Implicit function theorem over free groups and genus problem O. Kharlampovich, A. Myasnikov

1 Introduction

In late 40's Ralph Fox introduced derivatives over free groups to study invariants of group presentations (see [9]). That was a beginning of free differential calculus over free groups. It turns out that Fox's derivatives can be used to define matrix representations of free groups of finite rank, so called *Magnus representations*, and some of their groups of automorphisms, among which *Burau* and *Gasner representations* are the most notorious ones (see [3]). In 1950 R. Lyndon described cohomological dimensions of one relator groups [15]. His analysis was based on some non-trivial results from free differential calculus. Another development in the theory of differentiation over free groups is due to J. Birman. She proved that the inverse function theorem holds in free groups [4]. This gave rise to a new approach in the study of minimal generating systems (or, more generally, *primitive* systems) in various relatively free groups (see [1], [14], [17], [18]).

In this paper we discuss implicit function theorem over free groups and some of its applications.

2 Free differential calculus

Let F = F(X) be a free group with basis $X = \{x_1, \ldots, x_n\}$ and ZF be the integral group ring of F.

A linear map $D: ZF \to ZF$ is called a *derivation* in ZF if it satisfies the following condition:

$$D(fg) = D(f) + fD(g)$$
 for any $f, g \in F$.

For any i = 1, ..., n there exists a unique derivation d_i (it is called the *derivative* with respect to x_i) such that for any k = 1, ..., n

$$d_i(x_k) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } i = k \\ 0 & \text{if } i \neq k \end{cases}$$

Let $Y = \{y_1, \ldots, y_n\}$ be a set of *n* elements of the group *F*. The matrix

$$J_Y = (d_i(y_k))_{i,k=1,\dots,n}$$

is called the *Jacobian matrix* of Y. In particular, if $\phi : F \to F$ is an endomorphism of F, and $Y_{\phi} = \{x_1^{\phi}, \ldots, x_n^{\phi}\}$ then the Jacobian matrix $J_{\phi} = J_{Y_{\phi}}$ of Y_{ϕ} is called the Jacobian of ϕ .

The following is an analog of the inverse function theorem for free groups.

Theorem 1 (J.Birman [3]) A homomorphism $\phi : F \to F$ is an automorphism of F if and only if the Jacobian J_{ϕ} is right invertible over ZF.

3 Elements of algebraic geometry over groups

To formulate implicit function theorem over groups we need to introduce some basic notions of algebraic geometry over groups. We refer to [2] for details.

Let G be a group, F(X) be a free group with basis $X = \{x_1, x_2, \ldots x_n\}$, G[X] = G * F(X) be a free product of G and F(X). If $S \subset G[X]$ then S = 1 is called a system of equations over G. As an element of the free product the left side of every equation in S = 1 can be written as a product of some elements from $X \cup X^{-1}$ (which are called variables) and some elements from G (constants). To emphasize this we sometimes write $S(x_1, \ldots, x_n) = 1$ or S(X) = 1.

A solution of the system S(X) = 1 over a group G is a tuple of elements $a_1, \ldots, a_n \in G$ such that after replacement of each x_i by a_i the left side of every equation in S = 1 turns into the trivial element of G. Equivalently, a solution of the system S = 1 over G can be described as a homomorphism $\phi : G[X] \longrightarrow G$ which is identical on G and such that $\phi(S) = 1$. By $V_G(S)$ we denote the set of all solutions in G of the system S = 1, it is called the algebraic set defined by S. This algebraic set $V_G(S)$ uniquely corresponds to the normal subgroup

$$R(S) = \{u(x) \in G[X] \mid \forall A \in V_G(S)u(A) = 1\}$$

of the group G[X]. The subgroup R(S) contains S, and it is called the *radical of S*. The quotient group

$$G_{R(S)} = G[X]/R(S)$$

is the *coordinate group* of the variety V(S).

We define a Zariski topology on G^n by taking as a sub-basis for the closed sets of this topology, the algebraic sets in G^n . If F is a free non-abelian group then the union of two algebraic sets is again algebraic, therefore the closed sets in the Zariski topology over F are precisely the algebraic sets. The Zariski topology over F^n is noetherian for every n, i.e., every proper descending chain of closed sets in F^n is finite. This implies that every algebraic set V in F^n is a finite union of irreducible subsets (they are called *irreducible components* of V), and such decomposition of V is unique.

4 Algebraic sets over a free non-abelian group

Let F be a free non-abelian group. In this section, following [11] and [12], we describe algebraic sets over F. Quadratic equations play the central part in this description.

An equation S = 1 is called *quadratic in variables* $X = \{x_1, \ldots, x_n\}$ if every variable from X occurs in S not more than twice.

Let X_1, \ldots, X_m be disjoint tuples of variables. A system $U(X_1, \ldots, X_m) = 1$ (with coefficients from F) of the following type

$$S_1(X_1, X_2, \dots, X_m) = 1$$
$$S_2(X_2, \dots, X_m) = 1$$
$$\vdots$$

 $S_m(X_m) = 1$

is said to be *triangular quasi-quadratic* if for every *i* the equation $S_i(X_i, \ldots, X_m) = 1$ is quadratic in the variables from X_i .

Denote by G_i the coordinate group of the subsystem $S_i = 1, \ldots, S_m = 1$ of the system U = 1:

$$G_i = F[X_i, \dots, X_m] / R(S_i(X_i, \dots, X_m), \dots, S_m(X_m)) \quad (i = 1, \dots, m+1),$$

in particular, $G_{m+1} = F$ and $G_1 = F_{R(U)}$. The system U = 1 is said to be *non-degenerate* if for each *i* the equation $S_i(X_i, \ldots, X_m) = 1$ has a solution in G_{i+1} (with elements from X_i considered as variables and elements from X_{i+1}, \ldots, X_m as coefficients from G_{i+1}).

Observe, that if the system U = 1 is non-degenerate then the coordinate group G_{i+1} is embedable into G_i (i = 1, ..., m) ([13]), i.e., we have a chain of groups

$$F = G_{m+1} \le G_m \le \ldots \le G_1 = F_{R(U)}.$$

To solve the system U = 1 over F one needs to solve the last quadratic equation $S_m(X_m) = 1$ over $G_{m+1} = F$, then the previous one (which is again quadratic!)

 $S_{m-1}(X_{m-1}, X_m) = 1$ over the coordinate group G_m , and continue the process going up along the triangular system until the first equation $S_1(X_1, \ldots, X_m) = 1$ has been solved in the group G_2 . Now, to get solutions of this system in the initial free group F, one needs to specialize the solutions obtained in G_2 into F (in this case to specialize means to take an arbitrary homomorphism from G_2 into F, that fixes elements from F, and apply it to the obtained set of solutions in G_2).

Now, the following crucial result from [12] describes the solution set in F of an arbitrary system S(X) = 1 with coefficients from F: for any such S(X) = 1 one can effectively find a finite family of non-degenerate triangular quasi-quadratic systems $U_1(Y_1) = 1, \ldots, U_n(Y_n) = 1$ (here Y_i 's are disjoint tuples of variables of, possibly, different length) and word mappings $p_1(Y_1), \ldots, p_n(Y_n)$ such that

$$V_F(S) = p_1(V_F(U_1)) \cup \ldots \cup p_n(V_F(U_n)).$$

The discussion above shows that algebraic sets defined by quadratic equations are building blocks for construction of arbitrary algebraic sets over F. This allows us to focus now just on quadratic equations.

A standard quadratic equation over a group G is an equation of the one of the following forms:

$$\prod_{i=1}^{n} [x_i, y_i] = 1, \quad n > 0;$$
(1)

$$\prod_{i=1}^{n} [x_i, y_i] \prod_{i=1}^{m} z_i^{-1} c_i z_i d^{-1} = 1, \quad n, m \ge 0, \quad m+n \ge 1;$$
(2)

$$\prod_{i=1}^{n} x_i^2 = 1, \quad n > 0; \tag{3}$$

$$\prod_{i=1}^{n} x_i^2 \prod_{i=1}^{m} z_i^{-1} c_i z_i d^{-1} = 1, \quad n, m \ge 0, \quad n+m \ge 1;$$
(4)

where d, c_i are nontrivial elements from G.

The equation S = 1 is strictly quadratic in variables $X = \{x_1, \ldots, x_n\}$ if every letter from X occurs in S exactly twice. A quadratic, not strictly quadratic, equation is easy to solve over a group G (it has the form x = W(Y), where the variable x does not occur in W(Y)).

In the case when G is a free non-abelian group a strictly quadratic equation over G is equivalent to a standard one in the following way. Let S(X,Y) = 1 be a strictly quadratic equation in variables X over G. Then there is an automorphism ϕ of the free

group $G * F(X \cup Y)$ such that ϕ fixes all the letters from Y and all the elements from G and such that $\phi(S) = 1$ is a standard quadratic equation over G.

Thus the standard quadratic equations play a key part in constructing algebraic sets over free groups. This explains the following definition.

Definition 1 Let S = 1 be a standard quadratic equation over a free group F. Then the algebraic set $V_F(S)$ is called an elementary neighborhood over F.

5 Implicit function theorem

In this section we formulate the implicit function theorem over free groups in its basic simplest form. We refer to [13] for the proofs and generalizations.

Let F be a free non-abelian group. Recall that by an elementary neighborhood over F we understand an algebraic set $V_F(S)$ defined by a standard quadratic equation S = 1 over F. In general these neighborhoods are "rich" enough, but there are few exceptions. To define them we need the following definitions.

Strictly quadratic words of the type

$$[x, y], x^2, z^{-1}cz$$

where $c \in F$, are called *atoms*. It follows that any standard quadratic equation S = 1 over F can be written as a product of atoms r_i :

$$r_1 r_2 \dots r_k = g \quad (for some \ g \in F).$$

The minimal such number k is called the atomic rank of S = 1.

Definition 2 A solution ϕ of a quadratic equation $r_1r_2 \dots r_k = g$ of the atomic rank $k \geq 2$ is called commutative if $[r_i^{\phi}, r_{i+1}^{\phi}] = 1$ for all $i = 1, \dots, k-1$.

The following standard quadratic equations have non-commutative solutions (see [11]:

- 1. S = 1 is of type 1, n > 2,
- 2. S = 1 is of type 2, n > 0, n + m > 1,
- 3. S = 1 is of type 3, n > 3,

4. S = 1 is of type 4, n > 2.

Now we can describe equations which define "rich" neighborhoods. A standard quadratic equation S = 1 over F is called *regular* if its atomic rank is not less then 3 and it has a non-commutative solution. Elementary neighborhoods defined by such equations are called *regular neighborhoods*. Notice, that regular neighborhoods are irreducible in the Zariski topology [11].

Theorem 2 (Implicit function theorem) Let T(X,Y) = 1 be an equation over a free group F, |X| = m, |Y| = n. Suppose that for any A from a regular neighborhood $V_F(S) \subset F^m$ there exists a tuple of elements $B \in F^n$ such that T(A,B) = 1. Then there exists a tuple of words $P = (p_1(X), \ldots, p_n(X))$, with constants from F, such that T(A, P(A)) = 1 for any $A \in V_F(S)$.

6 Genus problem

In this section we apply the implicit function theorem for genus problem. We refer to [5], [6], [7] and [8] for some results and a general discussion of the genus problem. Here we focus only on the genus problem for non-orientable quadratic equations without coefficients.

Let F be a non-abelian free group.

Definition 3 Let f be a non-trivial element from the derived subgroup [F, F] of F. Genus of f is the minimal number of commutators, say n, such that f can be expressed as a product of n commutators.

Let us consider the quadratic equation

$$S_n = x_1^2 \dots x_n^2 = 1, \quad n \ge 4,$$
 (5)

where x_1, \ldots, x_n are variables. For a solution $u = (u_1, \ldots, u_n)$ of the equation (5) denote by p(u) the product $p(u) = u_1 \ldots u_n$. Notice, that $p(u)^2 = 1 \mod [F, F]$. Since F/[F, F] is torsion free, then $p(u) \in [F, F]$. By the genus of the solution u we understand the genus of the element p(u). Notice that p(u) = 1 for every solution u of the equation $S_n = 1$ for n = 1, 2, 3, hence the restriction $n \ge 4$.

Now we define the genus of the equation (5) as the supremum of the genus of all its solutions in the group F. The following problem was posed by A.Gaglione and D.Spellman.

Problem 1 What is the genus of the equation $x_1^2 \dots x_n^2 = 1$ $(n \ge 4)$?

Even for the case n = 4 it is difficult to find solutions of genus ≥ 2 (all "easy" solutions have genus 1, see [16]). In [8] J. Comerford and Y. Lee gave the first example of a such solution with genus 2. D. Spellman recently came up with another solution of genus 2 of the equation $S_4 = 1$ (see [16]).

Using implicit function theorem we prove the following result.

Theorem 3 For each $n \ge 4$ the genus of the equation $S_n = 1$ over a non-abelian free group F is infinite.

Proof. Suppose the equation $S_n = 1$ is of a finite genus, say m, over a non-abelian free group F. Then the following formula is true in F:

$$\Phi_{n,m} = \forall x_1 \dots x_n \exists y_1 z_1 \dots y_m z_m (x_1^2 \dots x_n^2 = 1 \to x_1 \dots x_n = [y_1, z_1] \dots [y_m, z_m]).$$
(6)

According to the implicit function theorem the equation

$$x_1 \dots x_n = [y_1, z_1] \dots [y_m, z_m] \tag{7}$$

in variables $y_1, z_1, \ldots, y_m, z_m$ and constants x_1, \ldots, x_n has a solution in the non-orientable surface group

$$G_{S_n} = \langle x_1, \dots, x_n \mid x_1^2 \dots x_n^2 = 1 \rangle.$$

But it is easy to see that the product $x_1 \dots x_n$ does not belong to the derived subgroup of G_{S_n} . This contradiction shows that the genus of the equation $S_n = 1$ is infinite.

7 Abelianization of cartesian powers of a free nonabelian groups

Let F be a free non-abelian group and λ an infinite cardinal. Denote by F_{λ} the unrestricted cartesian product of λ copies of the group F.

Below, for a group G by Ab(G) we denote the abelianization G/[G,G] of G. The following result is an answer to the question posed by A.Gaglione and D.Spellman (see [10] and [16]), whether the abelianization of the group F_{λ} is torsion-free.

Theorem 4 For any non-abelian free group F and any infinite cardinal λ the abelianization $Ab(F_{\lambda})$ of the cartesian power F_{λ} has non-trivial elements of order 2. *Proof.* Notice, that if $\lambda > \omega$, where ω is the first infinite cardinal, then $\lambda = \omega + \lambda$ and therefore

$$F_{\lambda} \simeq F_{\omega} \times F_{\lambda}.$$

Hence

$$Ab(F_{\lambda}) \simeq Ab(F_{\lambda}) \times Ab(F_{\omega}),$$

which shows that it suffices to prove the theorem just for $\lambda = \omega$.

Consider the equation

$$x_1^2 x_2^2 x_3^2 x_4^2 = 1$$

over the free group F. By Theorem 3 for each positive n there exists a solution, say

$$u(n) = (u(n)_1, u(n)_2, u(n)_3, u(n)_4)$$

such that the element

$$p(u(n)) = u(n)_1 u(n)_2 u(n)_3 u(n)_4$$

can not be presented as a product of fewer then n commutators in F. Denote by U_i (i = 1, ..., 4) the following element of the cartesian power F_{ω} :

$$U_i = (u(1)_i, u(2)_i, u(3)_i, \dots, u(n)_i, \dots),$$

and put

$$U = U_1 U_2 U_3 U_4.$$

Then U is not a product of finitely many commutators in F_{ω} . Hence the image \overline{U} of U in the abelianization $Ab(F_{\omega})$ is not trivial. But $(\overline{U})^2 = 1$. So the abelianization $Ab(F_{\omega})$, as well as $Ab(F_{\lambda})$, has non-trivial 2-torsion, as desired.

8 Bibliography

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