On a divisibility relation for Lucas sequences

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Abstract

In this note, we study the divisibility relation $U_m \mid U_{n+k}^s - U_n^s$, where $\mathbf{U} := \{U_n\}_{n\geq 0}$ is the Lucas sequence of characteristic polynomial $x^2 - ax \pm 1$ and k, m, n, s are positive integers.

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1 Introduction

Let $\mathbf{U} := \mathbf{U}(a,b) = \{U_n\}_{n\geq 0}$ be the Lucas sequence given by $U_0 = 0,\ U_1 = 1$ and

$$U_{n+2} = aU_{n+1} + bU_n \quad \text{for all} \quad n \geq 0, \quad \text{where} \quad b \in \{\pm 1\}. \tag{1}$$

Its characteristic equation is $x^2 - ax - b = 0$ with roots

$$(\alpha, \beta) = \left(\frac{a + \sqrt{a^2+4b}}{2}, \frac{a - \sqrt{a^2+4b}}{2} \right). \tag{2}$$

When $a \geq 1$, we have that $\alpha > 1 > |\beta|$. We assume that $\Delta = a^2 + 4b > 0$ and that α/β is not a root of unity. This only excludes the pairs $(a,b) \in \{(0,\pm 1),\ (\pm 1,-1),\ (2,-1)\}$ from the subsequent considerations. Here, we look at the relation

$$U_m \mid U_{n+k}^s - U_n^s, \tag{3}$$

with positive integers $k,\ m,\ n,\ s$. Note that when $(a,b) = (1,1)$, then $U_n = F_n$ is the nth Fibonacci number. Taking $k = 1$ and using the relations

$$\begin{aligned} F_{n+1} - F_n &= F_{n-1}, \\ F_{n+1} + F_n &= F_{n+2}, \\ F_{n+1}^2 + F_n^2 &= F_{2n+1}, \end{aligned}$$

it follows that relation (3) holds with $s = 1, 2, 4$, and $m = n-1,\ n+1,\ 2n+1$, respectively. Further, in [2], the authors assumed that m and n are coprime positive integers. In this case, F_n and F_m are coprime, so the rational number F_{n+1}/F_n is defined modulo F_m. Then it was shown in [2] that if this last congruence class above has multiplicative order s modulo F_m and $s \notin \{1, 2, 4\}$, then

$$m < 500s^2. \tag{4}$$

In this paper, we study the general divisibility relation (3) and prove the following result.

Theorem 1. *Let a be a non-zero integer, $b \in \{\pm 1\}$, and k a positive integer. Assume that $(a,b) \notin \{(\pm 1,-1),\ (\pm 2,-1)\}$. Given a positive integer m, let s be the smallest positive integer such that divisibility* (3) *holds. Then either $s \in \{1,2,4\}$, or*

$$m < 20000(sk)^2. \tag{5}$$

2 Preliminary results

We put $\mathbf{V} := \mathbf{V}(a,b) = \{V_n\}_{n\geq 0}$ for the Lucas companion of $\mathbf{U}$ which has initial values $V_0 = 2$, $V_1 = a$ and satisfies the same recurrence relation $V_{n+2} = aV_{n+1} + bV_n$ for all $n \geq 0$. The Binet formulas for U_n and V_n are

$$U_n = \frac{\alpha^n - \beta^n}{\alpha - \beta}, \qquad V_n = \alpha^n + \beta^n \qquad \text{for all} \qquad n \geq 0. \tag{6}$$

The next result addresses the period of $\{U_n\}_{n\geq 0}$ modulo U_m, where $m \geq 1$ is fixed.

Lemma 2. *The congruence*

$$U_{n+4m} \equiv U_n \pmod{U_m} \tag{7}$$

holds for all $n \geq 0$, $m \geq 2$.

Proof. This follows because of the identity

$$U_{n+4m} - U_n = U_m V_m V_{n+2m},$$

which can be easily checked using the Binet formulas (6). □

The following is Lemma 1 in [2]. It has also appeared in other places.

Lemma 3. *Let $X \geq 3$ be a real number. Let a and b be positive integers with $\max\{a,b\} \leq X$. Then there exist integers u, v not both zero with $\max\{|u|,|v|\} \leq \sqrt{X}$ such that $|au + bv| \leq 3\sqrt{X}$.*

The following lemma is well-known, but we include the proof for the reader's convenience. In what follows, a unit means Dirichlet unit, that is an algebraic integer η such that η^{-1} is also an algebraic integer.

Lemma 4. *Let $v > 1$ be an integer and ζ be a primitive vth root of unity. Then*

$$\prod_{\gcd(k,v)=1} (1 - \zeta^k) = \begin{cases} p, & \text{if } v = p^\ell \text{ is a prime power}, \\ 1, & \text{if } v \text{ has at least two distinct prime divisors}, \end{cases} \tag{8}$$

the product being over the residue classes mod v *coprime with v. In particular, in the second case, $1 - \zeta$ is a unit.*

Proof. The product on the left of (8) is $\Phi_v(1)$, where $\Phi_v(X)$ denotes the vth cyclotomic polynomial. For $v = p^\ell$ we have

$$\Phi_{p^\ell}(X) = \frac{X^{p^\ell} - 1}{X^{p^{\ell-1}} - 1} = X^{p^{\ell-1}(p-2)} + X^{p^{\ell-1}(p-1)} + \cdots + X^{p^{\ell-1}} + 1,$$

and $\Phi_{p^\ell}(1) = p$, proving the prime power case. In particular, $(1-\zeta) \mid p$ in this case.

Now assume that v is divisible by two distinct primes p and p'. Then $\zeta^{v/p}$ is a primitive root of unity of order p, which implies that in the ring $\mathbb{Z}[\zeta]$ we have $(1-\zeta) \mid (1-\zeta^{v/p}) \mid p$. Similarly, $(1-\zeta) \mid p'$. The divisibility relations $(1-\zeta) \mid p$ and $(1-\zeta) \mid p'$ imply that $(1-\zeta) \mid 1$, that is, $1-\zeta$ is a unit. Hence its $\mathbb{Q}(\zeta)/\mathbb{Q}$-norm is ± 1. Since it is obviously positive, it must be 1. But this norm is exactly the left-hand side of (8). □

This lemma has the following consequence, which is again well-known, but we did not find a suitable reference.

Corollary 5. *1. Assume that ζ and ξ are roots of unity of coprime orders, and both distinct from 1. The $\zeta - \xi$ is a unit.*

From now on m and n are positive integers and $d = \gcd(m, n)$.

2. In $\mathbb{Z}[x]$ we have the equality of ideals $(x^m - 1, x^n - 1) = (x^d - 1)$.

3. Let γ be an algebraic integer in some number field K. Then we have the equality of $\mathcal{O}_K$-ideals $(\gamma^m - 1, \gamma^n - 1) = (\gamma^d - 1)$.

Proof. Item 1 follows from the second assertion of Lemma 4.

In item 2 it suffices to show that $x^d - 1 \in (x^m - 1, x^n - 1)$. In the case $d = 1$ this reduces to showing that

$$1 \in \left(\frac{x^m - 1}{x - 1}, \frac{x^n - 1}{x - 1} \right). \tag{9}$$

The resultant of the polynomials $\frac{x^m-1}{x-1}$ and $\frac{x^n-1}{x-1}$ is the product of the factors of the form $\zeta - \xi$, where ζ and ξ are roots of unity of orders dividing m and n, respectively, and none of ζ, ξ is 1. If $d = \gcd(m, n) = 1$, then each factor is a unit by item 1. Hence, the resultant is a unit of $\mathbb{Z}$, that is, ± 1, proving (9) in the case $d = 1$.

The case of arbitrary d reduces to the case $d = 1$. Indeed, by the latter, $x^d - 1$ belongs to the ideal $(x^m - 1, x^n - 1)$ in the ring $\mathbb{Z}[x^d]$. Hence, the same is true in the ring $\mathbb{Z}[x]$.

Finally, item 3 is an immediate consequence of the previous item. □

We will use one simple property of cyclotomic polynomials. Recall that for a positive integer v we denote by $\Phi_v(X)$ the vth cyclotomic polynomial. Then for $\alpha > 1$ we have the trivial estimate $\Phi_v(\alpha) > (\alpha-1)^{\varphi(v)}$ (where $\varphi(v)$ is, of course, the Euler totient). We will need a slightly sharper estimate.

Lemma 6. *Let v be a positive integer and $\alpha > 1$ a real number. Then for $v > 1$ we have*

$$\Phi_v(\alpha) > \bigl(\alpha(\alpha-1)\bigr)^{\varphi(v)/2}. \tag{10}$$

Proof. We use the identity

$$\Phi_v(X) = \prod_{d\mid v}(X^d-1)^{\mu(v/d)},$$

where $\mu(\cdot)$ is the Möbius function. We have clearly

$$(\alpha^d-1)^{\mu(v/d)} \geq \begin{cases} \alpha^{d\mu(v/d)}, & \mu(v/d) = -1, \\ \alpha^{d\mu(v/d)}\frac{\alpha-1}{\alpha}, & \mu(v/d) = 1. \end{cases} \tag{11}$$

Moreover:

- denoting by $\tau^*(v)$ the number of square-free divisors of v, we have, for $v > 1$, exactly $\tau^*(v)/2$ divisors with $\mu(v/d) = 1$ and exactly $\tau^*(v)/2$ divisors with $\mu(v/d) = -1$;

- inequality (11) is strict for all $d \mid v$ satisfying $\mu(v/d) \neq 0$, with at most one exception.

Hence, multiplying (11) for all $d \mid v$ with $\mu(v/d) \neq 0$, and using the identity $\varphi(v) = \sum_{d\mid v} d\mu(v/d)$, we obtain, for $v > 1$, the lower estimate

$$\Phi_v(\alpha) > \alpha^{\varphi(v)}\left(\frac{\alpha-1}{\alpha}\right)^{\tau^*(v)/2}. \tag{12}$$

For $v \notin \{1, 2, 6\}$, we have $\tau^*(v) \leq \varphi(v)$, which implies

$$|\Phi_v(\alpha)| > \alpha^{\varphi(v)}\left(\frac{\alpha-1}{\alpha}\right)^{\varphi(v)/2} = \bigl(\alpha(\alpha-1)\bigr)^{\varphi(v)/2},$$

proving (10) for $v \notin \{1, 2, 6\}$. And for $v \in \{2, 6\}$, this is obviously true. $\square$

The following lemma is the workhorse of our argument.

Lemma 7. *Let a, b and k be as in the statement of Theorem* 1*, and assume in addition that $a \geq 1$. Let $v \geq 1$ be an integer and ζ a primitive vth root of unity. Define α as in* (2) *and assume that the numbers*

$$\alpha \qquad \textit{and} \qquad \frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k \bar{\zeta}}{\alpha^k - \zeta} \tag{13}$$

are multiplicatively dependent. Then we have one of the following options:

(*i*) $(-b)^k = -1$, $v = 4$;

(*ii*) $(a, b, k) \in \{(1, 1, 1),\ (2, 1, 1)\}$ *and* $v \in \{1, 2\}$;

(*iii*) $(-b)^k = 1$, $v \in \{1, 2\}$;

(*iv*) $(a, b, k) = (4, -1, 1)$ *and* $v \in \{4, 6\}$.

Proof. We use the notation

$$K = \mathbb{Q}(\alpha), \quad L = \mathbb{Q}(\zeta), \quad M = \mathbb{Q}(\alpha, \zeta), \quad \alpha_1 = \alpha^k, \quad \delta = (-b)^k.$$

Note that $\delta\alpha_1^{-1} = \beta^k$ is the Galois conjugate of α_1.

Recall that we disregard the cases $(a, b) \in \{(1, -1), (2, -1)\}$. In addition to this, we will disregard the case $(a, b, k) = (1, 1, 1)$, because it is settled in Lemma 2 of [2]. This implies that

$$\alpha_1 \geq 1 + \sqrt{2}. \tag{14}$$

When $\delta = 1$ we can say more:

$$\alpha_1 \in \left\{\frac{3 + \sqrt{5}}{2}, 2 + \sqrt{3}\right\} \quad \text{or} \quad \alpha_1 \geq \frac{5 + \sqrt{21}}{2}. \tag{15}$$

We will also assume that we are not in one of the instances (*i*), (*iii*) above; this is equivalent to saying that

$$\zeta^2 \neq \delta. \tag{16}$$

Since the numbers (13) are multiplicatively dependent, then the second of these numbers must be a unit (because the first is). In particular,

$$(\alpha_1 - \zeta) \mid (\alpha_1 - \delta\bar{\zeta})$$

in the ring $\mathcal{O}_M$, which implies that

$$(\alpha_1 - \zeta) \mid (\zeta - \delta\bar{\zeta}). \tag{17}$$

This divisibility relation is very restrictive: we will see that is satisfied in very few cases, which can be verified by inspection.

We first show the following identity for the norm of $\alpha_1 - \zeta$:

$$|\mathcal{N}_{M/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1 - \zeta)| = \bigl(\alpha_1^{-\varphi(v)}\Phi_v(\alpha_1)\Phi_{v^*}(\alpha_1)\bigr)^{[M:L]/2}, \tag{18}$$

where $\Phi_v(X)$ is the vth cyclotomic polynomial and

$$v^* = \begin{cases} v & \text{if } 4 \mid v \text{ or } \delta = 1, \\ v/2 & \text{if } 2 \parallel v \text{ and } \delta = -1, \\ 2v & \text{if } 2 \nmid v \text{ and } \delta = -1. \end{cases} \tag{19}$$

Note that

$$\varphi(v^*) = \varphi(v), \qquad \Phi_{v^*}(X) = \pm\Phi_v(\delta X), \qquad \Phi_v(X^{-1}) = \pm X^{-\varphi(v)}\Phi_v(X),$$

the sign in last identity being "+" for $v > 1$ and the sign in the middle identity being "+" if $\delta = 1$ or $\min\{v, v^*\} > 1$.

Let us prove (18). When $\alpha \notin L$, the conjugates of $\alpha_1 - \zeta$ are the $2\varphi(v)$ numbers $\alpha_1 - \zeta'$ and $\delta\alpha_1^{-1} - \zeta''$, where both ζ' and ζ'' run through the set of primitive vth roots of unity. Hence, in this case

$$|\mathcal{N}_{M/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1 - \zeta)| = |\Phi_v(\alpha_1)\Phi_v(\delta\alpha_1^{-1})| = \alpha_1^{-\varphi(v)}\Phi_v(\alpha_1)\Phi_{v^*}(\alpha_1),$$

which is (18) in the case $\alpha \notin L$.

Now assume that $\alpha \in L$, and set

$$G = \mathrm{Gal}(L/\mathbb{Q}), \qquad H = \mathrm{Gal}(L/K),$$

for the Galois groups of the various extensions. The group H is a subgroup of G of index 2, and we have

$$\alpha_1^\sigma = \begin{cases} \alpha_1, & \sigma \in H, \\ \delta\alpha_1^{-1}, & \sigma \in G \smallsetminus H. \end{cases}$$

Hence,

$$\begin{aligned} |\mathcal{N}_{M/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1 - \zeta)| &= |\mathcal{N}_{L/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1 - \zeta)| \\ &= \prod_{\sigma\in H} |\alpha_1 - \zeta^\sigma| \prod_{\sigma\in G\smallsetminus H} |\delta\alpha_1^{-1} - \zeta^\sigma| \\ &= \alpha_1^{-\varphi(v)/2} \prod_{\sigma\in H} |\alpha_1 - \zeta^\sigma| \prod_{\sigma\in G\smallsetminus H} |\delta\alpha_1 - \zeta^\sigma|, \end{aligned}$$

where in the second equality we used $\alpha_1 \in \mathbb{R}$. In a similar fashion,

$$
\begin{aligned}
|\mathcal{N}_{M/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1 - \delta\bar{\zeta})| &= \prod_{\sigma\in H} |\alpha_1 - \delta\bar{\zeta}^\sigma| \prod_{\sigma'\in G\smallsetminus H} |\delta\alpha_1^{-1} - \delta\bar{\zeta}^\sigma| \\
&= \alpha_1^{-\varphi(v)/2} \prod_{\sigma\in H} |\delta\alpha_1 - \zeta^\sigma| \prod_{\sigma\in G\smallsetminus H} |\alpha_1 - \zeta^\sigma|.
\end{aligned}
$$

Since $\frac{\alpha_1-\delta\bar{\zeta}}{\alpha_1-\zeta}$ is a unit, the two norms computed above are equal. Hence,

$$
\begin{aligned}
|\mathcal{N}_{M/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1 - \zeta)|^2 &= |\mathcal{N}_{M/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1 - \zeta)\mathcal{N}_{M/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1 - \delta\bar{\zeta})| \\
&= \alpha_1^{-\varphi(v)} \prod_{\sigma\in G} |\alpha_1 - \zeta^\sigma| \prod_{\sigma\in G} |\delta\alpha_1 - \zeta^\sigma| \\
&= \alpha_1^{-\varphi(v)} \Phi_v(\alpha_1)\Phi_{v^*}(\alpha_1),
\end{aligned}
$$

which proves (18) in the case $\alpha \in L$ as well.

Combining (17) and (18) and recalling (16), we obtain the inequality

$$
0 < \alpha_1^{-\varphi(v)/2} |\Phi_v(\alpha_1)\Phi_{v^*}(\alpha_1)|^{1/2} \le |\mathcal{N}_{L/\mathbb{Q}}(1 - \delta\zeta^2)|. \tag{20}
$$

This will be our basic tool.

Our next observation is that $1 - \delta\zeta^2$ cannot be a unit. Indeed, if it is a unit, then the right-hand side of (20) is 1 and $\min\{v, v^*\} > 1$. Hence, applying Lemma 6, we obtain

$$
\alpha_1^{-\varphi(v)/2} \big(\alpha_1(\alpha_1 - 1)\big)^{\varphi(v)/2} < 1,
$$

which implies $\alpha_1 < 2$, contradicting (14).

Thus, $1 - \delta\zeta^2$ is non-zero, but not a unit. Applying Lemma 4, we find that this is possible only in the following cases:

$$
\begin{aligned}
&v = p^\ell, && \delta = 1, && (21)\\
&v = 2p^\ell, && \delta = 1, && (22)\\
&v = 2^\ell, && \ell \ge 3, && (23)\\
&v \in \{1, 2, 4\}, && \delta \ne \zeta^2, && (24)
\end{aligned}
$$

where (here and below) ℓ is a positive integer and p is an odd prime number. We study these cases separately.

In the case (21), we have

$$
\Phi_v(X) = \Phi_{v^*}(X) = \frac{X^{p^\ell} - 1}{X^{p^{\ell-1}} - 1} \qquad \text{and} \qquad \mathcal{N}_{L/\mathbb{Q}}(1 - \zeta^2) = p
$$

by Lemma 4. We obtain

$$\frac{1}{\alpha_1^{p^{\ell-1}(p-1)/2}}\frac{\alpha_1^{p^\ell}-1}{\alpha_1^{p^{\ell-1}}-1}\leq p.$$

The left-hand side is strictly bounded from below by $\alpha^{p^{\ell-1}(p-1)/2}$, which gives $\alpha_1^{p^{\ell-1}}<p^{\frac{2}{p-1}}$. Checking with (15) leaves the only option

$$\alpha_1=\frac{3+\sqrt{5}}{2},\qquad p^\ell=3,$$

which is eliminated by direct verification.

In the case (22), we have

$$\Phi_v(X)=\Phi_{v^*}(X)=\frac{X^{p^\ell}+1}{X^{p^{\ell-1}}+1}\qquad\text{and}\qquad\mathcal{N}_{L/\mathbb{Q}}(1-\zeta^2)=p.$$

We obtain

$$\frac{1}{\alpha_1^{p^{\ell-1}(p-1)/2}}\frac{\alpha_1^{p^\ell}+1}{\alpha_1^{p^{\ell-1}}+1}\leq p.$$

From (15), we deduce $\alpha_1^{p^{\ell-1}}+1\leq 1.4\,\alpha_1^{p^{\ell-1}}$, which implies the inequality $\alpha_1^{p^{\ell-1}}<(1.4\,p)^{\frac{2}{p-1}}$. Invoking again (15), we are left with the three options

$$\alpha_1=\frac{3+\sqrt{5}}{2},\qquad\qquad p^\ell\in\{3,5\},\tag{25}$$

$$\alpha_1=2+\sqrt{3},\qquad\qquad p^\ell=3.\tag{26}$$

The two cases in (25) are eliminated by verification, while (26) leads to $(a,b,k,v)=(4,-1,1,6)$, one of the two instances in (iv).

In the case (23), we have

$$\Phi_v(X)=\Phi_{v^*}(X)=\frac{X^{2^\ell}-1}{X^{2^{\ell-1}}-1}\qquad\text{and}\qquad\mathcal{N}_{L/\mathbb{Q}}(1-\delta\zeta^2)=4.$$

We obtain

$$\frac{1}{\alpha_1^{2^{\ell-2}}}\frac{\alpha_1^{2^\ell}-1}{\alpha_1^{2^{\ell-1}}+1}\leq 4,$$

which implies $\alpha_1^{2^{\ell-2}}\leq 4$. Since $\ell\geq 3$, this contradicts (14).

In the final case (24), it more convenient to use the divisibility relation (17) directly. If $v \in \{1,2\}$, then $\zeta^2 = 1$ and $\delta = -1$. Taking the norm in both sides of (17), we obtain

$$\alpha_1 - \alpha_1^{-1} = \mathrm{Tr}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1) \mid 4.$$

Together with $\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1) = \delta = -1$ and inequality (14), this implies two possibilities:

$$\alpha_1 = 1 + \sqrt{2}, \quad \alpha_1 = 2 + \sqrt{3}. \tag{27}$$

The latter is disqualified by inspection. The former yields $(a,b,k) = (2,1,1)$, which is (ii).

In a similar fashion one treats $v = 4$. In this case $\zeta^2 = -1$ and $\delta = 1$, and, taking the norm in (17), we obtain

$$(\alpha_1 + \alpha_1^{-1})^2 = (\mathrm{Tr}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\alpha_1))^2 \mid 16.$$

We again have one of the options (27), but this time the former is eliminated by inspection, and the latter leads to $(a,b,k) = (4,-1,1)$, the missing instance in (iv). This completes the proof of the lemma. $\square$

The following is a generalization of Lemma 4 from [2].

For a prime number p and a nonzero integer m, we put $\nu_p(m)$ for the exponent of the prime p in the factorization of m. For a finite set of primes $\mathcal{S}$ and a positive integer m, we put

$$m_{\mathcal{S}} = \prod_{p \in \mathcal{S}} p^{\nu_p(m)}$$

for the largest divisor of m whose prime factors are in $\mathcal{S}$. For any prime number p we put f_p for the index of appearance in the Lucas sequence $\{U_n\}_{n \geq 0}$, which is the minimal positive integer k such that $p \mid U_k$.

Lemma 8. *Let $a \geq 1$. If $\mathcal{S}$ is any finite set of primes and m is a positive integer, then*

$$(U_m)_{\mathcal{S}} \leq \alpha^2 m \,\mathrm{lcm}[U_{f_p} : p \in \mathcal{S}].$$

Proof. It is known that

$$\nu_p(U_m) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if} \quad m \not\equiv 0 \pmod{f_p}; & \\ \nu_p(U_{f_p}) + \nu_p(m/f_p) & \text{if} \quad m \equiv 0 \pmod{f_p}, & p \text{ odd}; \\ \nu_2(U_2) + \nu_2(m/2) & \text{if} \quad m \equiv 0 \pmod{2}, & p = 2, \ a \text{ even}; \\ \nu_2(U_3) & \text{if} \quad m \equiv 3 \pmod{6}, & p = 2, \ a \text{ odd}; \\ \nu_2(U_6) + \nu_2(m/2) & \text{if} \quad m \equiv 0 \pmod{6}, & p = 2, \ a \text{ odd}. \end{cases}$$

The above relations follow easily from Proposition 2.1 in [1]. In particular, the inequality

$$\nu_p(U_m) \le \nu_p(U_{f_p}) + \nu_p(m) + \delta_{p,2}$$

always holds with $\delta_{p,2}$ being 0 if p is odd or $p = 2$ and a is even and $\nu_2((a^2+3b)/2)$ if $p = 2$ and a is odd. We get that

$$\begin{array}{rcl} (U_m)_{\mathcal{S}} & \le & \left(\prod_{p\in\mathcal{S}} p^{\nu_p(U_{f_p})}\right)\left(\prod_{\substack{p\mid m\\ p>2}} p^{\nu_p(m)}\right) 2^{\nu_2(m)+\nu_2((a^2+3b)/2} \\ & < & \alpha^2 m \,\mathrm{lcm}[U_{f_p} : p \in \mathcal{S}], \end{array}$$

which is what we wanted to prove. For the last inequality above, we used the fact that $2^{\nu_2((a^2+3b)/2)} \le (a^2+3b)/2 = (\alpha^2 - \alpha\beta + \beta^2)/2 < \alpha^2$. $\square$

3 Proof of Theorem 1

We assume that $m \ge 10000k$. Since U_n is periodic modulo U_m with period $4m$ (Lemma 2), we may assume that $n \le 4m$. We split U_m into various factors, as follows. Write

$$U_{n+k}^s - U_n^s = \prod_{d\mid s} \Phi_d(U_{n+k}, U_n),$$

where $\Phi_d(X,Y)$ is the homogenization of the cyclotomic polynomial $\Phi_d(X)$. We put $s_1 := \mathrm{lcm}[2,s]$, $\mathcal{S} := \{p : p \mid 6s\}$ and

$$\begin{array}{rcl} D & := & (U_m)_{\mathcal{S}}; \\ A & := & \gcd(U_m/D, \prod_{d\le 6,\ d\ne 5} \Phi_d(U_{n+k}, U_n); \\ E & := & \gcd(U_m/D, \prod_{\substack{d\mid s_1\\ d=5 \text{ or } d>6}} \Phi_d(U_{n+k}, U_n). \end{array}$$

Clearly,

$$U_m \mid ADE.$$

Before bounding $A,\ D,\ E$, let us comment on the sign of a. If $a < 0$, then we change the pair (a,b) to $(-a,b)$. This has as effect replacing (α,β) by

$(-\alpha, -\beta)$ and so $U_n(\alpha, \beta) = (-1)^{n-1} U_n(\alpha, \beta)$ for all $n \geq 0$. In particular, U_m remains the same or changes sign. Further, if k is even then

$$\Phi_d(U_{n+k}(-\alpha, -\beta), U_n(-\alpha, -\beta)) = \pm \Phi_d(U_{n+k}(\alpha, \beta), U_n(\alpha, \beta)),$$

while if k is odd, then

$$\begin{aligned} \Phi_d(U_{n+k}(-\alpha, -\beta), U_n(-\alpha, -\beta)) &= \pm \Phi_d(U_{n+k}(\alpha, \beta), -U_n(\alpha, \beta)) \\ &= \pm \Phi_{d^*}(U_{n+k}(\alpha, \beta), U_n(\alpha, \beta)), \end{aligned}$$

where the d^* has been defined at (19). Note that the sets $\{d \leq 6,\ d \neq 5\}$ and $\{d \mid s_1,\ d = 5 \text{ or } d > 6\}$ are closed under the operation $d \mapsto d^*$. Hence, $D,\ A,\ E$ do not change if we replace a by $-a$, so we assume that $a > 0$. By the Binet formula (6), we get easily that the inequality

$$\alpha^{n-2} \leq U_n \leq \alpha^n \quad \text{is valid for all} \quad n \geq 1. \tag{28}$$

We are now ready to bound $A,\ D,\ E$.

The easiest to bound is D. Namely, by Lemma 8 and the fact that $f_p \leq p+1$ for all $p \mid 6s$, we get

$$D \leq \alpha^2 m \prod_{p \mid 6s} U_{p+1} < m \alpha^{2+\sum_{p \mid 6s}(p+1)} < \alpha^{6s+3+\log m/\log \alpha}, \tag{29}$$

where we used the fact that $\sum_{p \mid t}(p+1) \leq t+1$, which is easily proved by induction on the number of distinct prime factors of t.

We next bound E.

Note that

$$E \mid \prod_{\substack{\zeta : \zeta^{s_1} = 1 \\ \zeta \notin \{\pm 1, \pm i, \pm \omega, \pm \omega^2\}}} (U_{n+k} - \zeta U_n), \tag{30}$$

where $\omega := e^{2\pi i/3}$ is a primitive root of unity of order 3.

Let $K = \mathbb{Q}(e^{2\pi i/s_1}, \alpha)$, which is a number field of degree $d \leq 2\phi(s_1) = 2\phi(s)$. Assume that there are ℓ roots of unity ζ participating in the product appearing in the right–hand side of (30) and label them $\zeta_1, \ldots, \zeta_\ell$. Write

$$\mathcal{E}_i = \gcd(E, U_{n+k} - \zeta_i U_n) \quad \text{for all} \quad i = 1, \ldots, \ell, \tag{31}$$

where $\mathcal{E}_i$ are ideals in $\mathcal{O}_K$. Then relations (30) and (31) tell us that

$$E\mathcal{O}_K \mid \prod_{i=1}^{\ell} \mathcal{E}_i. \tag{32}$$

Our next goal is to bound the norm $|\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\mathcal{E}_i)|$ of $\mathcal{E}_i$ for $i = 1, \ldots, \ell$. First of all, $U_m \in \mathcal{E}_i$. Thus, with formula (6) and the fact that $\beta = (-b)\alpha^{-1}$, we get

$$\alpha^m \equiv (-b)^m \alpha^{-m} \pmod{\mathcal{E}_i}.$$

Multiplying the above congruence by α^m, we get

$$\alpha^{2m} \equiv (-b)^m \pmod{\mathcal{E}_i}. \tag{33}$$

We next use formulae (6) and (31) to deduce that

$$(\alpha^{n+k} - (-b)^{n+k}\alpha^{-n-k}) - \zeta(\alpha^n - (-b)^n\alpha^{-n}) \equiv 0 \pmod{\mathcal{E}_i}, \quad (\zeta := \zeta_i).$$

Multiplying both sides above by α^n, we get

$$\alpha^{2n}(\alpha^k - \zeta) - (-b)^{n+k}(\alpha^{-k} - (-b)^k\zeta) \equiv 0 \pmod{\mathcal{E}_i}. \tag{34}$$

Let us show that $\alpha^k - \zeta$ and $\mathcal{E}_i$ are coprime. Assume this is not so and let π be some prime ideal of $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{K}}$ dividing both $\alpha^k - \zeta$ and $\mathcal{E}_i$. Then we get $\alpha^k \equiv \zeta \pmod{\pi}$ and so $\alpha^{-k} \equiv (-b)^k\zeta \pmod{\pi}$ by (34). Multiplying these two congruences we get $1 \equiv (-b)^k\zeta^2 \pmod{\pi}$. Hence, $\pi \mid 1-(-b)^k\zeta^2$. If this number is not zero, then, $(-b)^k\zeta^2$ is a root of unity whose order divides $6s$, so, by Lemma 6, we get that $\pi \mid 6s$, which is impossible because $\pi \mid \mathcal{E}_i \mid E$, and E is an integer coprime to $6s$. If the above number is zero, we get that $\zeta^2 = \pm 1$, so $\zeta \in \{\pm 1, \pm i\}$, but these values are excluded at this step. Thus, indeed $\alpha^k - \zeta$ and $\mathcal{E}_i$ are coprime, so $\alpha^k - \zeta$ is invertible modulo $\mathcal{E}_i$. Now congruence (34) shows that

$$\alpha^{2n+k} \equiv (-b)^n\zeta \left(\frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta}}{\alpha^k - \zeta}\right) \pmod{\mathcal{E}_i}. \tag{35}$$

We now apply Lemma 3 to $a = 2m$ and $b = 2n + k \le 8m + k < 9m$ with the choice $X = 9m$ to deduce that there exist integers u, v not both zero with $\max\{|u|, |v|\} \le \sqrt{X}$ such that $|2mu + (2n + k)v| \le 3\sqrt{X}$. We raise congruence (33) to u and congruence (35) to v and multiply the resulting congruences getting

$$\alpha^{2mu+(2n+k)v} = (-b)^{mu+nv}\zeta^v \left(\frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta}}{\alpha^k - \zeta}\right)^v \pmod{\mathcal{E}_i}.$$

We record this as

$$\alpha^R \equiv \eta \left(\frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta}}{\alpha^k - \zeta}\right)^S \pmod{\mathcal{E}_i} \tag{36}$$

for suitable roots of unity η and ζ of order dividing s_1 with ζ not of order $1, 2, 3, 4$, or 6, where $R := 2mu + (2n + k)v$ and $S := v$. We may assume that $R \geq 0$, for if not, we replace the pair (u, v) by the pair $(-u, -v)$, thus replacing (R, S) by $(-R, -S)$ and η by η^{-1} and leaving ζ unaffected. We may additionally assume that $S \geq 0$, for if not, we replace S by $-S$ and ζ by $(-b)^k\overline{\zeta}$, again a root of unity of order dividing s_1 but not of order $1, 2, 3, 4$, or 6 and leave R and η unaffected. Thus, $\mathcal{E}_i$ divides the algebraic integer

$$E_i = \alpha^R(\alpha^k - \zeta_i)^S - \eta_i(\alpha^k - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta_i})^S. \tag{37}$$

Let us show that $E_i \neq 0$. If $E_i = 0$, we then get

$$\alpha^R = \eta_i \left(\frac{\alpha - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta_i}}{\alpha - \zeta_i}\right)^S,$$

and after raising both sides of the above equality to the power s_1, we get, since $\eta_i^{s_1} = 1$, that

$$\alpha^{s_1 R} = \left(\frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta_i}}{\alpha - \zeta_i}\right)^{Ss_1}.$$

Lemma 7 gives us a certain number of conditions all of which have ζ_i or a root of unity of order $1, 2, 4$, or 6, which is not our case. Thus, E_i is not equal to zero. We now bound the absolute values of the conjugates of E_i. We find it more convenient to work with the associate of E_i given by

$$G_i = \alpha^{-\lfloor R/2 \rfloor} E_i = \alpha^{R - \lfloor R/2 \rfloor}(\alpha^k - \zeta_i)^S - \alpha^{-\lfloor R/2 \rfloor}\eta_i(\alpha^k - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta_i})^S.$$

Note that

$$R \leq |2m + (2n + k)v| \leq 3\sqrt{X} = 9\sqrt{m}, \quad \text{and} \quad S = |v| \leq \sqrt{X} = 3\sqrt{m}.$$

Let σ be an arbitrary element of $G = \mathrm{Gal}(K/\mathbb{Q})$. We then have that $\eta_i^\sigma = \eta_i'$, $\zeta_i^\sigma = \zeta_i'$, where η_i' and ζ_i' are roots of unity of order dividing s_1. Furthermore, $\alpha^\sigma \in \{\alpha, \beta\}$. If $\alpha^\sigma = \alpha$, we then get

$$\begin{aligned} |G_i^\sigma| &= |\alpha^{R - \lfloor R/2 \rfloor}(\alpha^k - \zeta_i')^S - \eta_i'\alpha^{-\lfloor R/2 \rfloor}(\alpha - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta_i'})^S| \\ &\leq \alpha^{(R+1)/2}(\alpha^k + 1)^S + (\alpha^k + 1)^S \\ &\leq 2\alpha^{(R+1)/2}(\alpha + 1)^{Sk} \leq \alpha^{2 + (9\sqrt{m}+1)/2 + 6\sqrt{m}k} \\ &\leq \alpha^{11\sqrt{m}k}, \end{aligned} \tag{38}$$

while if $\alpha^\sigma = \beta$, we also get

$$\begin{aligned}
|G_i^\sigma| &= |\beta^{R-\lfloor R/2\rfloor}(\beta^k - \zeta_i')^b - \beta^{-\lfloor R/2\rfloor}\eta_i'(\beta^k - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta_i'})^S| \\
&\le (\alpha^{-k}+1)^S + \alpha^{R/2}(\alpha^{-k}+1)^S \\
&= \alpha^S + \alpha^{R/2+S} \le 2\alpha^{R/2+S} \le \alpha^{2+4.5\sqrt{m}+6\sqrt{m}} \\
&= \alpha^{11\sqrt{m}k}.
\end{aligned}$$

In the above, we used the fact that $\alpha^{-k}+1 \le \alpha^{-1}+1 \le \alpha$. In conclusion, inequality (38) holds for all $\sigma \in G$. Thus, if we write $G_i^{(1)}, \ldots, G_i^{(d)}$ for the d conjugates of G_i in K, we then get that

$$|\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\mathcal{E}_i)| \le |\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(E_i)| = |\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(G_i)| \le \alpha^{11dk\sqrt{m}},$$

where the first inequality above follows because $\mathcal{E}_i$ divides E_i; hence G_i, and $E_i \ne 0$. Multiplying the above inequalities for $i = 1, \ldots, \ell$, we get that

$$\begin{aligned}
E^\ell &= |\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(E)| = \left|\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(E\mathcal{O}_K)\right| \le \left|\mathcal{N}_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}}\left(\prod_{i=1}^{\ell}\mathcal{E}_i\right)\right| \\
&\le \left|\prod_{i=1}^{\ell}\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(G_i)\right| \le \alpha^{11d\ell k\sqrt{m}},
\end{aligned}$$

therefore

$$E \le \alpha^{11kd\sqrt{m}} \le \alpha^{22k\phi(s)\sqrt{m}} < \alpha^{22ks\sqrt{m}}. \tag{39}$$

In the above, we used that $d \le 2\phi(s) \le 2s$.

We are now ready to estimate A. We write

$$\begin{aligned}
A_1 &:= \gcd(U_m, U_{n+k}^2 - U_n^2); \\
A_2 &:= \gcd(U_m, U_{n+k}^2 + U_n^2); \\
A_3 &:= \gcd\left(U_m, \frac{U_{n+k}^6 - U_n^6}{U_{n+k}^2 - U_n^2}\right).
\end{aligned}$$

Clearly, $A \le A_1A_2A_3$. We bound each of $A_1,\ A_2,\ A_3$. We first estimate A_1 and A_2 and deal with A_3 later. Write

$$\begin{aligned}
U_n^2 &= \left(\frac{\alpha^n - \beta^n}{\alpha - \beta}\right)^2 = \frac{\alpha^{2n} + 2(-b)^n + \alpha^{-2n}}{(\alpha + b\alpha^{-1})^2}; \\
U_{n+k}^2 &= \frac{\alpha^{2n+2k} + 2(-b)^n(-b)^k + \alpha^{-2n-2k}}{(\alpha + b\alpha^{-1})^2}.
\end{aligned}$$

Assume that $(-b)^k = 1$. If $\zeta \in \{\pm i\}$, then $(\alpha^k - (-b)^k\overline{\zeta})/(\alpha^k - \overline{\zeta}) = (\alpha^k + \zeta)/(\alpha^k - \zeta)$ is multiplicatively independent with α by Lemma 7. The argument which lead to inequality (39) shows that

$$A_2 \leq \alpha^{11kd_1\sqrt{m}} \leq \alpha^{44k\sqrt{m}}, \tag{40}$$

where $d_1 = 4$ is the degree of the field $\mathbb{Q}(\alpha, i)$. To estimate A_1, we set $\gamma = -b\alpha^2$ and, using that $(-b)^k = 1$, we find

$$\begin{aligned} U_{n+k}^2 - U_n^2 &= \frac{\alpha^{2n+2k} + \alpha^{-2n-2k} - \alpha^{2n} - \alpha^{-2n}}{(\alpha + b\alpha^{-1})^2} \\ &= \alpha^{2-2n-k}\frac{(\gamma^{2n+k} - 1)(\gamma^k - 1)}{(\gamma - 1)^2}, \\ U_m &= (-b\alpha)^{1-m}\left(\frac{\gamma^m - 1}{\gamma - 1}\right). \end{aligned}$$

In the ring of integers $\mathcal{O} = \mathcal{O}_K$ of the quadratic field $K = \mathbb{Q}(\alpha)$ consider the ideals

$$\mathfrak{a} = \left(\frac{\gamma^m - 1}{\gamma - 1}, \frac{\gamma^{2n+k} - 1}{\gamma - 1}\right), \quad \mathfrak{b} = \left(\frac{\gamma^m - 1}{\gamma - 1}, \frac{\gamma^k - 1}{\gamma - 1}\right).$$

Clearly, $A_1 \mid \mathfrak{ab}$, whence

$$A_1^2 = \mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(A_1) \leq |\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\mathfrak{a})||\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\mathfrak{b})|.$$

Clearly,

$$|\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\mathfrak{b})| \leq \left|\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}\left(\frac{(-b)^k\alpha^{2k} - 1}{\alpha + b\alpha^{-1}}\right)\right| = |\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(U_k)| < \alpha^{2k}.$$

To estimate $|\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\mathfrak{a})|$, observe that $\mathfrak{a} = (\gamma^d - 1)/(\gamma - 1)$ by item 3 of Corollary 5, where $d = \gcd(m, 2n+k)$. Using the obvious inequality $|\gamma^{-1}| \leq 1/2$, we get that

$$|\mathcal{N}_{\mathbb{K}/\mathbb{Q}}(\mathfrak{a})| = \left|\frac{\gamma^d - 1}{\gamma - 1}\frac{\gamma^{-d} - 1}{\gamma^{-1} - 1}\right| \leq 6|\gamma|^d = 6\alpha^{2d} < \alpha^{2d+4}.$$

Hence, $A_1 \leq \alpha^{d+k+2}$. It is important to note that $d \neq m$: otherwise we would have had $U_m \mid U_{n+k}^2 - U_n^2$, contradicting our hypothesis about the minimality of s. Therefore d is a proper divisor of m, showing that

$$A_1 \leq \alpha^{m/2+k+2}. \tag{41}$$

Thus, we have bounded A_1 and A_2 in the case $(-b)^k = 1$.

The case $(-b)^k = -1$ can be treated analogously, but A_1 and A_2 swap roles. This time for $\zeta \in \{\pm 1\}$ the number $\frac{\alpha^k-(-b)^k\overline{\zeta}}{\alpha^k-\zeta} = \frac{\alpha^k+\zeta}{\alpha^k-\zeta}$ is multiplicatively independent of α by Lemma 7, which implies the estimate

$$A_1 \leq \alpha^{22k\sqrt{m}}. \tag{42}$$

Next, using that $(-b)^k = -1$, we find

$$U_{n+k}^2 + U_n^2 = \alpha^{2-n-k}\frac{(\gamma^{2n+k}-1)(\gamma^k-1)}{(\gamma-1)^2},$$

and arguing exactly as in the case $(-b)^k = 1$, we get

$$A_2 \leq \alpha^{m/2+k+2}. \tag{43}$$

Hence, we get that both in case $(-b)^k = 1$ and in case $(-b)^k = -1$, we have

$$A_1A_2 \leq \alpha^{m/2+k+2+44k\sqrt{m}}. \tag{44}$$

Finally, for A_3, we note that by Lemma 7, unless $\alpha = 2+\sqrt{3}$, we have that $\frac{\alpha^k-(-b)^k\overline{\zeta}}{\alpha^k-\zeta}$ is multiplicatively independent of α for $\zeta \in \{\pm\omega, \pm\omega^2\}$. Thus, writing

$$A_{3,\pm} = \gcd(A_3, U_{n+k}^2 \pm U_{n+k}U_n + U_n^2),$$

we get, by arguing in the field $\mathbb{Q}(\alpha, e^{2\pi i/3})$ of degree 4 as we did in order to prove inequality (39), that

$$A_{3,\pm} \leq \alpha^{44k\sqrt{m}}, \tag{45}$$

which leads to

$$A_3 \leq A_{3,+}A_{3,-} \leq \alpha^{88k\sqrt{m}}. \tag{46}$$

So, let us assume that $(a,b,k) = (4,1,1)$, so $\alpha = 2+\sqrt{3}$. Note that since $U_t \equiv t \pmod 2$, it follows that $U_{n+k}^s - U_n^s = U_{n+1}^s - U_n^s$ is odd and a multiple of U_m, therefore m is odd. For $\zeta \in \{\omega, \omega^2\}$, we have that $\frac{\alpha^k-(-b)^k\overline{\zeta}}{\alpha^k-\zeta} = \frac{\alpha-\overline{\zeta}}{\alpha-\zeta}$ are multiplicatively independent of α, which leads, by the previous argument, to

$$A_{3,+} \leq \alpha^{44k\sqrt{m}}. \tag{47}$$

As for $A_{3,-}$, since

$$U_{n+1}^2 - U_{n+1}U_n + U_n^2 = V_{2n+1}/4,$$

we have that

$$A_{3,-} \mid \gcd(U_m, V_{2n+1}) = 1,$$

where the last equality follows easily from the fact that m is and $2n+1$ are both odd (see (*iii*) of the Main Theorem in [3]). Together with (47), we infer that inequality (46) holds in this last case as well. Together with (44), we get that the inequality

$$A \le A_1 A_2 A_3 \le \alpha^{m/2+k+2+132k\sqrt{m}} \tag{48}$$

holds in all instances.

Inequality (28) together with estimates (29), (48) and (39), give

$$\alpha^{m-2} \le U_m = DAE \le \alpha^{6s+3+\log m/\log\alpha+m/2+k+2+(132k+22ks)\sqrt{m}}.$$

Since $s \ge 3$, we have $132 + 22s \le 66s$. Since also $1/\log\alpha < 3$, we get

$$m/2 \le (6s + 7 + 3\log m + k) + 66sk\sqrt{m}.$$

Since $m \ge 10000$, one checks that $6s + 7 + 3\log m + k < ks\sqrt{m}$. Hence,

$$m \le 134ks\sqrt{m}, \tag{49}$$

which leads to the desired inequality (5).

4 Comment

One may wonder if one can strengthen our main result Theorem 1 in such a way as to include also the instances $s \in \{1, 2, 4\}$ maybe at the cost of eliminating finitely many exceptions in the pairs (a, k). The fact that this is not so follows from the formulae:

(*i*) $U_{n+k} - U_n = U_{n+k/2}V_{k/2}$ for all $n \ge 0$ when $b = 1$ and $2\|k$;

(*ii*) $U_{n+k} + U_n = U_{n+k/2}V_{k/2}$ for all $n \ge 0$ when $b = 1$ and $4 \mid k$ or when $b = -1$ and k is even;

(*iii*) $U_{n+k}^2 + U_n^2 = U_{2n+k}U_k$ for all $n \ge 0$ when $b = 1$ and k is odd,

which can be easily proved using the Binet formulas (6). Thus, taking $m = n + k/2$ (for k even) and $m = 2n + k$ for k odd and $b = 1$, we get that divisibility (3) always holds with some $s \in \{1, 2, 4\}$. We also note the "near-miss" $U_{4n+2} \mid 4(U_{n+1}^6 - U_n^6)$ for all $n \ge 0$ if $(a, b, k) = (4, -1, 1)$.

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