

# A Lossy data compression based on string matching: preliminary analysis and suboptimal algorithms

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INSTITUT NATIONAL DE RECHERCHE EN INFORMATIQUE ET EN AUTOMATIQUE

*A Lossy Data Compression  
Based on String Matching:  
Preliminary Analysis and Suboptimal Algorithms*

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**A LOSSY DATA COMPRESSION BASED ON STRING MATCHING:  
Preliminary Analysis and Suboptimal Algorithms**

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**Abstract**

A practical suboptimal algorithm (source coding) for lossy (non-faithful) data compression is discussed. This scheme is based on an approximate string matching, and it naturally extends lossless (faithful) Lempel-Ziv data compression scheme. The construction of the algorithm is based on a careful probabilistic analysis of an approximate string matching problem that is of its own interest. This extends Wyner-Ziv model to lossy environment. In this conference version, we consider only Bernoulli model (i.e., memoryless channel) but our results hold under much weaker probabilistic assumptions.

**UN ALGORITHME DE COMPRESSION DE DONNÉES AVEC PERTES:  
Analyse préliminaire et algorithmes sous optimaux**

**Résumé**

Nous présentons un algorithme sous-optimal mais pratique pour la compression de données avec pertes. Le schéma est basé sur une recherche approximative de motifs appliquée avec l'algorithme de compression sans perte de Lempel-Ziv. La construction de l'algorithme repose sur une analyse fine d'un modèle probabiliste de la recherche approximative de motifs. Nous étendons le modèle de Wyner-Ziv à un environnement avec pertes. Dans ce papier nous restreignons notre analyse au modèle dit de Bernoulli (canal sans mémoire) mais nos résultats tiennent sous des hypothèses probabilistes plus faibles.

# A LOSSY DATA COMPRESSION BASED ON STRING MATCHING: Preliminary Analysis and Suboptimal Algorithms\*

March 1, 1994

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## Abstract

A practical suboptimal algorithm (source coding) for lossy (non-faithful) data compression is discussed. This scheme is based on an approximate string matching, and it naturally extends lossless (faithful) Lempel-Ziv data compression scheme. The construction of the algorithm is based on a careful probabilistic analysis of an approximate string matching problem that is of its own interest. This extends Wyner-Ziv model to lossy environment. In this conference version, we consider only Bernoulli model (i.e., memoryless channel) but our results hold under much weaker probabilistic assumptions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Repeated patterns and related phenomena in words (sequences, strings) play a central role in many facets of telecommunications and theoretical computer science, notably in coding theory and data compression, in the theory of formal languages, and in the design and analysis of algorithms. For example: in faithful data compressions, such a repeated subsequence can be used to reduce the size of the original sequence (e.g., universal data compression schemes [14, 23, 21]); in exact string matching algorithms the longest suffix that matches a substring of the pattern string is used for "fast" shift of the pattern over a text string (cf. Knuth-Morris-Pratt and Boyer-Moore [1]; see also [7]).

However, in practice *approximate* repeated patterns are even more important. Non-faithful (or lossy) data compression and molecular sequence comparison are most notable examples. In this paper, we shall use approximate pattern matching to design suboptimal lossy (non-faithful) data compression. Hereafter, we shall think in terms of data compression, but most of our analysis and algorithms can be directly used to molecular sequences comparison (e.g., finding approximate palidroms).

We first briefly review some aspects of the distortion theory to put our results in the proper perspective. The reader is referred to [8, 9] for more details.

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Consider a stationary and ergodic sequence  $\{X_k\}_{k=-\infty}^{\infty}$  taking values in a finite alphabet  $\mathcal{A}$  (we later restrict our analysis to the so called Bernoulli model in which symbols in  $\{X_k\}$  are generated independently). For simplicity of presentation, we consider only binary alphabet  $\mathcal{A} = \{0, 1\}$ . We write  $X_m^n$  to denote  $X_m X_{m+1} \dots X_n$ .

In the data compression, one investigates the following problem: Imagine a source of information generating a block  $x_m^n = (x_m, \dots, x_n)$  which is a realization of the process  $X_m^n$ . To send it efficiently one codes it into another sequence  $y_1 \dots y_\ell$  of length  $\ell$ . Then, the compression factor is defined as  $c(x_m^n) = \ell/n \leq 1$  and its expected value is  $C = Ec(X_1^n)$ . What are the achievable values of  $C$  for lossless and lossy data compressions?

It is well known [8, 9, 12, 13, 23] that the average compression factor in a lossless data compression can asymptotically reach entropy rate,  $h$ . For the lossy transmission, one needs to introduce a measure of fidelity to find the achievable region of the compression factor  $C$ . We restrict our analysis to Hamming distance defined as  $d_n(x_1^n, \tilde{x}_1^n) = n^{-1} \sum_{i=1}^n d_1(x_i, \tilde{x}_i)$  where  $d_1(x, \tilde{x}) = 0$  for  $x = \tilde{x}$  and 1 otherwise ( $x, \tilde{x} \in \mathcal{A}$ ). Let us now fix  $D > 0$ . Roughly speaking, a data compression or a code is called *non-faithful* or *lossy* or *D-faithful* if a set of sequences  $x_1^n$  lying within the distance  $D$  of a representative sequence  $\tilde{x}_1^n$  is coded as  $\tilde{x}_1^n$ .

The optimal compression factor depends on the so called rate-distortion function  $R(D)$ . This is defined as follows (we give the definition of the operational rate-distortion function): Let  $B_D(w_n)$  be the set of all sequences of length  $n$  whose distance from the center  $w_n$  is smaller or equal to  $D$ , that is,  $B_D(w_n) = \{x_1^n : d_n(x_1^n, w_n) \leq D\}$ . We call the set  $B_D(w_n)$  a  $D$ -ball. Consider now the set  $\mathcal{A}^n$  of all sequences of length  $n$ , and let  $\mathcal{S}_n$  be a subset of  $\mathcal{A}^n$ . We define  $N(D, \mathcal{S}_n)$  as the *minimum* number of  $D$ -balls needed to cover  $\mathcal{S}_n$ . Then<sup>1</sup>

$$R_n(D, \varepsilon) = \min_{\mathcal{S}_n : P(\mathcal{S}_n) \geq 1 - \varepsilon} \frac{\log N(D, \mathcal{S}_n)}{n}.$$

The operation rate-distortion is (cf. [12, 16])

$$R(D) = \lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} R_n(D, \varepsilon). \quad (1)$$

Kieffer [12, 13] and Ornstein and Shields [16] proved that the compression factor in a  $D$ -faithful data compression is asymptotically equal to  $R(D)$ , and this cannot be improved. (Observe that  $R(0) = h$ .) Note, however, that to construct an optimal data compression one needs to “guess” the optimal (i.e., minimum) cover of the set  $\mathcal{A}^n$  by  $D$ -balls. (This is actually identical to guessing a probability measure on  $\mathcal{A}^n$  that minimizes the mutual information [8, 12, 18] which is equally difficult task!).

In this paper, we propose a practical suboptimal lossy data compression scheme that extends the Lempel-Ziv scheme and that achieves rate  $r(D)$  which is asymptotically optimal for  $D \rightarrow 0$ , that is,  $\lim_{D \rightarrow 0} r(D) = h$ . Our scheme reduces to the following approximate pattern matching problem. Let the “database” sequence  $x_1^n$  be given. Find the longest  $L_n$  such that there exists  $i \leq n$  in the database satisfying  $d(x_i^{i-1+L_n}, x_{n+1}^{n+L_n}) \leq D$ . We shall propose an algorithm to find  $L_n$  that runs on the average  $O(n \log^2 n)$  (but  $O(n^2 \log n)$  in the worst case). More importantly, we also propose two compression schemes that are based on this algorithm and our probabilistic analysis. Actually, the real engine behind this study

<sup>1</sup>All logarithms in this paper are with base 2 unless otherwise explicitly stated.

(and its algorithmic issues) is a probabilistic analysis of an approximate pattern matching problem.

Our probabilistic results are confined to the Bernoulli model (however, in the forthcoming journal version of the paper we extend them to mixing models). Thus, we assume that: *symbols from  $\mathcal{A}$  are generated independently and "0" occurs with probability  $p$  while "1" with probability  $q = 1 - p$ .* We prove that  $L_n/\log n \rightarrow 1/\tau(D)$  in probability (pr.) where  $\tau(D)$  represents the rate distortion, and in general  $\tau(D) \geq R(D)$ , except the symmetric case ( $p = q = 0.5$ ) in which  $\tau(D) = R(D)$ . But, we shall show that  $\lim_{D \rightarrow 0} \tau(D) = \lim_{D \rightarrow 0} R(D) = h$ . Surprisingly enough,  $L_n/\log n$  does not converge almost surely (a.s.) but rather oscillates between two random variables  $s_n/\log n$  and  $H_n/\log n$  that converge almost surely to two *different* constants. This kind of behavior was already recognized in the faithful case (cf. [19, 20]).

Our results extends those of Wyner and Ziv [21] and Szpankowski [19, 20] to lossy transmission. We observe, however, that in the lossless case the natural data structure around which practical schemes could be built is a suffix tree (cf. [19, 20]) or digital search tree. The situation with lossy data compression is much more complicated since the decoder at any time has as a database a sample of the *distorted* process. We shall propose two solutions to remedy this problem.

Our paper is closed in spirit to the one of Steinberg and Gutman [18] who also considered a practical data compression scheme based on a string matching. But the authors of [18] studied the so called waiting time while we concentrate on approximate prefix analysis. Finally, we should mention that there are results (cf. [12, 16]) indicating the existence of the optimal (thus, achieving the rate  $R(D)$ ) data compression. However, these scheme are exponentially expensive in implementations (cf. [18]). Very recently, Zhang and Wei [22] proposed an asymptotically optimal lossy data compression that is based on the so called "gold washing" or "information-theoretical sieve" method.

## 2. MAIN RESULTS

After formulating the pattern matching problem, we present some analytical (probabilistic) results. These results are of prime importance for the algorithmic issues which are discussed next.

### 2.1 Analytical Results

Let  $\{X_k\}_{k=1}^{\infty}$  be a stationary ergodic sequence generated over a binary alphabet  $\mathcal{A} = \{0, 1\}$ . Wyner and Ziv [21] (see also [15, 19]) proposed the following mutation of the Lempel-Ziv data compression scheme: Assume the first  $n$  symbols,  $X_1^n$ , are known to the transmitter and the receiver. Call it the *database* sequence. Find the longest prefix of  $X_{n+1}^{\infty}$  that occurred at least once in the database. Say, this occurrence is at position  $i_0 \leq n$  and it is of length  $L_n - 1$ . It was proved by Wyner and Ziv [21] that  $L_n/\log n \rightarrow 1/h$  in probability (pr.), where  $h$  is the entropy of the alphabet. However, Szpankowski [19, 20] showed that  $L_n/\log n$  does *not* converge almost surely (a.s.) to any constant but rather oscillates between two different constants.

Based on these results, Wyner and Ziv [21] proposed the following data compression scheme: The encoder sends the position  $i_0$  in the database, the length  $L_n - 1$  and one symbol, namely  $X_{L_n}$ . Using this information the decoder reconstructs the original message,

and both the encoder and the decoder enlarge the database to the right, that is, the new database becomes  $X_1^{n+L_n}$  or  $X_{L_n}^{n+L_n}$  (the so called sliding window scheme). Based on the probabilistic results discussed above, one easily concludes that the compression ratio of such an algorithm is equal to the entropy, and it is asymptotically optimal. This scheme is called a faithful data compression scheme.

In this paper, we discuss a scheme that directly extends the above algorithm to a lossy data transmission with a fidelity criterion. As in the introduction, we define the Hamming distance  $d(x_1, \tilde{x}_1^n)$  as the ratio of the number of mismatches between  $x_1^n$  and  $\tilde{x}_1^n$  to the length  $n$ , and we assume that the database  $X_1^n$  is given (see Section 2.2 for a detailed discussion of this point). We construct the longest prefix of  $X_{n+1}^\infty$  that is within a distance  $D > 0$  of a substring in the database. More precisely:

Let  $L_n$  be the length of the largest prefix of  $X_{n+1}^\infty$  such that there exists  $i \leq n$  so that  $d(X_i^{i-1+L_n}, X_{n+1}^{n+L_n}) \leq D$ .

We call  $L_n$  the *depth* to mimic the name adopted in the faithful case (cf. [19, 20]).

As in the faithful case, the quality of the compression depends on the probabilistic behavior of  $L_n$ . It turns out that its behavior depends on two other quantities, namely  $s_n$  and  $H_n$  defined in sequel.

The *height*  $H_n$  is the length of the longest substring in the database  $X_1^n$  for which there exists another substring in the database within the length  $D$ . More precisely: the height is equal to the largest  $K$  for which there exist  $1 \leq i, j \leq n$  such that  $d(X_i^{i-1+K}, X_j^{j-1+K}) \leq D$ . In the proof, we shall need another definition of  $H_n$  which is presented below. Let  $1(A)$  be the indicator function of the event  $A$ . Then, the following is true (this is a correct version of the definition presented in [4])

$$\{H_n \geq k\} = \bigcup_{l \geq k} \bigcup_{i, j=1}^n \left\{ \sum_{t=1}^l 1(X_i^{i-1+t} \neq X_j^{j-1+t}) \leq D l \right\}. \quad (2)$$

The *shortest path*  $s_n$  is defined as follows: Let  $\mathcal{W}_k$  be the set of words of length  $k$ , and  $w_k \in \mathcal{W}_k$ . The shortest path  $s_n$  is the longest  $k$  such that for every  $w_k \in \mathcal{W}_k$  there exists  $1 \leq i \leq n$  such that  $d(X_i^{i-1+k}, w_k) \leq D$ .

Now, we are in a position to present our main results. As mentioned before, in this preliminary version we discuss only Bernoulli model in which “0” occurs with probability  $p$  and “1” with probability  $q = 1 - p$ . We also define  $p_{\min} = \min\{p, q\}$  and  $P = p^2 + q^2$ . All proofs are delayed till the next section.

**Theorem 1.** *Let  $h(D, x) = (1 - D) \log((1 - D)/x) + D \log(D/(1 - x))$ . Then*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{s_n}{\log n} = \frac{1}{h(D, p_{\min})} \quad (a.s.), \quad (3)$$

and

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{H_n}{\log n} = \frac{2}{h(D, P)} \quad (a.s.), \quad (4)$$

for  $0 \leq D < p_{\min}$ . ■

**Remark.** Observe that for  $D \geq p_{\min}$  the shortest path  $s_n$  and the height  $H_n$  with high probability grow faster than logarithmic function. However, this case is not too interesting

from the algorithmic view point since the Hamming distance between the database sequence and a string consisting entirely either of zeros (when  $p_{\min} = q$ ) or of ones (when  $p_{\min} = p$ ) is smaller than  $D$  with high probability. Thus, we neglect this case in our analysis.

The next theorem tells us about the probabilistic behavior of  $L_n$  which is really responsible for the asymptotic behavior of a lossy data compression scheme discussed below.

**Theorem 2.** *Let*

$$x_0 = \begin{cases} \frac{D}{2} + \frac{\sqrt{p^2q^2 + D^2(p-q)^2 - 2Dpq(p-q)^2 - pq}}{2(p-q)} & \text{for } p \neq q \\ \frac{D}{2} & \text{for } p = q = 0.5 . \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

Define  $r(D) = -\log F$  where

$$F = \frac{p^{2p-2x_0+D} q^{2q+2x_0-D}}{x_0^{x_0} (p-x_0)^{p-x_0} (D-x_0)^{D-x_0} (q-D+x_0)^{q-D+x_0}} . \quad (6)$$

Then, for large  $n$  and a constant  $A$

$$Pr \left\{ \left| \frac{L_n}{\log n} - \frac{1}{r(D)} \right| \leq \varepsilon \right\} \leq 1 - \frac{A \log n}{n^\varepsilon} , \quad (7)$$

that is,  $L_n/\log n \rightarrow 1/r(D)$  (pr.). But,  $L_n/\log n$  does not converge almost surely. More precisely,

$$\liminf_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{L_n}{\log n} = \frac{1}{h(D, p_{\min})} \quad (a.s.) \quad \limsup_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{L_n}{\log n} = \frac{2}{h(D, P)} \quad (8)$$

provided  $0 \leq D \leq p_{\min}$ . ■

A lossy data compression scheme based on Theorem 2 is presented below. Observe that such a scheme is more intricate than in the lossless case due to the fact that the decoder and encoder have different database (i.e., the decoder has as a database a sample of the distorted process). Before we discuss algorithmic issues concerning such schemes, we first estimate the compression factor.

It is rather clear that any compression scheme based on Theorem 2 should have compression factor  $C$  equal to  $r(D)$ . Indeed, we observe that, as in the faithful case, any non-faithful data compression scheme based on the approximate string matching needs a pointer to the database and the length of the approximate matching. The former information costs  $\log n$  while the latter can be decoded in  $O(\log \log n)$  bits. In other words, instead of sending  $1/r(D) \cdot \log n$  bits of  $L_n$ , one transmits  $\log n + O(\log \log n)$  bits, thus the compression factor is  $r(D)$ .

In view of the above, one may ask how close is the rate (compression factor)  $r(D)$  of our scheme to the optimal compression factor equal to  $R(D)$  as defined in (1). An explicit formula for  $R(D)$  seems to be unknown except for the Bernoulli case. For the memoryless channel (i.e., Bernoulli model) it can be proved that  $R(D) = h - h(D)$  where  $h = -p \log p - q \log q$  is the entropy of the memoryless channel, and  $h(D) = -D \log D - (1-D) \log(1-D)$ . Note that  $R(0) = h$ . From Theorem 2 formulae (5)-(6) we conclude that the scheme is:



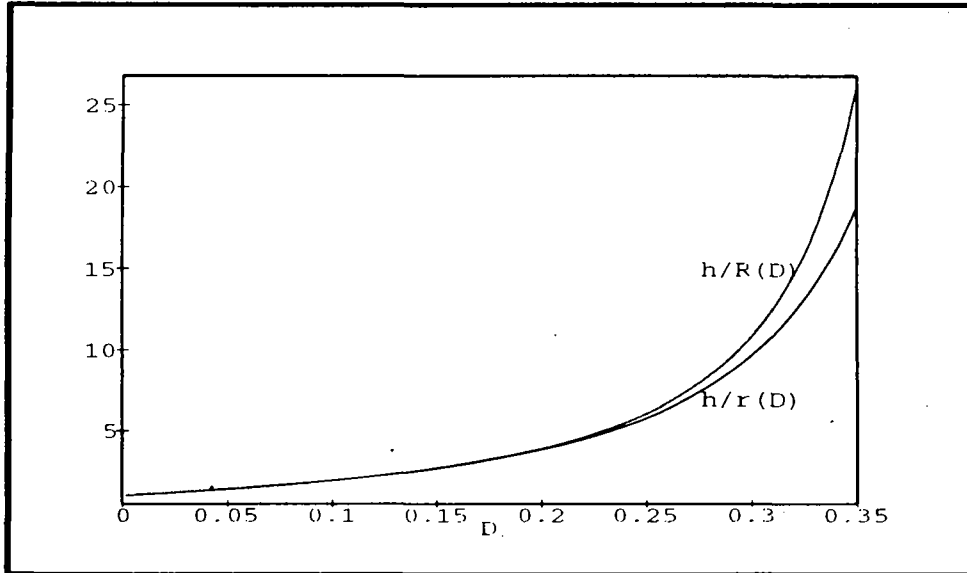


Figure 1: Comparison of gains in the compression factors for  $p = 0.4$

- asymptotically optimal in the limiting case, namely

$$\lim_{D \rightarrow 0} R(D) = \lim_{D \rightarrow 0} r(D) = h, \quad (9)$$

- asymptotically optimal in the symmetric Bernoulli case ( $p = q = 0.5$ ) since

$$r(D) = R(D) = \log 2 - h(D). \quad (10)$$

In general,  $r(D) \geq R(D)$ , however, a numerical study shows that the discrepancy between  $R(D)$  and  $r(D)$  is not too big as one may conclude from Figure 1 which presents the gains in compression factors, namely,  $h/r(D)$  and  $h/R(D)$  versus  $D$ .

## 2.2 Algorithmic Results

As mentioned above, the non-faithful data compression is much more intricate than the faithful one due to two reasons: In the faithful case, the prefix of length  $L_n$  can be found in  $O(n)$  time-complexity by a simple application of the suffix tree structure (cf. [19]). Secondly, the encoder and the decoder have different view on the database. These two problems must be solved in order to obtain an efficient lossy data compression based on Theorem 2, and they are discussed in sequel.

We start with an approximate pattern matching algorithm that finds the longest prefix of  $X_{n+1}^\infty$  that is within distance  $D$  of a substring in the database. We shall write below lowercase letter  $x_m^n$  to denote a realization of the process  $X_m^n$ .

The following algorithm is an adaptation of the idea already applied in Atallah *et al.* [3] to another problem.

Algorithm PREFIX

```

begin
  For  $i = n$  to 1 do
    Apply Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) to compute matches between
     $x_{n+1}^{n+i}$  and  $\{x_j^{j-1+i}\}_{j=1}^n$ ,
    Select  $j \leq n$  that gives the longest substring with  $(1 - D)\%$  of matches,
  doend
end

```

Clearly this algorithm works in  $O(n^2 \log n)$  time-complexity since the FFT needs  $O(n \log n)$  to compute matches between a string and *all* substrings of another string.

Although,  $O(n^2 \log n)$  algorithm sounds like a good solution, it is too expensive in most applications when PREFIX is expected to be run very often. One needs an algorithm that *most* of the time is linear or poly-linear. The next algorithms give us such a solution.

The problem with the previous PREFIX algorithm is the **do-loop** which requires  $n$  iterations. One possible solution (suggested by M. Atallah) is to apply binary search. The idea of the new algorithm PREFIX-BS is as follows. Let  $Y_1^n = X_{n+1}^{2n}$ . Using FFT we check if  $Y_1^n$  has  $(1 - D)\%$  of matches with any substrings of  $X_1^n$ . If the answer is YES we stop, otherwise we continue the binary search. That is, we divide the substring  $Y_1^n$  into two halves, and check whether  $Y_1^{n/2}$  approximately occurs (i.e., with less than  $D\%$  mismatches) in  $X_1^n$ . Again if answer is YES, we are fine and start investigating  $Y_1^{3n/4}$ . The only problem arises, however, when the algorithm returns NO. Say, it happens when checking  $Y_1^{n/2}$ . This, unfortunately does not mean – as in the classical binary search – that we can proceed to  $Y_1^{n/4}$  since still there is a possibility that  $Y_1^{3n/4}$  almost occur in  $X_1^n$ . There are two possibilities:

- (A) We use a heuristic PREFIX-BSH that searches for YES in the right-side of the string  $Y$ . More precisely, if NO occurred when investigating  $Y_1^{n/2}$  before we consider  $Y_1^{n/4}$  we check only few, say two, up-searches to see if YES does occur. For example, for NO at position  $Y_1^{n/2}$  we only investigate  $Y_1^{3n/4}$  and/or  $Y_1^{5n/8}$  for the approximate pattern matching. If in any case, we receive the answer YES, we continue exact binary search. Otherwise, we abandon the up-search, and the next check is at  $Y_1^{n/4}$ .
- (B) We append the binary search with the exact search to obtain the following algorithm that is further called PREFIX-BSE. As before, consider NO at  $Y_1^{n/2}$ . Then, we search all prefixes  $Y_1^{n/2+i}$  with  $i = 1, \dots, n/2$  until YES is obtained. If no YES occurred during such a search, we then move to  $Y_1^{n/4}$  as discussed above.

It is easy to see that the above two modifications work in  $O(n^2 \log n)$  in the worst case. But, as also easy to verify on the average their complexity is  $O(nP(\log n))$  where  $P(x)$  is a polynomial with respect to  $x$ . Algorithm PREFIX-BSH is faster, but it returns the true value only with high probability (whp) and sometimes we might be off. On the other hand, the algorithm PREFIX-BSE always returns the longest prefix, but is slower than the previous one. In our experimental studies, we used PREFIX-BSE.

To complete the description of our lossy data compression scheme we must describe how the database is updated. There are two options, too. In the first one, the database is sent faithfully by the encoder, for example using the Lempel-Ziv scheme. The lossy compression refers now only to the new transmissions and the references are made to the common copy of the database. We also systematically measure the compression ratio, and once it falls below

some specified level, a new faithful transmission of database is required. This procedure might be on-line.

The above scheme seems to be appropriate for situations when the database is kept unchanged for some time. For example, when sending pictures from a satellite, usually several pictures have the same background, hence the same database, so clearly our scheme is suitable for such transmission.

In the case when the database is varying quickly, another algorithm is needed. We suggest the following one. Instead of sending lossily a faithful database, we rather send faithfully (e.g., by Lempel-Ziv scheme) a non-faithful (distorted) database that is maintained simultaneously by the encoder and decoder.

We only briefly present the main idea of this scheme leaving details to a journal version. When a new prefix of length  $L_n$  of  $X_{n+1}^\infty$  is constructed, it is *not* added directly to the database but rather we add the center  $w_1^{L_n}$  of a ball  $B_D(w_1^{L_n})$  to which the prefix falls. For example, this can be accomplished by finding the prefix of length  $L_n$  by approximate pattern matching, say PREFIX-BSE, in the distorted database  $\tilde{X}_1^n$  that stores only the *centers* of balls  $B_D(\cdot)$ . Then, the encoder transmits faithfully the distorted version of the database  $\tilde{X}_1^n$  (i.e., the centers of  $D$ -balls). More precisely, the encoder sends only the pointer to the distorted database (maintained the same by the encoder and decoder) and the length  $L_n$ . Since the pointer costs  $\log n$  and by Theorem 2 we have  $L_n \sim 1/r(D) \log n$ , so one can conclude that the compression factor is asymptotically equal to  $r(D)$ .

### 3. PROBABILISTIC ANALYSIS

In this section, we present a sketch of proofs of Theorems 1 and 2. To simplify our analysis, we observe that the following formulation of the problem turns out to be asymptotically equivalent to our original model (see [19, 20] where a similar approach is used).

Let us generate unbounded sequences  $X(1), X(2), \dots, X(m+1)$  according to the original distribution, *independently* from each other. Let  $\hat{L}_m$  denote the length of the longest prefix of  $X(m+1)$  that lies within the distance  $D$  from the prefix of  $X(i)$  for some  $i = 1, 2, \dots, m$ ; let  $\hat{H}_m$  be the largest  $k$  such that

$$d(X_1^k(i), X_1^k(j)) < D \quad \text{for some } i, j, 1 \leq i < j \leq m;$$

finally, let  $\hat{s}_m$  denote the length of the longest string that has no approximate match among prefixes of  $X(1), X(2), \dots, X(m)$ .

One can show (cf. [19, 20]) that the behaviour of random variables  $\hat{L}_m, \hat{H}_m$  and  $\hat{s}_m$  defined for the above *independent model* resembles that of  $L_m, H_m$  and  $s_m$  in the original model. Thus, throughout the following section we do not distinguish between these two cases setting  $L_m = \hat{L}_m, H_m = \hat{H}_m$  and  $s_m = \hat{s}_m$ .

#### 3.1 The Shortest Length

We first prove Theorem 1 for  $s_n$ , that is, (3). Let us introduce some additional notation. To recall, we define  $\mathcal{W}_k$  as the set of words of length  $k$ . For a  $w_k \in \mathcal{W}_k$  we write  $P(w_k)$  for the probability of  $w_k$ . Let  $w_{\min} \in \mathcal{W}_k$  be such that  $P(w_{\min}) = \min_{w \in \mathcal{W}_k} \{P(w)\}$ . We also write  $P(B_D(w_{\min}))$  as the probability of a  $D$ -ball centered at  $w_{\min}$ . It is easy to verify that  $P(B_D(w_{\min})) = \min_{w_k \in \mathcal{W}_k} Pr\{B_D(w_k)\}$ .

As defined before, the shortest path  $s_n$  is the longest  $k$  such that for every  $w_k \in \mathcal{W}_k$  there exists  $1 \leq i \leq m$  such that  $d(X_1^k(i), w_k) \leq D$ . Clearly, the following is true

$$Pr\{s_m > k\} \leq m \min_{w_k} Pr\{d(X_1^k(i), w_k) \leq D\} = mP((B_D(w_{\min}))). \quad (11)$$

To estimate the above probability, one needs to assess  $P((B_D(w_{\min})))$ . Let  $p_{\min} = \min\{p, q\}$ . We note that  $w_{\min}$  is a string that consists of all zeros or all ones depending whether  $p < q$  or  $p > q$ , hence

$$P((B_D(w_{\min}))) = \sum_{j=0}^{kD} \binom{k}{j} p_{\min}^{k-j} (1 - p_{\min})^j.$$

By Stirling's formula we have

$$\binom{k}{kD} \sim \left( \frac{1}{((1-D)^{1-D} D^D)} \right)^k.$$

Thus, for large  $k$  and  $D \leq p_{\min}$

$$\left( \left( \frac{p_{\min}}{1-D} \right)^{1-D} \left( \frac{1-p_{\min}}{D} \right)^D \right)^k \leq P((B_D(w_{\min}))) \leq k \left( \left( \frac{p_{\min}}{1-D} \right)^{1-D} \left( \frac{1-p_{\min}}{D} \right)^D \right)^k.$$

In view of the above, we obtain  $P((B_D(w_{\min}))) \sim 2^{-kh(D, p_{\min})}$  where  $h(D, p_{\min}) = (1-D) \log((1-D)/p_{\min}) + D \log(D/(1-p_{\min}))$ . Thus, for  $k = \lfloor (1+\varepsilon)h^{-1}(D, p_{\min}) \log m \rfloor$  we conclude that  $Pr\{s_m > (1+\varepsilon)h^{-1}(D, p_{\min}) \log m\} \leq 1/m^\varepsilon$ , which proves the upper bound for the convergence in probability of  $s_m$ .

To get the lower bound for  $s_m$ , we proceed as follows. Note that

$$Pr\{s_m < k\} \leq \sum_{w_k} (1 - P(B_D(w_k)))^m \leq 2^k (1 - P((B_D(w_{\min}))))^m.$$

Using the above estimate for  $P((B_D(w_{\min})))$  and setting  $k = \lfloor (1-\varepsilon)h^{-1}(D, p_{\min}) \log m \rfloor$  we finally obtain

$$Pr\{s_m < k\} \leq \exp(-m^{\varepsilon/2})$$

which is the desired lower bound.

From the above, we conclude that  $s_m/\log m \rightarrow 1/h(D, p_{\min})$  (pr.) but the rate of convergence (upper bound) does not yet warrant direct application of the Borel-Cantelli Lemma. Nevertheless, one can use Kingman's idea (e.g., see [17, 19, 20]) to extend this result to the almost sure convergence. Indeed, one selects a subsequence like  $m_r = s2^r$  along which  $s_{m_r}/\log m$  converge almost surely (a.s.), and then by noting that  $s_m$  is a nondecreasing sequence with respect to  $m$  one can extend the last assertion to all  $m$ . This completes the proof for  $s_m$ , and actually for  $s_n$  since  $m = O(n/\log n)$ , hence all the results above easily extend to this case, too.

### 3.2 The Height

The height was already treated by Arratia and Waterman [4] (cf. Theorem 1 in [4]) for the independent model, and the string model can be analyzed along the same lines.

For completeness, we only present the derivation of the upper bound, which also corrects a minor problem of [4]. From the definition (2) we have

$$\begin{aligned} \{H_m \geq k\} &= \bigcup_{l \geq k} \bigcup_{i,j=1}^m \left\{ \sum_{t=1}^l 1\{X_t(i) = X_t(j)\} \geq at \right\} \\ &= \bigcup_{l \geq k} \bigcup_{i,j=1}^m \{d(X(i), X(j)) \leq D\} . \end{aligned}$$

Now, we consider  $M = m(m-1)/2$  new sequences  $Y(1), \dots, Y(M)$  such that  $Y_k(t) = 1$  ( $t = 1, \dots, M, k = 1, \dots$ ) if and only if for  $1 \leq i, j \leq m$  resulting in  $t$  there is a match between  $X_k(i)$  and  $X_k(j)$ , i.e.,  $X_k(i) = X_k(j)$ ; otherwise  $Y_k(t) = 0$ . Note that  $Pr\{Y_k(t) = 1\} = P = p^2 + q^2$ .

The rest is easy, and we obtain

$$Pr\{H_m \geq k\} \leq m^2 \sum_{l \geq k} P(B_D(Y(1), w_l)) ,$$

for some  $w_l \in \mathcal{W}_l$ . From our previous estimate of the probability of a  $D$ -ball, we observe that  $P(B_D(Y(1), w_l)) \sim 2^{-lh(D,P)}$ . Thus, for  $k = \lfloor (1 + \varepsilon)h^{-1}(D, P) \log m \rfloor$  and a constant  $B$

$$Pr\{H_m \geq k\} \leq Bm^2 2^{-kh(D,P)} = B/m^{2\varepsilon}$$

which is the desired upper bound. The lower bound can be derived by using the “second moment method” in a similar fashion as in [19, 20].

So, far only convergence in probability was derived. But using again the Kingman trick, and noting that  $H_m$  is a nondecreasing, we prove Theorem 1.

### 3.3 The Depth

Now, we prove Theorem 2, and we begin with the convergence in probability, that is, we establish (7).

To accomplish our task, we need to show that a prefix of an independently generated string  $X(m+1)$  of length  $L_m$  is within distance  $d(X_1^{L_m}(m+1), X_1^{L_m}(i)) \leq D$  for some  $1 \leq i \leq m$ . We prove that  $L_m/\log m \rightarrow 1/r(D)$  (pr.) where  $r(D)$  is defined in Theorem 2.

Let  $w_k$  be a *given* and *typical* word of length  $k$ . More precisely,  $w_k \in \mathcal{W}_k$  and by Shannon-McMillan-Breiman Theorem (cf. [8, 9])  $P(w_k) \sim 2^{-kh}$  where  $h$  is the entropy of the alphabet. In the above  $P(w_k)$  has the meaning of probability of  $w_k$  occurrence, that is,  $P(w_k) = p^{|0|_w} q^{|1|_w}$  where  $|0|_w$  ( $|1|_w$ ) denotes the number of zeros (ones) in  $w_k$ . For the Bernoulli model, we can say that with high probability the number of “0” and “1” in  $w_k$  is approximately equal to  $kp \mp j$  and  $kq \mp j$  where  $j = o(k)$ , respectively. Below, to simply further discussion we assume that these numbers are  $\lfloor kp \rfloor$  and  $\lfloor kq \rfloor$  respectively (and actually we ignore the floor function). Naturally,  $\log P(w_k) \sim kh$ .

We should stress that the word  $w_k$  is deterministic, but since it is also typical the prefix of  $X(m+1)$  of length  $k$  is close in probability to  $w_k$ . More specifically, for any  $\varepsilon > 0$

$$\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} Pr\{|k^{-1} \log P(X_1^k(m+1)) - k^{-1} \log P(w_k)| \geq \varepsilon\} = 0 . \quad (12)$$

The above implies that instead of working with random string  $X(m+1)$  we can work with deterministic word  $w_k$  provided the bounds on  $L_m$  hold uniformly for all  $w_k$ .

Let now  $Z_k$  be a random variable denoting the number of strings  $X_1^k(1), \dots, X_1^k(m)$  that lie within distance  $D$  from  $w_k$ , that is  $Z_k = |\{1 \leq i \leq m; d(X_1^k(i), w_k) \leq D\}|$ . Due to our deterministic choice,  $Z_k$  has the binomial distribution with parameter  $m$  and  $P_k \equiv P(B_D(w_k))$ , i.e.,

$$Pr\{Z_k = \ell\} = \binom{m}{\ell} P_k^\ell (1 - P_k)^{m-\ell}.$$

The rest is a simple application of the *first moment method* and the *second moment method* (cf. [2]). Indeed,

$$Pr\{Z_k = 0\} = Pr\{D_n < k\} \leq \frac{\text{var } Z_k}{(EZ_k)^2} = \frac{1 - P_k}{mP_k} \quad (13)$$

$$Pr\{Z_k > 0\} = Pr\{D_n \geq k\} \leq EZ_k = mP_k. \quad (14)$$

To complete the proof, we need to estimate the probability  $P_k$  which is discussed next.

Clearly, the following is true (for  $P(w_k) = p^{\lfloor kp \rfloor} q^{\lfloor kq \rfloor}$ )

$$P_k = P(B_D(w_k)) = \sum_{0 \leq l+r \leq kD} \binom{kp}{l} \binom{kq}{r} p^{kp+l-r} q^{kq-l+r}$$

where we assumed above for simplicity that  $kp$  and  $kq$  are integers. Let now  $x = l/k$ , and define

$$P_x = \binom{kp}{xk} \binom{kq}{(D-x)k} p^{k(p-x)+(D-x)k} q^{kx+k(q-D+x)}. \quad (15)$$

From the above, we immediately observe that

$$C \max_x \{P_x\} \leq P(B(w_k)) \leq Ck^2 \max_x \{P_x\}$$

where  $C$  is a constant. Thus, by the above  $\log P(B_D(w_k)) \sim \log(\max_x \{P_x\})$ , and it suffices to compute  $\max_x \{P_x\}$ .

Observe that by Stirling's formula

$$\binom{kp}{xk} \sim \left( \frac{p^p}{x^x (p-x)^{p-x}} \right)^k.$$

Thus,  $P_x \sim (F(x))^k$  where

$$F(x) = \frac{p^{2p-2x+D} q^{2q+2x-D}}{x^x (p-x)^{p-x} (D-x)^{D-x} (q-D+x)^{q-D+x}}.$$

We need the following restriction on  $x$ :  $\min\{0, p-q\} \leq x \leq \max\{p, D\}$ .

Finally, to maximize  $F(x)$  with respect to  $x$ , we are looking for  $x_0$  such that  $F'(x_0) = 0$ . It turns out that this  $x_0$  must solve the following quadratic equation

$$x^2(p-q) + x(pq + D(q-p)) - pq^2 = 0.$$

The solution  $x_0$  of the above is given by (5) in Theorem 2.

In summary, we have just proved that  $P(B_D(w_k) \sim 2^{-kr(D)})$ . Thus, by (12) and (13) with  $k = \lfloor (1 - \varepsilon) \frac{\log m}{r(D)} \rfloor$  we obtain the lower bound, while by (12) and (14) with  $k = \lfloor (1 + \varepsilon) \frac{\log m}{r(D)} \rfloor$  we derive the upper bound, which complete the proof of the convergence in probability of  $L_m$ .

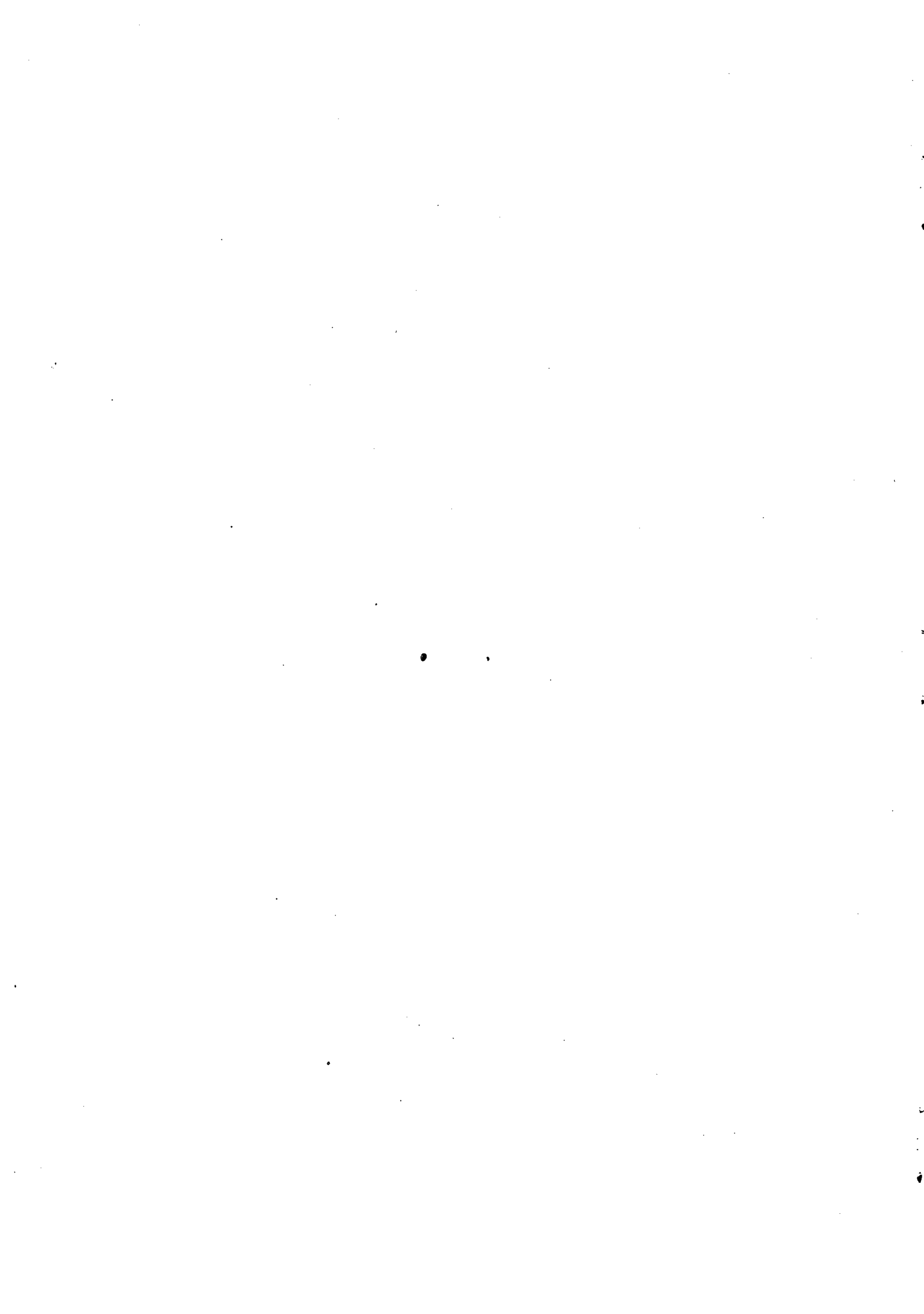
To establish the second part of Theorem 2, namely (8), we proceed along the lines of [17, 19, 20]. More specifically, we note that  $s_n \leq L_n \leq H_n$ , and infinitely often (i.o.)  $L_n = s_n$  as well as  $L_n = H_n$ . This, and Theorem 1, suffice to derive (8).

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