Evaluating the Complexity of Mathematical Problems: Part 2

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In this paper we present an implementation of the computational method in [1] that allows ranking mathematical statements by their complexity. We introduce the complexity classes $(\mathbf{C}_{U,i})_{i\geq 1}$, and, accordingly, show that Legendre's conjecture, Fermat's last theorem, and Goldbach's conjecture are in $\mathbf{C}_{U,1}$, Dyson's conjecture is in $\mathbf{C}_{U,2}$, the Riemann hypothesis is in $\mathbf{C}_{U,3}$, and the four color theorem is in $\mathbf{C}_{U,4}$.

1. Introduction

Based on the possibility of expressing mathematical problems in terms of (very) simple programs reducible to the halting problem in [1, 2], we developed a uniform approach for evaluating the complexity of a large class of mathematical problems. In this paper we: (*a*) describe an implementation of the method, (*b*) introduce the complexity classes $(\mathbf{C}_{U,i})_{i\geq 1}$, and (*c*) rank according to (*b*) these six mathematical statements: Goldbach's conjecture, Legendre's conjecture, Fermat's last theorem, Dyson's conjecture, the four color theorem, and the Riemann hypothesis. To this aim we describe a universal programming language that is a prefix-free Turing machine and a uniform method for evaluating the size (measured in bits) of the programs written in the language. For each of the six statements, we write the shortest possible program to systematically search for a counter-example. The programs never stop if and only if the statements are true. The ranking of a statement in a class $\mathbf{C}_{U,i}$ is based on the size of its associated program.

The programs for Goldbach's conjecture and the Riemann hypothesis given here improve (in size) those in [2] and appear in [3]. The program for the four color theorem is in [4]. The other three programs appear here for the first time.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2 we introduce a universal programming language. In Section 3 we present the implementation of the method introduced in [1, 2] and the complexity classes $\left(\mathbf{C}_{U,i}\right)_{i\geq 1}$. In Section 4 we present algorithms for some routines frequently used in the programs. In Sections 5 through 7 we discuss Legendre's conjecture, Fermat's last theorem, Dyson's conjecture, Goldbach's conjecture, the four color theorem, and the Riemann hypothesis. Section 8 presents some conclusions.

2. A Universal Programming Language

We briefly describe the syntax and semantics of a register machine language that implements a (natural) universal prefix-free binary Turing machine U. The language is a refinement of those described in [2, 5, 6].

Any register program (machine) uses a finite number of registers, each of which may contain an arbitrarily large non-negative integer. By default, all registers, named with a string of lower or uppercase letters, are initialized to 0. Instructions are labeled by default with 0, 1, 2, … .

Here is a list of the register machine instructions. Note that in all cases R2 and R3 denote either a register or a non-negative integer, while R1 must be a register. When referring to R we use, depending upon the context, either the name of register R or the non-negative integer stored in R.

- =R1, R2, R3: If the contents of R1 and R2 are equal, then the execution continues at the R3$^{\text{th}}$ instruction of the program. If the contents of R1 and R2 are not equal, then execution continues with the next instruction in sequence. There is an illegal branch error if the content of R3 is outside the scope of the program.
- &R1, R2: The content of register R1 is replaced by R2.
- +R1, R2: The content of register R1 is replaced by the sum of the contents of R1 and R2.
- !R1: One bit is read into the register R1, so the content of R1 becomes either 0 or 1. Any attempt to read past the last data bit results in a run-time error.
- %: This is the last instruction for each register machine program before the input data. It halts the execution in two possible states: successful completion or an under-read error.

A *register machine program* consists of a finite list of labeled instructions from the complete list, with the restriction that the halt instruction appears only once, as the last instruction of the list. The input data (a binary string) follows immediately after the halt instruction. A program that does not read all of the data or attempts to read

past the last data bit results in a runtime error. Some programs (such as the ones presented in this paper) have no input data, so they cannot halt with an under-read error.

The instruction =R, R, n is used for the unconditional jump to the n^{th} instruction of the program. For Boolean data types we use integers 0 = false and 1 = true.

For longer programs it is convenient to distinguish between the main program and some sets of instructions called "routines", which perform specific tasks within another routine or the main program. The call and call-back of a routine are executed with unconditional jumps.

3. Complexity

We present a method of evaluating the complexity of a Π_1-problem π, that is, a statement of the form $\pi = \forall\, \sigma P(\sigma)$ where P is a computable predicate. To every Π_1-problem $\pi = \forall\, \sigma P(\sigma)$, we associate a program $\Pi_P = \inf\{n : P(n) = \text{ false}\}$ to search for a possible counter-example to π. The following equivalence holds true: π is true if and only if $U(\Pi_P)$ never halts.

The complexity (with respect to U) of a Π_1-problem π is defined by

$$C_U(\pi) = \inf\{|\Pi_P| : \pi = \forall\, nP(n)\}.$$

The choice of U is not important because if U, U' are universal, then there exists a constant $c = c_{U,U'}$ such that for every Π_1-problem π, $\left|C_U(\pi) - C_{U'}(\pi)\right| \le c$. The "bad news" is that the complexity C_U is not computable [7].

At first glance, the complexity C_U may appear to separate the set of Π_1-problems into only two classes. However, this is false because C_U is unbounded. Because of incomputability, we can work only with upper bounds of C_U. As the exact value of C_U is not important, we classify Π_1-problems into the following classes:

$$\mathbf{C}_{U,n} = \left\{\pi : \pi \text{ is a } \Pi_1 \text{ -problem}, C_U(\pi) \le n \,\text{kbit}\right\}.$$

(A kilobit [kbit or kb] is equal to 2^{10} bits.) It is seen that for every $n \ge 1$ there is an $m > n$ such that $\mathbf{C}_{U,n}$ is strictly included in $\mathbf{C}_{U,m}$. We do not know whether m can always be taken to be $n + 1$, that is, if we have a strict hierarchy.

The goal is to compute an upper bound of the complexity $C_U(\pi)$ by choosing a representation $\pi = \forall\, nP(n)$ for which $|\Pi_P|$ is the smallest possible; hence $|\Pi_P|$ is the best possible upper bound for $C_U(\pi)$. The

running time efficiency of the program Π_P is irrelevant here; it is the size in bits that counts. (See more details and comments in [1].)

To compute an upper bound on $C_U(\pi)$ we need to compute the size in bits of the program Π_P, so we need to uniquely code in binary the programs for U. To this aim, we use the following prefix-free coding.

The binary coding of special characters (instructions and comma) is given in Table 1 (ε is the empty string).

Special Characters	Code	Instruction	Code
,	ε	+	111
&	01	!	110
=	00	%	100

Table 1.

For registers, we use the prefix-free code $\text{code}_1 = \left\{0^{|x|}\,1\,x \,\middle|\, x \in \{0,1\}^*\right\}$. Table 2 gives the codes of the first 15 registers. The register names are chosen to optimize the length of the program, that is, the most frequent registers have the smallest code_1 length.

Register	code_1	Register	code_1	Register	code_1
R_1	010	R_6	00111	R_{11}	0001100
R_2	011	R_7	0001000	R_{12}	0001101
R_3	00100	R_8	0001001	R_{13}	0001110
R_4	00101	R_9	0001010	R_{14}	0001111
R_5	00110	R_{10}	0001011	R_{15}	000010000

Table 2.

For non-negative integers, we use the prefix-free code $\text{code}_2 = \left\{1^{|x|}\,0\,x \,\middle|\, x \in \{0,1\}^*\right\}$. Table 3 gives the codes of the first 16 non-negative integers.

Integer	code_2	Integer	code_2	Integer	code_2	Integer	code_2
0	100	4	11010	8	1110010	12	1110110
1	101	5	11011	9	1110011	13	1110111
2	11000	6	1110000	10	1110100	14	111100000
3	11001	7	1110001	11	1110101	15	111100001

Table 3.

The instructions are coded by self-delimiting binary strings as follows. (Because $x\varepsilon = \varepsilon x = x$, for every string $x \in \{0, 1\}^*$, we omit the ε.)

1. & R1, R2 is coded in two different ways depending on R2:

   $01\,\mathrm{code}_1(\mathrm{R1})\,\mathrm{code}_i(\mathrm{R2})$,

   where $i = 1$ if R2 is a register and $i = 2$ if R2 is an integer.

2. + R1, R2 is coded in two different ways depending on R2:

   $111\,\mathrm{code}_1\,(\mathrm{R1})\,\mathrm{code}_i\,(\mathrm{R2})$,

   where $i = 1$ if R2 is a register and $i = 2$ if R2 is a non-negative integer.

3. = R1, R2, R3 is coded in four different ways depending on the data types of R2 and R3:

   $00\,\mathrm{code}_1\,(\mathrm{R1})\,\mathrm{code}_i\,(\mathrm{R2})\,\mathrm{code}_j\,(\mathrm{R3})$,

   where $i = 1$ if R2 is a register and $i = 2$ if R2 is a non-negative integer, $j = 1$ if R3 is a register and $j = 2$ if R3 is a non-negative integer.

4. ! R1 is coded by

   $110\,\mathrm{code}_1\,(\mathrm{R1})$.

5. % is coded by

   100.

All codings for instruction names, registers, and non-negative integers are self-delimiting. The prefix-free codes used for registers and non-negative integers are disjoint. The code of any instruction is the concatenation of the codes of the instruction name and the codes (in order) of its components, hence the set of codes of instructions is prefix-free. The code of a program is the concatenation of the codes of its instructions, so the set of codes of all programs is also prefix-free.

Table 4 gives some examples of instructions.

Instruction	Code	Length
%	100	3
& R_1, 0	01 010 100	8
& R_1, R_2	01 010 011	8
+ R_1, 1	111 010 101	9
+ R_1, R_2	111 010 011	9
= R_1, 0, 1	00 010 100 101	11
= R_1, R_2, 0	00 010 011 100	11

Table 4.

The shortest programs are

100 | 01010100100 | 01010011100.

The smallest program that halts is 100 and the smallest program that never halts is 00010010100100.

Table 5 gives a register machine routine that computes in d the product of two non-negative integers a and b (see the algorithm `MUL` in Section 4). We use: $R_1 = a$, $R_2 = b$, $R_3 = c$, $R_4 = d$, $R_5 = e$, $R_8 = h$.

Instruction Number	Instruction	Code	Length
0	& h, e	01 0001001 00110	14
1	& d, 0	01 00101 100	10
2	= b, 0, 8	00 011 100 1110010	15
3	& e, 1	01 00110 101	10
4	+ d, a	111 00101 010	11
5	= b, e, 8	00 011 00110 1110010	17
6	+ e, 1	111 00110 101	11
7	= a, a, 4	00 010 010 11010	13
8	& e, h	01 00110 0001001	14
9	= a, a, c	00 010 010 00100	13

Table 5.

The routine given in Table 5 can be uniquely encoded by concatenating the binary strings coding its instructions,

0100010010011001001011000001110011100100100110101...
11100101010000110011011100101110011010100010010...
11010010011000010010001001000100,

which is a string with a size of 128 bits.

4. Algorithms

Some register machine programs may be difficult to follow because of their terse syntax. In order to facilitate understanding, we sometimes present parts of them as algorithms in pseudocode. The notation used in these algorithms is self-explanatory (e.g., the assignment instruction is denoted by `Set x to v`, `Next x` is the successor, and `GoTo Ln` specifies the unconditional jump).

We start with a simple routine `REM` that computes the integer remainder of a divided by b. A local register e is initialized to b and incremented by 1 until it reaches the value of a when the algorithm finishes. The value of d, the result of the algorithm, is initialized to 0 and

incremented every time e is incremented. When d reaches the value of b, the value of d is reset to 0. The routine works for any non-negative integers a and b.

```
Algorithm REM
INPUT: a >= b >= 0
OUTPUT: d=rem(a,b) i.e., a=b*q+d, with 0 <= d < b, for some q
1. Set e to b
2. Set d to 0
3. if e = a
4.   then STOP
5.   else Next e
6.        Next d
7.        if d = b
8.             then GoTo 2 //reset the remainder to 0
9.             else GoTo 3
```

Here is the register machine program corresponding to REM.

```
//REM computes in d the integer remainder
// of a divided by b, assumes a>=b>=0.
//It uses the local register e to perform its task
0. &h,e //store locally the original value of e
1. &e,b //copy the value of b in e
2. &d,0 //set result to 0
3. =e,a,8 //e reached a, continue with instruction 8
4. +e,1 //as e < a, increase e
5. +d,1 //increase the result
6. =d,b,2 //result reached b, continue with instruction 2
7. =a,a,3 //continue with instruction 3
8. &e,h //restore original value in e
9. =a,a,c //computation completed, registers a, b, c, and
          //e have their original values and d contains
          //the integer remainder of a divided by b
```

We continue with the algorithms MUL and CMP for routines that are used repeatedly. MUL performs the multiplication of a and b and stores the product in d. The algorithm is based on the multiplication performed as a repeated addition. The local counter e keeps track of how many times a is added to itself.

```
Algorithm MUL
INPUT: a >= 0, b >= 0
OUTPUT: d= a*b
1. Set d to 0
2. if b = 0
3.   then STOP
4.   else Set e to 1
5.        Set d to d+a
6.        if e = b
7.             then STOP
```

```
8.          else Next e
9.          GoTo 5
```

The register machine program and its code for the multiplication algorithm appear in Table 5. CMP returns 0 if its two input values a and b are equal, returns 1 when $a < b$, and returns 2 when $b < a$.

```
Algorithm CMP
INPUT: a >= 0, b >= 0
OUTPUT: d is 1 if a < b, d is 0 for a = b, and d is 2 otherwise
1. Set e to a
2. Set f to b
3. Next e
4. Next f
5. Set d to 0
6. if e = f
7.  then STOP
8.  else Set d to 1
9.       if e = b
10.          then STOP
11.          else Set d to 2
12.               if f = a
13.                    then STOP
14.                    else GoTo 3
```

5. Legendre's Conjecture

Legendre's conjecture [8] states that for any natural number n there exists a prime number p such that $n^2 \leq p \leq (n+1)^2$. The following algorithm checks whether for each natural number n any of the numbers $n^2 + 1, \ldots, (n+1)^2 - 1$ is prime. If a prime is found, the algorithm generates the next n and so on. If for some natural n, none of the numbers from the given set is prime, the algorithm stops and the conjecture is false; otherwise, the algorithm never stops. Here is the register machine program for Legendre's conjecture.

```
0. &n,2
1. &m,n
2. &p,1
3. =p,n,7 //m=n^2
4. +m,n
5. +p,1
6. =p,p,3
7. &M,m
8. +M,n
9. +M,n //M=n^2+2n
10. &x,m
11. =x,M,31 //no prime x was found
```

```
12. &p, 2 //is x divided by p?
13. &z,1 //z =1 if x is prime, z=0 if p is not prime
14. =x,p,26 //x is prime
15. &e,p
16. &q,0 //compute q=rem(x,p)
17. =e,x,22
18. +e,1
19. +q,1
20. =q,p,16
21. =p,p,17
22. =q,0,25 //x is not prime
23. +p,1
24. =p,p,13
25. &z,0
26. =z,0,29 //x is not prime
27. +n,1 //x is prime
28. =p,p,1
29. +x,1
30. =p,p,11
31. % //Legendre's conjecture is false
```

This register machine program for Legendre's conjecture has 32 instructions. Computing its size, we get $\mathbf{C}_U$(Legendre's conjecture) ≤ 416 when using $R_1 = p$, $R_2 = n$, $R_3 = x$, $R_4 = m$, $R_5 = q$, $R_6 = M$, $R_7 = z$, $R_8 = e$.

6. Fermat's Last Theorem

Fermat's last theorem is one of the most famous theorems in the history of mathematics. It states that there are no positive integers x, y, z satisfying the equation $x^n + y^n = z^n$, for any integer value $n > 2$. The result was conjectured by Pierre de Fermat in 1637, and was finally proved in 1995 by A. Wiles [9] (see also [10]). Many illustrious mathematicians failed to prove it, but their efforts stimulated the development of algebraic number theory.

The following register machine program for Fermat's last theorem uses the integer $B \geq 5$ to enumerate all 4-tuples of integers (x, y, z, n) with $z \leq B$, $x, y < z$, $n \leq B$ for which the equality $x^n + y^n = z^n$ is tested.

```
0. =a,a,20
1. &i,x //===POW(a,b)
2. &j,y
3. &k,z
4. &x,1
5. &d,a
6. =x,b,16 //d = a^b
```

```
7. &z,a //compute a*d
8. &y,1
9. =y,d,13 //z = a*d
10. +y,1 //y < d
11. +z,a
12. =a,a,9
13. &d,z
14. +x,1 //x < b
15. =a,a,6
16. &x,i
17. &y,j
18. &z,k
19. =a,a,c //d = a^b
20. &B,5 //===Main program
21. &n,4
22. &z,4
23. &x,3
24. &y,3
25. &c,29
26. &a,x
27. &b,n
28. =a,a,1 //d = x^n
29. &e,d
30. &c,33
31. &a,y
32. =a,a,1 //d = y^n
33. +e,d //e = x^n + y^n
34. &a,z
35. +c,4 //c = 37
36. =a,a,1 //d = z^n
37. =e,d,52 //x^n + y^n = z^n
38. +y,1 //x^n + y^n =/= z^n
39. =y,z,41
40. =a,a,25 //y < z
41. +x,1 //y = z
42. =x,z,44
43. =a,a,24 //x < z
44. +z,1 //x = z
45. =B,z,47
46. =a,a,23 //z < B
47. +n,1 //z = B
48. =n,B,50
49. =a,a,22 //n < B
50. +B,1 //n = B
51. =a,a,21
52. % //Fermat's last theorem is false
```

This register machine program for Fermat's last theorem has 53 instructions. Computing its size, we get $\mathbf{C}_U$(Fermat's last theorem) ≤ 738 when using $R_1 = a$, $R_2 = z$, $R_3 = x$, $R_4 = y$, $R_5 = d$, $R_6 = c$, $R_7 = B$, $R_8 = n$, $R_9 = e$, $R_{10} = b$, $R_{11} = i$, $R_{12} = j$, $R_{13} = k$.

7. Dyson and Goldbach Conjectures, the Four Color Theorem, and Riemann's Hypothesis

Dyson's first conjecture [11] states that

> the reverse of a power of two is never a power of five

and is motivated by the quest to find a simple true unprovable statement in Gödel's sense. In [11], p. 86, Dyson states:

> Thanks to Kurt Gödel, we know that there are true mathematical statements that cannot be proved. But I want a little more than this. I want a statement that is true, unprovable, and simple enough to be understood by people who are not mathematicians.

Dyson's second conjecture [11] states that

> Dyson's first conjecture is unprovable.

(To be precise, we must specify the formal system in which Dyson's first conjecture is unprovable. A natural candidate is Peano arithmetic.) Here is the heuristic argument in support of Dyson's second conjecture [11]:

> The digits in a big power of two seem to occur in a random way without any regular pattern. If it ever happened that the reverse of a power of two was a power of five, this would be an unlikely accident, and the chance of it happening grows rapidly smaller as the numbers grow bigger. If we assume that the digits occur at random, then the chance of the accident happening for any power of two greater than a billion is less than one in a billion. It is easy to check that it does not happen for powers of two smaller than a billion.

In fact, this conjecture was verified in [12] up to all powers 2^k with $k \leq 10^5$ and in [13] up to all powers 2^k with $k \leq 10^8$.

Of course, if Dyson's first conjecture is false, that is, a counterexample is found, then Dyson's second conjecture is also false.

In [13] it was shown that the complexity of Dyson's first conjecture, shortly, Dyson's conjecture, has an upper bound of 3928 bits (150 register machine instructions). Here is a shorter program written for U.

```
0. =a,a,27
1. & E,e //===CMP(a,b)
2. &F,f
3. &e,a
4. &f,b
5. +e,1
6. +f,1
7. &d,0
8. =e,f,14 //a = b
9. &d,1
10. =e,b,14 //a < b
11. &d,2
12. =f,a,14 //a > b
13. =a,a,5
14. &f,F
15. &e, E
16. =a,a,c
17. & E,e //===MUL(a,b)
18. &d,0
19. =b,0,25 //ab = 0
20. &e,1
21. +d,a
22. =e,b,25 //d = ab
23. +e,1
24. =a,a,21
25. &e, E
26. =a,a,c
27. &k,1 //===MAIN PROGRAM
28. &n,1
29. +n,n
30. &c,34 // compute f = reverse of n
31. &a,n
32. &b,10
33. =a,a,1 //d = CMP(n,10)
34. =d,1,58 //n < 10
35. &f,0 //n >= 10
36. &e,b
37. &q,0
38. +q,1
39. &r,0
40. =e,n,45 //r = n mod 10, q = floor(n/10)
41. +e,1 //e < n
42. +r,1
43. =r,b,38
44. =a,a,40 //r < b
45. +f,r
46. &a,f
47. &c,49
```

```
48. =a,a,17 //d = (f+r)*10
49. +f,d
50. &a,q
51. +c,4 //c = 53
52. =a,a,1 //d = CMP(q,10)
53. =d,1,56 //q < 10
54. +f,q //q >= 10
55. =a,a,59
56. &n,q
57. =a,a,36
58. &f,n //reverse of n = n
59. &s,1
60. &j,0
61. +j,1
62. &c,66
63. &a,s
64. &b,5
65. =a,a,17 //d = MUL(5^(j-1),5)
66. &s,d
67. +c,5 //c = 71
68. &a,s //a = 5^j
69. &b,f //b = reverse(2^k)
70. =a,a,1 //d = CMP(s,f)
71. =d,1,61 //s < f
72. =d,0,75 //s = f
73. +k,1 //s > f
74. =a,a,29
75. % //Dyson's conjecture is false
```

This register machine program for Dyson's conjecture has 76 instructions. Computing its size, we get $\mathbf{C}_U$(Dyson's conjecture) $\leq$ 1067 when using R_1 = a, R_2 = e, R_3 = f, R_4 = d, R_5 = b, R_6 = c, R_7 = n, R_8 = q, R_9 = E, R_{10} = r, R_{11} = s, R_{12} = F, R_{13} = k, R_{14} = j.

8. Final Comments

We have calculated the upper bounds on the $\mathbf{C}_U$ complexity of these six mathematical statements: Goldbach's conjecture 756, Legendre's conjecture 416, Fermat's last theorem 738, Dyson's conjecture 1067, the Riemann hypothesis 2741, and the four color theorem 3289. Accordingly, Legendre's conjecture, Fermat's last theorem and Goldbach's conjecture are in $\mathbf{C}_{U,1}$, Dyson's conjecture is in $\mathbf{C}_{U,2}$, the Riemann hypothesis is in $\mathbf{C}_{U,3}$, and the four color theorem is in $\mathbf{C}_{U,4}$.

It is still possible to improve the size of the programs for these statements or to use a different implementation of the method. We conjec-

ture that, with the possible exception of the four color theorem, our ranking of the six mathematical statements cannot be improved. It is open whether for every $i \geq 1$, $\mathbf{C}_{U,i} \subset \mathbf{C}_{U,i+1}$.

Finally, the halting problem can be expressed in Peano arithmetic (PA), so reducing a problem to an instance of the halting problem shows the possibility of expressing that problem in PA. In some cases this was evident without any reducibility; in others, like the Riemann hypothesis, this was not so clear. In all cases it is interesting to look for solutions of the problem in PA (see [14] for a discussion of Fermat's last theorem).

Acknowledgment

We thank M. Dinneen, J. Hertel, and N. Kasto for comments, suggestions, and extensive discussions which improved this paper. We thank also the anonymous referee for critical comments and useful suggestions.

This work was supported in part by The Andrea von Braun Foundation, Munich, under the grant for "Artistic Forms and Complexity".

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