

STRASSMANN'S THEOREM AND AN APPLICATION

KEITH CONRAD

1. INTRODUCTION

Let $\{a_m\}$ be the sequence defined by the linear recursion

$$(1.1) \quad a_m = 2a_{m-1} - 3a_{m-2}$$

with initial conditions $a_0 = 1, a_1 = 1$. Here are the values of a_m for $m = 0, 1, \dots, 14$.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----|------|------|-----|------|------|
| m | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| a_m | 1 | 1 | -1 | -5 | -7 | 1 | 23 | 43 | 17 | -95 | -241 | -197 | 329 | 1249 | 1511 |

One feature suggested by the data is that a_m is always odd. It is easy to prove this by induction from the fact that a_0 and a_1 are both odd, since the recursion reduced mod 2 shows $a_m \equiv a_{m-2} \pmod{2}$.

The data also suggest that $|a_m| \rightarrow \infty$ as $m \rightarrow \infty$, and (seeing how $|a_m|$ starts growing) $a_m = \pm 1$ only for the times we see it happening in the table: for $m = 0, 1, 2$, and 5. This all turns out to be true, and while it sounds like a problem in real analysis, it will be explained by p -adic analysis!

A natural way to study a_m is with an explicit formula for the sequence. Using complex numbers, such a formula is

$$(1.2) \quad a_m = \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^m}{2} + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^m}{2}.$$

(To verify this formula, check the right side satisfies the recursion (1.1) and has value 1 at $m = 0$ and 1.) This shows the integer a_m is the real part of the complex number $(1 + \sqrt{-2})^m$, and that is the context in which the equation $a_m = \pm 1$ first came to my attention [1]. Determining when $a_m = \pm 1$ is equivalent to finding all integers x such that $1 + 2x^2$ is a power of 3; see Appendix A for that, which shows understanding the values of $\{a_m\}$ has applications to number theory.

In \mathbf{C} we have $|1 \pm \sqrt{-2}| = \sqrt{1+2} = \sqrt{3} > 1$, so the absolute value of both terms in (1.2) tends to ∞ with m . This is not sufficient to conclude $|a_m| \rightarrow \infty$ as $m \rightarrow \infty$ because the two terms in (1.2) have the same magnitude. We need to rule out the possibility of a massive cancellation for some large m that makes a_m small.

Let's write the condition " $|a_m| \rightarrow \infty$ as $m \rightarrow \infty$ " in another way: since each a_m is an integer, saying $|a_m|$ tends to ∞ as $m \rightarrow \infty$ is equivalent to saying for each $c \in \mathbf{Z}$ that the equation $a_m = c$ is satisfied for only finitely many m . Here is our goal.

Theorem 1.1. *For each integer c , the equation $a_m = c$ holds for only finitely many integers m . In particular, $a_m = 1$ if and only if $m = 0, 1$, or 5 and $a_m = -1$ if and only if $m = 2$.*

To make progress on Theorem 1.1, the key idea is to interpret (1.2) not in \mathbf{C} , but in some \mathbf{Q}_p containing a square root of -2 . Using the right side of (1.2) in \mathbf{Q}_p we will see how to extend a_m from being a function of the integral parameter m to being a *locally p -adic analytic* function of m : there are finitely many p -adic power series, for a suitable prime p ,

whose values at the nonnegative integers m are the sequence $\{a_m\}$. This will let us think about the equation $a_m = c$ as a special case of the equation $f(x) = c$ where f is one of finitely many p -adic power series and $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$. We will prove qualitative and quantitative theorems about zeros of p -adic power series that will tell us each equation $f(x) = c$ has a finite number of solutions in \mathbf{Z}_p and at most how many such solutions there can be. If the upper bound on the number of solutions in \mathbf{Z}_p is accounted for by the known $m \geq 0$ for which $a_m = c$, we will have provably found all $m \geq 0$ for which $a_m = c$.

2. ZEROS OF A p -ADIC ANALYTIC FUNCTION

Theorem 2.1. *Let $f(x)$ be a power series with coefficients in \mathbf{Q}_p that converges on \mathbf{Z}_p and is not identically zero. The zeros of f in \mathbf{Z}_p are isolated: for each $\alpha \in \mathbf{Z}_p$ at which $f(\alpha) = 0$ there is an $r > 0$ such that $f(x) \neq 0$ for $0 < |x - \alpha|_p < r$.*

This theorem is analogous to a property of real power series: each real zero of a real power series has an open interval around it in which there are no other real zeros.

Proof. We can recenter the power series at α : $f(x) = \sum_{n \geq 0} a_n(x - \alpha)^n$ on \mathbf{Z}_p with $a_0 = f(\alpha) = 0$. Some a_n is not 0, since otherwise f would be identically zero on \mathbf{Z}_p . Let $a_N \neq 0$ with $N \geq 1$ minimal, so $f(x) = \sum_{n \geq N} a_n(x - \alpha)^n = (x - \alpha)^N g(x)$, where $g(x) = \sum_{n \geq N} a_n(x - \alpha)^{n-N}$. The power series $g(x)$ converges for each $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$: this is obvious at $x = \alpha$, and for $x \neq \alpha$ in \mathbf{Z}_p we have $|a_n(x - \alpha)^n|_p \rightarrow 0$ when $n \rightarrow \infty$, so $|a_n(x - \alpha)^{n-N}|_p = |a_n(x - \alpha)^n|_p / |x - \alpha|_p^N \rightarrow 0$ when $n \rightarrow \infty$.

Although g was constructed as a power series centered at α , since $0 \in \mathbf{Z}_p$ we can recenter g at 0 and the new series still converges on \mathbf{Z}_p . Since $g(\alpha) = a_N \neq 0$ and a power series on \mathbf{Z}_p is continuous, $\lim_{x \rightarrow \alpha} g(x) = a_N \neq 0$. Therefore there is a small $r > 0$ such that $|x - \alpha|_p < r \implies g(x) \neq 0$. Then $0 < |x - \alpha|_p < r \implies f(x) = (x - \alpha)^N g(x) \neq 0$. \square

Corollary 2.2. *For a sequence $c_n \in \mathbf{Q}_p$ such that the series $f(x) = \sum_{n \geq 0} c_n x^n$ converges on \mathbf{Z}_p , if the coefficients are not all zero then f has only finitely many zeros in \mathbf{Z}_p .*

Proof. We will prove the contrapositive. Suppose f has infinitely many zeros x_1, x_2, \dots in \mathbf{Z}_p . Since \mathbf{Z}_p is compact, this sequence has a convergent subsequence, say $x_{n_i} \rightarrow x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$. Then $f(x) = \lim_{i \rightarrow \infty} f(x_{n_i}) = \lim_{i \rightarrow \infty} 0 = 0$, and the zero x is not isolated since it is a limit of the zeros x_{n_i} . Theorem 2.1 implies f is identically 0, so all of its coefficients are 0. \square

3. TURNING $\{a_m\}$ INTO THE VALUES OF A p -ADIC POWER SERIES

In the formula (1.2) we would like to extend integer powers $(1 + \sqrt{-2})^m$ and $(1 - \sqrt{-2})^m$ to p -adic integer powers $(1 + \sqrt{-2})^x$ and $(1 - \sqrt{-2})^x$, where $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$. This can't be done directly, because there is a restriction on the base b to be sure a power sequence $\{b^m\}$ extends to a p -adic power function b^x that is a p -adic power series in x : we want

$$(3.1) \quad |b - 1|_p \leq \begin{cases} 1/p, & \text{if } p \neq 2, \\ 1/4, & \text{if } p = 2. \end{cases}$$

Under this condition, b^x has a power series representation

$$b^x = e^{x \log b} = \sum_{n \geq 0} \frac{(x \log b)^n}{n!} = \sum_{n \geq 0} \frac{(\log b)^n}{n!} x^n$$

that converges for all $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$ since $|(\log b)^n/n!|_p = |b - 1|_p^n / |n!|_p \rightarrow 0$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$.

Even if \mathbf{Z}_p contains a square root of -2 , $1 + \sqrt{-2}$ and $1 - \sqrt{-2}$ can't both satisfy (3.1) in the role of b .

Example 3.1. In \mathbf{Z}_3 there is a square root of -2 since $-2 \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$. Explicitly, we can take

$$\sqrt{-2} = 1 + 3 + 2 \cdot 3^2 + 2 \cdot 3^5 + \dots,$$

so

$$1 + \sqrt{-2} = 2 + 3 + 2 \cdot 3^2 + \dots, \quad 1 - \sqrt{-2} = 2 \cdot 3 + 2 \cdot 3^3 + \dots.$$

Neither $1 + \sqrt{-2}$ nor $1 - \sqrt{-2}$ is in $1 + 3\mathbf{Z}_3$: one is in $2 + 3\mathbf{Z}_3$ and the other is in $3\mathbf{Z}_3$.

Example 3.2. In \mathbf{Z}_{11} there is a square root of -2 since $-2 \equiv 9 \pmod{11}$. We can take $\sqrt{-2} \equiv 3 \pmod{11}$, so $1 + \sqrt{-2} \equiv 4 \pmod{11}$ and $1 - \sqrt{-2} \equiv -2 \equiv 9 \pmod{11}$. More explicitly,

$$\sqrt{-2} = 3 + 9 \cdot 11 + 4 \cdot 11^2 + \dots,$$

so

$$1 + \sqrt{-2} = 4 + 9 \cdot 11 + 4 \cdot 11^2 + \dots, \quad 1 - \sqrt{-2} = 9 + 11 + 6 \cdot 11^2 + \dots.$$

Both $1 + \sqrt{-2}$ and $1 - \sqrt{-2}$ are in \mathbf{Z}_{11}^\times , but neither is in $1 + 11\mathbf{Z}_{11}$.

Unless a p -adic integer b is p -adically close to 1, the power sequence $\{b^m\}$ is not the values at $0, 1, 2, 3, \dots$ of a p -adic power series. However, if $b \in \mathbf{Z}_p^\times$ then the sequence $\{b^m\}$ is the values at nonnegative integers of a *finite number* of p -adic power series.

Theorem 3.3. *Let $b \in \mathbf{Z}_p^\times$. If $p \neq 2$ then for each $r \in \{0, 1, \dots, p-2\}$ there are power series $f_r(x)$ converging on \mathbf{Z}_p such that $f_r(k) = b^{(p-1)k+r}$ for all integers $k \geq 0$. If $p = 2$ then for $r = 0$ and 1 there are 2-adic power series $f_r(x)$ converging on \mathbf{Z}_2 such that $f_r(k) = b^{2k+r}$ for all integers $k \geq 0$.*

Proof. For $0 \leq r \leq p-2$ and $k \geq 0$,

$$b^{(p-1)k+r} = b^r (b^{p-1})^k.$$

Since $b \not\equiv 0 \pmod{p}$, by Fermat's little theorem $b^{p-1} \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$. Thus $|b^{p-1} - 1|_p \leq 1/p$, so when $p \neq 2$ we can extend integer powers of b^{p-1} to p -adic integer powers: for $0 \leq r \leq p-2$ define the power series

$$f_r(x) = b^r (b^{p-1})^x = b^r e^{x \log(b^{p-1})} = b^r \sum_{n \geq 0} \frac{(\log b^{p-1})^n}{n!} x^n.$$

(Do *not* rewrite $\log b^{p-1}$ as $(p-1) \log b$ if $b \not\equiv 1 \pmod{p}$ since otherwise b is not in the domain of convergence of the p -adic logarithm series.) Each power series f_r converges on \mathbf{Z}_p since its coefficients tend to 0, and for nonnegative integers k we have

$$f_r(k) = b^r (b^{p-1})^k = b^{(p-1)k+r}.$$

For $p = 2$ we have $b \equiv 1 \pmod{2} \implies b^2 \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$, so $|b^2 - 1|_2 \leq 1/4$. (In fact, $|b^2 - 1|_2 \leq 1/8$.) Therefore we can take 2-adic integer powers of b^2 and define for $r = 0$ and 1 the power series

$$f_r(x) = b^r (b^2)^x = b^r e^{x \log(b^2)} = b^r \sum_{n \geq 0} \frac{(\log b^2)^n}{n!} x^n.$$

This power series converges on \mathbf{Z}_2 , and for integers $k \geq 0$ we have

$$f_r(k) = b^r (b^2)^k = b^{2k+r}. \quad \square$$

We used b^{p-1} for $p \neq 2$ and b^2 for $p = 2$ to have a power of b that we know is congruent to 1 mod p (or 1 mod 4, if $p = 2$). This led to $p-1$ power series for $p \neq 2$ (or 2 power series if $p = 2$) whose values on \mathbf{Z}_p include all values of b^m . If a smaller power of b is congruent to 1 mod p then we can use fewer power series in Theorem 3.3.

Example 3.4. For $b \in \mathbf{Z}_7^\times$, we have $b^6 \equiv 1 \pmod{7}$ and Theorem 3.3 says for $r = 0, 1, \dots, 5$ that there are 7-adic power series $f_r(x)$ converging on \mathbf{Z}_7 such that $f_r(k) = b^{6k+r}$ for integers $k \geq 0$.

If $b \equiv 2 \pmod{7}$ then $b^3 \equiv 1 \pmod{7}$, so we can take 7-adic integer powers of b^3 , not just b^6 . The sequence $\{b^m\}$ lies among the values of just three 7-adic power series: for $0 \leq r \leq 2$ set $f_r(x) = b^r(b^3)^x = b^r \sum_{n \geq 0} ((\log b^3)^n / n!) x^n$. These series converge on \mathbf{Z}_7 and $f_r(k) = b^{3k+r}$ for integers $k \geq 0$.

Example 3.5. If $b \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$ for $p \neq 2$ or $b \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ then we only need a single p -adic power series to include all nonnegative integral powers of b : $f(x) = b^x = \sum_{n \geq 0} ((\log b)^n / n!) x^n$ is a power series converging on \mathbf{Z}_p and $f(k) = b^k$ for integers $k \geq 0$.

Example 3.6. Why do we require $|b|_p = 1$ in Theorem 3.3? If $|b|_p < 1$ and $b \neq 0$ then Theorem 3.3 breaks down: for no arithmetic progression $\{Mk + r\}_{k \geq 0}$, where $M \geq 1$ and $r \in \{0, \dots, M-1\}$, can $b^{Mk+r} = f(k)$ for a p -adic power series $f(x)$. Indeed, since p -adic power series are continuous, $f(p^t) \rightarrow f(0)$ as $t \rightarrow \infty$ while $b^{Mp^t+r} \rightarrow 0$ as $t \rightarrow \infty$ since $|b^{Mp^t+r}|_p = |b^r|_p |b|_p^{Mp^t} \leq |b|_p^{Mp^t} \rightarrow 0$. Therefore we need $f(0) = 0$, so $b^r = 0$, which is false.

The underlying problem here is that every p -adic integer is the p -adic limit of integers that are large in the ordinary sense, and when $|b|_p < 1$ the number b^m has to be very small when m is very large in the ordinary sense. If $|b|_p = 1$ then at least $|b^m|_p = 1$ all the time.

Corollary 3.7. For b_1 and b_2 in \mathbf{Z}_p^\times and c_1 and c_2 in \mathbf{Z}_p , the numbers $c_1 b_1^m + c_2 b_2^m$ for integers $m \geq 0$ are the values of finitely many p -adic power series at nonnegative integers.

Proof. Assume $p \neq 2$. Then $b_1^{p-1} \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$ and $b_2^{p-1} \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$. For $0 \leq r \leq p-2$ and $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$ set

$$\begin{aligned} f_r(x) &= c_1 b_1^r (b_1^{p-1})^x + c_2 b_2^r (b_2^{p-1})^x \\ &= \sum_{n \geq 0} \frac{c_1 b_1^r (\log b_1^{p-1})^n + c_2 b_2^r (\log b_2^{p-1})^n}{n!} x^n. \end{aligned}$$

This power series converges on \mathbf{Z}_p , and for integers $k \geq 0$

$$f_r(k) = c_1 b_1^r (b_1^{p-1})^k + c_2 b_2^r (b_2^{p-1})^k = c_1 b_1^{(p-1)k+r} + c_2 b_2^{(p-1)k+r}.$$

If $p = 2$ then $b_1^2 \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$ and $b_2^2 \equiv 1 \pmod{4}$, so for $r = 0$ or 1 and $x \in \mathbf{Z}_2$, define

$$\begin{aligned} f_r(x) &= c_1 b_1^r (b_1^2)^x + c_2 b_2^r (b_2^2)^x \\ &= \sum_{n \geq 0} \frac{c_1 b_1^r (\log b_1^2)^n + c_2 b_2^r (\log b_2^2)^n}{n!} x^n. \end{aligned}$$

This series converges on \mathbf{Z}_2 , and for integers $k \geq 0$

$$f_r(k) = c_1 b_1^r (b_1^2)^k + c_2 b_2^r (b_2^2)^k = c_1 b_1^{2k+r} + c_2 b_2^{2k+r}. \quad \square$$

Corollary 3.7 extends to a linear combination of the powers of more than two p -adic units. We stick to two units for concreteness, as it will be sufficient for our intended application.

For $p \neq 2$, if $b_1^M \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$ and $b_2^M \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$ for some $M < p - 1$ then the sequence $\{c_1 b_1^m + c_2 b_2^m\}_{m \geq 0}$ lies among the values of M power series in Corollary 3.7 instead of $p - 1$ power series. In particular, if $b_1 \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$ and $b_2 \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$ then the sequence $\{c_1 b_1^m + c_2 b_2^m\}_{m \geq 0}$ lies among the values of a single power series converging on \mathbf{Z}_p .

Example 3.8. In \mathbf{Z}_7 , if $b_1 \equiv 2 \pmod{7}$ and $b_2 \equiv 4 \pmod{7}$ then $b_1^3 \equiv 1 \pmod{7}$ and $b_2^3 \equiv 1 \pmod{7}$, so the numbers $c_1 b_1^m + c_2 b_2^m$ for $m \geq 0$ can be broken up into three sequences

$$c_1 b_1^r (b_1^3)^k + c_2 b_2^r (b_2^3)^k$$

for $r = 0, 1, 2$ and $k \geq 0$, which each extend to a 7-adic power series converging on \mathbf{Z}_7 :

$$c_1 b_1^r (b_1^3)^x + c_2 b_2^r (b_2^3)^x = \sum_{n \geq 0} \frac{c_1 b_1^r (\log b_1^3)^n + c_2 b_2^r (\log b_2^3)^n}{n!} x^n.$$

Let's return to our original sequence of interest a_m in (1.1), which has an explicit formula in terms of powers of $1 + \sqrt{-2}$ and $1 - \sqrt{-2}$ in (1.2). Although there are square roots of -2 in \mathbf{Z}_3 , one lying in $1 + 3\mathbf{Z}_3$ and one lying in $2 + 3\mathbf{Z}_3$, there is not a formula for a_m using 3-adic power series: taking $\sqrt{-2} \equiv 1 \pmod{3}$, there are problems with powers of $1 - \sqrt{-2}$ since $|1 - \sqrt{-2}|_3 < 1$, and if we had chosen $\sqrt{-2} \equiv 2 \pmod{3}$ then we'd have problems with powers of $1 + \sqrt{-2}$ for a similar reason.

The next prime after $p = 3$ where -2 has square roots in \mathbf{Z}_p is 11, so let's turn it up to 11. We saw in Example 3.2 that we can choose $\sqrt{-2} \equiv 3 \pmod{11}$, so $1 + \sqrt{-2} \equiv 4 \pmod{11}$ and $1 - \sqrt{-2} \equiv -2 \equiv 9 \pmod{11}$. Since $4^5 \equiv 1 \pmod{11}$ and $9^5 \equiv 1 \pmod{11}$, both $(1 + \sqrt{-2})^5$ and $(1 - \sqrt{-2})^5$ lie in $1 + 11\mathbf{Z}_{11}$. Explicitly,

$$(1 + \sqrt{-2})^5 = 1 - 11\sqrt{-2}, \quad (1 - \sqrt{-2})^5 = 1 + 11\sqrt{-2}.$$

For $r = 0, 1, 2, 3, 4$, and $x \in \mathbf{Z}_{11}$, define

$$\begin{aligned} f_r(x) &= \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r ((1 + \sqrt{-2})^5)^x + (1 - \sqrt{-2})^r ((1 - \sqrt{-2})^5)^x}{2} \\ &= \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} (1 - 11\sqrt{-2})^x + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} (1 + 11\sqrt{-2})^x \\ (3.2) \quad &= \sum_{n \geq 0} \left(\frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r (\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}))^n}{2 n!} + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r (\log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}))^n}{2 n!} \right) x^n. \end{aligned}$$

For integers $k \geq 0$,

$$f_r(k) = \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^{5k+r}}{2} + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^{5k+r}}{2} = a_{5k+r}.$$

This way of looking at the sequence $\{a_m\}$, as the values at nonnegative integers of five 11-adic power series, leads to a solution of the qualitative problem about values of a_m .

Theorem 3.9. *The sequence $\{a_m\}$ in (1.2) with initial conditions $a_0 = a_1 = 1$ has $|a_m| \rightarrow \infty$ as $m \rightarrow \infty$.*

Proof. We will show for each $c \in \mathbf{Z}$ that the equation $a_m = c$ is satisfied for only finitely many integers $m \geq 0$ by showing a more general property in the 11-adic integers: for each $c \in \mathbf{Z}_{11}$ and $r \in \{0, 1, \dots, 4\}$ the equations $f_r(x) = c$, where $f_r(x)$ is defined by (3.2), each have only finitely many solutions in \mathbf{Z}_{11} . To prove that, we will show each $f_r(x)$ is a nonconstant power series, since that makes the power series $f_r(x) - c$ nonconstant and thus it has finitely many zeros in \mathbf{Z}_{11} by Corollary 2.2.

To check each of the five power series $f_r(x)$ in (3.2) is not constant, we could compute the linear coefficient of $f_r(x)$ and check it is not 0 (and if it were 0, we could then check the quadratic coefficient is not 0, and so on). But we will do something simpler: compare $f_r(0) = a_r$ and $f_r(1) = a_{5+r}$ for $0 \leq r \leq 4$. If they are not equal then $f_r(x)$ is not a constant series. We already saw these values in the table at the start of Section 1. Here they are again, in a more suitable form for us now.

| | | | | | |
|-----------|---|----|----|----|-----|
| r | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| a_r | 1 | 1 | -1 | -5 | -7 |
| a_{5+r} | 1 | 23 | 43 | 17 | -95 |

We see $a_r \neq a_{5+r}$ when r is 1, 2, 3, and 4, so $f_r(x)$ is not constant, but at $r = 0$ we have $a_0 = a_5 = 1$. That is not a problem: just compute one more value: $f_0(2) = a_{5 \cdot 2} = a_{10} = -241$. So $f_0(x)$ is not constant either.¹ \square

To bound how often $a_m = \pm 1$, we will bound how often $f_r(x) = 1$ and $f_r(x) = -1$ in \mathbf{Z}_{11} for $0 \leq r \leq 4$ in (3.2). This is equivalent to bounding the number of 11-adic integer zeros of $f_r(x) - 1$ and $f_r(x) + 1$, which can be thought of as a quantitative refinement of Corollary 2.2. To do this we will use a theorem from p -adic analysis called Strassmann's theorem.

4. STRASSMANN'S THEOREM

By Corollary 2.2, a nonzero series $f(x) = \sum_{n \geq 0} a_n x^n$ with $a_n \in \mathbf{Q}_p$ that converges on \mathbf{Z}_p has finitely many zeros in \mathbf{Z}_p . We want to bound the number of those zeros. The series $\sum_{n \geq 0} a_n x^n$ converges on \mathbf{Z}_p if and only if $a_n \rightarrow 0$. If $a_n \rightarrow 0$ and the a_n 's are not all 0 then the numbers $|a_n|_p$ have a positive maximum and there is a last time the maximum occurs. The largest index for a coefficient of maximal absolute value is denoted $N(f)$. That is,

$$N(f) = \max\{N \geq 0 : |a_n|_p \leq |a_N|_p \text{ for all } n \geq 0\}.$$

For the power series f whose coefficients are all 0, $N(f)$ is not defined.

Theorem 4.1 (Strassmann). *Let $f(x) = \sum_{n \geq 0} a_n x^n$ where $a_n \in \mathbf{Q}_p$ and $a_n \rightarrow 0$. If the a_n 's are not all zero then the number of solutions to $f(x) = 0$ in \mathbf{Z}_p is at most $N(f)$.*

We can apply this theorem to polynomials, which are power series with finitely many terms.

Example 4.2. Over \mathbf{Q}_p , $f(X) = 1 + pX + X^2 + pX^5$ has $N = 2$, so it has at most 2 zeros in \mathbf{Z}_p . The actual number of zeros of $f(X)$ in \mathbf{Z}_p is 0 when $p = 2$ ($a \in \mathbf{Z}_2 \Rightarrow f(a) \equiv 1, 2 \pmod{4}$) and $p = 3$ ($a \in \mathbf{Z}_3 \Rightarrow f(a) \equiv 1, 2 \pmod{3}$) and 2 when $p = 5$ (use Hensel's lemma for $f(X)$ with $a = 2$ and $a = 3$).

Example 4.3. Over \mathbf{Q}_p , $1 + X + pX^2$ has $N = 1$ and thus at most 1 zero in \mathbf{Z}_p . In fact there is a zero in \mathbf{Z}_p , as you can check with the quadratic formula; a second zero is in \mathbf{Q}_p but outside of \mathbf{Z}_p .

Example 4.4. Over \mathbf{Q}_p , $X^n - p$ has $N = n$ and no roots in \mathbf{Z}_p (or \mathbf{Q}_p) for $n \geq 2$. This illustrates that the bound in Strassmann's theorem is only an upper bound on the number of roots in \mathbf{Z}_p , not a formula in general for the number of roots in \mathbf{Z}_p .

¹Another reason $f_r(x)$ in (3.2) is nonconstant is that $f_r(x) = c_{1,r}(1 - 11\sqrt{-2})^x + c_{2,r}(1 + 11\sqrt{-2})^x$ where the numbers $c_{i,r}$ are nonzero and the numbers $1 \pm 11\sqrt{-2}$ and their ratio are not roots of unity: see the proof of Theorem 3.1 with $p = 11$ in <https://kconrad.math.uconn.edu/blurbs/gradnumthy/x3-2y3=1.pdf>.

Strassmann's theorem can be regarded as an analogue for p -adic power series of bounding the number of roots of a polynomial over a field by the degree of the polynomial. In the polynomial theorem the key idea is to factor out $x - \alpha$ if α is a root, which lowers the degree of the polynomial by one, and the proof of Strassmann's theorem will have a step just like this where the value of $N(f)$ drops by one after removing a factor corresponding to a root (if one exists). When dealing with power series rather than polynomials we have to be a little more careful at the factoring step due to convergence issues.

Proof. We use induction on $N(f)$.

When $N(f) = 0$, $|a_n|_p < |a_0|_p$ for all $n \geq 1$, so $a_0 \neq 0$ and $\max_{n \geq 1} |a_n|_p < |a_0|_p$ because the a_n 's tend to 0. For $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$,

$$\left| \sum_{n \geq 1} a_n x^n \right|_p \leq \max_{n \geq 1} |a_n x^n|_p \leq \max_{n \geq 1} |a_n|_p < |a_0|_p,$$

so by the strong triangle inequality $|f(x)|_p = |a_0 + \sum_{n \geq 1} a_n x^n|_p = |a_0|_p > 0$. Thus f has no zero in \mathbf{Z}_p .

Now suppose $N \geq 1$ and the theorem is proved for all power series $g(x)$ with coefficients in \mathbf{Q}_p converging on \mathbf{Z}_p with $N(g) < N$. If $N(f) = N$ and f has no zeros in \mathbf{Z}_p then we are done since $0 < N$. If f has a zero $\alpha \in \mathbf{Z}_p$ then by the same reasoning as in the proof of Theorem 2.1 we can write

$$(4.1) \quad f(x) = (x - \alpha)g(x)$$

where g is a power series centered at 0 that converges on \mathbf{Z}_p . By (4.1), for $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$ we have $f(x) = 0$ if and only if $x = \alpha$ or $g(x) = 0$. We will show $N(g) = N(f) - 1 = N - 1$, so by induction g has at most $N - 1$ zeros in \mathbf{Z}_p , and therefore the number of zeros of f in \mathbf{Z}_p is at most $1 + (N - 1) = N$.

Writing $g(x) = \sum_{n \geq 0} b_n x^n$, to show $N(g) = N - 1$ means showing

$$(4.2) \quad |b_n|_p \leq |b_{N-1}|_p \text{ for all } n, \quad |b_n|_p < |b_{N-1}|_p \text{ for } n \geq N.$$

While doing this we will also show $|b_{N-1}|_p = |a_N|_p$.

If $\alpha = 0$ then $f(x) = xg(x)$, so $b_n = a_{n+1}$ for all n , and then (4.2) and $|b_{N-1}|_p = |a_N|_p$ are clear. If $\alpha \neq 0$, substituting the power series representations $f(x) = \sum_{n \geq 0} a_n x^n$ and $g(x) = \sum_{n \geq 0} b_n x^n$ into (4.1) and equating coefficients of like powers of x on both sides, we get

$$a_0 = -\alpha b_0, \quad a_n = b_{n-1} - b_n \alpha \text{ for } n \geq 1.$$

Replacing n by $n + 1$ in this recursion,

$$\begin{aligned} b_n &= a_{n+1} + b_{n+1} \alpha \\ &= a_{n+1} + (a_{n+2} + b_{n+2} \alpha) \alpha \\ &= a_{n+1} + a_{n+2} \alpha + b_{n+2} \alpha^2 \\ &= a_{n+1} + a_{n+2} \alpha + (a_{n+3} + b_{n+3} \alpha) \alpha^2 \\ &= a_{n+1} + a_{n+2} \alpha + a_{n+3} \alpha^2 + b_{n+3} \alpha^3. \end{aligned}$$

Repeating this, for any $m \geq 1$

$$b_n = \sum_{k=1}^m a_{n+k} \alpha^{k-1} + b_{n+m} \alpha^{m-1}.$$

Since $\alpha \neq 0$, $|a_{n+k}\alpha^{k-1}|_p = |a_{n+k}\alpha_p^{n+k}|/|\alpha|_p^{n+1} \rightarrow 0$ as $k \rightarrow \infty$ since the power series for f centered at 0 converges at α , and similarly $|b_{n+m}\alpha^{m-1}|_p \rightarrow 0$ as $m \rightarrow \infty$ since the power series for g centered at 0 converges at α . Therefore

$$(4.3) \quad b_n = \sum_{k \geq 1} a_{n+k} \alpha^{k-1},$$

so for all n

$$|b_n|_p \leq \max_{k \geq 1} |a_{n+k}|_p = \max_{k \geq n+1} |a_k|_p \leq |a_N|_p.$$

If $k \geq N+1$ then $|a_k|_p < |a_N|_p$ by the definition of N , so $n \geq N \implies |b_n|_p < |a_N|_p$. Also $b_{N-1} = a_N + \sum_{k \geq 2} a_{N-1+k} \alpha^{k-1}$ where $|a_{N-1+k} \alpha^{k-1}|_p \leq |a_{N-1+k}|_p < |a_N|_p$ for $k \geq 2$, so $|b_{N-1}|_p = |a_N|_p$. Thus $|b_n|_p$ is maximized for the last time at $n = N-1$, so $N(g) = N-1$. \square

Remark 4.5. The number of roots of a polynomial over a field need not equal its degree, but equality does occur in degree 1: $ax + b = 0$ if and only if $x = -b/a$ (if $a \neq 0$). Similarly, if $N(f) = 1$ in Strassmann's theorem then there really is a root of $f(x)$ in \mathbf{Z}_p . This can be proved using a version of Hensel's lemma for power series.

5. PROOF OF THEOREM 1.1 USING \mathbf{Q}_{11}

The formula for a_m in (1.2) uses a square root of -2 . Since $-2 \equiv 9 \pmod{11}$, -2 has a square root in \mathbf{Z}_{11} that is congruent to 3 mod 11. Define $\sqrt{-2}$ to be that 11-adic integer:

$$\sqrt{-2} = 3 + 9 \cdot 11 + 4 \cdot 11^2 + 11^3 + \dots$$

Step 1: Estimate values of the p -adic logarithm on $1 + p\mathbf{Z}_p$.

We will show for odd p (the case of interest is $p = 11$) and $y \in p\mathbf{Z}_p$ that $|\log(1+y)|_p = |y|_p$ and $\log(1+y) \equiv y \pmod{p^2}$.

Since $\log(1+y) = \sum_{n \geq 1} (-1)^{n-1} y^n / n$ it suffices, for both the desired equation and congruence, to check when $n \geq 2$ and $|y|_p \leq 1/p$ that $|y^n/n|_p < |y|_p$, or equivalently that $1/p < |n|_p^{1/(n-1)}$. This is clear if $|n|_p = 1$, and if $|n|_p < 1$ set $n = p^r m$ for $r \geq 1$ and $p \nmid m$. Then

$$|n|_p^{1/(n-1)} = \frac{1}{p^{r/(p^r m-1)}} > \frac{1}{p^{r/(p^r-1)}} \stackrel{?}{>} \frac{1}{p} \iff 1 > \frac{r}{p^r-1} \iff p^r - 1 \stackrel{\checkmark}{>} r \text{ (since } p > 2\text{)}.$$

Step 2: Make the numbers a_m into values of several 11-adic power series.

We seek j such that $|(1 + \sqrt{-2})^j - 1|_{11} \leq 1/11$ and $|(1 - \sqrt{-2})^j - 1|_{11} \leq 1/11$. Use $j = 5$:

$$(1 + \sqrt{-2})^5 = 1 - 11\sqrt{-2}, \quad (1 - \sqrt{-2})^5 = 1 + 11\sqrt{-2}.$$

Therefore if we write $m = 5k + r$ where $k \geq 0$ and $0 \leq r \leq 4$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} a_{5k+r} &= \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} ((1 + \sqrt{-2})^5)^k + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} ((1 - \sqrt{-2})^5)^k \\ &= \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} (1 - 11\sqrt{-2})^k + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} (1 + 11\sqrt{-2})^k. \end{aligned}$$

This formula suggests looking at the 11-adic analytic functions

$$f_r(x) = \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} (1 - 11\sqrt{-2})^x + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} (1 + 11\sqrt{-2})^x$$

where $0 \leq r \leq 4$ and $x \in \mathbf{Z}_{11}$. For integers $k \geq 0$,

$$(5.1) \quad \boxed{f_r(k) = a_{5k+r}.$$

Do not forget this! In terms of the 11-adic exponential series,

$$\begin{aligned} f_r(x) &= \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} e^{x \log(1-11\sqrt{-2})} + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} e^{x \log(1+11\sqrt{-2})} \\ &= \sum_{n \geq 0} c_{r,n} x^n, \end{aligned}$$

where $c_{r,n} = \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} \frac{(\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}))^n}{n!} + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} \frac{(\log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}))^n}{n!}$ in \mathbf{Q}_{11} . We have $|\log(1 \pm 11\sqrt{-2})|_{11} = |11|_{11}$ by Step 1, so from $|11^n/n!|_{11} \leq 1$ we get $c_{r,n} \in \mathbf{Z}_{11}$.

Step 3: Estimate how quickly the coefficients of f_r tend to 0.

Theorem 5.1. *For $0 \leq r \leq 4$ and $n \geq 1$, $|c_{r,n}|_{11} \leq 1/11^{(9n+1)/10} \leq 1/11$. In particular, $|c_{r,n}|_{11} \leq 1/11$ for $n \geq 1$, $|c_{r,n}|_{11} \leq 1/11^2$ for $n \geq 2$, and $|c_{r,n}|_{11} \leq 1/11^3$ for $n \geq 3$.*

Proof. Since $(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r/2$ and $(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r/2$ are in \mathbf{Z}_{11}^\times ,

$$\begin{aligned} |c_{r,n}|_{11} &\leq \max \left(\left| \frac{(\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}))^n}{n!} \right|_{11}, \left| \frac{(\log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}))^n}{n!} \right|_{11} \right) \\ &= \max \left(\frac{|11|_{11}^n}{|n!|_{11}}, \frac{|11|_{11}^n}{|n!|_{11}} \right) \text{ by Step 1} \\ &= \frac{(1/11)^n}{(1/11)^{(n-s_{11}(n))/(11-1)}} \\ &= \frac{1}{11^{9n/10+s_{11}(n)/10}} \\ &\leq \frac{1}{11^{9n/10+1/10}} \text{ since } n \geq 1. \end{aligned}$$

For $n \geq 1$ we have $9n/10 + 1/10 \geq 1$, for $n \geq 2$ we have $9n/10 + 1/10 \geq 1.9$, and for $n \geq 3$ we have $9n/10 + 1/10 \geq 2.8$. Since $\text{ord}_{11}(c_{n,r})$ is an integer (or ∞), if $\text{ord}_{11}(c_{r,n}) \geq 1.9$ then $\text{ord}_{11}(c_{r,n}) \geq 2$ and if $\text{ord}_{11}(c_{r,n}) \geq 2.8$ then $\text{ord}_{11}(c_{r,n}) \geq 3$. \square

Step 4: Finishing the proof of Theorem 1.1.

We want to show $a_m = 1$ only when $m = 0, 1$, and 5 , and $a_m = -1$ only when $m = 2$. The following table writes these m as $5k + r$: 1 arises twice when $r = 0$ (at $k = 0, 1$) and once when $r = 1$ (at $k = 0$), and -1 arises once when $r = 2$ (at $k = 0$).

| $5k + r$ | k | r | a_{5k+r} |
|----------|-----|-----|------------|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 0 | 2 | -1 |
| 5 | 1 | 0 | 1 |

Since $a_{5k+r} = f_r(k)$, we want to show the only zeros of $f_r(x) - 1$ and $f_r(x) + 1$ in \mathbf{Z}_{11} are as described in the following table, where k is replaced with the 11-adic integer variable x .

| r | Zeros of $f_r(x) - 1$ | Zeros of $f_r(x) + 1$ |
|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 0 | $x = 0, 1$ | None |
| 1 | $x = 0$ | None |
| 2 | None | $x = 0$ |
| 3 | None | None |
| 4 | None | None |

The indicated zeros for $f_0(x) - 1$, $f_1(x) - 1$, and $f_2(x) + 1$ follow from (5.1). We will show for Strassmann's theorem that $f_0(x) - 1$ has $N = 2$, $f_1(x) - 1$ and $f_2(x) + 1$ have $N = 1$, and other $f_r(x) \pm 1$ have $N = 0$, so the upper bound on zeros is reached by the known zeros.

Adding and subtracting 1 to $f_r(x)$ affects the constant term but no other coefficients:

$$f_r(x) \pm 1 = (c_{r,0} \pm 1) + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{r,n} x^n = (a_r \pm 1) + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{r,n} x^n.$$

Let's first take care of the series where no zeros are expected.

Theorem 5.2. *The series $f_2(x) - 1$, $f_3(x) - 1$, $f_4(x) - 1$, $f_0(x) + 1$, $f_1(x) + 1$, $f_3(x) + 1$, and $f_4(x) + 1$ all have no zeros in \mathbf{Z}_{11} .*

Proof. To prove an 11-adic power series has no zeros in \mathbf{Z}_{11} with Strassmann's theorem, we want to show $N = 0$: the constant term of $f_r(x) \pm 1$ has larger absolute value than every other coefficient. The table below lists the constant term $f_r(0) \pm 1 = a_r \pm 1$.

| r | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|--------------|---|---|----|----|----|
| $f_r(0)$ | 1 | 1 | -1 | -5 | -7 |
| $f_r(0) - 1$ | 0 | 0 | -2 | -6 | -8 |
| $f_r(0) + 1$ | 2 | 2 | 0 | -4 | -6 |

Thus $f_2(x) - 1$, $f_3(x) - 1$, $f_4(x) - 1$, $f_0(x) + 1$, $f_1(x) + 1$, $f_3(x) + 1$, and $f_4(x) + 1$ have constant terms in \mathbf{Z}_{11}^\times . The higher-degree coefficients are the same as those of $f_r(x)$, namely $c_{r,n}$ for $n \geq 1$. Those coefficients are in $11\mathbf{Z}_{11}$ by Theorem 5.1, so $f_2(x) - 1$, $f_3(x) - 1$, $f_4(x) - 1$, $f_0(x) + 1$, $f_1(x) + 1$, $f_3(x) + 1$, and $f_4(x) + 1$ all have $N = 0$. \square

It remains to handle $f_0(x) - 1$, $f_1(x) - 1$, and $f_2(x) + 1$.

Theorem 5.3. *The only zeros of $f_0(x) - 1$ in \mathbf{Z}_{11} are $x = 0$ and $x = 1$.*

Proof. The constant term of $f_0(x) - 1$ is 0. For the linear and quadratic coefficients we will show $|c_{0,1}|_{11} = 1/121$ and $|c_{0,2}|_{11} = 1/121$. For $n \geq 3$, Theorem 5.1 tells us $|c_{0,n}|_{11} < 1/121$, so $f_0(x) - 1$ would have $N = 2$ and that upper bound on the zeros in \mathbf{Z}_{11} is already accounted for by the two zeros we know (corresponding to $a_0 = 1$ and $a_5 = 1$).

The linear coefficient of $f_0(x) - 1$ is

$$c_{0,1} = \frac{1}{2} \log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}) + \frac{1}{2} \log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}) = \frac{1}{2} \log(1 + 2 \cdot 11^2),$$

so $|c_{0,1}|_{11} = |2 \cdot 11^2|_{11} = 1/121$. The quadratic coefficient of $f_0(x) - 1$ is

$$\begin{aligned} c_{0,2} &= \frac{1}{2} \frac{(\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}))^2}{2} + \frac{1}{2} \frac{(\log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}))^2}{2} \\ &= \frac{(\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}))^2 + (\log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}))^2}{4} \\ &= \frac{1}{4} \left(\left(\frac{\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}) + \log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2})}{\log((1 - 11\sqrt{-2})(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}))} \right)^2 - 2 \log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}) \log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}) \right). \end{aligned}$$

Since $(1 - 11\sqrt{-2})(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}) = 1 + 242$, the squared term has absolute value $|242|_{11}^2 = 1/11^4$, while by Step 1 $|\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}) \log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2})|_{11} = (1/11)(1/11) = 1/11^2$, so by the strong triangle inequality $|c_{0,2}|_{11} = |1/4|_{11}(1/11^2) = 1/121$.

Another way to show $|c_{0,2}|_{11} = 1/121$ is to compute $c_{0,2} \bmod 11^3$. By Step 1, $\log(1 \pm 11\sqrt{-2}) \equiv \pm 11\sqrt{-2} \bmod 11^2$. Thus $\log(1 \pm 11\sqrt{-2}) = \pm 11\sqrt{-2} + 11^2 x_{\pm}$ with $x_{\pm} \in \mathbf{Z}_{11}$, so

$$(\log(1 \pm 11\sqrt{-2}))^2 = -2 \cdot 11^2 + 11^3(\text{11-adic integer}) \equiv -2 \cdot 11^2 \bmod 11^3$$

for both choices of sign. Therefore

$$c_{0,2} \equiv \frac{1}{4}(-2 \cdot 11^2) + \frac{1}{4}(-2 \cdot 11^2) \bmod 11^3 \equiv -11^2 \bmod 11^3,$$

so $|c_{0,2}|_{11} = 1/121$. \square

Theorem 5.4. *The only zero of $f_1(x) - 1$ in \mathbf{Z}_{11} is $x = 0$.*

Proof. The constant term of $f_1(x) - 1$ is 0. We will prove $|c_{1,1}|_{11} = 1/11$. By Theorem 5.1, $|c_{1,n}|_{11} < 1/11$ for $n \geq 2$, so $f_1(x) - 1$ would have $N = 1$ and thus its known zero at $x = 0$ (corresponding to $a_1 = 1$) is its only zero in \mathbf{Z}_{11} .

The linear coefficient of $f_1(x) - 1$ is

$$c_{1,1} = \frac{1 + \sqrt{-2}}{2} \log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}) + \frac{1 - \sqrt{-2}}{2} \log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}).$$

Using the congruence mod p^2 in Step 1 at $p = 11$,

$$c_{1,1} \equiv \frac{1 + \sqrt{-2}}{2}(-11\sqrt{-2}) + \frac{1 - \sqrt{-2}}{2}(11\sqrt{-2}) \equiv 22 \bmod 11^2 \implies |c_{1,1}|_{11} = \frac{1}{11}. \quad \square$$

Theorem 5.5. *The only zero of $f_2(x) + 1$ in \mathbf{Z}_{11} is $x = 0$.*

Proof. The constant term of $f_2(x) + 1$ is 0. We will prove $|c_{2,1}|_{11} = 1/11$, which suffices by the same reasoning as in the proof of the previous theorem. Since

$$\begin{aligned} c_{2,1} &= \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^2}{2} \log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}) + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^2}{2} \log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}) \\ &= \frac{-1 + 2\sqrt{-2}}{2} \log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}) + \frac{-1 - 2\sqrt{-2}}{2} \log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}) \\ &\equiv \frac{-1 + 2\sqrt{-2}}{2}(-11\sqrt{-2}) + \frac{-1 - 2\sqrt{-2}}{2}(11\sqrt{-2}) \bmod 11^2 \text{ by Step 1} \\ &\equiv 4 \cdot 11 \bmod 11^2, \end{aligned}$$

we get $|c_{2,1}|_{11} = 1/11$. \square

6. FURTHER VALUES OF a_m

The method used to determine all $m \geq 0$ for which $a_m = \pm 1$ can be applied to other values in the sequence $\{a_m\}$. The values of a_m for $0 \leq m \leq 10$ besides ± 1 are

$$(6.1) \quad a_3 = -5, \quad a_4 = -7, \quad a_6 = 23, \quad a_7 = 43, \quad a_8 = 17, \quad a_9 = -95, \quad a_{10} = -241.$$

To prove these values occur exactly once in the sequence, let's write out what each $f_r(x)$ looks like. The constant term of $f_r(x)$ is $f_r(0) = a_r$, so

$$\begin{aligned} f_0(x) &= 1 + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{0,n} x^n, \\ f_1(x) &= 1 + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{1,n} x^n, \\ f_2(x) &= -1 + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{2,n} x^n, \\ f_3(x) &= -5 + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{3,n} x^n, \\ f_4(x) &= -7 + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{4,n} x^n. \end{aligned}$$

We already showed in Theorems 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5 that $|c_{0,1}|_{11} = 1/121$, $|c_{1,1}|_{11} = 1/11$, and $|c_{2,1}|_{11} = 1/11$. It is left to the reader to check that $|c_{3,1}|_{11} = 1/11$ and $|c_{4,1}|_{11} = 1/11$. For $n \geq 2$, $|c_{r,n}|_{11} \leq 1/121$ by Theorem 5.1.

Theorem 6.1. *We have $a_m = -5$ if and only if $m = 3$.*

Proof. For $r = 0, 1, 2, 4$ the series $f_r(x) + 5$ has constant term in \mathbf{Z}_{11}^\times and higher-degree coefficients in $11\mathbf{Z}_{11}$, so $N(f_r + 5) = 0$ and thus $a_{5k+r} \neq -5$ for all $k \geq 0$. What if $r = 3$? The series $f_3(x) + 5$ has constant term 0, linear coefficient of absolute value $1/11$ and $|c_{3,n}|_{11} \leq 1/121$ for $n \geq 2$, so $N(f_3 + 5) = 1$ and thus the only solution to $f_3(x) + 5 = 0$ in \mathbf{Z}_{11} is $x = 0$. That proves $a_m = -5$ only for $m = 5 \cdot 0 + 3 = 3$. \square

Theorem 6.2. *We have $a_m = 23$ if and only if $m = 6$.*

Proof. For $r = 2, 3, 4$, the series $f_r(x) - 23$ has constant term in \mathbf{Z}_{11}^\times and higher-degree coefficients in $11\mathbf{Z}_{11}$, so none of these series has a zero in \mathbf{Z}_{11} . Both $f_0(x) - 23$ and $f_1(x) - 23$ have constant term $-22 \in 11\mathbf{Z}_{11}$. Since $|-22|_{11} = 1/11$, $|c_{0,1}|_{11} = 1/121$, and $|c_{0,n}|_{11} \leq 1/121$ for $n \geq 2$, $N(f_0 - 23) = 0$ and thus $f_0(x) - 23$ is nonvanishing on \mathbf{Z}_{11} . Since $|-22|_{11} = 1/11$, $|c_{1,1}|_{11} = 1/11$, and $|c_{1,n}|_{11} \leq 1/121$ for $n \geq 2$, $N(f_1 - 23) = 1$ and thus the zero of $f_1(x) - 23$ at $x = 1$ (corresponding to $a_6 = 23$) is its only zero in \mathbf{Z}_{11} . \square

It is left as an exercise to the reader to show the values of a_m in (6.1) at $m = 4, 7, 8$, and 9 each occur only once among all $m \geq 0$.

While $a_{10} = -241$, showing $a_m = -241$ only at $m = 10$ doesn't work using \mathbf{Q}_{11} because something new happens: two of the series $f_r(x) + 241$ have a root in \mathbf{Z}_{11} that is not a nonnegative integer, so the Strassmann bound is too big. The reader can check $f_r(x) + 241$ has $N = 0$ for $r = 2, 3, 4$. At $r = 0$ and 1 we have

$$\begin{aligned} f_0(x) + 241 &= 242 + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{0,n} x^n, \\ f_1(x) + 241 &= 242 + \sum_{n \geq 1} c_{1,n} x^n, \end{aligned}$$

and $|242|_{11} = 1/121$. The linear and quadratic coefficients of $f_0(x) + 241$ also have absolute value $1/121$ (see the proof of Theorem 5.3), while $|c_{0,n}|_{11} < 1/121$ for $n \geq 3$ (Theorem

5.1), so $N(f_0 + 241) = 2$. In $f_1(x) + 241$, $|c_{1,1}|_{11} = 1/11$ and $|c_{1,n}|_{11} < 1/11$ for $n \geq 2$, so $N(f_1 + 241) = 1$.

By Strassmann's theorem, $f_0(x) + 241$ has at most two zeros in \mathbf{Z}_{11} and $f_1(x) + 241$ has at most one zero in \mathbf{Z}_{11} . The zero corresponding to the value $a_{10} = -241$ is $x = 2$ for $f_0(x) + 241$ (since $10 = 5 \cdot 2 + 0$). Write $f_0(x) + 241 = (x - 2)g(x)$ where $g(x)$ is a power series converging on \mathbf{Z}_{11} . Then $N(g) = N(f_0 + 241) - 1 = 1$ by the proof of Strassmann's theorem, so $g(x)$ and $f_1(x) + 241$ both have $N = 1$. By Remark 4.5, $g(x)$ and $f_1(x) + 241$ each have one root in \mathbf{Z}_{11} , so a_m can be -241 for at most two values of m other than 10. The roots of $g(x)$ and $f_1(x) + 241$ don't appear to be nonnegative integers (we estimate them in Appendix B), but it is numerically hard to prove rigorously that an 11-adic integer is not a nonnegative integer from an 11-adic approximation. In order to prove $a_m = -241$ only at $m = 10$ (thereby also proving the unique roots of $g(x)$ and $f_1(x) + 241$ in \mathbf{Z}_{11} are not nonnegative integers) we give up on the prime 11 and seek to apply Strassmann's theorem to \mathbf{Q}_p for some $p > 11$.

Theorem 6.3. *For $m \geq 0$, $a_m = -241$ if and only if $m = 10$.*

Proof. We want to find a prime $p > 3$ such that -2 has a square root in \mathbf{Z}_p . Then $|1 \pm \sqrt{-2}|_p = 1$ and for $r \in \{0, 1, \dots, p-2\}$ and $k \geq 0$, $a_{(p-1)k+r} = g_r(k)$ where

$$\begin{aligned} g_r(x) &= \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} ((1 + \sqrt{-2})^{p-1})^x + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} ((1 - \sqrt{-2})^{p-1})^x \\ &= \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} e^{x \log((1 + \sqrt{-2})^{p-1})} + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} e^{x \log((1 - \sqrt{-2})^{p-1})} \\ &= a_r + \sum_{n \geq 1} d_{r,n} x^n \end{aligned}$$

is a p -adic power series converging on all $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$, and

$$d_{r,n} = \frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} \frac{(\log((1 + \sqrt{-2})^{p-1}))^n}{n!} + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^r}{2} \frac{(\log((1 - \sqrt{-2})^{p-1}))^n}{n!} \in p\mathbf{Z}_p$$

for $n \geq 1$. Thus $g_r(x) \equiv a_r \pmod{p}$ for all $x \in \mathbf{Z}_p$, so if $a_r \not\equiv -241 \pmod{p}$ then $g_r(x) + 241$ has no zero in \mathbf{Z}_p . We want to find p so that $g_{10}(x) + 241$ (which has constant term 0) has $N = 1$ and all other $g_r(x) + 241$ have $N = 0$. (The series $g_r(x)$ and its coefficients $d_{r,n}$ all depend on the choice of p , but we omit this dependence in the notation.)

The first few primes $p > 3$ such that -2 has a square root in \mathbf{Z}_p are 11, 17, 19, and 41. We already saw $p = 11$ is not a good choice.

$p = 17$: The only $r \in \{0, 1, \dots, 15\}$ such that $a_r \equiv -241 \pmod{17}$ is $r = 10$, but over \mathbf{Q}_{17} , $g_{10}(x) + 241 = d_{10,1}x + d_{10,2}x^2 + \dots$ has $d_{10,1} \equiv 4 \cdot 17^2 + \dots$, $d_{10,2} \equiv 6 \cdot 17^2 + \dots$ and $d_{10,n} \equiv 0 \pmod{17^3}$ for $n \geq 3$, so $g_{10}(x) + 241$ has $N = 2$. This is not good.

$p = 19$: There are two $r \in \{0, 1, \dots, 17\}$ such that $a_r \equiv -241 \pmod{19}$: $r = 10$ and $r = 12$. Over \mathbf{Q}_{19} , $g_{10}(x) + 241$ and $g_{12}(x) + 241$ both have $N = 1$. This is not good.

$p = 41$: The only $r \in \{0, 1, \dots, 39\}$ such that $a_r \equiv -241 \pmod{41}$ is $r = 10$. Over \mathbf{Q}_{41} the series $g_{10}(x) + 241$ has constant term 0, linear coefficient $d_{10,1} = 40 \cdot 41 + 16 \cdot 41^2 + \dots$, and $d_{10,n} \equiv 0 \pmod{41^2}$ for $n \geq 2$, so $g_{10}(x) + 241$ has $N = 1$. Thus $x = 0$ is the only zero of $g_{10}(x) + 241$ in \mathbf{Z}_{41} . Therefore $a_m = -241$ only for $m = 10$ by working in \mathbf{Q}_{41} . \square

APPENDIX A. RELATION TO A DIOPHANTINE EQUATION

Theorem A.1. *The $m \geq 0$ such that $a_m = \pm 1$ are also the $m \geq 0$ such that $3^m = 1 + 2x^2$ for some integer x .*

The solutions are $(m, x) = (0, 0), (1, \pm 1), (2, \pm 2),$ and $(5, \pm 11)$.

Proof. We will study the equation by working in $\mathbf{Z}[\sqrt{-2}]$, which like \mathbf{Z} has unique factorization and its only units are ± 1 . We will assume the reader knows enough number theory to understand how to work in such rings (norms, primes, and relatively prime elements).

In $\mathbf{Z}[\sqrt{-2}]$ both sides of the equation $3^m = 1 + 2x^2$ decompose:

$$((1 + \sqrt{-2})(1 - \sqrt{-2}))^m = (1 + x\sqrt{-2})(1 - x\sqrt{-2}).$$

On the left side, $1 + \sqrt{-2}$ and $1 - \sqrt{-2}$ are both prime elements of $\mathbf{Z}[\sqrt{-2}]$ since their norms equal 3, which is a prime number. On the right side, the numbers $1 + x\sqrt{-2}$ and $1 - x\sqrt{-2}$ are relatively prime: if δ is a common divisor then δ divides their sum 2, which has prime factorization in $\mathbf{Z}[\sqrt{-2}]$ equal to $-(\sqrt{-2})^2$, so δ is ± 1 or $\pm\sqrt{-2}$. Thus $N(\delta)$ is 1 or 2. Also δ^2 divides $(1 + x\sqrt{-2})(1 - x\sqrt{-2}) = 1 + 2x^2 = 3^m$, so taking norms shows $N(\delta)^2$ divides $N(3^m) = 9^m$. Thus the integer $N(\delta)$ is a power of 3, so $N(\delta) = 1$, which means $\delta = \pm 1$.

Since $1 + x\sqrt{-2}$ and $1 - x\sqrt{-2}$ are relatively prime in $\mathbf{Z}[\sqrt{-2}]$, the only way their product can equal $(1 + \sqrt{-2})^m(1 - \sqrt{-2})^m$ is if

$$(A.1) \quad 1 + x\sqrt{-2} = \pm(1 + \sqrt{-2})^m \text{ or } \pm(1 - \sqrt{-2})^m.$$

This is equivalent to saying $(1 + \sqrt{-2})^m$ has real part ± 1 . Since the real part is the average of a complex number and its complex conjugate, (A.1) holds for some integer x and some nonnegative integer m if and only if

$$\frac{(1 + \sqrt{-2})^m}{2} + \frac{(1 - \sqrt{-2})^m}{2} = \pm 1,$$

which in light of (1.2) is equivalent to saying $a_m = \pm 1$. □

APPENDIX B. ESTIMATING ROOTS OF $f_0(x) + 241$ AND $f_1(x) + 241$ IN \mathbf{Z}_{11}

We will show how to compute $f_0(x) + 241 \equiv (x - 2)g(x) \pmod{11^6}$ and $f_1(x) + 241 \pmod{11^6}$ in order to estimate their roots in \mathbf{Z}_{11} . Both series have constant term 242. For $n \geq 1$, the coefficient of x^n in $f_0(x) + 241$ is

$$c_{0,n} = \frac{1}{2} \frac{(\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}))^n + (\log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}))^n}{n!}.$$

To estimate $c_{0,n}$ we estimate $\log(1 + \sqrt{-2})$ and $\log(1 - \sqrt{-2})$. If $|x|_{11} = 1/11$ then $|x^k/k|_{11} \leq 1/11^6$ for all $k \geq 6$, so $\log(1 + x) \equiv \sum_{k=1}^5 (-1)^{k-1} x^k/k \pmod{11^6}$. Using this together with the estimate $\sqrt{-2} \equiv 3 + 9 \cdot 11 + 4 \cdot 11^2 + 11^3 + 4 \cdot 11^4 + 4 \cdot 11^5 \pmod{11^6}$, we have

$$\log(1 - 11\sqrt{-2}) \equiv 8 \cdot 11 + 2 \cdot 11^2 + 8 \cdot 11^3 + 3 \cdot 11^4 + 8 \cdot 11^5 \pmod{11^6},$$

$$\log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}) \equiv 3 \cdot 11 + 10 \cdot 11^2 + 2 \cdot 11^3 + 5 \cdot 11^4 + 2 \cdot 11^5 \pmod{11^6}.$$

Recall from Section 6 that $c_{0,n} \equiv 0 \pmod{11^2}$ for all $n \geq 1$, so we use the above to compute

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{f_0(x) + 241}{11^2} &= 2 + (1 + 10 \cdot 11^2 + 10 \cdot 11^3)x + (10 + 10 \cdot 11 + 10 \cdot 11^2 + 11^3)x^2 + \\ &\quad (10 \cdot 11^2 + 10 \cdot 11^3)x^3 + (2 \cdot 11^2 + 9 \cdot 11^3)x^4 \pmod{11^4}. \end{aligned}$$

This polynomial has two roots modulo 11^4 : 2 and $10 + 10 \cdot 11 + 5 \cdot 11^2 + 3 \cdot 11^3$. (Since $(f_0(x) + 241)/11^2 \equiv 2 + x - x^2 \equiv -(x-2)(x+1) \pmod{11}$, a version of Hensel's lemma for power series implies there are roots in \mathbf{Z}_{11} that reduce to 2 and $-1 \pmod{11}$.)

For $n \geq 1$, the coefficient of x^n in $f_1(x) + 241$ is

$$c_{1,n} = \frac{1 + \sqrt{-2}}{2} \frac{(\log(1 - 11\sqrt{2}))^n}{n!} + \frac{1 - \sqrt{-2}}{2} \frac{(\log(1 + 11\sqrt{-2}))^n}{n!}.$$

Since $c_{1,n} \equiv 0 \pmod{11}$ for all $n \geq 1$, the above estimates let us compute

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{f_1(x) + 241}{11} &= 2 \cdot 11 + (2 + 11 + 6 \cdot 11^2 + 2 \cdot 11^3 + 2 \cdot 11^4)x + (10 \cdot 11 + 11^2 + 6 \cdot 11^4)x^2 + \\ &\quad (3 \cdot 11^2 + 6 \cdot 11^3 + 9 \cdot 11^4)x^3 + (2 \cdot 11^3 + 11^4)x^4 + 3 \cdot 11^4x^5 \pmod{11^5}. \end{aligned}$$

There is a unique root modulo 11^5 : $10 \cdot 11 + 5 \cdot 11^2 + 9 \cdot 11^4$. (Since $(f_1(x) + 241)/11 \equiv 2x \pmod{11}$, Hensel's lemma for power series implies there is one root in \mathbf{Z}_{11} that is congruent to $0 \pmod{11}$.)

REFERENCES

- [1] <http://math.stackexchange.com/questions/873147/finding-non-negative-integers-m-such-that-1-sqrt-2m-has-real-part/873529>