

**UNIFORM CONVERGENCE AND DECAY OF FOURIER SERIES
ON COMPACT NILMANIFOLDS**

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1. If G is a simply connected nilpotent Lie group it admits discrete co-compact subgroups Γ precisely when the Lie algebra \mathfrak{g} has rational structure constants. It is well known that the right action R of G on $L^2(\Gamma \backslash G)$ decomposes into factor representations corresponding to a discrete set $(\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge \subseteq \widehat{G}$ of irreducibles, and that each $\pi \in (\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge$ appears with finite multiplicity $m(\pi)$. The spectrum $(\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge$ and the multiplicities were computed explicitly in terms of coadjoint orbits in \mathfrak{g}^* using polarizations [10], [17], and later investigations have shown that these calculations may be performed entirely in terms of canonical objects associated with orbits [3], [6], [9].

If $P_\pi, \pi \in (\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge$, are the projections onto the primary components in $L^2(\Gamma \backslash G)$ we have

$$(1) \quad f = \sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge} P_\pi f$$

in the L^2 sense and it is natural to ask how much smoothness on f is required to ensure this sum converges uniformly and absolutely. Part of the problem is that continuity of f does not always imply continuity of $P_\pi f$ (see [18]), and a number of papers [1], [2], [3], [14] have been concerned with estimates on the order of P_π — that is, on the number of derivatives f must have for $P_\pi f$ to be continuous. It is known [1] that P_π maps $C^\infty(\Gamma \backslash G)$ into itself; this also follows immediately once one shows that the C^∞ vectors for R are precisely $C^\infty(\Gamma \backslash G)$ (see [4], Appendix 1, or [16]). As for (1), Sobolev estimates were used in [1] to prove that

- (2) If $\{P_k\}$ are mutually orthogonal projections such that
- (i) P_k commutes with $R_g, \forall g \in G, k \in \mathbf{N}$,
 - (ii) $\sum_{k=1}^\infty P_k = I$ in the strong operator sense,

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then $P_k f$ is continuous and $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} P_k f = f$ in the $\|\cdot\|_{\infty}$ -norm for any $f \in C^{(s)}(\Gamma \setminus G)$ if $s \geq [n/2] + 1$.

This is a statement about unconditional convergence since condition (ii) remains valid under any rearrangement; thus the series must be absolutely convergent at each point in $\Gamma \setminus G$.

We are left with some issues that do not seem to be resolvable using only Sobolev or other estimates that make no reference to the geometry of the orbits for $\pi \in (\Gamma \setminus G)^{\wedge}$. One would like to know whether $\sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \setminus G)^{\wedge}} \|P_{\pi} f\|_{\infty}$ is finite, and if possible obtain information about the relative size of the terms. By adapting a result from [11] one can obtain estimates of the following kind: if $k > 0$ is sufficiently large then $P_{\pi} f$ is continuous and there is a $C > 0$ such that

$$(3) \quad \|P_{\pi} f\|_{\infty} \leq C \|\pi\|^{-k} \quad \forall \pi \in (\Gamma \setminus G)^{\wedge}, \quad \pi \neq 1; \quad \forall f \in C^{(k)}(\Gamma \setminus G),$$

where \mathcal{O}_{π} is the $\text{Ad}^* G$ -orbit associated with π and

$$\|\pi\| = \text{distance from } \mathcal{O}_{\pi} \text{ to the origin in } \mathfrak{g}^*.$$

We then show how the exponent should be chosen to ensure that $\sum_{\pi} \|P_{\pi} f\|_{\infty}$ is finite. Our final result is:

THEOREM 1.1. *Let Γ be a discrete cocompact subgroup in a simply connected nilpotent Lie group G and let P_{π} be the projection onto the π -primary subspace of $L^2(\Gamma \setminus G)$. If*

$$k \geq (n + 1) + ([n/2] + 1)$$

then $P_{\pi} f$ is continuous for every $f \in C^{(k)}(\Gamma \setminus G)$ and

$$\sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \setminus G)^{\wedge}} \|P_{\pi} f\|_{\infty} < \infty$$

with $\sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \setminus G)^{\wedge}} P_{\pi} f = f$ absolutely and uniformly convergent.

The exponent k can undoubtedly be improved, especially for groups having square integrable representations. We would like to thank Len Richardson for his comments on [1].

2. Proof of the Theorem. From [4], Chapter 5, and [12], we know that there are "lattice subgroups" Γ_0 of finite index in Γ : $\log \Gamma_0$ is a free \mathbf{Z} -module in \mathfrak{g} with $n = \dim \mathfrak{g}$ generators. Consider the representations

$$R = \text{ind}(\Gamma \uparrow G, 1), \quad R_0 = \text{ind}(\Gamma_0 \uparrow G, 1), \quad \rho = \text{ind}(\Gamma_0 \uparrow \Gamma, 1);$$

then $\rho \geq 1_{\Gamma}$ (the trivial representation on Γ) so $R_0 \geq \text{ind}(\Gamma \uparrow G, 1) = R$, and we see that $(\Gamma_0 \setminus G)^{\wedge} \supseteq (\Gamma \setminus G)^{\wedge}$. For a lattice subgroup there is a very clean orbital criterion for determining the spectrum:

$$(4) \quad \pi \in (\Gamma_0 \setminus G)^\wedge \Leftrightarrow \text{the Ad}^* G\text{-orbit } \mathcal{O}_\pi \text{ meets } (\log \Gamma_0)^\mathbb{Z} \\ = \{\ell \in \mathfrak{g}^* : \ell(\log \Gamma_0) \subseteq \mathbb{Z}\} \text{ nontrivially}$$

(see [12], Theorem 1). For Γ we only have (\Rightarrow) .

Fix an inner product in \mathfrak{g} and take the corresponding inner product in \mathfrak{g}^* such that the map $X \rightarrow \ell_X$ with $\ell_X(Y) = (Y, X)$ is an isometry. For any $\pi \in \widehat{G}$, with orbit $\mathcal{O}_\pi \subseteq \mathfrak{g}^*$, define $\|\pi\| = \text{dist}(\mathcal{O}_\pi, 0)$ using the metric. If $(\Gamma \setminus G)_0^\wedge$ is the spectrum with the trivial one-dimensional representation excluded, then for any exponent $k > 0$ we have

$$(5) \quad \sum_{\pi' \in (\Gamma_0 \setminus G)_0^\wedge} \|\pi'\|^{-k} \geq \sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \setminus G)_0^\wedge} \|\pi\|^{-k}.$$

In view of the estimates (3) our result follows if the left-hand side of (5) is finite, and for this we deal only with a lattice subgroup.

The estimate (3) arises from Theorem 4.1 of [11]. If X_1, \dots, X_n is any orthonormal basis for \mathfrak{g} then $L = (-1) \sum_{i=1}^n X_i^2$ is a symmetric element in the enveloping algebra $u(\mathfrak{g})$ and is invariant under any change of orthonormal bases. On $C^\infty(\Gamma \setminus G)$ the operators $R(L)^k$, $k = 1, 2, \dots$, are essentially self-adjoint because $C^\infty(\Gamma \setminus G)$ is the set \mathcal{H}_R^∞ of C^∞ vectors for R (see [4], Appendix 1, or [16]). In fact, by [13], Theorem 2.2, for any unitary representation π of G , $\pi(L^k)$ is essentially self-adjoint on the space of Gårding vectors $\mathcal{H}_\pi^\gamma = \pi(C_0^\infty(G))\mathcal{H}_\pi$. These, however, are known [7] to coincide with the C^∞ vectors \mathcal{H}_π^∞ . (Alternatively, slight modifications of [13] make it work for \mathcal{H}_π^∞ in place of \mathcal{H}_π^γ .)

For any unitary π we write $\bar{\pi}(L^k)$ for the unique self-adjoint extension, the closure of $(\pi(L^k), \mathcal{H}_\pi^\infty) = (\pi(L)^k, \mathcal{H}_\pi^\infty)$. Then one can show that

$$\bar{\pi}(L^k) = [\bar{\pi}(L)]^k = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \lambda^k E(d\lambda)$$

where $\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \lambda E(d\lambda)$ is the spectral resolution of $\bar{\pi}(L)$ (see [8], pp. 1196–1201). Thus if $\lambda_0 = \min\{\text{sp } \bar{\pi}(L)\}$ we have

$$(6) \quad \lambda_0^k = (\min\{\text{sp } \bar{\pi}(L)\})^k = \min\{\text{sp } \bar{\pi}(L^k)\} \\ = \inf\{(\bar{\pi}(L^k)u, u) : \|u\| = 1, u \in \text{Dom}(\bar{\pi}(L^k))\} \\ = \inf\{(\pi(L)^k u, u) : \|u\| = 1, u \in \mathcal{H}_\pi^\infty\}.$$

In [11] it is shown that $\lambda_0 \geq \|\pi\|^2$ if π is irreducible, and hence

$$(7) \quad \text{If } \pi \in \widehat{G}, \text{ then } \lambda_0^k \geq \|\pi\|^{2k} \quad \forall k \in \mathbb{N}.$$

Let $\pi \in \widehat{G}$ and $\rho = m \cdot \pi$ a primary representation ($m < \infty$). Then $\rho(L^k)$ is essentially self-adjoint in \mathcal{H}_ρ^∞ . Any projection Q that intertwines the action of ρ preserves C^∞ vectors, so if we split $\mathcal{H}_\rho = \bigoplus_i \mathcal{H}_{\pi_i}$ with

$\pi_i = \rho | \mathcal{H}_{\pi_i} \simeq \pi$ we get $Q_i(\mathcal{H}_\rho^\infty) \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\pi_i}^\infty$. Hence $\mathcal{H}_\rho^\infty = \bigoplus \mathcal{H}_{\pi_i}^\infty$, from which we easily see that if $\rho = m \cdot \pi$ for some $\pi \in \widehat{G}$ we have

$$(8) \quad \begin{aligned} \lambda_0^k &= \inf\{(\rho(L^k)u, u) : \|u\| = 1, u \in \mathcal{H}_\rho^\infty\} = \min\{\text{sp } \bar{\rho}(L^k)\}, \\ \lambda_0^k &\geq \|\rho\|^{2k} \quad \text{if we let } \|\rho\| = \|\pi\|. \end{aligned}$$

Now consider a typical π -primary projection P_π on L^2 ; on range $(P_\pi) = \mathcal{H}_\pi$, R acts like $\rho = m(\pi) \cdot \pi$ for $\pi \in (\Gamma \setminus G)^\wedge$. The C^∞ vectors for R are $C^\infty(\Gamma \setminus G)$; since P_π intertwines the R -action we get $P_\pi(C^\infty) \subseteq C^\infty$. Likewise, we also see that $P_\pi(C^\infty) \subseteq \mathcal{H}_\rho^\infty$. The quadratic form $\phi \mapsto (R(L)^k \phi, \phi)$ on $C^\infty(\Gamma \setminus G)$ can be written as either

$$\|R(L)^\ell \phi\|_0^2 \quad \text{or} \quad \sum_{i=1}^n \|R(X_i)R(L)^\ell \phi\|_0^2 \quad (\|u\|_0 = L^2\text{-norm})$$

according to whether $k = 2\ell$ or $k = 2\ell + 1$, $\ell \in \mathbf{N}$. Thus if we impose the Sobolev norm $\|\phi\|_k^2 = \sum_{|\alpha| \leq k} \|R(X^\alpha)\phi\|_0^2$ on $C^\infty(\Gamma \setminus G)$ we see that there is a $C' > 0$ such that $(R(L)^k \phi, \phi) \leq C' \|\phi\|_k^2$, $\forall \phi \in C^\infty$. Hence

$$\begin{aligned} C' \|\phi\|_k^2 &\geq (R(L)^k \phi, \phi) \geq (R(L)^k P_\pi \phi, P_\pi \phi) \\ &= (\rho(L)^k P_\pi \phi, P_\pi \phi) \quad (R(L) \text{ commutes with } P_\pi \text{ and } I - P_\pi) \\ &\geq \lambda_0^k \|P_\pi \phi\|_0^2 \geq \|\pi\|^{2k} \|P_\pi \phi\|_0^2 \quad (\text{by (8)}). \end{aligned}$$

The Sobolev space $\mathcal{H}_k(\Gamma \setminus G) = \{u \in L^2 : R(X^\alpha)u \in L^2 \text{ (as a distribution), } \forall |\alpha| \leq k\}$ is complete in the $\|\cdot\|_k$ -norm, and is the $\|\cdot\|_k$ -norm closure of $C^\infty(\Gamma \setminus G)$ as can be seen by adopting the idea behind [19], pp. 58–59. If $\phi_n \in C^\infty$, $\|\phi_n - f\|_k \rightarrow 0$, then $\|\phi_n - f\|_0 \rightarrow 0$ and $\|P\phi_n - Pf\|_0 \rightarrow 0$, so

$$(9) \quad \|\pi\|^{2k} \|P\phi\|_0^2 \leq C' \|\phi\|_k^2 \quad \forall \phi \in \mathcal{H}_k.$$

In particular, this applies to any $\phi \in C^{(k)}(\Gamma \setminus G)$. Finally, notice that if $u \in L^2$ and $R(X^\alpha)u \in L^2$ (as a distribution) then we have

$$P(R(X^\alpha)u) = R(X^\alpha)Pu \quad \text{as distributions}$$

and in particular $R(X^\alpha)Pu \in L^2$. [If $\phi \in C^\infty$ then $(PR(X^\alpha)u, \phi) = (R(X^\alpha)u, P\phi)$ and $P\phi \in C^\infty$, so the latter is equal to $(u, R(X^\alpha)^*P\phi) = (u, PR(X^\alpha)^*\phi) = (R(X^\alpha)Pu, \phi)$.] For $s > 0$, $f \in C^{(k+s)}$, and $|\alpha| \leq s$, we then have $R(X^\alpha)f \in C^{(k)}$, $P(R(X^\alpha)f) = R(X^\alpha)Pf \in L^2$, and

$$(10) \quad \begin{aligned} \|R(X^\alpha)Pf\|_0 &= \|PR(X^\alpha)f\|_0 \leq C' \|\pi\|^{-k} \|R(X^\alpha)f\|_s \\ &\leq C' \|\pi\|^{-k} \|f\|_{k+s} \quad \forall |\alpha| \leq s, \\ \|Pf\|_s &\leq C' \|\pi\|^{-k} \|f\|_{k+s}. \end{aligned}$$

If $s = [n/2] + 1$, standard Sobolev theory says that $f \in C^{(k+s)} \Rightarrow P_\pi f$ is continuous and $\|P_\pi f\|_\infty \leq C \|P_\pi f\|_s \leq C' C \|f\|_{k+s} \|\pi\|^{-k}$, $\forall \pi \in (\Gamma \setminus G)_0^\wedge$,

where $C > 0$ is an absolute constant. Thus we get

$$\sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge} \|P_\pi f\|_\infty < \infty$$

if we choose the exponent k so that $\sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge} \|\pi\|^{-k} < \infty$, and for this it suffices to consider the lattice subgroup $\Gamma_0 \subseteq \Gamma$ and choose k so that

$$(11) \quad \sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma_0 \backslash G)^\wedge} \|\pi\|^{-k} < \infty.$$

Let Y_1, \dots, Y_n be a strong Malcev basis for \mathfrak{g} strongly based on Γ_0 . Then $\text{Ad } \gamma(\Gamma_0) \subseteq \Gamma_0$ for $\gamma \in \Gamma_0$ so $(\log \Gamma_0)^\mathbb{Z}$ is $\text{Ad}^*(\Gamma_0)$ -invariant. Let $K = \{\exp(s_1 Y_1) \dots \exp(s_n Y_n) : 0 \leq s_i < 1\}$; then $\Gamma K = G$, so if an orbit \mathcal{O}_π meets $(\log \Gamma_0)^\mathbb{Z}$ and $\ell \in \mathcal{O}_\pi$, $\text{Ad}^*(K)\ell$ must meet $\mathcal{O}_\pi \cap (\log \Gamma_0)^\mathbb{Z}$. As before, $\pi \in (\Gamma_0 \backslash G)^\wedge \Leftrightarrow \mathcal{O}_\pi \cap (\log \Gamma_0)^\mathbb{Z} \neq \emptyset$. For $\pi \in (\Gamma_0 \backslash G)^\wedge$ define $|\pi| = \text{dist}(0, \mathcal{O}_\pi \cap (\log \Gamma_0)^\mathbb{Z})$. Then $|\pi| \geq \|\pi\|$, but on the other hand the map $\mathfrak{g}^* \times \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^n$,

$$(\ell, s_1, \dots, s_n) \rightarrow \text{Ad}^*(\exp s_1 Y_1 \dots \exp s_n Y_n)\ell$$

is polynomial in \mathbb{R}^n and linear in $\ell \in \mathfrak{g}^*$. Take an element $\ell \in \mathcal{O}_\pi$ such that $\|\ell\| = \|\pi\|$. It is clear that there is a constant C such that $\|\text{Ad}^*(x)\ell\| \leq C\|\ell\|$ for all $x \in K$, $\ell \in \mathfrak{g}^*$; this ensures that $|\pi| \leq C\|\pi\|$. We may therefore replace $\|\pi\|$ by $|\pi|$ in (11). Evidently

$$\sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma_0 \backslash G)^\wedge} |\pi|^{-k} \leq \sum_{f \in (\log \Gamma_0)^\mathbb{Z}, f \neq 0} \|f\|^{-k}.$$

The latter series converges if $k \geq n + 1$. This completes the proof of the theorem. ■

It is clear that we can control convergence of derivatives $R(X^\alpha)(f) = \sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge} P_\pi(R(X^\alpha)f)$ for $|\alpha| \leq r$ if we require that $f \in C^{(k+r)}$ where k is the exponent in Theorem 1.1.

2.1. EXAMPLE. If $G = \mathbb{R}^n$ and $\Gamma = \mathbb{Z}^n$ then $(\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge$ consists of the characters χ_λ , $\lambda \in \mathbb{Z}^n$, on the torus $\Gamma \backslash G$. The quasi-regular representation R is multiplicity-free, $m(\pi) = 1$ for all π , and the decomposition $f = \sum_{\pi \in (\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge} P_\pi f$ is just the Fourier transform $\sum_{\lambda \in \mathbb{Z}^n} \hat{f}(\lambda)\chi_\lambda$ on $L^2(\Gamma \backslash G)$. To get $\sum_{\lambda \in \mathbb{Z}^n} |\hat{f}(\lambda)| < \infty$ it suffices to require $f \in C^{(k)}(\Gamma \backslash G)$ with $k \geq n + 1$. Our estimate would require $k \geq k_1 + k_2 = ([n/2] + 1) + (n + 1)$. In that estimate we required k_1 -fold differentiability to ensure continuity of $P_\pi f$ and control of its norm, $\|P_\pi f\|_\infty \leq C\|f\|_{k_1}$; in this example $P_\pi f$ is automatically continuous and $\|P_\pi f\|_\infty \leq C\|f\|_0$ so our choice of k_1 is too large. The other exponent is chosen so that (11) holds, $k_2 \geq n + 1$. That choice cannot be improved here. ■

2.2. EXAMPLE. Let G be the three-dimensional Heisenberg group, realized as \mathbf{R}^3 with the multiplication law

$$(z, y, x) \cdot (z', y', x') = \left(z + z' + \frac{1}{2}xy', y + y', x + x' \right).$$

This is obtained from the Campbell–Hausdorff formula on identifying $\mathfrak{g} = \mathbf{R}^3$ via a basis Z, Y, X such that $[X, Y] = Z$. Then $\log(z, y, x) = zZ + yY + xX$ and $\Gamma = \mathbf{Z} \times 2\mathbf{Z} \times 2\mathbf{Z}$ is a lattice subgroup. Writing $\ell \in \mathfrak{g}^*$ as $\ell = \dot{z}Z^* + \dot{y}Y^* + \dot{x}X^*$ in the dual basis, the coadjoint action becomes

$$\text{Ad}_{\exp(zZ+yY+xX)}^*(\dot{z}, \dot{y}, \dot{x}) = (\dot{z}, \dot{y} - x\dot{z}, \dot{x} + y\dot{z})$$

and the $\text{Ad}^* G$ orbits are

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Ad}^* G(\dot{z}, 0, 0) &= \{\dot{z}\} \times \mathbf{R}^2 && \text{if } \dot{z} \neq 0, \\ \text{Ad}^* G(0, \dot{y}, \dot{x}) &= \{(0, \dot{y}, \dot{x})\} && \text{if } \dot{z} = 0. \end{aligned}$$

The integral orbits that meet $\log \Gamma$ are given by

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{O}_n &= \{n\} \times \mathbf{R}^2, && n \neq 0, n \in \mathbf{Z}, \\ \mathcal{O}_{p,q} &= \{(0, p, q)\}, && p, q \in \frac{1}{2}\mathbf{Z}, \end{aligned}$$

and the corresponding irreducible representations $\pi \in (\Gamma \backslash G)^\wedge$ are precisely those with integral orbit

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_n &\text{ modeled on } L^2(\mathbf{R}) \text{ with } \pi_n(z, 0, 0) = e^{2\pi inz} I, \\ \pi_{p,q} &\text{ one-dimensional with } \pi_{p,q}(z, y, x) = e^{2\pi i(py+qx)}. \end{aligned}$$

For the infinite-dimensional π_n there is a single rational ideal $\mathfrak{m} = \mathbf{R}Z + \mathbf{R}Y$ that polarizes all the representatives $\ell_n = nZ^*$ ($n \neq 0$), and $\mathfrak{m} \cap \log \Gamma = (\mathbf{Z})Z + (2\mathbf{Z})Y$. The integral characters in \widehat{M} and their orbits under G and Γ are easily calculated. The number of Γ -orbits in the G -orbit of $\chi_n(\exp H) = e^{2\pi inZ^*(H)}$, $H \in \mathfrak{m}$, is the multiplicity of π_n in $L^2(\Gamma \backslash G)$, as in [6]: we find that $m(\pi_n) = |n|$, and similarly $m(\pi_{p,q}) \equiv 1$.

Since all orbits in \mathfrak{g}^* are flat, $P_\pi f$ is continuous if $f \in C^{(0)}(\Gamma \backslash G)$ [18]; however, we might need to require that f be in some Sobolev class k_1 to get control of $\|P_\pi f\|_\infty$ in terms of a Sobolev norm. (Our choice was $k_1 \geq 2$.) The second part of our estimate, which says

$$\sum_{\pi \neq 1} \|P_\pi f\|_\infty \leq C \sum_{\pi \neq 1} \|P_\pi f\|_{k_1} \leq C' \left(\sum_{\pi \neq 1} \|\pi\|^{-k_2} \right) \|f\|_{k_1+k_2},$$

estimates

$$\sum_{\pi \neq 1} \|\pi\|^{-k_2} \quad \text{by} \quad \sum_{\ell \in (\log \Gamma)^\mathbf{Z}, \ell \neq 0} \|\ell\|^{-k_2}.$$

Here we are overestimating a term $\|\pi\|^{-k_2}$ by summing over all integral points in the orbit; for the 2-dimensional orbits our choice of k_2 is too large.

Our estimate works if $f \in C^{(6)}(\Gamma \setminus G)$, but we actually have finiteness of the sum

$$(12) \quad \sum_{\pi \neq 1} \|\pi\|^{-k_2} = \sum_{(p,q) \neq (0,0)} (p^2 + q^2)^{-k_2/2} + \sum_{n \neq 0} n^{-k_2} \quad .$$

if $k_2 \geq 3$. Thus we only need $f \in C^{(5)}(\Gamma \setminus G)$, and in fact we could reduce k_1 by considering explicit formulas for the projections P_π that are available in the flat-orbit case [6]. ■

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