

Lecture 12 – Examples of Context-Free Grammars

COSE215: Theory of Computation

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2026 Spring

- A **context-free grammar (CFG)**:

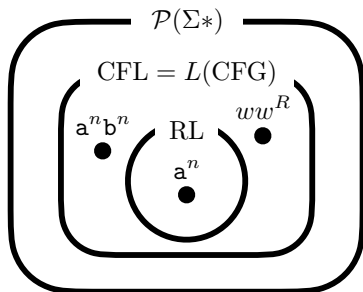
$$G = (V, \Sigma, S, R)$$

- The **language** of a CFG G :

$$L(G) = \{w \in \Sigma^* \mid S \Rightarrow^* w\}$$

- A language L is a **context-free language (CFL)**:

$$\exists \text{ CFG } G. L(G) = L$$



1. Regular Languages are Context-Free

Regular Expressions to CFGs

ϵ -NFA to CFG

2. Examples of Context-Free Grammars

Example 1: $b^n a^m b^{2n}$

Example 2: Well-Formed Brackets

Example 3: Equal Number of a's and b's

Example 4: Unequal Number of a's and b's

Example 5: Arithmetic Expressions

Example 6: Regular Expressions

Example 7: Simplified Scala Syntax

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Theorem (RLs are CFLs)

All regular languages are context-free.

Proof) There are two ways to prove this theorem:

- ① Converting regular expressions to equivalent CFGs
- ② Converting ϵ -NFAs to equivalent CFGs

For a given regular language L , let's construct an equivalent CFG G using the equivalent regular expression R . $L(G) = L(R)$.

RE R	CFG G
\emptyset	$S \rightarrow S$
ϵ	$S \rightarrow \epsilon$
$a \in \Sigma$	$S \rightarrow a$
$R_1 \mid R_2$	$S \rightarrow S_1 \mid S_2$
$R_1 \cdot R_2$	$S \rightarrow S_1 S_2$
R_1^*	$S \rightarrow \epsilon \mid S_1 S$
(R_1)	$S \rightarrow S_1$

where S_1 and S_2 are start variables of CFGs G_1 and G_2 such that $L(G_1) = L(R_1)$ and $L(G_2) = L(R_2)$, respectively.

For a given RE R , construct a CFG G such that $L(G) = L(R)$.

- $R = \epsilon | ab | ba$

$$S \rightarrow F | D$$

$$A \rightarrow a$$

$$C \rightarrow AB$$

$$E \rightarrow \epsilon$$

$$B \rightarrow b$$

$$D \rightarrow BA$$

$$F \rightarrow E | C$$

For a given RE R , construct a CFG G such that $L(G) = L(R)$.

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$$\begin{array}{llll} S \rightarrow F | D & A \rightarrow a & C \rightarrow AB & E \rightarrow \epsilon \\ B \rightarrow b & D \rightarrow BA & F \rightarrow E | C & \end{array}$$

Its simplified version:

$$S \rightarrow \epsilon | ab | ba$$

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$$S \rightarrow \epsilon | AS \quad A \rightarrow \epsilon | a$$

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- $R = (0 | 1(01^*0)^*1)^*$

$$\begin{array}{lll}
 S \rightarrow \epsilon | AS & A \rightarrow 0 | 1B1 & C \rightarrow 0D0 \\
 & B \rightarrow \epsilon | CB & D \rightarrow \epsilon | 1D
 \end{array}$$

For a given ϵ -NFA $N^\epsilon = (Q, \Sigma, \delta, q_0, F)$, let's construct a CFG G as:

- For each state $q \in Q$ of N^ϵ , introduce a non-terminal A_q .
- For each transition $q \xrightarrow{a} q'$ of N^ϵ , introduce a production rule:

$$A_q \rightarrow aA_{q'}$$

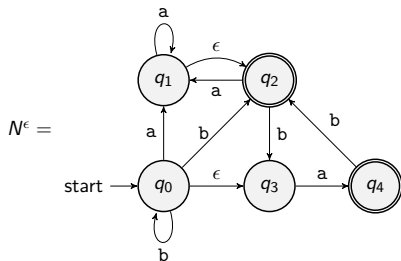
- For each ϵ -transition $q \xrightarrow{\epsilon} q'$ of N^ϵ , introduce a production rule:

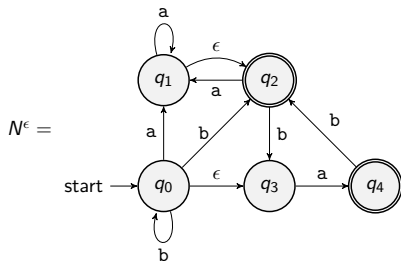
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- For each final state $q \in F$ of N^ϵ , introduce a production rule:

$$A_q \rightarrow \epsilon$$

- The start variable of G is A_{q_0} .





We can construct a CFG G (A_0 is the start variable) for N^ϵ :

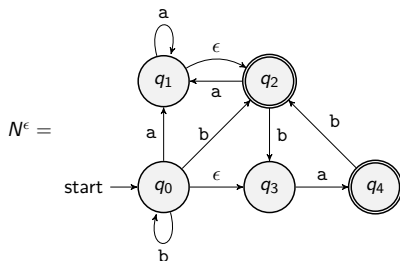
$$A_0 \rightarrow bA_0 \mid aA_1 \mid bA_2 \mid A_3$$

$$A_1 \rightarrow aA_1 \mid A_2$$

$$A_2 \rightarrow aA_1 \mid bA_3 \mid \epsilon$$

$$A_3 \rightarrow aA_4$$

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For example, we can derive $ba \in L(N^\epsilon)$ using G :

$$A_0 \Rightarrow bA_0 \Rightarrow bA_3 \Rightarrow baA_4 \Rightarrow ba$$

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Example 3: Equal Number of a's and b's

Construct a CFG for the language:

$$L = \{w \in \{a, b\}^* \mid N_a(w) = N_b(w)\}$$

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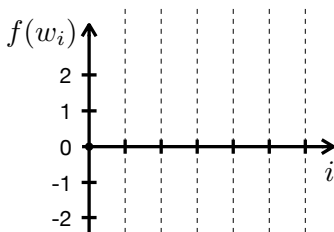
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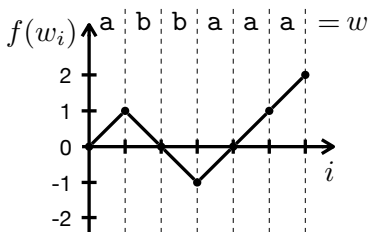
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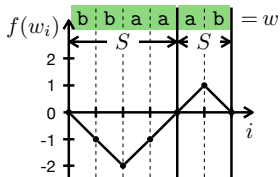
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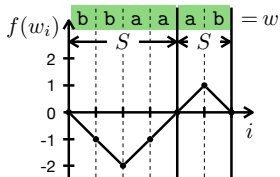
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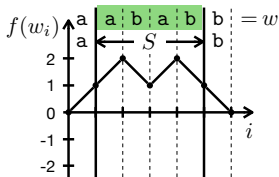
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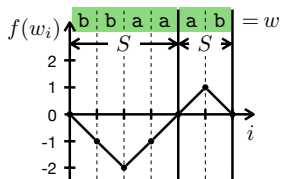
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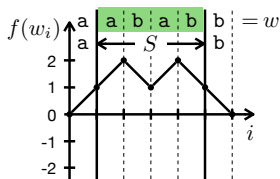
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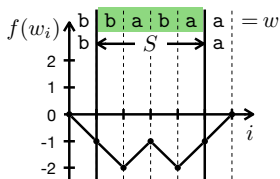
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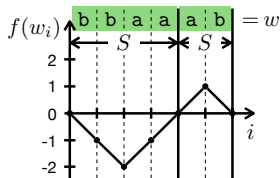
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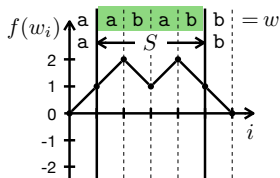
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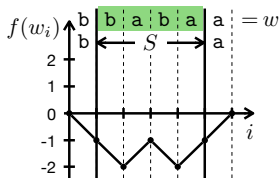
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Therefore, the following is a CFG for L :

$$S \rightarrow \epsilon \mid SS \mid aSb \mid bSa$$

Example 4: Unequal Number of a's and b's

Construct a CFG for the **complement** of the language in Example 3:

$$L = \{w \in \{a, b\}^* \mid N_a(w) \neq N_b(w)\}$$

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We can categorize $w \in \{a, b\}^*$ into three cases using the function f :

- $L_Z = \{w \in \{a, b\}^* \mid f(w) = 0\}$ – equal number of a's and b's
- $L_P = \{w \in \{a, b\}^* \mid f(w) > 0\}$ – more a's than b's
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Let's define production rules for L_P and L_N using graphs for $f(w_i)$.

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Let's split a word $w \in L_P$ using shorter words in L_Z , L_P , and L_N .

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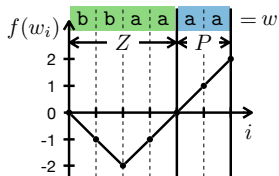
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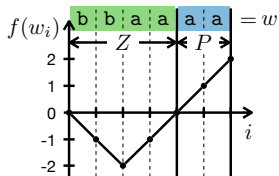


① $w = w_1 w_2$
($w_1 \in L_Z, w_2 \in L_P$)

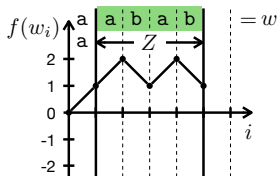
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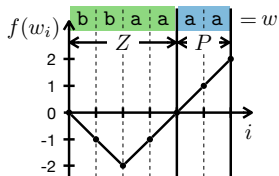


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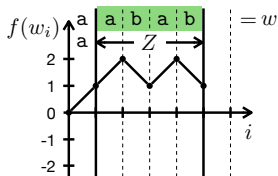
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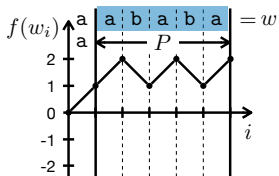
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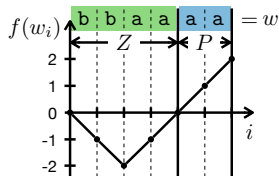


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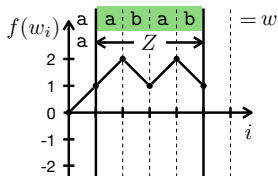
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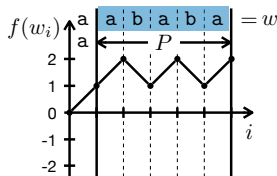
For a given $w \in L_P$, there are three cases:



① $w = w_1 w_2$
($w_1 \in L_Z, w_2 \in L_P$)



② $w = a w'$
($w' \in L_Z$)

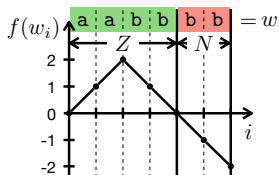


③ $w = a w'$
($w' \in L_P$)

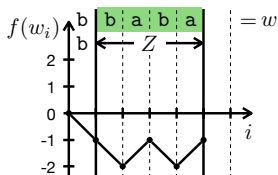
Therefore, the following is production rules for L_P :

$$P \rightarrow ZP \mid aP \mid aZ$$

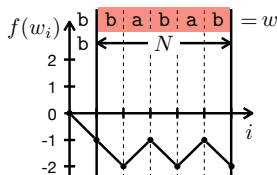
Example 4: Unequal Number of a's and b's



① $w = w_1 w_2$
 $(w_1 \in L_Z, w_2 \in L_N)$



② $w = b w'$
 $(w' \in L_Z)$

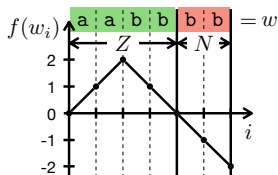


③ $w = b w'$
 $(w' \in L_N)$

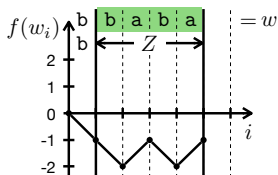
Similarly, the following is production rules for L_N :

$$N \rightarrow ZN \mid bN \mid bZ$$

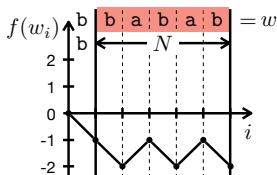
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③ $w = b w'$
 $(w' \in L_N)$

Similarly, the following is production rules for L_N :

$$N \rightarrow ZN \mid bN \mid bZ$$

Therefore, the CFG for L is:

$$\begin{aligned} S &\rightarrow P \mid N \\ P &\rightarrow ZP \mid aP \mid aZ \\ N &\rightarrow ZN \mid bN \mid bZ \\ Z &\rightarrow \epsilon \mid ZZ \mid aZb \mid bZa \end{aligned}$$

Example 5: Arithmetic Expressions

An **arithmetic expression** is defined with the following CFG:

$$S \rightarrow N \mid X \mid S+S \mid S*S \mid (S)$$

$$N \rightarrow D \mid DN$$

$$D \rightarrow 0 \mid \dots \mid 9$$

$$X \rightarrow a \mid \dots \mid z$$

Example 5: Arithmetic Expressions

An **arithmetic expression** is defined with the following CFG:

$$\begin{aligned} S &\rightarrow N \mid X \mid S+S \mid S*S \mid (S) \\ N &\rightarrow D \mid DN \\ D &\rightarrow 0 \mid \dots \mid 9 \\ X &\rightarrow a \mid \dots \mid z \end{aligned}$$

We can **derive** an arithmetic expression $13*(2+x)$ as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} S &\Rightarrow S*S && \Rightarrow N*S && \Rightarrow DN*S && \Rightarrow 1N*S \\ &\Rightarrow 1D*S && \Rightarrow 13*S && \Rightarrow 13*(S) && \Rightarrow 13*(S+S) \\ &\Rightarrow 13*(N+S) && \Rightarrow 13*(D+S) && \Rightarrow 13*(2+S) && \Rightarrow 13*(2+X) \\ &\Rightarrow 13*(2+x) \end{aligned}$$

Example 6: Regular Expressions

Consider a language representing the **syntax of regular expressions**:

$$L = \{w \in \{\emptyset, \varepsilon, a, b, |, *, (,)\}^* \mid w \text{ is a regular expression over } \{a, b\} \}$$

Example 6: Regular Expressions

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(Hint: consider a word $(^n\varepsilon)^n$ for a given $n > 0$)

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However, the language L is **context-free**:

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We can **derive** a regular expression $(b|ab)^*$ as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} S &\Rightarrow S^* && \Rightarrow (S)^* && \Rightarrow (S|S)^* \\ &\Rightarrow (S|SS)^* && \Rightarrow (S|Sb)^* && \Rightarrow (S|ab)^* \\ &\Rightarrow (b|ab)^* \end{aligned}$$

Example 7: Simplified Scala Syntax

We can define a CFG for a simplified version of Scala syntax¹:

(Scala Program)	$S \rightarrow E \mid S ; E$
(Expressions)	$E \rightarrow N \mid X \mid E + E \mid E - E \mid E * E \mid E / E$ <code>val</code> $X : T = E$ <code>def</code> $X (P) : T = E$ $E (A)$ <code>if</code> $(E) E$ <code>else</code> E <code>enum</code> $T \{ D \}$ E <code>match</code> $\{ C \}$
(Numbers)	$N \rightarrow 0 \mid \dots \mid 9 \mid 0N \mid \dots \mid 9N$
(Variables)	$X \rightarrow Y \mid YX$ $Y \rightarrow \emptyset \mid a \mid \dots \mid z \mid A \mid \dots \mid Z$
(Types)	$T \rightarrow X \mid T [T] \mid T \Rightarrow T$
(Parameters)	$P \rightarrow \epsilon \mid X : T \mid P , X : T$
(Arguments)	$A \rightarrow \epsilon \mid E \mid A , E$
(Cases)	$C \rightarrow$ <code>case</code> $E \Rightarrow E \mid C ;$ <code>case</code> $E \Rightarrow E$
(Enum Cases)	$D \rightarrow$ <code>case</code> $T (P) \mid D ;$ <code>case</code> $T (P)$

¹<https://docs.scala-lang.org/scala3/reference/syntax.html>

```
def sum(n: Int): Int = n match { case 0 => 0; case n => n + sum(n - 1) }
```

A derivation for this program:

$$\begin{aligned} S &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } X(P): T = E && \Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(P): T = E \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(X: T): T = E && \Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = E \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = E \text{ match } \{ C \} \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = n \text{ match } \{ C \} \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = n \text{ match } \{ \text{case } E \Rightarrow E ; C \} \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = n \text{ match } \{ \text{case } 0 \Rightarrow 0; C \} \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = n \text{ match } \{ \text{case } 0 \Rightarrow 0; \text{case } E \Rightarrow E \} \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = n \text{ match } \{ \text{case } 0 \Rightarrow 0; \text{case } n \Rightarrow E \} \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = n \text{ match } \{ \text{case } 0 \Rightarrow 0; \text{case } n \Rightarrow E + E \} \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = n \text{ match } \{ \text{case } 0 \Rightarrow 0; \text{case } n \Rightarrow n + E \} \\ &\Rightarrow^* \text{def } \text{sum}(n: \text{Int}): \text{Int} = n \text{ match } \{ \text{case } 0 \Rightarrow 0; \text{case } n \Rightarrow n + \text{sum}(n - 1) \} \end{aligned}$$

1. Regular Languages are Context-Free

Regular Expressions to CFGs

ϵ -NFA to CFG

2. Examples of Context-Free Grammars

Example 1: $b^n a^m b^{2n}$

Example 2: Well-Formed Brackets

Example 3: Equal Number of a's and b's

Example 4: Unequal Number of a's and b's

Example 5: Arithmetic Expressions

Example 6: Regular Expressions

Example 7: Simplified Scala Syntax

- The midterm exam will be given in class.
- **Date:** 13:30-14:45 (1 hour 15 minutes), April 22 (Wed.).
- **Location:**
 - **IT-Education Hall B102:** Students with Student ID 2025XXXX
 - **IT-Education Hall 611:** All other students
- **Coverage:** Lectures 1 – 13 (No coding question)
- **Format:** 7–9 questions with closed book and closed notes
- Please refer to the **previous exams** in the course website:

<https://plrg.korea.ac.kr/courses/cose215/>

- **Apr. 27 (Mon.):** No class
- **Apr. 29 (Wed.):** Recorded video lecture (Online).

- Parse Trees and Ambiguity

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<https://plrg.korea.ac.kr>