

The Closed Linear Span of $\{x^k - c_k\}_1^\infty$

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Let $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ be a given real sequence. We wish to determine, in the first instance, easily verified conditions on $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ which imply that the sequence of functions $\{x^k - c_k\}_1^\infty$ is total in $C[0, 1]$; that is, that the closed linear span $\bar{V}\{x^k - c_k\}$ is all of $C[0, 1]$ or, in other words, that every real function, continuous in $[0, 1]$, is the limit, in the uniform norm, of a sequence of finite linear combinations of the $x^k - c_k$. When this happens we refer to $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ as an *approximating sequence*. Since the sequence $\{x^k\}_0^\infty$ is total in $C[0, 1]$, our problem is equivalent to demanding that the function $f(x) \equiv 1$ belong to $\bar{V}\{x^k - c_k\}$. In this case we wish, in the second instance, to find an effective approximation to $f(x) \equiv 1$ in the uniform norm on $[0, 1]$ by finite linear combinations of the $x^k - c_k$.

An equivalent formulation of our problem, which is sometimes useful, is afforded by the following proposition. This proposition is an elementary application of the Hahn-Banach theorem.

PROPOSITION 1. *The sequence $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ is an approximating sequence if and*

only if it is not a Hausdorff moment sequence, i.e., if and only if, with $c_0 = 1$, there is no real function μ of bounded variation on $[0, 1]$ satisfying

$$c_k = \int_0^1 x^k d\mu(x), \quad k = 0, 1, 2, 3, \dots \quad (1)$$

To determine whether or not $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ is an approximating sequence, one might try to apply the following well-known criterion [1, p. 99].

PROPOSITION 2. *A necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of a real function μ of bounded variation, satisfying (1), is the convergence, as $n \uparrow \infty$, of*

$$\sum_{v=0}^n |\lambda_{nv}|, \quad (2)$$

where

$$\lambda_{nv} = \binom{n}{v} \Delta^{n-v} c_v = \binom{n}{v} \sum_{k=0}^{n-v} (-1)^k \binom{n-v}{k} c_{v+k}, \quad v = 0, 1, \dots, n.$$

Note that the value of c_0 is immaterial in the above theorem since we may add point masses at $x = 0$. The convergence of (2) is rather difficult to verify and so we seek simpler sufficient conditions for a sequence $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ to be an approximating sequence. We now present some such conditions.

1. If $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ is a Hausdorff moment sequence, then $|c_k| \leq \|\mu\|$ for all k , where $\|\mu\|$ denotes the total variation of μ . In addition, it follows from the dominated convergence theorem that the sequence $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ must converge, i.e., $\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} c_k$ exists. Thus if either $\limsup_{k \rightarrow \infty} |c_k| = \infty$ or $\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} c_k$ does not exist, then $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ is an approximating sequence. In the first case the function 1 can be approximated by $f_k(x) \equiv (c_{n_k})^{-1}(x^{n_k} - c_{n_k})$ for a suitable subsequence $\{c_{n_k}\}_1^\infty$.

2. If $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ is not an approximating sequence and if we change c_k for a finite number of k 's, however slightly, then the resulting sequence $\{c'_k\}_1^\infty$ is an approximating sequence. For if

$$F(z) = \int_0^1 x^z d\mu(x), \quad (3)$$

then $F(z)$ is holomorphic and bounded in $\operatorname{Re} z > \delta > 0$ for every $\delta > 0$, with $F(k) = c_k$. But such an $F(z)$ is uniquely determined by its values at all but a finite number of the k 's. In particular, if $c_k = c$ for all k , then $\{c_k\}$ is not an approximating sequence, so that if $c_k = c$ for all but a finite number of k ,

and there exists a j for which $c_j \neq c$, then $\{c_k\}$ is an approximating sequence.

3. Suppose that the sequence $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ is such that for all $k \geq M$,

$$\varepsilon(-1)^k(c_k - c) \geq 0, \quad (4)$$

where $c \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\varepsilon \in \{-1, 1\}$, fixed. If $c_k - c \neq 0$, then $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ is an approximating sequence. By subtracting a point mass at 1, if necessary, we may assume that $c = 0$ and that $c_r \neq 0$ for some $r \geq M$. Then for all $n \geq r$,

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{v=0}^n |\lambda_{nv}| \geq |\lambda_{nr}| &= \left| \binom{n}{r} \sum_{k=0}^{n-r} (-1)^k \binom{n-r}{k} c_{r+k} \right| \\ &\geq \binom{n}{r} |c_r| \rightarrow \infty \quad \text{as } n \uparrow \infty, \end{aligned}$$

establishing the result.

As a slightly more general example we assume that

$$(-1)^k(c_{n_k} - c) \geq 0, \quad k = 1, 2, \dots, \quad (5)$$

where $\{n_k\}_1^\infty$ is a subsequence satisfying the Müntz condition $\sum_{k=1}^\infty (n_k)^{-1} = \infty$. If $c_k \neq c$ for some $k \geq 1$, then $\{c_k\}_1^\infty$ is an approximating sequence. We may again assume that $c = 0$ and consider the function $F(z)$ of (3). The condition (5) implies that $F(t_k) = 0$ for some t_k with $n_k \leq t_k \leq n_{k+1}$. Since $\sum_{k=1}^\infty (t_k)^{-1} = \infty$, we see, by the uniqueness theorem for functions holomorphic and bounded in a half-plane, that $F(z) \equiv 0$, contradicting the fact that $c_k \neq 0$.

4. If (4) holds and $c_k \neq c$ for infinitely many k , we can explicitly construct a good approximation to $f(x) \equiv 1$ on $[0, 1]$. For $n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$, let $T_n(x) = \sum_{k=0}^n b_k^{(n)} x^k$ denote the n th Chebyshev polynomial of the first kind on $[0, 1]$, normalized so that $\|T_n\|_\infty = b_0^{(n)} = 1$. We choose $\{a_k^{(n)}\}_1^n$ and $A(n)$, $k = 1, 2, 3, \dots, n$; $n = 1, 2, \dots$, to satisfy

$$\sum_{k=1}^n a_k^{(n)}(x^k - c_k) - 1 = A(n) T_n(x).$$

For this we require that $a_k^{(n)} = A(n) b_k^{(n)}$ and that

$$\sum_{k=1}^n a_k^{(n)} c_k + 1 = -A(n) b_0^{(n)} = -A(n).$$

Thus

$$A(n) \left(\sum_{k=1}^n b_k^{(n)} c_k \right) + 1 = -A(n)$$

and

$$A(n) = - \left(\sum_{k=1}^n b_k^{(n)} c_k + 1 \right)^{-1}.$$

(See below where we show that $A(n)$ is well defined for all sufficiently large n .) We may assume that (4) holds with $\varepsilon = 1$ and $c = 0$. Since, for every n ,

$$\left\| \sum_{k=1}^n a_k^{(n)} (x^k - c_k) - 1 \right\|_{\infty} = |A(n)| \|T_n\|_{\infty} = |A(n)|,$$

it suffices to show that $A(n) \rightarrow 0$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$ or that

$$\left| \sum_{k=1}^n b_k^{(n)} c_k \right| \rightarrow \infty \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty. \quad (6)$$

It is known that

$$(-1)^k b_k^{(n)} = \frac{2^k n^2 (n^2 - 1^2) \cdots (n^2 - (k-1)^2)}{k! \cdot 1 \cdot 3 \cdot 5 \cdots (2k-1)}.$$

Let k_0 be the smallest integer $k \geq M$ for which $c_k \neq 0$. Then for $n \geq M$ we have

$$\left| \sum_{k=1}^n b_k^{(n)} c_k \right| \geq \left| \sum_{k=M}^n b_k^{(n)} c_k \right| - \left| \sum_{k=1}^{M-1} b_k^{(n)} c_k \right| \geq |b_{k_0}^{(n)} c_{k_0}| - \left| \sum_{k=1}^{M-1} b_k^{(n)} c_k \right|.$$

Note that it is precisely here that we make use of the hypothesis that $(-1)^k c_k \geq 0$, $k \geq M$. It is readily shown that the first term on the right of the above is $\geq \delta n^{2M}$ for some suitable $\delta > 0$, while the second term is $O(n^{2M-2})$ as $n \uparrow \infty$. Thus (6) holds and the functions

$$\sum_{k=1}^n a_k^{(n)} (x^k - c_k)$$

converge uniformly to 1 on $[0, 1]$.

5. If $|c_{n_k} - c|^{1/n_k} \rightarrow 0$ as $k \rightarrow \infty$, where the subsequence $\{n_k\}_1^{\infty}$ satisfies the Müntz condition $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} (n_k)^{-1} = \infty$ and $c_k \neq c$, then $\{c_k\}_1^{\infty}$ is an approximating sequence. We assume that $c = 0$ and that $\{c_k\}_1^{\infty}$ is the Hausdorff moment sequence of a real function μ of bounded variation. For each $x \in [0, 1)$ assume, without loss of generality, that $\mu(x) = \mu(x+0)$. Set

$$\rho = \inf\{s: \mu(x) = \mu(1), s \leq x \leq 1\}.$$

Since $c_{n_k} = O(d^{n_k})$ (as $k \rightarrow \infty$) for each $d > 0$, it follows from Theorem 2 of

[2] that $\rho = 0$. Thus μ is the Dirac measure at 0, which contradicts the fact that $c_k \neq 0$ for some $k \geq 1$.

In the case when $|c_k|^{1/k} \rightarrow 0$ as $k \rightarrow \infty$, we shall again explicitly construct a good approximation to $f(x) \equiv 1$. We are unable to do this in the general case where the subsequence $\{n_k\}$ is more lacunary. Since $|c_k|^{1/k} \rightarrow 0$, we can find a positive continuous increasing function $\phi(x)$ defined on $[0, \infty)$ such that

$$\begin{aligned} \phi(x) &\rightarrow \infty && \text{as } x \rightarrow \infty, \\ \frac{\log |c_k|}{k} &\leq -\phi(k), && k = 1, 2, \dots \end{aligned}$$

Set $\varepsilon(k) = \max\{(\log k)^{-1/2}, (\phi((\log k)^{1/2}))^{-1/2}\}$, $k = 2, 3, \dots$, so that $\varepsilon(k)$ is positive and

$$\begin{aligned} \varepsilon(k) &\rightarrow 0 && \text{as } k \rightarrow \infty, \\ \varepsilon(k) \phi(\varepsilon(k) \log k) &\rightarrow \infty && \text{as } k \rightarrow \infty. \end{aligned} \tag{7}$$

We now construct a sequence of polynomials

$$p_n(x) = \sum_{k=1}^{s_n} \alpha_k^{(n)} x^k, \quad n = 1, 2, \dots,$$

with the property that $\|p_n\|_\infty \rightarrow 0$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$, and

$$\left| \sum_{k=1}^{s_n} \alpha_k^{(n)} c_k \right| \geq \delta > 0,$$

where δ is some suitable constant. Assuming that this may be done, we have

$$\left\| 1 + \left(\sum_{k=1}^{s_n} \alpha_k^{(n)} c_k \right)^{-1} \sum_{k=1}^{s_n} \alpha_k^{(n)} (x^k - c_k) \right\|_\infty \leq \delta^{-1} \|p_n\|_\infty \rightarrow 0$$

as $n \rightarrow \infty$, thus achieving the desired approximation to 1.

It remains to construct p_n . Assume for simplicity that $c_1 \neq 0$. Set

$$p_n(x) = x(1 - x^r)^n,$$

where $r = [\varepsilon(n) \log n]$. Thus, in the above notation, $s_n = n[\varepsilon(n) \log n] + 1$. It is an elementary exercise to verify that

$$\|p_n\|_\infty = \exp\{(-1 + o(1))(\varepsilon(n))^{-1}\}, \quad n \rightarrow \infty,$$

so that $\|p_n\|_\infty \rightarrow 0$ as $n \rightarrow 0$. Now

$$\left| \sum_{k=1}^{s_n} \alpha_k^{(n)} c_k \right| \geq |c_1| - \binom{n}{1} |c_{r+1}| - \binom{n}{2} |c_{2r+1}| - \dots$$

Furthermore,

$$\frac{\log |c_{r+1}|}{r+1} \leq -\phi(r+1) \leq -\phi(\varepsilon(n) \log n)$$

and thus from (7),

$$\log |c_{r+1}| \leq -(\log n)[\varepsilon(n) \phi(\varepsilon(n) \log n)] \leq -2 \log n$$

for all n sufficiently large. Thus $|c_{r+1}| \leq n^{-2}$. Similarly it may be shown that $|c_{2r+1}| \leq (n^{-2})^2, \dots, |c_{jr+1}| \leq (n^{-2})^j$, for all r sufficiently large and $j = 1, 2, \dots$. Hence

$$\left| \sum_{k=1}^{s_n} \alpha_k^{(n)} c_k \right| \geq |c_1| - \sum_{k=1}^n \binom{n}{k} n^{-2k} \geq |c_1| - \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{k!} \geq \delta > 0,$$

as required.

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