

BUCHBERGER  
ON THE COMPLEXITY OF THE  
GRÖBNER-BASES ALGORITHM OVER  $K[x, y, z]$ <sup>1)</sup>

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Abstract

In /Bu65/, /Bu70/, /Bu76/ B. Buchberger presented an algorithm which, given a basis for an ideal in  $K[x_1, \dots, x_n]$  (the ring of polynomials in  $n$  indeterminates over the field  $K$ ), constructs a so-called Gröbner-basis for the ideal. The importance of Gröbner-bases for effectively carrying out a large number of construction and decision problems in polynomial ideal theory has been investigated in /Bu65/, /Wi78/, /WB81/, /Bu83b/. For the case of two variables B. Buchberger /Bu79/, /Bu83a/ gave bounds for the degrees of the polynomials which are generated by the Gröbner-bases algorithm. However, no bound has been known until now for the case of more than two variables. In this paper we give such a bound for the case of three variables.

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1. Introduction

In /Bu65/, /Bu70/, /Bu76/ B. Buchberger presented an algorithm which, given a basis  $F$  for an ideal in  $K[x_1, \dots, x_n]$  (the ring of polynomials in  $n$  indeterminates over the field  $K$ ), constructs a so-called Gröbner-basis  $G$  for  $\text{ideal}(F)$ , the ideal generated by  $F$ . A Gröbner-basis  $G$  can be characterized by the fact that every polynomial has a unique normal form w.r.t. a certain reduction relation induced by  $G$ . A large number of construction and decision problems in polynomial ideal theory can be solved easily once a Gröbner-basis for the ideal has been constructed (see /Bu65/, /Wi78/, /WB81/, /Bu83b/).

However, for a long time no bound was known for the complexity of the Gröbner-bases algorithm, especially for the degrees of the polynomials which are constructed by the Gröbner-bases algorithm. In 1979 B. Buchberger /Bu79/ gave such a bound, which was improved in /Bu83a/, for the case of two variables.

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Lazard /La83/ makes some remarks on this problem but he considers a special class of ideals. In this paper we give a bound for the case of three variables, where absolutely no special properties are required of the ideal.

The problem to be solved is the following:

- given a basis  $F$  for a polynomial ideal in  $K[x,y,z]$
- (P) construct a bound  $b$  such that the degree of every polynomial which is constructed during the execution of the Gröbner-bases algorithm on  $F$  is less than or equal to  $b$ .

(P) is solved in the subsequent chapters. Expressed only in  $D$  and  $d$ , the maximal and minimal degree of the polynomials in  $F$ , respectively, we get the bound  $(8D + 1) \cdot 2^d$ . For proofs of the various lemmata we refer to /Wi83/.

## 2. Reduction of the problem

Throughout this paper, we let the linear ordering  $\prec_t$  on the set of power products be the graduated lexicographical ordering, i.e. power products are ordered according to their degrees and lexicographically within the same degree.

By the "overlap lemma" /KB78/, /Bu79/, /BW79/ it suffices to consider only "essential" pairs of polynomials during the execution of the Gröbner-bases algorithm, where a pair  $f, g$  in  $F$  is essential if there is no sequence  $f = h_1, \dots, h_l = g$  in  $F$  such that

$$\text{lpp}(h_i) \text{ divides } \text{lcm}(\text{lpp}(f), \text{lpp}(g)) \quad \text{for all } 1 < i < l,$$

$$\text{deg}(\text{lcm}(\text{lpp}(h_i), \text{lpp}(h_{i+1}))) < \text{deg}(\text{lcm}(\text{lpp}(f), \text{lpp}(g))) \quad \text{for all } 1 < i < l-1,$$

where  $\text{lpp}(f)$  denotes the leading power product of  $f$  w.r.t.  $\prec_t$  and  $\text{lcm}(p, q)$  the least common multiple of the power products  $p, q$ . So every polynomial  $h$  which is added to the basis during the execution of the Gröbner-bases algorithm satisfies the following two conditions:

- (i)  $\text{lpp}(h)$  is not a multiple of  $\text{lpp}(f)$  for every  $f$ , which is already in the basis,
- (ii)  $\text{deg}(h)$  is not greater than the maximal degree of the least common multiples of essential pairs of polynomials in the basis.

We call a sequence of polynomials  $h_1, \dots, h_s$  admissible w.r.t.  $F$  if  $h_i$  satisfies these two conditions w.r.t.  $F \cup \{h_1, \dots, h_{i-1}\}$  for all  $i$ . Then it is clear that the following theorem holds.

Theorem 2.1: Let  $F$  be a finite set of polynomials in  $K[x_1, \dots, x_n]$ .

Then every polynomial which is either in  $F$  or is generated during the execution of the Gröbner-bases algorithm on  $F$  has degree less than or equal to  $\max\{\max\{\deg(h) \mid h \in H\} \mid H = F \cup \{h_1, \dots, h_s\}, h_1, \dots, h_s \text{ admissible w.r.t. } F\}$ .

So if we have a bound for the maximal degree of the polynomials in  $F \cup \{h_1, \dots, h_s\}$ , where  $h_1, \dots, h_s$  are admissible w.r.t.  $F$ , then we have solved problem (P). Such a bound is constructed in the next chapter. Actually the notion of "admissibility" depends only on the leading power products of the involved polynomials. So instead of sets of polynomials  $F$  we consider sets of power products  $P$ .

### 3. A bound for admissible sequences of power products

Let  $V := \{x, y, z\}$  denote the set of variables or indeterminates.

By  $pp3$  we denote the set of power products in  $x, y$  and  $z$ .

If  $p = x^a y^b z^c$  is a power product then  $\deg(p, x) = a$ ,  $\deg(p, y) = b$ ,  $\deg(p, z) = c$  and  $\deg(p) = a + b + c$ .

By  $\text{lcm}(p, q)$  we denote the least common multiple of the two power products  $p, q$ .

We write  $p \leq q$  for "p divides q".

If  $P \subseteq pp3$ ,  $v \in V$  and  $d \in \mathbb{N}$  then  $P^* := \{q \in pp3 \mid p \leq q \text{ for some } p \in P\}$ ,

$\text{mind}(P, v) := \min\{\deg(p, v) \mid p \in P\}$ , and  $\text{sect}(P, d) := \{p \in P \mid \deg(p) = d\}$ .

Def.: Let  $d \in \mathbb{N}$ ,  $P$  a nonempty subset of  $\text{sect}(pp3, d)$ . Then

$\text{int}(P) := \{p \in \text{sect}(pp3, d) \mid \deg(p, v) \geq \text{mind}(P, v) \text{ for all } v \in V\} - P$ .

$\text{ext}(P) := \text{sect}(pp3, d) - (P \cup \text{int}(P))$ .

An important notion in /Bu83a/ is the "essentiality" of pairs of polynomials in some basis  $F$ . Since this notion depends only on the leading power products of the polynomials in  $F$ , we can define it for sets of power products.

Def.: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp3$ . Then

$\text{ess}(P) := \{(p, q) \mid p, q \in P, p \neq q, \text{ and there are no } r_1, \dots, r_l \text{ in } P \text{ such that}$

$$p = r_1, r_1 = q,$$

$$r_i < \text{lcm}(p, q) \text{ for all } 1 \leq i \leq l, \text{ and}$$

$$\deg(\text{lcm}(r_i, r_{i+1})) \leq \deg(\text{lcm}(p, q)) \text{ for all } 1 \leq i \leq l-1\}.$$

(Essential pairs in  $P$ .)

Def.: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ . Then the maximal degree of essential least common multiples of  $P$  is defined as  
 $mdel(P) := \max\{\deg(\text{lcm}(p,q)) \mid (p,q) \in \text{ess}(P)\}$ .

Example 3.1: Let  $P = \{x^2yz^6, x^3y^2z^5, xy^3z^5, x^4y^2z^3, xy^5z^3, x^4y^4z, x^3y^5z\}$ .  
 $\text{ess}(P) = \{(p_1,p_2), (p_1,p_3), (p_2,p_3), (p_2,p_4), (p_3,p_5), (p_4,p_6), (p_5,p_7), (p_6,p_7)\}$ .  
 For instance  $(p_1,p_6)$  is not in  $\text{ess}(P)$ , since  $r_1=p_1, r_2=p_2, r_3=p_4, r_4=p_6$  satisfy the condition in the definition of "ess".  
 So  $mdel(P)=11$ .

Def.: Let  $P \subseteq pp_3$ . Then the width of  $P$  is defined as  
 $w(P) := \sum_{v \in V} \text{mind}(P,v)$ .

Lemma 3.1: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ ,  $m \geq mdel(P)$ ,  $p \in \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*,m))$ ,  $v \in V$ .  
 If  $p \cdot v^k \notin P^*$  for all  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ ,  
 then for all  $w \in V - \{v\}$  there is a  $k \in \mathbb{N}$  such that  $p \cdot w^k \in P^*$ .

So  $\text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*,m))$  ( $m \geq mdel(P)$ ) can be decomposed into the following four parts.

Def.: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ ,  $m \geq mdel(P)$ .  
 $\text{ker}(\text{sect}(P^*,m)) := \{p \mid p \in \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*,m)) \text{ and for all } v \in V \text{ there is a } k \in \mathbb{N} \text{ such that } p \cdot v^k \in P^*\}$ .

(Kernel of  $\text{sect}(P^*,m)$ .)

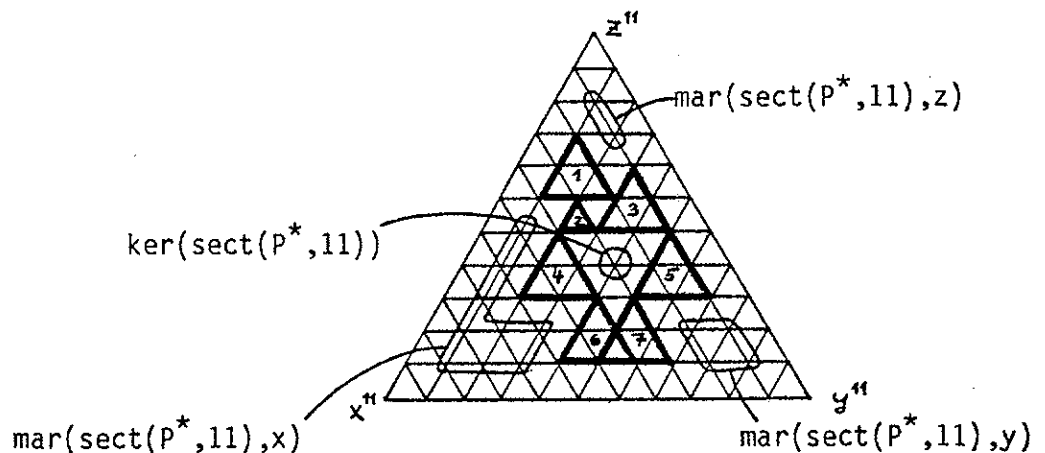
For  $v \in V$ :

$\text{mar}(\text{sect}(P^*,m),v) := \{p \mid p \in \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*,m)) \text{ and for all } k \in \mathbb{N} \text{ } p \cdot v^k \notin P^*\}$ .

(Margin of  $\text{sect}(P^*,m)$  at  $v$ .)

Example 3.2:

Let  $P$  be as in example 3.1,  
 $m=11$  ( $\geq mdel(P)$ ).



The triangles symbolize the multiples of the indicated power products.

Corollary to lemma 3.1: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ ,  $m \geq mdel(P)$ .

Then

$int(sect(P^*, m))$  is the disjoint union of  $ker(sect(P^*, m))$ ,  $mar(sect(P^*, m), x)$ ,  $mar(sect(P^*, m), y)$  and  $mar(sect(P^*, m), z)$ .

In order to investigate the increase of "mdel" if an "admissible" power product  $p$  is added to the set of power products  $P$ , we need some means of measuring the "distance" between  $p$  and  $P$ . The goal, of course, is to specify this "distance"  $dist(p, P)$  in such a way that  $mdel(P \cup \{p\})$  can easily be expressed in terms of  $mdel(P)$  and  $dist(p, P)$ .

Def.: Let  $P \subseteq pp_3$ ,  $p \in pp_3$ .

$dist(p, P) := \max\{\deg(r) \mid p, r \in P^* \text{ and } p, s \notin P^* \text{ for all } s \in r\}$ .

(Distance between  $p$  and  $P$ .)

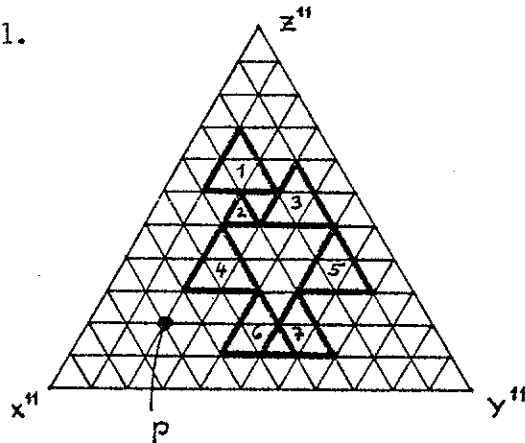
Lemma 3.2: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ ,  $p \in sect(pp_3 - P^*, mdel(P))$ .

Then  $mdel(P \cup \{p\}) = mdel(P) + dist(p, P)$ .

Example 3.3: Let  $P$  be as in example 3.1.

Suppose  $p = p_8 = x^7 y^2 z^2$  is added to  $P$ .

$dist(p, P) = 2$



The new essential pairs are (4,8) and (6,8).

So  $mdel(P \cup \{p\}) = 13 = mdel(P) + dist(p, P)$ .

During the execution of the Gröbner-bases algorithm it is well possible that a polynomial  $h$  is added to the basis  $F$  such that, for  $p = lpp(h)$ ,  $\deg(p) < mdel(\{q \in pp_3 \mid \text{there is a polynomial } f \in F \text{ with } lpp(f) = q\})$ . Lemma 3.2 can be extended to deal also with this case.

Lemma 3.3: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ ,  $p \in pp_3$ ,  $\deg(p) < mdel(P)$ .

Then  $mdel(P \cup \{p\}) < mdel(P) + \max\{dist(p', P) \mid p < p' \text{ and } \deg(p') = mdel(P)\}$ .

While "mdel" increases if a new power product  $p$  is added to  $P$ , one notices a decrease of the "interior" and (or) the "width" of  $P$ . This phenomenon is investigated in detail in the next few lemmata.

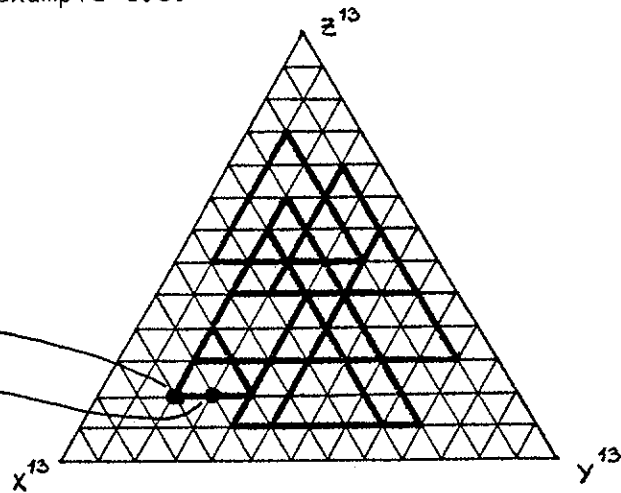
Lemma 3.4: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ ,  $p \in \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mdel}(P)))$ .

Then

$$\lfloor \text{int}(\text{sect}((P \cup \{p\})^*, \text{mdel}(P) + \text{dist}(p, P))) \rfloor < \lfloor \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mdel}(P))) \rfloor - \text{dist}(p, P).$$

Example 3.4: Let  $P$  and  $p$  be as in example 3.3.

In  $\text{sect}(pp_3, 13)$  the indicated power products are eliminated from the "interior"



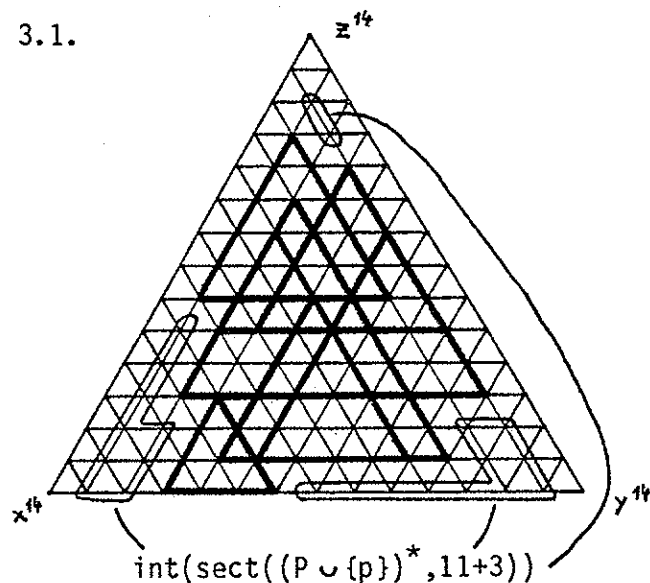
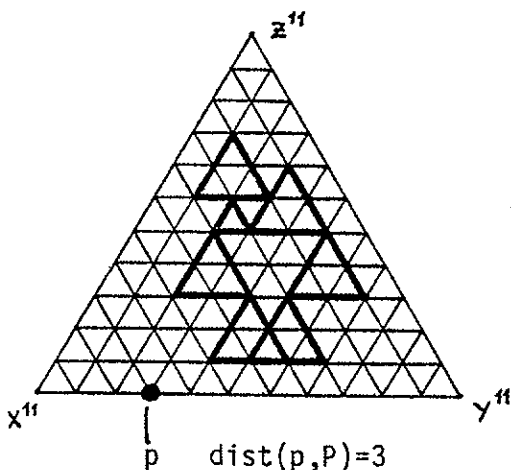
Lemma 3.5: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ ,  $p \in \text{ext}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mdel}(P)))$ ,

$$t = w(P) - w(P \cup \{p\}).$$

Then

$$\lfloor \text{int}(\text{sect}((P \cup \{p\})^*, \text{mdel}(P) + \text{dist}(p, P))) \rfloor < \lfloor \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mdel}(P))) \rfloor + t \cdot \text{mdel}(P) - (\text{dist}(p, P) - t).$$

Example 3.5: Let  $P$  be as in example 3.1.





By lemma 3.5

$$I := \# \text{int}(\text{sect}((P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{S'}\})^*, \text{mdel}(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{S'}\}))) \# < \\ k' + (t-t') \cdot \text{mdel}(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{S'-1}\}) - (d - (t-t')).$$

Now we get from lemma 3.4

$$\text{mdel}(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_S\}) < c - k' + d + (I - k) < \\ c - k' + d + k' + \underbrace{(t-t') \cdot \text{mdel}(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{S'-1}\})}_{< c} - d + (t-t') - k <$$

$$(\dots((\underbrace{(c \cdot 2 + 1) \cdot 2 + 1}_{(t-t') \text{ times}}) \cdot \dots) \cdot 2 + 1 - k <$$

$$(\dots(((\text{mdel}(P) + \# \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mdel}(P)))) \#) \cdot \underbrace{2 + 1}_{t \text{ times}} \cdot \dots) \cdot 2 + 1 - k. \bullet$$

Def: Let P be a finite subset of pp3.

$b(P) := \max\{\text{mdel}(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_S\}) \# (p_1, \dots, p_S) \text{ maximal w.r.t. } P\}.$

(Bound for P.)

Theorem 3.1: Let P be a finite subset of pp3.

Then

$$b(P) < (\dots(((\text{mdel}(P) + \# \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mdel}(P)))) \#) \cdot \underbrace{2 + 1}_{w(P) \text{ times}} \cdot \dots) \cdot 2 + 1.$$

Proof: The assertion follows from lemma 3.6 if we set  $t=w(P)$  and  $k=0$ . •

Corollary to theorem 3.1: Let P be a finite subset of pp3.

Then

$$b(P) < (\text{mdel}(P) + \# \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mdel}(P)))) \# + 1 \cdot 2^{w(P)}.$$

Theorem 3.1 gives a bound for the degrees of the power products in a sequence  $(p_1, \dots, p_t)$  which is maximal w.r.t. P. But during the execution of the Gröbner-bases algorithm this maximality usually does not hold. So what remains to be done is to show that  $b(P)$  is an upper bound for  $\text{mdel}(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_S\})$ , where the sequence  $(q_1, \dots, q_S)$  is admissible w.r.t. P.

Lemma 3.7: Let  $P, Q \subseteq \text{pp3}$ ,  $P^* \subseteq Q^*$ ,  $\text{mdel}(P) > \text{mdel}(Q)$ ,  $q \in \text{sect}(\text{pp3}, \text{mdel}(Q))$ .

Then there is a  $p \in \text{sect}(\text{pp3}, \text{mdel}(P))$  such that

$$(*) \quad q < p \text{ and } \text{dist}(q, Q) + \text{mdel}(Q) < \text{dist}(p, P) + \text{mdel}(P).$$



Theorem 3.2: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $pp_3$ ,  $q_1, \dots, q_s \in pp_3$  such that  $\deg(q_i) < mdel(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{i-1}\})$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq s$ .

Then there is a maximal sequence  $(p_1, \dots, p_t)$  w.r.t.  $P$  such that

$$mdel(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_s\}) < mdel(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_t\}) \quad \text{and} \\ (P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_t\})^* \subseteq (P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_s\})^*.$$

Proof: By induction on  $s$ .

$s=1$ : If  $mdel(P \cup \{q_1\}) < mdel(P)$  then the assertion holds with  $t=0$ .

If  $mdel(P \cup \{q_1\}) \geq mdel(P)$  then by lemma 3.3 there is a  $p_1$  such that

$$\deg(p_1) = mdel(P), \quad q_1 < p_1, \quad p_1 \notin P^* \quad \text{and} \\ mdel(P \cup \{q_1\}) < mdel(P) + \text{dist}(p_1, P) = \quad mdel(P \cup \{p_1\}). \\ \uparrow \text{lemma 3.2}$$

Obviously  $(P \cup \{p_1\})^* \subseteq (P \cup \{q_1\})^*$  holds.

$s \geq 1$ : By induction hypothesis there are  $p_1, \dots, p_{t'}$  maximal w.r.t.  $P$  such that

$$mdel(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{s-1}\}) < mdel(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) \quad \text{and} \\ (P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\})^* \subseteq (P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{s-1}\})^*.$$

By lemma 3.7 for every  $q \in \text{sect}(pp_3, mdel(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{s-1}\}))$  there is a  $p \in \text{sect}(pp_3, mdel(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}))$  such that

$$q < p \quad \text{and} \\ (*) \quad mdel(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{s-1}\}) + \text{dist}(q, P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{s-1}\}) < \\ mdel(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) + \text{dist}(p, P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}).$$

So

$$mdel(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_s\}) < \\ \uparrow \text{lemma 3.3}$$

$$mdel(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{s-1}\}) + \max \{ \text{dist}(q', P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{s-1}\}) \mid q_s < q' \text{ and} \\ \deg(q') = mdel(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{s-1}\}) \} < \\ \uparrow (*)$$

$$mdel(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) + \max \{ \text{dist}(p', P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) \mid q_s < p' \text{ and} \\ \deg(p') = mdel(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) \}.$$

If  $\text{sect}(\{q_s\}^*, mdel(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\})) \subseteq (P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\})^*$  then the assertion holds for  $t=t'$ .

If  $A := \text{sect}(\{q_s\}^*, mdel(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\})) - (P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\})^* \neq \emptyset$  then we choose  $p_{t'+1}$  in  $A$  such that

$$\text{dist}(p_{t'+1}, P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) = \max \{ \text{dist}(p', P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) \mid p' \in A \}.$$

Then we have

$$\begin{aligned} \text{mdel}(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_s\}) &\leq \text{mdel}(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) + \text{dist}(p_{t'+1}, P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}\}) \\ &= \text{mdel}(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}, p_{t'+1}\}) \end{aligned}$$

↑ lemma 3.2

and by the induction hypothesis

$$(P \cup \{p_1, \dots, p_{t'}, p_{t'+1}\}) \subseteq (P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_s\}).$$

Corollary to theorem 3.2: Let  $P$  be a finite subset of  $\text{pp}^3$ ,  $q_1, \dots, q_s$  such that  $\deg(q_i) < \text{mdel}(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_{i-1}\})$  for all  $1 < i \leq s$ .

Then  $\text{mdel}(P \cup \{q_1, \dots, q_s\}) < b(P)$ .

Theorem 3.3: Let  $F$  be a finite set of polynomials in  $K[x, y, z]$ ,

$P = \{p \mid p = \text{lpp}(f) \text{ for some } f \in F\}$ ,  $h_1, \dots, h_s$  admissible polynomials w.r.t.  $F$ .

Then

$$\max\{\deg(h) \mid h \in F \cup \{h_1, \dots, h_s\}\} < b(P).$$

Proof: The leading power products of  $h_1, \dots, h_s$  satisfy the conditions of the corollary to theorem 3.2. So

$$\begin{aligned} \max\{\deg(h) \mid h \in F \cup \{h_1, \dots, h_s\}\} &< \\ \text{mdel}(P \cup \{\text{lpp}(h_1), \dots, \text{lpp}(h_s)\}) &< \\ &\uparrow \text{cor. to theorem 3.2} \end{aligned}$$

$b(P)$ .

#### 4. Conclusion

Combining theorem 2.1 and the corollary to theorem 3.2 we get

Theorem 4.1: Let  $F$  be a finite set of polynomials in  $K[x, y, z]$ ,

$P = \{\text{lpp}(f) \mid f \in F\}$ ,

then every polynomial which is either in  $F$  or is generated during the execution of the Gröbner-bases algorithm on  $F$  has degree less than or equal to  $b(P)$ .

From this bound for the degrees of the polynomials generated by the Gröbner-bases algorithm we can get one which only depends on the maximal and minimal degree of the given basis  $F$ . This bound is of course much coarser than the one given in the above theorems.

Corollary to theorem 4.1: Let  $F$  be a finite set of polynomials in  $K[x,y,z]$ ,  
 $d = \min\{\deg(f) \mid f \in F\}$ ,  $D = \max\{\deg(f) \mid f \in F\}$ ,  
then every polynomial which is either in  $F$  or is generated during the execution  
of the Gröbner-bases algorithm on  $F$  has degree less than or equal to  
 $(8D + 1) \cdot 2^d$ .

Proof:  $w(P) \leq d$ ,  $\text{mde1}(P) \leq 2D$ ,

$$\begin{aligned} \# \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mde1}(P))) \# &\leq \# \text{sect}(pp3, 2D) \# = \binom{3 - 1 + 2D}{2D} = \\ &= \frac{(2D+2) \cdot \dots \cdot 3}{2D \cdot \dots \cdot 1} \leq 2D \cdot 3. \end{aligned}$$

So by the corollary to theorem 3.1

$$\begin{aligned} b(P) &\leq \\ (\text{mde1}(P) + \# \text{int}(\text{sect}(P^*, \text{mde1}(P))) \# + 1) \cdot 2^{w(P)} &\leq \\ (2D + 6D + 1) \cdot 2^d &= \\ (8D + 1) \cdot 2^d. \end{aligned}$$

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