

## AN EXPLICIT BOUND FOR THE ŁOJASIEWICZ EXPONENT OF REAL POLYNOMIALS

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*Dedicated to Professor Mutsuo Oka on the occasion of his 65th birthday*

### Abstract

Let  $f : \mathbf{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  be a polynomial function of degree  $d$  with  $f(0) = 0$ . The classical Łojasiewicz inequality states that there exist  $c > 0$  and  $\alpha > 0$  such that  $|f(x)| \geq cd(x, f^{-1}(0))^\alpha$  in a neighbourhood of the origin  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$ , where  $d(x, f^{-1}(0))$  denotes the distance from  $x$  to the set  $f^{-1}(0)$ . We prove that the smallest such exponent  $\alpha$  is not greater than  $R(n, d)$  with  $R(n, d) := \max\{d(3d-4)^{n-1}, 2d(3d-3)^{n-2}\}$ .

### 1. Introduction

Let  $f : U \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  be an analytic function defined in a neighborhood  $U$  of the origin  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$ ,  $f(0) = 0$ , and let  $Z := \{x \in U \mid f(x) = 0\}$ . Then the classical Łojasiewicz inequality ([29]) asserts that there exist constants  $r > 0$ ,  $c > 0$  and  $\alpha > 0$  such that

$$|f(x)| \geq cd(x, Z)^\alpha, \quad \text{for all } \|x\| \leq r,$$

where  $d(x, Z) := \inf\{\|x - y\| \mid y \in Z\}$ , and  $\|\cdot\|$  denotes the usual Euclidean norm in  $\mathbf{R}^n$ .

The Łojasiewicz exponent of  $f$  at the origin  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$ , denoted by  $\alpha_f$ , is the infimum of the exponents  $\alpha$  satisfying the above Łojasiewicz's inequality. Bocknak and Risler [7] (see also [37]) proved that  $\alpha_f$  is a rational number. Moreover, the Łojasiewicz's inequality holds with exponent  $\alpha_f$  and some constant  $c > 0$ .

The computation or estimation of the Łojasiewicz exponent is a quite interesting problem. For instance, if  $f$  is a real polynomial of degree  $d$  in  $n$  variables, one would like to have an explicit bound for  $\alpha_f$  in terms of  $d$  and  $n$ . The complex analytic variant of this question has been settled in the papers [1], [2], [5], [6], [9], [10], [16], [19], [20], [22], [23], [24], [31], [33], [34], [36], [37].

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In the case  $n = 2$ , a formula for computing the Łojasiewicz exponent  $\alpha_f$  was given by Kuo in [25]. A similar formula for the Łojasiewicz exponent at infinity in the real plane is given in the paper [40] (see also [41]). However, it seems more difficult to obtain effective estimates in the general case.

We now assume that  $f$  is a real polynomial of degree  $d$  in  $n$  variables. It is known that  $\alpha_f$  can be bounded by some rational number depending only on  $n$  and  $d$  (see, for example, [23], [38]). If  $f$  has an isolated zero at the origin (that is,  $f$  has a strict local extremum at 0), then Gwoździewicz [13] (see also [24], [17]) established the following nice estimate:

$$\alpha_f \leq (d - 1)^n + 1.$$

In this paper we consider the general case, that is, the case where  $f$  may have a non-isolated zero at the origin. Precisely, for any integer  $d \geq 2$  and for any polynomial  $f$  in  $n$  variables with  $\deg f = d$  and  $f(0) = 0$  we have the following explicit estimate:

$$\alpha_f \leq \max\{d(3d - 4)^{n-1}, 2d(3d - 3)^{n-2}\}.$$

The proof of this inequality is based on an explicit bound for the Łojasiewicz exponent in the gradient inequality for real polynomials [11] and the Ekeland's variational principle [14]. Note that this principle is also used recently by Tiep, Vui and Thao [39] in order to study the (global) Łojasiewicz inequality for polynomial functions.

The paper is organized as follows: The results are given in Section 2 and the proofs are given in Section 3.

## 2. Results

Let  $f : U \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  be an analytic function defined in a neighborhood  $U$  of the origin  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$  and let  $Z := \{x \in U \mid f(x) = 0\}$ . We can write

$$f = f_m + f_{m+1} + \cdots,$$

where  $f_i$  is a homogeneous form of degree  $i$ , and  $f_m \not\equiv 0$ . We denote by  $m_f := m$ , the *multiplicity* of  $f$ . Note that  $m_f \geq 1$  with the equality if and only if  $\nabla f(0) \neq 0$ .

**THEOREM 2.1.** *Let  $f : U \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  be an analytic function defined in a neighborhood  $U$  of the origin  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$ ,  $f(0) = 0$ . We have*

- (i)  $\alpha_f \geq m_f$ .
- (ii)  $\alpha_f = 1$  if and only if  $m_f = 1$ .

*Remark 2.1.* In the complex case, Risler and Trotman proved in [35] that  $\alpha_f = m_f$ .

The main result of this paper is as follows.

**THEOREM 2.2.** *Let  $f : \mathbf{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  be a real polynomial of degree  $d \geq 2$ . Assume that  $f(0) = 0$  and  $\nabla f(0) = 0$ . Then the Łojasiewicz exponent  $\alpha_f$  satisfies*

$$\alpha_f \leq R(n, d),$$

where  $R(n, d) := \max\{d(3d - 4)^{n-1}, 2d(3d - 3)^{n-2}\}$ .

### 3. Proofs

**3.1. Proof of Theorem 2.1.** Let  $f : U \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  be an analytic function defined in a neighborhood  $U$  of the origin  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$ ,  $f(0) = 0$ , and let  $Z := \{x \in U \mid f(x) = 0\}$ . The directional set  $D(Z)$  of  $Z$  at  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$  is defined by

$$D(Z) := \left\{ v \in \mathbf{S}^{n-1} \mid \exists \{x_k\} \subset Z \setminus \{0\}, x_k \rightarrow 0 \in \mathbf{R}^n \text{ s.t. } \frac{x_k}{\|x_k\|} \rightarrow v, k \rightarrow \infty \right\}.$$

Here  $\mathbf{S}^{n-1}$  denotes the unit sphere centred at  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$ . We refer the reader to [21] for the basic properties of the directional set  $D(Z)$ . We note that the set  $D(Z)$  is simply the intersection of the usual tangent cone of  $Z$  at  $0 \in \mathbf{R}^n$  (i.e. the Painlevé-Kuratowski upper limit:  $\limsup_{t \rightarrow 0+} \frac{1}{t}Z$ ) with the sphere  $\mathbf{S}^{n-1}$ . Therefore, it is straightforward that  $D(Z)$  is a closed subanalytic subset of  $\mathbf{S}^{n-1}$  (since it is described by a first-order formula and since  $Z$  is an analytic set). Moreover, we have

**LEMMA 3.1.** *The directional set  $D(Z)$  is a subanalytic set of dimension  $\leq n - 2$ .*

*Proof.* See, for example, [27, Proposition 1], [21, Proposition 2.2], [28]. □

*Proof of Theorem 2.1.* (i) By Lemma 3.1, there is  $v \in \mathbf{S}^{n-1} \setminus D(Z)$  such that  $f_{m_f}(v) \neq 0$ . We have, for all  $0 < t \ll 1$ ,

$$f(tv) = f_{m_f}(v)t^{m_f} + \text{terms of higher in } t.$$

Therefore

$$(1) \quad f(tv) \simeq t^{m_f} \quad \text{for } 0 \leq t \ll 1.$$

On the other hand, by the monotonicity lemma (e.g. [12, Theorem 4.1], [8, Theorem 2.1]), the function  $t \mapsto d(tv, Z)$  is analytic for  $0 \leq t \ll 1$ . We will prove that there exists a constant  $c > 0$  such that

$$(2) \quad d(tv, Z) \geq ct \quad \text{for } 0 \leq t \ll 1.$$

By contrary, assume that

$$\lim_{t \rightarrow 0+} \frac{d(tv, Z)}{t} = 0.$$

Let  $x(t)$ ,  $0 \leq t \ll 1$ , be a curve in  $Z$  such that  $d(tv, Z) = \|tv - x(t)\|$ . Clearly,  $x(t) \neq 0$  for  $0 < t \ll 1$ . Moreover, we have, for all  $0 < t \ll 1$ ,

$$\frac{d(tv, Z)}{t} = \frac{\|tv - x(t)\|}{t} = \left\| v - \frac{x(t)}{t} \right\| \geq \left| \|v\| - \left\| \frac{x(t)}{t} \right\| \right| = \left| 1 - \left\| \frac{x(t)}{t} \right\| \right|.$$

Consequently,  $\lim_{t \rightarrow 0+} \frac{x(t)}{t} = v$  and  $\lim_{t \rightarrow 0+} \frac{\|x(t)\|}{t} = 1$ . Therefore

$$\lim_{t \rightarrow 0+} \frac{x(t)}{\|x(t)\|} = \lim_{t \rightarrow 0+} \frac{x(t)}{t} \frac{t}{\|x(t)\|} = v,$$

which contradicts to the fact that  $v \notin D(Z)$ .

Now it follows immediately from (1), (2) and the definition of the exponent  $\alpha_f$  that  $\alpha_f \geq m_f$ .

(ii) By the statement (i), if  $\alpha_f = 1$  then  $m_f = 1$ .

We now assume that  $m_f = 1$ , which means that  $\nabla f(0) \neq 0$ . Then there exist positive constants  $r$  and  $c$  such that

$$\|\nabla f(x)\| \geq c \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r).$$

Here and in the following  $\mathbf{B}^n(r) := \{x \in \mathbf{R}^n \mid \|x\| \leq r\}$  denotes the closed ball centered at the origin with radius  $r$ .

Without loss of generality, we may assume that the function  $f$  is of class  $C^1$  on  $\mathbf{R}^n$ .

Take any  $x \in \mathbf{B}^n(r)$ . By [15, Corollary 16], there exists  $x' \in \mathbf{R}^n$  such that

$$\begin{aligned} \|x - x'\| &\leq d(x, Z), \\ \|\nabla f(x')\| d(x, Z) &\leq |f(x)|. \end{aligned}$$

The first inequality implies that

$$\|x'\| \leq \|x' - x\| + \|x\| \leq d(x, Z) + \|x\| \leq 2\|x\| \leq 2r.$$

Thus

$$(3) \quad |f(x)| \geq \|\nabla f(x')\| d(x, Z) \geq cd(x, Z).$$

On the other hand, since the function  $f$  is of class  $C^1$ ,  $f$  is Lipschitz on the closed ball  $\mathbf{B}^n(2r)$ . That is there exists  $L > 0$  such that

$$|f(b) - f(a)| \leq L\|b - a\| \quad \text{for all } a, b \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r).$$

Let  $a \in Z$  be such that  $\|x - a\| = d(x, Z)$ . Observe that  $a \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r)$ . Hence

$$(4) \quad |f(x)| = |f(x) - f(a)| \leq L\|x - a\| = Ld(x, Z).$$

The desired result now follows immediately from (3), (4) and the definition of the Łojasiewicz exponent  $\alpha_f$ .  $\square$

**3.2. Proof of Theorem 2.2.** Let  $f : \mathbf{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$  be a real polynomial of degree  $d \geq 2$ . Assume that  $f(0) = 0$ ,  $\nabla f(0) = 0$ , and  $Z := \{x \in \mathbf{R}^n \mid f(x) = 0\}$ . We have

LEMMA 3.2. *Let  $r > 0$ ,  $c > 0$  and  $l > 0$  be constants such that*

$$\|\nabla f(x)\| \geq cd(x, Z)^l \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r).$$

Then

$$|f(x)| \geq c'd(x, Z)^{l+1} \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbf{B}^n(r),$$

where  $c' := c \frac{l^l}{(l+1)^{l+1}}$ .

*Proof.* This proof follows that of [42].

Let  $\phi(s) := cs^l$  and  $\psi(s) := \max_{0 \leq \lambda \leq s} \lambda \phi(s - \lambda)$ . Then it is easy to see that

- (a) the function  $\phi$  is nondecreasing on  $[0, r]$ ;
- (b)  $\psi(s) = c's^{l+1}$ ; and
- (c) for each  $s > 0$  there exists  $\lambda \in (0, s)$  such that

$$\frac{1}{\lambda} \psi(s) \leq \phi(s - \lambda).$$

By the assumption,  $\|\nabla f(x)\| \geq \phi(d(x, Z))$  for all  $x \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r)$ . We will prove the following inequality

$$|f(x)| \geq \psi(d(x, Z)), \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbf{B}^n(r).$$

By contrary, assume that there exists  $x_0 \in \mathbf{B}^n(r)$  such that

$$|f(x_0)| < \psi(d(x_0, Z)).$$

Then  $x_0 \notin Z$  and  $\psi(d(x_0, Z)) > 0$ . Moreover, there exists  $c_0 \in (0, 1)$  such that

$$|f(x_0)| < c_0 \psi(d(x_0, Z)).$$

Let  $\varepsilon := c_0 \psi(d(x_0, Z)) > 0$  and  $s := d(x_0, Z) > 0$ .

In view of Item (c) above, it is clear that there exists  $\lambda \in \mathbf{R}$  such that the following inequalities hold

$$0 < \lambda < s = d(x_0, Z),$$

$$\frac{1}{\lambda} \psi(s) \leq \phi(s - \lambda).$$

By the Ekeland's variational principle ([14, Theorem 1.1]), there exists  $x' \in \mathbf{R}^n$  such that

$$\|x' - x_0\| \leq \lambda,$$

$$|f(x')| \leq |f(x_0)|,$$

$$|f(z)| + \frac{\varepsilon}{\lambda} \|z - x'\| \geq |f(x')| \quad \text{for all } z \in \mathbf{R}^n.$$

Consequently, we have

$$\|x'\| \leq \|x' - x_0\| + \|x_0\| \leq \lambda + \|x_0\| < d(x_0, Z) + \|x_0\| \leq 2\|x_0\| \leq 2r,$$

and

$$d(x', Z) \geq d(x_0, Z) - \|x' - x_0\| \geq d(x_0, Z) - \lambda > 0.$$

This implies that  $x' \notin Z$ ; i.e.,  $f(x') \neq 0$ . We may assume that  $f(x') = |f(x')| > 0$  (otherwise, we replace  $f$  by  $-f$ ). Then  $f(z) = |f(z)| \geq 0$  for  $\|z - x'\| \ll 1$ . Therefore

$$f(z) + \frac{\varepsilon}{\lambda} \|z - x'\| \geq f(x') \quad \text{for } \|z - x'\| \ll 1.$$

Take any  $u \in \mathbf{R}^n$ , and set  $z = x' + tu$  in the preceding inequality, with  $0 < t \ll 1$ . This yields

$$\frac{1}{t} [f(x' + tu) - f(x')] \geq -\frac{\varepsilon}{\lambda} \|u\|.$$

Letting  $t \rightarrow 0+$ , we get

$$\langle \nabla f(x'), u \rangle \geq -\frac{\varepsilon}{\lambda} \|u\|.$$

Taking the infimum of both sides over all  $u \in \mathbf{R}^n$  with  $\|u\| = 1$ , we get

$$-\|\nabla f(x')\| \geq -\frac{\varepsilon}{\lambda},$$

which means that

$$\|\nabla f(x')\| \leq \frac{\varepsilon}{\lambda} = \frac{c_0 \psi(d(x_0, Z))}{\lambda}.$$

And thus we obtain the following contradiction

$$\begin{aligned} \|\nabla f(x')\| &\geq \phi(d(x', Z)) \geq \phi(d(x_0, Z) - \lambda) \\ &\geq \frac{1}{\lambda} \psi(d(x_0, Z)) > \frac{c_0}{\lambda} \psi(d(x_0, Z)) \geq \|\nabla f(x')\|. \end{aligned}$$

(The first inequality follows from the assumption and the fact that  $x' \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r)$ .)  $\square$

*Remark 3.1.* In Lemma 3.2, we assume that  $f$  was polynomial function. However, it is enough to assume that  $f$  is  $C^1$ -function.

*Proof of Theorem 2.2.* The well known Łojasiewicz's gradient inequality ([29] or [30]) states that there exist  $r > 0$ ,  $c_1 > 0$ ,  $\theta > 0$  such that for any  $x \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r)$  we have

$$(5) \quad \|\nabla f(x)\| \geq c_1 |f(x)|^\theta.$$

Let  $\theta_f$  be the infimum of the exponents  $\theta$  satisfying the Łojasiewicz’s gradient inequality. It is known (see [29], [7], [3]) that  $\theta_f \in (0, 1)$  and the inequality (5) holds with the exponent  $\theta_f$  and some constant  $c_1 > 0$ . Moreover, D’Acunto and Kurdyka proved [11] that

$$(6) \quad \theta_f \leq 1 - \frac{1}{R(n, d)}.$$

We observe from (5) that

$$\{x \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r) \mid \nabla f(x) = 0\} \subset \{x \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r) \mid f(x) = 0\}.$$

By Łojasiewicz’s inequality ([7], [3]), there exist constants  $c_2 > 0, \beta > 0$  such that we have for any  $x \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r)$ ,

$$(7) \quad \|\nabla f(x)\| \geq c_2 d(x, Z)^\beta.$$

Let  $\beta_f$  be the infimum of the exponents  $\beta$  satisfying the inequality (7). It is known (see, for example, [7]) that the inequality (7) holds with the exponent  $\beta_f$  and some constant  $c_2 > 0$ , i.e.,

$$\|\nabla f(x)\| \geq c_2 d(x, Z)^{\beta_f} \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbf{B}^n(2r).$$

It follows from Lemma 3.2 that

$$|f(x)| \geq c'_2 d(x, Z)^{\beta_f+1} \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbf{B}^n(r),$$

where  $c'_2 := c_2 \frac{\beta_f^{\beta_f}}{(\beta_f + 1)^{\beta_f+1}}$ . By the definition of the Łojasiewicz exponent  $\alpha_f$ , then

$$(8) \quad \beta_f + 1 \geq \alpha_f.$$

On the other hand, we have for all  $\|x\| \leq r$ ,

$$|f(x)| \geq cd(x, Z)^{\alpha_f},$$

after perhaps reducing  $r$ . This yields

$$\|\nabla f(x)\| \geq c_1 |f(x)|^{\theta_f} \geq c_1 c^{\theta_f} d(x, Z)^{\alpha_f \theta_f} \quad \text{for all } \|x\| \leq r.$$

By the definition of  $\beta_f$ , then

$$\alpha_f \theta_f \geq \beta_f.$$

This, together with the inequality (8), implies that

$$\alpha_f \leq \frac{1}{1 - \theta_f}.$$

The desired result follows immediately from the inequality (6). □

*Remark 3.2.* After the submission of this paper for publication we have learnt that Theorem 2.2 was also proved by a different argument by Kurdyka and Spodzieja [26] (see also [4, Theorem 2.8]).

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