Theoretical Computer Science ••• (••••) •••–•••

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Theoretical Computer Science

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Note

Separability by piecewise testable languages is PTime-complete

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 24 November 2016
Accepted 7 November 2017
Available online xxxx
Communicated by D. Perrin

Keywords:
Separability
Piecewise testable languages
Complexity

ABSTRACT

Piecewise testable languages form the first level of the Straubing–Thérien hierarchy. The membership problem for this level is decidable and testing if the language of a DFA is piecewise testable is NL-complete. So far, this question has not been addressed for NFAs in the literature. We fill in this gap and show that it is PSpace-complete. The main interest of this paper is, however, the lower-bound complexity of separability of regular languages by piecewise testable languages. Two regular languages are separable by a piecewise testable language if the piecewise testable language includes one of them and is disjoint from the other. For languages represented by NFAs, separability by piecewise testable languages is decidable in PTime. We show that it is PTime-hard and that it remains PTime-hard even if the input automata are minimal DFAs. As a result, it is unlikely that separability of regular languages by piecewise testable languages can be solved in a restricted space or effectively parallelized.

1. Introduction

A regular language over Σ is *piecewise testable* if it is a finite boolean combination of languages of the form $\Sigma^* a_1 \Sigma^* a_2 \Sigma^* \cdots \Sigma^* a_n \Sigma^*$, where $a_i \in \Sigma$ and $n \geq 0$. If n is bounded by a constant, k, then the language is called *k-piecewise testable*. Piecewise testable languages are exactly those regular languages whose syntactic monoid is $\mathcal{J}$-trivial [35]. Simon [36] provided various characterizations of piecewise testable languages, e.g., in terms of monoids or automata. These languages are of interest in many disciplines of mathematics, such as semigroup theory [2,3,28] for their relation to Green's relations or in logic on words [10] for their relation to first-order logic FO[<] and the *Straubing–Thérien hierarchy* [40,43].

For an alphabet Σ, level 0 of the Straubing–Thérien hierarchy is defined as $\mathscr{L}(0) = \{\emptyset, \Sigma^*\}$. For integers $n \geq 0$, the levels $\mathscr{L}(n)$ and $\mathscr{L}(n+\frac{1}{2})$ are defined as follows:

- $\mathscr{L}(n+\frac{1}{2})$ consists of all finite unions of languages $L_0 a_1 L_1 a_2 \ldots a_k L_k$ with $k \geq 0$, $L_0, \ldots, L_k \in \mathscr{L}(n)$, and $a_1, \ldots, a_k \in \Sigma$,
- $\mathscr{L}(n+1)$ consists of all finite Boolean combinations of languages from level $\mathscr{L}(n+\frac{1}{2})$.

The levels of the hierarchy contain only *star-free* languages [27]. Piecewise testable languages form the first level of the hierarchy. The hierarchy does not collapse on any level [5], but the problem of deciding whether a language belongs to some level ℓ is largely open for $\ell > \frac{5}{2}$ [1,31]. The Straubing–Thérien hierarchy has further close relations to the *dot-depth hierarchy* [5,7,23,41] and to complexity theory [45].

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tcs.2017.11.004
0304-3975/

The fundamental question is how to efficiently recognize whether a given regular language is piecewise testable. Stern [39] provided a solution that was later improved by Trahtman [44] and Klíma and Polák [21]. Stern presented an algorithm deciding piecewise testability of a regular language represented by a DFA in time $O(n^5)$, where n is the number of states of the DFA. Trahtman improved Stern's algorithm to time quadratic with respect to the number of states and linear with respect to the size of the alphabet, and Klíma and Polák found an algorithm for DFAs that is quadratic with respect to the size of the alphabet and linear with respect to the number of states. Cho and Huynh [6] proved that piecewise testability for DFAs is NL-complete. Although the complexity for DFAs has been deeply investigated, the study for NFAs is missing in the literature. We fill in this gap and show that piecewise testability for NFAs is PSPACE-complete (Theorem 2).

The knowledge of the minimal k or a reasonable bound on k for which a piecewise testable language is k-piecewise testable is of interest in applications [24,17]. The complexity of finding the minimal k has been studied in the literature [17,20,21,26]. Testing whether a piecewise testable language is k-piecewise testable is coNP-complete for $k \geq 4$ if the language is represented as a DFA [20] and PSPACE-complete if the language is represented as an NFA [26]. The complexity for DFAs and $k < 4$ has also been discussed in detail [26]. Klíma and Polák [21] showed that the upper bound on k is given by the depth of the minimal DFA. This result has recently been generalized to NFAs [25].

The recent interest in piecewise testable languages is mainly for applications of separability of regular languages by piecewise testable languages in logic on words [30] and XML schema languages [8,17,24]. Given two languages K and L and a family of languages $\mathcal{F}$, the separability problem asks whether there exists a language S in $\mathcal{F}$ such that S includes one of the languages K and L and is disjoint from the other. Place and Zeitoun [30] used separability to obtain new decidability results of the membership problem for some levels of the Straubing–Thérien hierarchy. The separability problem for two regular languages represented by NFAs and the family of piecewise testable languages is decidable in polynomial time with respect to both the number of states and the size of the alphabet [8,29]. Separability by piecewise testable languages is of interest also outside regular languages. Although separability of context-free languages by regular languages is undecidable [18], separability by piecewise testable languages is decidable (even for some non-context-free languages) [9]. Piecewise testable languages are further investigated in natural language processing [11,32], cognitive and sub-regular complexity [33], and learning theory [12,22]. They have been extended from word languages to tree languages [4,13,15].

In this paper, we show that separability of regular languages represented by NFAs by piecewise testable languages is a PTIME-complete problem (Theorem 3) and that it remains PTIME-hard even if the input automata are minimal DFAs. As a result, the separability problem is unlikely to be solvable in logarithmic space or effectively parallelizable.

2. Preliminaries and definitions

We assume that the reader is familiar with automata theory [37]. The cardinality of a set A is denoted by $|A|$ and the power set of A by 2^A. The free monoid generated by an alphabet Σ is denoted by Σ^*. A word over Σ is any element of Σ^*; the empty word is denoted by ε. For a word $w \in \Sigma^*$, $\mathrm{alph}(w) \subseteq \Sigma$ denotes the set of all symbols occurring in w.

A *nondeterministic finite automaton* (NFA) is a quintuple $M = (Q, \Sigma, \delta, Q_0, F)$, where Q is the finite nonempty set of states, Σ is the input alphabet, $Q_0 \subseteq Q$ is the set of initial states, $F \subseteq Q$ is the set of accepting states, and $\delta : Q \times \Sigma \to 2^Q$ is the transition function extended to the domain $2^Q \times \Sigma^*$ in the usual way. The language *accepted* by M is the set $L(M) = \{w \in \Sigma^* \mid \delta(Q_0, w) \cap F \neq \emptyset\}$. A *path* π from a state q_0 to a state q_n under a word $a_1 a_2 \cdots a_n$, for some $n \geq 0$, is a sequence of states and input symbols $q_0, a_1, q_1, a_2, \ldots, q_{n-1}, a_n, q_n$ such that $q_{i+1} \in \delta(q_i, a_{i+1})$, for all $i = 0, 1, \ldots, n-1$. Path π is *accepting* if $q_0 \in Q_0$ and $q_n \in F$. We write $q_0 \xrightarrow{a_1 a_2 \cdots a_n} q_n$ to denote that there is a path from q_0 to q_n under the word $a_1 a_2 \cdots a_n$. We says that M has a *cycle over an alphabet* $\Gamma \subseteq \Sigma$ if there is a state q in M and a word w over Σ such that $q \xrightarrow{w} q$ and $\mathrm{alph}(w) = \Gamma$. The NFA M is *deterministic* (DFA) if $|Q_0| = 1$ and $|\delta(q, a)| = 1$ for every $q \in Q$ and $a \in \Sigma$. Although we define DFAs as complete, we mostly depict only the most important transitions in our illustrations. The reader can easily complete such an incomplete DFA.

We say that $v = a_1 a_2 \cdots a_n$ is a *subsequence* of w, denoted by $v \preccurlyeq w$, if $w \in \Sigma^* a_1 \Sigma^* a_2 \Sigma^* \cdots \Sigma^* a_n \Sigma^*$. For two languages K and L, a sequence $(w_i)_{i=1}^r$ of words is a *tower between K and L* if $w_1 \in K \cup L$ and, for all $i = 1, \ldots, r-1$, $w_i \preccurlyeq w_{i+1}$, $w_i \in K$ implies $w_{i+1} \in L$, and $w_i \in L$ implies $w_{i+1} \in K$. The number of words in the sequence, r, is the *height* of the tower. In the same way, we define an infinite sequence of words as an *infinite tower between K and L*. Stern [38] defined towers between a language and its complement. Our definition naturally generalizes his definition to arbitrary two languages. Towers are sometimes called zigzags in the literature [8]. If the languages are clear from the context, we usually omit them. We do not require that the languages K and L are disjoint. However, if there is a $w \in K \cap L$, then there is a trivial infinite tower $w, w, w, \ldots$ between K and L. If we talk about a *tower between two automata*, we mean a tower between their languages.

Let K and L be languages. A language S *separates K from L* if S contains K and does not intersect L. Languages K and L are *separable by a family of languages $\mathcal{F}$* if there exists a language S in $\mathcal{F}$ that separates K from L or L from K.

3. Piecewise testability for NFAs

Given an NFA A over an alphabet Σ, the *piecewise-testability problem* asks whether the language $L(A)$ is piecewise testable. Although the containment in PSPACE follows basically from the result by Cho and Huynh [6], we prefer to provide the proof here for two reasons: (i) we would like to provide an unfamiliar reader with a method to recognize whether a

Algorithm 1 Non-piecewise testability (symbol $\rightsquigarrow$ stands for reachability).

1: Guess states $X, Y \subseteq Q$ of A'; ▷ Verify property (1)
2: **if** $Q_0 \rightsquigarrow X \rightsquigarrow Y \rightsquigarrow X$ **then**
3:     go to line 12;
4: **end if**
5: Guess states $P, X, Y \subseteq Q$ of A'; ▷ Verify property (2)
6: Check $Q_0 \rightsquigarrow P$, $Q_0 \rightsquigarrow X$, and $Q_0 \rightsquigarrow Y$;
7: $s_1 := P$; $\quad s_2 := P$;
8: **repeat** guess $a, b \in \Sigma(X) \cap \Sigma(Y)$;
9:     $s_1 := \delta(s_1, a)$;
10:     $s_2 := \delta(s_2, b)$;
11: **until** $s_1 = X$ and $s_2 = Y$;
12: Guess states X', Y' of A' s.t. $X' \cap F \neq \emptyset$ and $Y' \cap F = \emptyset$; ▷ Non-equivalence check of X and Y
13: $s_1 := X$; $\quad s_2 := Y$;
14: **repeat** guess $a \in \Sigma$;
15:     $s_1 := \delta(s_1, a)$;
16:     $s_2 := \delta(s_2, a)$;
17: **until** $s_1 = X'$ and $s_2 = Y'$;
18: **return** 'yes';

regular language is piecewise testable, (ii) Cho and Huynh assume that the input DFA is minimal, hence it is necessary to extend their algorithm with a non-equivalence check. We use the following characterization in our proof.

Proposition 1 *(Cho and Huynh [6]). A regular language L is not piecewise testable if and only if the minimal DFA for L either (1) contains a nontrivial (non-self-loop) cycle or (2) there are three distinct states p, q, q' such that q and q' are reachable from p by words over the symbols that form self-loops on both q and q'; formally, there are paths $p \xrightarrow{w} q$ and $p \xrightarrow{w'} q'$ in the DFA with $w, w' \in \Sigma(q) \cap \Sigma(q')$, where $\Sigma(q) = \{a \in \Sigma \mid q \xrightarrow{a} q\}$.*

We now prove the first result of this paper.

Theorem 2. *The piecewise-testability problem for NFAs is* PSpace*-complete.*

Proof. To prove that piecewise testability is in PSpace, let $A = (Q, \Sigma, \delta, Q_0, F)$ be an NFA. Since A is nondeterministic, we cannot directly use the algorithm of Cho and Huynh [6]. Instead, we consider the DFA A' obtained from A by the standard subset construction, where the states of A' are subsets of states of A. We now need to modify Cho and Huynh's algorithm to check whether the guessed states are distinguishable.

For a set of states $X \subseteq Q$, let $\Sigma(X) = \{a \in \Sigma \mid X \xrightarrow{a} X\}$. The entire algorithm is presented as Algorithm 1. In line 1 it guesses two states, X and Y, of A' that are verified to be reachable and in a cycle in lines 2–4. If so, it is verified in lines 12–17 that the states X and Y are not equivalent in A'. If there is no nontrivial cycle in A' or the guess in line 1 fails, property (2) of Proposition 1 is verified in lines 5–11, and the guessed states X and Y are checked to be non-equivalent in lines 12–17. Notice that in lines 7–11, the algorithm verifies that the states X and Y are reachable from a state P by paths of the same length rather than by paths of different lengths. This is not a problem because line 8 considers only symbols from $\Sigma(X) \cap \Sigma(Y)$. If A' reaches X under $\Sigma(X) \cap \Sigma(Y)$, it stays in X under those symbols (and analogously for Y). Thus, under $\Sigma(X) \cap \Sigma(Y)$, the states X and Y are reachable from state P by paths of different lengths if and only if they are reachable by paths of the same length. The algorithm is in NPSpace = PSpace [34] and returns a positive answer if and only if A does not accept a piecewise testable language. Since PSpace is closed under complement [19,42], piecewise testability is in PSpace.

We prove PSpace-hardness by reduction from the universality problem, which is PSpace-complete [14]. Given an NFA A over Σ, the *universality problem* asks whether the language $L(A)$ is identical to Σ^*.

Let A be an NFA with a single initial state q_0 (this is not a restriction). Check whether $L(A) = \emptyset$ (in linear time by reachability of an accepting state). If so, return the minimal DFA A' for the non-piecewise testable language $(aa)^*$. If $L(A) \neq \emptyset$, let x be a new symbol, and let d be a new state. We complete the automaton A in the sense that if no a-transition is defined in a state q, for $a \in \Sigma$, we add an a-transition from state q to state d. State d contains self-loops under all symbols of Σ, but not under x. Now, we add an x-transition from each state, including d, to the initial state q_0. Let A' denote the resulting automaton. We prove that A is universal if and only if $L(A')$ is piecewise testable.

If $L(A) = \Sigma^*$, we show that the language $L(A')$ is piecewise testable by showing that $L(A') = (\Sigma \cup \{x\})^*$. Indeed, $L(A) \subseteq L(A')$, so it remains to show that every word containing x is accepted by A'. Let $w = w_1 x w_2$, where $w_1 \in (\Sigma \cup \{x\})^*$ and $w_2 \in \Sigma^*$. By the construction, $w_1 x$ leads the automaton back to the initial state, and w_2 leads the automaton to an accepting state, because $w_2 \in L(A) = \Sigma^*$. Thus, $w \in L(A')$.

To prove the other direction, assume that $L(A) \neq \Sigma^*$. If $L(A) = \emptyset$, then $L(A') = (aa)^*$ is not piecewise testable. If $L(A) \neq \emptyset$, consider the minimal DFA A'' computed from A' by the standard subset construction and minimization. The DFA A'' has at least two states, otherwise its language is either universal or empty. Every state of A'' is a nonempty subset of states of A'

Please cite this article in press as: T. Masopust, Separability by piecewise testable languages is PTime-complete, Theoret. Comput. Sci. (2018), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tcs.2017.11.004

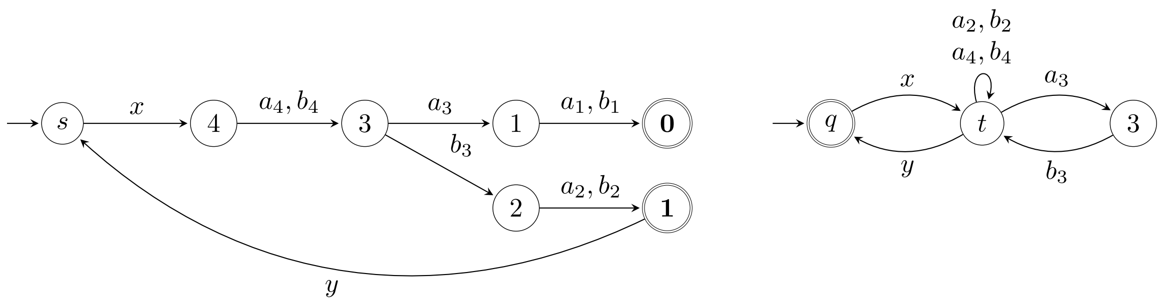

Fig. 1. Automata A' and B for the circuit $g_1 = \mathbf{0}$, $g_2 = \mathbf{1}$, $g_3 = g_1 \wedge g_2$, $g_4 = g_3 \vee g_3$.

(actually it is an equivalence class of such subsets, but we pick one as a representative). The empty set is not reachable because A' is complete. Let $X \neq \{q_0\}$ be a state of A''. Then X is reachable from the initial state $\{q_0\}$, and goes back to $\{q_0\}$ under x, which means that there is a cycle in the minimal DFA A''. By (1) of Proposition 1, $L(A') = L(A'')$ is not piecewise testable. $\square$

4. Separability of regular languages by piecewise testable languages

In this section, we show that the separability problem of two regular languages by a piecewise testable language is PTime-complete. Since the containment in PTime is known [8,29], we prove PTime-hardness by constructing a log-space reduction from the PTime-complete monotone circuit value problem [16].

The *monotone circuit value problem* consists of a set of boolean variables $g_1, g_2, \ldots, g_n$ called *gates*, whose values are defined recursively by equalities of the forms $g_i = \mathbf{0}$ (then g_i is called a $\mathbf{0}$-gate), $g_i = \mathbf{1}$ ($\mathbf{1}$-gate), $g_i = g_j \wedge g_k$ ($\wedge$-gate), or $g_i = g_j \vee g_k$ ($\vee$-gate), where $j, k < i$. Here $\mathbf{0}$ and $\mathbf{1}$ are symbols representing the boolean values. The aim is to compute the value of g_n.

Theorem 3. *The separability problem of two regular languages represented as NFAs by a piecewise testable language is* PTime*-complete. It remains* PTime*-hard even for languages represented as minimal DFAs.*

Proof. The containment in PTime was independently shown by Czerwiński, Martens and Masopust [8] and Place, Van Rooijen and Zeitoun [29]. We now prove PTime-hardness by reduction from the monotone circuit value problem (MCVP). Given an instance $g_1, g_2, \ldots, g_n$ of MCVP, we construct two minimal DFAs A and B using a log-space reduction and prove that there exists an infinite tower between their languages if and only if the circuit evaluates gate g_n to $\mathbf{1}$. The theorem then follows from the fact that non-separability of two regular languages by a piecewise testable language is equivalent to the existence of an infinite tower [8].

Let $f(i)$ be the element of $\{\wedge, \vee, \mathbf{0}, \mathbf{1}\}$ such that g_i is an $f(i)$-gate. For every $\wedge$-gate and $\vee$-gate, we set $\ell(i)$ and $r(i)$ to be the indices such that $g_i = g_{\ell(i)} f(i) g_{r(i)}$ is the defining equality of g_i. If g_i is a $\mathbf{0}$-gate, we set $f(i) = \ell(i) = r(i) = \mathbf{0}$, and if g_i is a $\mathbf{1}$-gate, we set $f(i) = \ell(i) = r(i) = \mathbf{1}$.

We first construct an automaton $A' = (Q_{A'}, \Sigma, \delta_{A'}, s, F_{A'})$ with states $Q_{A'} = \{s, \mathbf{0}, \mathbf{1}, 1, 2, \ldots, n\}$, the input alphabet $\Sigma = \{x, y\} \cup \{a_i, b_i \mid i = 1, \ldots, n\}$, and accepting states $F_{A'} = \{\mathbf{0}, \mathbf{1}\}$. The initial state of A' is s and the transition function $\delta_{A'}$ is defined by $\delta_{A'}(i, a_i) = \ell(i)$ and $\delta_{A'}(i, b_i) = r(i)$. In addition, there are two special transitions $\delta_{A'}(s, x) = n$ and $\delta_{A'}(\mathbf{1}, y) = s$.

To construct automaton $B = (Q_B, \Sigma, \delta_B, q, F_B)$, let $Q_B = \{q, t\} \cup \{i \mid f(i) = \wedge\}$ and $F_B = \{q\}$, where q is also the initial state of B. If $f(i) = \vee$ or $f(i) = \mathbf{1}$, we define $\delta_B(t, a_i) = \delta_B(t, b_i) = t$. If $f(i) = \wedge$, we define $\delta_B(t, a_i) = i$ and $\delta_B(i, b_i) = t$. Finally, we define $\delta_B(q, x) = t$ and $\delta_B(t, y) = q$.

All undefined transitions go to the unique sink states of the respective automata. The automata A' and B can be constructed from $g_1, \ldots, g_n$ in logarithmic space. An example of the construction for the circuit $g_1 = \mathbf{0}$, $g_2 = \mathbf{1}$, $g_3 = g_1 \wedge g_2$, $g_4 = g_3 \vee g_3$ is illustrated in Fig. 1.

The languages $L(A')$ and $L(B)$ are disjoint, the automata A' and B are deterministic, and B is minimal. However, automaton A' need not be minimal because the circuit may contain gates that do not contribute to the definition of the value of g_n. We therefore define a minimal deterministic automaton A by adding new transitions into A', each under a fresh symbol, from state s to each of the states $1, 2, \ldots, n-1$, from each of the states $1, 2, \ldots, n$ to state $\mathbf{0}$, and from state $\mathbf{0}$ to state $\mathbf{1}$. This can again be done in logarithmic space. No new transition is defined in B.

Since the language of B is over Σ, the symbols of A not belonging to Σ have no effect on the existence of an infinite tower between $L(A)$ and $L(B)$. Namely, there exists an infinite tower between the languages $L(A)$ and $L(B)$ if and only if there exists an infinite tower between $L(A')$ and $L(B)$. It is therefore sufficient to prove that the circuit evaluates gate g_n to $\mathbf{1}$ if and only if there is an infinite tower between the languages $L(A')$ and $L(B)$.

The intuition behind the construction is that the symbols of an infinite tower with unbounded number of occurrences correspond to gates that evaluate to $\mathbf{1}$ to satisfy g_n, and that the non-existence of an infinite tower implies the existence of a symbol with bounded number of occurrences in A' that appears in a non-trivial cycle of the form a_jb_j in B. Such a state corresponds to an $\wedge$-gate, g_j, which cannot be satisfied and causes that g_n evaluates to $\mathbf{0}$ (cf. symbol a_3 in Fig. 1).

If there are no $\wedge$-gates, g_n is satisfied if and only if state $\mathbf{1}$ is reachable from state n in A'. Let w be a word under which state $\mathbf{1}$ is reachable from state n. Then $xw \in L(A')$, $xwy \in L(B)$, $xwyxw \in L(A'), \ldots$ is an infinite tower between $L(A')$ and $L(B)$. If state $\mathbf{1}$ is not reachable from state n in A', then the language $L(A')$ is finite and there is indeed no infinite tower between $L(A')$ and $L(B)$.

The problem with $\wedge$-gates is how to ensure that both children of an $\wedge$-gate, g_j, are satisfied. To this aim, we use the nontrivial cycle under a_jb_j in B, which enforces that both a_j and b_j appear in the words of an infinite tower. Speaking intuitively, automata A' and B encode the satisfiability check of g_j (see state g_3 in Fig. 1) in the following way. Automaton A' checks reachability of state $\mathbf{1}$ from state j under a word in $a_j\Sigma^* \cup b_j\Sigma^*$ and automaton B ensures that a_j appears in a word in $L(B)$ if and only if b_j does. The main idea now is that if there is an infinite tower $(w_i)_{i=1}^{\infty}$ and a_j appears in a word $w_i \in L(A')$, then both a_j and b_j appear in $w_{i+1} \in L(B)$. By the construction of A', symbol x appears between any two occurrences of a_j and b_j, hence B increases the number of occurrences of a_j and b_j in the words of the tower as the hight grows. Since the tower is infinite, the number of their occurrences is unbounded. However, to read an unbounded number of a_j and b_j in A' requires that there is a path from state j to state $\mathbf{1}$ under a word in $a_j\Sigma^*$ as well as under a word in $b_j\Sigma^*$, which (using inductively the same argument for other $\wedge$-gates) is possible only if g_j is satisfied. In Fig. 1, the words of $L(A')$ contain at most one occurrence of a_3, whereas those of $L(B)$ require unbounded number of occurrences of a_3. Thus, there is no infinite tower between the languages of Fig. 1.

We now formally prove the claim. The dependence between the gates $g_1, g_2, \ldots, g_n$ can be depicted as a directed acyclic graph $G = (\{1, 2, \ldots, n\}, E)$, where E is defined as $\delta_{A'}$ without the labels, multiplicities and states $s, \mathbf{0}, \mathbf{1}$. We say that i is *accessible* from j if there is a path from j to i in G.

(Only if) Assume that g_n is evaluated to $\mathbf{1}$. We construct an alphabet Γ, $\{x, y\} \subseteq \Gamma \subseteq \Sigma$, under which both automata A' and B have a cycle containing the initial and an accepting state. These cycles then imply the existence of an infinite tower between the languages $L(A')$ and $L(B)$. Symbol a_i belongs to Γ if and only if g_i is evaluated to $\mathbf{1}$, i is accessible from n, and either $\ell(i) = \mathbf{1}$ or $g_{\ell(i)}$ is evaluated to $\mathbf{1}$. Similarly, b_i belongs to Γ if and only if i is accessible from n, g_i is evaluated to $\mathbf{1}$, and either $r(i) = \mathbf{1}$ or $g_{r(i)}$ is evaluated to $\mathbf{1}$. It is not hard to observe that each transition labeled by a symbol a_i or b_i from Γ is part of a path from n to $\mathbf{1}$ in A', hence it appears on a cycle in A' from the initial state s back to state s through the accepting state $\mathbf{1}$. Moreover, the definition of $\wedge$ implies that $a_i \in \Gamma$ if and only if $b_i \in \Gamma$ for each $i = 1, 2, \ldots, n$ such that $f(i) = \wedge$. Notice that B has a cycle from q to q labeled by xa_ib_iy for each $i = 1, 2, \ldots, n$ such that $f(i) = \wedge$, and also a cycle from q to q labeled by xc_iy for each $c \in \{a, b\}$ and each $i = 1, 2, \ldots, n$ such that $f(i) = \vee$ or $f(i) = \mathbf{1}$. Therefore, both automata A' and B have a cycle over the alphabet Γ containing the initial and accepting states. The existence of an infinite tower follows.

(If) Assume that there exists an infinite tower $(w_i)_{i=1}^{\infty}$ between A' and B, and, for the sake of contradiction, assume that g_n is evaluated to $\mathbf{0}$. Note that any path from i to $\mathbf{1}$ in A', where g_i is evaluated to $\mathbf{0}$, must contain a state corresponding to an $\wedge$-gate that is evaluated to $\mathbf{0}$. In particular, this applies to any path in A' accepting a word of the infinite tower of length at least $n+2$, since such a path contains a subpath from n to $\mathbf{1}$. Let j denote the smallest positive integer such that $f(j) = \wedge$, gate g_j is evaluated to $\mathbf{0}$, and a_j or b_j is in $\cup_{i=1}^{\infty} \operatorname{alph}(w_i)$. The construction of B implies that both a_j and b_j are in $\cup_{i=1}^{\infty} \operatorname{alph}(w_i)$ because of the nontrivial cycle a_jb_j. Since g_j is evaluated to $\mathbf{0}$, there exists $c \in \{a, b\}$ such that the transition from j under c_j leads to a state σ, where either $\sigma = \mathbf{0}$ or $\sigma < j$ and g_σ is evaluated to $\mathbf{0}$. Consider a word $w_i \in L(A')$ of the infinite tower containing c_j. If w_i is accepted in $\mathbf{1}$, then the accepting path contains a subpath from σ to $\mathbf{1}$, which yields a contradiction with the minimality of j. Therefore, w_i is accepted in $\mathbf{0}$. However, no symbol of a transition to state $\mathbf{0}$ appears in a word accepted by B (cf. the symbols a_1 and b_1 in Fig. 1), a contradiction again. $\square$

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Štěpán Holub for his comments on the preliminary version of this work. The research was supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG) in Emmy Noether grant KR 4381/1-1 (DIAMOND).

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