

Automata Theory and Formal Languages

Summer Term 2026

11th Lecture

CYK Algorithm

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- How long would it take if the program has 30 symbols? 2^{30} ms $\approx$ 12 days

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- It is named after its inventors: Cocke, Younger, Kasami
- It expects the grammar to be in Chomsky normal form

Idea behind CYK Algorithm

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- Thus we can break down the decision problem of length n into two decision problems of lengths k and $n - k$.

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Solution

Systematically try out all possible k . This approach is called *dynamic programming*.

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Remark

The algorithm uses a table $T[1 \dots n, 1 \dots n]$ where just one triangle is used.

CYK Algorithm

Input: $x = a_1 a_2 \dots a_n$ and grammar G

for $i := 1$ to n **do**

$T[i, 1] = \{A \in V \mid (A \rightarrow a_i) \in P\}$

end for

for $j := 2$ to n **do**

for $i := 1$ to $n + 1 - j$ **do**

$T[i, j] = \emptyset$

for $k := 1$ to $j - 1$ **do**

$T[i, j] = T[i, j] \cup \{A \in V \mid (A \rightarrow BC) \in P \wedge$
 $B \in T[i, k] \wedge C \in T[i + k, j - k]\}$

end for

end for

end for

$\vdots$

CYK Algorithm

```
⋮  
if  $S \in T[1, n]$  then  
    return true  
else  
    return false  
end if
```

CYK Algorithm

Runtime

The runtime of the CYK algorithm is $\mathcal{O}(n^3)$ since we have three nested for loops of which each requires $\mathcal{O}(n)$ passes. This is much faster than the brute-force algorithm that we discussed for type 1 languages, which required $\mathcal{O}(\exp(n))$ steps.

Example – CYK Algorithm

Language

$$L = \{a^n b^n c^m \mid n, m \geq 1\}$$

Grammar

$$S \rightarrow AB$$

$$A \rightarrow CD \mid CF$$

$$B \rightarrow c \mid EB$$

$$C \rightarrow a$$

$$D \rightarrow b$$

$$E \rightarrow c$$

$$F \rightarrow AD$$

Example – CYK Algorithm

Input: $x = aaabbbcc$

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<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>c</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E, B</i>	<i>E, B</i>
-	-	<i>A</i>	-	-	-	<i>B</i>	
-	-	<i>F</i>	-	-	-		
-	<i>A</i>	-	-	-			
-	<i>F</i>	-	-				
<i>A</i>	-	-					
<i>S</i>	-						
<i>S</i>							

Example – CYK Algorithm

Input: $x = aaabbbcc$

<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>c</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E, B</i>	<i>E, B</i>
-	-	<i>A</i>	-	-	-	<i>B</i>	
-	-	<i>F</i>	-	-	-		
-	<i>A</i>	-	-	-			
-	<i>F</i>	-	-				
<i>A</i>	-	-					
<i>S</i>	-						
<i>S</i>							

Since $S \in T[1, 8]$ the string x can be generated by the grammar G .