Reducibility

(Based on [Sipser 2006, 2013])

Yih-Kuen Tsay

Department of Information Management
National Taiwan University

Introduction

- A *reduction* is a way of converting one problem into another problem in such a way that a solution to the second problem can be used to solve the first problem.
- If a problem A reduces (is reducible) to another problem B, we can use a solution to B to solve A.
- *Reducibility* says nothing about solving A or B alone, but only about the solvability of A in the presence of a solution to B.
- Reducibility is the primary method for proving that problems are computationally unsolvable.
- Suppose that A is reducible to B. If B is decidable, then A is decidable; equivalently, if A is undecidable, then B is undecidable.

The Halting Problem

- $HALT_{\mathrm{TM}} = \{\langle M, w\rangle \mid M \text{ is a TM and } M \text{ halts on } w\}$.

Theorem (5.1)

$HALT_{\mathrm{TM}}$ is undecidable.

- The idea is to reduce the acceptance problem A_{TM} (shown to be undecidable) to $HALT_{\mathrm{TM}}$.
- Assume toward a contradiction that a TM R decides $HALT_{\mathrm{TM}}$.
- We could then construct a decider S for A_{TM} as follows.

The Halting Problem (cont.)

$S =$ "On input $\langle M, w \rangle$, an encoding of a TM M and a string w:

1. Run TM R on input $\langle M, w \rangle$.
2. If R rejects, *reject*.
3. If R accepts, simulate M on w until it halts.
4. If M has accepted, *accept*; it M has rejected, *reject*."

Undecidable Problems

- $E_{\mathrm{TM}} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a TM and } L(M) = \emptyset\}$.

Theorem (5.2)

E_{TM} is undecidable.

- Assuming that a TM R decides E_{TM}, we construct a decider S for A_{TM} as follows.

Undecidable Problems (cont.)

$S =$ "On input $\langle M, w \rangle$:

1. Construct the following TM M_1.
   $M_1 =$ "On input x:
   1.1 If $x \neq w$, *reject*.
   1.2 If $x = w$, run M on input w and *accept* if M accepts w."
2. Run R on input $\langle M_1 \rangle$.
3. If R accepts, *reject*; if R rejects, *accept*."

Undecidable Problems (cont.)

- $REGULAR_{\mathrm{TM}} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid M$ is a TM and $L(M)$ is a regular language$\}$.

Theorem (5.3)

$REGULAR_{\mathrm{TM}}$ is undecidable.

- Assuming that a TM R decides $REGULAR_{\mathrm{TM}}$, we construct a decider S for A_{TM} as follows.

Undecidable Problems (cont.)

$S =$ "On input $\langle M, w \rangle$:

1. Construct the following TM M_2.
   $M_2 =$ "On input x:
   1.1 If x has the form $0^n 1^n$, *accept*.
   1.2 If x does not have this form, run M on input w and *accept* if M accepts w."
2. Run R on input $\langle M_2 \rangle$.
3. If R accepts, *accept*; if R rejects, *reject*."

Undecidable Problems (cont.)

- $EQ_{\mathrm{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2\rangle \mid M_1$ and M_2 are TMs and $L(M_1) = L(M_2)\}$.

Theorem (5.4)

EQ_{TM} is undecidable.

- Assume that a TM R decides EQ_{TM}.
- We construct a decider S for E_{TM} as follows.
- $S =$ "On input $\langle M\rangle$:
  1. Run R on input $\langle M, M_1\rangle$, where M_1 is a TM that rejects all inputs.
  2. If R accepts, *accept*; if R rejects, *reject*."

Rice's Theorem

Theorem

Any "nontrivial" property about the languages recognized by Turing machines is undecidable.

- Note 1: The theorem considers only properties that do not distinguish equivalent Turing machine descriptions.
- Note 2: A property is *nontrivial* if it is satisfied by some, but not all, Turing machine descriptions.

Computation Histories

Definition (5.5)

An *accepting computation history* for M on w is a sequence of configurations $C_1, C_2, \cdots, C_l$, where

1. C_1 is the start configuration,
2. C_l is an accepting configuration, and
3. C_i yields C_{i+1}, $1 \le i \le l-1$.

A *rejecting computation history* for M on w is defined similarly, except that C_l is a rejecting configuration.

- Computation histories are finite sequences.
- Deterministic machines have at most one computation history on any given input.

Linear Bounded Automata

Definition (5.6)

A *linear bounded automaton* (LBA) is a restricted type of Turing machine wherein the tape head is not permitted to move off the portion of the tape containing the input.

- So, an LBA is a TM with a limited amount of memory. It can only solve problems requiring memory that can fit within the tape used for the input.

(Note: Using a tape alphabet larger than the input alphabet allows the available memory to be increased up to a constant factor.)

Linear Bounded Automata (cont.)

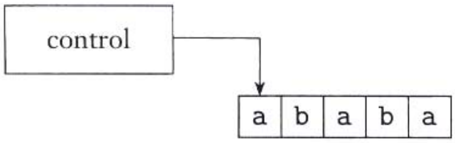


FIGURE 5.7
Schematic of a linear bounded automaton

Source: [Sipser 2006]

Linear Bounded Automata (cont.)

Despite their memory constraint, LBAs are quite powerful.

Lemma (5.8)

Let M be an LBA with q states and g symbols in the tape alphabet. There are exactly qng^n distinct configurations of M for a tape of length n.

Decidable Problems about LBAs

- $A_{\mathrm{LBA}} = \{\langle M, w\rangle \mid M \text{ is an LBA that accepts } w\}$.

Theorem (5.9)

A_{LBA} is decidable.

- L = "On input $\langle M, w\rangle$, an encoding of an LBA M and a string w:
  1. Simulate M on input w for qng^n steps or until it halts.
  2. If M has halted, *accept* if it has accepted and *reject* if it has rejected. If M has not halted, *reject*."

Undecidable Problems about LBAs

- $E_{\mathrm{LBA}} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid M$ is an LBA where $L(M) = \emptyset\}$.

Theorem (5.10)

E_{LBA} is undecidable.

- Assuming that a TM R decides E_{LBA}, we construct a decider S for A_{TM} as follows.
- $S =$ "On input $\langle M, w \rangle$, an encoding of a TM M and a string w:
  1. Construct an LBA B from $\langle M, w \rangle$ that, on input x, decides whether x is an accepting computation history for M on w.
  2. Run R on input $\langle B \rangle$.
  3. If R rejects, *accept*; if R accepts, *reject*."

Undecidable Problems about LBAs (cont.)

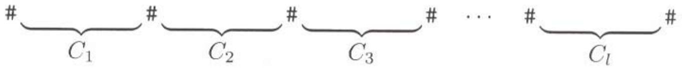


FIGURE 5.11
A possible input to B

Source: [Sipser 2006]

Three conditions of an accepting computation history:

- C_1 is the start configuration.
- C_l is an accepting configuration.
- C_i yields C_{i+1}, for every i, $1 \leq i < l$.

Undecidable Problems about LBAs (cont.)

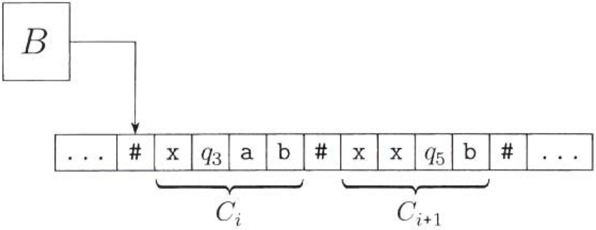


FIGURE 5.12
LBA B checking a TM computation history

Source: [Sipser 2006]

Undecidable Problems about CFGs

- $ALL_{\mathrm{CFG}} = \{\langle G \rangle \mid G \text{ is a CFG and } L(G) = \Sigma^*\}$.

Theorem (5.13)

ALL_{CFG} is undecidable.

- For a TM M and an input w, we construct a CFG G (by first constructing a PDA) to generate all strings that are *not* accepting computation histories for M on w.
- That is, G generates all strings if and only if M does not accept w.
- If ALL_{CFG} were decidable, then A_{TM} would be decidable.

Undecidable Problems about CFGs (cont.)

The PDA for recognizing computation histories that are not accepting works as follows.

- The input is regarded as a computation history of the form:

  $$\#C_1\#C_2^R\#C_3\#C_4^R\#\cdots\#C_l\#$$

  where C_i^R denotes the reverse of C_i.
- The PDA nondeterministically chooses to check if one of the following conditions holds for the input:
  - C_1 is not the start configuration.
  - C_l is not an accepting configuration.
  - C_i does not yield C_{i+1}, for some i, $1 \leq i < l$.
- It also accepts an input that is not in the proper form of a computation history.

Undecidable Problems about CFGs (cont.)

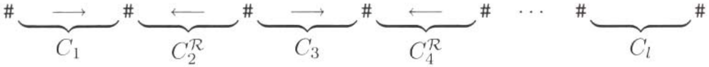


FIGURE 5.14
Every other configuration written in reverse order

Source: [Sipser 2006]

The Post Correspondence Problem

- Consider a collection of dominos such as follows:

$$\left\{ \left[\frac{b}{ca}\right], \left[\frac{a}{ab}\right], \left[\frac{ca}{a}\right], \left[\frac{abc}{c}\right] \right\}$$

- A *match* is a list of these dominos (repetitions permitted) where the string of symbols on the top is the same as that on the bottom. Below is a match:

$$\left[\frac{a}{ab}\right] \left[\frac{b}{ca}\right] \left[\frac{ca}{a}\right] \left[\frac{a}{ab}\right] \left[\frac{abc}{c}\right]$$

| a | b | c a | a | a b c |
| a b | c a | a | a b | c |

The Post Correspondence Problem (cont.)

- The Post correspondence problem (PCP) is to determine whether a collection of dominos has a match.
- More formally, an instance of the PCP is a collection of dominos:

$$P = \left\{ \left[\frac{t_1}{b_1}\right], \left[\frac{t_2}{b_2}\right], \cdots, \left[\frac{t_k}{b_k}\right] \right\}$$

- A *match* is a sequence $i_1, i_2, \cdots, i_l$ such that $t_{i_1} t_{i_2} \cdots t_{i_l} = b_{i_1} b_{i_2} \cdots b_{i_l}$.
- $PCP = \{\langle P \rangle \mid P$ is an instance of the Post correspondence problem with a match$\}$.

Undecidability of the PCP

Theorem (5.15)

PCP is undecidable

- The proof is by reduction from A_{TM} via accepting computation histories.
- From any TM M and input w we can construct an instance P where a match is an accepting computation history for M on w.
- Assume that a TM R decides PCP.
- A decider S for A_{TM} constructs an instance of the PCP that has a match if and only if M accepts w, as follows.

Undecidability of the PCP (cont.)

1. Add $\left[\dfrac{\#}{\#q_0 w_1 w_2 \cdots w_n \#}\right]$ as $\left[\dfrac{t_1}{b_1}\right]$.
2. For every $a, b \in \Gamma$ and every $q, r \in Q$ where $q \neq q_{\text{reject}}$,

$$\textit{if } \delta(q, a) = (r, b, R), \textit{ add } \left[\frac{qa}{br}\right].$$

3. For every $a, b, c \in \Gamma$ and every $q, r \in Q$ where $q \neq q_{\text{reject}}$,

$$\textit{if } \delta(q, a) = (r, b, L), \textit{ add } \left[\frac{cqa}{rcb}\right].$$

4. For every $a \in \Gamma$, add $\left[\dfrac{a}{a}\right]$.
5. Add $\left[\dfrac{\#}{\#}\right]$ and $\left[\dfrac{\#}{\sqcup\#}\right]$.

Undecidability of the PCP (cont.)

A start configuration (by Part 1):

$$\begin{array}{l} \# \\ \# \; q_0 \; 0 \; 1 \; 0 \; 0 \; \# \end{array}$$

Suppose $\delta(q_0, 0) = (q_7, 2, R)$. With Parts 2-5, the match may be extended to:

$$\begin{array}{l} \# \; q_0 \; 0 \; 1 \; 0 \; 0 \; \# \\ \# \; q_0 \; 0 \; 1 \; 0 \; 0 \; \# \; 2 \; q_7 \; 1 \; 0 \; 0 \; \# \end{array}$$

Undecidability of the PCP (cont.)

6. For every $a \in \Gamma$, add $\left[\dfrac{a q_{\mathrm{accept}}}{q_{\mathrm{accept}}}\right]$ and $\left[\dfrac{q_{\mathrm{accept}}\, a}{q_{\mathrm{accept}}}\right]$.

$$\#\ 2\ 1\ q_{\mathrm{a}}\ 0\ 2\ \#\ \cdots\ \#$$
$$\#\ 2\ 1\ q_{\mathrm{a}}\ 0\ 2\ \#\ 2\ 1\ q_{\mathrm{a}}\ 2\ \#\ \cdots\ \#\ q_{\mathrm{a}}\ \#$$

7. Add $\left[\dfrac{q_{\mathrm{accept}}\#\#}{\#}\right]$.

$$\#\ q_{\mathrm{a}}\ \#\ \#$$
$$\#\ q_{\mathrm{a}}\ \#\ \#$$

Undecidability of the PCP (cont.)

To ensure that a match starts with $\left[\frac{t_1}{b_1}\right]$,

S converts the collection $\left\{\left[\frac{t_1}{b_1}\right], \left[\frac{t_2}{b_2}\right], \cdots, \left[\frac{t_k}{b_k}\right]\right\}$ to

$$\left\{\left[\frac{\star t_1}{\star b_1 \star}\right], \left[\frac{\star t_1}{b_1 \star}\right], \left[\frac{\star t_2}{b_2 \star}\right], \ldots, \left[\frac{\star t_k}{b_k \star}\right], \left[\frac{*\Diamond}{\Diamond}\right]\right\}$$

where

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \star u & = & * u_1 * u_2 * u_3 * \cdots * u_n \\ u \star & = & u_1 * u_2 * u_3 * \cdots * u_n * \\ \star u \star & = & * u_1 * u_2 * u_3 * \cdots * u_n * \end{array}.$$

Computable Functions

- A Turing machine computes a function by starting with the input to the function on the tape and halting with the output of the function on the tape.

Definition (5.17)

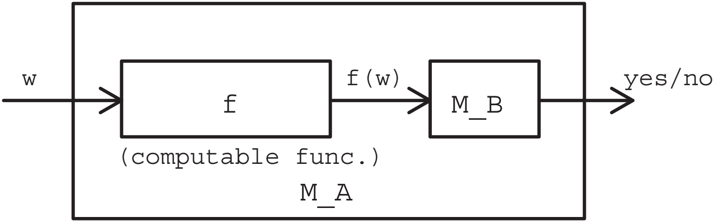
A function $f : \Sigma^* \longrightarrow \Sigma^*$ is a **computable function** if some Turing machine M, on every input w, halts with just $f(w)$ on its tape.

- For example, all usual arithmetic operations on integers are computable functions.
- Computable functions may be transformations of machine descriptions.

Mapping (Many-One) Reducibility

Definition (5.20)

Language A is **mapping reducible** (many-one reducible) to language B, written $A \leq_m B$, if there is a computable function $f : \Sigma^* \longrightarrow \Sigma^*$, where for every w, $w \in A \iff f(w) \in B$.



- This provides a way to convert questions about membership testing in A to membership testing in B.

Mapping (Many-One) Reducibility (cont.)

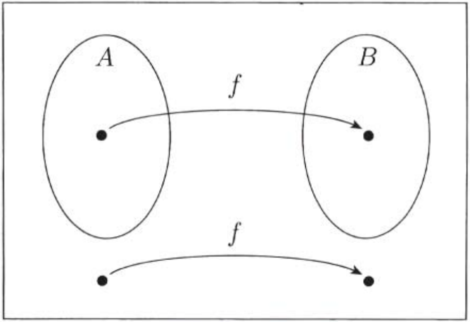


FIGURE 5.21
Function f reducing A to B

Source: [Sipser 2006]

- The function f is called the *reduction* of A to B.

Reducibility and Decidability

IM NTU

Theorem (5.22)

If $A \leq_m B$ and B is decidable, then A is decidable.

- Let M be a decider for B and f a reduction from A to B. A decider N for A works as follows.
- $N =$ "On input w:
  1. Compute $f(w)$.
  2. Run M on input $f(w)$ and output whatever M outputs."

Corollary (5.23)

If $A \leq_m B$ and A is undecidable, then B is undecidable.

Reducibility and Decidability (cont.)

Theorem

$HALT_{\mathrm{TM}}$ is undecidable.

- We show that $A_{\mathrm{TM}} \leq_m HALT_{\mathrm{TM}}$, i.e., a computable function f exists (as defined by F below) such that

$$\langle M, w\rangle \in A_{\mathrm{TM}} \iff f(\langle M, w\rangle) \in HALT_{\mathrm{TM}}.$$

- F = "On input $\langle M, w\rangle$:
  1. Construct the following machine M'.
     M' = "On input x:
     1.1 Run M on x.
     1.2 If M accepts, *accept*.
     1.3 If M rejects, enter a loop.
  2. Output $\langle M', w\rangle$."

Reducibility and Recognizability

Theorem (5.28)

If $A \leq_m B$ and B is Turing-recognizable, then A is Turing-recognizable.

Corollary (5.29)

If $A \leq_m B$ and A is not Turing-recognizable, then B is not Turing-recognizable.

Corollary

If $A \leq_m B$ (i.e., $\overline{A} \leq_m \overline{B}$) and A is not co-Turing-recognizable, then B is not co-Turing-recognizable.

Note: "A is not co-Turing-recognizable" is the same as "$\overline{A}$ is not Turing-recognizable".

Reducibility and Recognizability (cont.)

Theorem (5.30 Part One)

EQ_{TM} is not Turing-recognizable.

- We show that A_{TM} reduces to $\overline{EQ_{\mathrm{TM}}}$, i.e., $\overline{A_{\mathrm{TM}}}$ reduces to EQ_{TM}.
- Since $\overline{A_{\mathrm{TM}}}$ is not Turing-recognizable, EQ_{TM} is not Turing-recognizable.
- $F =$ "On input $\langle M, w\rangle$:
  1. Construct the following two machines M_1 and M_2.
     $M1 =$"On any input: *reject*."
     $M2 =$"On any input: Run M on w. If it accepts, *accept*."
  2. Output $\langle M_1, M_2\rangle$."

Reducibility and Recognizability (cont.)

Theorem (5.30 Part Two)

EQ_{TM} is not co-Turing-recognizable.

- We show that A_{TM} reduces to EQ_{TM}.
- Since A_{TM} is not co-Turing-recognizable, EQ_{TM} is not co-Turing-recognizable.
- $G =$ "On input $\langle M, w \rangle$:
  1. Construct the following two machines M_1 and M_2.
     $M1 =$ "On any input: *accept*."
     $M2 =$ "On any input: Run M on w. If it accepts, *accept*."
  2. Output $\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle$."