Acta Math. Univ. Comenianae
Vol. LXVI, 2(1997), pp. 321–328

A FUJITA–TYPE THEOREM FOR THE LAPLACE EQUATION WITH A DYNAMICAL BOUNDARY CONDITION

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ABSTRACT. We find a critical exponent for global existence of positive solutions of the Laplace equation on a half-space with a dynamical boundary condition.

1. Introduction

Given a nonempty open subset X of $\mathbb{R}^m$ we denote by $BUC(X)$ the Banach space of all bounded and uniformly continuous functions on X, endowed with the supremum norm $\|\cdot\|_\infty$. We also put $BUC_+(X) := \{\, u \in BUC(X)\ ;\ u(x) \geq 0 \text{ for } x \in X \,\}$. Moreover, $\mathbb{H}^n := \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times (0,\infty)$ is the open upper half-space in $\mathbb{R}^n$, and its boundary $\partial\mathbb{H}^n$ is identified with $\mathbb{R}^{n-1}$.

We fix $q \in (1,\infty)$ and consider the following system:

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta u &= 0 && \text{in } \ \mathbb{H}^n \times (0,\infty)\ , \\ \partial_t u - \partial_n u &= u^q && \text{on } \partial\mathbb{H}^n \times (0,\infty)\ , \\ u(\cdot,0) &= \varphi && \text{on } \partial\mathbb{H}^n\ , \end{aligned} \tag{1.1}$$

where $\Delta = \partial_1^2 + \cdots + \partial_n^2$ is the Laplacian with respect to $x = (x', x_n) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$. By a solution of (1.1) on $[0,T)$ we mean a function

$$u \in C\big([0,T), BUC_+(\mathbb{H}^n)\big) \cap C^1\big((0,T), BUC(\mathbb{H}^n)\big) \tag{1.2}$$

such that $u(t) \in C^2(\mathbb{H}^n) \cap C^1(\bar{\mathbb{H}}^n)$ for $t > 0$, and u satisfies (1.1) point-wise, where $u(x,t) := u(t)(x)$. Note that this requires φ to belong to $BUC_+(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$. Of course, each solution, being harmonic, is analytic in $\mathbb{H}^n$ for $0 < t < T$.

A function $u \in C\big([0,T_\varphi), BUC_+(\mathbb{H}^n)\big)$ is a maximal solution of (1.1) if u is a solution on $[0,T_\varphi)$ and $[0,T_\varphi)$ is a maximal interval with this property. If $T_\varphi = \infty$ and u is a solution on $[0,\infty)$ then u is a global solution of (1.1).

The following theorem is the main result of this paper:

Received October 10, 1997.
1980 *Mathematics Subject Classification* (1991 *Revision*). Primary 35J05, 35B05.
Key words and phrases. Global existence, blow-up, Laplace equation, dynamical boundary condition.

Theorem. *Problem* (1.1) *possesses for each* $\varphi \in BUC_+(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$ *a unique maximal solution* u_φ. *If* $T_\varphi < \infty$ *then* u_φ *'blows up', that is,*

$$\lim_{t \to T_\varphi} \|u_\varphi(t)\|_\infty = \infty \ .$$

If $q \le n/(n-1)$ *then every nonzero maximal solution blows up in finite time (that is,* $T_\varphi < \infty$*). If* $q > n/(n-1)$ *then there are solutions that exist globally as well as solutions that blow up in finite time.*

Observe, in particular, that each nonzero maximal solution blows up in finite time if $n = 1$.

Intuitively, the above result can be explained as follows: If $\varphi \in L_1 \cap BUC_+$ then the solution of the linear problem

$$\begin{aligned} \Delta u &= 0 && \text{in } \ \mathbb{H}^n \times (0,\infty) \ , \\ \partial_t u - \partial_n u &= 0 && \text{on } \partial\mathbb{H}^n \times (0,\infty) \ , \\ u(\cdot,0) &= \varphi && \text{on } \partial\mathbb{H}^n \ , \end{aligned} \tag{1.3}$$

is global and decays with rate t^{1-n}, as will be shown in Section 2. On the other hand, each solution of the ordinary differential equation $\dot{u} = u^q$ blows up in finite time with rate $(T-t)^{1/(1-q)}$, where $T := T\big(u(0), q\big)$. Therefore the solution q $(\,= n/(n-1))$ of equation $n - 1 = 1/(q-1)$ can be expected to be a critical exponent for global existence.

Let us mention here that problem (1.1) possesses positive stationary states iff $q \ge n/(n-2)$ (cf. [**H**], [**CSF**], [**CCFS**]).

In the case of bounded domains, problems analogous to (1.1) have been studied recently in [**E1–3**], [**K**], [**FQ**], for example. References to earlier work can be found in [**E1**].

Beginning with the classical paper by Fujita [**F**], blow-up results of the above type have been established for many classes of parabolic problems (see [**L**] for a survey, and [**DFL**], [**EL**], [**FL**], [**FLU**], [**GL1–2**], [**HY1–3**], [**KO**], [**LQ**], [**MS**], [**MY**], and [**S**] for some more recent results). 'Fujita-type theorems' are also known for nonlinear Schrödinger and wave equations (also cf. [**L**] and the references given therein). The interest in our (model) problem stems from the fact that system (1.1) is equivalent to an evolution equation of the form

$$\dot{u} + Au = u^q \ , \quad t > 0 \ , \qquad u(0) = \varphi \tag{1.4}$$

in $BUC(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$, where A is a pseudodifferential operator of degree 1 (see Section 2). Thus the Theorem is a Fujita-type result for a new class of equations.

2. Preliminaries

The case $n=1$ is trivial. Therefore we assume henceforth that $n \geq 2$ and study (1.1) by means of a 'variation-of-constants formula', which we establish now.

We denote by $\widehat{u} = \mathcal{F}u$ the (partial) Fourier transform with respect to $x' \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$ (in the space $\mathcal{S}'(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$ of temperate distributions). Then the first equation in (1.3) yields

$$\partial_n^2 \widehat{u}(\cdot, x_n, t) - |\xi'|^2\, \widehat{u}(\cdot, x_n, t) = 0\ , \qquad x_n, t > 0\ .$$

Hence

$$\widehat{u}(\cdot, x_n, t) = \widehat{u}(\cdot, 0, t) e^{-x_n\,|\xi'|}\ , \tag{2.1}$$

and we infer from the second equation in (1.3) that

$$\partial_t \widehat{u}(\cdot, 0, t) + |\xi'|\, \widehat{u}(\cdot, 0, t) = 0\ , \qquad t > 0\ .$$

Thus $\widehat{u}(\cdot, 0, t) = e^{-t\,|\xi'|}\widehat{\varphi}$ for $t \geq 0$, and it follows from (2.1) that

$$\widehat{u}(\cdot, x_n, t) = e^{-(x_n+t)\,|\xi'|}\widehat{\varphi}\ , \qquad x_n > 0\ , \quad t > 0\ . \tag{2.2}$$

Put $\Lambda(x') := \bigl(1 + |x'|^2\bigr)^{1/2}$ for $x' \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$ and $c_n := \|\Lambda^{-n}\|_1^{-1}$, where $\|\cdot\|_r$ is the norm in $L_r := L_r(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$ for $1 \leq r \leq \infty$, and let

$$p_\tau(x') := \tau^{1-n} c_n \Lambda^{-n}(x'/\tau)\ , \qquad \tau > 0\ , \quad x' \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1}\ . \tag{2.3}$$

Then $\{\, p_\tau\ ;\ \tau > 0 \,\}$ is the $(n-1)$-dimensional Poisson kernel, and we deduce from (2.2), by taking the inverse Fourier transform, that

$$u(\cdot, x_n, t) = p_{x_n+t} * \varphi =: P(x_n + t)\varphi\ , \qquad x_n \geq 0\ , \quad t > 0\ , \tag{2.4}$$

denoting by $\bigl\{\, P(\tau)\ ;\ \tau \geq 0 \,\bigr\}$ the Poisson convolution semigroup on $\mathbb{R}^{n-1}$. It is well-known that $\bigl\{\, P(\tau)\ ;\ \tau \geq 0 \,\bigr\}$ is a strongly continuous analytic semigroup of contractions on $BUC(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$ whose negative infinitesimal generator equals the $BUC(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$-realization of $A := \mathcal{F}^{-1}\,|\xi'|\,\mathcal{F}$. By invoking standard properties of this semigroup (e.g., [**A**]) it is not difficult to see that u, as given by (2.4), is a global solution of (1.3) and the only one (in our class of solutions satisfying (1.2)). Note that (2.3) and (2.4) also imply that if $\varphi \in L_1 \cap BUC_+$ then

$$\|u(t)\|_\infty = O(t^{1-n})\ , \qquad t \to \infty\ ,$$

and it is easily seen that this decay rate is exact.

Let γ be the trace operator for $\partial\mathbb{H}^n$, that is, $\gamma w(x') := w(x', 0)$ for $w \in C(\bar{\mathbb{H}}^n)$. Then an obvious modification of the above considerations also shows that u is a solution of (1.1) on $[0,T)$ iff $v := \gamma u$ is a solution of (1.4) on $[0,T)$. In fact, if v is a solution of (1.4) on $[0,T)$ then

$$u(\cdot, x_n, t) := P(x_n)v(t) \ , \qquad x_n \geq 0 \ , \quad t \geq 0 \ , \tag{2.5}$$

is its unique harmonic extension over $\mathbb{H}^n \times [0,T)$ such that $u(\cdot,\cdot,t)$ is bounded on $\mathbb{H}^n$ for $0 < t < T$.

As usual, we associate with (1.4) the Volterra integral equation

$$v(t) = P(t)\varphi + \int_0^t P(t-\tau)v^q(t)\,d\tau \ , \qquad t \geq 0 \ , \tag{2.6}$$

in $BUC(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$. Standard arguments guarantee that it possesses a unique maximal solution

$$v_\varphi \in C\big([0,T_\varphi), BUC_+(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})\big) \tag{2.7}$$

and that

$$\lim_{t\to T_\varphi} \|v_\varphi(t)\|_\infty = \infty \tag{2.8}$$

if $T_\varphi < \infty$. Thus v_φ is a mild solution of (1.4). Using Besov spaces and regularity properties of the Poisson semigroup in these spaces it can be shown that v_φ is a classical solution of (1.4), that is, $v_\varphi(t) \in \mathrm{dom}(A)$ for $t \in (0,T_\varphi)$ and Av_φ belongs to $C\big((0,T_\varphi), BUC_+(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})\big)$, and v_φ satisfies (1.4) on $[0,T)$ in the point-wise sense. In fact, it can be shown that

$$v_\varphi \in C^1\big((0,T_\varphi), BUC(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})\big) \cap C\big((0,T_\varphi), BUC^2(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})\big) \ , \tag{2.9}$$

where $u \in BUC^2$ iff $\partial^\alpha u \in BUC$ for $|\alpha| \leq 2$. Since we do not need these regularity results for the blow-up considerations we refrain from giving details and refer the interested reader to [**A**].

Note that (2.7) and (2.9) imply that u_φ, as defined by (2.5) with v replaced by v_φ, is the unique maximal solution of (1.1). Moreover, (2.8) shows that the supremum norm of $u_\varphi(t)$ over $\mathbb{H}^n$ blows up as $t \to T$, provided T_φ is finite. Also note that u_φ is characterized by being the unique maximal solution of the integral equation

$$u(\cdot, x_n, t) = P(x_n + t)\varphi + \int_0^t P(x_n + t - \tau)u^q(\cdot, 0, \tau)\,d\tau \ , \qquad x_n > 0 \ , \quad t \geq 0 \ ,$$

in $BUC(\mathbb{H}^n)$, as follows from the semigroup property of P.

The above considerations prove the existence and uniqueness assertion of the Theorem and also the fact that u_φ blows up if T_φ is finite. It should be mentioned that uniqueness is lost if we drop the condition that $u_\varphi(t)$ be bounded on $\mathbb{H}^n$ for $0 \leq t < T_\varphi$. Indeed, if φ is a positive constant and g is any C^1-function of one variable satisfying $g(0) = \varphi$ and $\dot g(t) \geq g^q(t)$ for $0 \leq t < T$, then

$$u(x,t) := \big(\dot g(t) - g^q(t)\big)x_n + g(t) \ , \qquad (x,t) \in \mathbb{H}^n \times [0,T) \ ,$$

is a solution of (1.1).

3. Blow-Up and Global Existence

Thanks to the observations in Section 2 it suffices to study the blow-up behavior of the unique maximal solution of integral equation (2.6) in the Banach space $E := BUC(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$. Note that E is ordered by the positive cone $E_+ := BUC_+(\mathbb{R}^{n-1})$ and that $\{ P(t) \; ; \; t \geq 0 \}$ is a positivity preserving semigroup on E.

For abbreviation we write (2.6) in the form

$$u(t) = P(t)\varphi + P * f(u)(t) \; , \qquad t \geq 0 \; , \tag{3.1}$$

where $f(u) := u^q$. Then we prove the following comparison principle:

Lemma 1. *Let v be a solution of (3.1) on $[0,T]$ and suppose that $w \in C\big([0,T], E_+\big)$ satisfies*

$$w(t) \geq P(t)\psi + P * f(w)(t) \; , \qquad 0 \leq t \leq T \; , \tag{3.2}$$

for some $\psi \in E_+$. Then $\psi \geq \varphi$ implies $w \geq v$.

Proof. Suppose that $\delta \in (0,T]$ and $a_j \in C\big([0,\delta], E_+\big)$ for $j = 0, 1$ with $a_0 \geq a_1$. Also suppose that $u_j \in C\big([0,\delta], E_+\big)$ satisfies $u_j = a_j + P * f(u_j)$ on $[0,\delta]$ and that $u_j = \lim_{k\to\infty} u_j^k$ in $C\big([0,\delta], E_+\big)$, where the sequence $(u_j^k)_{k\in\mathbb{N}}$ is obtained by the iteration scheme $u_j^0 := a_j$ and $u_j^{k+1} := a_j + P * f(u_j^k)$ for $k \in \mathbb{N}$ and $j = 0, 1$. Then $a_0 \geq a_1$, the positivity of P, and the fact that f is increasing imply by induction that $u_0^k \geq u_1^k$ for $k \in \mathbb{N}$. Hence $u_0 \geq u_1$.

From (3.2) we infer the existence of $b \in C\big([0,T], E_+\big)$ such that

$$w = b + P(\cdot)\psi + P * f(w)$$

on $[0,T]$. Thus

$$a_0 := b + P(\cdot)\psi \geq P(\cdot)\varphi =: a_1$$

and $u_0 := w$ and $u_1 := v$ satisfy $u_j = a_j + P * f(u_j)$ on $[0,T]$. Since f is locally Lipschitz continuous it is well-known that there exists $\delta \in (0,T]$ such that u_j can be obtained on $[0,\delta]$ by the above iteration scheme. Hence $w \,|\, [0,\delta] \geq v \,|\, [0,\delta]$ by the first part of the proof. Since (3.1) is autonomous we can apply this argument once more with ψ and φ replaced by $w(\delta)$ and $v(\delta)$, respectively, to find that $w \,|\, [0,\delta_1] \geq v \,|\, [0,\delta_1]$ for some $\delta_1 \in (0,T]$. Then standard arguments guarantee that $w \geq v$ as long as both solutions exist, that is, on all of $[0,T]$. □

Since the Poisson kernel is positive and satisfies $\int p_t(x')\,dx' = 1$ for $t > 0$, it follows from Jensen's inequality that

$$P(\tau)u^q = P(\tau)f(u) = p_\tau * f(u) \geq f(p_\tau * u) = (p_\tau * u)^q$$

for $\tau \geq 0$ and $u \in E_+$. Thus the proof of Theorem 5 in [**W1**] implies the existence of a constant $c := c(q)$ such that

$$t^{1/(q-1)} P(t)\varphi \leq c \ , \qquad 0 \leq t < T_\varphi \ , \quad \varphi \in E_+ \ . \tag{3.3}$$

Using this estimate we can derive the following blow-up result along the lines of the proof of Theorem 1 in [**W2**]. For the reader's convenience we include the details.

Lemma 2. *If $q \leq n/(n-1)$ then each nonzero solution blows up in finite time.*

Proof. Suppose that $\varphi \in E_+ \backslash \{0\}$ and $T_\varphi = \infty$. Thanks to Lemma 1 we can assume that $\varphi \in L_1$. Since $t^{n-1} p_t \to c_n$ point-wise as $t \to \infty$, it follows that

$$\lim_{t\to\infty} t^{n-1} P(t)\varphi = c_n \, \|\varphi\|_1 \tag{3.4}$$

point-wise. This contradicts (3.3) if $q < n/(n-1)$.

Suppose that $q = n/(n-1)$. From $1 + |x' - y'|^2 \leq 2(1 + |x'|^2)(1 + |y'|^2)$ we infer

$$P(1)\varphi = p_1 * \varphi \geq \alpha p_1 \ ,$$

where $\alpha := 2^{-n/2} \, \|\Lambda^{-n}\varphi\|_1$. Hence (3.1) implies

$$u_\varphi(t+1) \geq P(t+1)\varphi = P(t)P(1)\varphi \geq \alpha P(t) p_1 = \alpha p_{t+1} \ , \qquad t \geq 0 \ ,$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \|u_\varphi(t+1)\|_1 \geq \big\| P * f(u_\varphi)(t+1) \big\|_1 &\geq \alpha^q \int_0^{t+1} \big\| P(t+1-\tau) f(p_{\tau+1}) \big\|_1 \, d\tau \\ &= \alpha^q \int_0^{t+1} \|f(p_{\tau+1})\|_1 \, d\tau \end{aligned} \tag{3.5}$$

for $t \geq 0$, since $\|P(t)v\|_1 = \|v\|_1$ for $v \in E_+$ by Fubini's theorem. Note that

$$\|f(p_{\tau+1})\|_1 = (\tau+1)^{-1} c_n^q \, \|\Lambda^{-nq}\|_1$$

since $q = n/(n-1)$. From this, together with (3.5) we deduce that

$$\lim_{t\to\infty} \|u_\varphi(t)\|_1 = \infty \ . \tag{3.6}$$

On the other hand, (3.3) (with $q = n/(n-1)$) and (3.4) guarantee the existence of a constant c such that $\|\varphi\|_1 \leq c$ for any $\varphi \in E_+$ with $T_\varphi = \infty$. Thus, in particular, $\|u_\varphi(t)\|_1 \leq c$ for $t \geq 0$, which contradicts (3.6). □

Lemma 3. *If $q > n/(n-1)$ then there are global solutions.*

Proof. Note that $\alpha := n - (1-1/q)^{-1} > 0$. Put $c := \alpha^{1/(q-1)}/c_n$ and $v(t) := ct^\alpha p_t$ for $t > 0$. Then $\dot{p}_t = -Ap_t$ for $t > 0$ and

$$\dot{v}(t) = \alpha c t^{\alpha-1} p_t + ct^\alpha \dot{p}_t = \alpha t^{-1} v(t) - Av(t) \ , \qquad t > 0 \ .$$

It is easily verified that $\alpha t^{-1} v(t) \geq f\big(v(t)\big)$ so that $\dot{v} + Av \geq f(v)$ on $(0,\infty)$. From this it follows that $w(t) := v(t+1)$ satisfies $w(t) \geq P(t)v(1) + P * f(w)(t)$ for $t \geq 0$. Now the assertion is a consequence of Lemma 1. $\square$

Lastly, suppose that u_φ is a solution on $[0, T_\varphi)$ for some $\varphi \in E_+ \backslash \{0\}$. Then it follows from (3.3) that there exists $k_0 > 0$ such that $T_{k\varphi} < T_\varphi$ for $k \geq k_0$. Hence there exist solutions that blow up in finite time.

Acknowledgments Parts of this work were done while the first author visited Comenius University and while the second author visited the University of Zürich. The first author was partially supported by Schweizerischer Nationalfonds and the second one by VEGA Grant 1/4190/97.

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