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NOTES ON TWO KINDS OF SPECIAL VALUES FOR THE BELL POLYNOMIALS OF THE SECOND KIND

FENG QI, DONGKYU LIM, AND YONG-HONG YAO

ABSTRACT. In the paper, by methods and techniques in combinatorial analysis, the authors discuss two kinds of special values for the Bell polynomials of the second kind for two special sequences, find a relation between these two kinds of special values for the Bell polynomials of the second kind, and derive an identity involving the combinatorial numbers.

1. MOTIVATION

In [1, Definition 11.2] and [2, p. 134, Theorem A], the Bell polynomials of the second kind, denoted by $B_{n,k}(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_{n-k+1})$ for $n \geq k \geq 0$, are defined by

$$B_{n,k}(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_{n-k+1}) = \sum_{\substack{1 \leq i \leq n, \ell_i \in \{0\} \cup \mathbb{N} \\ \sum_{i=1}^n i \ell_i = n \\ \sum_{i=1}^n \ell_i = k}} \frac{n!}{\prod_{i=1}^{n-k+1} \ell_i!} \prod_{i=1}^{n-k+1} \left(\frac{x_i}{i!}\right)^{\ell_i}.$$

For more information on the Bell polynomials of the second kind $B_{n,k}$, please refer to the monographs and handbooks [1, 2, 3] and closely related references therein.

In [1, p. 451], the formulas

$$\begin{aligned} B_{2r,k}(0, 2!, \dots, 0, (2r)!) &= \frac{(2r)!}{k!} \binom{r-1}{k-1}, \\ B_{2r-1,k}(0, 2!, \dots, (2r-2)!, 0) &= 0, \\ B_{2r,2s}(1!, 0, \dots, (2r-1)!, 0) &= \frac{(2r)!}{(2s)!} \binom{r+s-1}{2s-1}, \\ B_{2r,2s-1}(1!, 0, \dots, (2r-1)!, 0) &= 0, \\ B_{2r-1,2s-1}(1!, 0, \dots, (2r-1)!, 0) &= \frac{(2r-1)!}{(2s-1)!} \binom{r+s-2}{2s-2}, \\ B_{2r-1,2s}(1!, 0, \dots, 0, (2r-1)!) &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

were stated, but no proof was supplied for them there.

For simplicity, we denote

$$\lambda(n, k) = B_{n,k} \left(1!, 0, 3!, 0, \dots, (n-k+1)! \frac{1 - (-1)^{n-k+1}}{2} \right)$$

and

$$\mu(n, k) = B_{n,k} \left(0, 2!, 0, 4!, \dots, (n-k+1)! \frac{1 + (-1)^{n-k+1}}{2} \right).$$

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In terms of these notations, the above statements in [1, p. 451] can be restated as

$$\begin{aligned}\mu(2r, k) &= \frac{(2r)!}{k!} \binom{r-1}{k-1}, & \mu(2r-1, k) &= 0, \\ \lambda(2r, 2s) &= \frac{(2r)!}{(2s)!} \binom{r+s-1}{2s-1}, & \lambda(2r, 2s-1) &= 0, \\ \lambda(2r-1, 2s-1) &= \frac{(2r-1)!}{(2s-1)!} \binom{r+s-2}{2s-2}, & \lambda(2r-1, 2s) &= 0.\end{aligned}$$

In this paper, we will provide alternative proofs for the above six formulas and discover a relation between them.

2. MAIN RESULTS

We first prove an identity involving combinatorial numbers.

Theorem 1. *For $k \geq 1$ and $n \geq 0$, we have*

$$\sum_{q=0}^n \frac{(-1)^q}{k+q} \binom{n}{q} = \frac{1}{k \binom{k+n}{k}}. \quad (1)$$

Proof. Let

$$f(x) = \sum_{q=0}^n \frac{(-1)^q}{k+q} \binom{n}{q} x^{k+q}, \quad x \in [-1, 1].$$

Then $f(0) = 0$ and

$$f'(x) = \sum_{q=0}^n (-1)^q \binom{n}{q} x^{k+q-1} = x^{k-1} \sum_{q=0}^n (-1)^q \binom{n}{q} x^q = x^{k-1} (1-x)^n.$$

Integrating from 0 to $t \in (0, 1]$ on both sides of the above equality yields

$$f(t) = \int_0^t x^{k-1} (1-x)^n dx = B(t; k, n+1),$$

where $B(z; a, b)$ denotes the incomplete beta function, see [3, p. 183]. Therefore, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned}f(1) &= B(1; k, n+1) = B(k, n+1) \\ &= \frac{\Gamma(k)\Gamma(n+1)}{\Gamma(k+n+1)} = \frac{(k-1)!n!}{(k+n)!} = \frac{1}{k} \frac{k!n!}{(k+n)!} = \frac{1}{k \binom{n+k}{k}},\end{aligned}$$

where $B(a, b)$ and $\Gamma(z)$ denote the beta function and the classical Euler gamma function respectively, see [3, p. 142] and [3, Chapter 5]. The formula (1) is thus proved. The proof of Theorem 1 is complete. \square

We are now in a position to state and prove our main results.

Theorem 2. *For $n \geq k \geq 0$, we have the relation*

$$\frac{\lambda(n, k)}{n!} = \frac{\mu(n+k, k)}{(n+k)!} \quad (2)$$

and two explicit formulas

$$\lambda(n, k) = \frac{1 + (-1)^{n+k}}{2} \frac{n!}{k!} \binom{\frac{n+k}{2} - 1}{k-1}, \quad \mu(n, k) = \frac{1 + (-1)^n}{2} \frac{n!}{k!} \binom{\frac{n}{2} - 1}{k-1}. \quad (3)$$

Proof. It is known [2, 16] that the quantities

$$\langle x \rangle_n = \prod_{\ell=0}^{n-1} (x - \ell) = \begin{cases} x(x-1)\cdots(x-n+1), & n \geq 1 \\ 1, & n = 0 \end{cases}$$

and

$$(x)_n = \prod_{\ell=0}^{n-1} (x + \ell) = \begin{cases} x(x+1)\cdots(x+n-1), & n \geq 1 \\ 1, & n = 0 \end{cases}$$

are called the falling and rising factorials respectively. In [2, p. 133], it was listed that

$$\frac{1}{k!} \left(\sum_{m=1}^{\infty} x_m \frac{t^m}{m!} \right)^k = \sum_{n=k}^{\infty} B_{n,k}(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_{n-k+1}) \frac{t^n}{n!} \quad (4)$$

for $k \geq 0$. Hence, we have

$$\sum_{n=k}^{\infty} \mu(n, k) \frac{t^n}{n!} = \frac{1}{k!} \left[\sum_{m=1}^{\infty} m! \frac{1 + (-1)^m t^m}{2} \frac{t^m}{m!} \right]^k = \frac{1}{k!} \left(\frac{t^2}{1-t^2} \right)^k$$

which is equivalent to

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \mu(n+k, k) \frac{1}{\binom{n+k}{n}} \frac{t^n}{n!} = \left(\frac{t}{1-t^2} \right)^k.$$

Since the function $\frac{t}{1-t^2}$ is odd, we derive $\mu(2r-1, k) = 0$. Further computation yields

$$\begin{aligned} \mu(n+k, k) &= \binom{n+k}{n} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \frac{d^n}{dt^n} \left(\frac{t}{1-t^2} \right)^k \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{1}{2^k} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \left[\left(\frac{1}{1-t} - \frac{1}{1+t} \right)^k \right]^{(n)} \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{1}{2^k} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \left[\sum_{\ell=0}^k \binom{k}{\ell} \left(\frac{1}{1-t} \right)^{\ell} (-1)^{k-\ell} \left(\frac{1}{1+t} \right)^{k-\ell} \right]^{(n)} \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{1}{2^k} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^{k-\ell} \binom{k}{\ell} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{q=0}^n \binom{n}{q} \left[\left(\frac{1}{1-t} \right)^{\ell} \right]^{(q)} \left[\left(\frac{1}{1+t} \right)^{k-\ell} \right]^{(n-q)} \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{1}{2^k} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^{k-\ell} \binom{k}{\ell} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{q=0}^n \binom{n}{q} \\ &\quad \times \langle -\ell \rangle_q (-1)^q \left(\frac{1}{1-t} \right)^{\ell+q} \langle -(k-\ell) \rangle_{n-q} \left(\frac{1}{1+t} \right)^{k-\ell+(n-q)} \\ &= \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k} \binom{n+k}{n} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^{\ell} \binom{k}{\ell} \sum_{q=0}^n (-1)^q \binom{n}{q} \langle -\ell \rangle_q \langle \ell-k \rangle_{n-q} \\ &= \frac{(-1)^{n+k}}{2^k} \binom{n+k}{n} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^{\ell} \binom{k}{\ell} \sum_{q=0}^n (-1)^q \binom{n}{q} (\ell)_q (k-\ell)_{n-q}. \end{aligned}$$

In summary, we obtain

$$\mu(n, k) = \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k} \binom{n}{k} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^{\ell} \binom{k}{\ell} \sum_{q=0}^{n-k} (-1)^q \binom{n-k}{q} \langle -\ell \rangle_q \langle \ell-k \rangle_{n-k-q}$$

$$= \frac{(-1)^n}{2^k} \binom{n}{k} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^\ell \binom{k}{\ell} \sum_{q=0}^{n-k} (-1)^q \binom{n-k}{q} (\ell)_q (k-\ell)_{n-k-q}. \quad (5)$$

By similar argument as above, it follows that

$$\sum_{n=k}^{\infty} \lambda(n, k) \frac{t^n}{n!} = \frac{1}{k!} \left[\sum_{m=1}^{\infty} m! \frac{1 - (-1)^m t^m}{2} \frac{1}{m!} \right]^k = \frac{(-1)^k}{k! 2^k} \left(\frac{1}{t-1} + \frac{1}{t+1} \right)^k$$

which is equivalent to

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \lambda(n+k, k) \frac{1}{\binom{n+k}{n}} \frac{t^n}{n!} = \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k} \frac{1}{t^k} \left(\frac{1}{t-1} + \frac{1}{t+1} \right)^k = \left(\frac{1}{1-t^2} \right)^k. \quad (6)$$

Since $\frac{1}{1-t^2}$ is even, we deduce immediately that $\lambda(2r-1, 2s) = 0$ and $\lambda(2r, 2s-1) = 0$. By the L'Hôspital rule and the identity (1) in Theorem 1, it follows that

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda(n+k, k) &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \frac{d^n}{d t^n} \left[\frac{1}{t^k} \left(\frac{1}{t-1} + \frac{1}{t+1} \right)^k \right] \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{q=0}^n \binom{n}{q} \frac{\langle -k \rangle_q}{t^{k+q}} \left[\left(\frac{1}{t-1} + \frac{1}{t+1} \right)^k \right]^{(n-q)} \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k} \sum_{q=0}^n \binom{n}{q} \frac{\langle -k \rangle_q}{(k+q)!} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \left[\left(\frac{1}{t-1} + \frac{1}{t+1} \right)^k \right]^{(n+k)} \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k} \sum_{q=0}^n \binom{n}{q} \frac{(-1)^q (k+q-1)!}{(k-1)! (k+q)!} \\ &\quad \times \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \left[\sum_{\ell=0}^k \binom{k}{\ell} \left(\frac{1}{t-1} \right)^\ell \left(\frac{1}{t+1} \right)^{k-\ell} \right]^{(n+k)} \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k (k-1)!} \sum_{q=0}^n \frac{(-1)^q}{k+q} \binom{n}{q} \sum_{\ell=0}^k \binom{k}{\ell} \\ &\quad \times \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{m=0}^{n+k} \binom{n+k}{m} \left[\left(\frac{1}{t-1} \right)^\ell \right]^{(m)} \left[\left(\frac{1}{t+1} \right)^{k-\ell} \right]^{(n+k-m)} \\ &= \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k k!} \sum_{\ell=0}^k \binom{k}{\ell} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{m=0}^{n+k} \binom{n+k}{m} \\ &\quad \times \langle -\ell \rangle_m \left(\frac{1}{t-1} \right)^{\ell+m} \langle \ell-k \rangle_{n+k-m} \left(\frac{1}{t+1} \right)^{(k-\ell)+(n+k-m)} \\ &= \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k k!} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^\ell \binom{k}{\ell} \sum_{m=0}^{n+k} (-1)^m \binom{n+k}{m} \langle -\ell \rangle_m \langle \ell-k \rangle_{n+k-m}. \end{aligned}$$

In short, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda(n, k) &= \frac{(-1)^k}{2^k k!} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^\ell \binom{k}{\ell} \sum_{m=0}^n (-1)^m \binom{n}{m} \langle -\ell \rangle_m \langle \ell-k \rangle_{n-m} \\ &= \frac{(-1)^{n+k}}{2^k k!} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^\ell \binom{k}{\ell} \sum_{m=0}^n (-1)^m \binom{n}{m} (\ell)_m (k-\ell)_{n-m}. \quad (7) \end{aligned}$$

Comparing between (5) and (7) reveals

$$\lambda(n, k) = \frac{(-1)^{n+k}}{2^k k!} \frac{2^k}{(-1)^{n+k}} \frac{1}{\binom{n+k}{k}} \mu(n+k, k)$$

which can be rearranged as (2).

The Faà di Bruno formula, see [1, Theorem 11.4] and [2, p. 139, Theorem C], can be described in terms of $B_{n,k}(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_{n-k+1})$ by

$$\frac{d^n}{dx^n} f \circ h(x) = \sum_{k=0}^n f^{(k)}(h(x)) B_{n,k}(h'(x), h''(x), \dots, h^{(n-k+1)}(x)). \quad (8)$$

In [1, p. 412] and [2, p. 135], one can find the identity

$$B_{n,k}(abx_1, ab^2x_2, \dots, ab^{n-k+1}x_{n-k+1}) = a^k b^n B_{n,k}(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_{n-k+1}) \quad (9)$$

for $n \geq k \geq 0$ and $a, b \in \mathbb{C}$. In [9, Theorem 4.1] and [18, Section 3], it was set up little by little that

$$B_{n,k}(x, 1, 0, \dots, 0) = \frac{1}{2^{n-k}} \frac{n!}{k!} \binom{k}{n-k} x^{2k-n}, \quad (10)$$

where $\binom{0}{0} = 1$ and $\binom{q}{p} = 0$ for $q > p \geq 0$. For detailed information on applications of the formula (10), please refer to the papers [4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21] and closely related references therein. Then it follows from (6), (8), (9), and (10) that, when denoting $u = u(t) = 1 - t^2$,

$$\begin{aligned} \lambda(n+k, k) &= \binom{n+k}{n} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \frac{d^n}{dt^n} \left(\frac{1}{1-t^2} \right)^k \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{\ell=0}^n \left(\frac{1}{u^k} \right)^{(\ell)} B_{n,\ell}(-2t, -2, 0, \dots, 0) \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{\ell=0}^n \langle -k \rangle_{\ell} \frac{1}{u^{k+\ell}} (-2)^{\ell} B_{n,\ell}(t, 1, 0, \dots, 0) \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{\ell=0}^n \langle -k \rangle_{\ell} \frac{1}{(1-t^2)^{k+\ell}} (-2)^{\ell} \frac{1}{2^{n-\ell}} \frac{n!}{\ell!} \binom{\ell}{n-\ell} t^{2\ell-n} \\ &= \binom{n+k}{n} \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \sum_{\ell=0}^n \langle k \rangle_{\ell} \frac{n!}{\ell!} \binom{\ell}{n-\ell} \frac{(2t)^{2\ell-n}}{(1-t^2)^{k+\ell}} \\ &= \begin{cases} 0, & n = 2m - 1 \\ \binom{2m+k}{2m} \langle k \rangle_m \frac{(2m)!}{m!} \binom{m}{2m-m}, & n = 2m \end{cases} \\ &= \begin{cases} 0, & n = 2m - 1 \\ \frac{(2m+k)!}{k!} \binom{m+k-1}{k-1}, & n = 2m \end{cases} \\ &= \begin{cases} 0, & n = 2m - 1 \\ \frac{(n+k)!}{k!} \binom{\frac{n+2k}{2}-1}{k-1}, & n = 2m \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

for $m \in \mathbb{N}$. The first formula in (3) is thus proved.

Substituting the first formula in (3) into (2) and simplifying lead readily to the formula in (3). The proof of Theorem 2 is complete. \square

3. REMARKS

In this section, we state several remarks on something related.

Remark 1. In [9, Theorem 2.1], it was proved that

$$B_{n,k} \left(1, 0, 1, \dots, \frac{1 - (-1)^{n-k+1}}{2} \right) = \frac{1}{2^k k!} \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^\ell \binom{k}{\ell} (k - 2\ell)^n$$

and

$$B_{n,k} \left(0, 1, 0, \dots, \frac{1 + (-1)^{n-k+1}}{2} \right) = \frac{1}{2^k k!} \sum_{\ell=0}^{2k} (-1)^\ell \binom{2k}{\ell} (k - \ell)^n$$

for $n \geq k \geq 0$, where 0^0 is regarded as 1. In [9, Section 3], basing on numerical calculation, the authors guessed that

$$B_{2\ell-1,k} \left(0, 1, 0, \dots, \frac{1 + (-1)^{(2\ell-1)-k+1}}{2} \right) = 0, \quad 2\ell - 1 \geq k \geq 0, \quad (11)$$

$$B_{2\ell,k} \left(0, 1, 0, \dots, \frac{1 - (-1)^{2\ell-k+1}}{2} \right) = 0, \quad 2\ell > k > \ell, \quad (12)$$

$$B_{2\ell,k} \left(0, 1, 0, \dots, \frac{1 - (-1)^{2\ell-k+1}}{2} \right) \neq 0, \quad \ell \geq k \geq 1, \quad (13)$$

$$B_{k+2\ell,k}(1, 0, 1, \dots, 1, 0, 1) \neq 0, \quad k, \ell \in \mathbb{N}, \quad (14)$$

and

$$B_{k+2\ell-1,k}(1, 0, 1, \dots, 0, 1, 0) = 0, \quad k, \ell \in \mathbb{N}. \quad (15)$$

In [9, Theorem 3.1], the identity (15) was proved to be true. In fact, the identities (11) and (15) can be deduced readily from the proof of [9, Theorem 2.1] as follows. From the formula (4), it followed that

$$\sum_{n=k}^{\infty} B_{n,k} \left(0, 1, 0, \dots, \frac{1 + (-1)^{n-k+1}}{2} \right) \frac{t^n}{n!} = \frac{(\cosh t - 1)^k}{k!} \quad (16)$$

and

$$\sum_{n=k}^{\infty} B_{n,k} \left(1, 0, 1, \dots, \frac{1 - (-1)^{n-k+1}}{2} \right) \frac{t^n}{n!} = \frac{\sinh^k t}{k!}. \quad (17)$$

In (16), the function $\cosh t - 1$ is even, so the identity (11) is clearly valid. Since the function $\sinh t$ in (17) is odd, then

$$B_{2n,2k-1}(1, 0, 1, \dots, 1, 0) = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad B_{2n-1,2k}(1, 0, 1, \dots, 1, 0) = 0$$

which are equivalent to the identity (15). However, the validity of the identities (12), (13), and (14) has not been verified yet.

Remark 2. The formula (7) can be rewritten as

$$\lambda(n, k) = \frac{(-1)^{n+k} n!}{2^k k!} \sum_{\ell=0}^k \sum_{m=0}^n (-1)^{\ell+m} \binom{k}{\ell} \binom{\ell+m-1}{\ell-1} \binom{(k-\ell)+(n-m)-1}{k-\ell-1}. \quad (18)$$

Then combining the formulas (7) and (18) with the first formula in (3) and rearranging arrive at

$$\sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^\ell \binom{k}{\ell} \sum_{m=0}^n (-1)^m \binom{n}{m} (\ell)_m (k-\ell)_{n-m} = [1 + (-1)^{n+k}] 2^{k-1} n! \binom{\frac{n+k}{2}-1}{k-1}$$

and

$$\sum_{m=0}^n \sum_{\ell=0}^k (-1)^{\ell+m} \binom{k}{\ell} \binom{\ell+m-1}{\ell-1} \binom{(k-\ell)+(n-m)-1}{k-\ell-1} \\ = [1 + (-1)^{n+k}] 2^{k-1} \binom{\frac{n+k}{2}-1}{k-1}.$$

Comparing these identities with the Vandermonde convolution formula

$$\sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} \langle x \rangle_k \langle y \rangle_{n-k} = \langle x+y \rangle_n$$

in [1, Theorem 3.1] and [2, p. 44] motivates us to ask a question: is the quantity

$$\sum_{k=0}^n (-1)^k \binom{n}{k} \langle x \rangle_k \langle y \rangle_{n-k}$$

summable?

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(Qi) INSTITUTE OF MATHEMATICS, HENAN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, JIAOZUO, HENAN, 454010, CHINA; COLLEGE OF MATHEMATICS, INNER MONGOLIA UNIVERSITY FOR NATIONALITIES, TONGLIAO, INNER MONGOLIA, 028043, CHINA; INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL AND FRONTIER SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF ELECTRONIC SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF CHINA, CHENGDU, SICHUAN, 610054, CHINA; DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TIANJIN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, TIANJIN, 300387, CHINA

Email address: qifeng618@gmail.com, qifeng618@hotmail.com, qifeng618@qq.com
URL: <https://qifeng618.wordpress.com>, <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6239-2968>

(Lim) DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, SUNGKYUNKWAN UNIVERSITY, SUWON, 16419, SOUTH KOREA

Email address: dgrim84@gmail.com, dgrim84@skku.edu
URL: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0928-8480>

(Yao) INSTITUTE OF FUNDAMENTAL AND FRONTIER SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF ELECTRONIC SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF CHINA, CHENGDU, SICHUAN, 610054, CHINA; DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, TIANJIN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, TIANJIN, 300387, CHINA

Email address: yaoyonghong@aliyun.com, yaoyonghong@uestc.edu.cn