# Basic Concepts: Alphabets, Strings, and Language

<u>Alphabet:</u> A finite and nonempty set of symbols denoted by  $\Sigma$ . The elements of an alphabet are *letters*, but sometimes are named also *symbols*.

e.g.,

```
\emptyset = \{ \} ليست أبجدية لأنها خالية (لا تحقق التعريف) \Sigma = \{a, b, ...., z\} أبجدية اللغة الانكليزية (أحرفها الصغيرة فقط) \Sigma = \{0, 1\} \Sigma = \{0, 1, ..., 2\} \{1, 0, ..., 2\} أبجدية اللغة العربية \Sigma = \{1, 2, 3, ..., 9\} مجموعة غير منتهية ليست أبجدية لأنها مجموعة غير منتهية \Sigma = \{0, 1, 01\} وبالتالي هو ليس رمزاً \Sigma = \{0, 1, 01\}
```

<u>Strings (words)</u>: is a finite ordered sequence of symbols from a given Alphabet. Note that repetitions are allowed. The words (strings)  $u = a_1a_2 \dots a_m$  and  $v = b_1b_2 \dots b_n$  are equal (i.e., u = v), if m = n and  $a_i = b_i$ , i = 1, 2, ..., n.

## **Some Important Notations**

 $\varepsilon$  (Empty String): is a special string its length is 0, some text denoted empty string with ( $\lambda$ ).

 $\Sigma^*$ : All strings composed from the alphabet  $\Sigma$  with length  $\geq 0$ .

 $\Sigma^+$ : All strings composed from the alphabet  $\Sigma$  with length > 0.

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e.g., Let \Sigma = \{0,1\}   \{0,1\}^* is all strings over (all strings composed from) \{0,1\}   \{0,1\}^* = \{\epsilon,0,1,00,01,10,11,000,001,010,011,100,101,110,111,0000,......\}   \{0,1\}^+ = \{0,1,00,01,10,11,000,001,010,011,100,101,110,111,0000,.....\} \Sigma_i: all strings over \Sigma with length i.
```

e.g.,: Suppose  $\Sigma = \{a, b, c\}$   $\Sigma_0 = \{\varepsilon\}$   $\Sigma_1 = \{a, b, c\}$   $\Sigma_2 = \{a, b, c\}_2 = \{aa, ab, ac, ba, bb, bc, ca, cb, cc, .....\}$   $\Sigma_3 = \{a,b\}_3 = \{aaa, aab, aba, abb, baa, bab, bba, bbb, .....\}$   $\Sigma^* = \Sigma_0 \cup \Sigma_1 \cup \Sigma_2 \cup ..... \cup \Sigma_n \cup \Sigma_{n+1} \cup .....$  $\Sigma^+ = \Sigma_1 \cup \Sigma_2 \cup ..... \cup \Sigma_n \cup \Sigma_{n+1} \cup .....$ 

Length of string /s/: The length of a string is the number of symbols in the string, with repetitions counted. e.g., |a| is 1, |ab| is 2, |aba| is 3,  $|\epsilon|$  is 0.

#### **String Operations**

**Concatenation:** The concatenation (or product) of the words  $u = a_1 a_2 \dots a_m$  and  $v = b_1 b_2 \dots b_n$  is the word  $uv = a_1 a_2 \dots a_m b_1 b_2 \dots b_n$ . |uv| = |u| + |v|.

```
e.g., if \Sigma = \{a, b\}, x = aba, y = bbb
then,
xy = ababbb
yx = bbbaba
```

The **reversal** (or **mirror image**) of the word  $u = a_1 a_2 \dots a_n$  is  $u^{-1} = a_n a_{n-1} \dots a_1$ . The reversal of usometimes is denoted by  $u^R$  or u. It is clear that  $u^{-1-1} = u$  and  $(uv)^{-1} = v^{-1}u^{-1}$ .

Word v is a prefix of the word u if there exists a word z such that u = vz. If  $z = \varepsilon$  then v is a proper prefix of u.

e.g.,

v = ababbbaa

Prefix of the string v is:  $\{\varepsilon, a, ab, aba, abab, ababb, ababbba, ababbbaa\}$ 

Similarly, v is a *suffix* of u if there exists a word x such that u = xv. The proper suffix can also be defined.

e.g.,

v = ababbbaa

Suffix of the string v is: {\varepsilon}, a, aa, baa, bbaa, abbbaa, babbbaa, ababbbaa}

Word v is a subword of the word u if there are words p and q such that u = pvq. If  $pq \neq \varepsilon$  then v is a proper subword.

e.g.,

v = ababbbaa

Subwords from the string v are: {babb, bab, abb, ab, baa, .....}

**Language:** A subset L of  $\Sigma^*$  is called a *language* over the alphabet  $\Sigma$ . Sometimes this is called a *formal language* because the words are here considered without any meanings. Note that  $\emptyset$  is the empty language while  $\{\varepsilon\}$  is a language which contains the empty word.

اللغة: هي مجموعة السلاسل المختارة من المجموعة 
$$\Sigma$$
 والمولدة من الأبجدية  $\Sigma$  ونرمز لها (L).

#### **Operations on Languages**

If L,  $L_1$ ,  $L_2$  are languages over  $\Sigma$  we define the following operations

union

$$L_1 \cup L_2 = \{ u \in \Sigma^* \mid u \in L_1 \text{ or } u \in L_2 \} ,$$

intersection

$$L_1 \cap L_2 = \{ u \in \Sigma^* \mid u \in L_1 \text{ and } u \in L_2 \} ,$$

difference

$$L_1 \setminus L_2 = \{ u \in \Sigma^* \mid u \in L_1 \text{ and } u \notin L_2 \}$$
,

complement

$$\overline{L} = \Sigma^* \setminus L$$
,

multiplication

$$L_1L_2 = \{uv \mid u \in L_1, v \in L_2\}$$
,

power

$$L^0 = \{ \varepsilon \}, \qquad L^n = L^{n-1}L, \text{ if } n \ge 1,$$

• iteration or star operation

$$L^* = \bigcup_{i=0}^{\infty} L^i = L^0 \cup L \cup L^2 \cup \dots \cup L^i \cup \dots ,$$

mirror

$$L^{-1} = \{u^{-1} \mid u \in L\} \ .$$

We will use also the notation  $L^+$ 

$$L^{+} = \bigcup_{i=1}^{\infty} L^{i} = L \cup L^{2} \cup \dots \cup L^{i} \cup \dots$$

The union, product and iteration are called *regular operations*.

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#### **Specifying languages**

Languages can be specified in several ways. For example, a language can be specified using: 1) the enumeration of its words; 2) a property, such that all words of the language have this property, but other words have not; 3) Regular Expression; and 4) a grammar.

## Specifying languages by enumeration of their words (listing their elements)

For example, the following are languages:

```
L_1 = \{ \varepsilon, 0, 1 \},\
L_2 = \{a, aa, aaa, ab, ba, aba\}.
```

Even if we cannot enumerate the elements of an infinite set, infinite languages can be specified by enumeration if after enumerating the first some elements we can continue the enumeration using a rule. The following is such a language:

```
L_3 = \{\varepsilon, ab, aabb, aaabbb, aaaabbbb, \dots \}.
```

## **Specifying languages by properties**

The following sets are languages:

```
L_4 = \{a^n b^n | n = 0, 1, 2, \dots\},\
L_5 = \{ u \ u^{-1} | \ u \in \Sigma^* \},
L_6 = \{u \in \{a, b\}^* | /u/_a = /u/_b\},\
     e.g., baba, aabb, bbaa,
```

Where  $|u|_a$  denotes the number of letters a in word u, and  $|u|_b$  the number of letters b.

#### التعابير المنتظمة Regular Expressions

A regular expression is a formula, and the corresponding language is a language over  $\Sigma$ . For example, if  $\Sigma = \{a, b\}$ , then  $a^*$ ,  $b^*$ ,  $a^* + b^*$  are regular expressions over  $\Sigma$ , which represent, respectively languages  $\{a\}^*$ ,  $\{b\}^*$ ,  $\{a\}^* \cup \{b\}^*$ .

التعابير المنتظمة هي عبارة عن سلسلة نصية تُستخدم في وصف العديد من الأنماط الشائعة والتعرف عليها مثل عنوان البريد الالكتروني وعناوين مواقع الأنترنت، كما تستخدم في معالجة النصوص وفي صناعة المترجمات (Compilers) حيث قامت ويكيبيديا (Wikipedia) بتصحيح أكثر من 250 ألف خطأ املائي في مقالاتها باستخدام تطبيق يعتمد على التعابير المنتظمة، حيث يكون التعبير المنتظم هام للتعرف على أنماط معينة من السلاسل. وكمثال للتوضيح: لجعل الآلة تتعرف على بريد الكتروني من نص ما، نستخدم التعابير المنتظمة للبريد الالكتروني ولتكن بالشكل:

```
(charcter)<sup>+</sup>(Digits, character)<sup>*</sup>@(charcter)<sup>+</sup>.(character)<sup>+</sup>
                                                                   حيث: + تعني انه يمكن تكرار الحرف مرة أو أكثر (أي حرف واحد على الأقل).
* تعني أنه يمكن تكرار الحرف صفر مرة أو أكثر (أي ولا حرف أو أكثر).
```

**Definition:** *Define recursively a regular expression over*  $\Sigma$  *and the language it represents:* 

- $\emptyset$  is a regular expression representing the empty language. e.g.,  $L(\emptyset) = \emptyset = \{\}$ Φ هو التعبير المنتظم الذي بحدد اللغة الفارغة.
- $\varepsilon$  is a regular expression representing language  $\{\varepsilon\}$ . e.g.,  $L(\varepsilon) = \{\varepsilon\}$ ع هو التعبير المنتظم الذي يحدد اللغة التي تحوى السلسلة الفارغة.
- If  $a \in \Sigma$ , then a is a regular expression representing language {a}. e.g.,  $L(a) = \{a\}$  $\Sigma$  اذا كان  $\alpha$  حرف من حروف الأبجدية عندئذ تكون المجموعة  $\alpha$  لغة منتظمة على اذا كان

• If x, y are regular expressions representing languages X and Y, respectively, then (x+y), (xy), (x\*) are regular expressions representing languages XUY, XY and X\* respectively. اذا كان X, Y تعبيران منتظمان فإن التعبير X+Y هو تعبير منتظم يحدد اجتماع اللغتين L(X) و L(Y). والتعبير XY هو تعبير منتظم يحدد تعاقب اللغتين L(X) و L(Y). و  $X^*$  هو تعبير منتظم (تكرار E من الصفر الى تكرارات غير منتهية).

## **Properties of regular expressions**

```
y+x
x+y
(xy)z
              \equiv x(yz)
(x+y)+z \equiv
                   x+(y+z)
x(y+z)
(x+y)^*
(x^*)^*
\mathbf{x}^*\mathbf{x}
xx^*+\epsilon
```

## **Regular Expression: Examples**

Consider  $\Sigma = \{0,1\}$  and w  $\in \Sigma$ , Find RE for each of the following languages:

1- {w | w contains a single 1}

Answer: 0\*10\* e.g., 0010, 100, 01, 1, 0000100000, ......

2- {w| w has at least single 1}

Answer:  $(0+1)^*1(0+1)^*$ 

3- {w| w contains the string 001 as a substring}.

Answer:  $(0+1)^*001(0+1)^*$ e.g., 100101, 0001, <del>100</del>, 1010010, <del>010101</del>, .....

4- {w| every 0 in w is followed by at least single 1}

Answer:  $1^*(011^*)^*$ e.g., 1101101111, 111,  $\epsilon$ , 01,  $\frac{0010}{0}$ , .....

5- {w| w is a string of even length}

Answer:  $((0+1)(0+1))^*$ e.g., 01, 1001, 11, 1100, 0000, 1111, .....

6- {w| the length of w is a multiple of three}

Answer:  $((0+1)(0+1)(0+1))^+$ e.g., *HW* 

7- {w| w starts and ends with the same symbol}.

Answer:  $(0(0+1)^*0)+(1(0+1)^*1)+0+1$ e.g., *HW* 

**HW.** Does the string dabc  $\in$  L(ab\*c+d\*) or it  $\in$  L(ab\*c+d)\*?