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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 $U := \{U_n\}_{n \geq 0}$ 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

$$F_{n+1} - F_n = F_{n-1},$$

$$F_{n+1} + F_n = F_{n+2},$$

$$F_{n+1}^2 + F_n^2 = F_{2n+1},$$

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

$$m < 500s^2. \quad (4)$$

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*

$$m < 20000(sk)^2. \quad (5)$$

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

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

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*

$$U_{n+4m} \equiv U_n \pmod{U_m} \quad (7)$$

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). $\square$

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 v th root of unity. Then*

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

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 v th cyclotomic polynomial. For $v = p^\ell$ we have

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

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). $\square$

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

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

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. $\square$

We will use one simple property of cyclotomic polynomials. Recall that for a positive integer v we denote by $\Phi_v(X)$ the v th 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*

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

Proof. We use the identity

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

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

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

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 $\varphi(v) = \sum_{d|v} d\mu(v/d)$, we obtain, for $v > 1$, the lower estimate

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

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

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

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 v th root of unity. Define α as in (2) and assume that the numbers*

$$\alpha \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k \bar{\zeta}}{\alpha^k - \zeta} \quad (13)$$

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

$$\alpha_1 \geq 1 + \sqrt{2}. \quad (14)$$

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

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

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

$$\zeta^2 \neq \delta. \quad (16)$$

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

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

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 $\alpha_1 - \zeta$:

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

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

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

Note that

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

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 v th 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

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

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

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

Hence,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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:

$$v = p^\ell, \quad \delta = 1, \quad (21)$$

$$v = 2p^\ell, \quad \delta = 1, \quad (22)$$

$$v = 2^\ell, \quad \ell \geq 3, \quad (23)$$

$$v \in \{1, 2, 4\}, \quad \delta \neq \zeta^2, \quad (24)$$

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

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

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

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

which is eliminated by direct verification.

In the case (22), we have

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

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

$$\alpha_1 = \frac{3 + \sqrt{5}}{2}, \quad p^\ell \in \{3, 5\}, \quad (25)$$

$$\alpha_1 = 2 + \sqrt{3}, \quad p^\ell = 3. \quad (26)$$

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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*

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

Proof. It is known that

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Proof of Theorem 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 $\zeta_1, \dots, \zeta_\ell$. Write

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

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

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

Our next goal is to bound the norm $|\mathcal{N}_{K/\mathbb{Q}}(\mathcal{E}_i)|$ of $\mathcal{E}_i$ for $i = 1, \dots, \ell$. 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We record this as

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

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 $(-b)^k \bar{\zeta}$, 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

$$E_i = \alpha^R (\alpha^k - \zeta_i)^S - \eta_i (\alpha^k - (-b)^k \bar{\zeta}_i)^S. \quad (37)$$

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

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

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

$$\alpha^{s_1 R} = \left(\frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k \bar{\zeta}_i}{\alpha - \zeta_i} \right)^{S s_1}.$$

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 $G = \text{Gal}(K/\mathbb{Q})$. 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

therefore

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

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

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, $A \leq A_1 A_2 A_3$. 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 $(\alpha^k - (-b)^k \bar{\zeta})/(\alpha^k - \bar{\zeta}) = (\alpha^k + \zeta)/(\alpha^k - \zeta)$ is multiplicatively independent with α by [Lemma 7](#). The argument which lead to inequality (39) shows that

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

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, $A_1 \mid \mathfrak{a}\mathfrak{b}$, 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

$$A_1 \leq \alpha^{m/2+k+2}. \quad (41)$$

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 $\frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k \zeta}{\alpha^k - \zeta} = \frac{\alpha^k + \zeta}{\alpha^k - \zeta}$ is multiplicatively independent of α by [Lemma 7](#), which implies the estimate

$$A_1 \leq \alpha^{22k\sqrt{m}}. \quad (42)$$

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

$$A_2 \leq \alpha^{m/2+k+2}. \quad (43)$$

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

$$A_1 A_2 \leq \alpha^{m/2+k+2+44k\sqrt{m}}. \quad (44)$$

Finally, for A_3 , we note that by [Lemma 7](#), unless $\alpha = 2 + \sqrt{3}$, we have that $\frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k \zeta}{\alpha^k - \zeta}$ 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

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

which leads to

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

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 $\frac{\alpha^k - (-b)^k \zeta}{\alpha^k - \zeta} = \frac{\alpha - \bar{\zeta}}{\alpha - \zeta}$ are multiplicatively independent of α , which leads, by the previous argument, to

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

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

$$A \leq A_1 A_2 A_3 \leq \alpha^{m/2+k+2+132k\sqrt{m}} \quad (48)$$

holds in all instances.

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

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

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

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

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

$$m \leq 134ks\sqrt{m}, \quad (49)$$

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 $n \geq 0$ when $b = 1$ and $2 \parallel k$;
- (ii) $U_{n+k} + U_n = U_{n+k/2}V_{k/2}$ for all $n \geq 0$ 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 $n \geq 0$ 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 $n \geq 0$ if $(a, b, k) = (4, -1, 1)$.

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