

Theory of Computation

Undecidable Languages

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Undecidability Proofs

We want to show that language B is undecidable

Technique: Use reducibility to prove that a language is decidable

1. AFSOC B is decidable
2. Show that $A \leq_T B$
“If we can decide B we can also decide A ”
3. But A is known to be undecidable
▶ This is a contradiction!
4. We conclude that B was never decidable in the first place

The language E_{TM}

Consider the following language

$$E_{TM} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing Machine, } L(M) = \emptyset\}$$

- ▶ We receive a TM description $\langle M \rangle$ as input
- ▶ We want to determine whether M is capable of accepting any strings or not
- ▶ We accept $\langle M \rangle$ if M rejects or loops on every string; otherwise we reject $\langle M \rangle$

E_{TM} is undecidable

Let's prove that E_{TM} is undecidable

$$E_{TM} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing Machine, } L(M) = \emptyset\}$$

- ▶ Hint 1: Reduce from A_{TM}
- ▶ Hint 2: Your solution will involve constructing a machine P at runtime

E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that E_{TM} is undecidable

$$E_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing Machine, } L(M) = \emptyset \}$$

AFSOC machine M_E decides E_{TM} . We will construct a machine D to decide A_{TM}

1. D receives $\langle M, w \rangle$ as input
2. Create a new machine P
 - 2.1 P receives s as input
 - 2.2 If $s = w$, run M on s
If $s \neq w$, reject

M and w are hard-coded constants

E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

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M and w are hard-coded constants

What is $L(P)$?

If M accepts w then $L(P) = \{w\}$

If M doesn't accept w then $L(P) = \emptyset$

$$\langle P \rangle \in E_{TM} \Leftrightarrow \langle M, w \rangle \notin A_{TM}$$

E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that E_{TM} is undecidable

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If $s \neq w$, reject
 M and w are hard-coded constants
3. Use M_E to check if $\langle P \rangle \in E_{TM}$
 - 3.1 If M_E accepts $\langle P \rangle$, D rejects $\langle M, w \rangle$
 - 3.2 If M_E rejects $\langle P \rangle$, D accepts $\langle M, w \rangle$

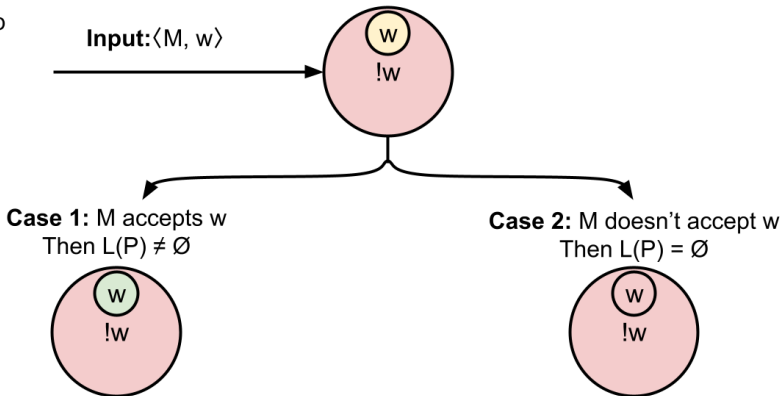
E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

● Accept

● Reject/loop

● Simulate M

Create machine P:
Reject if input $\neq w$, otherwise simulate M

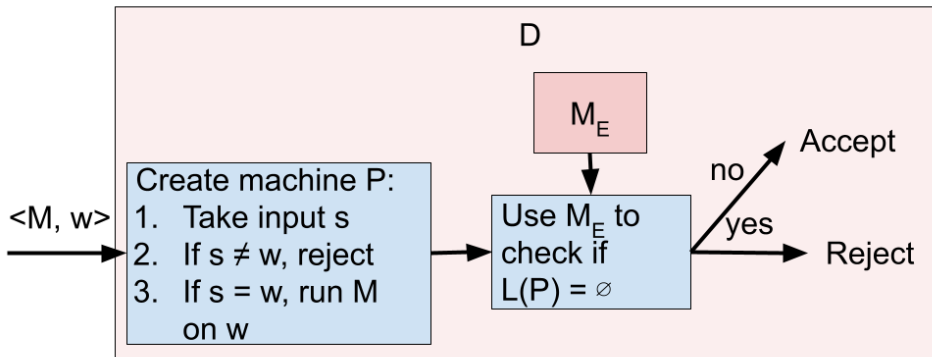


If we can check if $L(P) = \emptyset$, we can infer whether M accepts w

E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

$$A_{TM} = \{ \langle M, w \rangle \mid M \text{ accepts } w \}$$

$$E_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \emptyset \}$$



If we can decide E_{TM} , we can decide A_{TM}

E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

Let's prove that E_{TM} is undecidable

$$E_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing Machine, } L(M) = \emptyset \}$$

AFSOC machine M_E decides E_{TM} . We will construct a machine D to decide A_{TM}

1. D receives $\langle M, w \rangle$ as input
2. Create a new machine P
 - 2.1 P receives s as input
 - 2.2 Ignore s , run M on w

M and w are hard-coded constants

What is $L(P)$?

If M accepts w then $L(P) = \Sigma^*$

If M doesn't accept w then $L(P) = \emptyset$

$\langle P \rangle \in E_{TM} \Leftrightarrow \langle M, w \rangle \notin A_{TM}$

E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

Let's prove that E_{TM} is undecidable

$$E_{TM} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing Machine, } L(M) = \emptyset\}$$

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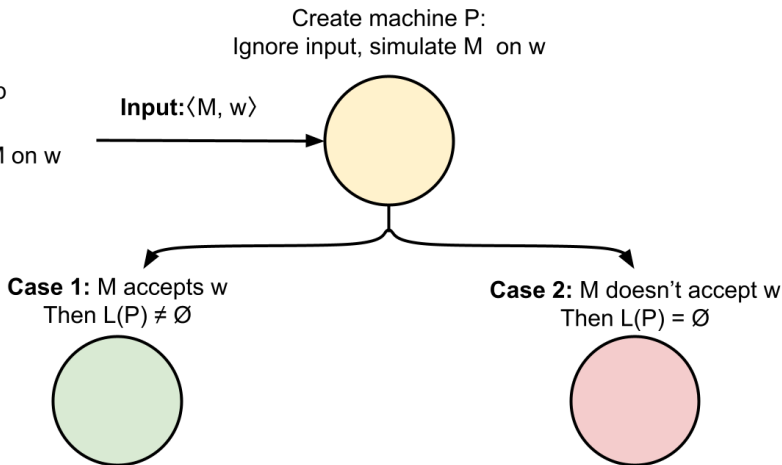
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E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

● Accept

● Reject/loop

● Simulate M on w

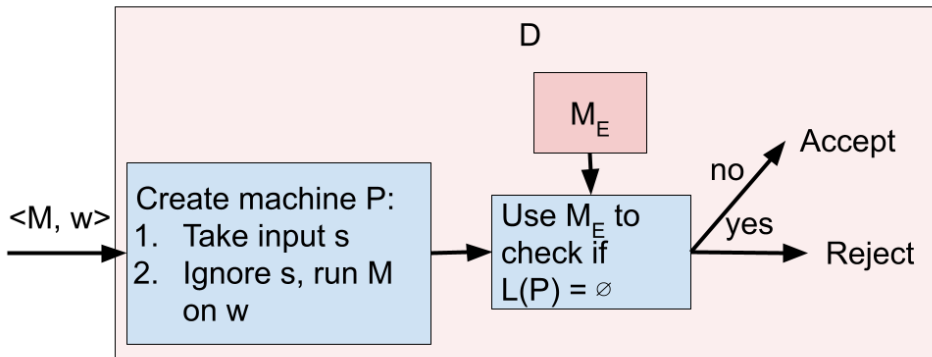


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E_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

$$A_{TM} = \{ \langle M, w \rangle \mid M \text{ accepts } w \}$$

$$E_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \emptyset \}$$



If we can decide E_{TM} , we can decide A_{TM}

The language ALL_{TM}

Consider the following language

$$ALL_{TM} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \Sigma^*\}$$

We receive a TM description as input, and want to figure out if that TM accepts everything

ALL_{TM} is undecidable

Let's prove that ALL_{TM} is undecidable

$$ALL_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing Machine, } L(M) = \Sigma^* \}$$

- ▶ Hint 1: Reduce from A_{TM}
- ▶ Hint 2: Your solution will involve constructing a machine P at runtime

ALL_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that ALL_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{ALL}_{\text{TM}} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing Machine, } L(M) = \Sigma^* \}$$

AFSOC machine M_A decides ALL_{TM}. We will construct a machine D to decide A_{TM}

1. D receives $\langle M, w \rangle$ as input
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If $s \neq w$, accept

M and w are hard-coded constants

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If $s \neq w$, accept

M and w are hard-coded constants

What is $L(P)$?

If M accepts w then $L(P) = \Sigma^*$

If M doesn't accept w then $L(P) = \Sigma^* \setminus \{w\}$

$$\langle P \rangle \in \text{ALL}_{\text{TM}} \Leftrightarrow \langle M, w \rangle \in A_{\text{TM}}$$

ALL_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that ALL_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{ALL}_{\text{TM}} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid M \text{ is a Turing Machine, } L(M) = \Sigma^* \}$$

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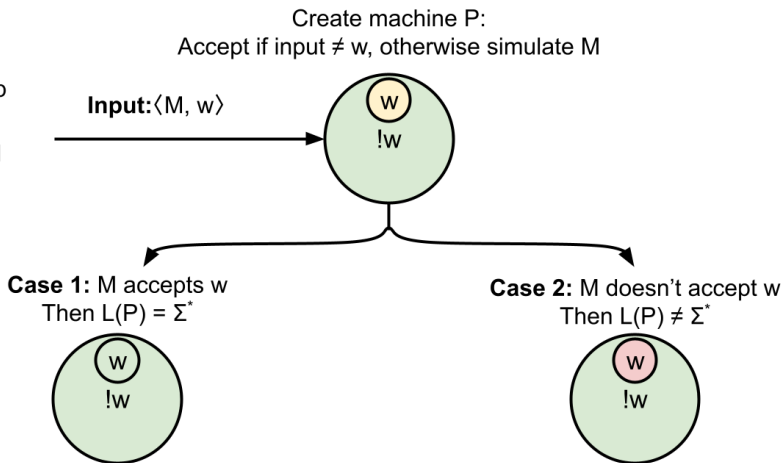
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3. Use M_A to check if $\langle P \rangle \in \text{ALL}_{\text{TM}}$
 - 3.1 If M_A accepts $\langle P \rangle$, D accepts $\langle M, w \rangle$
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ALL_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

● Accept

● Reject/loop

● Simulate M

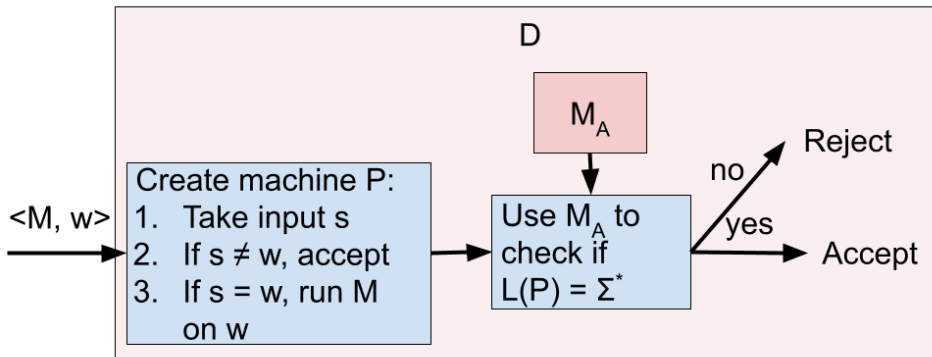


If we can check if $L(P) = \Sigma^*$, we can infer whether M accepts w

ALL_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

$$A_{TM} = \{ \langle M, w \rangle \mid M \text{ accepts } w \}$$

$$ALL_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \Sigma^* \}$$



If we can decide ALL_{TM} , we can decide A_{TM}

ALL_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

Let's prove that ALL_{TM} is undecidable

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What is $L(P)$?

If M accepts w then $L(P) = \Sigma^*$

If M doesn't accept w then $L(P) = \emptyset$

$$\langle P \rangle \in \text{ALL}_{\text{TM}} \Leftrightarrow \langle M, w \rangle \in A_{\text{TM}}$$

ALL_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

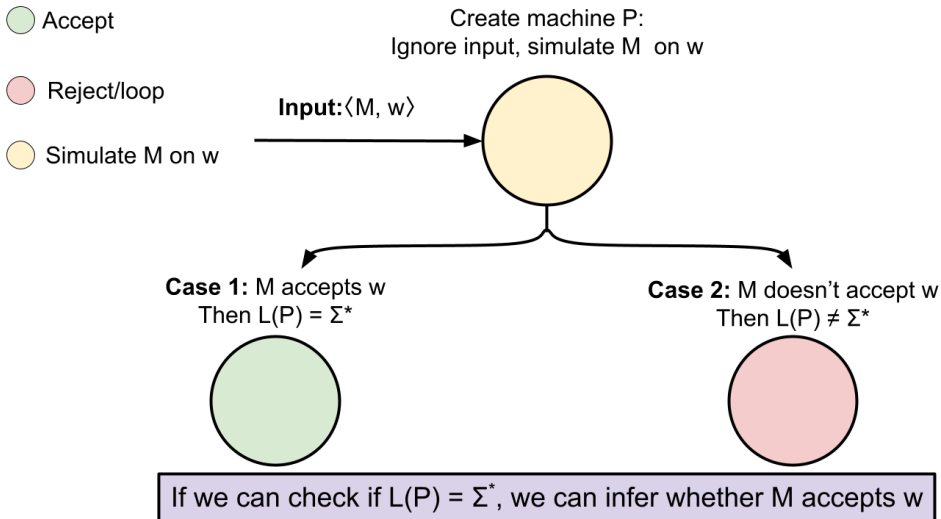
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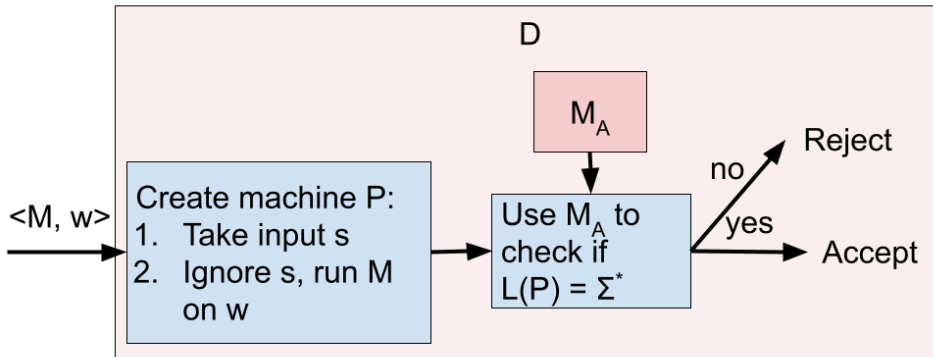
ALL_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)



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If we can decide ALL_{TM} , we can decide A_{TM}

The language EQ_{TM}

$$EQ_{TM} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2)\}$$

We receive two Turing machine descriptions, and we want to determine out if the two machines are equivalent

- ▶ Can we write a script to check that your programming assignment submissions are equivalent to my solution code?
 - ▶ “equivalent” as in “the EXACT same output on ALL (possible) test cases”

EQ_{TM} is undecidable

Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

$$EQ_{TM} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2)\}$$

We will reduce from each of the following languages

$$A_{TM} = \{\langle M, w \rangle \mid w \in L(M)\}$$

$$E_{TM} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \emptyset\}$$

$$ALL_{TM} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \Sigma^*\}$$

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

$$EQ_{TM} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2)\}$$

Reduce from A_{TM} : AFSOC machine M_{EQ} decides EQ_{TM} . We will construct a machine D to decide A_{TM}

1. D receives $\langle M, w \rangle$ as input
2. Create a new machine M_2
 - 2.1 M_2 receives s as input
 - 2.2 If $s = w$, M_2 accepts. Otherwise, M_2 runs M on s

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

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When are M and M_2 equivalent?

$$L(M) = L(M_2) \Leftrightarrow M \text{ accepts } w$$

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

$$EQ_{TM} = \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2) \}$$

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 - 2.1 M_2 receives s as input
 - 2.2 If $s = w$, M_2 accepts. Otherwise, M_2 runs M on s
3. Use M_{EQ} to check if $\langle M, M_2 \rangle \in EQ_{TM}$

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

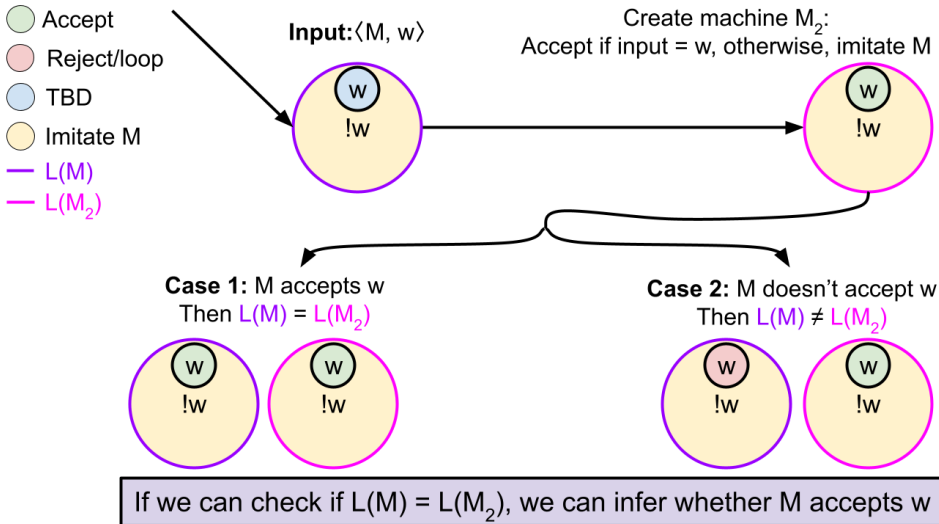
Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

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Reduce from A_{TM} : AFSOC machine M_{EQ} decides EQ_{TM} . We will construct a machine D to decide A_{TM}

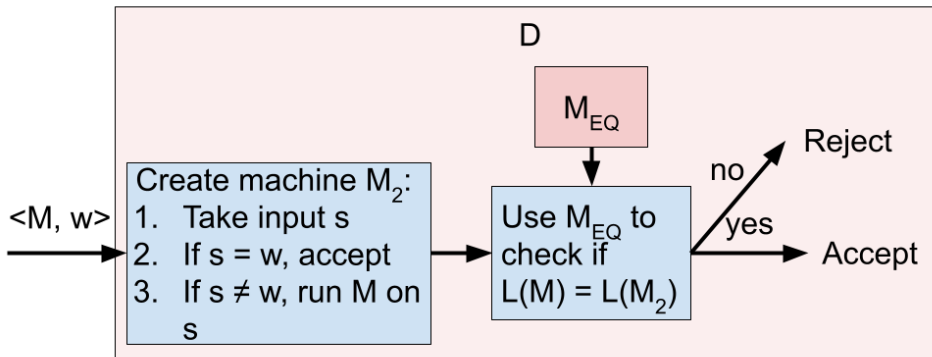
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3. Use M_{EQ} to check if $\langle M, M_2 \rangle \in EQ_{TM}$
 - 3.1 If M_{EQ} accepts $\langle M, M_2 \rangle$, then D accepts $\langle M, w \rangle$
 - 3.2 Otherwise D rejects $\langle M, w \rangle$

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)



EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

$$A_{TM} = \{ \langle M, w \rangle \mid M \text{ accepts } w \}$$
$$EQ_{TM} = \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2) \}$$



If we can decide EQ_{TM} , we can decide A_{TM}

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

$$EQ_{TM} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2)\}$$

Reduce from E_{TM} : AFSOC machine M_{EQ} decides EQ_{TM} . We will construct a machine D to decide E_{TM}

1. D receives $\langle M \rangle$ as input
2. Create a new machine M_2 that recognizes \emptyset

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

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When are M and M_2 equivalent?

$$L(M) = L(M_2) \Leftrightarrow L(M) = \emptyset$$

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

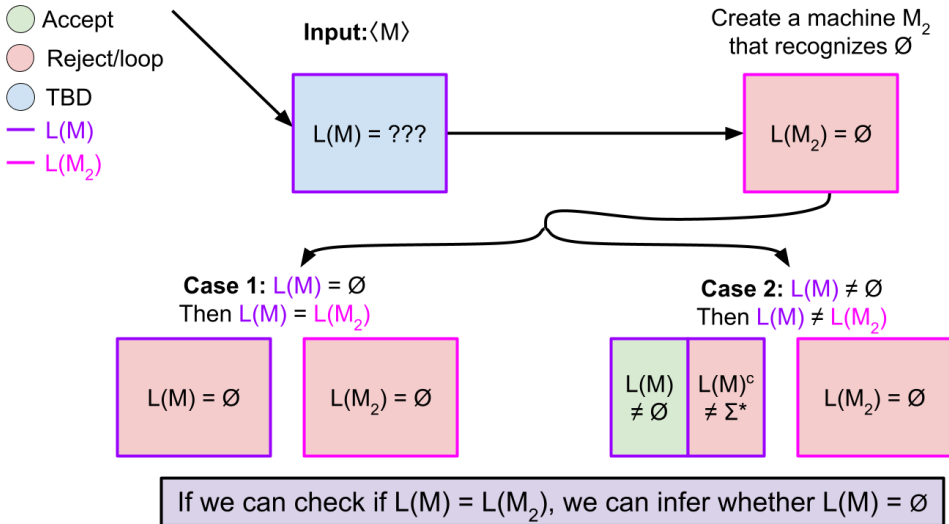
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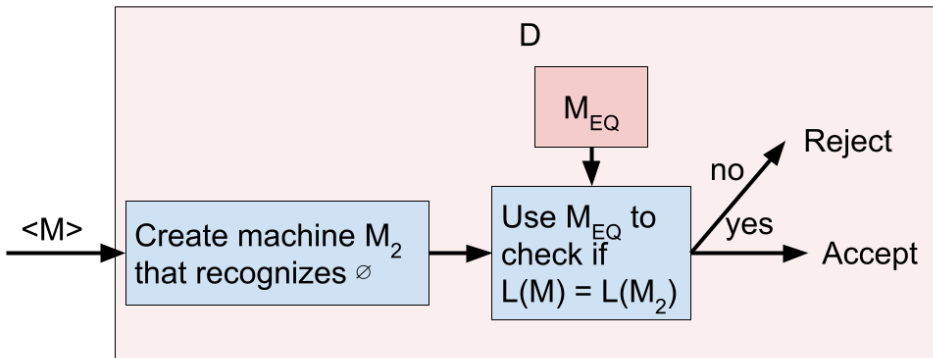
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 - 3.2 Otherwise D rejects $\langle M \rangle$

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)



EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

$$E_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \emptyset \}$$
$$EQ_{TM} = \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2) \}$$



If we can decide EQ_{TM} , we can decide E_{TM}

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)

Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

$$EQ_{TM} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2)\}$$

Reduce from ALL_{TM} : AFSOC machine M_{EQ} decides EQ_{TM} . We will construct a machine D to decide ALL_{TM}

1. D receives $\langle M \rangle$ as input
2. Create a new machine M_2 that recognizes Σ^*

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)

Let's prove that EQ_{TM} is undecidable

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When are M and M_2 equivalent?

$$L(M) = L(M_2) \Leftrightarrow L(M) = \Sigma^*$$

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)

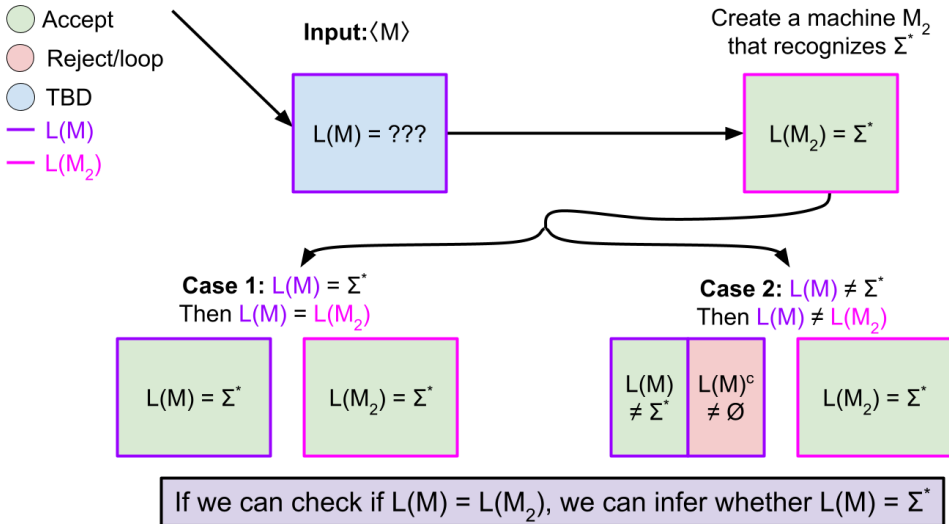
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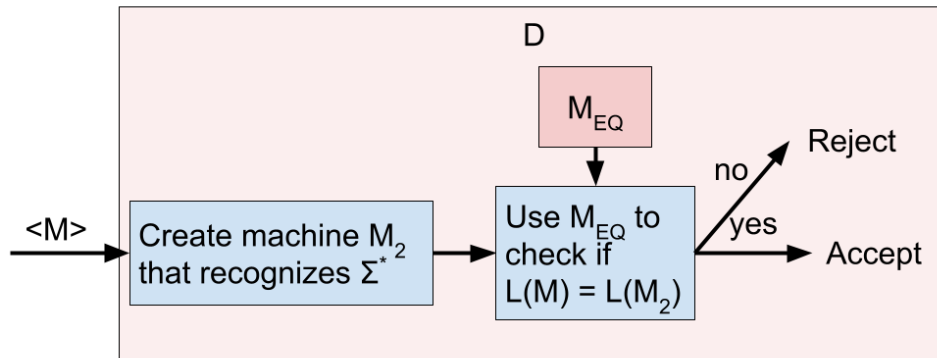
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 - 3.2 Otherwise D rejects $\langle M \rangle$

EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)



EQ_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)

$$ALL_{TM} = \{ \langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \Sigma^* \}$$
$$EQ_{TM} = \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2) \}$$



If we can decide EQ_{TM} , we can decide ALL_{TM}

The language SUB_{TM}

Consider the following language

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2)\}$$

We receive two machines M_1, M_2 as input. We want to determine if M_1 is contained within M_2

SUB_{TM} is undecidable

Let's prove that SUB_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2)\}$$

We will reduce from each of the following languages

$$\text{E}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \emptyset\}$$

$$\text{ALL}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \Sigma^*\}$$

$$\text{EQ}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2)\}$$

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that SUB_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2)\}$$

Reduce from E_{TM}: AFSOC SUB_{TM} is decided by machine M_S . We will construct a machine D to decide E_{TM} as follows:

1. D takes $\langle M \rangle$ as input
2. Construct a machine M_2 that recognizes \emptyset

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

Let's prove that SUB_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2)\}$$

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1. D takes $\langle M \rangle$ as input
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When does M_2 contain M ?

$$L(M) \subseteq L(M_2) \Leftrightarrow L(M) \subseteq \emptyset \Leftrightarrow L(M) = \emptyset$$

$$\langle M, M_2 \rangle \in \text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} \Leftrightarrow \langle M \rangle \in \text{E}_{\text{TM}}$$

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

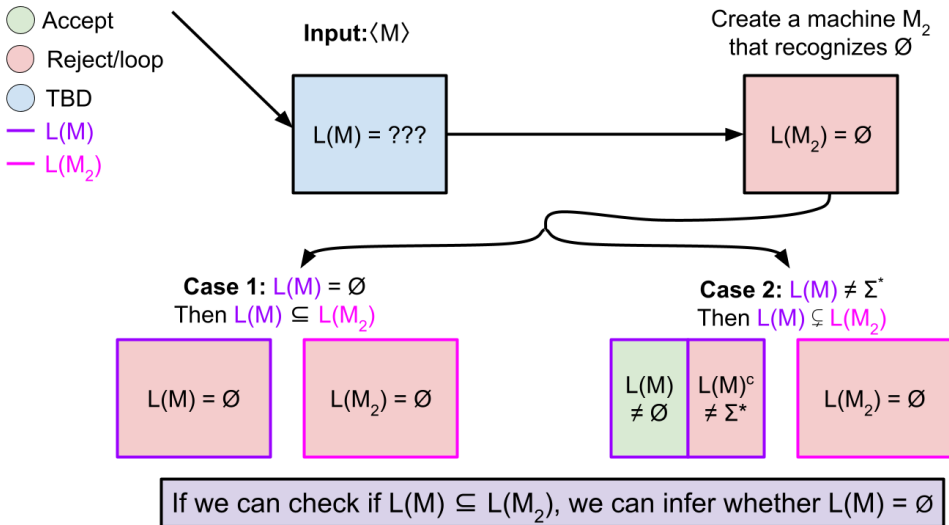
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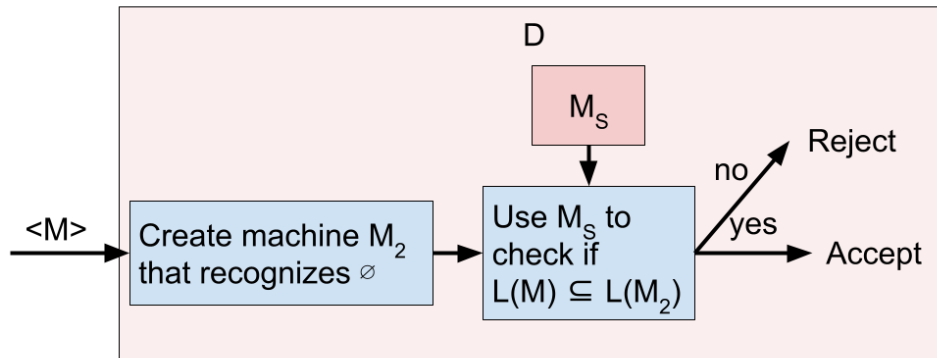
1. D takes $\langle M \rangle$ as input
2. Construct a machine M_2 that recognizes \emptyset
3. Use M_S to check if $\langle M, M_2 \rangle \in \text{SUB}_{\text{TM}}$
“Is M contained within a machine that accepts nothing?”
 - 3.1 If M_S accepts $\langle M, M_2 \rangle$, then D accepts $\langle M \rangle$
 - 3.2 Otherwise, D rejects $\langle M \rangle$

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)



SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 1)

$$\begin{aligned} E_{\text{TM}} &= \{ \langle M \rangle \mid L(M) = \emptyset \} \\ \text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} &= \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2) \} \end{aligned}$$



If we can decide SUB_{TM} , we can decide E_{TM}

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

Let's prove that SUB_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2)\}$$

Reduce from ALL_{TM}: AFSOC SUB_{TM} is decided by machine M_S . We will construct a machine D to decide ALL_{TM} as follows:

1. D takes $\langle M \rangle$ as input
2. Construct a machine M_2 that recognizes Σ^*

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

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When does M contain M_2 ?

$$L(M_2) \subseteq L(M) \Leftrightarrow \Sigma^* \subseteq L(M) \Leftrightarrow L(M) = \Sigma^*$$

$$\langle M_2, M \rangle \in \text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} \Leftrightarrow \langle M \rangle \in \text{ALL}_{\text{TM}}$$

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

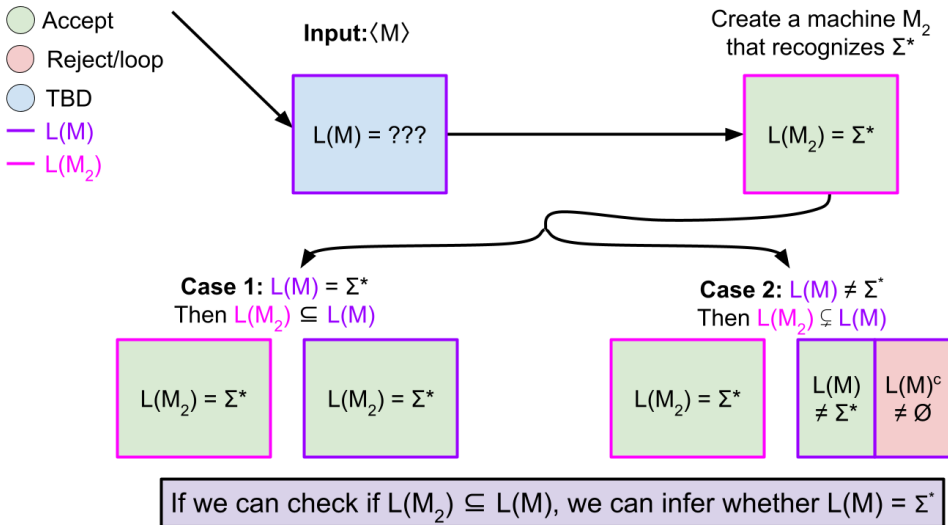
Let's prove that SUB_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2) \}$$

Reduce from ALL_{TM}: AFSOC SUB_{TM} is decided by machine M_S . We will construct a machine D to decide ALL_{TM} as follows:

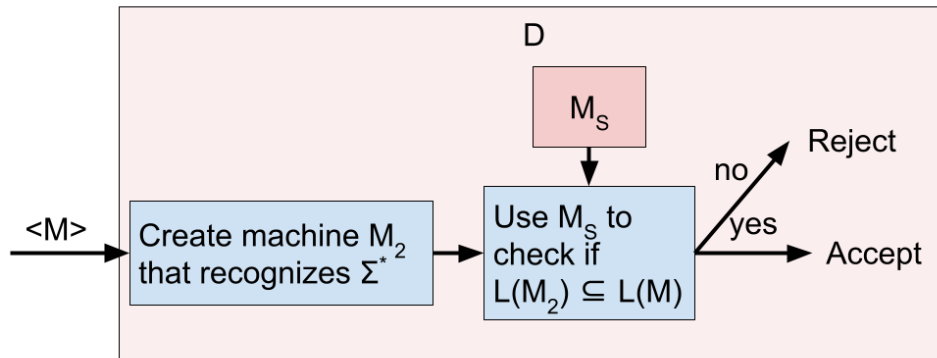
1. D takes $\langle M \rangle$ as input
2. Construct a machine M_2 that recognizes Σ^*
3. Use M_S to check if $\langle M_2, M \rangle \in \text{SUB}_{\text{TM}}$
“Does M contain a machine that accepts everything?”
 - 3.1 If M_S accepts $\langle M, M_2 \rangle$, then D accepts $\langle M \rangle$
 - 3.2 Otherwise, D rejects $\langle M \rangle$

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)



SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 2)

$$\text{ALL}_{\text{TM}} = \{ \langle M, w \rangle \mid L(M) = \Sigma^* \}$$
$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2) \}$$



If we can decide SUB_{TM}, we can decide ALL_{TM}

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)

Let's prove that SUB_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2)\}$$

Reduce from EQ_{TM}: AFSOC SUB_{TM} is decided by machine M_S . We will construct a machine D to decide EQ_{TM} as follows:

1. D takes $\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle$ as input

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)

Let's prove that SUB_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2)\}$$

Reduce from EQ_{TM}: AFSOC SUB_{TM} is decided by machine M_S . We will construct a machine D to decide EQ_{TM} as follows:

1. D takes $\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle$ as input

When does M_1 equal M_2 ?

$$L(M_1) = L(M_2) \Leftrightarrow L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2) \wedge L(M_2) \subseteq L(M_1)$$

$$\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \in \text{EQ}_{\text{TM}} \Leftrightarrow \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle, \langle M_2, M_1 \rangle \in \text{SUB}_{\text{TM}}$$

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)

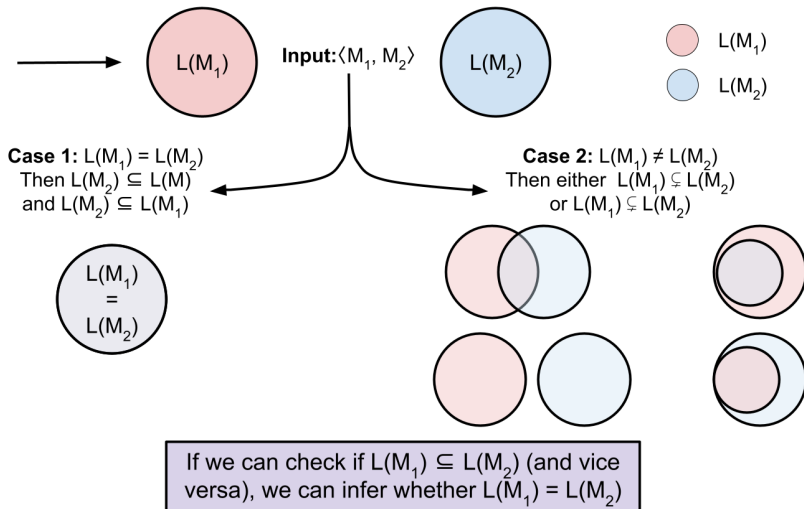
Let's prove that SUB_{TM} is undecidable

$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2)\}$$

Reduce from EQ_{TM}: AFSOC SUB_{TM} is decided by machine M_S . We will construct a machine D to decide EQ_{TM} as follows:

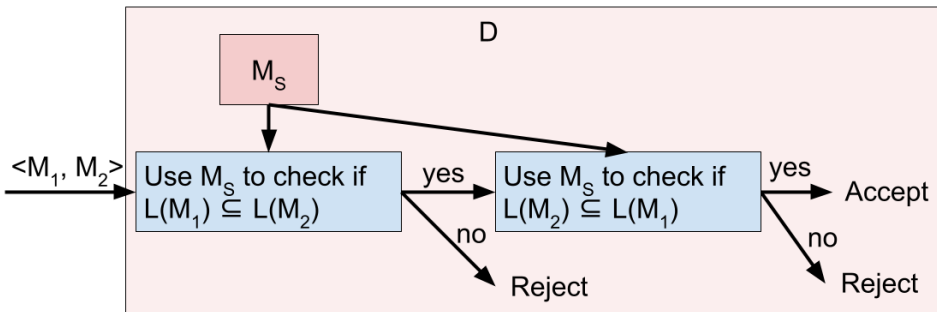
1. D takes $\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle$ as input
2. Use M_S to check if $\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \in \text{SUB}_{\text{TM}}$ and $\langle M_2, M_1 \rangle \in \text{SUB}_{\text{TM}}$
“Do M_1 and M_2 contain each other?”
 - 2.1 If M_S accepts $\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle$ and $\langle M_2, M_1 \rangle$, then D accepts $\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle$
 - 2.2 Otherwise, D rejects $\langle M_1, M_2 \rangle$

SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)



SUB_{TM} is undecidable (approach 3)

$$\text{EQ}_{\text{TM}} = \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) = L(M_2) \}$$
$$\text{SUB}_{\text{TM}} = \{ \langle M_1, M_2 \rangle \mid L(M_1) \subseteq L(M_2) \}$$



If we can decide SUB_{TM} , we can decide EQ_{TM}

Reducibility

Recap: If we could solve certain problems, we would be able to solve other problems

- ▶ We can use reducibility to prove undecidability
- ▶ If $A \leq_T B$ and A is known to be undecidable, then B must also be undecidable