

A GENERALIZATION OF A RESULT BY NARKIEWICZ CONCERNING LARGE DIGITS OF POWERS

Robert E. Kennedy, Curtis Cooper

1. INTRODUCTION

For some time we have been concerned about the validity of the statement

$$s(2^n) < 2n \text{ for all } n > 3.$$

Here, $s(m)$ denotes the (base 10) digital sum of the integer m . We have been unable to prove or disprove the above conjecture. But, based on the relation

$$s(2^n) = 2s(2^{n-1}) - 9L(2^{n-1})$$

where

$$L(m) = \# \text{ of "large digits" of } m$$

we have become interested in the number of large digits occurring in powers of 2.

Generalizing the concepts above, a “base b large digit” is a base b digit when doubled involves a “carry”. For example, 6 is a base ten large digit since $2 \times 6 = 12$ has two digits. The base b large digits are the digits

$$[b/2], [b/2] + 1, [b/2] + 2, \dots, b - 1.$$

So, for example, the base 7 large digits are

$$4, 5, \text{ and } 6.$$

Digits which are not large digits are called, “small base b digits.” Hence the small base 7 digits are

$$0, 1, 2, \text{ and } 3.$$

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In general, $L_b(m)$ denotes the number of base b large digits of the base b representation of the integer m .

A method due to NARKIEWICZ [2] and earlier by GUPTA [1] was used in investigating the question asked by ERDŐS:

“Does there exist an integer $m \neq 0, 2, 8$ such that 2^m is a distinct sum of powers of 3?”

That is,

“Is it true that $L_3(2^m) \neq 0$ for $m \geq 9$?”

In NARKIEWICZ [2], it was shown that the number of nonnegative integers $m \leq x$ such that 2^m is the sum of distinct powers of 3 does not exceed

$$1.62x^{0.631}.$$

This method will be generalized in what follows.

2. MAIN RESULT

Theorem. *Let $(a, b) = 1$, that is a and b are relatively prime. Let*

$$S = \{n : L_b(a^n) = 0\} \text{ and } S(x) = \#\{n \leq x : L_b(a^n) = 0\}.$$

Let

$$\beta = \#\{d < b : (d, b) = 1 \text{ and } d \text{ is small}\}$$

and

$$\theta = \frac{\ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)}{\ln b}.$$

Finally, let ϕ denote Euler's phi function. Then

$$S(x) \leq \beta \left(\frac{b(1-\theta)}{\theta \phi(b)} \right)^\theta \left(\frac{1}{1-\theta} \right) x^\theta.$$

Proof. Let

$$a^n = \sum_{i=0}^s d_i b^i.$$

If $L_b(a^n) = 0$, then $0 \leq d_i \leq \lfloor (b-1)/2 \rfloor$ for all $0 \leq i \leq s$. Then for any $k \geq 0$ (we will assume $k \geq 1$)

$$a^n \equiv \sum_{i=0}^{k-1} d_i b^i \pmod{b^k}.$$

Note that $d_0 \neq 0$, since $(a, b) = 1$. In fact, $(d_0, b) = 1$, since $(a, b) = 1$. By the definition of β , $\beta \leq \phi(b)$. So,

$$\#\{a^n \pmod{b^k}\} \leq \beta \left(\left\lfloor \frac{b-1}{2} \right\rfloor + 1 \right)^{k-1},$$

since $(a, b) = 1$.

The number of residue classes which n can belong to mod $\phi(b^k)$ is at most

$$\beta \left(\left\lfloor \frac{b-1}{2} \right\rfloor + 1 \right)^{k-1},$$

say,

$$r_1, r_2, \dots, r_{\beta \left(\lfloor (b-1)/2 \rfloor \right)^{k-1}}.$$

Hence, for any x ,

$$\#\{n \leq x : n \equiv r_i \pmod{\phi(b^k)}\} \leq \frac{x}{\phi(b^k)} + 1$$

and so,

$$\begin{aligned} S(x) &\leq \sum_{i=1}^{\beta \left(\lfloor (b-1)/2 \rfloor + 1 \right)^{k-1}} \#\{n \leq x : n \equiv r_i \pmod{\phi(b^k)}\} \\ &\leq \beta \left(\left\lfloor \frac{b-1}{2} \right\rfloor + 1 \right)^{k-1} \left(\frac{x}{\phi(b^k)} + 1 \right) \\ &\leq \beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right)^{k-1} \left(\frac{x}{\phi(b^k)} + 1 \right) \\ &= \frac{\beta}{2^{k-1}} (b+1)^{k-1} \frac{1}{b^k} \left(\frac{b^k x}{\phi(b^k)} \right) + \beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right)^{k-1} \\ &= \frac{\beta}{2^{k-1}} \left(\frac{b+1}{b} \right)^{k-1} \frac{1}{b} \cdot \frac{bx}{\phi(b)} + \beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right)^{k-1} \\ &= \frac{\beta}{\phi(b)} \left(\frac{b+1}{2b} \right)^{k-1} x + \beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right)^{k-1}. \end{aligned}$$

Let

$$f(z) = \frac{\beta}{\phi(b)} \left(\frac{b+1}{2b} \right)^{z-1} x + \beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right)^{z-1}$$

so,

$$f'(z) = \frac{\beta}{\phi(b)} \left(\frac{b+1}{2b} \right)^{z-1} x \ln \left(\frac{b+1}{2b} \right) + \beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right)^{z-1} \ln \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right)$$

and thus, $f'(z) = 0$ implies that

$$\beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right)^{z-1} \left[\frac{1}{\phi(b)} \cdot \frac{x}{b^{z-1}} \ln \left(\frac{b+1}{2b} \right) + \ln \left(\frac{b+1}{2} \right) \right] = 0$$

when

$$\frac{x}{b^{z-1}} = \frac{-\ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)}{\ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2b}\right)} \cdot \phi(b) = \frac{\ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)}{\ln\left(\frac{2b}{b+1}\right)} \phi(b).$$

Since

$$\theta = \frac{\ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)}{\ln b}, \text{ i.e. } \ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right) = \theta \ln b$$

and

$$\ln\left(\frac{2b}{b+1}\right) = -\ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2b}\right) = -\ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right) + \ln b = -\theta \ln b + \ln b,$$

and so,

$$\frac{x}{b^{z-1}} = \frac{\theta \ln b}{-\theta \ln b + \ln b} \cdot \phi(b) = \frac{\theta}{1-\theta} \phi(b).$$

Since

$$\begin{aligned} b^z &\geq b^{\lfloor z \rfloor} = b^{\lceil z \rceil - 1} \geq b^{z-1}, \\ \frac{1}{b} \cdot \frac{x}{\phi(b) b^{z-1}} &\leq \frac{x}{\phi(b) b^{\lfloor z \rfloor}} = \frac{x}{\phi(b) b^{\lceil z \rceil - 1}} \\ &\leq \frac{x}{\phi(b) b^{z-1}} = \frac{\theta}{1-\theta}. \end{aligned}$$

Therefore,

$$\frac{1}{b} \cdot \frac{\theta}{1-\theta} \leq \frac{x}{\phi(b) b^{\lceil z \rceil - 1}} \leq \frac{\theta}{1-\theta}.$$

Hence, there exists a $k (= \lceil z \rceil)$ that can be used. So let $k = \lceil z \rceil$ and we have

$$\frac{1}{b} \cdot \frac{\theta}{1-\theta} \leq \frac{x}{\phi(b) b^{k-1}} \leq \frac{\theta}{1-\theta}.$$

This implies

$$\frac{1}{b} \cdot \frac{\theta}{1-\theta} \leq \frac{bx}{\phi(b) b^k} \leq \frac{\theta}{1-\theta}.$$

This implies

$$\frac{1}{b} \cdot \frac{\theta}{1-\theta} \leq \frac{x}{\phi(b^k)} \leq \frac{\theta}{1-\theta}.$$

Therefore,

$$S(x) \leq \beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)^{k-1} \left(\frac{\theta}{1-\theta} + 1\right) = \beta \left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)^{k-1} \left(\frac{1}{1-\theta}\right).$$

But

$$\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)^{k-1} = (b^{k-1})^\theta,$$

and

$$b^{k-1} \leq \frac{bx(1-\theta)}{\theta\phi(b)},$$

so

$$\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)^{k-1} \leq \left(\frac{b(1-\theta)}{\theta\phi(b)}\right)^\theta x^\theta,$$

and we have

$$S(x) \leq \beta \left(\frac{b(1-\theta)}{\theta\phi(b)}\right)^\theta \left(\frac{1}{1-\theta}\right) x^\theta.$$

This completes the proof. Note that

$$\theta = \frac{\ln\left(\frac{b+1}{2}\right)}{\ln b} < 1,$$

since $\frac{b+1}{2} < b$ for $b \geq 2$.

3. EXAMPLE

Suppose $b = 5$. Then $\phi(b) = 4$, $\beta = 2$, and

$$\theta = \frac{\ln 3}{\ln 5} \approx 0.68$$

and so

$$\text{constant } c \approx 2 \left(\frac{5(0.32)}{0.68(4)}\right)^{0.68} \left(\frac{1}{0.32}\right) \approx 2 \left(\frac{1.6}{2.72}\right)^{0.68} \left(\frac{1}{0.32}\right) \approx 2.18.$$

Therefore,

$$S(x) \leq 2.18x^{0.68}.$$

REFERENCES

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Department of Mathematics,
Central Missouri State University,
Warrensburg, MO 64093
Email: rkenedy@cmsuvm.cmsu.edu
Email: cnc8851@cmsu2.cmsu.edu

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