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An elementary proof of Catalan-Mihailescu theorem

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Abstract

(MSC=11D04) More than one century after its formulation by the Belgian mathematician Eugene Catalan, Preda Mihailescu has solved the open problem. But, is it all? Mihailescu's solution utilizes computation on machines, we propose here not really a proof as it is intended classically, but a resolution of an equation like the resolution of the polynomial equations of third and fourth degrees. This solution is totally algebraic and does not utilize, of course, computers or any kind of calculation.

(Keywords : Diophantine equations, Catalan equation ; Algebraic resolution)

Introduction

Catalan theorem has been proved in 2002 by Preda Mihailescu. In 2004, it became officially Catalan-Mihailescu theorem. This theorem stipulates that there are not consecutive pure powers. There do not exist integers strictly greater than 1, $X > 1$ and $Y > 1$, for which with exponents strictly greater than 1, $p > 1$ and $q > 1$,

$$Y^p = X^q + 1$$

but for $(X, Y, p, q) = (2, 3, 2, 3)$. We can verify that

$$3^2 = 2^3 + 1$$

Euler has proved that the equation $X^3 + 1 = Y^2$ has this only solution. We propose in this study a general solution. The particular cases already solved concern $p = 2$, solved by Ko Chao in 1965, and $q = 3$ which has been solved in 2002. The case $q = 2$ has been solved by Lebesgue in 1850. We solve here the equation for the general case.

The approach

Let

$$c = \frac{X^p - 1}{Y^{\frac{p}{2}}}, \quad c' = \frac{7 - X^p}{Y^{\frac{p}{2}}}$$

And

$$d = X^p - Y^{\frac{p}{2}}, \quad d' = X^p + Y^{\frac{p}{2}}$$

We have

$$Y^{\frac{p}{2}} = X^p - d = d' - X^p = \frac{d' - d}{2}$$

And

$$X^p = \frac{d' + d}{2}$$

But

$$(c + c')Y^{\frac{p}{2}} = X^p - 1 + 7 - X^p = 6 \Rightarrow Y^{\frac{p}{2}} = \frac{6}{c + c'} = \frac{d' - d}{2}$$

And

$$X^p = cY^{\frac{p}{2}} + 1 = \frac{6c}{c + c'} + 1 = \frac{7c + c'}{c + c'} = \frac{d' + d}{2}$$

We deduce

$$d = \frac{7c + c' - 6}{c + c'}, \quad d' = \frac{7c + c' + 6}{c + c'}$$

And

$$X^q = Y^p - 1 = \frac{36 - (c + c')^2}{(c + c')^2}$$

We have

$$(c + c')Y^{\frac{p}{2}} = 6 > 0$$

Thus $c + c' > 0$. Also

$$cY^{\frac{p}{2}} = X^p - 1 > 0$$

Thus $c > 0$. But $X^p \geq 4$, hence

$$cY^{\frac{p}{2}} = X^p - 1 \geq 7 - X^p = c'Y^{\frac{p}{2}}$$

hence $c \geq c'$

$$7 - X^p = 7 - \frac{7c + c'}{c + c'} = \frac{6c'}{c + c'}$$

If

$$c' > 0$$

Thus $X^p < 7$ and $X^p = 4$, it means that $c' < 0$, now if $c < 1$, and

$$(c + c')X^p = 7c + c' > 0$$

thus $c + c' > 0$. But, here $c < 1$, it means $(c - 1)Y^{\frac{p}{2}} = d - 1 < 0$, we deduce

$$(c' + 1)Y^{\frac{p}{2}} = 7 - d > 0$$

Thus $c' > -1$. But

$$3X^p(c + c') - 4Y^{\frac{p}{2}}(c + c') = 3(7c + c') - 24 = 21(c - 1) + 3(c' - 1) < 0$$

And

$$\begin{aligned} 2X^q - X^{2p} &= \frac{72 - 2(c + c')^2 - (7c + c')^2}{(c + c')^2} \\ &= \frac{72 - 51c^2 - 3c'^2 - 18cc'}{(c + c')^2} \end{aligned}$$

$$= \frac{51(1-c^2) - 3c'(c+c') - 15cc' + 21}{(c+c')^2} > 0$$

And

$$\begin{aligned} c^2 X^q - X^{2p} &= \frac{36c^2 - c^2(c+c')^2 - (7c+c')^2}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{36c^2 - c^4 - c^2c'^2 - 2c^3c' - 49c^2 - c'^2 - 14cc'}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{-13c(c+c') - c'c(1+(c'+2c)c) - c^4}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{c(-13c - 14c' + c^2(2c'+c) - cc'^2 - c^3)}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{c(-13c - 13c' + c'c(c-c') + c^2(c'-c) + c^2c')}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{c(-13c - 13c' + c(c'^2 - c^2) + c^2c')}{(c+c')^2} < 0 \end{aligned}$$

We deduce

$$\frac{c^2}{2} X^{2p} < c^2 X^q < X^{2p}$$

But

$$X^{2p-q-1} < 2X^{-1} \leq 1$$

Thus

$$2p \leq q + 1$$

But, let us search a u for which $uX^q = X^{2p}$

$$\begin{aligned} uX^q - X^{2p} &= \frac{36uc^2 - uc^2(c+c')^2 - (7c+c')^2}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{((36u - 49 - uc^2)c^2 - (uc^2 + 1)c'^2 - (2uc^2 + 14)cc')}{(c+c')^2} = 0 \\ (36c^2 - c^4 - c^2c'^2 - 2c^3c')u &= 49c^2 + c'^2 + 14cc' \\ u &= \frac{49c^2 + c'^2 + 14cc'}{36c^2 - c^4 - c^2c'^2 - 2c^3c'} \\ u - 1 &= \frac{13c^2 + c'^2 + 14cc' + c^4 + c^2c'^2 + 2c^3c'}{35c^2 - c'^2 - 2cc'} \\ &= \frac{(14c + 2c')(c+c') - c'^4 + c^4 + cc'(2c^2 - 2 + cc')}{32c^2 + c^2 - c'^2 + 2c(c-c')} > 0 \end{aligned}$$

Thus $u = 1 + A > 1$. And

$$X^{2p} = uX^q = X^q + AX^q > X^q$$

We deduce

$$q + 1 \leq 2p \leq q + 1$$

And

$$0 \geq c^2 - 1 = X^{2p} - 2X^p - c^2 X^q > X^{2p} - 2X^p - \frac{1}{u} X^{2p} = \frac{u-1}{u} X^p \left(X^p - \frac{2u}{u-1} \right) \geq 0$$

And

$$(c^2 - 1)Y^p X^{-p} = 0 = X^p - 2 - X^{q-p}$$

and it means

$$X^p - 2 = X^{q-p} = X^{p-1}$$

$X^{p-1} - X^{p-2} = \frac{2}{X}$ is an integer, then $X = 2$. And

$$2^{p-2} = 1 + 2^{p-1}$$

In one side an even number, in the other an odd one, the solution is $q = p + 1 = 3$, and $Y = \pm 3$. Now, let $c \geq 1$ We have

$$\begin{aligned} 2c^2 X^q - X^{2p} &= \frac{72c^2 - 2c^2(c+c')^2 - (7c+c')^2}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{72c^2 - 49c^2 - c'^2 - 14cc' - 2c^2(c^2 + c'^2 + 2cc')}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{c^2(23 - 2c^2 - 2c'^2 - 4cc') - c'(c+c') - 13(cc')}{(c+c')^2} > 0 \end{aligned}$$

And

$$\begin{aligned} c^2 X^q - X^{2p} &= \frac{36c^2 - c^4(c+c')^2 - (7c+c')^2}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{36c^2 - 50c^2 - 2c'^2 - 16cc' - c^4(c+c') + c^2(c+c')}{(c+c')^2} \\ &= \frac{-2(7c+c')(c+c') + c^2(c+c')(1-c^2)}{(c+c')^2} < 0 \end{aligned}$$

We deduce

$$\frac{1}{2} X^{2p} < c^2 X^q < X^{2p} < c^2 X^{2p}$$

$$X^{2p-q} > c^2 > 1$$

And

$$2p \geq q + 1$$

We have with $u = q - p$

$$\frac{X^{2p} - 7X^p + 49}{X^q + X^p} < c'^2 = \frac{(X^p - 7)^2}{X^q + 1} < 1 = \frac{X^p}{X^{q-u}}$$

$u = q - p$, We have

$$X^{2p+q-u} - 14X^{p+q-u} + 49X^{q-u} \leq X^{p+q} + X^{2p}$$

$$X^{2p} - 14X^p + 49 \leq X^{p+u} + X^{2p-q+u}$$

$$X^{2p} - X^{p+u} - X^{2p-q+u} \leq 14X^p - 49$$

$$X^p - X^u - X^{p+u-q} \leq 14 - 49X^{-p}$$

$$X^p - X^u - 14 \leq X^{p+u-q} - 49X^{-p} = -48 + 49 - 49X^{-p} < -48 + 49 = 1$$

$$0 < X^p - X^{p-1} < X^p - X^{q-p} \leq 15$$

There are 6 possibilities $2k \in \{2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14\}$ and $X^{p-1} - X^{q-p-1} = \frac{2k}{X}$ is an integer thus $X = 2m \in \{2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14\}$

$$(2m)^{p-1} = 2v + 1 + (2m)^{q-p-1}$$

when $m \in 2, 6, 10, 12, 14$ in one side an even number, in the other an odd one, the solution is $q = p + 1$ which leads to

$$X^{p-1} = 2 \Rightarrow (X, p) = (2, 2)$$

And

$$(2m)^{p-2} = \frac{2v}{X} + (2m)^{q-p-2}$$

If $q \geq p + 2$, it means $X = 2v \in 2, 4$ and it is impossible! Thus $X = 2$ and $(p, q) = (2, 3)$ or $Y = \pm 3$

Conclusion

Catalan equation implies a second one, and an original solution of Catalan equation exists. It seems that many problems of number theory can be solved like this. How? We showed an example.

Références

- [1] P. MIHAILESCU A class number free criterion for catalan's conjecture, *Journal of Number theory*, **99** (2003).