

ACYLINDRICALLY HYPERBOLIC GROUPS AND COUNTING PROBLEMS

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ABSTRACT. We show that Morse elements are generic in acylindrically hyperbolic groups. As an application, we observe that fully irreducible outer automorphisms are generic in the outer automorphism group of a finite-rank free group.

Keywords. Mapping class group, pseudo-Anosov map, counting problem, weakly contracting axis
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1. INTRODUCTION

In non-positively curved manifolds and groups, certain geodesics or group elements exhibit hyperbolicity. A quasi-geodesic γ is said to be *Morse* if every quasi-geodesic of uniform quality connecting points on γ lies in a common neighborhood of γ . A group element g is called a *Morse element* if its orbit $\{g^i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$ is an unbounded Morse quasi-geodesic in the group.

In globally hyperbolic spaces such as $\text{CAT}(-1)$ spaces and Gromov hyperbolic spaces, every geodesic is Morse (of uniform quality). This corresponds to the fact that every infinite-order element in a word hyperbolic group is loxodromic and is Morse. Furthermore, “most” elements in a word hyperbolic group are Morse. To formulate this, given a group G and its generating set S , let $B_S(n)$ be the collection of group elements whose S -word length is at most n . We can ask if the proportion of Morse elements in $B_S(n)$ tends to 1 as n tends to infinity. This is indeed the case when G is an infinite word hyperbolic group [Dan], [GTT18], [Yan20].

Morse elements are found in many other groups with flat parts. One classic example is the mapping class group $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ of a finite-type hyperbolic surface Σ , whose Morse elements are precisely pseudo-Anosov mapping classes. In [Cho24], the author proved that the asymptotic density of pseudo-Anosovs in the mapping class group is 1. We establish a similar result for the class of *acylindrically hyperbolic groups*. Our main theorem is:

Theorem A. *Let G be an acylindrically hyperbolic group. Then for any finite generating set S of G , we have*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#\{g \in B_S(n) : g \text{ is Morse}\}}{\#B_S(n)} = 1.$$

In view of the equivalent definitions of acylindrically hyperbolic groups in [Osi16] (especially in relation to [BF02]), Theorem A is a restatement of the following more explicit theorem.

Theorem 1.1. *Let G be a group generated by a finite set $S \subseteq G$. Suppose that G acts on a Gromov hyperbolic space X and that there exists $g \in G$ that is a loxodromic isometry of X with the WPD property (cf. Definition 2.5). Then for any $M > 0$, we have*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#\{g \in B_S(n) : g \text{ is WPD loxodromic and satisfies } \tau_X(g) > M\}}{\#B_S(n)} = 1.$$

We note the following theorem by B. Wiest [Wie17], which was applied to the mapping class group by M. Cumplido and B. Wiest [CW18]: for any finitely generated group G having a non-elementary action on a Gromov hyperbolic space, the density of loxodromics is bounded away from

0. Hence, the main point of Theorem A and 1.1 is that the density has limit 1. Such a claim does not hold for general non-elementary actions.

Two important examples of acylindrically hyperbolic groups beyond hierarchically hyperbolic groups (HHGs) are $\text{Out}(F_N)$ and $\text{Aut}(F_N)$, the outer automorphism group and the automorphism group of the free group of rank $N \geq 3$. Theorem A tells us that most elements are Morse in large word metric balls in these groups. We can say more by focusing on a specific $\text{Out}(F_N)$ -action, namely, the one on the free factor complex \mathcal{FF}_N [BF14]:

Theorem 1.2. *Let $G = \text{Out}(F_N)$ be the outer automorphism group of the free group of rank N for some $N \geq 2$. Then for any finite generating set S of G , we have*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#\{g \in B_S(n) : g \text{ is an ageometric triangular fully irreducible element}\}}{\#B_S(n)} = 1.$$

We record a cute application to the mapping class group $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$. It seems hard to apply the method of [Cho24] to general non-elementary subgroups of $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$. However, since they all act on the curve complex $\mathcal{C}(\Sigma)$ with a WPD loxodromic element, we observe that:

Corollary 1.3. *Let $G \leq \text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ be a non-elementary subgroup of the mapping class group and let S be a finite generating set of G . Then for any $M > 0$, we have*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#\{g \in B_S(n) : g \text{ is pseudo-Anosov with stretch factor } \geq M\}}{\#B_S(n)} = 1.$$

In particular, pseudo-Anosovs are generic in the Torelli group. This generalizes the result of I. Gekhtman, S. Taylor, and G. Tiozzo regarding word hyperbolic groups acting on a Gromov hyperbolic space [GTT18, Theorem 1.12].

1.1. Comparison with other groups. To better illustrate Theorem 1.1, let us compare four groups that act on a Gromov hyperbolic space: the free group F_2 of rank 2, the mapping class group $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$, the outer automorphism group $\text{Out}(F_N)$ of the free group of rank $n \geq 2$, and the direct product $F_2 \times F_3$ of two free groups. All of these act on some Gromov hyperbolic space.

Let G be a group acting on a hyperbolic space X and let S be a finite generating set of G . Given a group element $g \in G$ and a basepoint $x_0 \in X$, let us define a function $f : \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \cup \{+\infty\}$ as follows. For any M -short word metric geodesic $[a, b] \subseteq G$, if a and b are D -apart along $\{g^i x_0\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$, then $[a, b]$ must pass through an $f(D, M)$ -neighborhood of $\{g^i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$ in G .

First, F_2 has proper action on its own Cayley graph $\text{Cay}(F_2)$. This implies that any coarse stabilizer of $v \in F_2$ is finite. Furthermore, each $g \in F_2 \setminus \{id\}$ has the so-called *strong contracting property*: if a geodesic $[a, b] \subseteq F_2$ makes nontrivial progress along $\{g^i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$, then $[a, b]$ passes through a bounded neighborhood of $\{g^i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$. In other words, $f(D, M)$ is constant in M for large enough D .

Second, $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ acts on the ambient curve complex $\mathcal{C}(\Sigma)$ and tuples of subsurface curve complexes $\mathcal{C}(U), U \subsetneq \Sigma$. Fixing a simple closed curve $x_0 \in \mathcal{C}(\Sigma)$, each $g \in \text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ gives rise to shadows $d_U(x_0, gx_0)$ on various $\{\mathcal{C}(U) : U \subseteq \Sigma\}$, using which the word metric on $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ can be (coarsely) estimated via distance formula [MM00]. One consequence of the distance formula and is the *weakly contracting property* of pseudo-Anosov orbits [Beh06], [DR09]. Explicitly, for each pseudo-Anosov mapping class g , there exists $\epsilon > 0$ such that if an M -short geodesic $[a, b] \subseteq \text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ makes progress D along $\{g^i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$, then $[a, b]$ passes through a $f(D, M) := (M \cdot e^{-\epsilon D})$ -neighborhood of $\{g^i\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$.

There is no direct analogue of the distance formula for $\text{Out}(F_N)$. As a result, we do not know whether fully irreducible outer automorphisms (which are analogues of pseudo-Anosovs) have the weakly contracting property on the Cayley graph of $\text{Out}(F_N)$. However, every fully irreducible outer automorphism g has the WPD property (for various hyperbolic actions, cf. [BF10], [Man14], [BF14]), i.e., the joint coarse stabilizer of g^i and g^j is finite when $|i - j|$ is large. This leads to an implicit contracting property, i.e., for every D and M the value of $f(D, M)$ is finite.

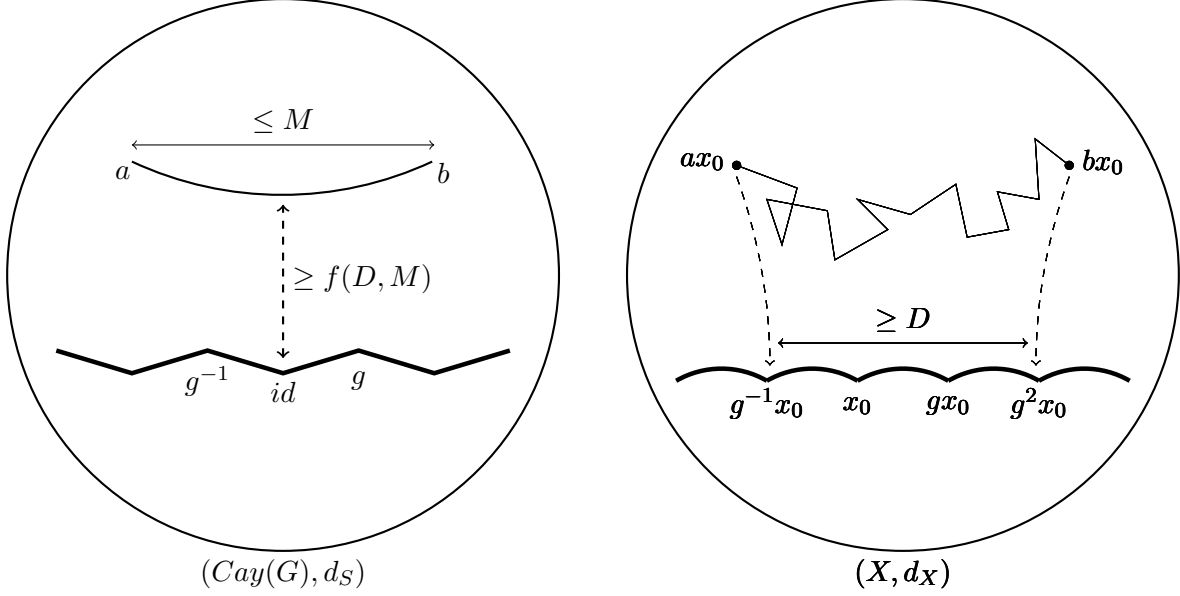


FIGURE 1. Schematics for $f(D, M)$ in Subsection 1.1

	δ -hyperbolic space	$f(D, M)$ for a fixed D	Density of non-loxodromics
F_2	$Cay(F_2)$	constant in M	$\lesssim \lambda^{-n}$ for some $\lambda > 1$
$\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$	$\mathcal{C}(\Sigma)$	linear in M	$\lesssim n^{-k}$ ($\forall k$)
$\text{Out}(F_N)$	\mathcal{FF}_N	finite	tends to 0
$F_2 \times F_3$	$Cay(F_2)$	$+\infty$	can be bounded away from 0

FIGURE 2. Properties of 4 actions and the density estimates

Finally, consider a trivial projection of $F_2 \times F_3$ onto the first factor F_2 . This gives rise to a natural action of $F_2 \times F_3$ on $Cay(F_2)$. This action has not only a large point stabilizer, but also a large global stabilizer. Namely, $\{id\} \times F_3$ acts trivially on $Cay(F_2)$. In addition, there is no contraction along loxodromics on F_2 , i.e., $f(D, M) = +\infty$. In general, if $X \times Y$ is a product space, a D -long geodesic γ can have D -large projection onto $X \times \{id\}$, regardless of the distance of γ from $X \times \{id\}$. Figure 2 summarizes the discussion so far.

In these four groups, the more information we have about the growth of $f(D, M)$, the better asymptotics of the density of non-loxodromics we can prove. In F_2 , the proportion of non-loxodromic elements in $B_S(n)$ decays exponentially fast in n . This is proved by W. Yang [Yan20] in groups with strongly contracting elements, including relatively hyperbolic groups and small cancellation groups.

For the mapping class group, the function $f(D, M)$ grows at most linearly in M . Using this property, it is shown in [Cho24] that the density of non-pseudo-Anosovs in $B_S(n)$ decays faster than n^{-k} for any $k > 0$. Similar growth behaviour of $f(D, M)$ is observed in HHGs with Morse elements, because loxodromics on the top curve space have the weakly contracting property. Rank-1 CAT(0) groups also fall into this category, as the strongly contracting property of a rank-1 element on the CAT(0) space implies its weak contracting property in the group.

Without control of $f(D, M)$, loxodromics can either be generic or non-generic depending on the generating set S . Indeed, there exist two finite generating sets S and S' of $F_2 \times F_3$, such that loxodromics (for the action on $Cay(F_2)$) are generic in S but not in S' . We refer readers to [GTT18,

Example 1]. This simple example also tells us that genericity of Morse elements of a group may not be preserved through a quasi-isometry.

This paper deals with $\text{Out}(F_N)$ and others of its ilk. There is no *a priori* control on the growth of $f(D, M)$ for acylindrically hyperbolic groups. Our main point is that, nonetheless, the finiteness of $f(D, M)$ is sufficient to conclude the genericity of loxodromics.

1.2. Another side of the story: random walks. There are two popular models to sample a random element in a group G . One is the counting method as in Theorem A. Namely, we consider a large word metric ball and choose an element with respect to the uniform measure. The other one is the random walk model: we put a probability measure μ on a generating set S of G (e.g., the uniform measure when S is finite) and investigate its n -fold convolution μ^{*n} .

For example, given a G -action on a Gromov hyperbolic space X , one can ask if $\mathbb{P}_{\mu^{*n}}(g \text{ is loxodromic})$ converges to 1 as n tends to infinity. This is closely related to a description of a typical sample path drawn on X , called *ray approximation* or *geodesic tracking*, that was pursued for word hyperbolic groups by V. Kaimanovich [Kai94]; see [Kai00] also. It was J. Maher's observation that neither the properness of X nor the properness of the action is necessary. As a result, Maher proved in [Mah11] that $\mathbb{P}_{\mu^{*n}}(g \text{ is pseudo-Anosov})$ converges to 1 in the mapping class group (I. Rivin independently proved this result using different method in [Riv08]).

Maher's observation was later generalized by J. Maher and G. Tiozzo in [MT18]: they proved that $\mathbb{P}_{\mu^{*n}}(g \text{ is loxodromic})$ converges to 1 as long as the G -action on X is non-elementary (i.e., S generates two independent loxodromics). In particular, random walks do not care if the group has a large subgroup with trivial action, given that they hit non-elementary loxodromic elements for a positive probability. Maher-Tiozzo's result indeed applies to all 4 group actions in Subsection 1.1.

Consequently, for the uniform measure μ_S on a finite generating set S of G , the genericity of loxodromics with respect to μ_S^{*n} does not imply the genericity with respect to (uniform measure on $B_S(n)$). This is anticipated by the fact that the two measures differ by an exponential factor in n .

If one is allowed to pick their favorite generating set S for G , then one can bring the estimates from random walks to the counting problem. This was indeed the strategy of [Cho21], where the author proved that every finitely generated weakly hyperbolic group has a finite generating set S for which loxodromics are generic. Since the asymptotic density may depend on the choice of S (as shown in [GTT18, Example 1]), this strategy does not establish Theorem A.

1.3. Beyond hyperbolic spaces. The method for Theorem 1.1 does not require global hyperbolicity of the space X . It only uses the *strongly contracting property* and the WPD property of $g \in G$ in X . For simplicity, however, we will not pursue this generality. It should be noted that the previous assumption does not imply that g is strongly contracting *in* G , i.e., with respect to the word metric. For example, the author does not know whether fully irreducibles are weakly contracting with respect to the word metrics (cf. [BD14, Question 6.8]).

For example, the method for Theorem 1.1 applies to finitely generated groups acting on a CAT(0) space (not necessarily cocompactly) that involves a rank-1 isometry with the WPD property. The study of strongly contracting isometries and their dynamics is growing rapidly. We refer the readers to the references in [ACT15], [Yan19], [Yan20], [Cou22], [SZ23], [DMGZ25].

In fact, the very notion of acylindrically hyperbolic group was already formulated in terms of contracting elements by A. Sisto [Sis18], who generalized Maher-Tiozzo's random walk theory in [MT18] to non-hyperbolic spaces. We also note a recent construction by H. Petyt and A. Zalloum [PZS24, Theorem B] that justifies why it suffices to consider WPD action on hyperbolic spaces.

1.4. Open questions. The methods in [Cho24] and this paper still do not answer:

Question 1.4. *Are pseudo-Anosovs exponentially generic in $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ with respect to every word metric?*

There are two types of word metrics for which exponential genericity of pseudo-Anosovs is known. One comes from generating sets mostly consisting of independent pseudo-Anosovs [Cho21]. The other recent one is due to L. Ding, D. Martínez-Granado and A. Zalloum [DMGZ25], where the authors consider the $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ -action on an injective metric space (Y, d_Y) and collect orbit points in a large d_Y -ball. It seems hard to push either method to handle arbitrary word metric.

For non-HHG, we can ask:

Question 1.5. *Are fully irreducibles exponentially generic in $\text{Out}(F_N)$ with respect to every word metric? Or, is it at least true for some $\alpha > 0$ that*

$$\frac{\#B_S(n) \cap \{\text{fully irreducibles}\}}{\#B_S(n)} \lesssim n^{-\alpha}?$$

This question might be answered for a given group G whenever we know the growth of the function $f(D, M)$ in Subsection 1.1.

Finally, we state a question related to Question 1.4.

Question 1.6. *Does $G = \text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ or $G = \text{Out}(F_N)$ have purely exponential growth? That means, for (some or every) finite generating set S of G , does there exist $K, \lambda > 1$ such that*

$$\frac{1}{K}\lambda^n \leq \#B_S(n) \leq K\lambda^n? \quad (\forall n > 0)$$

This question is answered by W. Yang for groups with strongly contracting elements [Yan19, Theorem B]. Meanwhile, we do not know the answer for $\text{Mod}(\Sigma)$ for any finite generating set.

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2. PRELIMINARIES

In this section, we collect some notions and facts about acylindrically hyperbolic groups. We refer to Gromov’s seminal paper [Gro87] and standard textbooks [CDP90], [GdlH90].

A metric space is said to be *geodesic* if every pair of points can be connected by a geodesic. For two points x and y in this space, we denote by $[x, y]$ an arbitrary geodesic connecting x to y . Given $\delta > 0$, we say that a geodesic metric space is δ -hyperbolic if every geodesic is δ -slim.

Given a geodesic $\gamma : I \rightarrow X$, we will sometimes denote the image $\text{Im}(\gamma) \subseteq X$ by γ . Based on this convention, we define the *closest point projection* $\pi_\gamma : X \rightarrow 2^\gamma$ by

$$y \in \pi_\gamma(x) \Leftrightarrow d_X(x, y) = \inf \{d_X(x, p) : p \in \gamma\}.$$

We say that two geodesics $\gamma : [0, L] \rightarrow X$ and $\eta : [0, L'] \rightarrow X$ are ϵ -fellow traveling if

$$d_X(\gamma(0), \eta(0)) < \epsilon, \quad d_X(\gamma(L), \eta(L')) < \epsilon \quad \text{and} \quad d_{\text{Haus}}(\gamma, \eta) < \epsilon.$$

The fellow traveling property is transitive: if γ_1 and γ_2 are ϵ -fellow traveling; γ_2 and γ_3 are ϵ' -fellow traveling, then γ_1 and γ_3 are $(\epsilon + \epsilon')$ -fellow traveling. Furthermore, we have:

Fact 2.1. *Let X be a δ -hyperbolic space and let $x, y, z, w \in X$ be such that $d_X(x, y) < \epsilon$ and $d_X(z, w) < \epsilon'$. Then $[x, z]$ and $[y, z]$ are $(\epsilon + \delta)$ -fellow traveling. Moreover, $[x, z]$ and $[y, w]$ are $(\epsilon + \epsilon' + 2\delta)$ -fellow traveling.*

For each $x \in X$, $\pi_\gamma(x)$ may not be a singleton. Nevertheless, its diameter is bounded and $\pi_\gamma(\cdot)$ is coarsely Lipschitz. The following is a consequence of [CDP90, Proposition 10.2.1], which follows from the tree approximation lemma [CDP90, Théorème 8.1], [GdlH90, Théorème 2.12].

Fact 2.2. *Let X be a δ -hyperbolic space.*

- (1) *Let $x, y \in X$ and let γ be a geodesic in X . Then $\pi_\gamma(x) \cup \pi_\gamma(y)$ has diameter at most $d_X(x, y) + 12\delta$.*
- (2) *Let $x, y \in X$, let γ be a geodesic in X and let $p \in \pi_\gamma(x)$ and $q \in \pi_\gamma(y)$. Suppose that p appears earlier than q on γ and that $d_X(p, q) > 20\delta$. Then any geodesic $[x, y]$ between x and y contains a subsegment that is 20δ -fellow traveling with $[p, q]$.*

Corollary 2.3 ([Sis18, Lemma 4.1]). *Let X be a δ -hyperbolic space, let γ be a geodesic in X , let $x, y \in X$ and let η be a subsegment of γ that contains $\pi_\gamma(x) \cup \pi_\gamma(y)$. Then $\pi_\gamma([x, y])$ is contained in the 60δ -neighborhood of η .*

Proof. Suppose to the contrary that there exist $z \in [x, y]$, $p \in \pi_\gamma(x)$, $q \in \pi_\gamma(y)$, $r \in \pi_\gamma(z)$ such that $d_X(p, r), d_X(q, r) \geq 60\delta$ and such that p, q are to the right of r . Let p_0 be the point on γ to the right of r such that $d_X(r, p_0) = 60\delta$. Then Fact 2.2(2) implies that there exist a subsegment $[r', p']$ of $[z, x]$ and a subsegment $[r'', p'']$ of $[z, y]$ such that $d_X(r', r), d_X(r'', r) < 20\delta$ and $d_X(p', p_0), d_X(p'', p_0) < 20\delta$. We then observe that

$$\begin{aligned} 40\delta &> d_X(p', p_0) + d_X(p_0, p'') \geq d_X(p', p'') \geq d_X(p', r') + d_X(r'', p'') \\ &\geq [d_X(p_0, r) - d_X(p_0, p') - d_X(r, r')] + [d_X(p_0, r) - d_X(p_0, p'') - d_X(r, r'')] > 20\delta + 20\delta, \end{aligned}$$

a contradiction. Similar contradiction happens when p, q are both to the left of r . \square

For $x, y, z \in X$, we define the *Gromov product* of y and z based at x by

$$(y, z)_x := \frac{1}{2} [d_X(y, x) + d_X(x, z) - d_X(y, z)].$$

Gromov hyperbolicity has the following consequence.

Fact 2.4 ([Cho24, Lemma A.3]). *Let X be a δ -hyperbolic space. Let $x, y, z \in X$ and let $p \in [y, z]$ be such that $d_X(p, y) = (x, z)_y$. Then $\pi_{[y, z]}(x)$ is contained in the 8δ -neighborhood of p .*

Definition 2.5. *Let G be a finitely generated group acting on a δ -hyperbolic space (X, d_X) with a basepoint $x_0 \in X$. We say that a loxodromic element $\varphi \in G$ has the WPD (weak proper discontinuity) property if for each K there exists N, M such that*

$$\# \left(\text{Stab}_K(x_0, \varphi^N x_0) := \{g \in G : d_X(x_0, gx_0) < K \text{ and } d_X(\varphi^N x_0, g\varphi^N x_0) < K\} \right) < M.$$

We say that a finitely generated group G is *acylindrically hyperbolic* if it admits an isometric action on a δ -hyperbolic space with a WPD loxodromic element $\varphi \in G$. An acylindrically hyperbolic group G is said to be *non-elementary* if it is not virtually cyclic. The following fact is a consequence of [BF02, Proposition 6(1), (2)]. The proof is sketched in [Cho24, Fact 2.2].

Fact 2.6. *Let G be a non-virtually cyclic group with a generating set S . Suppose that G acts on a δ -hyperbolic space $X \ni x_0$ with a WPD loxodromic element $\varphi \in G$. Then there exists $E_0 > 0$ such that the following hold.*

- (1) *For each $g \in G$, there exist $s, t \in S \cup \{id\}$ such that $(\varphi^i x_0, sgx_0)_{x_0} \leq E_0$ for all $i > 0$ and $(\varphi^j x_0, tgx_0)_{x_0} \leq E_0$ for all $j < 0$.*
- (2) *Let $n > 0$ and $g \in G$. Let $\gamma := [x_0, \varphi^n x_0]$, let $p \in \pi_\gamma(gx_0)$ and let $q \in \pi_\gamma(g\varphi^n x_0)$. Suppose that p appears earlier than q along γ and suppose that $d_X(p, q) > E_0$. Then $d_S(\varphi^i, g\varphi^j) < E_0$ for some $i, j \in \{0, 1, \dots, n\}$.*

We now recall the notion of alignment.

Definition 2.7. Let $K > 0$ and let $\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \dots, \gamma_n$ be finite geodesics (which can be degenerate, i.e., points). We say that $(\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_n)$ is K -aligned if for each $i = 1, \dots, n-1$ we have

$$\begin{aligned} \text{diam}(\pi_{\gamma_i}(\gamma_{i+1}) \cup (\text{ending point of } \gamma_i)) &< K \text{ and} \\ \text{diam}(\pi_{\gamma_{i+1}}(\gamma_i) \cup (\text{beginning point of } \gamma_{i+1})) &< K. \end{aligned}$$

The following facts are straightforward, whose proofs can be found in [Cho24, Appendix].

Fact 2.8. Let γ be a geodesic in a metric space. Let γ_1 and γ_2 be subsegments of γ , with γ_1 appearing earlier than γ_2 . Let κ_1 and κ_2 be geodesics that are K -fellow traveling with γ_1 and γ_2 , respectively. Then (κ_1, κ_2) is $6K$ -aligned.

Fact 2.9. The following holds for each $K > 0$ and $L \geq 12K$. Let γ be a geodesic in a metric space and let γ_1 and γ_2 be subsegments of γ such that $\gamma_1 \cap \gamma_2$ has length L . Let $[x, y]$ and κ_2 be geodesics that are K -fellow traveling with γ_1 and γ_2 , respectively. Then $\pi_{\kappa}(x)$ appears earlier than $\pi_{\kappa}(y)$ along κ , and $d_X(\pi_{\kappa}(x), \pi_{\kappa}(y)) > L - 10K$.

We now record a version of Behrstock's inequality [Beh06, Theorem 4.3] (cf. [Sis18, Lemma 2.5]) and its consequences. The proofs can be found in [Cho24, Section 3, Appendix].

Fact 2.10. Let X be a δ -hyperbolic space. Let $x \in X$ and let (γ_1, γ_2) be a K -aligned sequence of geodesics in X . Then either (x, γ_2) is $(K + 60\delta)$ -aligned or (γ_1, x) is $(K + 60\delta)$ -aligned.

Fact 2.11. Let X be a δ -hyperbolic space. Let $n \geq 3$ and let $(\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_n)$ be a K -aligned sequence of geodesics in X . Suppose that $\gamma_2, \dots, \gamma_{n-1}$ are longer than $2K + 120\delta$. Then (γ_i, γ_j) is $(K + 60\delta)$ -aligned for each $1 \leq i < j \leq n$.

Fact 2.12. Let X be a δ -hyperbolic space. Let $x, y \in X$ and let $\gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_n$ be geodesics in X , longer than $2K + 140\delta$ each, such that $(x, \gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_n, y)$ is K -aligned.

Then there exist disjoint subsegments η_1, \dots, η_n of $[x, y]$ such that

- (1) η_1, \dots, η_n are in order from left to right along $[x, y]$, i.e., η_i appears earlier than η_{i+1} along $[x, y]$ for each $i = 1, \dots, n-1$, and
- (2) γ_i and η_i are $(K + 80\delta)$ -fellow traveling for each $i = 1, \dots, n$.

Let G be a group and let $S \subseteq G$ be its finite generating set. The word metric d_S is defined by

$$d_S(g, h) := \min \left\{ n \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0} : \begin{array}{l} \exists a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n \in S, \epsilon_1, \epsilon_2, \dots, \epsilon_n \in \{1, -1\} \\ \text{such that } g^{-1}h = a_1^{\epsilon_1} a_2^{\epsilon_2} \dots a_n^{\epsilon_n}. \end{array} \right\}$$

We use the notation for the word norm $\|g\|_S := d_S(id, g)$. We define

$$B_S(n) := \{g \in \text{Mod}(\Sigma) : d_S(id, g) \leq n\}.$$

We denote by $[g, h]_S$ an arbitrary d_S -geodesic between $g, h \in G$. By a d_S -path, we mean a sequence of group elements $P = (g_1, g_2, \dots, g_n)$ such that $d_S(g_i, g_{i+1}) = 1$ for each i ; we denote n by $\text{Len}(P)$.

When the group G acts on a metric space $X \ni x_0$, we often define

$$\begin{aligned} \|g\|_X &:= d_X(x_0, gx_0) \quad (g \in G), \\ K_{\text{Lip}} &:= \max_{s \in S} \|s\|_X. \end{aligned}$$

Then we have $\|g\|_X \leq K_{\text{Lip}} \|g\|_S$ for each $g \in G$.

3. WPD PROPERTY AND SUBLINEAR CONTRACTION

It is well-known that a loxodromic isometry φ of a δ -hyperbolic space $X \ni x_0$ has strictly positive asymptotic translation length $\tau := \lim_n d_X(x_0, \varphi^n x_0)/n$. Moreover, its orbit $\{\varphi^i x_0\}_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$ is a quasi-geodesic and hence quasi-convex. In summary,

Fact 3.1. *Let φ be a loxodromic isometry of a δ -hyperbolic space $X \ni x_0$. Then there exists $\mathcal{G} > 0$ such that the sequence $(\varphi^i x_0, \dots, \varphi^j x_0)$ and the geodesic $[\varphi^i x_0, \varphi^j x_0]$ are \mathcal{G} -fellow traveling for each $i \leq j$. Furthermore, the sequence $(\varphi^i x_0)_{i \in \mathbb{Z}}$ is a \mathcal{G} -coarse geodesic, i.e.,*

$$d_X(\varphi^i x_0, \varphi^l x_0) \geq d_X(\varphi^i x_0, \varphi^j x_0) + d_X(\varphi^j x_0, \varphi^l x_0) - \mathcal{G} \quad (\forall i \leq j \leq l).$$

In Subsection 1.1, we claimed that $f(D, M) < +\infty$ for each $D, M > 0$ for every acylindrically hyperbolic group. We prove a variant of this fact.

Lemma 3.2. *Let G be a non-virtually cyclic group with a finite generating set $S \subseteq G$. Suppose that G acts on a δ -hyperbolic space $X \ni x_0$ with a WPD loxodromic element $\varphi \in G$. Then there exists $D_0 > 0$, and for each $k, M > 0$ there exists $R = R(k, M) > 0$, such that the following holds.*

Let $g, h \in G$ be such that $\|g\|_S > R$ and $\|h\|_S \leq M$. Then $\pi_{[x_0, \varphi^k x_0]}(\{gx_0, ghx_0\})$ has diameter at most D_0 .

This lemma closely resembles [Sis16, Lemma 3.3] and [MS20, Lemma 8.1]. Here, the crucial point is that D_0 is uniform and is independent from k, M and R .

Proof. Let $\mathcal{G} > 0$ be the constant for φ as in Fact 3.1. For $K = 24\mathcal{G} + 130\delta$, we pick N such that $\text{Stab}_K(x_0, \varphi^N x_0)$ is finite using the WPD property of φ . We then set $D_0 := 1002\mathcal{G} + ND_\varphi + 1000\delta$, where $D_\varphi := d_X(x_0, \varphi x_0)$.

To prove the lemma, let $k, M > 0$ and denote $\gamma := [x_0, \varphi^k x_0]$. Suppose to the contrary that there does not exist R for (k, M) . That means, suppose that there exist a sequence (g_1, g_2, \dots) of distinct elements of G and a sequence (h_1, h_2, \dots) in $B_S(M)$ such that

$$\text{diam}(\pi_\gamma(\{g_i x_0, g_i h_i x_0\})) \geq D_0 \quad (\forall i > 0).$$

Let p_i, q_i be points in $\pi_\gamma(\{g_i x_0, g_i h_i x_0\})$ that are at least D_0 -apart. Recall that the nearest point projection of a single point onto γ has diameter at most $20\delta < D_0$ (Fact 2.2(1)). Hence, up to relabelling, we can say that $p_i \in \pi_\gamma(g_i x_0)$ and $q_i \in \pi_\gamma(g_i h_i x_0)$.

Since $\gamma = [x_0, \varphi^k x_0]$ is compact and $B_S(M)$ is finite, we can take a subsequence and assert that:

$$h_1 = h_2 = \dots =: h, \\ d_X(p_i, p_j), d_X(q_i, q_j) < \mathcal{G} \quad (\forall i, j > 0).$$

Either p_i 's appear earlier than or later than q_i 's. In the latter case, we can replace h with h^{-1} , g_i with $g_i h$ and swap p_i 's with q_i 's. Hence, we may assume that p_i 's appear earlier than q_i 's.

By Fact 2.2(2), there exists $[\alpha_i, \beta_i] \subseteq [g_i x_0, g_i h x_0]$ that is 20δ -fellow traveling with $[p_i, q_i]$. Note that $0 \leq d_X(g_i x_0, \alpha_i) \leq d_X(x_0, h x_0)$. By taking further subsequence, we can obtain T such that

$$|d_X(g_i x_0, \alpha_i) - T| < \delta \quad (\forall i > 0).$$

By Fact 3.1, there exist $l, m \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $d_X(\varphi^l x_0, p_1) < \mathcal{G}$ and $d_X(\varphi^m x_0, q_1) < \mathcal{G}$. Note that

$$(3.1) \quad D_\varphi \cdot |l - m| \geq d_X(\varphi^l x_0, \varphi^m x_0) > d_X(p_1, q_1) - 2\mathcal{G} > 1000\mathcal{G} + ND_\varphi.$$

Here, if $m \leq l$ then

$$\begin{aligned} d_X(x_0, q_1) &\leq d_X(x_0, \varphi^m x_0) + \mathcal{G} \leq d_X(x_0, \varphi^l x_0) - d_X(\varphi^m x_0, \varphi^l x_0) + 2\mathcal{G} \\ &\leq d_X(x_0, \varphi^l x_0) - 1000\mathcal{G} + 2\mathcal{G} < d_X(x_0, \varphi^l x_0) - 998\mathcal{G} \leq d_X(x_0, p_1) - 997\mathcal{G}. \end{aligned}$$

This contradicts the fact that p_1 appears earlier than q_1 on γ . Hence, we have $l < m$.

Now Inequality 3.1 implies that $l + N$ lies between l and m . By Fact 3.1, $\varphi^{l+N}x_0$ lies in a \mathcal{G} -neighborhood of $[\varphi^l x_0, \varphi^m x_0]$. Note that $d_X(\varphi^l x_0, p_i) \leq d_X(\varphi^l x_0, p_1) + d_X(p_1, p_i) \leq 2\mathcal{G}$ for each i , and similarly $\varphi^m x_0$ and q_i are $2\mathcal{G}$ -close.

By Fact 2.1 $[\varphi^l x_0, \varphi^m x_0]$ is $(4\mathcal{G} + 2\delta)$ -fellow traveling with $[p_i, q_i]$, which is 20δ -fellow traveling with $[\alpha_i, \beta_i]$. Thus, there exists $c_i \in [\alpha_i, \beta_i]$ such that $d_X(c_i, \varphi^{l+N}x_0) < 5\mathcal{G} + 22\delta$. We have

$$\begin{aligned} |d_X(\alpha_i, c_i) - d_X(\varphi^l x_0, \varphi^{l+N}x_0)| &\leq d_X(\alpha_i, \varphi^l x_0) + d_X(c_i, \varphi^{l+N}x_0) \\ &\leq d_X(\alpha_i, p_i) + d_X(p_i, p_1) + d_X(p_1, \varphi^l x_0) + d_X(c_i, \varphi^{l+N}x_0) \\ &\leq 20\delta + \mathcal{G} + \mathcal{G} + (5\mathcal{G} + 22\delta) \leq 7\mathcal{G} + 42\delta. \end{aligned}$$

Now, for each i we have four points $g_i g_1^{-1} \alpha_1$, $g_i g_1^{-1} c_1$, α_i on the geodesic

$$g_i \cdot g_1^{-1}([g_1 x_0, g_1 h x_0]) = [g_i x_0, g_i h x_0].$$

Recall that $d_X(g_i x_0, g_i g_1^{-1} \alpha_1) = d_X(g_1 x_0, \alpha_1)$ and $d_X(g_i x_0, \alpha_i)$ are both δ -close to T . This implies that $g_i g_1^{-1} \alpha_1$ and α_i are 2δ -close. Hence, we have

$$\begin{aligned} d_X(\varphi^l x_0, g_i g_1^{-1} \cdot \varphi^l x_0) &\leq d_X(\varphi^l x_0, \alpha_i) + d_X(\alpha_i, g_i g_1^{-1} \alpha_1) + d_X(g_i g_1^{-1} \alpha_1, g_i g_1^{-1} \cdot \varphi^l x_0) \\ &\leq d_X(\varphi^l x_0, p_i) + d_X(p_i, \alpha_i) + 2\delta + d_X(\varphi^l x_0, p_1) + d_X(p_1, \alpha_1) \\ &\leq (20\delta + 2\mathcal{G}) + 2\delta + (\mathcal{G} + 20\delta) = 42\delta + 3\mathcal{G}. \end{aligned}$$

Next, $d_X(g_i x_0, c_i) = d_X(g_i x_0, \alpha_i) + d_X(\alpha_i, c_i)$ is $(7\mathcal{G} + 43\delta)$ -close to $T + d_X(x_0, \varphi^N x_0)$. So is $d_X(g_i x_0, g_i g_1^{-1} c_1) = d_X(g_1 x_0, c_1)$. Hence, c_i and $g_i g_1^{-1} c_1$ are $(14\mathcal{G} + 86\delta)$ -close. We conclude

$$\begin{aligned} d_X(\varphi^{l+N}x_0, g_i g_1^{-1} \cdot \varphi^{l+N}x_0) &\leq d_X(\varphi^{l+N}x_0, c_i) + d_X(c_i, g_i g_1^{-1} c_1) + d_X(g_i g_1^{-1} c_1, g_i g_1^{-1} \cdot \varphi^{l+N}x_0) \\ &\leq (5\mathcal{G} + 22\delta) + (14\mathcal{G} + 86\delta) + (5\mathcal{G} + 22\delta) < 24\mathcal{G} + 130\delta. \end{aligned}$$

To summarize, $\varphi^{-l} g_i g_1^{-1} \varphi^l$ belongs to $Stab_K(x_0, \varphi^N x_0)$ for each i . Furthermore, we have

$$\varphi^{-l} g_i g_1^{-1} \varphi^l = \varphi^{-l} g_j g_1^{-1} \varphi^l \Leftrightarrow g_i = g_j.$$

Since g_1, g_2, \dots are distinct, it follows that $Stab_K(x_0, \varphi^N x_0)$ is infinite, a contradiction. \square

Proposition 3.3. *Let G be a non-virtually cyclic group and let $S \subseteq G$ be its finite generating set. Suppose that G acts on a δ -hyperbolic space $X \ni x_0$ with a WPD loxodromic element $\varphi \in G$. Then for each $K > 0$ there exists $L_0 = L_0(K)$ such that, for each $L \geq L_0$ and for each $M > 0$ there exists $R_0 = R_0(L, M) > 0$ satisfying the following.*

Let P_l be a d_S -path connecting $a_l \in G$ to $b_l \in G$ for $l = 1, 2$. Let $g_1, \dots, g_m \in G$ be such that

$$(a_i x_0, g_1[x_0, \varphi^L x_0], \dots, g_m[x_0, \varphi^L x_0], b_i x_0) \text{ is } K\text{-aligned.} \quad (i = 1, 2)$$

Let $k \leq m$. Then one of the following happens:

(1) For each subset $I \subseteq \{1, \dots, m\}$ of cardinality k , there exist $i \in I$ such that

$$d_S(P_l, g_i) < R_0 \quad (l = 1, 2); \text{ or,}$$

(2) $Len(P_1) + Len(P_2) \geq M \cdot k$.

Proof. Let D_0 be as in Lemma 3.2. Let $K_{Lip} = \max_{s \in S} \|s\|_X$, let $\tau := \lim_n \frac{1}{n} d_X(x_0, \varphi^n x_0)$ and let

$$L_0 = \frac{1}{\tau} (2K + 2K_{Lip} + 1000\delta + D_0).$$

Now given $L > L_0$, we will declare $R_0 = R_0(L, M)$ following Lemma 3.2.

Consider P_1, P_2 and g_i 's as in the proposition. Note that

$$(3.2) \quad \text{diam}_X([x_0, \varphi^L x_0]) \geq \tau L \geq 2K + 2K_{Lip} + 1000\delta + D_0.$$

Thanks to this inequality, we can apply Fact 2.11 to the K -aligned translates of $[x_0, \varphi^L x_0]$.

We will negate the case (1) and prove that (2) holds. For this, let $I \subseteq \{1, \dots, m\}$ be a k -element subset such that g_i is not simultaneously R_0 -close to P_1 and P_2 for each $i \in I$. Let

$$I_l := \{i : d_S(P_l, g_i) \geq R_0\}. \quad (l = 1, 2)$$

Then $I_1 \cup I_2$ has cardinality at least k . For convenience, we will denote $g_i[x_0, \varphi^L x_0]$ by γ_i .

For each $i \in \{1, \dots, m\}$, let p_i be the latest vertex of P_1 such that $(p_i x_0, \gamma_i)$ is $(K + 60\delta)$ -aligned. Such a vertex exists because $(a_i x_0, \gamma_i)$ is $(K + 60\delta)$ -aligned by Fact 2.11. Now let

$$V_i := \{v \in P_1 : v \text{ comes later than } p_i \text{ along } P_1 \text{ and } (\gamma_i, vx_0) \text{ is } (K + 60\delta)\text{-aligned}\};$$

V_i is nonempty because (γ_i, b_i) is $(K + 60\delta)$ -aligned by Fact 2.11. Let q_i be the earliest vertex in V_i . Lastly, let p'_i be the vertex of P_1 right after p_i , and let q'_i be the one right before q_i .

Note that $\pi_{\gamma_i}(\{p_i x_0, p'_i x_0\})$ has diameter at most $K_{Lip} + 12\delta$ by Fact 2.2(1). Hence, $\pi_{\gamma_i}(p'_i x_0)$ is contained in the beginning $(K_{Lip} + K + 80\delta)$ -subsegment of γ_i and does not meet the ending $(K_{Lip} + 60\delta)$ -subsegment (Inequality 3.2). This implies $p'_i \notin V_i$, and q_i comes later than p'_i . Let

$$V'_i := \{v \in P_1 : v \text{ in between } p_i \text{ and } q_i \text{ (excluding } p_i, q_i)\}.$$

We have then observed that $p'_i, q'_i \in V'_i$ and V'_i is nonempty. For each $v \in V'_i$ we conclude that

$$\text{neither } (\gamma_i, vx_0) \text{ nor } (vx_0, \gamma_i) \text{ is } (K + 60\delta)\text{-aligned}.$$

Now repeated application of Fact 2.10 tells us that for $i \neq j$,

$$v \in V'_i \Rightarrow \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} (\gamma_j, vx_0) \text{ is } (K + 60\delta)\text{-aligned} & \text{if } j < i \\ (vx_0, \gamma_j) \text{ is } (K + 60\delta)\text{-aligned} & \text{if } j > i \end{array} \right\} \Rightarrow v \notin V'_j.$$

In conclusion, V'_1, \dots, V'_m 's are disjoint subpaths of P_1 .

Now observe for each i that

$$\begin{aligned} \text{diam}_X(\pi_{\gamma_i}(\{p'_i, q'_i\})) &\geq \text{diam}(\gamma_i) - 2(K + 60\delta) - \text{diam}(\pi_{\gamma_i}(p_i x_0, p'_i x_0)) - \text{diam}(\pi_{\gamma_i}(q_i x_0, q'_i x_0)) \\ &\geq \tau L - 2(K + 60\delta) - 2 \cdot (K_{Lip} + 20\delta) > D_0. \end{aligned}$$

If $i \in I_1$, we additionally know that $d_S(p'_i, g_i) \geq R_0$. Lemma 3.2 then implies that $d_S(p'_i, q'_i) > M$. Hence, $\text{Len}(V'_i) \geq M$ for each $i \in I_1$. Summing up, we obtain $\text{Len}(P_1) \geq M \cdot \#I_1$.

Similar logic implies $\text{Len}(P_2) \geq M \cdot \#I_2$. We thus conclude

$$\text{Len}(P_1) + \text{Len}(P_2) \geq M \cdot (\#I_1 \cup \#I_2) \geq M \cdot k. \quad \square$$

4. PROOF OF THEOREM 1.1

Throughout, let G be a non-virtually cyclic group with a finite generating set S . Suppose that G acts on a δ -hyperbolic space $X \ni x_0$ with a WPD loxodromic element $\varphi \in G$. When a constant L is understood, we will use the notation

$$\Upsilon_L := [x_0, \varphi^L x_0].$$

Since G contains independent loxodromics, G has exponential growth. In other words,

$$\lambda_S := \liminf_n \frac{\ln \#B_S(n)}{n} > 1.$$

This immediately implies that:

Fact 4.1. *For each sufficiently large n we have*

$$\frac{\#B_S(0.9n)}{\#B_S(n)} \leq \lambda_S^{0.05n}.$$

Let us fix some more constants for the proof. Let E_0 be as in Fact 2.6. Let $K_{Lip} := \max_{s \in S} \|s\|_X$, let $\tau := \lim_n \|\varphi^n\|_X/n$ (so that $\|\varphi^k\|_X \geq k\tau$ for each k). Let $F_0 := \|\varphi\|_S$. Finally, let L_0 be as in Proposition 3.3 for $K = 100(E_0 + 1000\delta + K_{Lip})$, and

$$L_1 := L_0 + \frac{1}{\tau} 100(E_0 + 1000\delta + K_{Lip}).$$

This choice implies that:

Fact 4.2. *For each $L > L_1$,*

$$d_X(x_0, \varphi^L x_0) - 40(E_0 + 1000\delta + K_{Lip}) \geq \tau L - 40(E_0 + 1000\delta + K_{Lip}) \geq 0.5\tau L + 140\delta.$$

Given $L, \epsilon > 0$, we define

$$\mathcal{V}_{L,\epsilon}(n) := \left\{ g \in B_S(n) : \begin{array}{l} \text{there exist } h_1, \dots, h_{\epsilon n} \in G \text{ such that} \\ (x_0, h_1 \Upsilon_L, \dots, h_{\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g x_0) \text{ is } (6E_0 + 300\delta)\text{-aligned} \end{array} \right\},$$

$$\mathcal{BAD}_{L,\epsilon}(n) := B_S(n) \setminus (B_S(0.9n) \cup \mathcal{V}_{L,\epsilon}(n)).$$

Lemma 4.3. *For each $L > L_1$ and $\epsilon > 0$, we have*

$$\limsup_n \frac{\#\mathcal{BAD}_{L,\epsilon}(n)}{\#B_S(n)} < 5 \cdot (2E_0 + 4LF_0 + 5) \cdot (\#S)^{E_0+3LF_0+4} \cdot \epsilon.$$

Proof of Lemma 4.3. Let us define a map

$$F : \text{Dom}(F) := \mathcal{BAD}_{L,\epsilon}(n) \times \{1, \dots, 0.9n\} \rightarrow B_S(n)$$

as follows. Given $(g, i) \in \mathcal{BAD}_{L,\epsilon}(n) \times \{1, \dots, 0.9n\}$, we first fix a d_S -geodesic representative $g = a_1 a_2 \cdots a_{\|g\|_S}$. By Fact 2.6, there exist $s = s(g, i)$ and $t = t(g, i)$ in $S \cup \{id\}$ such that

$$(s^{-1} \cdot (a_1 \cdots a_i)^{-1} x_0, \varphi^L x_0)_{x_0} < E_0, (\varphi^{-L} x_0, t \cdot a_{i+F_0 L+3} \cdots a_{\|g\|_S} x_0)_{x_0} < E_0.$$

We then define

$$h(g, i) := a_1 \cdots a_i \cdot s, \quad h'(g, i) := t \cdot a_{i+F_0 L+3} \cdots a_{\|g\|_S}, \quad F(g, i) := h(g, i) \varphi^L h'(g, i).$$

Note that $F(g, i) \in B_S(n)$ because

$$\begin{aligned} \|F(g, i)\|_S &\leq \|h(g, i)\|_S + \|\varphi^L\|_S + \|h'(g, i)\|_S \\ &\leq (i+1) + F_0 L + (\|g\|_S - i - F_0 L - 2) + 1 \leq \|g\|_S \leq n. \end{aligned}$$

Before the proof, we first declare

$$T := (2E_0 + 4LF_0 + 5) \cdot \#B_S(E_0 + 2LF_0) \cdot \#B_S(F_0 L + 4)$$

and $R_0 = R_0(L, 4/\epsilon)$ as in Proposition 3.3.

Claim 4.4. *Let m be the maximum number of elements $(g_1, i_1), \dots, (g_m, i_m) \in \mathcal{BAD}_{L,\epsilon}(n) \times \{1, \dots, 0.9n\}$ such that*

- (1) $F(g_1, i_1) = \dots = F(g_m, i_m) =: U$,
- (2) $(x_0, h(g_1, i_1) \cdot \Upsilon_L, \dots, h(g_m, i_m) \cdot \Upsilon_L, U x_0)$ is $6(E_0 + 30\delta)$ -aligned.

Then $\#F^{-1}(U) \leq 2T \cdot m$ holds for each $U \in B_S(n)$.

Proof of Claim 4.4. Fix an arbitrary $U \in B_S(n)$. For each $(g, i) \in F^{-1}(U)$, we have:

- (1) $(x_0, h(g, i) \varphi^L x_0)_{h(g, i) x_0} < E_0$; hence $\pi_{h(g, i) \Upsilon_L}(x_0)$ is $(E_0 + 8\delta)$ -close to $h(g, i) x_0$ (Fact 2.4).
- (2) Similarly, the projection of $U x_0$ onto $h(g, i) \Upsilon_L$ is $(E_0 + 8\delta)$ -close to $h(g, i) \varphi^L x_0$.
- (3) $h(g, i) x_0$ and $h(g, i) \varphi^L x_0$ are at least τL -apart, which is much larger than 20δ .

Now Fact 2.2 guarantees a subsegment $\gamma(g, i)$ of $[x_0, Ux_0]$ and a subsegment $\eta = [p, q]$ of $h(g, i)\Upsilon_L$ that are 20δ -fellow traveling. Here, p and $h_k x_0$, and q and $h_k \varphi^L x_0$ are pairwise $(E_0 + 8\delta)$ -close. Hence, $\gamma(g, i)$ and $h(g, i)\Upsilon_L$ are $(E_0 + 30\delta)$ -fellow traveling. It follows that $\gamma(g, i)$'s are longer than $\tau L - 2(E_0 + 30\delta) \geq 25(E_0 + 30\delta)$.

We now pick a maximal subset \mathcal{A} of $F^{-1}(U)$ such that

for any $(g, i), (g', i') \in \mathcal{A}$, $\gamma(g, i)$ and $\gamma(g', i')$ overlap for length at most $12(E_0 + 30\delta)$.

We claim that $\#F^{-1}(U) \leq T \cdot \#\mathcal{A}$. To show this, pick an arbitrary $(g, i) \in F^{-1}(U)$. Let $a_1 \cdots a_{\|g\|_S}$ be the geodesic representative for g that was used when defining

$$h(g, i) := a_1 \cdots a_i \cdot s(g, i), \quad h(g, i)' := t(g, i) \cdot a_{i+F_0 L+3} + \cdots a_{\|g\|_S}.$$

By the maximality of \mathcal{A} , there exists $(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i}) \in \mathcal{A}$ such that $\gamma(g, i)$ and $\gamma(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i})$ overlap for length at least $12(E_0 + 30\delta)$. Recall that $h(g, i)\Upsilon_L$ and $h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i})\Upsilon_L$ are $(E_0 + 30\delta)$ -fellow traveling $\gamma(g, i)$ and $\gamma(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i})$, respectively. By Fact 2.9, $\pi_{h(g, i)\Upsilon_L}(h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i})x_0)$ appears earlier than $\pi_{h(g, i)\Upsilon_L}(h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i})\varphi^L x_0)$. Moreover, they are $(12(E_0 + 30\delta) - 10(E_0 + 30\delta))$ -apart and hence E_0 -apart. By Fact 2.6, we conclude that $\varphi^{-a} \cdot h(g, i)^{-1} h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i}) \varphi^b \in B_S(E_0)$ for some $a, b \in \{0, \dots, L\}$. We conclude that

$$h(g, i) \in h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i}) \cdot \{\varphi^a : a = 0, \dots, L\} \cdot B_S(E_0) \cdot \{\varphi^{-a} : a = 0, \dots, L\} \subseteq h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i}) B_S(E_0 + 2LF_0).$$

This also implies that $\|h(g, i)\|_S$ and $\|h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i})\|_S$ differ by at most $E_0 + 2LF_0$, and hence

$$i \in [\mathbf{i} - (E_0 + 2LF_0 + 2), \mathbf{i} + (E_0 + 2LF_0 + 2)].$$

Note also that

$$h(g, i)' = \varphi^{-L} h(g, i)^{-1} \cdot U$$

is determined as soon as $h(g, i)$ is determined.

Finally, in order to reconstruct $g = a_1 \cdots a_{\|g\|_S}$ from $h(g, i)$ and $h(g, i)'$, it suffices to pick $c := s_l^{-1} a_{i_l+1} \cdots a_{i_l+F_0 L+2} t^{-1} \in B_S(F_0 L+4)$ and multiply $h(g, i)$, c and $h(g', i')$. In summary, we have

$$F^{-1}(U) \subseteq \bigcup_{(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i}) \in \mathcal{A}} \left(\left\{ h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i}) f \cdot c \cdot \varphi^{-L} f^{-1} h(\mathbf{g}, \mathbf{i})^{-1} U : f \in B_S(E_0 + 2LF_0), c \in B_S(F_0 L+4) \right\} \times I(\mathbf{i}) \right)$$

where $I(\mathbf{i}) := [\mathbf{i} - (E_0 + 2LF_0 + 2), \mathbf{i} + (E_0 + 2LF_0 + 2)]$. From this, we conclude $\#F^{-1}(U) \leq T \cdot \#\mathcal{A}$.

Next, let us enumerate \mathcal{A} as

$$\mathcal{A} = \{(\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{i}_1), (\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2), \dots\}$$

so that $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_l, \mathbf{i}_l)$ starts earlier than $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_{l+1}, \mathbf{i}_{l+1})$ along $[x_0, Ux_0]$, for each l . Then the beginning point of $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2)$ is later than that of $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{i}_1)$ and earlier than that of $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)$. (*) Moreover, $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2)$ does not contain $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)$, as their overlap should not be longer than $12(E_0 + 30\delta)$ while $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)$ is longer than $25(E_0 + 30\delta)$. Hence, the ending point of $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2)$ is earlier than that of $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)$. (**)

At this point, if $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{i}_1)$ and $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)$ intersect, then $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)$ is completely covered by $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{i}_1)$ and $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2)$ due to (*) and (**). We would then have

$$\text{diam}_X(\gamma(\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{i}_1) \cap \gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2)) + \text{diam}_X(\gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2) \cap \gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)) \geq \text{diam}_X(\gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2)) \geq 25(E_0 + 30\delta),$$

which contradicts to the bound $12(E_0 + 30\delta)$ on $\text{diam}_X(\gamma(\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{i}_1) \cap \gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2))$ and $\text{diam}_X(\gamma(\mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{i}_2) \cap \gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3))$. Hence, we conclude that $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{i}_1)$ and $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)$ do not intersect.

With the same logic, we conclude that $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_l, \mathbf{i}_l)$'s for odd integers l are disjoint subsegments of $[x_0, Ux_0]$, in order from left to right along $[x_0, Ux_0]$. Recall again that $\gamma(\mathbf{g}_l, \mathbf{i}_l)$ and $h(\mathbf{g}_l, \mathbf{i}_l)\Upsilon_L$ are $(E_0 + 30\delta)$ -fellow traveling. Now Fact 2.8 tells us that

$$(x_0, h(\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{i}_1)\Upsilon_L, h(\mathbf{g}_3, \mathbf{i}_3)\Upsilon_L, \dots, h(\mathbf{g}_{2\lceil \#\mathcal{A}/2 \rceil+1}, \mathbf{i}_{2\lceil \#\mathcal{A}/2 \rceil+1})\Upsilon_L, Ux_0)$$

is $6(E_0 + 30\delta)$ -aligned. This implies that $m \geq \lceil \#\mathcal{A}/2 \rceil \geq \frac{1}{2T} \#F^{-1}(U)$ as desired. \square

Now let $(g_1, i_1), \dots, (g_m, i_m) \in \mathcal{BAD}_{L, \epsilon}(n) \times \{1, \dots, 0.9n\}$ the elements as in Claim 4.4:

- (1) $F(g_1, i_1) = \dots = F(g_m, i_m) =: U$,
- (2) $(x_0, h(g_1, i_1) \cdot \Upsilon_L, \dots, h(g_m, i_m) \cdot \Upsilon_L, Ux_0)$ is $6(E_0 + 30\delta)$ -aligned.

It remains to prove that $m < 2\epsilon n$ for large enough n . We will prove it for every $n \geq 32R_0K_{Lip}/\tau L\epsilon$. Suppose to the contrary that $m \geq 2\epsilon n$. Let us denote the d_S -geodesic representative used for g_1 by $a_1 \cdots a_{\|g_1\|_S}$, so that $h(g_1, i_1) = a_1 \cdots a_{i_1}s(g_1, i_1)$. We will abbreviate $h(g_l, i_l)$ by h_l , $h'(g_l, i_l)$ by h'_l , $s(g_l, i_l)$ by s_l and $t(g_l, i_l)$ by t_l .

We focus on a particular vertex on the d_S -geodesic $Ug_1^{-1} \cdot [x_0, g_1]_S$, namely

$$v := Ug_1^{-1} \cdot a_1 \cdots a_{i_1+F_0L+2} = a_1 \cdots a_{i_1} \cdot s_1 \cdot \varphi^L \cdot t_1x_0 = h_1 \cdot \varphi^L \cdot t_1.$$

Then vx_0 is K_{Lip} -close to $h_1 \cdot \varphi^Lx_0$. Since $(h_1\varphi^Lx_0, h_2[x_0, \varphi^Lx_0])$ is $(6E_0 + 180\delta)$ -aligned, Fact 2.2(1) tells us that $(vx_0, h_2\Upsilon_L)$ is $(6E_0 + 200\delta + K_{Lip})$ -aligned.

Now, Fact 2.10 tells us that either:

- (1) $(Ug_1^{-1}x_0, h_{\epsilon n}\Upsilon_L)$ is $(6E_0 + 240\delta)$ -aligned, or
- (2) $(h_{\epsilon n-1}\Upsilon_L, Ug_1^{-1}x_0)$ is $(6E_0 + 240\delta)$ -aligned.

In Case (1), we conclude that

$$(x_0, g_1U^{-1}h_{\epsilon n}\Upsilon_L, g_1U^{-1}h_{\epsilon n+1}\Upsilon_L, \dots, g_1U^{-1}h_m\Upsilon_L, g_1x_0)$$

is $(6E_0 + 240\delta)$ -aligned. This contradicts the fact that $g_1 \notin \mathcal{V}_{L,\epsilon}(n)$.

In the latter case, we have:

$$(vx_0, h_1\Upsilon_L, \dots, h_{\epsilon n-1}\Upsilon_L, y_i)$$

is $(6E_0 + 240\delta + K_{Lip})$ -aligned for $y_1 = Ug_1^{-1}x_0$ and $y_2 = Ux_0$. Here, the alignment of $(h_{\epsilon n-1}\Upsilon_L, y_2)$ is due to Fact 2.11. Let P_1 be the first half of the geodesic $Ug_1^{-1}[x_0, g_1x_0]$ connecting $Ug_1^{-1}x_0$ to vx_0 , and let P_2 be the latter half connecting vx_0 to Ux_0 . Then $Len(P_1) + Len(P_2) \leq \|g_1\|_S \leq n$.

Recall that $R_0 = R_0(L, 4/\epsilon)$ is chosen as in Proposition 3.3 and that $L \geq L_1$ is longer than $L_0(K)$ for $K = 6E_0 + 240\delta + K_{Lip}$. Since $Len(P_1) + Len(P_2) \leq n \leq (4/\epsilon) \cdot (\epsilon n/4)$, the paths should satisfy the first alternative in Proposition 3.3 for $k = \epsilon n/4$. In particular, there exists $i \in \{0.5\epsilon n, \dots, 0.75\epsilon n\}$ such that $d_S(P_1, h_i), d_S(P_2, h_i) \leq R_0$. Let $u_1 \in P_1$ and $u_2 \in P_2$ be the vertices realizing the distance.

Meanwhile, note that $(vx_0, h_2\Upsilon_L, \dots, h_{i-1}\Upsilon_L, h_ix_0)$ is $(6E_0 + 200\delta + K_{Lip})$ -aligned. Fact 2.12 implies that there exist $i - 2 \geq 0.25\epsilon n$ disjoint subsegments of $[vx_0, h_ix_0]$, each longer than $\tau L - 2(6E_0 + 200\delta + K_{Lip}) - 160\delta \geq 0.5\tau L$. This implies that

$$d_S(h_i, v) \geq \frac{1}{K_{Lip}}d_X(vx_0, h_ix_0) \geq \frac{1}{K_{Lip}} \cdot 0.5\tau L \cdot 0.35\epsilon n.$$

This implies that

$$d_S(u_1, v) \geq d_S(h_i, v) - d_S(h_i, u_1) \geq \frac{\tau L \epsilon n}{8K_{Lip}} - R_0 \geq 3R_0.$$

Meanwhile, u_1, v and u_2 are aligned along a d_S -geodesic $Ug_1^{-1}[x_0, g_1x_0]$. This implies that

$$2R_0 \geq d_S(u_1, h_i) + d_S(u_2, h_i) \geq d_S(u_1, u_2) \geq d_S(u_1, v) \geq 3R_0$$

which is a contradiction.

In conclusion, $m \leq 2\epsilon n$ holds for m in Claim 4.4 when $n \geq 32R_0K_{Lip}/\tau L\epsilon$. This implies that

$$\#\mathcal{BAD}_{L,\epsilon}(n) \times 0.9n = \#(\text{Dom } F) = \sum_{U \in B_S(n)} (\#F^{-1}(U)) \leq 4T\epsilon n \cdot \#B_S(n).$$

We conclude

$$\frac{\#\mathcal{BAD}_{L,\epsilon}(n)}{\#B_S(n)} \leq 5T\epsilon. \quad (\forall n \geq 32R_0K_{Lip}/\tau L\epsilon) \quad \square$$

Let us now define

$$\mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n) := \left\{ g \in B_S(n) : \begin{array}{l} \text{there exist } h_1, \dots, h_{\epsilon n} \in G \text{ such that} \\ (x_0, h_1 \Upsilon_L, \dots, h_{\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g x_0) \text{ is } (6E_0 + 360\delta)\text{-aligned,} \\ (g^{-1}x_0, h_1 \Upsilon_L) \text{ is } (6E_0 + 360\delta)\text{-aligned and} \\ (h_{\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g^2 x_0) \text{ is } (6E_0 + 360\delta)\text{-aligned} \end{array} \right\}.$$

Lemma 4.5. *Let $L > L_1$. Then the following is true for $g \in \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)$:*

- (1) g is a loxodromic isometry on X with $\tau_X(g) \geq 0.5\tau L\epsilon n$.
- (2) g has the WPD property and hence is Morse ([Sis16, Theorem 1]).
- (3) There exists a conjugate ψ of φ such that for each large enough i , the projections of $g^{-i}x_0$ and $g^i x_0$ onto $[\psi^{-i}x_0, \psi^i x_0]$ are at least $\tau L/2$ -apart, with the former one coming first.

Proof. For the first item, we claim that

$$(\dots, g^{-1}\gamma_1, \dots, g^{-1}\gamma_{\epsilon n}, \gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_{\epsilon n}, g\gamma_1, \dots, g\gamma_{\epsilon n}, \dots)$$

is $(12E_0 + 900\delta)$ -aligned, where $\gamma_i := h_i \Upsilon_L$. The only nontrivial part is the $(12E_0 + 900\delta)$ -alignment of $(\gamma_{\epsilon n}, g\gamma_1)$. First, observe that $(\gamma_{\epsilon n}, g x_0)$ and $(\gamma_{\epsilon n}, g^2 x_0)$ are each $(6E_0 + 360\delta)$ -aligned. This implies that $\pi_{\gamma_{\epsilon n}}([g x_0, g^2 x_0])$ is contained in the $(6E_0 + 420\delta)$ -neighborhood of the ending point of $\gamma_{\epsilon n}$, by Corollary 2.3.

Meanwhile, Fact 2.12 implies that $g\gamma_1$ is contained in the $(6E_0 + 440\delta)$ -neighborhood of $[x_0, g x_0]$. Fact 2.2(1) implies that $\pi_{\gamma_{\epsilon n}}(g\gamma_1)$ is contained in the $(12E_0 + 900\delta)$ -long ending subsegment of $\gamma_{\epsilon n}$.

By a symmetric argument, we can similarly observe that $\pi_{g\gamma_1}(\gamma_{\epsilon n})$ is contained in the $(12E_0 + 900\delta)$ -long ending subsegment of $g\gamma_1$. This concludes the desired alignment.

Now Fact 2.12 applies to the $(12E_0 + 900\delta)$ -aligned sequence $(x_0, \gamma_1, \dots, \gamma_{\epsilon n}, g\gamma_1, \dots, g\gamma_{\epsilon n}, \dots, g^k x_0)$ and concludes that

$$\begin{aligned} d_X(x_0, g^k x_0) &\geq \sum_{i=0}^{k-1} \sum_{j=1}^{\epsilon n} (\text{diam}_X(g^i \gamma_j) - (2(12E_0 + 900\delta) + 160\delta)) \\ &\geq \epsilon n k \cdot (\tau L - (2(12E_0 + 900\delta) + 160\delta)) \geq \epsilon n k \cdot \frac{1}{2}\tau L. \end{aligned}$$

This implies that $\tau_X(g) \geq 0.5\tau L\epsilon n$.

In order to discuss WPD property, let $K > 0$. Because g is loxodromic, there exists N such that $d_X(g^{\pm N} x_0, h_1 \Upsilon_L) \geq K + 1000\delta$. We then claim that $\text{Stab}_K(x_0, g^{2N} x_0)$ is finite. Suppose to the contrary that $\text{Stab}_K(x_0, g^{2N} x_0)$ is not contained in any finite d_S -metric ball. Then we can take infinitely many distinct elements $g_1, g_2, \dots \in \text{Stab}_K(x_0, g^{2N} x_0)$.

Combining the alignment of the sequence in Display ?? and Fact 2.11, we observe that

$$(x_0, g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L, g^{2N} x_0)$$

is $(12E_0 + 960\delta)$ -aligned. Since $d_X(x_0, g_i x_0) \leq K \leq d_X(x_0, g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L) - 1000\delta$, the contraposition of Fact 2.2(2) tells us that $\pi_{g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L}(\{x_0, g_i x_0\})$ has diameter at most 20δ . Similarly, $\pi_{g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L}(\{g_0^{2N}, g_i g^{2N} x_0\})$ is also 20δ -small. Hence, $(g_i x_0, g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L, g_i g^{2N} x_0)$ is also $(12E_0 + 980\delta)$ -aligned. Hence, $[g_i x_0, g_i g^{2N} x_0]$ contains a subsegment η_i that is $(12E_0 + 1060\delta)$ -fellow traveling with $g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L$.

Now, $g_i^{-1} \eta_i$'s are subsegments of $[x_0, g^{2N} x_0]$ that is longer than $\tau L - 2(12E_0 + 1060\delta) \geq 0.5\tau L$. Since $[x_0, g^{2N} x_0]$ is compact, by passing to subsequence, we may assume that $g_i^{-1} \eta_i$'s converge to a subsegment of $[x_0, g^{2N} x_0]$ of length at least $0.5\tau L$. This implies that, for each large i and j , $g_i^{-1} \eta_i$ and $g_j^{-1} \eta_j$ overlap for length at least $0.4\tau L$. Also, these subsegments are $(12E_0 + 1060\delta)$ -fellow traveling with $g_i^{-1} g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L$ and $g_j^{-1} g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L$, respectively. Since $0.4\tau L \geq 12(12E_0 + 1060\delta) + E_0$, Fact 2.9 implies that $\pi_{g_i^{-1} g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L}(g_j^{-1} g^N h_1 \Upsilon_L)$ is E_0 -large and is orientation-matching. Now Fact

2.6(2) implies that

$$h_1^{-1}g^{-N}g_i g_j^{-1}g^N h_1 \subseteq B_S(E_0 + 2LF_0).$$

In particular, $g_i g_j^{-1}$ is uniformly bounded for every pair of g_i, g_j . This contradicts the infinitude of $\text{Stab}_K(x_0, g^{2N}x_0)$. The WPD property of g is now proven.

The third item holds for $\psi = h_1 \varphi h_1^{-1}$. Indeed, when N is sufficiently large, $[g^{-N}x_0, g^N x_0]$ and $[h_1 \varphi^{-N} h_1^{-1} x_0, h_1 \varphi^N h_1 x_0]$ both contain subsegments that are $0.01\tau L$ -fellow traveling with a τL -long geodesic $h_1 \Upsilon_L$. We omit the detail. \square

We now claim that $\mathcal{V}_{L,3\epsilon}(n) \setminus \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)$ is non-generic.

Lemma 4.6. *For each $L > L_1$ and $\epsilon > 0$, there exists $\lambda > 1$ such that*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#\mathcal{V}_{L,3\epsilon}(n) \setminus \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)}{\#B_S(n)} \leq \lambda^{-n}$$

for all large enough n .

Proof. Before the proof, let $R_1 = R_1(L, 12/\epsilon)$ be as in Proposition 3.3. Let us first define

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{K}_1 &:= \bigcup_{r=\epsilon n}^{n/2} \{abca^{-1} : a \in B_S(r), b \in B_S(n-2r+2R_1), c \in B_S(2R_1)\}, \\ \mathcal{K}_2 &:= \bigcup_{r, r' \geq 0, r+r' \leq (1-\epsilon)n} \{acba^{-1} : a \in B_S(r+2R_1), b \in B_S(r'+2R_1), c \in B_S(2R_1)\}. \end{aligned}$$

We also define $\mathcal{K}_i^{-1} := \{g^{-1} : g \in \mathcal{K}_i\}$ for $i = 1, 2$. Then we have

$$\#(\mathcal{K}_1 \cup \mathcal{K}_2 \cup \mathcal{K}_1^{-1} \cup \mathcal{K}_2^{-1}) \lesssim 2 \cdot n^2 \lambda_S^{(1-0.5\epsilon)n}.$$

This is exponentially smaller than $\#B_S(n)$.

It remains to prove that $\mathcal{V}_{L,3\epsilon}(n) \setminus (\mathcal{K}_1 \cup \mathcal{K}_2 \cup \mathcal{K}_1^{-1} \cup \mathcal{K}_2^{-1})$ is contained in $\mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)$. To show this, let $g \in \mathcal{V}_{L,3\epsilon}(n) \setminus (\mathcal{K}_1 \cup \mathcal{K}_2 \cup \mathcal{K}_1^{-1} \cup \mathcal{K}_2^{-1})$. Then there exists $h_1, \dots, h_{3\epsilon n} \in G$ such that

$$(4.1) \quad (x_0, h_1 \Upsilon_L, \dots, h_{3\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, gx_0)$$

is $(6E_0 + 300\delta)$ -aligned. Then $(x_0, h_i \Upsilon_L, gx_0)$ is $(6E_0 + 360\delta)$ -aligned for each i by Fact 2.11.

Fact 2.10 guarantees that the following dichotomy holds: either

- (1) $(g^{-1}x_0, h_{\epsilon n+1} \Upsilon_L)$ is $(6E_0 + 360\delta)$ -aligned, or
- (2) $(h_{\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g^{-1}x_0)$ is $(6E_0 + 360\delta)$ -aligned.

We claim that Case (1) holds. Suppose to the contrary that Case (2) holds. That means,

$$(x_0, h_1 \Upsilon_L, \dots, h_{\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g^{\pm 1}x_0) \text{ is } (6E_0 + 360\delta)\text{-aligned}.$$

Pick a d_S -geodesic path P connecting id to g . Then $g^{-1}P$ is a path connecting g^{-1} to id .

We now apply Proposition 3.3. Since $\text{Len}(P) + \text{Len}(g^{-1}P) \leq 2n \leq (12/\epsilon) \cdot (\epsilon n/6)$, the first alternative in Proposition 3.3 should hold for $k = \epsilon n/6$. In particular, there exists $i \in \{\epsilon n/2, \dots, \epsilon n\}$ such that $d_S(h_i, P), d_S(h_i, g^{-1}P) \leq R_1$. Let $v \in P$ and $g^{-1}u \in g^{-1}P$ be the vertices realizing the distance. Here, as before, the alignment of the sequence in Display 4.1 implies that $[x_0, h_i x_0]$ contains i disjoint subsegments longer than $\text{diam}_X(\Upsilon_L) - 2(6E_0 + 520\delta) \geq 0.5\tau L$. Hence,

$$d_S(id, h_i) \geq \frac{1}{K_{Lip}} d_X(x_0, h_i x_0) \geq \frac{1}{4K_{Lip}} \tau L \epsilon n.$$

This implies

$$\|v\|_S \geq \|h_i\|_S - d_S(h_i, v) \geq \frac{1}{4K_{Lip}} \tau L \epsilon n - R_1 \geq \epsilon n. \quad (\text{when } n \geq R_1/\epsilon)$$

Meanwhile, since $(h_i x_0, h_{i+1} \Upsilon_L, \dots, h_{3\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g x_0)$ is also aligned, we have

$$d_S(h_i, g) \geq \frac{1}{K_{Lip}} d_X(h_i x_0, g x_0) \geq \frac{1}{K_{Lip}} \tau L \epsilon.$$

This implies $d_S(v, g) \geq \epsilon n$. Note that $\|g^{-1}u\|_S = \|g\|_S - \|u\|_S$ and $\|v\|_S$ differ by at most $2R_0$. (*)

We now divide the cases:

(1) $\epsilon n \leq \|v\|_S \leq \|g\|_S/2$. Recall that id, u, v, g are on the same d_S -geodesic P . This means

$$\|v^{-1}u\|_S = d_S(v, u) = \left| \|v\|_S - \|u\|_S \right| = \left| \|v\|_S + (\|g^{-1}u\|_S - \|g\|_S) \right|.$$

Thanks to (*), we have

$$\left| \|v\|_S + (\|g^{-1}u\|_S - \|g\|_S) \right| \leq |2\|v\|_S - \|g\|_S| + 2R_0 = \|g\|_S - 2\|v\|_S + 2R_0.$$

Finally, $g^{-1}u$ and v are $2R_0$ -close so $u^{-1}g \cdot v \in B_S(2R_0)$. This implies the contradiction

$$g = v \cdot (v^{-1}u) \cdot (u^{-1}gv) \cdot v^{-1} \in \mathcal{K}_1.$$

(2) $\|g\|_S/2 \leq \|v\|_S \leq \|g\|_S - \epsilon n$. In this case, (*) implies that

$$\|u\|_S \leq \|g\|_S - \|v\|_S + 2R_0, \quad \|u^{-1}v\|_S \leq |2\|v\|_S - \|g\|_S| + 2R_0 = 2\|v\|_S - \|g\|_S + 2R_0.$$

We also have $u^{-1}g \cdot v^{-1} \in B_S(2R_0)$. Finally, note that $\|g\|_S - \|v\|_S$, $2\|v\|_S - \|g\|_S$ are positive integers whose sum is at most $\|v\|_S \leq \|g\|_S - \epsilon n \leq n - \epsilon n$. Combined together, we are led to a contradiction

$$g = u \cdot (u^{-1}gv) \cdot (v^{-1}u) \cdot u^{-1} \in \mathcal{K}_2.$$

We can thus conclude that Case (1) holds. Meanwhile, Fact 2.10 asserts that either

- (a) $(h_{2\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g^2 x_0)$ is $(6E_0 + 360\delta)$ -aligned, or
- (b) $(g^2 x_0, h_{2\epsilon n+1} \Upsilon_L)$ is $(6E_0 + 360\delta)$ -aligned.

In Case (b), we are led to the alignment that

$$(g^{\pm 1} x_0, g^{-1} h_{2\epsilon n+1} \Upsilon_L, \dots, g^{-1} h_{3\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, x_0) \text{ is } (6E_0 + 360\delta)\text{-aligned.}$$

A similar argument as before implies $g \in \mathcal{K}_1^{-1} \cup \mathcal{K}_2^{-1}$, a contradiction. Hence, Case (a) must hold.

In conclusion, the following sequence is $(6E_0 + 360\delta)$ -aligned:

$$(g^{-1} x_0, h_{\epsilon n+1} \Upsilon_L, \dots, h_{2\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g^2 x_0)$$

Also, $(x_0, h_{\epsilon n+1} \Upsilon_L)$ and $(h_{2\epsilon n} \Upsilon_L, g x_0)$ are $(6E_0 + 360\delta)$ -aligned. Hence $g \in \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)$. \square

We can now finish the proof of Theorem 1.2.

Proof of Theorem 1.2. We again start by fixing the constants $E_0, \tau, K_{Lip}, F_0, L_1$. Take $L \geq L_1$ large enough such that $\tau L \geq M$.

By Lemma 4.5, it suffices to show that for each $\eta > 0$ there exists $\epsilon > 0$ such that

$$(4.2) \quad \limsup_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#(B_S(n) \setminus \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n))}{\#B_S(n)} \leq \eta.$$

We will take $\epsilon = \frac{1}{30(2E_0+4LF_0+5)(\#S)^{E_0+3LF_0+4}} \cdot \eta$. Then by Fact 4.1, Lemma 4.3 and Lemma 4.6,

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#B_S(0.9n)}{\#B_S(n)} &= \lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#(\mathcal{V}_{L,3\epsilon}(n) \setminus \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n))}{\#B_S(n)} = 0, \\ \limsup_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\#\mathcal{BAD}_{L,3\epsilon}(n)}{\#B_S(n)} &< \eta/2. \end{aligned}$$

Moreover, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
B_S(n) \setminus \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n) &\subseteq B_S(0.9n) \cup \left((B_S(n) \setminus B_S(0.9n)) \setminus \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n) \right) \\
&\subseteq B_S(0.9n) \cup \left(B_S(n) \setminus (B_S(0.9n) \cup \mathcal{V}_{L,3\epsilon}(n)) \right) \cup (\mathcal{V}_{L,3\epsilon}(n) \setminus \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)) \\
&= B_S(0.9n) \cup \mathcal{BAD}_{L,3\epsilon}(n) \cup (\mathcal{V}_{L,3\epsilon}(n) \setminus \mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)).
\end{aligned}$$

Hence, Equation 4.2 holds. \square

Proof of Theorem 1.2. We only list additional observations needed for Theorem 1.2. For detailed explanations about the notion of principal/triangular/ageometric fully irreducible outer automorphism in $\text{Out}(F_n)$, refer to [AKKP19] and [KMPT22].

By [AKKP19, Example 6.1], there exists a principal fully irreducible $\varphi \in \text{Out}(F_N)$. Now [KMPT22, Remark 5.4] provides a *lone axis* γ for φ , which is necessarily a periodic greedy folding line. Further, every fully irreducible $g \in \text{Out}(F_N)$ has a simple (periodic) folding axis.

Pick a basepoint $x_0 \in \mathcal{FF}_N$. For now, let us denote the projection map from the Outer space CV_N to \mathcal{FF} by Π . Then [KMPT22, Proposition 8.1] guarantees that:

Fact 4.7. *There exists $M_0 > 0$ such that the following holds. If g is a fully irreducible and if the $d_{\mathcal{FF}}$ -nearest point projections of $g^{-i}x_0$ and $g^i x_0$ onto $[\varphi^{-i}x_0, \varphi^i x_0]_{\mathcal{FF}}$ is at least M_0 -apart, the first projection coming first, then g is ageometric and triangular.*

The original [KMPT22, Proposition 8.1] is formulated in terms of Pr_γ , but this can be replaced with the $d_{\mathcal{FF}}$ -nearest point projection onto $\Pi(\gamma)$ by [DT17, Lemma 4.2]. Furthermore, $[\varphi^{-i}x_0, \varphi^i x_0]_{\mathcal{FF}}$ uniformly fellow travels with subsegments $\Pi(\gamma_i)$ of $\Pi(\gamma)$, where γ_i exhausts γ as i tends to infinity. This justifies the reformulation.

Given Fact 4.7, we take $M > M_0$ and run the proof of Theorem 1.1: for each $\eta > 0$ there exists $\epsilon > 0$ such that $\mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}$ has asymptotic density $\geq 1 - \eta$. For this ϵ , elements of $\mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)$ for large enough n satisfy the assumption of Fact 4.7 by Lemma 4.5. Hence, $\mathcal{W}_{L,\epsilon}(n)$ consists of ageometric triangular fully irreducibles for large enough n . By shrinking η , we conclude Theorem 1.2. \square

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