

15-150

Principles of Functional Programming

Slides for Lecture 14

Regular Expressions

March 12, 2024

Michael Erdmann

Lessons:

- Regular Expressions
- Regular Languages
- Matcher
- Correctness
 - Proof-Directed Debugging
 - Termination
 - Soundness and Completeness

Language Hierarchy

Class of Languages

Recognizers

Applications

Unrestricted

Turing Machines

General
Computation

Context-Sensitive

Linear-bounded
automata

Some simple
type-checking

Context-Free

Nondeterministic
automata
with one stack

Syntax checking

Regular

Finite Automata

Tokenization

An example: Excursions from home



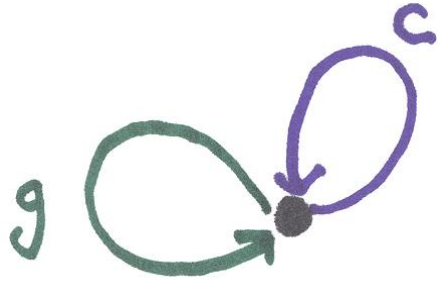
(home)

An example: Excursions from home



“c” means “go to CMU, then go home”

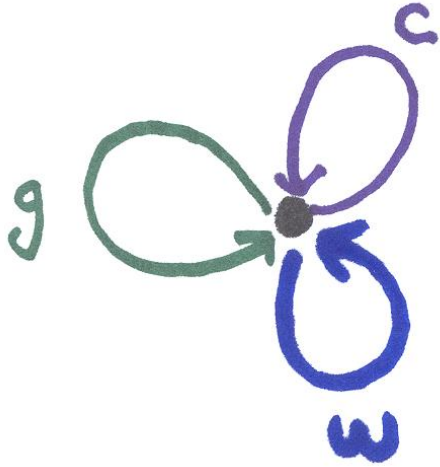
An example: Excursions from home



“c” means “go to CMU, then go home”

“g” means “get groceries, then go home”

An example: Excursions from home

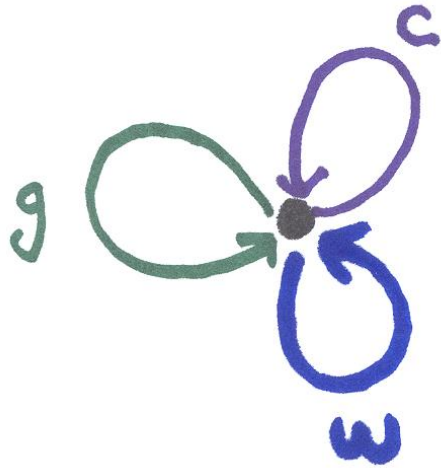


“**c**” means “go to CMU, then go home”

“**g**” means “get groceries, then go home”

“**w**” means “go for a walk, then home”

An example: Excursions from home



“**c**” means “go to CMU, then go home”

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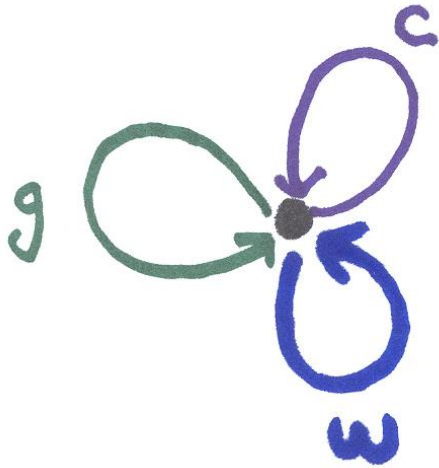
Description of excursions in a given week:

c (go to CMU once) **cc** (go to CMU twice) **ccc** (go to CMU 3 times)

c* (go to CMU zero or more times)

cgc (go to CMU, then get groceries, then go to CMU)

An example: Excursions from home



“c” means “go to CMU, then go home”

“g” means “get groceries, then go home”

“w” means “go for a walk, then home”

Description of excursions in a given week:

g + w

(get groceries **OR** go for a walk)

(g + w)*

(zero or more times do one of the following:
get groceries **OR** go for a walk)

(g + w)* c

(zero or more times do one of the following:
get groceries **OR** go for a walk;
after that go to CMU once)

Notation and Definitions

Σ is an *alphabet of characters*. (nonempty, finite)

For example, $\Sigma = \{a, b\}$.

(Using SML, `#"a" : char.`)

Σ^* means the set of all finite-length strings over alphabet Σ , i.e., with characters in Σ .

For example, `aabba` is in $\{a,b\}^*$.

(Using SML, `"aabba" : string.`)

ϵ is the *empty string*, containing no characters.

ϵ is in Σ^* . (Using SML, `"" : string.`)

Notation and Definitions

A *language* over Σ is a subset of Σ^* .

(In other words, a language is a set of *finite-length strings* with characters in Σ .

A language may contain infinitely many strings.)

We are here interested in a particular class of languages called *regular languages*. The languages may have infinite size, but we will describe them via a finite representation called *regular expressions*, much like in the excursion example.

Regular Expressions

Assume we have been given some alphabet Σ .

A *regular expression* over Σ is any of the following:


Regular Expressions

Assume we have been given some alphabet Σ .

A *regular expression* over Σ is any of the following:

a for every character **a** \in Σ ,

set symbol meaning “is in”
(don’t confuse with the empty string ϵ)



Regular Expressions

Assume we have been given some alphabet Σ .

A *regular expression* over Σ is any of the following:

- a** for every character $a \in \Sigma$,
- 0** (a special symbol),

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- 1** (another special symbol),

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$r_1 + r_2$ with r_1 and r_2 regular expressions
(called *alternation*),

Regular Expressions

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(called *alternation*),

$r_1 r_2$ with **r_1** and **r_2** regular expressions
(called *concatenation*),

r^* with **r** a regular expression
(called *Kleene star*).

Regular Expressions

Assume we have been given some alphabet Σ .

A *regular expression* over Σ is any of the following:

(And use parentheses as needed.)

$r_1 + r_2$

with r_1 and r_2 regular expressions
(called *alternation*),

$r_1 r_2$

with r_1 and r_2 regular expressions
(called *concatenation*),

r^*

with r a regular expression
(called *Kleene star*).

Regular Languages

Given regular expression r we define language $L(r)$:

$L(a) = \{a\}$ (singleton set) for every character $a \in \Sigma$,

$L(0) = \{ \}$ (the empty language, no strings),

$L(1) = \{\varepsilon\}$ (the language consisting of the empty string),

$L(r_1 + r_2) = \{ s \mid s \in L(r_1) \text{ or } s \in L(r_2) \}$ (not exclusive),

$L(r_1 r_2) = \{ s_1 s_2 \mid s_1 \in L(r_1) \text{ and } s_2 \in L(r_2) \}$,

$L(r^*) = \{ s \mid s = s_1 s_2 \cdots s_n, \text{ some } n \geq 0, \text{ with each } s_i \in L(r) \}$
(here we mean $s = \varepsilon$ when $n=0$).

So: $\varepsilon \in L(r^*)$ for all regular expressions r .

Regular Languages

Let Σ be a given alphabet and L a subset of Σ^* .

We say that language L is *regular* if $L = L(r)$ for some regular expression r .

(Fact: The class of regular languages over Σ is the *minimal class* containing the empty set and all singleton subsets of Σ , and that is *closed* under union, concatenation, and Kleene star.)

(The class is also *closed* under complement:
 L is regular iff $\Sigma^* \setminus L$ is regular.)

Examples (assume $\Sigma = \{a, b\}$)

$L(a) = \{a\}$ (singleton set consisting of the string **a**)

$L(aa) = \{aa\}$ (singleton set consisting of the string **aa**)

$L((a + b)^*) = \Sigma^*$ (all finite-length strings with **as** and **bs**)

$L((a + b)^*aa(a + b)^*) =$ all strings in Σ^* containing
at least two consecutive **as**.

$L((a + 1)(b + ba)^*) =$???????

Examples (assume $\Sigma = \{a, b\}$)

$L(a) = \{a\}$ (singleton set consisting of the string **a**)

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$L((a + b)^*) = \Sigma^*$ (all finite-length strings with **as** and **bs**)

$L((a + b)^*aa(a + b)^*) =$ all strings in Σ^* containing
at least two consecutive **as**.

$L((a + 1)(b + ba)^*) =$ all strings in Σ^* that do *not*
contain two consecutive **as**.

Examples (assume $\Sigma = \{a, b\}$)

Comment: Different regular expressions can give rise to the same regular language.

For instance:

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbf{L(ab + b^*ab)} \\ &= \mathbf{L((1 + b^*)ab)} \\ &= \mathbf{L((1 + bb^*)ab)} \\ &= \mathbf{L(b^*ab)} \\ &= \mathbf{L(b^*ab + 0)} \\ &= \text{all strings in } \Sigma^* \text{ consisting of zero or more } \mathbf{b} \mathbf{s} \\ & \quad \text{followed by } \mathbf{ab} \text{ (and nothing thereafter).} \end{aligned}$$

Examples (assume $\Sigma = \{a, b\}$)

Comment: Different regular expressions can give rise to the same regular language.

For instance:

$$\begin{aligned} & L(\mathbf{ab + b^*ab}) \\ = & L(\mathbf{(1 + b^*)ab}) \\ = & L(\mathbf{(1 + bb^*)ab}) \\ = & L(\mathbf{b^*ab}) \\ = & L(\mathbf{b^*ab + 0}) \end{aligned}$$

= all strings in Σ^* consisting of zero or more **bs** followed by **ab** (and nothing thereafter).

In particular, for any reg exp **r**:

$$L(\mathbf{r^*}) = L(\mathbf{1 + rr^*})$$

An Acceptor

We would like to implement a function that decides whether a given string **s** is in the language **L(r)** of a given regular expression **r**.

```
(* accept : regexp -> string -> bool
```

```
  REQUIRES: true (may change this later).
```

```
  ENSURES: (accept r s) returns true if  $s \in L(r)$  ;
```

```
           (accept r s) returns false, otherwise.
```

```
*)
```

Think of **accept** as a simple parser/compiler.

(Still need to define the **regexp** type.)

Matching

Suppose $r = (a + ab)(a + b)$.

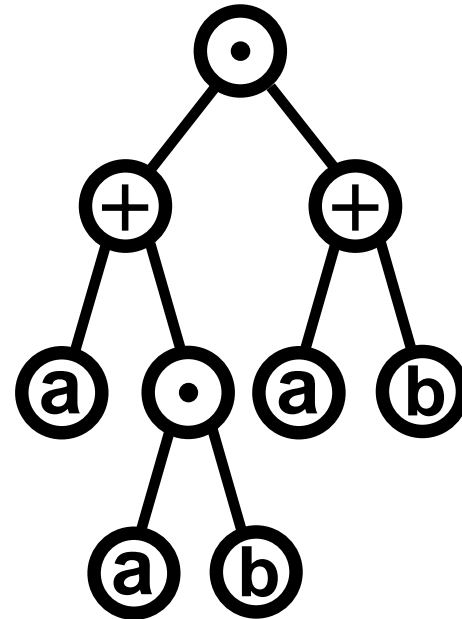
Then $L(r) = \{aa, ab, aba, abb\}$.

How does the acceptor recognize that $aba \in L(r)$?

By backtracking search.

View r as a tree.

Use up characters in **aba**
matching tree operations
determined by r .



Matching

Suppose $r = (a + ab)(a + b)$.

Then $L(r) = \{aa, ab, aba, abb\}$.

$(a + ab)(a + b)$

a

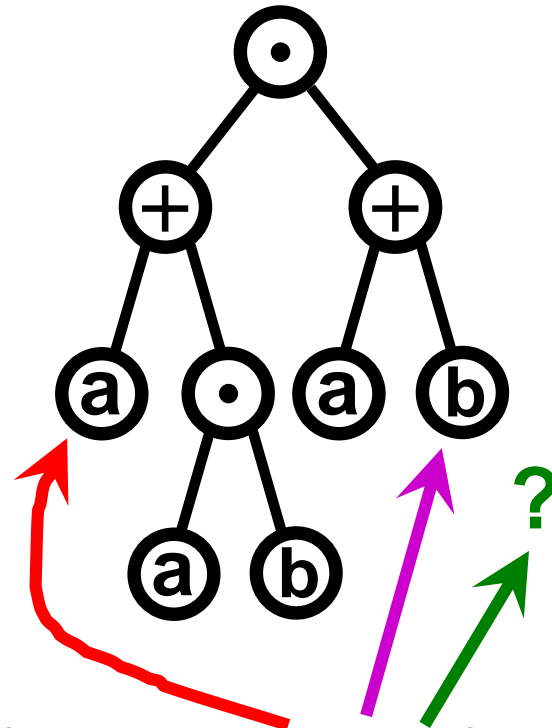
ba

How does the acceptor recognize that $aba \in L(r)$?

By backtracking search.

View r as a tree.

Use up characters in **aba**
matching tree operations
determined by r .



First split of **aba** as **a** **ba** fails
on last character.

Matching

Suppose $r = (a + ab)(a + b)$.

Then $L(r) = \{aa, ab, aba, abb\}$.

$(a + ab)(a + b)$

ab

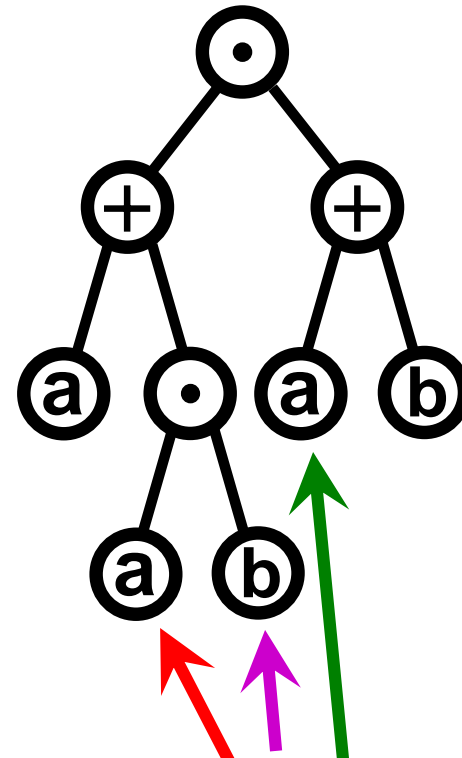
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How does the acceptor recognize that $aba \in L(r)$?

By backtracking search.

View r as a tree.

Use up characters in **aba**
matching tree operations
determined by r .



Second split of **aba** as **ab** **a** succeeds.

Matching

Suppose $r = (a + ab)(a + b)$.

Then $L(r) = \{aa, ab, aba, abb\}$.

How does the acceptor recognize that $aba \in L(r)$?

By backtracking search.

Tonight, do an evaluation trace on this example of the code we are about to write.
(Check yourself using today's lecture page.)

A Matcher

We will implement the backtracking search using a Boolean-specific continuation.

```
(* match : regexp -> char list ->
      (char list -> bool) -> bool
```

```
REQUIRES: k is total (aside: weaker condition
      simplifies termination proof).
```

```
ENSURES: (match r cs k) returns true if
      cs can be split as  $cs \cong p@s$ , with
      p representing a string in  $L(r)$ 
      and  $k(s)$  evaluating to true;
      (match r cs k) returns false, otherwise.
```

*)

A Matcher

We will implement the backtracking search using a Boolean-specific continuation.

```
(* match : regexp -> char list ->
                               (char list -> bool) -> bool
```

REQUIRES: k is total.

ENSURES: `(match r cs k)` returns `true` if
`cs` can be `split` as `cs \cong p@s`, with
`p` representing a string `in L(r)`
and `k(s)` evaluating to `true`;
`(match r cs k)` returns `false`, otherwise.

*)

We use character lists instead of strings here for simplicity. In discussions/proofs we sometimes treat them as identical.

Acceptor Based on Matcher Specs

```
(* match : regexp -> char list ->
           (char list -> bool) -> bool
REQUIRES: k is total.
ENSURES: (match r cs k)  $\cong$  true if
          cs  $\cong$  p@s, with  $p \in L(r)$  &  $k(s) \cong$  true;
          (match r cs k)  $\cong$  false, otherwise.
```

```
accept : regexp -> string -> bool
REQUIRES: true
ENSURES: (accept r s)  $\cong$  true if  $s \in L(r)$ ;
          (accept r s)  $\cong$  false otherwise.
```

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```
fun accept r s =
    match r (String.explode s) List.null
```

Acceptor Based on Matcher Specs

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```

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accept : regexp -> string -> bool
REQUIRES: true
ENSURES: (accept r s)  $\cong$  true if s  $\in$  L(r);
          (accept r s)  $\cong$  false otherwise.
```

*)

```
fun accept r s =      turns a string into a char list
                    ↙
                    match r (String.explode s) List.null
```

List.null : 'a list -> bool decides whether a list is empty.

Implementation

We will define a datatype that mirrors the mathematical definition of regular expressions.

We will implement a matcher that mirrors the definition of a regular expression's language.

Implementation

```
datatype regexp =  
    Char of char  
  | Zero  
  | One  
  | Plus of regexp * regexp  
  | Times of regexp * regexp  
  | Star of regexp
```

Implementation

`fun match`

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =
```

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
  (case cs of  
    [] =>  
    | c::cs' =>
```

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
  (case cs of  
    [] => ??????  
  | c::cs' => )
```

Recall:

$(\text{match } r \text{ cs } k) \cong \text{true}$
if $\text{cs} \cong p@s$, with $p \in L(r)$ & $k(s) \cong \text{true}$

$L(a) = \{a\}$

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
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Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
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```

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
  (case cs of  
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  | c::cs' => (a=c) andalso (k cs'))  
| match Zero _ _ = ?????
```

Recall:

$(\text{match } r \text{ cs } k) \cong \text{true}$

if $\text{cs} \cong p@s$, with $p \in L(r)$ & $k(s) \cong \text{true}$

$L(0) = \{\}$

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
  (case cs of  
    [] => false  
    | c::cs' => (a=c) andalso (k cs'))  
| match Zero _ _ = false
```

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
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    | c::cs' => (a=c) andalso (k cs'))  
| match Zero _ _ = false  
| match One cs k = ???????
```

Recall:

$(\text{match } r \text{ cs } k) \cong \text{true}$

if $\text{cs} \cong p@s$, with $p \in L(r)$ & $k(s) \cong \text{true}$

$L(1) = \{\epsilon\}$

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
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    | c::cs' => (a=c) andalso (k cs'))  
| match Zero _ _ = false  
| match One cs k = k cs
```

Implementation

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fun match (Char a) cs k =  
  (case cs of  
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| match Zero _ _ = false  
| match One cs k = k cs  
| match (Plus (r1, r2)) cs k =
```

Implementation

`(match r cs k) ≅ true`
if `cs ≅ p@s`, with `p ∈ L(r) & k(s) ≅ true`

$$L(r_1 + r_2) = \{ s \mid s \in L(r_1) \text{ or } s \in L(r_2) \}$$

| `match (Plus(r1, r2)) cs k =`
`(match r1 cs k) ??????`

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =  
  (case cs of  
    [] => false  
    | c::cs' => (a=c) andalso (k cs'))  
| match Zero _ _ = false  
| match One cs k = k cs  
| match (Plus(r1,r2)) cs k =  
  (match r1 cs k) orelse (match r2 cs k)
```

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =
  (case cs of
    [] => false
  | c::cs' => (a=c) andalso (k cs'))
| match Zero _ _ = false
| match One cs k = k cs
| match (Plus(r1,r2)) cs k =
  (match r1 cs k) orelse (match r2 cs k)
| match (Times(r1,r2)) cs k =
```

Implementation

`(match r cs k) ≅ true`

`if cs ≅ p@s, with p ∈ L(r) & k(s) ≅ true`

$L(r_1 r_2) = \{ s_1 s_2 \mid s_1 \in L(r_1) \text{ and } s_2 \in L(r_2) \}$

| `match (Times (r1, r2)) cs k =`
`match r1 cs` **?????**

Implementation

```
(match r cs k) ≅ true  
  if cs ≅ p@s, with p ∈ L(r) & k(s) ≅ true
```

```
L(r1r2) = { s1s2 | s1 ∈ L(r1) and s2 ∈ L(r2) }
```

```
| match (Times (r1, r2)) cs k =  
  match r1 cs (fn cs' => ??????) )
```

Implementation

```
fun match (Char a) cs k =
  (case cs of
    [] => false
  | c::cs' => (a=c) andalso (k cs'))
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| match (Plus(r1,r2)) cs k =
  (match r1 cs k) orelse (match r2 cs k)
| match (Times(r1,r2)) cs k =
  match r1 cs (fn cs' => match r2 cs' k)
```

Implementation – Star clause

```
| match (Star r) cs k =
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Implementation – Star clause

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```

Recall: $L(r^*) = L(1 + rr^*)$

We could make calls to previous clauses,
but let's implement this equation directly.

Implementation – Star clause

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| match (Star r) cs k =  
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               match (Star r) cs' k)
```

Recall: $L(r^*) = L(1 + rr^*)$

We could make calls to previous clauses,
but let's implement this equation directly.

There is a potential bug.

```
| match (Star r) cs k =  
  (k cs) orelse (match r cs (fn cs' => match (Star r) cs' k))
```

Proof-Directed Debugging

```
| match (Star r) cs k =  
  (k cs) orelse (match r cs (fn cs' => match (Star r) cs' k))
```

Imagine trying to prove that `(match (Star r) cs k)` reduces to a value as part of some larger induction proof that `match` always *terminates* (returns a value) when given input satisfying the specs.

In the Induction Hypothesis we may assume that `(match r cs k)` reduces to a value whenever `k` is total. So we need to establish that `(fn cs' => match (Star r) cs' k)` is total. Now we are in a circular argument!

Proof-Directed Debugging

```
| match (Star r) cs k =  
  (k cs) orelse (match r cs (fn cs' => match (Star r) cs' k))
```

A possible way out: We don't really need to establish that

```
(fn cs' => match (Star r) cs' k)
```

is total, merely that it returns values when called on suffixes `cs'` of the given `cs`. Maybe a second induction on `cs` will help.

If we could show that `cs'` is a *proper suffix* of `cs`, we could perhaps establish eventual termination.

Proof-Directed Debugging

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| match (Star r) cs k = k'  
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If we could show that `cs'` is a *proper suffix* of `cs`, we could perhaps establish eventual termination.

ALAS, that need not be true:

```
match (Star One) ["a"] List.null
```

will loop forever since `List.null ["a"] ≅ false`
and since `match One cs k'` will pass all of `cs` to `k'`.

Proof-Directed Debugging

```
| match (Star r) cs k = k'  
  (k cs) orelse (match r cs (fn cs' => match (Star r) cs' k))
```

This issue arises when the empty string is in $L(r)$.

If we could show that cs' is a *proper suffix* of cs ,
we could perhaps establish eventual termination.

ALAS, that need not be true:

```
match (Star One) ["a"] List.null
```

will loop forever since `List.null ["a"] ≅ false`
and since `match One cs k'` will pass all of cs to k' .

Two possible fixes to avoid infinite loops

1. Change the specs:

- Require regular expressions to be in *standard form* (definition shortly).

2. Change the code:

- Explicitly check that **cs'** is a proper suffix of **cs**.

Two possible fixes to avoid infinite loops

1. Change the specs

Definition:

A regular expression r is in *standard form* iff for any subexpression $\text{Star}(r')$ of r , $L(r')$ does *not* contain the empty string ϵ .

Fact: It is possible to convert any regular expression r into a regular expression q that is in standard form such that $L(r) = L(q)$.

Consequently, if we **REQUIRE** regular expressions to be in standard form we avoid infinite loops without losing any regular languages.

(Preprocess r into standard form, then call **match**.)

Two possible fixes to avoid infinite loops

2. Change the code

```
| match (Star r) cs k =  
  k cs  orelse  
  match r cs (fn cs' =>  
              properSuffix (cs', cs)  
                andalso  
                match (Star r) cs' k)
```

Two possible fixes to avoid infinite loops

2. Change the code

```
| match (Star r) cs k =  
  k cs orelse  
  match r cs (fn cs' =>  
    properSuffix (cs', cs)  
    andalso  
    match (Star r) cs' k)
```

This is new.

The code checks that `cs'` is a proper suffix of `cs`.

Sketch of a Proof of Correctness

1. Prove Termination

Show that `(match r cs k)` returns a value for all arguments `r`, `cs`, `k` satisfying **REQUIRES** specs. (This proof is surprisingly difficult. We assume it here.)

2. Prove Soundness and Completeness

Given termination, we can simplify the **ENSURES** specs in a convenient way, then perform structural induction. (We will write out one of the recursive cases here.)

Soundness & Completeness, Assuming Termination

Here are the given **ENSURES** specs for **match**:

$$\begin{aligned} (\text{match } r \text{ cs } k) \cong \text{true} & \text{ if } \text{cs} \cong p@s, \\ & \text{with } p \in L(r) \text{ and } k(s) \cong \text{true}; \\ (\text{match } r \text{ cs } k) \cong \text{false} & \text{, otherwise.} \end{aligned}$$

Given termination, we can rephrase the specs as:

$$\begin{aligned} (\text{match } r \text{ cs } k) \cong \text{true} & \text{ if and only if there exist } p \text{ and } s \\ & \text{such that } \text{cs} \cong p@s, p \in L(r), \text{ and } k(s) \cong \text{true}. \end{aligned}$$

That is the theorem we must prove.

The “if” part is sometimes called “completeness”.

The “only if” part is sometimes called “soundness”.

Theorem

For all values

r : regexp, cs : char list, k : char list \rightarrow bool, with k total,

$(\text{match } r \text{ } cs \text{ } k) \cong \text{true}$

if and only if

there exist p and s such that

$cs \cong p@s$, $p \in L(r)$, and $k(s) \cong \text{true}$.

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Proof

By structural induction on r .

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Base Cases: Zero, One, Char (a) for every $a : \text{char}$.

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Proof By structural induction on r .

Base Cases: Zero, One, Char (a) for every a : char.

Inductive Cases:

Plus (r_1, r_2), Times (r_1, r_2), Star (r).

We will discuss only the Plus case here, as an example.

(See also today's online notes, including another proof technique.)

Inductive Case $r = \text{Plus}(r_1, r_2)$, for some r_1, r_2 :

IH: For $i=1,2$ and for all values cs & k , with k total,
($\text{match } r_i \text{ } cs \text{ } k$) \cong true iff there exist p & s
such that $cs \cong p@s$, $p \in L(r_i)$, & $k(s) \cong$ true.

NTS: For all values cs & k , with k total,
($\text{match } (\text{Plus}(r_1, r_2)) \text{ } cs \text{ } k$) \cong true iff there exist p & s
such that $cs \cong p@s$, $p \in L(\text{Plus}(r_1, r_2))$, & $k(s) \cong$ true.

(We will prove the two parts of the “iff” separately.)

I. Suppose $(\text{match } (\text{Plus } (r_1, r_2)) \text{ cs } k) \cong \text{true}$.

NTS: There exist p & s such that $\text{cs} \cong p@s$,
 $p \in L(\text{Plus } (r_1, r_2))$, & $k(s) \cong \text{true}$.

Showing: true

[assumption] $\cong (\text{match } (\text{Plus } (r_1, r_2)) \text{ cs } k)$

[Plus] $\cong (\text{match } r_1 \text{ cs } k) \text{ orelse } (\text{match } r_2 \text{ cs } k)$

\therefore One or both of the arguments to **orelse** must be **true**.

Let us suppose it is the first argument (proof similar for second).

So $(\text{match } r_1 \text{ cs } k) \cong \text{true}$.

By IH for r_1 ,

there exist p & s s.t. $\text{cs} \cong p@s$, $p \in L(r_1)$, & $k(s) \cong \text{true}$.

Then also $p \in L(\text{Plus } (r_1, r_2))$, by language definition for **Plus**.

That finishes this part of the proof (soundness).

II. Suppose there exist p & s such that $cs \cong p@s$,
 $p \in L(\text{Plus}(r_1, r_2))$, & $k(s) \cong \text{true}$.

NTS: $(\text{match}(\text{Plus}(r_1, r_2))\ cs\ k) \cong \text{true}$.

Showing:

$$\begin{aligned} & (\text{match}(\text{Plus}(r_1, r_2))\ cs\ k) \\ \text{[Plus]} & \cong (\text{match}\ r_1\ cs\ k)\ \text{orelse}\ (\text{match}\ r_2\ cs\ k) \\ \text{[see below]} & \cong \text{true} \end{aligned}$$

By supposition, there exist p & s such that $cs \cong p@s$,
 $p \in L(\text{Plus}(r_1, r_2))$, & $k(s) \cong \text{true}$. By the language
definition for **Plus**, $p \in L(r_1)$ and/or $p \in L(r_2)$.

If $p \in L(r_1)$, then $(\text{match}\ r_1\ cs\ k) \cong \text{true}$ by IH for r_1 .

Otherwise, $(\text{match}\ r_1\ cs\ k) \cong \text{false}$ by termination,
 $p \in L(r_2)$, and $(\text{match}\ r_2\ cs\ k) \cong \text{true}$ by IH for r_2 .

That finishes this part of the proof (completeness), and so the **Plus** case.

That is all.

Please have a good lab.

See you Thursday.

We will discuss another matcher,
inspired by staging and combinators.