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Abstract

In this paper, we show that if $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ is any nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequence of integers whose general term is up to sign not a polynomial in n , then the inequality $\phi(|U_n|) \geq |U_{\phi(n)}|$ holds on a set of positive integers n of density 1, where ϕ is the Euler function. We show that the set of $n \leq x$ for which the above inequality fails has counting function $O_U(x/\log x)$.

ON THE EULER FUNCTION OF LINEARLY RECURRENT SEQUENCES

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ABSTRACT. In this paper, we show that if $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ is any nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequence of integers whose general term is up to sign not a polynomial in n , then the inequality $\phi(|U_n|) \geq |U_{\phi(n)}|$ holds on a set of positive integers n of density 1, where ϕ is the Euler function. We show that the set of $n \leq x$ for which the above inequality fails has counting function $O_U(x/\log x)$.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ be a linearly recurrent sequence of integers. Such a sequence satisfies a recurrence of the form

$$U_{n+k} = a_1 U_{n+k-1} + \cdots + a_k U_n \quad \text{for all } n \geq 1, \quad (1)$$

with integers $a_1, \dots, a_k$, where $U_1, \dots, U_k$ are integers. Assuming k is minimal, U_n can be represented as

$$U_n = \sum_{i=1}^s P_i(n) \alpha_i^n, \quad (2)$$

where

$$\Psi(X) := X^k - a_1 X^{k-1} - \cdots - a_k = \prod_{i=1}^s (X - \alpha_i)^{\sigma_i} \quad (3)$$

is the characteristic polynomial of $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$, $\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_s$ are the distinct roots of $\Psi(X)$ with multiplicities $\sigma_1, \dots, \sigma_s$, respectively, and $P_i(X)$ is a polynomial of degree $\sigma_i - 1$ with coefficients in $\mathbb{Q}(\alpha_i)$. The sequence is nondegenerate if α_i/α_j is not a root of 1 for any $i \neq j$ in $\{1, \dots, s\}$. A classic example is the Fibonacci sequence $(F_n)_{n \geq 1}$ that has $k = 2$, $\Psi(X) = X^2 - X - 1$, and initial terms $F_1 = F_2 = 1$. Let $\phi(m)$ and $\sigma(m)$ be the Euler function and sum of divisors function of the positive integer m . In [5], the first author proved that the inequalities

$$\phi(F_n) \geq F_{\phi(n)} \quad \text{and} \quad \sigma(F_n) \leq F_{\sigma(n)}$$

hold for all positive integers n . It was also remarked that if instead of considering $(F_n)_{n \geq 1}$, one considers a Lucas sequence with complex conjugated roots, i.e., a nondegenerate binary recurrent sequence $(U_n)_{n \geq 0}$ with $U_0 = 0$, $U_1 = 1$, and $\Psi(X)$ a quadratic polynomial with complex conjugated roots, then the inequality

$$\phi(|U_n|) \geq |U_{\phi(n)}|$$

fails infinitely often. It fails for a positive proportion of prime numbers n . Such questions were recently revisited by other authors (see [4] and [7], for example).

In this paper, we prove the following theorem. Recall that if $f(x)$ and $g(x)$ are functions defined on $\mathbb{R}_+$ with values in $\mathbb{R}_+$, we write $f(x) = O(g(x))$ and $f(x) = o(g(x))$ if the inequality $f(x) < Kg(x)$ holds with some constant $K > 0$ and all $x > x_0$, and $\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} f(x)/g(x) = 0$, respectively. Further, the notations $f(x) \ll g(x)$ and $g(x) \gg f(x)$ are equivalent to

ON THE EULER FUNCTION OF LINEARLY RECURRENT SEQUENCES

$f(x) = O(g(x))$. When the implied constant K depends on some other parameters like U , ε , we indicate this by writing $f(x) = O_{U,\varepsilon}(g(x))$ or $f(x) \ll_{U,\varepsilon} g(x)$.

Theorem 1. *Let $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ be a nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequence of integers such that $|U_n|$ is not a polynomial in n for all large n and let x be a large real number. Then, the inequality*

$$\phi(|U_n|) \geq |U_{\phi(n)}| \quad (4)$$

fails on a set of positive integers $n \leq x$ of cardinality $O_U(x/\log x)$. A similar statement holds for the positive integers $n \leq x$ for which the inequality

$$\sigma(|U_n|) \leq |U_{\sigma(n)}|$$

fails.

The theorem does not hold for sequences for which U_n is either $P(n)$ or $(-1)^n P(n)$, with some polynomial $P(X) \in \mathbb{Z}[X]$, whose characteristic polynomial $\Psi(X)$ is one of $(X-1)^k$ or $(X+1)^k$, where $k-1$ is the degree of $P(X)$. For example, with $k=3$ and $P(X) = X^2 + 1$, we have that if n is odd, then $U_n = n^2 + 1$ is even; therefore,

$$\phi(U_n) \leq \frac{n^2 + 1}{2}.$$

On the other hand, for a positive proportion of n , we have $\phi(n) > n/\sqrt{2}$ and all such n are odd. Indeed, if n is even, then $\phi(n)/n \leq 1/2$, so we cannot have $\phi(n)/n > 1/\sqrt{2}$ for such n . To justify why there are a positive proportion of such n , recall that Schoenberg [9] proved the existence of a continuous monotone function $f : [0, 1] \rightarrow [0, 1]$ with $f(0) = 0$ and $f(1) = 1$ such that

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{x} \# \left\{ n \leq x : \frac{\phi(n)}{n} \leq \alpha \right\} = f(\alpha) \quad \text{for } \alpha \in [0, 1].$$

In particular, the density of the set of n such that $\phi(n)/n > 1/\sqrt{2}$ equals $1 - f(1/\sqrt{2}) > 0$. For such n ,

$$U_{\phi(n)} = \phi(n)^2 + 1 > \frac{n^2}{2} + 1 > \phi(U_n).$$

As we said above, the bound $O_U(x/\log x)$ from the statement of Theorem 1 is close to the truth in some cases like when $(U_n)_{n \geq 0}$ is a Lucas sequence with complex conjugated roots. Even more, it is easy to construct binary recurrent sequences $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ with real roots for which inequality (4) fails for a number of positive integers $n \leq x$, which is $\gg_U x/(\log x)$. For example, let $q_1 < \dots < q_k$ be odd primes such that

$$\sum_{i=1}^k \frac{1}{q_i} > 1.$$

Let $a > 2$ be a positive integer such that $a \equiv 2 \pmod{q_i}$ for $i = 1, \dots, k$. Then $2^p - a$ is a multiple of q_i for all $i = 1, \dots, k$, whenever p is a prime such that $p \equiv 1 \pmod{q_i - 1}$ for all

$i = 1, \dots, k$. For such primes p that are sufficiently large, we have

$$\begin{aligned}\phi(2^p - a) &= (2^p - a) \prod_{q|2^p - a} \left(1 - \frac{1}{q}\right) \leq (2^p - a) \prod_{i=1}^k \left(1 - \frac{1}{q_i}\right) \\ &< (2^p - a) \exp\left(-\sum_{i=1}^k \frac{1}{q_i}\right) < \frac{2^p - a}{e} \\ &< 2^{p-1} - a = 2^{\phi(p)} - a.\end{aligned}$$

Thus, $\phi(U_n) < U_{\phi(n)}$ for $n = p$ a large prime in the progression

$$p \equiv 1 \pmod{\text{lcm}[q_1 - 1, \dots, q_k - 1]}$$

and $U_n := 2^n - a$, which is the n th term of a binary recurrent sequence of characteristic polynomial $\Psi(X) = X^2 - 3X + 2$. In the above, the notation $\text{lcm}[q_1 - 1, \dots, q_k - 1]$ stands for the least common multiple of $q_1 - 1, \dots, q_k - 1$.

2. PRELIMINARY RESULTS

2.1. Arithmetic Functions. Here, we collect a few facts from the anatomy of integers that are useful for our proof of Theorem 1. The first result addresses the minimal order of $\phi(n)$ and the maximal order of $\sigma(n)$. It follows from Theorems 323, 328, and 329 in [3].

Lemma 1. *Let $n \geq 3$. We then have*

$$\frac{\phi(n)}{n} \gg \frac{1}{\log \log n} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\sigma(n)}{n} \ll \log \log n.$$

For a positive integer n , put $p(n)$ for the smallest prime factor of n with the convention that $p(1) = 1$. For $x \geq y \geq 2$, put

$$\Phi(x, y) := \#\{n \leq x : p(n) > y\}.$$

The following inequality is a consequence of the Brun sieve and appears, for example, on page 397 in [10] (see also Exercise on page 11 in [2]).

Lemma 2. *We have, uniformly for $x \geq y \geq 2$,*

$$\Phi(x, y) \ll \frac{x}{\log y}.$$

Let $\Omega(n)$ be the total number of prime factors of n counting multiplicities.

Lemma 3. *Let $x \geq 10$. The number of positive integers $n \leq x$ such that $\Omega(n) \geq 10 \log \log x$ is $O(x/(\log x)^2)$.*

Proof. Exercise 05 on page 12 in [2] shows that

$$\#\{n \leq x : \Omega(n) = k\} \ll \frac{xk \log x}{2^k}$$

uniformly in $k \geq 1$ and $x \geq 2$. Taking $K := \lfloor 10 \log \log x \rfloor$ and applying the above estimate with $k \geq K$, we get that

$$\begin{aligned} \#\{n \leq x : \Omega(n) \geq 10 \log \log x\} &\ll x \log x \sum_{k \geq K} \frac{k}{2^k} \ll \frac{xK \log x}{2^K} \\ &\ll \frac{x \log x \log \log x}{2^{10 \log \log x}} = \frac{x \log x \log \log x}{(\log x)^{10 \log 2}} \\ &= O\left(\frac{x}{(\log x)^2}\right). \end{aligned}$$

□

Let $\tau(n)$ be the number of divisors of n .

Lemma 4. *Let $x \geq 10$. The number of positive integers $n \leq x$ such that $\tau(\sigma(n)) > \exp(\sqrt{\log x})$ is $O(x/(\log x)^2)$.*

Proof. Theorem 1 in [6] shows that

$$\sum_{n \leq x} \tau(\phi(n)) = x \exp\left(c(x) \left(\frac{\log x}{\log \log x}\right)^{1/2} \left(1 + O\left(\frac{\log \log \log x}{\log \log x}\right)\right)\right),$$

where $c(x) \in [e^{-\gamma/2}/7, 2\sqrt{2}e^{-\gamma/2}]$ and $\gamma = 0.577\dots$ is the Euler-Mascheroni constant. The remarks on page 128 of the same paper show that the above estimate holds with $\phi(n)$ replaced by $\sigma(n)$. In particular,

$$\begin{aligned} \#\{n \leq x : \tau(\sigma(n)) > \exp(\sqrt{\log x})\} \exp(\sqrt{\log x}) &\leq \sum_{n \leq x} \tau(\sigma(n)) \\ &< x \exp\left(O\left(\frac{\log x}{\log \log x}\right)^{1/2}\right), \end{aligned}$$

which gives that

$$\begin{aligned} \#\{n \leq x : \tau(\sigma(n)) > \exp(\sqrt{\log x})\} &< x \exp\left(-\sqrt{\log x} + O\left(\left(\frac{\log x}{\log \log x}\right)^{1/2}\right)\right) \\ &= O\left(\frac{x}{(\log x)^2}\right). \end{aligned}$$

□

2.2. The Subspace Theorem and Linearly Recurrent Sequences. Here, we review a quantitative version of the Subspace Theorem due to Evertse from [1] and apply it to nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequences of integers. Let $\mathbb{K}$ be an algebraic number field with ring of integers $\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{K}}$ and collection of places (equivalence classes of absolute values) $M_{\mathbb{K}}$. For $v \in M_{\mathbb{K}}$ and $x \in \mathbb{K}$, we define the absolute value $|x|_v$ as follows:

$$|x|_v := \begin{cases} |\sigma(x)|_{[\mathbb{K}:\mathbb{Q}]}, & \text{if } v \text{ corresponds to } \sigma : \mathbb{K} \mapsto \mathbb{R}; \\ |\sigma(x)|_{[\mathbb{K}:\mathbb{Q}]}^2, & \text{if } v \text{ corresponds to the pair } \sigma, \bar{\sigma} : \mathbb{K} \mapsto \mathbb{C}; \\ N(\pi)^{-\frac{\text{ord}_{\pi}(x)}{[\mathbb{K}:\mathbb{Q}]}} , & \text{if } v \text{ corresponds to the prime ideal } \pi \subset \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{K}}. \end{cases}$$

Here, $N(\pi) := \#(\mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{K}}/\pi)$ is the norm of π and $\text{ord}_{\pi}(x)$ is the exponent of π in the factorization of the principal fractional ideal (x) of $\mathbb{K}$ with the convention that $\text{ord}_{\pi}(0) = \infty$. In the first

two cases above, we call v real infinite or complex infinite, respectively, whereas in the third case we call v finite. These absolute values satisfy the product formula

$$\prod_{v \in M_K} |x|_v = 1 \quad \text{for all } x \in K^*.$$

Now let $s \geq 2$, $\mathbf{x} := (x_1, \dots, x_s) \in K^s$ with $\mathbf{x} \neq 0$, and define

$$|\mathbf{x}|_v := \begin{cases} \left(\sum_{i=1}^s |x_i|_v^{2[K:\mathbb{Q}]} \right)^{\frac{1}{2[K:\mathbb{Q}]}} & \text{if } v \text{ is real infinite;} \\ \left(\sum_{i=1}^s |x_i|_v^{[K:\mathbb{Q}]} \right)^{\frac{1}{[K:\mathbb{Q}]}} & \text{if } v \text{ is complex infinite;} \\ \max\{|x_1|_v, \dots, |x_s|_v\} & \text{if } v \text{ is finite.} \end{cases}$$

Note that for infinite places v , $|\cdot|_v$ is a power of the Euclidean norm. Define

$$H(\mathbf{x}) := \prod_{v \in M_K} |\mathbf{x}|_v.$$

In the statement of the next result, the following apply:

- K is an algebraic number field;
- $\mathcal{S}$ is a finite subset of M_K of cardinality r containing all the infinite places;
- $\{l_{1,v}, \dots, l_{s,v}\}$ for $v \in \mathcal{S}$ are linearly independent sets of linear forms with algebraic coefficients in s variables such that

$$H(l_{i,v}) \leq H, \quad [K(l_{i,v}) : K] \leq D$$

for all $i = 1, \dots, s$ and $v \in \mathcal{S}$.

The following is the main Theorem in [1].

Theorem 2. *Let $0 < \delta < 1$. Consider the inequality*

$$\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} \prod_{i=1}^s \frac{|l_{i,v}(\mathbf{x})|_v}{|\mathbf{x}|_v} < \left(\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |\det(l_{1,v}, \dots, l_{s,v})|_v \right) H(\mathbf{x})^{-s-\delta}, \quad \mathbf{x} \in K^s. \quad (5)$$

Then

- (i) *There are proper linear subspaces $T_1, \dots, T_{t_1}$ with*

$$t_1 \leq (2^{60s^2} \delta^{-7s})^r \log(4D) \log \log(4D)$$

such that every solution $\mathbf{x} \in K^s$ to (5) with $H(\mathbf{x}) \geq H$ satisfies

$$\mathbf{x} \in T_1 \cup \dots \cup T_{t_1}.$$

- (ii) *There are proper linear subspaces $S_1, S_2, \dots, S_{t_2}$ of K^s with*

$$t_2 \leq (150s^4 \delta^{-1})^{sr+1} (2 + \log \log(2H))$$

such that every solution $\mathbf{x} \in K^s$ of (5) with $H(\mathbf{x}) < H$ satisfies

$$\mathbf{x} \in S_1 \cup S_2 \cup \dots \cup S_{t_2}.$$

We present an application to small values of nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequences. But before, let us record the following result of Schmidt [8]. For a nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequence $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$, let

$$Z_U := \#\{n : U_n = 0\}.$$

ON THE EULER FUNCTION OF LINEARLY RECURRENT SEQUENCES

Theorem 3. *If $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ is a nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequence of order $k \geq 2$ whose terms are complex numbers, then*

$$\#Z_U \leq \exp(\exp(\exp(3k \log k))).$$

Now let $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ be a nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequence of integers given by recurrence (1), whose characteristic polynomial is given by (3) and formula for the general term (2). Assume that $|\alpha_1| \geq |\alpha_2| \geq \dots \geq |\alpha_s|$ and that $|U_n|$ is not a polynomial in n for large n . In particular, $|\alpha_1| > 1$.

We prove the following lemma.

Lemma 5. *Let $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ be a nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequence of integers whose general term is given by (2) with $s \geq 2$ and assume that $|\alpha_1| = \max\{|\alpha_j| : 1 \leq j \leq s\}$. Then there exists x_0 and $c := c(U) \in (0, 1/3)$ such that for $x \geq x_0$, the number of $n \leq x$ such that*

$$|U_n| \leq |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta)}, \quad (6)$$

with $\delta := x^{-c}$ is of cardinality $O_U(\sqrt{x})$.

Proof. We may assume that $n \in (x^{1/2}, x]$ since there are only $O(x^{1/2})$ positive integers $n \leq x^{1/2}$. Using (2), inequality (6) becomes

$$\left| \sum_{i=1}^s P_i(n) \alpha_i^n \right| \leq |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta)}.$$

Let L be a positive integer that is a common multiple of all the denominators of all the coefficients of $P_i(X)$ for $i = 1, \dots, s$. Multiplying across by L , we get, by setting $Q_i(X) := LP_i(X)$, that

$$\left| \sum_{i=1}^s Q_i(n) \alpha_i^n \right| \leq L |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta)}. \quad (7)$$

Note now that $Q_i(n) \alpha_i^n \in \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{K}}$, where $\mathbb{K} := \mathbb{Q}(\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_s)$ is an algebraic number field. For technical reasons, we would like to exclude the greatest common divisor of the ideals $(\alpha_1), \dots, (\alpha_s)$. So, let $I := \gcd((\alpha_1), \dots, (\alpha_s))$. Then I^h is principal for some positive integer h , which can be taken to be the cardinality of the class group of $\mathbb{K}$. Let β be a generator of I^h . Then β divides α_i^h for all $i = 1, \dots, s$, so $(\alpha_1^h/\beta), \dots, (\alpha_s^h/\beta)$ are coprime. Since I is Galois invariant, any conjugate $\beta^{(j)}$ of β is also a generator of I , so β is associated to any of its conjugates. Letting d be the degree of β , we get that $\alpha_i^h/\beta^{(j)}$ are all associated for $j = 1, \dots, d$ (and fixed $i \in \{1, \dots, s\}$) and in particular, they are also associated with α_i^{hd}/b , where we can take $b := N(\beta)$. Now we replace $(U_n)_{n \geq 1}$ with any of the hd linearly recurrent sequences $(U_{hdm+\ell})_{m \geq 0}$ and $\ell \in \{0, 1, \dots, hd-1\}$ by fixing ℓ . Then

$$U_{hdm+\ell} = b^m \sum_{i=1}^s Q'_i(m) \alpha_i'^m,$$

where $Q'_i(X) := \alpha_i^\ell Q_i(hdX + \ell) \in \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{K}}[X]$ and $\alpha_i' := \alpha_i^{hd}/b$ for $i = 1, \dots, s$. Inequality (7) now implies

$$\left| \sum_{i=1}^s Q'_i(m) \alpha_i'^m \right| \leq L |\alpha_1|^\ell \left| \frac{\alpha_1^{hd}}{b} \right|^m \cdot \alpha_1^{-\delta(hdm+\ell)} = L' |\alpha_1|^{m(1-\delta_1)}, \quad (8)$$

where $L' := L |\alpha_1|^{\ell(1-\delta)}$ and $\delta_1 := c_0 \delta$ with $c_0 := \frac{hd \log |\alpha_1|}{hd \log |\alpha_1| - \log b}$. Note that $|\alpha_1| > 1$, for if not, then $|\alpha_i^{hd}/b| \leq 1$ holds for all $i = 1, \dots, s$. Since α_i' are algebraic integers having all the

conjugates at most 1, we get that they are roots of unity. Thus, α_i/α_j is a root of unity for all $i \neq j$, which contradicts the nondegeneracy assumption.

We now set up the subspace machinery. We let $\mathcal{S}$ be the subset of $M_{\mathbb{K}}$ containing all the infinite valuations as well as all the finite ones v such that $|\alpha'_i|_v \neq 1$ for some $i = 1, \dots, s$. We take $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, \dots, x_s)$ and $l_{i,v}(\mathbf{x})$ given by

$$l_{i,v}(\mathbf{x}) := x_i \quad \text{for all } (i, v) \in \{1, \dots, s\} \times \mathcal{S} \text{ with } i \geq 2 \text{ or } v \text{ finite,}$$

and take

$$l_{1,v}(\mathbf{x}) := x_1 + \dots + x_s \quad \text{for } v \text{ infinite.}$$

We evaluate

$$\prod_{i=1}^s \prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |l_{i,v}(\mathbf{x})|_v \quad (9)$$

in $\mathbf{x} := (Q'_1(m)\alpha_1'^m, \dots, Q'_s(m)\alpha_s'^m)$ with some m satisfying inequality (8). For a fixed $i \geq 2$, we have

$$\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |l_{i,v}(\mathbf{x})|_v = \prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |Q'_i(m)\alpha_i'^m|_v \leq \prod_{v \text{ infinite}} |Q'_i(m)|_v \ll m^{\sigma_i-1},$$

where the implied constant depends on the coefficients of $Q'_i(x)$. The above inequality follows by the product formula for $\alpha_i'^m$, together with the fact that $\mathcal{S}$ contains all the places of $M_{\mathbb{K}}$ for which $|\alpha'_i|_v \neq 1$ and together with the fact that $Q'_i(m)$ is an algebraic integer, so $|Q'_i(m)|_v \leq 1$ for all finite places v . Hence,

$$\prod_{i=2}^s \prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |l_{i,v}(\mathbf{x})|_v \ll \prod_{i=2}^s m^{\sigma_i-1} = m^{\sum_{i=2}^s \sigma_i-1}.$$

For $i = 1$, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} \prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |l_{1,v}(\mathbf{x})|_v &= \prod_{\substack{v \in \mathcal{S} \\ v \text{ finite}}} |Q'_1(m)\alpha_1'^m|_v \prod_{\substack{v \in \mathcal{S} \\ v \text{ infinite}}} \left| \sum_{i=1}^s Q'_i(m)\alpha_i'^m \right|_v \\ &\ll \prod_{\substack{v \in \mathcal{S} \\ v \text{ infinite}}} |Q'_1(m)|_v \left(\prod_{\substack{v \in \mathcal{S} \\ v \text{ finite}}} |\alpha_1'^m|_v \right) |\alpha_1'|^{m(1-\delta_1)}. \end{aligned}$$

In the above, we used the fact that $\sum_{i=1}^s Q'_i(m)\alpha_i'^m$ is an integer from $\mathbb{Z}$, so the product of its valuations over all infinite places $v \in M_{\mathbb{K}}$ is just the regular absolute value of this integer. Using again the product formula, $|\alpha_1'^m|$ is cancelled by the second product above, so we get that

$$\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |l_{1,v}(\mathbf{x})|_v \ll m^{\sigma_1-1} (|\alpha_1'^m|)^{-\delta_1}.$$

Collecting everything together, we get that the product shown in (9) is bounded as

$$\prod_{i=1}^s \prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |l_{i,v}(\mathbf{x})|_v \ll m^{\sum_{i=1}^s \sigma_i-1} (|\alpha_1'^m|)^{-\delta_1} \ll m^k |\alpha_1'^m|^{-\delta_1}. \quad (10)$$

To be able to apply Theorem 2, we should compare the above upper bound on our double product with

$$\left(\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |\det(l_{1,v}, l_{2,v}, \dots, l_{s,v})|_v \right) \left(\frac{\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |\mathbf{x}|_v}{H(\mathbf{x})} \right)^s H(\mathbf{x})^{-\delta_2}$$

ON THE EULER FUNCTION OF LINEARLY RECURRENT SEQUENCES

for some suitable δ_2 . Well, the first factor above is easy since all the involved determinants are equal to 1. For the second factor above, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |\mathbf{x}|_v}{H(\mathbf{x})} &= \prod_{v \in M_{\mathbb{K}} \setminus \mathcal{S}} |\mathbf{x}|_v^{-1} = \prod_{v \in M_{\mathbb{K}} \setminus \mathcal{S}} (\max\{|Q'_i(m)\alpha_i'^m|_v\})^{-1} \\ &= \prod_{v \in M_{\mathbb{K}} \setminus \mathcal{S}} (\max\{|Q'_i(m)|_v\})^{-1} \geq 1. \end{aligned}$$

In the above, we used the fact that $M_{\mathbb{K}} \setminus \mathcal{S}$ consists only of finite valuations v for which $|\alpha_i'^m|_v = 1$. Finally for $H(\mathbf{x})$, we use the fact that $x_i \in \mathcal{O}_{\mathbb{K}}$ to deduce that

$$H(\mathbf{x}) \leq \prod_{v \text{ infinite}} |\mathbf{x}|_v \leq \left(\sum_{i=1}^s |Q'_i(m)^2 \alpha_i'^{2m}|^{1/2} \right) \ll m^k |\alpha_1'|^m.$$

Here, we used the fact that $\sum_{i=1}^s Q'_i(m)^2 \alpha_i'^{2m}$ is an integer as the collection of numbers $\{Q'_1(m)^2 \alpha_1'^{2m}, \dots, Q'_s(m) \alpha_s'^{2m}\}$ is Galois stable. In particular, we have that

$$\left(\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |\det(l_{1,v}, l_{2,v}, \dots, l_{s,v})|_v \right) \left(\frac{\prod_{v \in \mathcal{S}} |\mathbf{x}|_v}{H(\mathbf{x})} \right)^s H(\mathbf{x})^{-\delta_2} \gg m^{-k\delta_2} |\alpha_1'|^m.$$

So, inequality (5) will hold for us, assuming that

$$c_1 m^k |\alpha_1'|^m \leq c_2 m^{-k\delta_2} |\alpha_1'|^m \quad (11)$$

holds, where c_1 and c_2 are the constants implied by the $\ll$ and $\gg$ symbols in (10) and (11), respectively. We take $\delta_2 := \delta_1/2$ and the above inequality becomes equivalent to

$$(c_1/c_2) m^{k(1+\delta_2)} < |\alpha_1'|^{\delta_1/2}.$$

Taking logarithms, we get

$$k(1 + \delta_2) \log m + \log(c_1/c_2) \leq (\delta_1/2)(\log |\alpha_1'|)m.$$

Since $n \leq x$, then the left side is $O(\log x)$. Since $\delta_1 = c_0 \delta \gg x^{-1/3}$, $\log |\alpha_1'| > 0$, and $m \gg n \gg \sqrt{x}$, it follows that the right side above is $\gg x^{1/6}$. Thus, the last inequality above holds for $x > x_0$, where x_0 depends on U . We conclude that our $\mathbf{x}$ satisfies inequality (5) with $\delta_2 := \delta_1/2$ and $x > x_0$.

We take a closer look at $H(\mathbf{x})$. Since $(\alpha_1'), \dots, (\alpha_s')$ are coprime, it follows that for every finite place $v \in M_{\mathbb{K}}$, there is $i \in \{1, \dots, s\}$ such that $|\alpha_i'|_v = 1$. This shows that for finite v , we have

$$|\mathbf{x}|_v \gg \min\{|Q'_i(m)|_v\} \gg m^{-k}.$$

Hence,

$$H(\mathbf{x}) \gg m^{-rk} \prod_{v \text{ infinite}} |Q'_i(m) \alpha_i'^m|_v \gg m^{-rk} |\alpha_1'|^m. \quad (12)$$

Here, r is the cardinality of $\mathcal{S}$. For our set-up, the parameter H can be taken to be $\sqrt{s}$. Since $m \gg n \gg x^{1/2}$, it follows that for large x , the inequality

$$c_3 m^{-rk} |\alpha_1'|^m \geq \sqrt{s}$$

holds, where c_3 is the constant implied in (12). Thus, for $x > x_0$, we have

$$H(\mathbf{x}) \geq H.$$

THE FIBONACCI QUARTERLY

Also, for us $D = 1$, since $l_{i,v}(\mathbf{x})$ have coefficients from $\mathbb{Z}$. So, by Theorem 2, there are proper subspaces $T_1, \dots, T_{t_1}$ with

$$t_1 \leq (2^{60s^2} \delta_2^{-7s})^r \log 4 \log \log 4$$

such that $\mathbf{x} \in T_1 \cup T_2 \cup \dots \cup T_{t_1}$. Each of the containments $\mathbf{x} \in T_j$ leads to an equation of the form

$$\sum_{i=1}^s C_i^{(j)} Q_i'(m) \alpha_i'(m) = 0,$$

where $\mathbf{C}^{(j)} := (C_1^{(j)}, \dots, C_s^{(j)}) \in \mathbb{K}^s$ is not the zero vector. Each such equation signals that m is in the set of zeros of a nondegenerate linearly recurrent sequence of order at most k , so there are at most $O_k(1)$ such values of m , where the constant in O_k can be taken to be $\exp(\exp(3k \log k))$ by Theorem 3. So, it remains to understand the upper bound on t_2 . But, this is

$$(2^{60s^2+7s} c_0^{-7s} x^{7sc})^r \log 4 \log \log 4.$$

Taking $c := 1/(15sr)$, the above bound becomes

$$2^{(60s^2+7s)r} c_0^{-7sr} x^{7/15} \log 4 \log \log 4,$$

and this is smaller than $x^{1/2}$ for $x > x_0$. This finishes the proof. $\square$

3. PROOF OF THEOREM 1

3.1. The Case of the Euler ϕ Function. Let $p(n)$ be the smallest prime factor of n . Let

$$\mathcal{A}_1(x) = \{n \leq x : p(n) > x^{c_1}\},$$

where $c_1 \in (0, 1/6)$ is a constant to be determined later. We show first that $\mathcal{A}_1(x)$ contains $O(x/\log x)$ positive integers $n \leq x$ as $x \rightarrow \infty$. Indeed, putting $y := x^{c_1}$, the set $\mathcal{A}_1(x)$ coincides with the $n \leq x$, which are coprime to all the primes $p \leq y$. The number of such is, by Lemma 2,

$$\Phi(x, y) \ll \frac{x}{\log y} \ll \frac{x}{\log x}.$$

From now on, let $n \leq x$ not in $\mathcal{A}_1(x)$. We also assume that $n \geq x^{1/2}$, since there are only $O(x^{1/2}) = o(x/\log x)$ as $x \rightarrow \infty$ positive integers failing this last inequality.

For such n , the interval $[1, n]$ contains at least $n/p(n)$ numbers, which are not coprime to n , namely all the positive integers that are multiples of $p(n)$. Thus,

$$\phi(n) \leq n - \frac{n}{p(n)} \leq n - n\delta,$$

where $\delta := 1/x^{c_1}$. Let

$$U_n = \sum_{i=1}^s P_i(n) \alpha_i^n.$$

We assume that $|\alpha_1| \geq |\alpha_2| \geq \dots \geq |\alpha_s|$. Assume first that $s = 1$. In this case $\Psi(X) = (X - \alpha_1)^k$, so α_1 is an integer with $|\alpha_1| \geq 2$. Thus,

$$U_n = P_1(n) \alpha_1^n,$$

ON THE EULER FUNCTION OF LINEARLY RECURRENT SEQUENCES

where $P_1(X) \in \mathbb{Q}[X]$. Let L be the least common denominator of all the coefficients of $P_1(X)$. Then, for large n (say larger than the maximal real root of $P_1(X)$), we have

$$\begin{aligned} L\phi(|U_n|) &\geq \phi(L|U_n|) \geq \phi(L|P_1(n)|)\phi(|\alpha_1|^n) \gg \frac{L|P_1(n)|}{\log \log(L|P_1(n)|)} |\alpha_1|^n \\ &\gg \frac{Ln^{k-1}}{\log \log n} |\alpha_1|^n. \end{aligned}$$

This gives

$$\phi(|U_n|) \gg \frac{n^{k-1}}{\log \log n} |\alpha_1|^n. \quad (13)$$

On the other hand,

$$|U_{\phi(n)}| = |P_1(\phi(n))| |\alpha_1|^{\phi(n)} \ll \phi(n)^{k-1} |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta)} \ll n^{k-1} |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta)}. \quad (14)$$

By (13) and (14), it follows that if

$$\phi(|U_n|) \leq |U_{\phi(n)}|$$

holds, then

$$\frac{n^{k-1}}{\log \log n} |\alpha_1|^n \leq \phi(|U_n|) \leq |U_{\phi(n)}| \ll n^{k-1} |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta)}.$$

This is equivalent to

$$|\alpha_1|^{n\delta} \ll \log \log n.$$

Taking logarithms, this becomes

$$(n\delta) \log |\alpha_1| \leq \log \log \log n + O(1).$$

The right side is $O(\log \log \log x)$. Since $|\alpha_1| \geq 2$, $n\delta \geq x^{1/2}/x^{c_1} \geq x^{1/3}$; it follows that the above inequality implies that x is bounded. Thus, there are only finitely many such n in case $s = 1$.

From now on, we assume $s \geq 2$. In this case, the inequality

$$|\alpha_1|^{n/2} \leq |U_n| \ll |\alpha_1|^n n^k$$

holds for all $n \geq n_0$. Indeed, the right side is obvious and the left side follows from a known application of the Subspace Theorem (see, for example, [11, Lemma 4.1]). Thus, for $n \geq n_0$, we have that

$$\log \log |U_n| = \log n + O(1).$$

Since $\phi(m) \gg m/\log \log m$ holds for all integers $m \geq 2$ (see Lemma 1), we have that for $n > n_0$, the inequality

$$\phi(|U_n|) \gg \frac{|U_n|}{\log \log |U_n|} = \frac{|U_n|}{\log n + O(1)}$$

holds. Assume now that

$$\phi(|U_n|) \leq |U_{\phi(n)}|.$$

We then get

$$\frac{|U_n|}{\log n + O(1)} \ll \phi(|U_n|) \leq |U_{\phi(n)}| \leq |\alpha_1|^{\phi(n)} \phi(n)^k \ll |\alpha_1|^{n-n\delta} n^k.$$

This gives

$$|U_n| \ll |\alpha_1|^{n-n\delta} n^k (\log n + O(1)).$$

Let c_4 be the constant implied by the above inequality and c_5 be the constant implied by the above $O(1)$. We claim that with $\delta_1 := 1/x^{2c_1}$, the inequality

$$c_4 |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta)} n^k (\log n + c_5) < |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta_1)}$$

holds. Indeed, this is equivalent to

$$k \log n + \log(\log n + c_5) + \log(c_4) < n(\delta - \delta_1) \log |\alpha_1|. \quad (15)$$

Since $n \in (\sqrt{x}, x]$, the left side above is $O(\log x)$. Since $\delta_1 = 1/x^{2c_1}$ and $\delta = 1/x^{c_1}$, it follows that $\delta - \delta_1 \geq 0.5\delta \geq 0.5x^{-c_1}$ for $x \geq x_0$. Since $n \geq \sqrt{x}$, it follows that the right side above is $\gg x^{1/2-c_1} \gg x^{1/3}$. Therefore, indeed (15) holds for all our n in $(\sqrt{x}, x]$ and $x > x_0$. Thus, we get

$$|U_n| \leq |\alpha_1|^{n(1-\delta_1)}.$$

By Lemma 5, we can choose $c_1 := c/2$ such that the number of $n \leq x$ satisfying the above inequality is $O_k(\sqrt{x}) = o(x/\log x)$ as $x \rightarrow \infty$, which finishes the argument.

3.2. The Case of the σ Function. Assume again that x is large and $n \in (\sqrt{x}, x]$ is divisible by some prime $p \leq x^{c_1}$ for some small constant c_1 , since otherwise, like in the case of the Euler function, the set of such $n \leq x$ is $O(x/\log x)$. Then $\sigma(n) \geq n + n\delta$, where $\delta := 1/x^{c_1}$, which gives

$$n \leq \frac{\sigma(n)}{1+\delta} \leq \sigma(n)(1-\delta_1),$$

where $\delta_1 := \delta/2$. Assume now that

$$|U_{\sigma(n)}| \leq \sigma(|U_n|). \quad (16)$$

As in the case of the ϕ function, we need to treat the case $s = 1$ separately. In this case, $U_n = P_1(n)\alpha_1^n$, where $|\alpha_1| \geq 2$ is an integer and $P_1(X) \in \mathbb{Q}[X]$. Let again L be the least common denominator of the coefficients of $P_1(X)$ and n be larger than the maximal real zero of $P_1(X)$. The right side above is by Lemma 1.

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma(|U_n|) &\leq \sigma(L|U_n|) = \sigma(L|P_1(n)||\alpha_1|^n) \leq \sigma(L|P_1(n)|)\sigma(|\alpha_1|^n) \\ &\ll L|P_1(n)|(\log \log(L|P_1(n)|))|\alpha_1|^n \\ &\ll n^{k-1}(\log \log n)|\alpha_1|^{\sigma(n)(1-\delta_1)}, \end{aligned} \quad (17)$$

whereas

$$|U_{\sigma(n)}| = |P_1(\sigma(n))||\alpha_1|^{\sigma(n)} \gg \sigma(n)^{k-1}|\alpha_1|^{\sigma(n)} \gg n^{k-1}|\alpha_1|^{\sigma(n)}. \quad (18)$$

Inequality (16), with (17) and (18), imply

$$n^{k-1}|\alpha_1|^{\sigma(n)} \ll |U_{\sigma(n)}| \leq \sigma(|U_n|) \ll n^{k-1}(\log \log n)|\alpha_1|^{\sigma(n)(1-\delta_1)}.$$

This leads to

$$|\alpha_1|^{\delta_1 \sigma(n)} \ll \log \log n,$$

and by the argument for the case $s = 1$ and the ϕ function, this leads to the conclusion that x (so, n) is bounded.

From now on, we assume that $s \geq 2$. The right side is, by Lemma 1 and the calculation done at the case of the Euler ϕ function,

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma(|U_n|) &\ll |U_n| \log \log |U_n| \ll |\alpha_1|^n n^k (\log n + O(1)) \\ &\leq |\alpha_1|^{\sigma(n)(1-\delta_1)} \sigma(n)^k (\log \sigma(n) + O(1)). \end{aligned}$$

ON THE EULER FUNCTION OF LINEARLY RECURRENT SEQUENCES

Let c_6 and c_7 be the constants implied by the $\ll$ -symbol and O -symbol above, respectively. By the argument done in the case of the Euler ϕ function, putting $\delta_2 := 1/x^{2c_1}$, the inequality

$$c_6 |\alpha_1|^{m(1-\delta_1)} m^k (\log m + c_7) < |\alpha_1|^{m(1-\delta_2)}$$

holds for all $m = \sigma(n)$ and $n \in (\sqrt{x}, x]$ for $x > x_0$. Thus, putting $m := \sigma(n)$, we get that

$$|U_m| \leq |\alpha_1|^{m(1-\delta_2)}$$

holds, when $x \geq x_0$. Note that $m \ll x \log \log x$ by Lemma 1. By Lemma 5, we can choose $c_1 = c/2$ and then the set of $m \ll x \log \log x$ satisfying the above inequality is of cardinality

$$O_k(\sqrt{x \log \log x}).$$

But this is only an upper bound on the number of distinct values of $\sigma(n)$ and we have to get an upper bound on the number of n 's themselves. By Lemmas 3 and 4, we may assume that $\Omega(n) \leq 10 \log \log x$ and $\tau(\sigma(n)) \leq \exp(\sqrt{\log x})$, since the number of $n \leq x$ for which one of the above inequalities fails is $O(x/(\log x)^2)$. Writing

$$n = p_1^{a_1} \cdots p_\ell^{a_\ell},$$

with distinct primes $p_1, \dots, p_\ell$ and positive exponents $a_1, \dots, a_\ell$, we have

$$\sigma(n) = \prod_{i=1}^{\ell} \left(\frac{p_i^{a_i+1} - 1}{p_i - 1} \right).$$

Given $m = \sigma(n)$, each of $(p_i^{a_i+1} - 1)/(p_i - 1)$ is a divisor d_i of $\sigma(n)$. Additionally, given d_i and also a_i , p_i is uniquely determined. Thus, since d_i can be fixed in at most $\tau(\sigma(n))$ ways and $a_i \leq \Omega(n)$ can be fixed in at most $\Omega(n)$ ways, it follows that $p_i^{a_i}$ can be fixed in at most $\Omega(n)\tau(\sigma(n))$ ways. This is so for a fixed i , but $i \leq \ell = \omega(n) \leq \Omega(n)$. Thus, the number of such n , when $\sigma(n)$ and $\Omega(n)$ are given, is at most

$$\left((10 \log \log x) \exp(\sqrt{\log x}) \right)^{10 \log \log x} < \exp \left(20 (\log \log x) \sqrt{\log x} \right)$$

for $x > x_0$. Varying $\Omega(n)$ up to $10 \log \log x$, as well as the number of possible values of $\sigma(n)$, we get that the number of possible $n \leq x$ is

$$\ll_k \sqrt{x \log \log x} (\log \log x) \exp \left(20 (\log \log x) \sqrt{\log x} \right) = o(x/\log x)$$

as $x \rightarrow \infty$, which finishes the proof of the σ case.

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Volume 62

Number 4

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CONTENTS

Mathematics Books for Sale	274
Full text (Open)	
Haruo Iwasaki	
<i>A New Classification of the Kaprekar Numbers</i>	275
Abstract Full text	
Kálmán Liptai, László Németh, Tamás Szakács, and László Szalay	
<i>On Certain Fibonacci Representations</i>	282
Abstract Full text	
Emily J. Evans and Russell Jay Hendel	
<i>Recursions and Characteristic Polynomials of the Rows of the Circuit Array</i>	290
Abstract Full text	
Hùng Việt Chu and Zachary Louis Vasseur	
<i>Weighted Schreier-type Sets and the Fibonacci Sequence</i>	305
Abstract Full text	
Florian Luca and Makoko Campbell Manape	
<i>On the Euler Function of Linearly Recurrence Sequences</i>	316
Abstract Full text	
Elementary Problems and Solutions	
(Edited by Harris Kwong)	329
Full text (Open)	
Advanced Problems and Solutions	
(Edited by Robert Frontczak)	337
Full text (Open)	
Volume Index	345
Full text (Open)	

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