VC-DIMENSION OF SHORT PRESBURGER FORMULAS

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ABSTRACT. We study VC-dimension of *short formulas* in Presburger Arithmetic, defined to have a bounded number of variables, quantifiers and atoms. We give both lower and upper bounds, which are tight up to a polynomial factor in the bit length of the formula.

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of VC-dimension was introduced by Vapnik and Červonenkis in [VC71]. Although originally motivated by applications in probability and statistics, it was quickly adapted to computer science, learning theory, combinatorics, logic and other areas. We refer to [Vap98] for the extensive review of the subject, and to [Che16] for an accessible introduction to combinatorial and logical aspects.

1.1. **Definitions of VC-dimension and VC-density.** Let X be a set and $S \subseteq 2^X$ be a family of subsets of X. For a subset $A \subseteq X$, let $S \cap A \coloneqq \{S \cap A : S \in S\}$ be the family of subsets of A cut out by S. A subset $A \subseteq X$ is *shattered* by S if $S \cap A = 2^A$, i.e., for every subset $B \subseteq A$, there is $S \in S$ with $B = S \cap A$. The largest size |A| among all subsets $A \subseteq X$ shattered by S is called the *VC-dimension* of S, denoted by VC(S). If no such largest size |A| exists, we write VC(S) = ∞ .

The shatter function $\pi_{\mathcal{S}}$ is defined as follows:

$$\pi_{\mathcal{S}}(n) = \max\left\{ |\mathcal{S} \cap A| : A \subseteq X, |A| = n \right\},\$$

The *VC*-density of \mathcal{S} , denoted by $vc(\mathcal{S})$ is defined as

$$\inf \left\{ r \in \mathbb{R}^+ : \operatorname{limsup}_{n \to \infty} \frac{\pi_{\mathcal{S}}(n)}{n^r} < \infty \right\}.$$

The classical theorem of Sauer and Shelah [Sa72, Sh72] states that

$$\operatorname{vc}(\mathcal{S}) \leq \operatorname{VC}(\mathcal{S}).$$

In other words, $\pi_{\mathcal{S}}(n) = O(n^d)$ in case \mathcal{S} has finite VC-dimension d. In general, VC-density can be much smaller than VC-dimension, and also behaves a lot better under various operations on \mathcal{S} .

1.2. NIP theories and bounds on VC-dimension/density. It is of interest to distinguish the first-order theories in which VC-dimension and VC-density behave nicely. Let \mathcal{L} be a first-order language and M be an \mathcal{L} -structure. Consider a partitioned \mathcal{L} -formula $F(\mathbf{x}; \mathbf{y})$ whose free variables are separated into two groups $\mathbf{x} \in M^m$ (objects) and $\mathbf{y} \in M^n$ (parameters). For each parameter tuple $\mathbf{y} \in M^n$, let

$$S_{\mathbf{y}} = \{ \mathbf{x} \in M^m : \mathbf{M} \models F(\mathbf{x}; \mathbf{y}) \}.$$

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Associated to F is the family $S_F = \{S_y : y \in M^n\}$. We say that F is NIP, short for "F does not have the independence property", if S_F has finite VC-dimension. The structure M is called NIP if every partitioned \mathcal{L} -formula F is NIP in M.

One prominent example of an NIP structure is *Presburger Arithmetic* $PA = (\mathbb{Z}, <, +)$, which is the first-order structure on \mathbb{Z} with only addition and inequalities. The main result of this paper are the lower and upper bounds on the VC-dimensions of PA-formulas. These are contrasted with the following notable bounds on the VC-density:

Theorem 1 ([A+16]). Given a PA-formula $F(\mathbf{x}; \mathbf{y})$ with $\mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{Z}^n$, $vc(\mathcal{S}_F) \leq n$ holds.

In other words, VC-density in the setting of PA can be bounded solely by the dimension of the parameter variables \mathbf{y} . It cannot grow very large when we vary the number of object variables \mathbf{x} , quantified variables or the description of F. This follows from a more general result in [A+16], which says that every *quasi-o-minimal* structure satisfies a similar bound on the VC-density. We refer to [A+16] for the precise statement of this result and for the powerful techniques used to bound the VC-density.

Karpinski and Macintyre raised a natural question whether similar bounds would hold for the VC-dimension. In [KM97], they gave upper bounds for the VC-dimension in some o-minimal structures (PA is not one), which are polynomial in the parameter dimension n. Later, they extended their arguments in [KM00] to obtain upper bounds on the VC-density, this time linear in n. Also in [KM00], the authors claimed to have an effective bound on the VC-dimensions of PA-formulas. However, we cannot locate such an explicit bound in any papers. To our knowledge, no effective upper bounds on the VC-dimensions of general PA-formulas exist in the literature.

1.3. Main results. We consider PA-formulas with a fixed number of variables (both quantified and free). Clearly, this also restricts the number of quantifier alternations in F. The atoms in F are linear inequalities in these variables with some integer constants and coefficients (in binary). Given such a formula F, denote by $\ell(F)$ the length of F, i.e., the total bit length of all symbols, operations, integer coefficients and constants in F.

We can further restrict the form of a PA-formula by requiring that it does not contain too many inequalities. For fixed k and t, denote by Short-PA_{k,t} the family of PA-formulas with at most k variables (both free and quantified) and t inequalities. When k and t are clear, a formula $F \in$ Short-PA_{k,t} is simply called a *short Presburger formula*. In this case, $\ell(F)$ is essentially the total length of a bounded number of integer coefficients and constants. Our main result is a lower bound on the VC-dimension of short Presburger formulas:

Theorem 2. For every d, there is a short Presburger formula $F(x; y) = \exists \mathbf{u} \forall \mathbf{v} \Psi(x, y, \mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v})$ in the class Short-PA_{10,18} with

$$\ell(F) = O(d^2)$$
 and $VC(F) \ge d$.

Here x, y are singletons and $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{Z}^6, \mathbf{v} \in \mathbb{Z}^2$. The expression Ψ is quantifier-free, and can be computed in probabilistic polynomial time in d.

So in contrast with VC-density, the VC-dimension of a PA-formula F crucially depends on the actual length $\ell(F)$. For the formulas in the theorem, we have:

$$\operatorname{VC}(F) = \Omega(\ell(F)^{1/2}), \text{ and } \operatorname{vc}(F) \le 1,$$

where the last inequality follows by Theorem 1. Note that if one is allowed an unrestricted number of inequalities in F, a similar lower bound to Theorem 2 can be easily established

by an elementary combinatorial argument. However, since the formula F is short, we can only work with a few integer coefficients and constants.

The construction in Theorem 2 uses a number-theoretic technique that employs continued fractions to encode a union of many arithmetic progressions. This technique was explored earlier in [NP17b] to show that various decision problems with short Presburger sentences are intractable. In this construction we need to pick a prime roughly larger than 4^d , which can be done in probabilistic polynomial time in d. This can be modified to a deterministic algorithm with run-time polynomial in d, at the cost of increasing $\ell(F)$:

Theorem 3. For every d, there is a short Presburger formula $F(x; y) = \exists \mathbf{u} \forall \mathbf{v} \Psi(x, y, \mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v})$ in the class Short-PA_{10.18} with

$$\ell(F) = O(d^3)$$
 and $VC(F) \ge d$.

Here x, y are singletons and $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{Z}^6, \mathbf{v} \in \mathbb{Z}^2$. The expression Ψ is quantifier-free, and can be computed in deterministic polynomial time in d.

We conclude with the following polynomial upper bound for the VC-dimension of all (not necessarily short) Presburger formulas in a fixed number of variables:

Theorem 4. For a Presburger formula $F(\mathbf{x}; \mathbf{y})$ with at most k variables (both free and quantified), we have:

$$\operatorname{VC}(F) = O(\ell(F)^c),$$

where c and the $O(\cdot)$ constant depend only on k.

This upper bound implies that Theorem 2 is tight up to a polynomial factor. The proof of Theorem 4 uses an algorithm from [NP17a] for decomposing a semilinear set, i.e., one defined by a PA-formula, into polynomially many simpler pieces. Each such piece is a polyhedron intersecting a periodic set, whose VC-dimensions can be bounded by elementary arguments.

We note that the number of quantified variables is vital in Theorem 4. In §3.3, we construct PA-formulas F(x; y) with x, y singletons and many quantified variables, for which VC(F) grows doubly exponentially compared to $\ell(F)$.

2. Proofs

We start with Theorem 3, and then show how it can be modified to give Theorem 2.

Proof of Theorem 3. Let $A = \{1, 2, ..., d\}$ and $S = 2^A$. Since S contains all of the subsets of A, we have VC(S) = d. We order the sets in S lexicographically. In other words, for $S, S' \in S$, we have S < S' if $\sum_{i \in S} 2^i < \sum_{i \in S'} 2^i$. Thus, the sets in S can be indexed as $S_0 < S_1 < \cdots < S_{2^d-1}$, where $S_0 = \emptyset, S_1 = \{1\}, \ldots, S_{2^d-1} = A$. Next, define:

(2.1)
$$T \coloneqq \bigsqcup_{0 \le j < 2^d} \{i + dj : i \in S_j\}.$$

We show in Lemma 5 below that the set T is definable by a short PA formula $G_T(t)$ with only 8 quantified variables and 18 inequalities. Using this, it is clear that the parametrized formula

$$F_T(x;y) \coloneqq G_T(x+dy)$$

describes the family S (with y as the parameter), and thus has VC dimension d. We remark that G_T has only 1 quantifer alternation (see below).

Lemma 5. The set T is definable by a short Presburger formula $G_T(t) = \exists \mathbf{u} \forall \mathbf{v} \Psi(t, \mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v})$ with $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{Z}^6$, $\mathbf{v} \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ and Ψ a Boolean combination of at most 18 inequalities in $t, \mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v}$ with binary length $\ell(\Psi) = O(d^3)$.

Proof. Our strategy is to represent the set T as a union of arithmetic progressions (APs). In [NP17b], given d progressions $AP_i = \{a_i, a_i + c_i, \ldots, a_i + b_i c_i\}$, we gave a method to define $AP_1 \cup \cdots \cup AP_d$ by a short Presburger formula of length polynomial in $\sum \log(a_i b_i c_i)$. For each $1 \leq i \leq d$, let $J_i = \{j : 0 \leq j < 2^d, i \in S_j\}$. From (2.1), we have:

(2.2)
$$T = \bigsqcup_{i=1}^{a} (i + dJ_i)$$

From the lexicographic ordering of the sets S_j , we can easily describe each set J_i as:

(2.3)
$$J_i = \{m + 2^{i-1} + 2^i n : 0 \le m < 2^{i-1}, 0 \le n < 2^{d-i}\}$$

So each set J_i is not simply an AP, but the Minkowski sum of two APs. However, we can easily modify each J_i into an AP by defining:

(2.4)
$$J'_i = \{2^d (m+2^{i-1}) + 2^i n : 0 \le m < 2^{i-1}, 0 \le n < 2^{d-i}\}.$$

It is clear that J'_i is an AP that starts at 2^{d+i-1} and ends at $2^{d+i} - 2^i$ with step size 2^i . Let $AP_i := i + dJ'_i$ and

(2.5)
$$T' = \bigsqcup_{i=1}^{d} \operatorname{AP}_{i}$$

This is a union of d arithmetic progressions. Using the construction from [NP17b], we can define T' by a short Presburger formula:

$$t' \in T' \quad \iff \quad \exists \mathbf{w} \quad \forall \mathbf{v} \quad \Phi(t', \mathbf{w}, \mathbf{v}),$$

where $t' \in \mathbb{Z}$, $\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{v} \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ and Φ is a Boolean combination of at most 10 inequalities. This construction works by finding a single continued fraction $\alpha = [a_0; b_0, a_1, b_1, \dots, a_{2d-1}]$ whose successive convergents encode the starting and ending points of our AP₁,..., AP_d. We refer to Section 4 in [NP17b] for the details. The largest term in each AP_i is $\gamma_i = i + d(2^{d+i} - 2^i)$, which has binary length O(d). Each term a_k and b_k in the continued fraction α is at most the product of these γ_i . Since $\prod_{i=1}^d \gamma_i$ has binary length $O(d^2)$, and so does each term a_k and b_k . Therefore, the final continued fraction α is a rational number p/q with binary length $O(d^3)$. This implies that $\ell(\Phi) = O(d^3)$ as well.

To get a formula for T, note that from (2.2), (2.3), (2.4) and (2.5), we have:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} t\in T & \iff & \exists \ t',i,r,s \ : \ t'\in T', & 1\leq i\leq d, & 0\leq s<2^d, \\ & t'=i+d(2^dr+s), & t=i+d(r+s).^1 \end{array}$$

Here r and s respectively stand for $m + 2^{i-1}$ and $2^i n$ in (2.3). Using $\exists \mathbf{w} \forall \mathbf{v} \Phi(t', \mathbf{w}, \mathbf{v})$ to express $t' \in T'$, we get a formula $G_T(t)$ defining T with 8 quantified variables $t', i, r, s \in \mathbb{Z}$, $\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{v} \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ and 18 inequalities. Note that t', i, r, s and \mathbf{w} are existential variables, so G_T has the form $\exists \mathbf{u} \forall \mathbf{v} \Psi(t, \mathbf{u}, \mathbf{v})$ with $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{Z}^6$, $\mathbf{v} \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ and Ψ quantifier-free. \Box

¹Each equality is a pair of inequalities.

Proof of Theorem 2. Note that the above construction of F_T and G_T is deterministic with run-time polynomial in d. For Theorem 2, only the existence of a short PA formula with high VC-dimension is needed. In this case, our lower bound can be improved to $VC(F) \ge c\sqrt{\ell(F)}$, for some c > 0, as follows. Recall that $\gamma_i = i + d(2^{d+i} - 2^i)$ is the largest term in $AP_i = i + dJ'_i$ in (2.5). Pick the smallest prime p larger than $\max(\gamma_1, \ldots, \gamma_d) \approx d4^d$. This prime p can substitute for the large number M in Section 4.1 of [NP17b], which was (deterministically) chosen as $1 + \prod_{i=1}^d \gamma_i$, so that it is larger and coprime to all γ_i 's. The rest of the construction follows verbatim. Note that $\log p = O(d)$ by Chebyshev's theorem. So the final continued fraction $\alpha = [a_0; b_0, a_1, b_1, \ldots, a_{2d-1}]$ has length $O(d^2)$, because now each term a_k, b_k has length at most $\log p$. This completes the proof.

Proof of Theorem 4. Let $F(\mathbf{x}; \mathbf{y})$ be any PA formula with free variables $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{Z}^m$, $\mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{Z}^n$ and n' other quantified variables, where m, n, n' are fixed. Let k = m + n + n'. In [NP17a] (Theorem 5.2), we gave the following polynomial decomposition on the semilinear set defined by F:

(2.6)
$$\Sigma_F \coloneqq \{ (\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) \in \mathbb{Z}^{m+n} : F(\mathbf{x}; \mathbf{y}) = \text{true} \} = \bigsqcup_{j=1}^r R_j \cap T_j.$$

Here each R_j is a polyhedron in \mathbb{R}^{m+n} , and each $T_j \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^{m+n}$ is a periodic set, i.e., a union of several cosets of some lattice $\mathcal{T}_j \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^{m+n}$. In other words, the set defined by F is a union of r pieces, each of which is a polyhedron intersecting a periodic set. Our decomposition is algorithmic, in the sense that the pieces R_j and lattices \mathcal{T}_j can be found in time $O(\ell(F)^c)$, with c and $O(\cdot)$ depending only on k. The algorithm describes each piece R_j by a system of inequalities and each lattice \mathcal{T}_j by a basis. Denote by $\ell(R_j)$ and $\ell(\mathcal{T}_j)$ the total binary lengths of these systems and basis vectors, respectively. These also satisfy:

(2.7)
$$\sum_{j=1}^{r} \ell(R_j) + \ell(\mathcal{T}_j) = O(\ell(F)^c).$$

Each R_j can be written as the intersection $H_{j1} \cap \cdots \cap H_{jf_j}$, where each H_{jk} is a halfspace in \mathbb{R}^{m+n} , and f_j is the number of facets of R_j . Note that $f_j \leq \ell(R_j) = O(\ell(F)^c)$. We rewrite (2.6) as:

(2.8)
$$\Sigma_F = \bigsqcup_{j=1}^r H_{j1} \cap \cdots \cap H_{jf_j} \cap T_j.$$

Therefore, the set Σ_F is a Boolean combination of $f_1 + \cdots + f_r$ half-spaces and r periodic sets. In total, there are

(2.9)
$$f_1 + \dots + f_r + r = O(\ell(F)^c)$$

of those basic sets.

For a set $\Gamma \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{m+n}$ and $\mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{Z}^n$, denote by $\Gamma_{\mathbf{y}}$ the subset $\{\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{Z}^m : (\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) \in \Gamma\}$ and by \mathcal{S}_{Γ} the family $\{\Gamma_{\mathbf{y}} : \mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{Z}^n\}$. For a half-space $H \subset \mathbb{R}^{m+n}$, it is easy to see that $\operatorname{VC}(\mathcal{S}_H) = 1$. For each periodic set T_j with period lattice \mathcal{T}_j , the family \mathcal{S}_{T_j} has cardinality at most $\det(\mathcal{T}_j \cap \mathbb{Z}^n) \leq 2^{O(\ell(\mathcal{T}_j))}$. Thus, we have

(2.10)
$$\operatorname{VC}(\mathcal{S}_{T_i}) \le \log |\mathcal{S}_{T_i}| = O(\ell(\mathcal{T}_j)).$$

Let $\Gamma_1, \ldots, \Gamma_t \subseteq \mathbb{Z}^{m+n}$ be any t sets with $VC(\mathcal{S}_{\Gamma_i}) = d_i$. By an application of the Sauer-Shelah lemma ([Sa72, Sh72]), if Σ is any Boolean combination of $\Gamma_1, \ldots, \Gamma_t$, then we can bound $VC(\mathcal{S}_{\Sigma})$ as:

$$\operatorname{VC}(\mathcal{S}_{\Sigma}) = O((d_1 + \dots + d_t) \log(d_1 + \dots + d_t)).$$

Applying this to (2.8), we get $\operatorname{VC}(\mathcal{S}_{\Sigma_F}) = O(\ell \log \ell)$, where

$$\ell = \sum_{j=1}^r \left(\operatorname{VC}(\mathcal{S}_{T_j}) + \sum_{j'=1}^{J_j} \operatorname{VC}(\mathcal{S}_{H_{jj'}}) \right) \leq \sum_{j=1}^r \operatorname{VC}(\mathcal{S}_{T_j}) + f_j.$$

By (2.7), (2.9) and (2.10), we have $\ell = O(\ell(F)^c)$. We conclude that $VC(F) = O(\ell(F)^{2c})$.

3. FINAL REMARKS AND OPEN PROBLEMS

3.1. The proof of Theorem 2 is almost completely effective except for finding a small prime p larger than a given integer N. This problem is considered to be computationally very difficult in the deterministic case, and only exponential algorithms are known (see [LO87, TCH12]).

3.2. Our constructed short formula F is of the form $\exists \forall$. It is interesting to see if similar polynomial lower bounds are obtainable with existential short formulas. For such a formula $F(\mathbf{x}; \mathbf{y}) = \exists \mathbf{z} \Phi(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}, \mathbf{z})$, the quantifier-free expression $\Phi(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}, \mathbf{z})$ captures the set of integer points Γ lying in a union of some polyhedra P_i 's. Note that the total number of polyhedra and their facets should be bounded, since we are working with short formulas. Therefore, F simply capture the pairs (\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) in the projection of Γ along the \mathbf{z} direction. Denote this set by $\operatorname{proj}(\Gamma)$. The work of Barvinok and Woods [BW03] shows that $\operatorname{proj}(\Gamma)$ has a *short generating function*, and can even be counted efficiently in polynomial time. In our construction, the set that yields high VC-dimension is a union arithmetic progressions, which cannot be counted efficiently unless $\mathsf{P} = \mathsf{NP}$ (see [SM73]). This difference indicates that $\operatorname{proj}(\Gamma)$ has a much simpler combinatorial structure, and may not attain a high VC-dimension.

3.3. One can ask about the VC-dimension of a general PA-formula with no restriction on the number of variables, quantifier alternations or atoms. Fischer and Rabin famously showed in [FR74] that PA has decision complexity at least doubly exponential in the general setting. For every $\ell > 0$, they constructed a formula $\operatorname{Prod}_{\ell}(a, b, c)$ of length $O(\ell)$ so that for every triple

$$0 \le a, b, c < 2^{2^{2^{\ell}}}$$

we have $\operatorname{Prod}_{\ell}(a, b, c) = \text{true}$ if and only if ab = c. Using this "partial multiplication" relation, one can easily construct a formula $F_{\ell}(x; y)$ of length $O(\ell)$ and VC-dimension at least $2^{2^{\ell}}$. This can be done by constructing a set similar to T in (2.1) with d replaced by $2^{2^{\ell}}$ using $\operatorname{Prod}_{\ell}$. We leave the details to the reader.

Regarding upper bound, Oppen showed in [Opp78] that any PA-formula F of length ℓ is equivalent to a quantifier-free formula G of length $2^{2^{2^{c\ell}}}$ for some universal constant c > 0. This implies that VC(G), and thus VC(F), is at most triply exponential in $\ell(F)$. We conjecture that a doubly exponential upper bound on VC(F) holds in the general setting.

It is unlikely that such an upper bound could be established by straightforward quantifier elimination, which generally results in triply exponential blow up (see [Wei97, Thm 3.1]).

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