

Using patterns to infer first-order temporal specifications

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Outline

Specification inference

A specification language

Mining with patterns

What's next

The problem

system specifications are useful

The problem

formal system specifications are useful

The problem

formal system specifications are useful **for**
testing, verification, maintenance,
understanding,...

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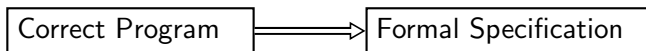
but

are also difficult and costly to write
and are therefore **often missing or
incomplete.**

The 'solution'

Infer specifications from 'correct' programs

i.e. extract them don't write them



The more specific problem

Given a set of **dynamic** traces, **passively** infer a **temporal** specification.

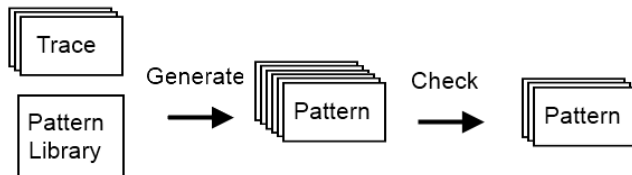
- **Dynamic** - The input will be recorded traces.
Traces have the advantage (over source code) that they contain **common** behaviour.
- **Passive** - We cannot query or interact with the system.
- **Temporal** - We are only concerned with properties about the ordering of events. In this work a specification denotes a set of allowed traces of events.

Where I'm coming from

- Last year I gave a talk on a **runtime verification** technique for checking first-order temporal properties
- Today I'm using this technique for extracting specifications rather than testing them against a trace
- The natural setting for this is a pattern-based technique

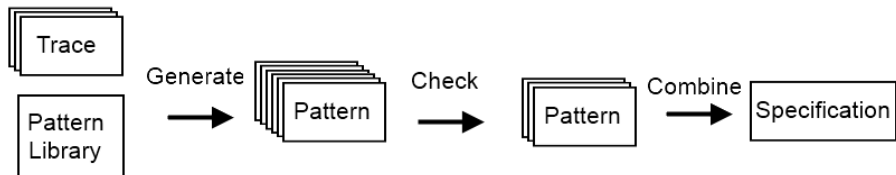
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The generate-and-check approach in action

- We use a set of abstract patterns and an alphabet to **generate** a set of concrete patterns and then **check** these on the trace(s)
- For example, given these (abstract) patterns

$$(ab)^* \quad (ab^+c)^*$$

and this trace

`open.use.close.open.use.use.close`

we can identify these (concrete) patterns

$$\begin{aligned} &(open\ close)^* \\ &(open\ use^+\ close)^* \end{aligned}$$

- This is (roughly) what has been done previously in this space

How to interpret data

- What do we do when events can carry data?

`open(1).use(1).close(1).open(2).use(2).close(2)`

- This looks fine - ignore the data! (using it in the alphabet will quickly explode)

How to interpret data

- What do we do when events can carry data?

```
open(1).open(2).use(1).use(2).close(2).close(1)
```

- But here we have two open events in a row - we won't detect our previous patterns

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`open(1).open(2).use(1).use(2).close(2).close(1)`

- But here we have two open events in a row - we won't detect our previous patterns
- There is a sense that the events for different data values can be *separated* i.e.

file 1: `open(1).use(1).close(1)`

file 2: `open(2).use(2).close(2)`

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file 1: `open(1).use(1).close(1)`

file 2: `open(2).use(2).close(2)`

- We can also do this with multiple pieces of data, i.e.

`create(L1).add(L1, O1).create(L2).add(L2, O1).remove(L1, O1)`

- becomes

list L_1 with object O_1 : `create(L1).add(L1, O1).remove(L1, O1)`

list L_2 with object O_1 : `create(L2).add(L2, O1)`

Quantified Event Automata (QEA)

- The **runtime verification** technique mentioned earlier
- Also, our target temporal specification language
- Has this notion of slicing up the trace built in
- Good for this generate-and-check approach as **efficient** checking algorithms have been developed

What is it?

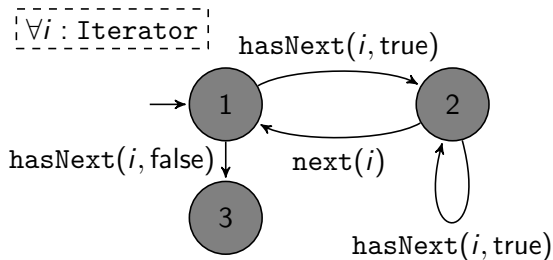
- A QEA defines a language of traces of events
- Events are defined as a name and a list of symbols i.e.

$\text{open}(f)$ $\text{login}(user, pwd)$ $\text{send}(msg, time, addr)$

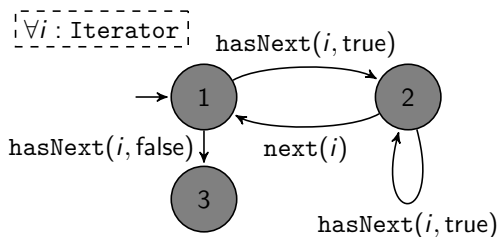
- A QEA consists of
 - A list of quantifications of variables X
 - A state machine over an alphabet of events using X

An example : HasNext

A call of `next` to an iterator is safe if it is preceded directly by a call of `hasNext` that returns `true`.



An example of (non)acceptance



Trace
hasNext(A,true)
hasNext(B,true)
next(A)
next(B)
hasNext(B,true)
next(A)

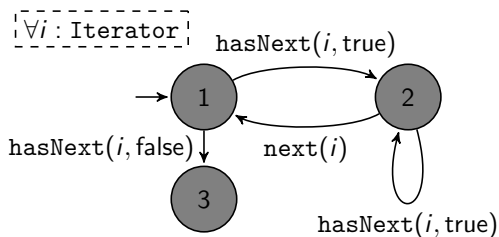
For $i = A$

$\text{hasNext}(A, \text{true}).\text{next}(A).\text{next}(A)$

For $i = B$

$\text{hasNext}(B, \text{true}).\text{next}(B).\text{hasNext}(B, \text{true})$

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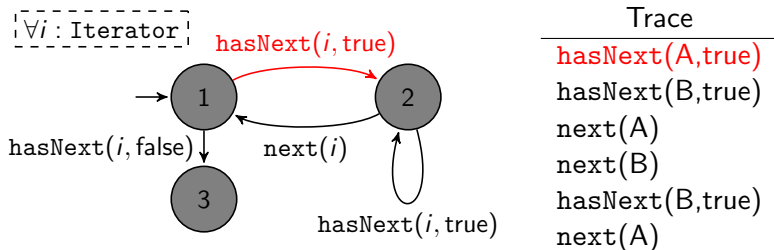
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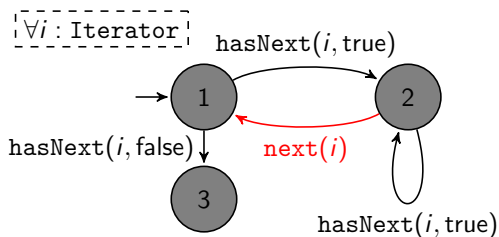
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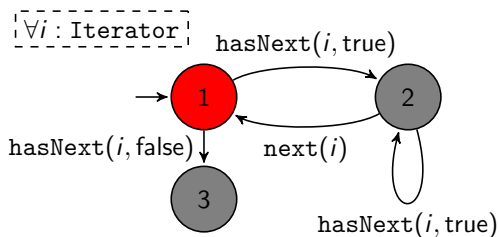
For $i = A$

hasNext(A, true).**next(A)**.next(A)

For $i = B$

hasNext(B, true).next(B).hasNext(B, true)

An example of (non)acceptance



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next(A)
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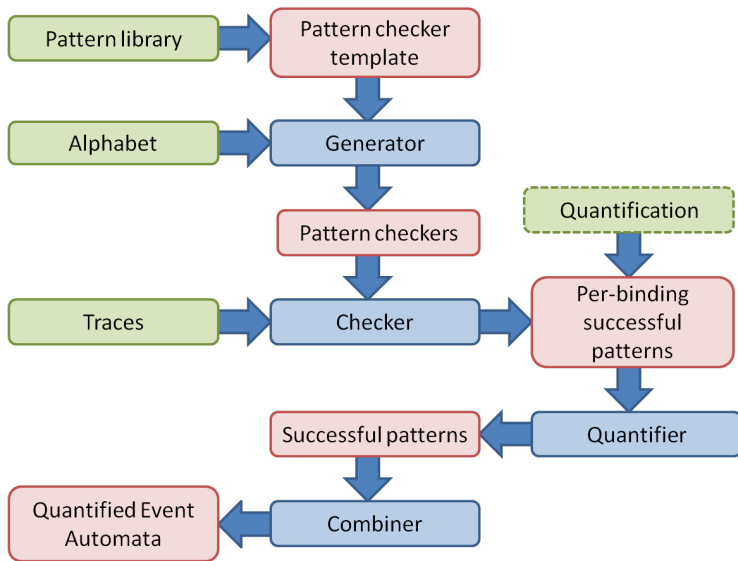
For $i = A$

hasNext(A, true).next(A).next(A)

For $i = B$

hasNext(B, true).next(B).hasNext(B, true)

Overview of mining process



Defining what we mean by pattern

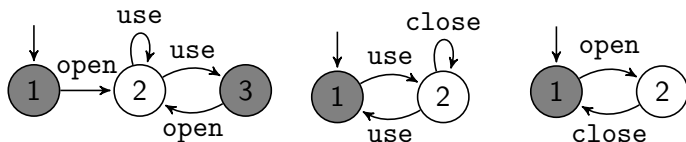
- Patterns need to be predicates on traces that can be combined
- It has been previously shown that using standard automata or regular expressions is inadequate for combination
- This inadequacy (shown next) leads to over-generalised combinations
- We therefore introduce a new kind of automata to use as a pattern (shown shortly)

The inadequacy

- Given the trace

open.use.use.close.open.use.close

- We might mine these patterns

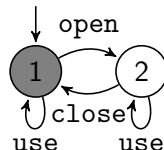
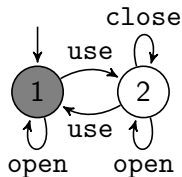
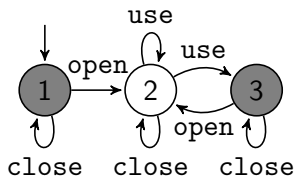


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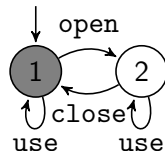
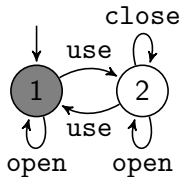
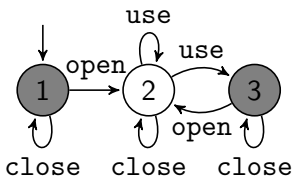
- Which uses the standard method of expanding alphabets

The inadequacy

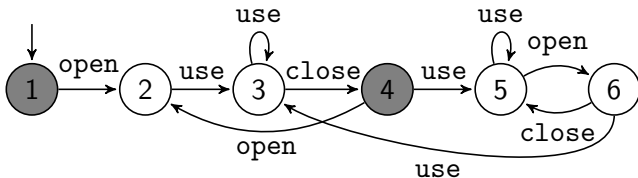
- Given the trace

open.use.use.close.open.use.close

- We might mine these patterns



- Which uses the standard method of expanding alphabets to use standard automata intersection to give

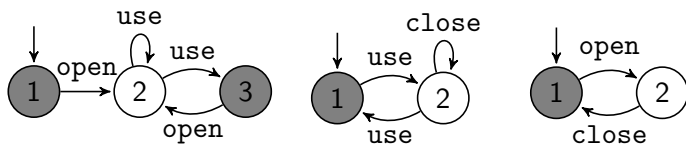


The inadequacy

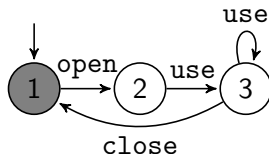
- Given the trace

open.use.use.close.open.use.close

- We might mine these patterns



- When we should hope for



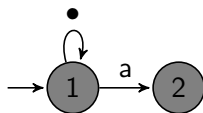
- The problem is that we have no information about where interleaving can happen

Patterns = open automata

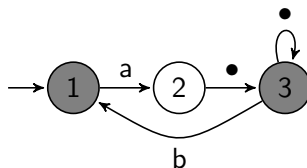
- For use as patterns we introduce *open automata*
- An open-automata is a state machine with a special • hole symbol that can label transitions
- The hole symbol matches any symbol not in the state machine's alphabet
- To avoid undesired interleaving we define intersection so that it expands alphabets only on holes

An example pattern library

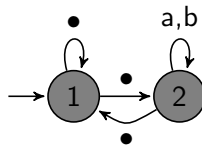
Let us assume our pattern library consists of these three patterns



Pattern p_1



Pattern p_2

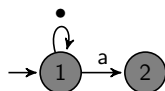


Pattern p_3

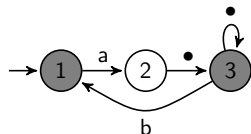
Checking patterns

$$\mathcal{A} = \{\text{open}(f), \text{read}(f), \text{write}(f), \text{close}(f), \text{delete}(f)\}$$

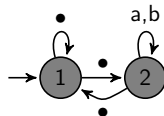
Pattern Library



Pattern p_1



Pattern p_2



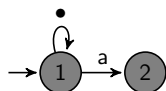
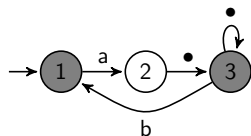
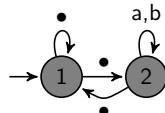
Pattern p_3

Checking patterns

$$\mathcal{A} = \{ \text{open}(f), \text{read}(f), \text{write}(f), \\ \text{close}(f), \text{delete}(f) \}$$

Binding	Pattern		Passed
	a	b	
$[f \mapsto 1]$	delete(f)	-	p_1
	open(f)	close(f)	p_2
	open(f)	delete(f)	p_2
	read(f)	write(f)	p_3
	read(f)	close(f)	p_3
	write(f)	read(f)	p_3
$[f \mapsto 2]$	delete(f)	-	p_1
	open(f)	close(f)	p_2
	read(f)	write(f)	p_3
	write(f)	read(f)	p_3

Pattern Library

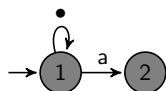
Pattern p_1 Pattern p_2 Pattern p_3

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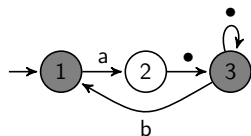
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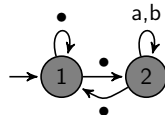
Pattern Library



Pattern p_1



Pattern p_2



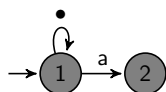
Pattern p_3

Checking patterns

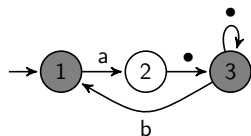
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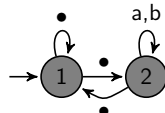
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Pattern p_2



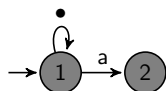
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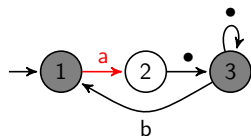
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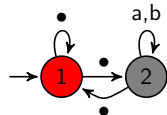
Pattern Library



Pattern p_1



Pattern p_2



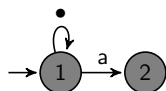
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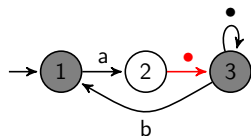
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	read(<i>f</i>)	write(<i>f</i>)	p_3
	read(<i>f</i>)	close(<i>f</i>)	p_3
	write(<i>f</i>)	read(<i>f</i>)	p_3
	$[f \mapsto 2]$	delete(<i>f</i>)	-
open(<i>f</i>)		close(<i>f</i>)	p_2
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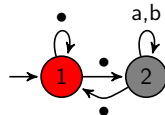
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Pattern p_1



Pattern p_2



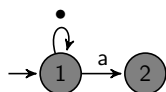
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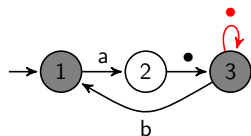
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<code>read(f)</code>		<code>write(f)</code>	p_3
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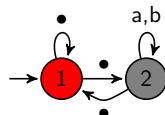
Pattern Library



Pattern p_1



Pattern p_2



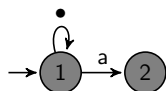
Pattern p_3

Checking patterns

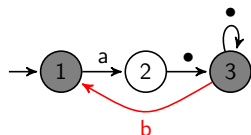
$\sigma = \text{open}(1).\text{open}(2).\text{read}(1).\text{write}(2).$
 $\text{close}(1).\text{close}(2).\text{delete}(1)$

Binding	Pattern		Passed
	a	b	
$[f \mapsto 1]$	<code>delete(f)</code>	-	p_1
	<code>open(f)</code>	<code>close(f)</code>	p_2
	<code>open(f)</code>	<code>delete(f)</code>	p_2
	<code>read(f)</code>	<code>write(f)</code>	p_3
	<code>read(f)</code>	<code>close(f)</code>	p_3
	<code>write(f)</code>	<code>read(f)</code>	p_3
$[f \mapsto 2]$	<code>delete(f)</code>	-	p_1
	<code>open(f)</code>	<code>close(f)</code>	p_2
	<code>read(f)</code>	<code>write(f)</code>	p_3
	<code>write(f)</code>	<code>read(f)</code>	p_3

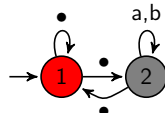
Pattern Library



Pattern p_1



Pattern p_2



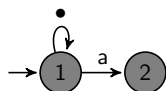
Pattern p_3

Checking patterns

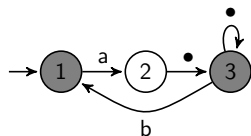
$$\sigma = \text{open}(1).\text{open}(2).\text{read}(1).\text{write}(2). \\ \text{close}(1).\text{close}(2).\text{delete}(1)$$

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	<code>read(f)</code>	<code>write(f)</code>	p_3
	<code>read(f)</code>	<code>close(f)</code>	p_3
	<code>write(f)</code>	<code>read(f)</code>	p_3
$[f \mapsto 2]$	<code>delete(f)</code>	-	p_1
	<code>open(f)</code>	<code>close(f)</code>	p_2
	<code>read(f)</code>	<code>write(f)</code>	p_3
	<code>write(f)</code>	<code>read(f)</code>	p_3

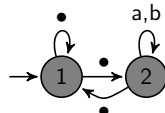
Pattern Library



Pattern p_1



Pattern p_2



Pattern p_3

Quantify

- The quantifications tell us to select the successful patterns *for all files*

Binding	Pattern		Passed	$\forall f ?$
	a	b		
$[f \mapsto 1]$	delete(f)	-	p_1	
	open(f)	close(f)	p_2	
	open(f)	delete(f)	p_2	
	read(f)	write(f)	p_3	
	read(f)	close(f)	p_3	
	write(f)	read(f)	p_3	
$[f \mapsto 2]$	delete(f)	-	p_1	
	open(f)	close(f)	p_2	
	read(f)	write(f)	p_3	
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	<code>open(f)</code>	<code>delete(f)</code>	p_2	
	<code>read(f)</code>	<code>write(f)</code>	p_3	
	<code>read(f)</code>	<code>close(f)</code>	p_3	
	<code>write(f)</code>	<code>read(f)</code>	p_3	
$[f \mapsto 2]$	<code>delete(f)</code>	-	p_1	✓
	<code>open(f)</code>	<code>close(f)</code>	p_2	
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	write(f)	read(f)	p_3	
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	read(f)	close(f)	p_3	
	write(f)	read(f)	p_3	
$[f \mapsto 2]$	delete(f)	-	p_1	✓
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	read(f)	close(f)	p_3	
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	read(f)	write(f)	p_3	✓
	read(f)	close(f)	p_3	✗
	write(f)	read(f)	p_3	
$[f \mapsto 2]$	delete(f)	-	p_1	✓
	open(f)	close(f)	p_2	✓
	read(f)	write(f)	p_3	✓
	write(f)	read(f)	p_3	

Quantify

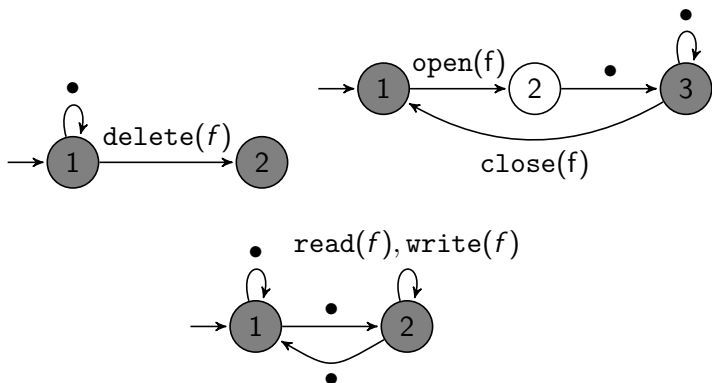
- The quantifications tell us to select the successful patterns *for all files*

Binding	Pattern		Passed	$\forall f ?$
	a	b		
$[f \mapsto 1]$	delete(f)	-	p_1	✓
	open(f)	close(f)	p_2	✓
	open(f)	delete(f)	p_2	✗
	read(f)	write(f)	p_3	✓
	read(f)	close(f)	p_3	✗
	write(f)	read(f)	p_3	✓
$[f \mapsto 2]$	delete(f)	-	p_1	✓
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	read(f)	write(f)	p_3	✓
	write(f)	read(f)	p_3	✓

- There are four successful patterns

Successful patterns

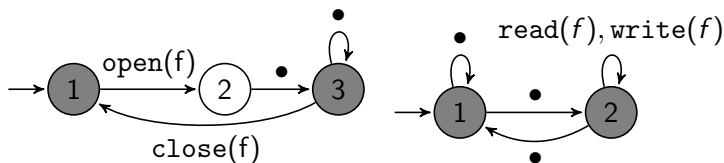
- Our four successful patterns become three due to symmetry



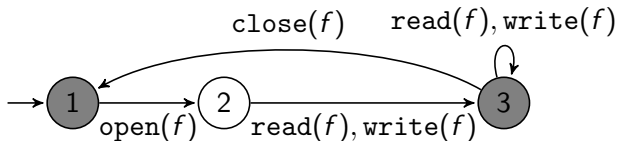
- Each of these tell us something about how their events order with each other *and other events not mentioned*

Combining successful patterns

- We can then construct an (open) automaton that accepts the intersection of their languages
- First combining these two patterns



- Gives us

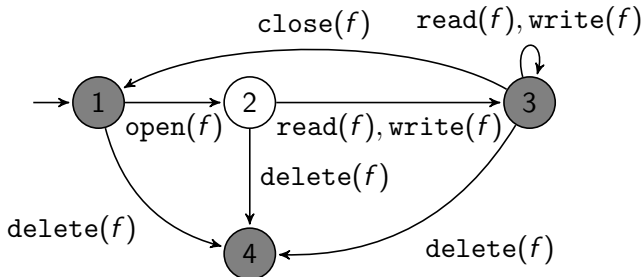


Combining successful patterns

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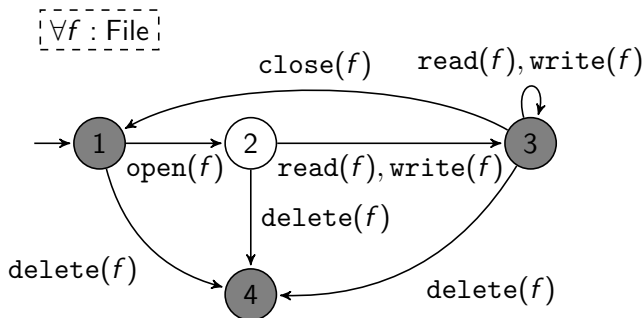


- Gives us



Combining successful patterns

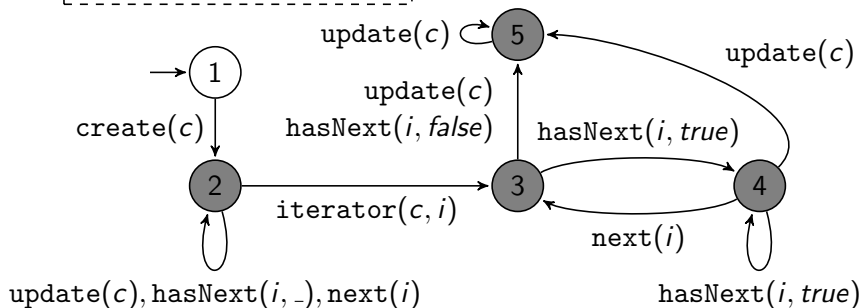
- We can then construct an (open) automaton that accepts the intersection of their languages
- Leading to the Quantified Event Automaton



Something from the real world

- This example with files has been necessarily simple, here is an example of a property mined from the Java standard library
- This states that an iterator created from a collection cannot be used after the collection is updated

$\forall c : \text{Collection}, \forall i : \text{Iterator}$



The approach I didn't use

Automata-learning / regular-inference

- Passive via state merging
 - Construct an automaton that accepts exactly the traces
 - Merge 'equivalent' states for some notion of equivalence
 - Active via L^* (Angluin's) - requires an oracle
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- So why have I chosen to use this pattern-based approach?
There are two main reasons
 1. Algorithms from runtime verification allow large traces to be processed efficiently
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An overview of further work

- Extending to full expressiveness of QEA
- Developing a methodology for finding suitable pattern libraries
- Methods for identifying likely alphabets

Conclusion

We have

- Introduced the idea of *specification inference*
- Outlined a pattern-based approach that deals with data effectively and allows for efficient mining
- Presented an example of how this works
- Discussed some outstanding issues

Any Questions?

Where do patterns come from?

- A pattern library needs to be defined before mining
- There are two interesting questions
 1. How do we do this?
 2. Does it matter?
- Let us consider the second by posing the question - **Is there a pattern library that will always give the desired specification?**
i.e. one that gives a solution to the specification inference problem
- To answer this we must consider what a solution looks like

Why there is no solution

- Complete learnability requires an impracticable amount of information - we must **generalise**

Why there is no solution

- Complete learnability requires an impracticable amount of information - we must generalise

- We see two traces

```
open.read.close.open.read.close  
open.read.write.save.close
```

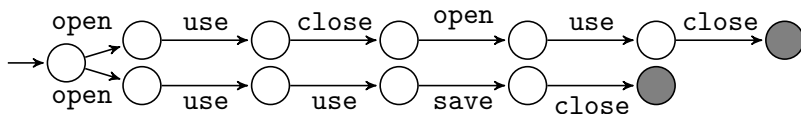
- What property can we infer?

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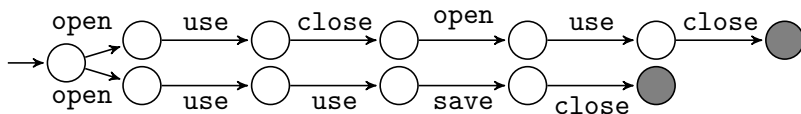


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```
open.read.close.open.read.close
open.read.write.save.close
```

- What property can we infer?



- Now we receive this trace

```
open.read.close.open.close
```

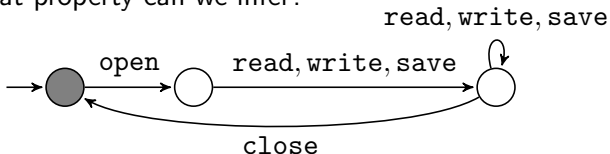
- Our specification is too **specific**

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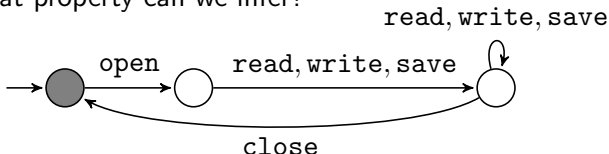


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```
open.read.close.open.read.close  
open.read.write.save.close
```

- What property can we infer?



- But if we have to save after writing we incorrectly accept

```
open.read.write.save.write.close
```

- Our specification is too **general**

Why there is no solution

- Complete learnability requires an impracticable amount of information - we must generalise
- It is known that without negative information we cannot exactly identify a language
- As combination is the straight-forward intersection of languages the pattern library can cause
 - over-specification, for example if it contains a pattern accepting exactly the input traces
 - over-generalisation, when the desired specification is very specific
- Additionally, a pattern library may be too small or lack the coverage to identify a specification at all

Making patterns

- Intuition and experience
 - There exist studies identifying common shapes in specifications
 - There are also exist common methods for combining specifications that can be formed as patterns
- Exploration
 - Given a known specification we can perform the reverse of combination to give us patterns
- Automatic generation/enumeration
 - We can use different methods to automatically generate patterns either by enumeration up to a certain size or by performing operations on a set of existing patterns
 - Disadvantage - likely to introduce noise
- A full methodology for pattern library definition remains further work

Where to start

- Our process begins having collected a set of traces
- But to do this we assume we already know the alphabet of the specification (this is another input)
- This is similar to other processes like ours
- Identifying likely alphabets remains further work