

Lexical Analysis

Compiler Design

CSE 504

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Structure of a Language

Grammars: Notation to succinctly represent the structure of a language.

Example:

```
Stmt  →  if Expr then Stmt else Stmt
Stmt  →  while Expr do Stmt
Stmt  →  do Stmt until Expr
      ⋮
Expr  →  Expr + Expr
      ⋮
```

Grammars

$$Stmt \longrightarrow \text{if } Expr \text{ then } Stmt \text{ else } Stmt$$

- **Terminal** symbols: *if*, *then*, *else*
 - Terminal symbols represent group of characters in input language: *Tokens*.
 - Analogous to *words*.
- **Nonterminal** symbols: *Stmt*, *Expr*
 - Nonterminal symbols represent a sequence of terminal symbols.
 - Analogous to *sentences*.

Phases of Syntax Analysis

① Identify the words: **Lexical Analysis**.

Converts a stream of characters (input program) into a stream of tokens.

Also called *Scanning* or *Tokenizing*.

② Identify the sentences: **Parsing**.

Derive the structure of sentences: construct *parse trees* from a stream of tokens.

Applications of Languages

- **Command Interpreters:** `csh`, `perl`, ...
- **Programming:** `FORTRAN`, `SmallTalk`, ...
- **Document Structuring:** `troff`, $\text{\LaTeX}$, `HTML`, ...
- **Page Definition:** `PostScript`, `PCL`, ...
- **Databases:** `SQL`, ...
- **Hardware Design:** `VHDL`, `VeriLog`, ...
- ... and many many more

Language Processing

Flexible control: programmable combination of primitive operations.

- Express input to the system in a well defined *language*.
- Translate the input into the sequence of primitive operations.
 - Direct execution
 - Byte code emulation
 - Object code compilation

Language processing techniques have evolved over the last 30 years. In almost every domain, at least three steps can be identified: *lexical analysis, parsing, and syntax-directed translation*.

Lexical Analysis

Convert a stream of characters into a stream of *tokens*.

- **Simplicity**: Conventions about “words” are often different from conventions about “sentences”.
- **Efficiency**: Word identification problem has a much more efficient solution than sentence identification problem.
- **Portability**: Character set, special characters, device features.

Terminology

- **Token**: Name given to a family of words.
e.g., `integer_constant`
- **Lexeme**: Actual sequence of characters representing a word.
e.g., 32894
- **Pattern**: Notation used to identify the set of lexemes represented by a token.
e.g., $[0 - 9]^+$

Terminology

A few more examples:

Token	Sample Lexemes	Pattern
<code>while</code>	<code>while</code>	<code>while</code>
<code>integer_constant</code>	<code>32894, -1093, 0</code>	<code>[0-9]+</code>
<code>identifier</code>	<code>buffer_size</code>	<code>[a-zA-Z]+</code>

Patterns

How do we *compactly* represent the set of all lexemes corresponding to a token?

For instance:

The token `integer_constant` represents the set of all integers: that is, all sequences of digits (0–9), preceded by an optional sign (+ or –).

Obviously, we cannot simply enumerate all lexemes.

Use **Regular Expressions**.

Regular Expressions

Notation to represent (potentially) infinite sets of strings over alphabet Σ .

- a : stands for the set $\{a\}$ that contains a single string a .
- $a \mid b$: stands for the set $\{a, b\}$ that contains two strings a and b .
 - Analogous to *Union*.
- ab : stands for the set $\{ab\}$ that contains a single string ab .
 - Analogous to *Product*.
 - $(a|b)(a|b)$: stands for the set $\{aa, ab, ba, bb\}$.
- a^* : stands for the set $\{\epsilon, a, aa, aaa, \dots\}$ that contains all strings of zero or more a 's.
 - Analogous to *closure* of the product operation.

ϵ stands for the *empty string*.

Regular Expressions

Examples of Regular Expressions over $\{a, b\}$:

- $(a|b)^*$: Set of strings with zero or more a's and zero or more b's:
 $\{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb, aaa, aab, \dots\}$
- (a^*b^*) : Set of strings with zero or more a's and zero or more b's such that all a's occur before any b:
 $\{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, bb, aaa, aab, abb, \dots\}$
- $(a^*b^*)^*$: Set of strings with zero or more a's and zero or more b's:
 $\{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb, aaa, aab, \dots\}$

Language of Regular Expressions

Let R be the set of all regular expressions over Σ . Then,

- **Empty String:** $\epsilon \in R$
- **Unit Strings:** $\alpha \in \Sigma \Rightarrow \alpha \in R$
- **Concatenation:** $r_1, r_2 \in R \Rightarrow r_1 r_2 \in R$
- **Alternative:** $r_1, r_2 \in R \Rightarrow (r_1 \mid r_2) \in R$
- **Kleene Closure:** $r \in R \Rightarrow r^* \in R$

Regular Expressions

Example: $(a \mid b)^*$

$$L_0 = \{\epsilon\}$$

$$L_1 = L_0 \cdot \{a, b\}$$

$$= \{\epsilon\} \cdot \{a, b\}$$

$$= \{a, b\}$$

$$L_2 = L_1 \cdot \{a, b\}$$

$$= \{a, b\} \cdot \{a, b\}$$

$$= \{aa, ab, ba, bb\}$$

$$L_3 = L_2 \cdot \{a, b\}$$

$$\vdots$$

$$L = \bigcup_{i=0}^{\infty} L_i = \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb, \dots\}$$

Semantics of Regular Expressions

Semantic Function $\mathcal{L}$: Maps regular expressions to sets of strings.

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

$$\mathcal{L}(\alpha) = \{\alpha\} \quad (\alpha \in \Sigma)$$

$$\mathcal{L}(r_1 \mid r_2) = \mathcal{L}(r_1) \cup \mathcal{L}(r_2)$$

$$\mathcal{L}(r_1 r_2) = \mathcal{L}(r_1) \cdot \mathcal{L}(r_2)$$

$$\mathcal{L}(r^*) = \{\epsilon\} \cup (\mathcal{L}(r) \cdot \mathcal{L}(r^*))$$

Computing the Semantics

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

$$\mathcal{L}(a \mid b) = \mathcal{L}(a) \cup \mathcal{L}(b)$$

$$= \{a\} \cup \{b\}$$

$$= \{a, b\}$$

$$\mathcal{L}(ab) = \mathcal{L}(a) \cdot \mathcal{L}(b)$$

$$= \{a\} \cdot \{b\}$$

$$= \{ab\}$$

$$\mathcal{L}((a \mid b)(a \mid b)) = \mathcal{L}(a \mid b) \cdot \mathcal{L}(a \mid b)$$

$$= \{a, b\} \cdot \{a, b\}$$

$$= \{aa, ab, ba, bb\}$$

Computing the Semantics of Closure

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Example: } \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*) \\ = \{\epsilon\} \cup (\mathcal{L}(a \mid b) \cdot \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*)) \end{aligned}$$

$$L_0 = \{\epsilon\} \quad \text{Base case}$$

$$L_1 = \{\epsilon\} \cup (\{a, b\} \cdot L_0)$$

$$= \{\epsilon\} \cup (\{a, b\} \cdot \{\epsilon\})$$

$$= \{\epsilon, a, b\}$$

$$L_2 = \{\epsilon\} \cup (\{a, b\} \cdot L_1)$$

$$= \{\epsilon\} \cup (\{a, b\} \cdot \{\epsilon, a, b\})$$

$$= \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb\}$$

$$\vdots$$

$$\mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*) = L_\infty = \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb, \dots\}$$

Another Example

$\mathcal{L}((a^*b^*)^*) :$

$$\mathcal{L}(a^*) = \{\epsilon, a, aa, \dots\}$$

$$\mathcal{L}(b^*) = \{\epsilon, b, bb, \dots\}$$

$$\mathcal{L}(a^*b^*) = \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, bb, \\ aaa, aab, abb, bbb, \dots\}$$

$$\mathcal{L}((a^*b^*)^*) = \{\epsilon\} \\ \cup \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, bb, \\ aaa, aab, abb, bbb, \dots\} \\ \cup \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb, \\ aaa, aab, aba, abb, baa, bab, bba, bbb, \dots\}$$

$\vdots$

$$= \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb, \dots\}$$

Regular Definitions

Assign “names” to regular expressions.

For example,

$$\begin{array}{ll} \text{digit} & \longrightarrow 0 \mid 1 \mid \dots \mid 9 \\ \text{natural} & \longrightarrow \text{digit digit}^* \end{array}$$

SHORTHANDS:

- a^+ : Set of strings with one or more occurrences of a.
- $a^?$: Set of strings with zero or one occurrences of a.

Example:

$$\text{integer} \longrightarrow (+|-)^? \text{digit}^+$$

Regular Definitions: Examples

```

float      → integer . fraction
integer    → (+|-)? no_leading_zero
no_leading_zero → (nonzero_digit digit*) | 0
fraction   → no_trailing_zero exponent?
no_trailing_zero → (digit* nonzero_digit) | 0
exponent   → (E | e) integer
digit      → 0 | 1 | ... | 9
nonzero_digit → 1 | 2 | ... | 9

```

Regular Definitions and Lexical Analysis

Regular Expressions and Definitions *specify* sets of strings over an input alphabet.

- They can hence be used to specify the set of *lexemes* associated with a *token*.
- That is, regular expressions and definitions can be used as the *pattern* language

How do we decide whether an input string belongs to the set of strings specified by a regular expression?

Using Regular Definitions for Lexical Analysis

Q: Is ababbaabbb in $\mathcal{L}(((a^*b^*)^*)^*)$?

A: Hm. Well. Let's see.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \mathcal{L}((a^*b^*)^*) &= \{\epsilon\} \\
 &\cup \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, bb, \\
 &\quad aaa, aab, abb, bbb, \dots\} \\
 &\cup \{\epsilon, a, b, aa, ab, ba, bb, \\
 &\quad aaa, aab, aba, abb, baa, bab, bba, bbb, \dots\} \\
 &\vdots \\
 &= ???
 \end{aligned}$$

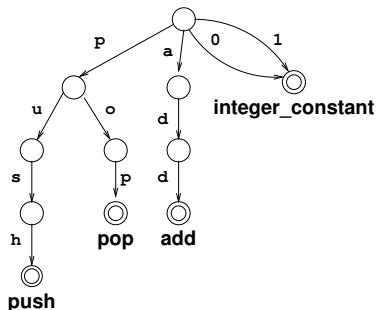
Recognizers

Construct *automata* that recognize strings belonging to a language.

- Finite State Automata $\Rightarrow$ Regular Languages
 - Finite State $\rightarrow$ cannot maintain arbitrary counts.
- Push Down Automata $\Rightarrow$ Context-free Languages
 - Stack is used to maintain counter, but only one counter can go arbitrarily high.

Recognizing Finite Sets of Strings

- Identifying words from a small, finite, fixed vocabulary is straightforward.
- For instance, consider a stack machine with `push`, `pop`, and `add` operations with two constants: 0 and 1.
- We can use the *automaton*:



Finite State Automata

Represented by a labeled directed graph.

- A finite set of *states* (vertices).
- *Transitions* between states (edges).
- *Labels* on transitions are drawn from $\Sigma \cup \{\epsilon\}$.
- One distinguished *start* state.
- One or more distinguished *final* states.

Finite State Automata: An Example

Consider the Regular Expression $(a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b)$.

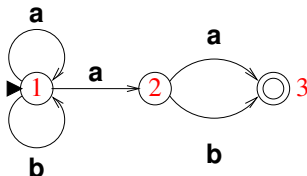
$\mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b)) = \{aa, ab, aaa, aab, baa, bab, aaaa, aaab, abaa, abab, baaa, \dots\}$.

Finite State Automata: An Example

Consider the Regular Expression $(a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b)$.

$\mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b)) = \{aa, ab, aaa, aab, baa, bab, aaaa, aaab, abaa, abab, baaa, \dots\}$.

The following automaton determines whether an input string belongs to $\mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$:



Acceptance Criterion

A finite state automaton (NFA or DFA) *accepts* an input string x
... if beginning from the start state

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- ... we can trace some path through the automaton

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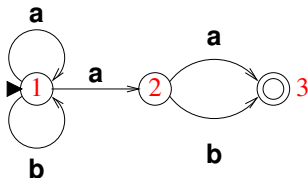
- ... if beginning from the start state
- ... we can trace some path through the automaton
- ... such that the sequence of edge labels spells x

Acceptance Criterion

- A finite state automaton (NFA or DFA) *accepts* an input string x
- ... if beginning from the start state
 - ... we can trace some path through the automaton
 - ... such that the sequence of edge labels spells x
 - ... and end in a final state.

Recognition with an NFA

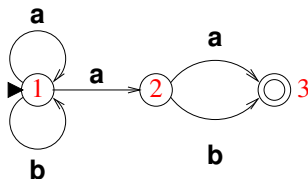
Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	b	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	no

Recognition with an NFA

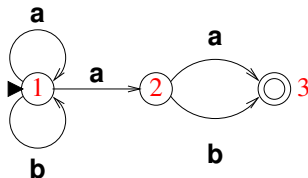
Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	b	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	no
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3	yes

Recognition with an NFA

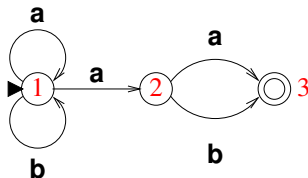
Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	b	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	no
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3	yes
Path 3:	1	2	3	⊥	⊥	no

Recognition with an NFA

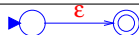
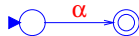
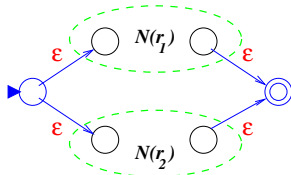
Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b))$?



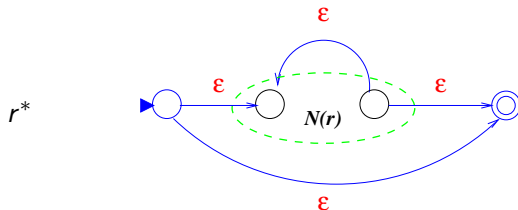
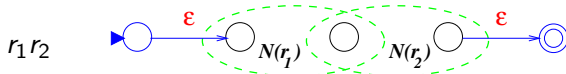
Input:		a	b	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	no
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3	yes
Path 3:	1	2	3	⊥	⊥	no
						YES

Regular Expressions to NFA

Thompson's Construction: For every regular expression r , derive an NFA $N(r)$ with unique start and final states.

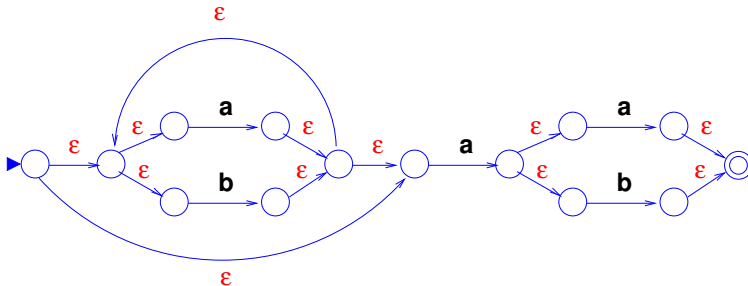
 ϵ

 $\alpha \in \Sigma$

 $(r_1 \mid r_2)$


Regular Expressions to NFA (contd.)



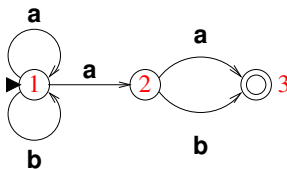
Example

$(a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b)$:



Recognition with an NFA

Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:

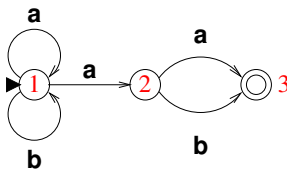
Path 1:

	a	b	a	b
1	1	1	1	1

Accept?

Recognition with an NFA

Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:

a b a b

Path 1: 1 1 1 1 1

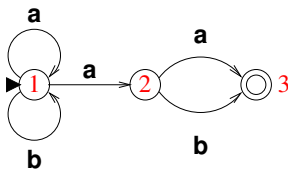
Path 2: 1 1 1 2 3

Accept?

Accept

Recognition with an NFA

Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b))$?



Input:

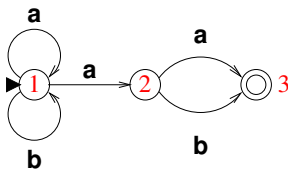
		a	b	a	b
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3
Path 3:	1	2	3	⊥	⊥

Accept?

Accept

Recognition with an NFA

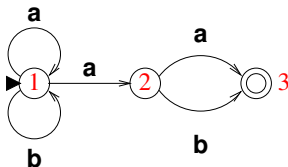
Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	b	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3	Accept
Path 3:	1	2	3	⊥	⊥	
All Paths	{1}	{1, 2}	{1, 3}	{1, 2}	{1, 3}	Accept

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

Is aaab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:

Path 1:

1

a

1

a

1

a

1

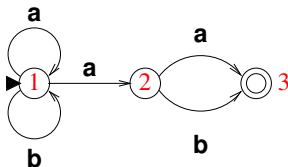
b

1

Accept?

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

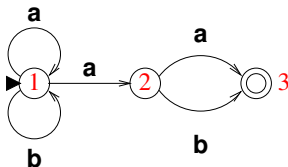
Is aaab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	a	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3	Accept

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

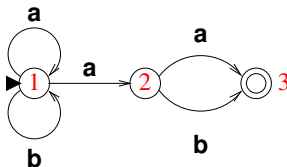
Is aaab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	a	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3	Accept
Path 3:	1	1	2	3	⊥	

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

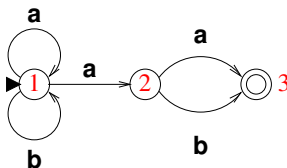
Is aaab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	a	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3	Accept
Path 3:	1	1	2	3	⊥	
Path 4:	1	2	3	⊥	⊥	

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

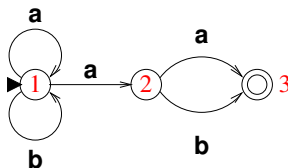
Is aaab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	a	a	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	
Path 2:	1	1	1	2	3	Accept
Path 3:	1	1	2	3	⊥	
Path 4:	1	2	3	⊥	⊥	
All Paths	{1}	{1, 2}	{1, 2, 3}	{1, 2, 3}	{1, 3}	Accept

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

Is aabb $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:

Path 1:

1

a

1

a

1

b

1

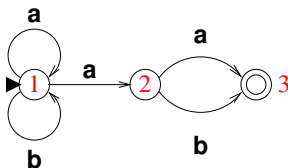
b

1

Accept?

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

Is aabb $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:

Path 1:

Path 2:

1

1

a

1

1

a

1

2

b

1

3

b

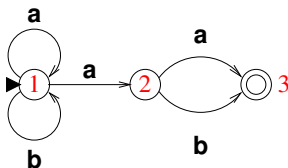
1

⊥

Accept?

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

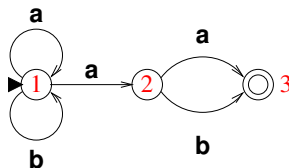
Is aabb $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:		a	a	b	b	Accept?
Path 1:	1	1	1	1	1	
Path 2:	1	1	2	3	⊥	
Path 3:	1	2	3	⊥	⊥	

Recognition with an NFA (contd.)

Is aabb $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^*a(a \mid b))$?



Input: **a** **a** **b** **b** Accept?

Path 1: 1 1 1 1 1

Path 2: 1 1 2 3 ⊥

Path 3: 1 2 3 ⊥ ⊥

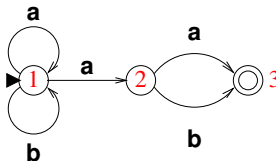
All Paths {1} {1, 2} {1, 2, 3} {1, 3} {1}

REJECT

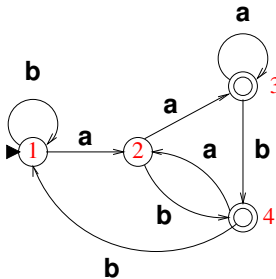
Determinism

$(a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b)$:

Nondeterministic:
(NFA)

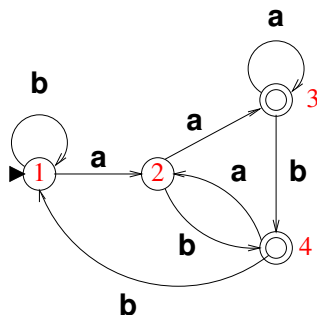


Deterministic:
(DFA)



Recognition with a DFA

Is abab $\in \mathcal{L}((a \mid b)^* a(a \mid b))$?



Input:	a	b	a	b	Accept?
Path:	1	2	4	2	4
					YES

NFA vs. DFA

For every NFA, there is a DFA that accepts the same set of strings.

- NFA may have transitions labeled by ϵ .
(Spontaneous transitions)
- All transition labels in a DFA belong to Σ .
- For some string x , there may be *many* accepting paths in an NFA.
- For all strings x , there is *one unique* accepting path in a DFA.
- Usually, an input string can be recognized *faster* with a DFA.
- NFAs are typically *smaller* than the corresponding DFAs.

NFA vs. DFA (contd.)

R = Size of Regular Expression

N = Length of Input String

	NFA	DFA
Size of Automaton	$O(R)$	$O(2^R)$
Recognition time per input string	$O(N \times R)$	$O(N)$

Converting NFA to DFA

Subset construction

Given a set S of NFA states,

- compute $S_\epsilon = \epsilon\text{-closure}(S)$: S_ϵ is the set of all NFA states reachable by zero or more ϵ -transitions from S .
- compute $S_\alpha = \text{goto}(S, \alpha)$:
 - S' is the set of all NFA states reachable from S by taking a transition labeled α .
 - $S_\alpha = \epsilon\text{-closure}(S')$.

Converting NFA to DFA (contd).

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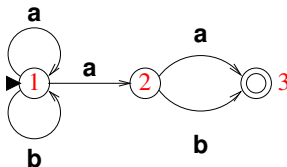
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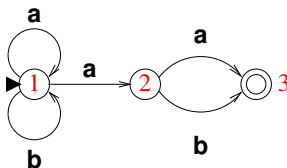
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 $\Rightarrow s$ is a final state of DFA

NFA $\rightarrow$ DFA: An Example



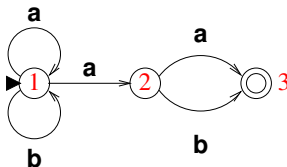
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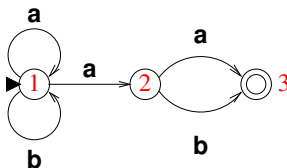
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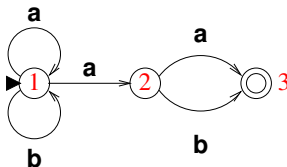
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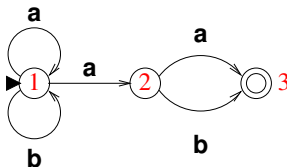
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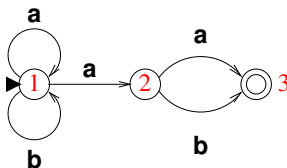


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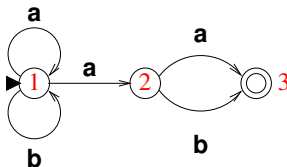
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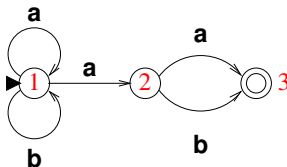
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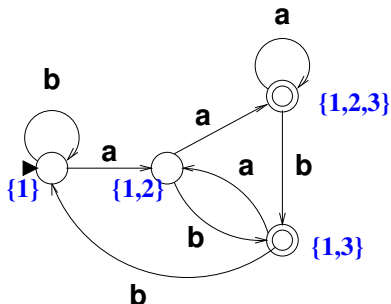
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Construction of a Lexical Analyzer

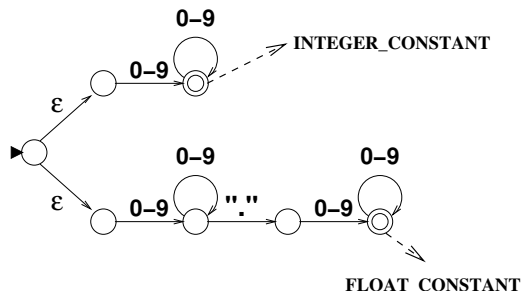
- Regular Expressions and Definitions are used to specify the set of strings (lexemes) corresponding to a *token*.
- An automaton (DFA/NFA) is built from the above specifications.
- Each final state is associated with an *action*: emit the corresponding token.

Specifying Lexical Analysis

Consider a recognizer for integers (sequence of digits) and floats (sequence of digits separated by a decimal point).

$[0-9]^+$ { emit(INTEGER_CONSTANT); }

$[0-9]^+ "." [0-9]^+$ { emit(FLOAT_CONSTANT); }



Lex

- Tool for building lexical analyzers.
- Input: lexical specifications (.l file)
- Output: C function (yyllex) that returns a token on each invocation.
- Example:

```
%%
[0-9]+                { return(INTEGER_CONSTANT); }

[0-9]+ "." [0-9]+     { return(FLOAT_CONSTANT); }
```

- Tokens are simply integers (#define's).

Lex Specifications

%{

C header statements for inclusion

%}

Regular Definitions e.g.:

digit [0-9]

%%

Token Specifications e.g.:

{digit}+ { return(INTEGER_CONSTANT); }

%%

Support functions in C

Lex/Flex Regular Expressions

Adds “syntactic sugar” to regular expressions:

- **Range:** [0-7]: Integers from 0 through 7 (inclusive)
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- **Definition:** {digit}: Use the previously specified regular definition digit.
- **Special characters:** Connectives of regular expression, convenience features.
e.g.: | * ^

Special Characters in Lex/Flex

* + ? ()	Same as in regular expressions
[]	Enclose ranges and exceptions
{ }	Enclose “names” of regular definitions
^	Used to negate a specified range (in Exception)
.	Match any single character except newline
\	Escape the next character
\n, \t	Newline and Tab

For literal matching, enclose special characters in double quotes (") e.g.:
"+"

Or use “\” to escape. e.g.: \+

Examples

for Sequence of f, o, r

Examples

 for

 Sequence of f, o, r

 "||"

 C-style OR operator (two vert. bars)

Examples

for	Sequence of f, o, r
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.*	Sequence of non-newline characters
[^*/]+	Sequence of characters except * and /
\"[^"]*" \	Sequence of non-quote characters beginning and ending with a quote
{letter} "_" ({letter} {digit} "_") *	C-style identifiers

Actions

Actions are attached to final states.

Actions:

- Distinguish the different final states.
- Are used to return *tokens*.
- Can be used to set *attribute values*.
- In Lex/Flex: action is a fragment of C code (blocks enclosed by '{' and '}').

PLY

PLY is a Yacc/Lex-like parser/lexer framework in Python.
(See <http://www.dabeaz.com/ply/>)

- List of tokens is declared *a priori*.
- Each token T with an action is specified by a Python function t_T :
 - Regular expression patterns, specified as Python docstrings, describe sets of lexemes.
 - Function body describes the action to be performed when input matches the pattern.
- Action-less token T is specified by defining variable t_T with the regular expression pattern as its value.

Example:

```
import ply.lex as lex

# List of token names.
tokens = ('NUMBER', 'PLUS',
          'MINUS')

# Tokens without actions.
t_PLUS = r'\+'
t_MINUS = r'\-'

# A token with action.
def t_NUMBER(t):
    r'\d+'
    t.value = int(t.value)
    return t
```

Mechanics

- The returned tokens are instances of class `LexToken`, with attributes `type`, `value`, `lineno` and `lexpos`.
- Line numbers have to be maintained explicitly by setting the `lineno` attribute of the lexer.
- To ignore a lexeme (i.e. not return a token),
 - end its action with a `pass` instead of `return`, or
 - name the rule as `t_ignore`
- Error handling (for characters not matching any pattern) can be specified as function `t_error`.
- PLY's lexer can handle regular definitions, as well as conditional analysis (*a la* `lex`) where matching can be controlled by explicitly maintained conditions. See PLY documentation for details.

Priority of matching

- Patterns for tokens with actions are matched in the order they are specified.
- Regular expressions for action-less tokens are sorted, and matched longest-expression first.

Constructing Lexers using PLY

- Easy way:
 - `lex.lex()` to create the lexer;
 - `lex.input()` to specify the input string to be scanned;
 - repeated invocation of `lex.token()` to generate tokens.
- Alternative (better) way:
 - Put lexer specifications in a separate module, say `proto2lex.py`.
 - `lexer = lex.lex(module=proto2lex)` to create a lexer (referenced from variable `lexer`).
 - `lexer.input(...)` to specify its input
 - `lexer.token()` to generate tokens, one at a time.
- The alternative way works even when there are multiple instances of the same lexer in an application.

Lexical Analysis: Summary

Convert a stream of characters into a stream of tokens.

- Make rest of compiler independent of character set
- Strip off comments
- Recognize line numbers
- Ignore white space characters
- Process macros (definitions and uses)
- Interface with **symbol table** (also called “name table”).