



## Computing the index of Lie algebras

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**Abstract.** The aim of this paper is to compute and discuss the index of Lie algebras. We consider the  $n$ -dimensional Lie algebras for  $n < 5$  and the case of filiform Lie algebras which form a special class of nilpotent Lie algebras. We compute the index of generalized Heisenberg algebras and graded filiform Lie algebras  $L_n$  and  $Q_n$ . We also discuss the evolution of the Lie algebra index by deformation.

**Key words:** Lie algebra, index, regular vector, deformation.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The index theory of Lie algebras was intensively studied by Elashvili (see [5–8]), in particular the case of semi-simple Lie algebras and Frobenius Lie algebras. He classified all the algebraic Frobenius algebras up to dimension 6. In [3], the authors connect the computation of the index to combinatorial theory of meanders and evaluate the index of a Lie algebra of seaweed type, which is equal to the number of cycles in an associated permutation. The index of semi-simple Lie algebras was also studied in [21]. The authors of that paper consider a semi-simple Lie algebra  $\mathcal{G}$  with a Cartan subalgebra  $h$ ,  $R$  its corresponding root system,  $\pi$  a base of  $R$ , and  $S, T$  subsets of  $\pi$ . They provide an upper bound for the index of  $\mathcal{G}_{S,T}$ , the direct sum of  $h$ , and the sum of the root spaces for the positive roots in the space spanned by  $S$  and the sum of the root spaces for the negative roots in the space spanned by  $T$ . They then verify that this inequality is actually an equality in a number of special cases and conjecture that equality holds in all cases. See also [20], where the index of a Borel subalgebra of a semi-simple Lie algebra is determined.

The aim of this paper is to compute the index of Lie algebras in low dimensions and in general for some special cases. In Section 2 we summarize the index theory of Lie algebras. Then, in Section 3, we recall the classification of  $n$ -dimensional Lie algebras for  $n < 5$  and compute the indexes for all these Lie algebras. Section 4 is dedicated to nilpotent Lie algebras and specially to filiform Lie algebras. We consider the generalized Heisenberg Lie algebras and the two graded filiform Lie algebras  $L_n$  and  $Q_n$ . Notice that  $L_n$  plays an important role in the study of filiform and nilpotent Lie algebras. It is known that any  $n$ -dimensional filiform Lie algebra may be obtained by deformation of the one of the filiform Lie algebras  $L_n$ . In the last Section we study the evolution by deformation of the index of a Lie algebra. We prove that the index of a Lie algebra decreases by deformation.

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## 2. INDEX OF LIE ALGEBRAS

Throughout this paper  $\mathbb{K}$  is an algebraically closed field of characteristic 0. In this Section we summarize the index theory of Lie algebras.

**Definition 1.** A Lie algebra  $\mathcal{G}$  over  $\mathbb{K}$  is a pair consisting of a vector space  $\mathbb{V} = \mathcal{G}$  and a skew-symmetric bilinear map  $[\cdot, \cdot] : \mathcal{G} \times \mathcal{G} \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$   $(x, y) \rightarrow [x, y]$  satisfying the Jacobi identity

$$[x, [y, z]] + [y, [z, x]] + [z, [x, y]] = 0 \quad \forall x, y, z \in \mathcal{G}.$$

Let  $x \in \mathcal{G}$ . We denote by  $adx$  the endomorphism of  $\mathcal{G}$  defined by  $adx(y) = [x, y] \forall y \in \mathcal{G}$ .

Let  $\mathbb{V}$  be a finite-dimensional vector space over  $\mathbb{K}$  provided with the Zariski topology,  $\mathcal{G}$  be a Lie algebra and  $\mathcal{G}^*$  its dual. Then  $\mathcal{G}$  acts on  $\mathcal{G}^*$  as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{G} \times \mathcal{G}^* &\rightarrow \mathcal{G}^*, \\ (x, f) &\mapsto x \cdot f, \end{aligned}$$

where  $\forall y \in \mathcal{G} : (x \cdot f)(y) = f([x, y])$ .

Let  $f \in \mathcal{G}^*$  and  $\Phi_f$  be a skew-symmetric bilinear form defined by

$$\begin{aligned} \Phi_f : \mathcal{G} \times \mathcal{G} &\rightarrow \mathbb{K}, \\ (x, y) &\mapsto \Phi_f(x, y) = f([x, y]). \end{aligned}$$

We denote the kernel of the map  $\Phi_f$  by  $\mathcal{G}^f$ :

$$\mathcal{G}^f = \{x \in \mathcal{G} : f([x, y]) = 0 \quad \forall y \in \mathcal{G}\}.$$

**Definition 2.** The index of Lie algebra  $\mathcal{G}$  is the integer  $\chi_{\mathcal{G}} = \inf \{ \dim \mathcal{G}^f ; f \in \mathcal{G}^* \}$ . A linear functional  $f \in \mathcal{G}^*$  is called regular if  $\dim \mathcal{G}^f = \chi_{\mathcal{G}}$ . The set of all regular linear functionals is denoted by  $\mathcal{G}_r^*$ .

**Remark 3.** The set  $\mathcal{G}_r^*$  of all regular linear functionals is a nonempty Zariski open set.

Let  $\{x_1, \dots, x_n\}$  be a basis of  $\mathcal{G}$ . We can express the index using the matrix  $([x_i, x_j])_{1 \leq i < j \leq n}$  as a matrix over the ring  $S(\mathcal{G})$ , (see [4]). We have the following proposition:

**Proposition 4.** The index of an  $n$ -dimensional Lie algebra  $\mathcal{G}$  is the integer

$$\chi_{\mathcal{G}} = n - \text{Rank}_{R(\mathcal{G})} ([x_i, x_j])_{1 \leq i < j \leq n},$$

where  $R(\mathcal{G})$  is the quotient field of the symmetric algebra  $S(\mathcal{G})$ .

**Remark 5.** The index of an  $n$ -dimensional Abelian Lie algebra is  $n$ .

**Definition 6.** A Lie algebra  $\mathcal{G}$  over an algebraically closed field of characteristic 0 is said to be Frobenius if there exists a linear form  $f \in \mathcal{G}^*$  such that the bilinear form  $\Phi_f$  on  $\mathcal{G}$  is nondegenerate.

In [7] the author described all the Frobenius algebraic Lie algebras  $\mathcal{G} = R + N$  whose nilpotent radical  $N$  is Abelian in the following two cases: the reductive Levi subalgebra  $R$  acts on  $N$  irreducibly;  $R$  is simple. He classified all the algebraic Frobenius algebras up to dimension 6. See also [16–18] for further computations.

### 3. LIE ALGEBRAS OF DIMENSION $n < 5$

In this section we compute the index of  $n$ -dimensional Lie algebras with  $n < 5$ . Let  $\mathcal{G}$  be an  $n$ -dimensional Lie algebra and  $\{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n\}$  be a fixed basis of  $\mathbb{V} = \mathcal{G}$ .

Any  $n$ -dimensional Lie algebra with  $n < 5$  is isomorphic to one of the following Lie algebras.

**Dimension 2**

$$\mathcal{G}_2^1 : [x_1, x_2] = x_2.$$

**Dimension 3**

$$\mathcal{G}_3^1 : [x_1, x_2] = x_3.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_3^2 : [x_1, x_2] = x_2, [x_1, x_3] = \alpha x_3, \alpha \neq 0.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_3^3 : [x_1, x_2] = x_2 + x_3, [x_1, x_3] = x_3.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_3^4 : [x_1, x_3] = -2x_2, [x_1, x_3] = -2x_3.$$

**Dimension 4**

$$\mathcal{G}_4^1 : [x_1, x_2] = x_2, [x_1, x_3] = \alpha x_3, [x_1, x_4] = (1 + \alpha)x_4, [x_2, x_3] = x_4.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_4^2 : [x_1, x_2] = x_2 + x_3, [x_1, x_3] = x_3, [x_1, x_4] = 2x_4, [x_2, x_3] = x_4.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_4^3 : [x_1, x_3] = x_3, [x_1, x_4] = x_4, [x_2, x_3] = x_4.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_4^4 : [x_1, x_2] = x_2, [x_1, x_3] = \alpha x_3, [x_1, x_4] = \beta x_3.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_4^5 : [x_1, x_2] = \alpha x_2, [x_1, x_3] = x_3 + x_4, [x_1, x_4] = x_4.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_4^6 : [x_1, x_2] = x_2 + x_3, [x_1, x_3] = x_3 + x_4, [x_1, x_4] = x_4.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_4^7 : [x_1, x_2] = x_3, [x_1, x_4] = x_4.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_4^8 : [x_1, x_2] = x_3, [x_1, x_3] = x_4.$$

$$\mathcal{G}_4^9 : [x_1, x_2] = 2x_2, [x_1, x_3] = -2x_3.$$

The computations of the index using Proposition 4 lead to the following result.

**Proposition 7.** *The index of  $n$ -dimensional Lie algebras with  $n < 5$  is*

$$\begin{aligned} \chi(\mathcal{G}_2^1) &= 0, \\ \chi(\mathcal{G}_3^i) &= 1 \text{ for } i = 1, 2, 3, 4, \\ \chi(\mathcal{G}_4^1) &= 0 \text{ if } \alpha \neq -1 \text{ and } \chi(\mathcal{G}_4^1) = 2 \text{ if } \alpha = -1, \\ \chi(\mathcal{G}_4^i) &= 0 \text{ for } i = 2, 3, \quad \chi(\mathcal{G}_4^i) = 2 \text{ for } i = 4, \dots, 9. \end{aligned}$$

*Proof.* By direct computations we obtain:

**Index of the 2-dimensional Lie algebra:** The corresponding matrix of  $\mathcal{G}_2^1$  is  $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_2 \\ -x_2 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ .

Since its rank is 2,  $\chi(\mathcal{G}_2^1) = 0$ .

**Index of 3-dimensional Lie algebras:**

We make the computation for  $\mathcal{G}_3^1$ . The corresponding matrix is

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_3 & 0 \\ -x_3 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

It is of rank 2, then  $\chi(\mathcal{G}_3^1) = 1$ .

The corresponding matrices of Lie algebras  $\mathcal{G}_3^2, \mathcal{G}_3^3, \mathcal{G}_3^4$  are of rank 2, so the index is equal to 1.

**Index of 4-dimensional Lie algebras:** We make the computation for  $\mathcal{G}_4^1$ . The corresponding matrix of  $\mathcal{G}_4^1$  is

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_2 & \alpha x_3 & (1 + \alpha)x_4 \\ -x_2 & 0 & x_4 & 0 \\ -\alpha x_3 & -x_4 & 0 & 0 \\ -(1 + \alpha)x_4 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

The determinant of this matrix is  $(1 + \alpha)^2 x_4^2$ . Then it is of rank 4 if  $\alpha \neq -1$ . When  $\alpha \neq -1$ , the matrix is of rank 2. Thus,  $\chi(\mathcal{G}_4^1) = 0$  if  $\alpha \neq -1$  and  $\chi(\mathcal{G}_4^1) = 2$  if  $\alpha = -1$ .

In a similar way we find that the corresponding matrices for the Lie algebras  $\mathcal{G}_4^2, \mathcal{G}_4^3$  are of rank 4, so their index is equal to 0, and the corresponding matrices for the Lie algebras  $\mathcal{G}_4^4, \dots, \mathcal{G}_4^9$  are of rank 2, so their index is equal to 2. Details of calculations can be found in [1]. □

#### 4. INDEX OF NILPOTENT AND FILIFORM LIE ALGEBRAS

Let  $\mathcal{G}$  be a Lie algebra. We set  $\mathcal{C}^0\mathcal{G} = \mathcal{G}$  and  $\mathcal{C}^k\mathcal{G} = [\mathcal{C}^{k-1}\mathcal{G}, \mathcal{G}]$ , for  $k > 0$ . A Lie algebra  $\mathcal{G}$  is said to be nilpotent if there exists an integer  $p$  such that  $\mathcal{C}^p\mathcal{G} = 0$ . The smallest  $p$  such that  $\mathcal{C}^p\mathcal{G} = 0$  is called the nilindex of  $\mathcal{G}$ . Then a nilpotent Lie algebra has a natural filtration given by the central descending sequence:  $\mathcal{G} = \mathcal{C}^0\mathcal{G} \supseteq \mathcal{C}^1\mathcal{G} \supseteq \dots \mathcal{C}^{p-1}\mathcal{G} \supseteq \mathcal{C}^p\mathcal{G} = 0$ .

We have the following characterization of nilpotent Lie algebras (Engel’s theorem).

**Theorem 8.** *A Lie algebra  $\mathcal{G}$  is nilpotent if and only if the operator  $adx$  is nilpotent for all  $x$  in  $\mathcal{G}$ .*

**Example 9.** We consider the generalized Heisenberg algebra, which is a  $(2n + 1)$ -dimensional Lie algebra  $\mathcal{G}$  given, with respect to a basis  $\{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_{2n+1}\}$ , by the following nontrivial brackets:

$$[x_{2i+1}, x_{2i+2}] = x_{2n+1}; \quad i = 0, \dots, n - 1.$$

The associated matrix of  $\mathcal{G}$  is of the form

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_{2n+1} & \dots & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ -x_{2n+1} & 0 & \dots & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & \dots & 0 & x_{2n+1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \dots & -x_{2n+1} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \dots & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

This matrix is of rank  $2n$ , then the index of  $\mathcal{G}$  is  $\chi(\mathcal{G}) = 1$ . The regular vectors are of the form  $f = \sum_{i=1}^{2k} g_i x_i^* + x_{2k+1}^*$ .

In the study of nilpotent Lie algebras the filiform Lie algebras play an important role. This class was introduced by Vergne [22]. An  $n$ -dimensional nilpotent Lie algebra is called *filiform* if its nilindex  $p = n - 1$ . The filiform Lie algebras are the nilpotent algebras with the largest nilindex. If  $\mathcal{G}$  is an  $n$ -dimensional filiform Lie algebra, we have  $\dim \mathcal{C}^i\mathcal{G} = n - i$  for  $2 \leq i \leq n$ .

Another characterization of filiform Lie algebras uses characteristic sequences  $c(\mathcal{G}) = \sup\{c(x) : x \in \mathcal{G} \setminus [\mathcal{G}, \mathcal{G}]\}$ , where  $c(x)$  is the sequence, in decreasing order, of dimensions of characteristic subspaces of the nilpotent operator  $adx$ . Thus an  $n$ -dimensional nilpotent Lie algebra is filiform if its characteristic sequence is of the form  $c(\mathcal{G}) = (n - 1, 1)$ .

The classification of filiform Lie algebras was given by Vergne ([22]) until dimension 6 and was extended to dimension 11 by several authors (see [2,13,14,19]).

Throughout the classification of  $n$ -dimensional Lie algebra  $n < 5$ , there are only two isomorphic classes of filiform Lie algebras, that is  $\mathcal{G}_3^1$  and  $\mathcal{G}_4^8$ , and their indexes are  $\chi(\mathcal{G}_3^1) = 1, \chi(\mathcal{G}_4^8) = 2$ .

The 5-dimensional filiform Lie algebras are isomorphic to one of the following Lie algebras:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{G}_5^1 &: [x_1, x_i] = x_{i+1}, \text{ for } i = 2, 3, 4, \\ \mathcal{G}_5^2 &: [x_1, x_i] = x_{i+1}, \text{ for } i = 2, 3, 4 \text{ and } [x_2, x_3] = x_5. \end{aligned}$$

Their indexes are  $\chi(\mathcal{G}_5^1) = 3, \chi(\mathcal{G}_5^2) = 1$ . The regular vectors of  $\mathcal{G}_5^1$  are of the form  $f = g_1x_1^* + g_2x_2^* + g(x_3^* + x_4^* + x_5^*)$  with  $g \neq 0$  and the regular vectors of  $\mathcal{G}_5^2$  are of the form  $f = (\sum_{i=1}^4 g_i x_i^*) + x_5^*$ .

In the general case there are two classes  $L_n$  and  $Q_n$  of filiform Lie algebras which play an important role in the study of the algebraic varieties of filiform and more generally nilpotent Lie algebras.

Let  $\{x_1, \dots, x_n\}$  be a basis of the  $\mathbb{K}$  vector space  $L_n$ . The Lie algebra structure of  $L_n$  is defined by the following nontrivial brackets:

$$[x_1, x_i] = x_{i+1}, \quad i = 2, \dots, n - 1. \tag{1}$$

Let  $\{x_1, \dots, x_{n=2k}\}$  be a basis of the  $\mathbb{K}$  vector space  $Q_n$ . The Lie algebra structure of  $Q_n$  is defined by the following nontrivial brackets:

$$\begin{aligned} [x_1, x_i] &= x_{i+1}, \quad i = 2, \dots, n - 1, \\ [x_i, x_{n-i+1}] &= (-1)^{i+1} x_n, \quad i = 2, \dots, k, \quad \text{where } n = 2k. \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

The classification of  $n$ -dimensional graded filiform Lie algebras yields two isomorphic classes  $L_n$  and  $Q_n$  when  $n$  is odd and only the Lie algebra  $L_n$  when  $n$  is even.

It turns out that any filiform Lie algebra is isomorphic to a Lie algebra obtained as a deformation of a Lie algebra  $L_n$ .

We aim to compute the indexes of  $L_n$  and  $Q_n$  and regular vectors.

Let  $\{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n\}$  be a fixed basis of the vector space  $\mathbb{V} = L_n$  (resp.  $\mathbb{V} = Q_n$ ) and  $\{x_1^*, \dots, x_n^*\}$  be a basis of the dual space. Define the Lie algebra  $L_n$  (resp.  $Q_n$ ) with respect to the basis by the brackets (1) (resp. (2)). Set  $f = \sum_{i \geq 0} g_i x_i^* \in \mathbb{V}^*$ .

**Proposition 10.** For  $n \geq 3$ , the index of the  $n$ -dimensional filiform Lie algebra  $L_n$  is  $\chi(L_n) = n - 2$ . The regular vectors of  $L_n$  are of the form  $f = \sum_{i=1}^n g_i x_i^*$  with one of  $g_i \neq 0$  where  $i \in \{3, \dots, n\}$ .

*Proof.* Since the corresponding matrix to the Lie algebra  $L_n$  is of the form

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_3 & \dots & x_n & 0 \\ -x_3 & 0 & \dots & 0 & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \vdots \\ -x_n & 0 & \dots & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \dots & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

and its rank is 2,  $\chi(L_n) = n - 2$ . The second assertion is obtained by a direct calculation. □

**Proposition 11.** For  $n = 2k$  and  $k \geq 2$ , the index of the  $n$ -dimensional filiform Lie algebra  $Q_n$  is  $\chi(Q_n) = 2$ . The regular vectors of  $Q_n$  are of the form  $f = \sum_{i=1}^n g_i x_i^*$  with  $g_n \neq 0$ .

*Proof.* Since the corresponding matrix to the Lie algebra  $Q_n$  is of the form

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_3 & x_4 & \dots & x_{n-1} & x_n & 0 \\ -x_3 & 0 & 0 & \dots & 0 & -x_n & 0 \\ -x_4 & 0 & 0 & \dots & x_n & 0 & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & -x_n & \dots & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ -x_n & x_n & 0 & \dots & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

and its rank is  $n - 2, \chi(Q_n) = 2$ . The second assertion is obtained by a direct calculation. □

## 5. INDEX AND DEFORMATIONS

We study now the evolution by deformation of the index of a Lie algebra. About deformation theory we refer to [9–12] and [15]. Let  $\mathbb{V}$  be a  $\mathbb{K}$ -vector space and  $\mathcal{G}_0 = (\mathbb{V}, [\cdot, \cdot]_0)$  be a Lie algebra. Let  $\mathbb{K}[[t]]$  be the power series ring in one variable  $t$  and coefficients in  $\mathbb{K}$  and  $\mathbb{V}[[t]]$  be the set of formal power series whose coefficients are elements of  $\mathbb{V}$ . A formal Lie deformation of  $\mathcal{G}_0$  is given by the  $\mathbb{K}[[t]]$ -bilinear map  $[\cdot, \cdot]_t : \mathbb{V}[[t]] \times \mathbb{V}[[t]] \rightarrow \mathbb{V}[[t]]$  of the form  $[\cdot, \cdot]_t = \sum_{i \geq 0} [\cdot, \cdot]_i t^i$ , where each  $[\cdot, \cdot]_i$  is a  $\mathbb{K}$ -bilinear map  $[\cdot, \cdot]_i : \mathbb{V} \times \mathbb{V} \rightarrow \mathbb{V}$ , satisfying the skew-symmetry and the Jacobi identity.

**Proposition 12.** *The index of a Lie algebra decreases by deformation.*

*Proof.* The rank of the matrix  $([X_i, X_j])_{i,j}$  increases by deformation, consequently the index decreases.  $\square$

**Corollary 13.** *The index of a filiform Lie algebra is less than or equal to  $n - 2$ .*

*Proof.* Any filiform Lie algebra  $\mathcal{N}$  is obtained as a deformation of the Lie algebra  $L_n$ . Since  $\chi(L_n) = n - 2$  using the previous lemma, one has  $\chi(\mathcal{N}) \leq n - 2$ .  $\square$

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## **Lie algebrate indeksi arvutamine**

Hadjer Adimi ja Abdenacer Makhlouf

Töö eesmärgiks on arvutada ja uurida Lie algebrate indeksi. On uuritud  $n$ -mõõtmelisi Lie algebrad, kui  $n < 5$ , teatavate Lie algebrate korral (nn filiform-algebrad), mis moodustavad nilpotentsete Lie algebrate alamklassi. On arvutatud üldistatud Heisenbergi algebrate ja gradueeritud filiform-algebrate indeks. Samuti on uuritud Lie algebrate indeksi evolutsiooni deformatsioonevolutsiooni.