

LIE POWERS OF FREE MODULES FOR CERTAIN GROUPS OF PRIME POWER ORDER

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To Laci Kovács on his 65th birthday

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Abstract

Let G be a finite group of order p^k , where p is a prime and $k \geq 1$, such that G is either cyclic, quaternion or generalised quaternion. Let V be a finite-dimensional free KG -module where K is a field of characteristic p . The Lie powers $L^n(V)$ are naturally KG -modules and the main result identifies these modules up to isomorphism. There are only two isomorphism types of indecomposables occurring as direct summands of these modules, namely the regular KG -module and the indecomposable of dimension $p^k - p^{k-1}$ induced from the indecomposable KH -module of dimension $p - 1$, where H is the unique subgroup of G of order p . Formulae are given for the multiplicities of these indecomposables in $L^n(V)$. This extends and utilises work of the first author and R. Stöhr concerned with the case where G has order p .

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1. Introduction

Let G be a group, K a field and V a KG -module. Let $L(V)$ denote the free Lie algebra on V , that is, the free Lie algebra which contains V as a subspace and which has every basis of V as a free generating set. For each positive integer n , let $L^n(V)$ be the homogeneous component of degree n in $L(V)$. The action of G on V extends naturally to $L(V)$, so that G acts on $L(V)$ by Lie algebra automorphisms. In this way $L(V)$ becomes a KG -module with each $L^n(V)$ as a submodule, called the n th Lie power of V .

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Suppose now that G is finite and V is finite-dimensional. If the characteristic of K is zero then each $L^n(V)$ is semisimple and the character of this module is given in terms of the character of V by Brandt’s character formula [3]. Thus $L^n(V)$ may be determined up to isomorphism, at least in principle, by the character orthogonality relations. In the case where K has prime characteristic p , and p divides the order of G , it is much more difficult to obtain information about the module structure of $L^n(V)$. Recent progress is described in [4] and [5]. The reader is also referred to [4] or [5] for further details of the background and underlying concepts.

The main result of the first author and Stöhr in [5] is a description of $L^n(V)$ in the case where K has prime characteristic p , G is cyclic of order p and V is a finite-dimensional free KG -module. The module $L^n(V)$ decomposes into a direct sum of modules isomorphic either to the regular KG -module or to the indecomposable of dimension $p - 1$. Here we extend this result to the case where G is an arbitrary cyclic p -group or (when $p = 2$) a quaternion or generalised quaternion group.

THEOREM 1. *Let G be a finite group of order p^k , where p is a prime and $k \geq 1$, such that G is either cyclic, quaternion or generalised quaternion. Let H be the unique subgroup of G of order p . Let K be a field of characteristic p and let V be a finite-dimensional free KG -module. Then, for each positive integer n , $L^n(V)$ is a direct sum of $r(n)$ copies of the regular KG -module and $s(n)$ copies of the indecomposable KG -module of dimension $p^k - p^{k-1}$ induced from the indecomposable KH -module of dimension $p - 1$, where*

$$s(n) = - \frac{1}{np^{k-1}} \sum_{\substack{d \\ p|d|n}} \mu(d)(\dim V)^{n/d}$$

and $r(n) = p^{-k} \dim L^n(V) - (1 - p^{-1})s(n)$.

In the equation for $s(n)$, μ is the Möbius function, $\dim V$ denotes the dimension of V as a K -space, and the summation is over all positive divisors d of n which are divisible by p . The second equation yields $r(n)$ because of Witt’s formula for the dimension of $L^n(V)$:

$$\dim L^n(V) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{d|n} \mu(d)(\dim V)^{n/d}.$$

Theorem 1 will be derived from the following more general result.

THEOREM 2. *Let G be a non-trivial finite p -group, where p is a prime, and let H be the subgroup generated by all elements of G of order p . Let K be a field of characteristic p and let V be a finite-dimensional free KG -module. Then, for each positive integer n , $L^n(V)$ is isomorphic to a module induced from some KH -module.*

Theorem 2 shows that there is a KH -module U such that $L^n(V) \cong U \uparrow^G$. Thus, to find $L^n(V)$ up to isomorphism it is sufficient to find U . However,

$$L^n(V \downarrow_H) \cong L^n(V) \downarrow_H \cong U \uparrow^G \downarrow_H.$$

If we assume that H is central in G then $U \uparrow^G \downarrow_H$ is isomorphic to the direct sum of $[G : H]$ copies of U . Thus we can find U up to isomorphism if we can find $L^n(V \downarrow_H)$. However, $V \downarrow_H$ is a free KH -module. Thus, when H is central in G , Theorem 2 reduces the problem of finding Lie powers of free KG -modules to the same problem for H .

Under the assumptions of Theorem 1, H is central in G and has order p . Thus Theorem 1 can be obtained from Theorem 2 by means of the main result of [5]. When G is any finite abelian p -group, Theorem 2 makes a reduction to the case where G is elementary abelian. At present, however, we are not able to deal with an elementary abelian p -group of order greater than p . The representation theory of such a group is complicated by the fact that it has infinitely many isomorphism types of indecomposable modules over a field of characteristic p .

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2. Preliminaries

Throughout the paper K denotes a field, and in this section K is an arbitrary field. All Lie algebras are Lie algebras over K , and all tensor products are taken with respect to K . By a KG -module, where G is a group, we mean a right module for the group algebra KG . As mentioned in Section 1, if V is a KG -module then the free Lie algebra $L(V)$ acquires the structure of a KG -module.

For any Lie algebra L , $[u, v]$ denotes the product of elements u and v of L , and expressions of the form $[u_1, u_2, \dots, u_n]$ denote left-normed products: thus, for $n \geq 3$,

$$[u_1, u_2, \dots, u_n] = [[u_1, \dots, u_{n-1}], u_n].$$

For subspaces U_1, U_2, \dots, U_n of L , $[U_1, U_2, \dots, U_n]$ denotes the subspace of L spanned by all elements $[u_1, u_2, \dots, u_n]$ with $u_i \in U_i$ for $i = 1, \dots, n$.

By a *graded vector space over K* we mean a K -space V with a distinguished K -space decomposition $V = V_1 \oplus V_2 \oplus \dots$. A *graded subspace of V* is then a subspace W such that $W = (W \cap V_1) \oplus (W \cap V_2) \oplus \dots$.

Let L be a free Lie algebra over K and, for each positive integer n , let L_n be the n th homogeneous component of L with respect to a given free generating set for L . Then L is a graded vector space, $L = L_1 \oplus L_2 \oplus \dots$. A subalgebra of L is called graded if it is graded as a subspace. By the theorem of Shirshov and Witt (see [8, Theorem 2.5]), every subalgebra of L is free on some free generating set. If Q is a subalgebra of L and W is a subspace of L such that Q is freely generated by a basis of W we say (with slight abuse of language) that Q is freely generated by W and write $Q = L(W)$. In this case every basis of W is a free generating set for Q . The notation $L(W)$ is used for the subalgebra of L generated by a subspace W only in the case where $L(W)$ is freely generated by W .

LEMMA 1. Let Q be a graded subalgebra of the free Lie algebra L and write $Q = Q_1 \oplus Q_2 \oplus \dots$ where $Q_i = Q \cap L_i$ for all i . For $i \geq 1$ let R_i be the subalgebra of Q generated by $Q_1 \oplus \dots \oplus Q_i$ and let $R_0 = 0$. Let W be a subspace of Q which has the form $W = W_1 \oplus W_2 \oplus \dots$, where $W_i = W \cap Q_i$ for all $i \geq 1$. Then Q is freely generated by W if and only if

$$(2.1) \quad Q_i = (R_{i-1} \cap Q_i) \oplus W_i \quad \text{for all } i \geq 1.$$

PROOF. For the purposes of this proof, if X is any subset of L we write KX for the subspace of L spanned by X and $\langle X \rangle_L$ for the Lie subalgebra of L generated by X . For $i \geq 1$, let $E_i = Q_1 \oplus \dots \oplus Q_i$ and let $E_0 = 0$. Thus, for all $i \geq 1$, $R_{i-1} = \langle E_{i-1} \rangle_L$. Also, write $E'_i = E_i \cap R_{i-1}$. Then

$$E'_i = Q_1 \oplus \dots \oplus Q_{i-1} \oplus (R_{i-1} \cap Q_i).$$

If (2.1) holds, then any basis X_i of W_i is a basis for E_i modulo E'_i . Hence, by the proof of Theorem 2.5 of [8], Q is freely generated by $X_1 \cup X_2 \cup \dots$. Thus Q is freely generated by W .

Conversely, suppose that Q is freely generated by W . For each $i \geq 1$, let X_i be a basis of W_i and let $X = X_1 \cup X_2 \cup \dots$. Since $Q = \langle X \rangle_L$, Q is spanned by the set of all Lie monomials formed from elements of X . For $i \geq 1$, Q_i is spanned by all such monomials which belong to L_i . Therefore,

$$Q_i = \langle X_1 \cup \dots \cup X_{i-1} \rangle_L \cap L_i + KX_i.$$

However, X is a free generating set for Q , and so

$$(2.2) \quad Q_i = \langle X_1 \cup \dots \cup X_{i-1} \rangle_L \cap L_i \oplus KX_i.$$

Hence $Q_j \subseteq \langle X_1 \cup \dots \cup X_j \rangle_L$ for $j = 1, \dots, i - 1$, and so $R_{i-1} = \langle X_1 \cup \dots \cup X_{i-1} \rangle_L$. Thus (2.1) follows from (2.2). □

For subspaces U and V of any Lie algebra, let $V \wr U$ denote the subspace defined by

$$V \wr U = V + [V, U] + [V, U, U] + \dots$$

The following lemma is a version of ‘Lazard elimination’ (see [2, Chapter 2, Section 2.9, Proposition 10]) and it appears in [4, Lemma 2.2].

LEMMA 2. *Let G be any group and let U and V be KG -modules. Consider the free Lie algebra $L(U \oplus V)$ as a KG -module. Then U and $V \wr U$ freely generate free subalgebras $L(U)$ and $L(V \wr U)$, and there is a KG -module decomposition*

$$L(U \oplus V) = L(U) \oplus L(V \wr U).$$

Furthermore,

$$V \wr U = V \oplus [V, U] \oplus [V, U, U] \oplus \dots,$$

and, for each $n \geq 0$, there is a KG -module isomorphism

$$[V, \underbrace{U, \dots, U}_n] \cong V \otimes \underbrace{U \otimes \dots \otimes U}_n$$

under which $[v, u_1, u_2, \dots, u_n]$ corresponds to $v \otimes u_1 \otimes u_2 \otimes \dots \otimes u_n$ for all $v \in V$ and all $u_1, \dots, u_n \in U$.

We apply Lemma 2 to obtain two further results.

LEMMA 3. *Let G be any group and let V_1, \dots, V_m be KG -modules, where m is a positive integer. Consider the free Lie algebra $L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m)$ as a KG -module. Let Q be the ideal of $L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m)$ generated by the subspaces $[V_i, V_j]$ with $i \neq j$. Then there is a KG -module decomposition*

$$L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m) = L(V_1) \oplus \dots \oplus L(V_m) \oplus Q.$$

Furthermore, Q is a free Lie subalgebra of $L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m)$ of the form $Q = L(W)$, where $W = W_2 \oplus W_3 \oplus \dots$ such that, for each $n \geq 2$, W_n is a KG -submodule of $L^n(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m)$ equal to the direct sum of all subspaces $[V_{i_1}, V_{i_2}, \dots, V_{i_n}]$ with $i_1 > i_2 \leq i_3 \leq \dots \leq i_n$. Furthermore, $[V_{i_1}, V_{i_2}, \dots, V_{i_n}]$ is isomorphic to $V_{i_1} \otimes V_{i_2} \otimes \dots \otimes V_{i_n}$ as a KG -module.

PROOF. By Lemma 2,

$$L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m) = L(V_1) \oplus L(Z_1),$$

where Z_1 is the direct sum of the subspaces V_2, \dots, V_m and the subspaces

$$[V_i, \underbrace{V_1, \dots, V_1}_{n_1}]$$

with $i_1 > 1$ and $n_1 > 0$. Also,

$$[V_i, \underbrace{V_1, \dots, V_1}_{n_1}] \cong V_i \otimes \underbrace{V_1 \otimes \dots \otimes V_1}_{n_1}$$

as KG -modules. Using the summand V_2 of Z_1 we obtain $L(Z_1) = L(V_2) \oplus L(Z_2)$, where Z_2 is the direct sum of the subspaces V_3, \dots, V_m and the subspaces

$$[V_i, \underbrace{V_1, \dots, V_1}_{n_1}, \underbrace{V_2, \dots, V_2}_{n_2}]$$

with either $i_1 > 1, n_1 > 0, n_2 \geq 0$ or $i_1 > 2, n_1 = 0, n_2 > 0$. Also

$$[V_i, \underbrace{V_1, \dots, V_1}_{n_1}, \underbrace{V_2, \dots, V_2}_{n_2}] \cong V_i \otimes \underbrace{V_1 \otimes \dots \otimes V_1}_{n_1} \otimes \underbrace{V_2 \otimes \dots \otimes V_2}_{n_2}$$

as KG -modules. Continuing in this way we obtain

$$(2.3) \quad L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m) = L(V_1) \oplus \dots \oplus L(V_m) \oplus L(W),$$

where W is the direct sum of the subspaces $[V_i, V_{i_2}, \dots, V_{i_n}]$ with $n \geq 2$ and $i_1 > i_2 \leq i_3 \leq \dots \leq i_n$. Also,

$$[V_i, V_{i_2}, \dots, V_{i_n}] \cong V_i \otimes V_{i_2} \otimes \dots \otimes V_{i_n}$$

as KG -modules. Clearly, $[V_i, V_{i_2}, \dots, V_{i_n}]$ is a submodule of $L^n(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m)$. Thus W can be written in the required form.

It remains to show that $L(W) = Q$, where Q is defined as in the statement of the lemma. Clearly $L(W) \subseteq Q$. Let D be the Lie algebra direct sum,

$$D = L(V_1) \oplus \dots \oplus L(V_m),$$

formed from the Lie algebras $L(V_1), \dots, L(V_m)$ with componentwise multiplication. Let

$$\pi : L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m) \longrightarrow D$$

be the Lie algebra homomorphism given by $u\pi = u$ for all $u \in V_1 \cup \dots \cup V_m$: this exists because $L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m)$ is free on $V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m$. As is well known, Q is the kernel of π . The restriction of π to the subspace $L(V_1) \oplus \dots \oplus L(V_m)$ of $L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m)$ is clearly one-one and onto. Hence

$$L(V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m) = L(V_1) \oplus \dots \oplus L(V_m) \oplus Q.$$

Since $L(W) \subseteq Q$ we obtain $L(W) = Q$ by (2.3). □

LEMMA 4. Let G be any group and let V be a KG -module. Let Q be a subalgebra of $L(V)$ which has the form $Q = L(U_r \oplus U_{r+1} \oplus \dots)$ for some positive integer r , where, for each $i \geq r$, U_i is a free KG -submodule of $L^i(V)$. Let n be a positive integer such that $n \geq r$. Then, for each $i \geq r$, there exists a free KG -submodule X_i of $L^i(V)$ such that $Q = L(X_r) \oplus L(X_{r+1}) \oplus \dots \oplus L(X_n) \oplus L(X_{n+1} \oplus X_{n+2} \oplus \dots)$.

PROOF. By Lemma 2,

$$L(U_r \oplus U_{r+1} \oplus \dots) = L(U_r) \oplus L((U_{r+1} \oplus U_{r+2} \oplus \dots) \wr U_r).$$

Also, $(U_{r+1} \oplus U_{r+2} \oplus \dots) \wr U_r$ is the direct sum of the modules $U_{r+i} \wr U_r$ for $i \geq 1$, and $U_{r+i} \wr U_r$ is the direct sum of the modules

$$[U_{r+i}, \underbrace{U_r, \dots, U_r}_m]$$

for $m \geq 0$. Furthermore,

$$[U_{r+i}, \underbrace{U_r, \dots, U_r}_m] \cong U_{r+i} \otimes \underbrace{U_r \otimes \dots \otimes U_r}_m,$$

so this module is a free KG -submodule of $L^{r+i+mr}(V)$. Thus we may write

$$L(U_r \oplus U_{r+1} \oplus \dots) = L(U_r) \oplus L(V_{r+1} \oplus V_{r+2} \oplus \dots),$$

where, for $i \geq 1$, V_{r+i} is a free KG -submodule of $L^{r+i}(V)$. The result follows by induction on $n - r$. □

3. Main results

Let G be a non-trivial finite p -group, where p is a prime, and let H be the subgroup generated by all elements of G of order p . Let K be a field of characteristic p . For any KG -module V we write $V \downarrow_H$ for the KH -module obtained by restriction, and for any KH -module U we write $U \uparrow^G$ for the KG -module obtained by induction. We say that a KG -module is H -induced if it is isomorphic to a module induced from a KH -module. Clearly any direct sum of H -induced modules is H -induced.

PROOF OF THEOREM 2. Let V be a finite-dimensional free KG -module. Write $L = L(V)$ and $L_n = L^n(V)$ for all $n \geq 1$. We must prove that L_n is H -induced for all n . We use induction on n . Since $L_1 = V$, the module L_1 is free. Thus it is induced from a free KH -module. Hence we may assume that $n \geq 2$ and that the result is true for all smaller values of n .

Let m be the index of H in G and let $\{c_1, \dots, c_m\}$ be a (right) transversal for H in G , where $c_1 = 1$. Since V is a free KG -module, there is a subspace Y of V such that $V = Y(KG) \cong Y \otimes KG$. Write $V_i = Y(KH)c_i$ for $i = 1, \dots, m$. Then, since H is normal in G , each V_i is a free KH -module isomorphic to V_1 . Also, $V = V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_m$ and $V \cong V_1 \uparrow^G$.

By Lemma 3 applied to the group H , we have a KH -module decomposition $L = M \oplus Q$, where $M = L(V_1) \oplus \dots \oplus L(V_m)$ and Q is the ideal of L generated by the subspaces $[V_i, V_j]$ with $i \neq j$. The subspaces $[V_i, V_j]$ are permuted under the action of G . Therefore Q is a KG -submodule of L . Also, $L(V_i) = L(V_i)c_i$ for $i = 1, \dots, m$, so that M is a KG -submodule of L . By Lemma 3, $Q = L(W)$ where W is a graded subspace of L . Thus Q is a graded subalgebra of L . Clearly M is a graded subspace of L . It follows that $L_n = (L_n \cap M) \oplus (L_n \cap Q)$. Thus it suffices to show that $L_n \cap M$ and $L_n \cap Q$ are H -induced.

It is easily verified that $L^n(V_i) = L^n(V_1)c_i$ for $i = 1, \dots, m$ and

$$L_n \cap M = L^n(V_1) \oplus \dots \oplus L^n(V_m).$$

It follows that $L_n \cap M \cong L^n(V_1) \uparrow^G$. Therefore $L_n \cap M$ is H -induced.

By Lemma 3, $W = W_2 \oplus W_3 \oplus \dots$ where, for $i \geq 2$, W_i is a free KH -submodule of L_i . We also write $W_1 = 0$. Since Q is a graded subalgebra of L , it has the form $Q = Q_1 \oplus Q_2 \oplus \dots$ where $Q_i = Q \cap L_i$ for all i . Clearly $Q_1 = 0$. For $i \geq 1$ let R_i be the subalgebra of Q generated by $Q_1 \oplus \dots \oplus Q_i$ and let $R_0 = 0$. Since Q is a KG -module, Q_i is a KG -module for each $i \geq 1$, and $R_{i-1} \cap Q_i$ is a submodule. Thus $Q_i/(R_{i-1} \cap Q_i)$ is a KG -module.

By Lemma 1, $Q_i = (R_{i-1} \cap Q_i) \oplus W_i$ for all $i \geq 1$. Since W_i is a free KH -module, $(Q_i/(R_{i-1} \cap Q_i)) \downarrow_H$ is a free KH -module. Therefore, by the definition of H , $(Q_i/(R_{i-1} \cap Q_i)) \downarrow_E$ is a free KE -module for every elementary abelian subgroup E of G . Therefore, by a theorem of Chouinard, [1, Theorem 5.2.4], $Q_i/(R_{i-1} \cap Q_i)$ is a projective KG -module. Since G is a p -group, this module is free (see, for example, [6, Theorem VII.7.15]). Therefore, for each $i \geq 1$, there is a KG -submodule U_i of Q_i such that U_i is free and $Q_i = (R_{i-1} \cap Q_i) \oplus U_i$. Note that $U_1 = 0$ and write $U = U_2 \oplus U_3 \oplus \dots$. By Lemma 1, Q is freely generated by U , that is $Q = L(U)$.

By Lemma 4, we may write

$$Q = L(X_2) \oplus L(X_3) \oplus \dots \oplus L(X_n) \oplus L(X_{n+1} \oplus X_{n+2} \oplus \dots),$$

where each X_i is a free KG -submodule of L_i . It follows that $L_n \cap Q$ is the direct sum of the modules $L^{n/d}(X_d)$ where d ranges over the divisors of n in the set $\{2, \dots, n\}$. By the inductive hypothesis each summand is H -induced. Therefore $L_n \cap Q$ is H -induced, as required. □

PROOF OF THEOREM 1. Now let G have order p^k , with $k \geq 1$, and suppose that G is either cyclic, quaternion or generalised quaternion. Thus the subgroup H is central and is cyclic of order p . We write J_p to denote a regular KH -module and J_{p-1} to denote an indecomposable KH -module of dimension $p - 1$ (this is isomorphic to the augmentation ideal of KH).

Let V be a finite-dimensional free KG -module and let n be a positive integer. By Theorem 2, there exists a KH -module U such that $L^n(V) \cong U \uparrow^G$. Therefore

$$L^n(V \downarrow_H) \cong L^n(V) \downarrow_H \cong U \uparrow^G \downarrow_H.$$

Since H is central in G , $U \uparrow^G \downarrow_H$ is isomorphic to the direct sum of p^{k-1} copies of U . However $V \downarrow_H$ is a free KH -module. Therefore, by [5, Theorem 1], $L^n(V \downarrow_H)$ is isomorphic to the direct sum of r_n copies of J_p and s_n copies of J_{p-1} where

$$s_n = -\frac{1}{n} \sum_{\substack{d \\ p|d|n}} \mu(d) (\dim V)^{n/d}$$

and $pr_n + (p - 1)s_n = \dim L^n(V)$. It follows that U is isomorphic to the direct sum of $p^{-(k-1)}r_n$ copies of J_p and $p^{-(k-1)}s_n$ copies of J_{p-1} . Therefore the induced module $L^n(V)$ is isomorphic to the direct sum of $p^{-(k-1)}r_n$ copies of $J_p \uparrow^G$ and $p^{-(k-1)}s_n$ copies of $J_{p-1} \uparrow^G$.

Clearly $J_p \uparrow^G$ is a regular KG -module and is indecomposable (see [6, VII.5.2]). Since J_{p-1} remains indecomposable under any field extension it follows from Green's indecomposability theorem (see [6, VII.16.6]) that $J_{p-1} \uparrow^G$ is an indecomposable KG -module. Clearly it has dimension $p^k - p^{k-1}$. In the notation of Theorem 1, $r(n) = p^{-(k-1)}r_n$ and $s(n) = p^{-(k-1)}s_n$. This gives Theorem 1. \square

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