

On the Numerical Range of λ -Commuting Operators

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Abstract: A proof is given that if A and B are operators on a complex Hilbert space that commute by a scalar factor then the scalar factor must be real whenever either A or B is selfadjoint.

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Let H be an infinite dimensional Hilbert space and $B(H)$ denote the Banach Algebra of bounded linear operators on H , then we say that A and B are λ -

Commuting Operators if $AB = \lambda BA$, Commuting operators have had extensive application in quantum mechanical observation and analysis of the spectra. In this article we consider results obtained by Putnam and obtain conditions to be imposed on λ so that $AB = \lambda BA$. We arrive at similar conditions to those obtained by Brook without spectral analysis of the operator. We show that when operators commute to a scalar factor then the numerical range $W(AB)$ of the product is real or pure imaginary

An operator is said to be normal if $AA^* = A^*A$, selfadjoint if $A = A^*$ and anti-selfadjoint if

$A = -A^*$,

Theorem 1.1 (Putnam-Fuglede)

If T is a normal operator and S commutes with T then $T^*S = ST^*$

Corollary 1.2

If A and B are normal operators such that $TA = BT$ then $TA^* = B^*T$ for all operators T on H

Proof

Let $A = \begin{bmatrix} A & 0 \\ 0 & B \end{bmatrix}$

and

$$L = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ T & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

then N is normal and furthermore $LN = NL$. So by (i) $LN^* = N^*L$.

Hence $TA^* = B^*T$ Applying Fuglede's theorem Rehder (1982) makes some remarkable observations on the product of selfadjoint operators as follows.

Theorem 1.3

Let A and B be selfadjoint operators and either A or B is positive. Then AB is selfadjoint if and only if AB is normal

Proof

Obviously if AB is selfadjoint then AB is normal. For the converse we note that

$$A(BA) = (AB)A$$

and so we invoke Fuglede's theorem to obtain

$$A(BA)^* = (AB)^* A \text{ i.e. } A^2 B = BA^2.$$

Suppose that A is positive (otherwise interchange roles with B) then A is the square root of A^2

hence A commutes with B and so $(AB)^* = BA = AB$

Let T be a selfadjoint operator then $T = AB$ where A is positive and B unitary be the polar decomposition of T . The previous theorem gives a converse in the class of normal operators. Thus if T is normal and $T = AB$ where A is positive and B selfadjoint then T is selfadjoint.

Corollary 1.4

Let $T = A +$

iB be the canonical form of an operator where by A and B are selfadjoint. If AB is normal and either A or B is positive then T is normal

Proof

We have that

$$TT^* = (A + iB)(A - iB) = A^2 + i(BA - AB) + B^2 = A^2 + B^2.$$

On the other hand

$$T^*T = (A - iB)(A + iB) = A^2 + i(AB - BA) + B^2 = A^2 + B^2 = TT^*$$

Corollary 1.5

Let A and B be selfadjoint, and either A or B be positive. If $AB - BA \neq 0$ then also $AB + BA \neq 0$

Proof

If $AB + BA = 0$ then $(AB)(AB)^* = (AB)(BA) = -(AB)^2$. Similarly $(AB)^*(AB) = (BA)(AB) = -(AB)^2$.

Consequently AB is normal and by theorem 1.5.7 AB is selfadjoint i.e. $AB - AB = 0$.

λ -commuting operators

We consider operators that commute up to scalar multiples and make some application of the Putnam-Fuglede property to obtain the following

Theorem 2.1

Let A, B be bounded operators on a Hilbert space H such that $AB = \lambda BA$ and $AB \neq 0$ where

λ is a complex number. Then

- (i) If A or B is selfadjoint we must have that λ is a real number
- (ii) If A and B are selfadjoint then $\lambda \in \{1, -1\}$
- (iii) If A and B are selfadjoint and either A or B is positive then $\lambda = 1$.

Proof

- (i) $AB = \lambda BA$ if and only if

$$B^*A^* = \bar{\lambda}A^*B^*.$$

But if say $A = A^*$ then

$$B^*A = \bar{\lambda}AB^*.$$

By Putnam-Fuegledetheorem $B^*A = \lambda A^*B^*$. Hence we have that
 $\lambda A^*B^* = \bar{\lambda}A^*B^*$

Consequently we have that $(\bar{\lambda} - \lambda)A^*B^* = 0$ Since $AB \neq 0$ we obtain the result $(\bar{\lambda} - \lambda) = 0$. So
 $\bar{\lambda} = \lambda$

(ii) If $A = A^*, B = B^*$ then $AB = \lambda BA$ and so $(AB)^* =$

$$\bar{\lambda}A^*B^*.$$

$$\bar{\lambda}AB =$$

$\bar{\lambda}AB = |\lambda|^2 BA$. Consequently $(1 - |\lambda|^2)BA = 0$. So from (i) $\lambda = \pm 1$.

(iii) Let $AB = -BA$ then Consider the commutator of A and B namely $AB - BA = AB + AB = 2AB \neq 0$. However this leads to the anticommutator being non zero. i.e $AB + BA \neq 0$

. This is a contradiction hence we must have that $\lambda = 1$

An operator A is called anti-selfadjoint if $A + A^* = 0$

Remark: If A is an anti-selfadjoint operator then A is normal operator. To see this note that

$$AA^* = -A^2 = A^*A$$

Theorem 2.2

If an operator T is anti-selfadjoint then $W(T)$ is a pure imaginary.

Proof

Note that $\lambda \in W(T) \Leftrightarrow \lambda = (Tx, x) = (x, T^*x) = -(x, Tx) = -\bar{\lambda}$. Thus $\lambda + \bar{\lambda} = 0$ and hence λ is a pure imaginary number.

Theorem 2.3

Let $AB = \lambda BA, AB \neq 0$ and B be a normal operator. If A is anti-selfadjoint then λ is a real number

Proof

If $AB = \lambda BA$ then we take the adjoint on both sides to find $B^*A^* = \bar{\lambda}A^*B^*$. Hence applying

the Putnam-Fuegledetheorem we have that

$$B^*A = \lambda AB^* \Leftrightarrow -B^*A^* = -\lambda A^*B^* \Leftrightarrow (AB)^* = \lambda A^*B^* \Leftrightarrow (\lambda BA)^* = \lambda A^*B^* \Leftrightarrow$$

$$\lambda A^*B^* \Leftrightarrow (\bar{\lambda} - \lambda)A^*B^* = 0. \text{ Hence } \bar{\lambda} = \lambda$$

Corollary 2.4

$$\bar{\lambda}A^*B^* =$$

If A and B are anti-selfadjoint operators such that $AB = \lambda BA$ and $AB \neq 0$ then $\lambda \in \{1, -1\}$

Proof

Since A is normal we have that λ is a real number. Furthermore, from $AB = \lambda BA$ we obtain

$$B^* A^* = \lambda A^* B^* \Leftrightarrow BA = \lambda AB = \lambda^2 BA \Leftrightarrow (1 - (\lambda)^2)BA = 0. \text{ Since } AB \neq 0 \text{ we obtain } \lambda = \pm 1$$

Corollary 2.5

If A and B are anti-selfadjoint operators such that $AB = \lambda BA$ and $AB \neq 0$ then either $W(AB)$ is a real or pure imaginary set.

Proof

If $\lambda = 1$ then AB is selfadjoint and so $W(AB)$ is real. If $\lambda = -1$ then AB is anti-selfadjoint and so $W(AB)$ is pure imaginary.

References

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