An Inequality About Factors of Polynomials

By M. Mignotte

Abstract. A sharp inequality is proved about the product of some roots of a polynomial. It is used to bound the height of the factors of a polynomial. Applications are given to the problem of factorization and numerical examples show that these bounds strongly improve the previous ones.

I. Introduction. If \( R = \sum_{j=0}^{d} c_j X^j \) is a polynomial with complex coefficients, we put

\[ H = \left( \frac{1}{d^2} \right)^{1/2}, \quad L(R) = \sum |c_j|, \quad H(R) = \max |c_j|. \]

We shall first prove:

**Theorem 1.** Let \( P = \sum_{i=0}^{d} a_i X^i \) be a polynomial with complex coefficients. Let \( z_1, z_2, \ldots, z_k \) be those zeros of \( P \) (counted with their multiplicities), such that \( 1 < |z_1| < |z_2| < \cdots < |z_k| \). Then

\[ |a_d| \prod_{i=1}^{k} |z_i| \leq \|P\|. \]

This inequality improves a result of Mahler [1] who obtained \( L(P) \) instead of \( \|P\| \) on the right-hand side.

**Theorem 2.** Let \( Q \) be a polynomial with rational integer coefficients. If \( Q_1 \cdots Q_m R = Q \), where \( Q_1, \ldots, Q_m, R \) are polynomials with rational integer coefficients, then

\[ \prod_{j=1}^{m} L(Q_j) \leq 2^D \|Q\|, \quad \text{where} \quad D = \sum_{j=1}^{m} \deg(Q_j), \]

and, if for example \( Q_1 = b_0 + b_1 X + \cdots + b_1 X^1 \), then

\[ |b_i| \leq \binom{1}{i} \|Q\|. \]

(This result also holds for Gaussian integer coefficients.)

These inequalities can be used in the theory of transcendental numbers, but we...
shall not speak of this here. They are also useful in the problem of factorization of polynomials over $\mathbb{Z}$ as we shall see now.

We recall the method of H. Zassenhaus [3]. Put

$$F(X) = X^n + a_1 X^{n-1} + \cdots + a_n, \quad a_i \in \mathbb{Z},$$

and assume that

$$G(X) = X^m + b_1 X^{m-1} + \cdots + b_m, \quad b_j \in \mathbb{Z}, m \leq n/2,$$

is a factor of $F$.

Suppose that we find $M$ such that for any such $G$ we have $H(G) \leq M$. We take a prime number $p$, not dividing the discriminant of $F$, and choose $r$ such that $p^r > 2M$. Then, starting with a factorization into monic polynomials

$$F \equiv F_1 \cdots F_k \pmod{p},$$

we get, with the help of Hensel's lemma, well-defined $\bar{F}_i \in \mathbb{Z}(X)$ such that

$$F \equiv \bar{F}_1 \cdots \bar{F}_k \pmod{p^r}, \quad \text{with } \bar{F}_i \equiv F_i \pmod{p}, \quad i = 1, \ldots, r,$$

and such that the coefficients of the $\bar{F}_i$ belong to the interval $\left(-p^r/2, p^r/2\right]$.

It is now clear that we are able to factorize $F$ over $\mathbb{Z}$. The problem is now to find a value for $M$.

Zassenhaus remarked that, if $|z| \leq A$ for any root $z$ of $F$, then

$$|b_j| \leq \binom{m}{j} A^j.$$

It is well known that we can take

$$(3) \quad A = \max |a_i| + 1.$$

Zassenhauss also used the bound

$$(4) \quad A = \max_{1 \leq i \leq n} \left| \frac{a_i}{\binom{n}{i}} \right|^{1/i} / (2^{1/n} - 1).$$

To show the strength of (2), we take two examples given in [4] to compare (3) and (4).

Put

$$F_1(X) = X^{15} + 30X^{14} + 5X^{13} + 2X^{12} + 5X + 2,$$

and

$$F_2(X) = X^8 + 8X^7 + 21X^6 + 21X^5 + 42X^4 + 13X^3 + 12X^2 - 14X + 12.$$

For $F_1$, we get
and, for $F_2$,

$$M_1 \leq 2.8 \cdot 10^{10} \quad \text{by (3)},$$

$$M_1 \leq 2.7 \cdot 10^9 \quad \text{by (4)},$$

whereas (2) gives

$$M_1 \leq 1083 \quad \text{and} \quad M_2 \leq 348.$$  

(In fact, $F_1$ is irreducible: Rouché’s theorem shows that all its roots but one lie in the disk $|z| < 1$.)

II. Proof of Theorem 1. A proof can be found in [2], but we prefer to deduce it from the following elementary lemma which gives a stronger result.

**Lemma 1.** Let $P(X)$ be a polynomial with complex coefficients and $\alpha$ be a nonzero complex number. Then

$$\|(X + \alpha)P(X)\| = |\alpha| \|(X + \overline{\alpha}^{-1})P(X)\|.$$  

**Proof.** Write

$$P(X) = \sum_{k=0}^{m} a_k X^k,$$

$$Q(X) = (X + \alpha)P(X) = \sum_{k=0}^{m+1} (a_{k-1} + \alpha a_k)X^k,$$

$$R(X) = (X + \overline{\alpha}^{-1})P(X) = \sum_{k=0}^{m+1} (a_{k-1} + \overline{\alpha}^{-1}a_k)X^k,$$

with $a_{-1} = a_{m+1} = 0$. Then

$$\|Q\|^2 = \sum_{k=0}^{m+1} |a_{k-1} + \alpha a_k|^2 = \sum_{k=0}^{m+1} (a_{k-1} + \alpha a_k)(a_{k-1} + \overline{\alpha}a_k).$$

which expands to

$$\sum_{k=0}^{m+1} (|a_{k-1}|^2 + \alpha a_k \overline{a}_{k-1} + \overline{\alpha} a_{k-1} a_k + |\alpha|^2 |a_k|^2).$$

Expanding $|\alpha|^2 \|R\|^2$ yields the same sum.
Thus we have $\|Q\| = |\alpha| \|R\|$, which proves the lemma.

**Lemma 2.** Let $x_1, x_2, \cdots, x_m$ be complex numbers,

$$0 < |x_1| \leq \cdots \leq |x_q| < 1 \leq |x_{q+1}| \leq \cdots \leq |x_m|, \quad q \geq 0.$$

Put

$$S(X) = (X - x_1) \cdots (X - x_m),$$

$$T(X) = (X - \bar{x}_1^{-1}) \cdots (X - \bar{x}_q^{-1})(X - x_{q+1}) \cdots (X - x_m).$$

Then

\[(5) \quad \|S\| = |x_1 \cdots x_q| \|T\|.
\]

**Proof.** By induction on $q$. For $q = 0$, (5) holds. Assume $q > 0$ and put

$$\tilde{S}(X) = S(X)/(X - x_1), \quad \tilde{T}(X) = T(X)/(X - \bar{x}_1^{-1}).$$

Then

$$\|S\| = \|(X - x_1)\tilde{S}(X)\| = |x_1| \|(X - \bar{x}_1^{-1})\tilde{S}(X)\| \quad \text{(by Lemma 1)}$$

$$= |x_1| |x_2 \cdots x_q| \|(X - \bar{x}_1^{-1})\tilde{T}(X)\| \quad \text{(by induction hypothesis)}$$

$$= |x_1 \cdots x_q| \|T\|.$$

This implies the following refinement of Theorem 1.

**Proposition.** Let $P(X) = a_m X^m + \cdots + a_0 = a_m (X - x_1) \cdots (X - x_m)$ where $x_1, \cdots, x_m$ are complex numbers such that

$$|x_1| \leq \cdots \leq |x_q| < 1 \leq |x_{q+1}| \leq \cdots \leq |x_m|, \quad q \geq 0.$$

Then

$$\|P\|^2 \geq |a_m|^2 |x_{q+1} \cdots x_m|^2 + |a_0|^2 |x_{q+1} \cdots x_m|^2.$$

**Proof.** Put

$$Q(X) = a_m \prod_{i=1}^{q} (X - \bar{x}_1^{-1}) \prod_{i=q+1}^{m} (X - x_i) = b_m X^m + \cdots + b_0.$$

First assume $x_1 \neq 0$. Then by Lemma 2, $\|P\| = |x_1 \cdots x_q| \|Q\|$, hence

$$\|P\|^2 \geq |x_1 \cdots x_q|^2 (|b_m|^2 + |b_0|^2),$$

from which the result follows.

If $x_1 = \cdots = x_n = 0$ ($n \leq q$), then $a_0 = 0$, so we just have to prove $\|P\|^2 \geq |a_m|^2 |x_{q+1} \cdots x_m|^2$. But, in fact, replacing $P(X)$ by $P(X)/X^n$ in the above argument yields the stronger result
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\[ \|P\|^2 > |a_m|^2 |x_{q+1} \cdots x_m|^2 + |a_n|^2 |x_{q+1} \cdots x_m|^{-2}. \]

Remarks. (1) The proof of Theorem 1 is quite elementary while the previous inequalities were weaker and based on transcendental results such as Jensen’s or Parseval’s formula. We leave an analytic proof of Lemma 2 as exercise to the reader.

(2) In a certain sense, Theorem 1 is the best possible: the inequality is not always true if we replace \( \|P\| \) by \( (\sum |a_i|^e)^{1/e} \) for \( e > 2 \). (Take for example \( P(X) = X^2 - 2aX - 1 \) where \( a \) is a sufficiently large positive number.)

III. Proof of Theorem 2. The well-known expression of the coefficients of a polynomial gives:

Lemma 3. Let \( P \) be as in Theorem 1. Then
\[ |a_i| \leq \binom{d}{i}|z_1 \cdots z_k| |a_d|, \]
and
\[ \sum_{i=0}^{d} |a_i| \leq 2^d |z_1 \cdots z_k| |a_d|. \]

The theorem follows easily from Lemma 3 and Theorem 1.

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Université Paris-Nord
Département de Mathématiques
Centre Scientifique et Polytechnique
Place du 8 Mai 1945
93 Saint-Denis 93206, France