

Classification of links up to self pass-move

Dedicated to Professor Shin'ichi Suzuki for his 60th birthday

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Abstract. A pass-move and a #-move are local moves on oriented links defined by L. H. Kauffman and H. Murakami respectively. Two links are self pass-equivalent (resp. self #-equivalent) if one can be deformed into the other by pass-moves (resp. #-moves), where none of them can occur between distinct components of the link. These relations are equivalence relations on ordered oriented links and stronger than link-homotopy defined by J. Milnor. We give two complete classifications of links with arbitrarily many components up to self pass-equivalence and up to self #-equivalence respectively. So our classifications give subdivisions of link-homotopy classes.

1. Introduction.

We shall work in piecewise linear category. All links will be assumed to be ordered and oriented.

A *pass-move* [5] (resp. *#-move* [7]) is a local move on oriented links as illustrated in Figure 1.1(a) (resp. 1.1(b)). If the four strands in Figure 1.1(a) (resp. 1.1(b)) belong to the same component of a link, we call it a *self pass-move* (resp. *self #-move*) ([1], [13], [14], [15]). We note that pass-moves and #-moves are called #(II)-moves and #(I)-moves respectively in first author's prior papers [13], [14], [15], [16], etc. Two links are said to be *self pass-equivalent* (resp. *self #-equivalent*) if one can be deformed into the other by a finite sequence of self pass-moves (resp. self #-moves). Two links are said to be *link-homotopic* if one can be deformed into the other by finite sequence of *self crossing changes* ([6]). Since both self pass-move and self #-move are realized by self crossing changes, self pass-equivalence and self #-equivalence are stronger than link-homotopy. Link-homotopy classification is achieved by J. Milnor [6] for 3-component links, by J. Levine [4] for 4-component links, and by N. Habegger and X. S. Lin [2] for all links. In this paper we give two complete classifications of links with arbitrarily many components up to self pass-equivalence and up to self #-equivalence respectively. So our classifications give subdivisions of link-homotopy classes.

An n -component link $l = k_1 \cup \cdots \cup k_n$ is called a *proper link* if the linking number $\text{lk}(l - k_i, k_i)$ is even for any $i (= 1, \dots, n)$. For a proper link $l = k_1 \cup \cdots \cup k_n$, we call $\text{Arf}(l) - \sum_{i=1}^n \text{Arf}(k_i) (\in \mathbf{Z}_2)$ the *reduced Arf invariant* [13] and denote it by $\overline{\text{Arf}}(l)$, where Arf is the *Arf invariant* ([11]). (The Arf invariant is sometime called the *Robertello-Arf invariant*.)

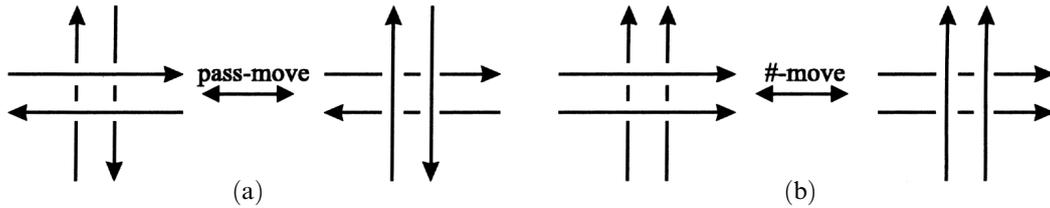


Figure 1.1.

THEOREM 1.1. *Let $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$ and $l' = k'_1 \cup \dots \cup k'_n$ be n -component links. Then the following (i) and (ii) hold.*

- (i) *l and l' are self pass-equivalent if and only if they are link-homotopic, $\text{Arf}(k_i) = \text{Arf}(k'_i)$ for any i ($i = 1, \dots, n$), and $\text{Arf}(k_{i_1} \cup \dots \cup k_{i_p}) = \text{Arf}(k'_{i_1} \cup \dots \cup k'_{i_p})$ for any proper links $k_{i_1} \cup \dots \cup k_{i_p} \subseteq l$ and $k'_{i_1} \cup \dots \cup k'_{i_p} \subseteq l'$.*
- (ii) *l and l' are self #-equivalent if and only if they are link-homotopic and $\overline{\text{Arf}}(k_{i_1} \cup \dots \cup k_{i_p}) = \overline{\text{Arf}}(k'_{i_1} \cup \dots \cup k'_{i_p})$ for any proper links $k_{i_1} \cup \dots \cup k_{i_p} \subseteq l$ and $k'_{i_1} \cup \dots \cup k'_{i_p} \subseteq l'$.*

For two-component links, both self pass-equivalence classification and self #-equivalence classification have been done by the first author ([15]). His proof can be applied only to two-component links. So we need different approach to proving Theorem 1.1.

A link $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$ is said to be \mathbf{Z}_2 -algebraically split if $\text{lk}(k_i, k_j)$ is even for any i, j ($1 \leq i < j \leq n$). We note that if $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$ is \mathbf{Z}_2 -algebraically split link, then l and $k_i \cup k_j$ ($1 \leq i < j \leq n$) are proper.

THEOREM 1.2. *Let $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$ and $l' = k'_1 \cup \dots \cup k'_n$ be n -component \mathbf{Z}_2 -algebraically split links. If l and l' are link-homotopic, then*

$$\overline{\text{Arf}}(l) + \sum_{1 \leq i < j \leq n} \overline{\text{Arf}}(k_i \cup k_j) = \overline{\text{Arf}}(l') + \sum_{1 \leq i < j \leq n} \overline{\text{Arf}}(k'_i \cup k'_j) \quad (\in \mathbf{Z}_2).$$

By combining Theorems 1.1 and 1.2, we have the following corollary.

COROLLARY 1.3. *Let $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$ and $l' = k'_1 \cup \dots \cup k'_n$ be n -component \mathbf{Z}_2 -algebraically split links. Then the following (i) and (ii) hold.*

- (i) *l and l' are self pass-equivalent if and only if they are link-homotopic, $\text{Arf}(k_i) = \text{Arf}(k'_i)$ for any i , and $\text{Arf}(k_i \cup k_j) = \text{Arf}(k'_i \cup k'_j)$ for any i, j ($1 \leq i < j \leq n$).*
- (ii) *l and l' are self #-equivalent if and only if they are link-homotopic and $\overline{\text{Arf}}(k_i \cup k_j) = \overline{\text{Arf}}(k'_i \cup k'_j)$ for any i, j ($1 \leq i < j \leq n$).*

2. Preliminaries.

In this section, we collect several results in order to prove Theorems 1.1 and 1.2.

Let $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$ and $l' = k'_1 \cup \dots \cup k'_n$ be n -component links. Let D^4 be the unit 4-ball, $L_\#$ a link in ∂D^4 as illustrated in Figure 2.1, and $C_\#$ the cone with the center of D^4 and $L_\#$. Let $\mathcal{A} = A_1 \cup \dots \cup A_n$ be a disjoint union of n annuli A_1, \dots, A_n . Suppose that there is a continuous map $f : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow S^3 \times [0, 1]$ with $f(\partial \mathcal{A}) \subset \partial(S^3 \times [0, 1])$ such that

- (i) $(\partial(S^3 \times [0, 1]), f(\partial A_i)) = (S^3 \times \{0\}, k_i) \cup (-S^3 \times \{1\}, -k'_i)$ ($i = 1, \dots, n$), and
- (ii) there are finite points p_1, \dots, p_m in $f(\mathcal{A}) \cap (S^3 \times (0, 1))$ such that
 - the inverse image $f^{-1}(p_j)$ of each p_j is a set of 4 points and belongs to a single annulus,
 - $f : \mathcal{A} - \bigcup_j f^{-1}(p_j) \rightarrow S^3 \times [0, 1]$ is a locally flat embedding, and
 - each p_j has a small neighborhood $N(p_j)$ in $S^3 \times [0, 1]$ such that $(N(p_j), N(p_j) \cap \mathcal{A})$ is homeomorphic to $(D^4, C_\#)$,

where $-X$ denotes X with the opposite orientation. Then $f(\mathcal{A})$ is called a *pass-annuli* between l and l' .

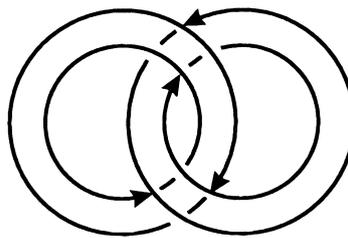


Figure 2.1.

The following is proved by the first author in [14].

LEMMA 2.1. *Two links l and l' are self pass-equivalent if and only if there is a pass-annuli between them.*

It is known that a pass-move is realized by a finite sequence of $\#$ -moves ([8]). Thus we have the following.

LEMMA 2.2. *If two links l and l' are self pass-equivalent, then they are self $\#$ -equivalent.*

A Γ -move [5] denotes a local move on oriented links as illustrated in Figure 2.2.

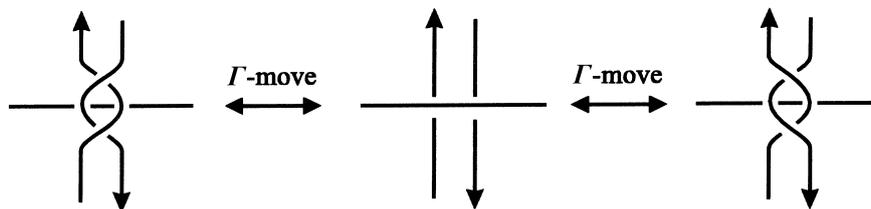


Figure 2.2.

The following is known [5].

LEMMA 2.3. *A Γ -move is realized by a single pass-move.*

Let $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$ and $l' = k'_1 \cup \dots \cup k'_n$ be n -component links such that there is a 3-ball B^3 in S^3 with $B^3 \cap (l \cup l') = l$. Let b_1, \dots, b_n be mutually disjoint disks in S^3 such that $b_i \cap l = \partial b_i \cap k_i$ and $b_i \cap l' = \partial b_i \cap k'_i$ are arcs for each i . Then the link

$l \cup l' \cup (\bigcup_{i=1}^n \partial b_i) - (\bigcup \text{int}(b_i \cap (l \cup l')))$ is called a *band sum* (or a *product fusion* [12]) of l and l' and denoted by $(k_1 \#_{b_1} k'_1) \cup \dots \cup (k_n \#_{b_n} k'_n)$. Note that a band sum of l and l' is \mathbf{Z}_2 -algebraically split if $\text{lk}(k_i, k_j) \equiv \text{lk}(k'_i, k'_j) \pmod{2}$ ($1 \leq i < j \leq n$).

The following is proved by the first author in [12].

LEMMA 2.4. *Two links l and l' are link-homotopic if and only if there is a band sum of l and $-\overline{l'}$ that is link-homotopic to a trivial link, where $(S^3, -\overline{l'}) \cong (-S^3, -l')$.*

By the definition of the Arf invariant via 4-dimensional topology ([11]), we have the following.

LEMMA 2.5. *Let l and l' be proper links and L a band sum of l and $-\overline{l'}$. Then L is proper and $\text{Arf}(L) = \text{Arf}(l) + \text{Arf}(l') \pmod{2}$.*

The following lemma forms an interesting contrast to the lemma above.

LEMMA 2.6. *Let $l = k_1 \cup k_2$ and $l' = k'_1 \cup k'_2$ be 2-component links with $\text{lk}(k_1, k_2)$ and $\text{lk}(k'_1, k'_2)$ odd. Let $L = (k_1 \#_{b_1} (-\overline{k'_1})) \cup (k_2 \#_{b_2} (-\overline{k'_2}))$ be a band sum and L' a band sum obtained from L by adding a single full-twist to b_2 ; see Figure 2.3. Then L and L' are proper and link-homotopic, and $\text{Arf}(L) \neq \text{Arf}(L')$.*

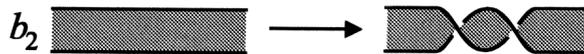


Figure 2.3.

PROOF. Clearly L and L' are proper and link-homotopic. So we shall show $\text{Arf}(L) \neq \text{Arf}(L')$.

Let a_i be the i th coefficient of the Conway polynomial. Then we have

$$a_3(L) - a_3(L') = a_2((k_1 \#_{b_1} (-\overline{k'_1})) \cup k_2 \cup (-\overline{k'_2})).$$

It is known that the third coefficient of the Conway polynomial of a two-component proper link is mod 2 congruent to the sum of the Arf invariants of the link and the components [9]. This and Lemma 2.5 imply $\text{Arf}(L) - \text{Arf}(L') = a_3(L) - a_3(L') \pmod{2}$. By [3],

$$\begin{aligned} & a_2((k_1 \#_{b_1} (-\overline{k'_1})) \cup k_2 \cup (-\overline{k'_2})) \\ &= \text{lk}(k_1 \#_{b_1} (-\overline{k'_1}), k_2) \text{lk}(k_2, -\overline{k'_2}) + \text{lk}(k_2, -\overline{k'_2}) \text{lk}(-\overline{k'_2}, k_1 \#_{b_1} (-\overline{k'_1})) \\ &+ \text{lk}(-\overline{k'_2}, k_1 \#_{b_1} (-\overline{k'_1})) \text{lk}(k_1 \#_{b_1} (-\overline{k'_1}), k_2). \end{aligned}$$

Thus we have $\text{Arf}(L) - \text{Arf}(L') = 1 \pmod{2}$. □

A Δ -move [8] is a local move on links as illustrated in Figure 2.4. If at least two of the three strands in Figure 2.4 belong to the same component of a link, we call it a

quasi self Δ -move ([10]). Two links are said to be *quasi self Δ -equivalent* if one can be deformed into the other by a finite sequence of quasi self Δ -moves.

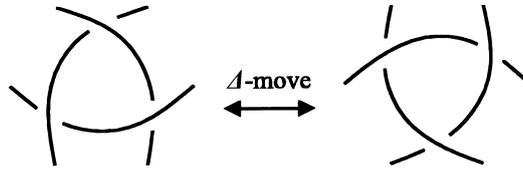


Figure 2.4.

The following is proved by Y. Nakanishi and the first author in [10].

LEMMA 2.7. *Two links are link-homotopic if and only if they are quasi self Δ -equivalent.*

3. Proofs of Theorems 1.1 and 1.2.

PROOF OF THEOREM 1.2. Since l is link-homotopic to l' , by Lemma 2.7, l is quasi self Δ -equivalent to l' . It is sufficient to consider the case that l' is obtained from l by a single quasi self Δ -move.

Suppose that the three strands of the Δ -move that is applied to the deformation from l into l' belong to one component of l . Without loss of generality we may assume that the component is k_1 . Note that k_i and k'_i are ambient isotopic for any $i (\neq 1)$, and that $k_i \cup k_j$ and $k'_i \cup k'_j$ are ambient isotopic for any $i < j (i \neq 1)$. Since a Δ -move changes the value of the Arf invariant ([8]), we have $\text{Arf}(l) \neq \text{Arf}(l')$, $\text{Arf}(k_1) \neq \text{Arf}(k'_1)$ and $\text{Arf}(k_1 \cup k_j) \neq \text{Arf}(k'_1 \cup k'_j)$. Thus we have $\overline{\text{Arf}}(l) = \overline{\text{Arf}}(l')$ and $\overline{\text{Arf}}(k_1 \cup k_j) = \overline{\text{Arf}}(k'_1 \cup k'_j)$. So we have the conclusion.

We now consider the other case, i.e., the three strands of the Δ -move belong to exactly two components of l . Without loss of generality we may assume that the two components are k_1 and k_2 . Note that k_i and k'_i are ambient isotopic for any i , and that $k_i \cup k_j$ and $k'_i \cup k'_j$ are ambient isotopic for any $i < j ((i, j) \neq (1, 2))$. Since $\text{Arf}(l) \neq \text{Arf}(l')$ and $\text{Arf}(k_1 \cup k_2) \neq \text{Arf}(k'_1 \cup k'_2)$, $\text{Arf}(l) + \text{Arf}(k_1 \cup k_2) = \text{Arf}(l') + \text{Arf}(k'_1 \cup k'_2) (\in \mathbf{Z}_2)$. This completes the proof. \square

LEMMA 3.1. *Let $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$ and $l' = k'_1 \cup \dots \cup k'_n$ be n -component \mathbf{Z}_2 -algebraically split links. If l and l' are link-homotopic, $\text{Arf}(k_i) = \text{Arf}(k'_i) (i = 1, \dots, n)$ and $\text{Arf}(k_i \cup k_j) = \text{Arf}(k'_i \cup k'_j) (1 \leq i < j \leq n)$, then l and l' are self pass-equivalent.*

PROOF. Since l is link-homotopic to l' , by Lemma 2.7, l is quasi self Δ -equivalent to l' . Let u be the minimum number of quasi self Δ -moves which are needed to deform l into l' . By Theorem 1.2, $\text{Arf}(l) = \text{Arf}(l')$. Since a Δ -move changes the value of the Arf invariant, u is even. It is sufficient to consider the case $u = 2$. Therefore, there is a continuous map $f : \mathcal{A} = A_1 \cup \dots \cup A_n \rightarrow S^3 \times [0, 1]$ from a disjoint union of n annuli A_1, \dots, A_n with $f(\partial \mathcal{A}) \subset \partial(S^3 \times [0, 1])$ such that

- (i) $(\partial(S^3 \times [0, 1]), f(\partial A_i)) = (S^3 \times \{0\}, k_i) \cup (-S^3 \times \{1\}, -k'_i) (i = 1, \dots, n)$, and

- (ii) there are two points p_1, p_2 in $f(\mathcal{A}) \cap (S^3 \times (0, 1))$ such that
 - the inverse image $f^{-1}(p_t)$ of each p_t is a set of 3 points and belongs to at most two annuli,
 - $f : \mathcal{A} - f^{-1}(p_1) \cup f^{-1}(p_2) \rightarrow S^3 \times [0, 1]$ is a locally flat, level-preserving embedding, and
 - each p_t has a small neighborhood $N(p_t)$ in $S^3 \times [0, 1]$ such that $(N(p_t), N(p_t) \cap f(\mathcal{A}))$ is homeomorphic to $(D^4, C_{\mathcal{A}})$, where $C_{\mathcal{A}}$ is the cone with the center of the unit 4-ball D^4 and the Borromean rings in ∂D^4 .

A singular point p_t is called *type (i)* if $f^{-1}(p_t) \subset A_i$, and *type (i, j)* ($i < j$) if $f^{-1}(p_t) \subset A_i \cup A_j$. Note that if p_t is type (i) (resp. type (i, j)), then $\partial(N(p_t) \cap f(\mathcal{A})) \subset f(A_i)$ (resp. $\subset f(A_i \cup A_j)$). For each i (resp. i, j), let u_i (resp. $u_{i,j}$) be the number of the singular points of type (i) (resp. type (i, j)). We note that a number of \mathcal{A} -moves which are needed to deform k_i into k'_i (resp. $k_i \cup k_j$ into $k'_i \cup k'_j$) is equal to u_i (resp. $u_{i,j} + u_i + u_j$). By the hypothesis of this lemma, we have u_i and $u_{i,j} + u_i + u_j$ are even. Hence u_i and $u_{i,j}$ are even. This implies that both p_1 and p_2 are the same type.

Suppose that p_1 and p_2 are type (i, j). Without loss of generality we may assume that $(i, j) = (1, 2)$ and two components of the Borromean rings $\partial(N(p_1) \cap f(\mathcal{A}))$ belong to $f(A_2)$. Let α be an arc in $f(A_1) \cap (S^3 \times (0, 1))$ that connects two singular points p_1 and p_2 of type (1, 2), and let $(S^3, L) = (\partial N(\alpha), \partial(N(\alpha) \cap f(A_1 \cup A_2)))$. Then L is a 5-component link as illustrated in either Figure 3.1(a) or (b). In the case that L is as Figure 3.1(a), we can deform L into a trivial link by applying Γ -moves to the sublink $L \cap f(A_2)$; see Figure 3.2. In the case that L is as Figure 3.1(b), we can deform L into the link as in Figure 3.2(a) by two Γ -moves, one is applied to $L \cap f(A_1)$ and the other to $L \cap f(A_2)$; see Figure 3.3. It follows from this and Figure 3.2 that L can be deformed into a trivial link by Γ -moves, one is applied to $L \cap f(A_1)$ and the others to $L \cap f(A_2)$.

Suppose that p_1 and p_2 are type (i). Let α be an arc in $f(A_i) \cap (S^3 \times (0, 1))$ that connects two singular points p_1 and p_2 of type (i), and let $(S^3, L) = (\partial N(\alpha), \partial(N(\alpha) \cap f(A_i)))$. By the argument similar to that in the above, L can be deformed into a trivial link by applying Γ -moves to $L \cap f(A_i)$.

Therefore, by Lemma 2.3, we can construct pass-annuli in $S^3 \times [0, 1]$ between l and l' . Lemma 2.1 completes the proof. □

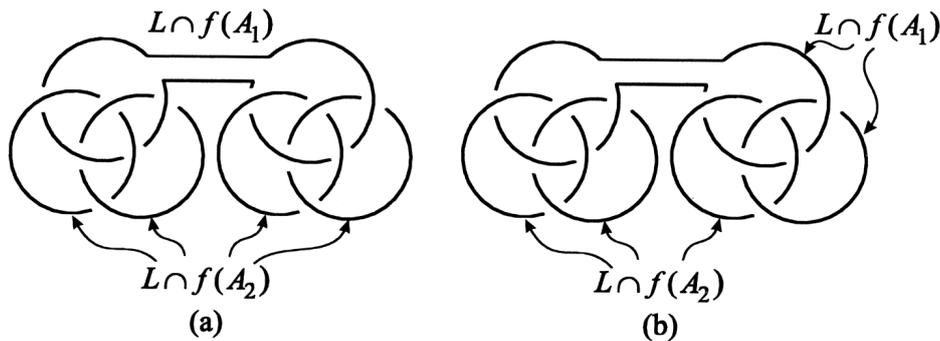


Figure 3.1.

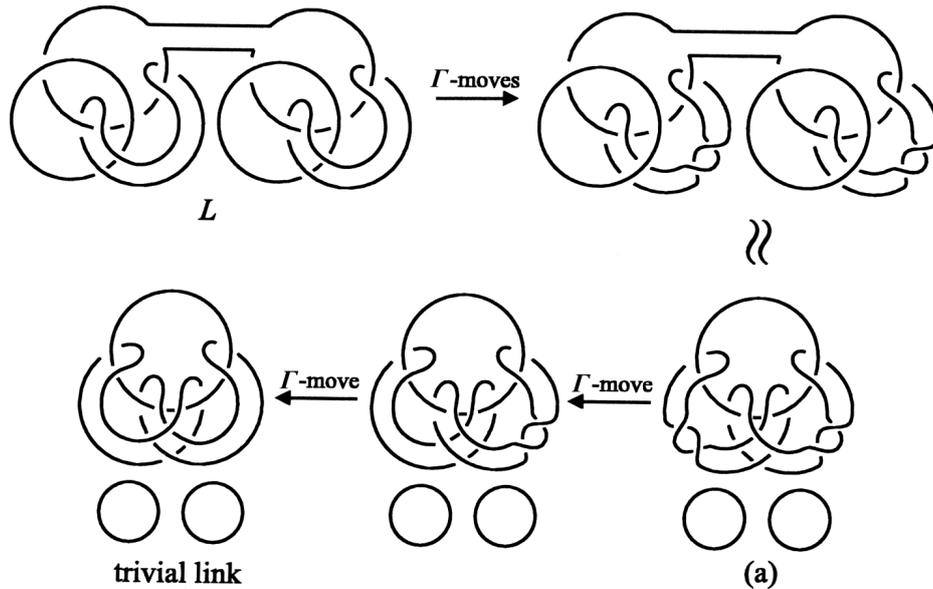


Figure 3.2.

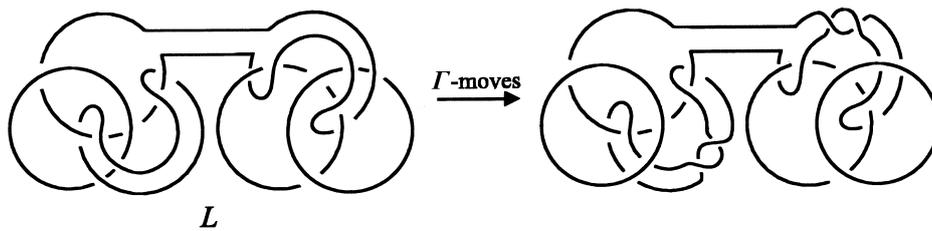


Figure 3.3.

PROOF OF THEOREM 1.1. Since a self pass-move (resp. a self #-move) is realized by link-homotopy and it preserves Arf (resp. $\overline{\text{Arf}}$) [15, Proposition], we have the ‘only if’ part of (i) (resp. (ii)). We shall prove the ‘if’ parts.

(i) For a link $l = k_1 \cup \dots \cup k_n$, let G_l^o (resp. G_l^e) be a graph with the vertex set $\{k_1, \dots, k_n\}$ and the edge set $\{k_i k_j \mid \text{lk}(k_i, k_j) \text{ is odd}\}$ (resp. $\{k_i k_j \mid \text{lk}(k_i, k_j) \text{ is even}\}$). Note that $G_l^o \cup G_l^e$ is the complete graph with n vertices. For a band sum $L = K_1 \cup \dots \cup K_n (= (k_1 \#_{b_1} (-\overline{k_1'})) \cup \dots \cup (k_n \#_{b_n} (-\overline{k_n'})))$ of l and $-\overline{l'}$, let A_L be a graph with the vertex set $\{K_1, \dots, K_n\}$ and the edge set $\{K_i K_j \mid \text{Arf}(K_i \cup K_j) = 0\}$. (Note that L is a \mathbb{Z}_2 -algebraically split link since l and l' are link-homotopic.)

CLAIM. *There is a band sum L of l and $-\overline{l'}$ such that L is link-homotopic to a trivial link and A_L is the complete graph with n vertices.*

PROOF. Let T be a maximal subgraph of G_l^o that does not contain a cycle. Since T does not contain a cycle, by Lemmas 2.4 and 2.6, there is a band sum L of l and l' such that L is link-homotopic to a trivial link and $T \subset h(A_L)$, where $h : A_L \rightarrow G_l^o \cup G_l^e$ the natural map defined by $h(K_i) = k_i$ and $h(K_i K_j) = k_i k_j$. By Lemma 2.5, we have $G_l^e \subset h(A_L)$. Since h is injective and $G_l^o \cup G_l^e$ is the complete graph, it is sufficient to prove that h is surjective. Let E be the set of edges which are not contained in $h(A_L)$, and $H^o = h(A_L) \cap G_l^o$. Suppose $E \neq \emptyset$. Then there is an edge $e \in E$ such that there is a cycle C in $H^o \cup e$ containing e whose any chord are not contained in G_l^o , where

a chord denotes an edge connecting two nonadjacent edges of C . (In fact, for each $e_i \in E$, consider the minimum length l_i of cycles in $H^o \cup e_i$ containing e_i and choose an edge e and a cycle C in $H^o \cup e$ containing e so that the length of C is equal to $\min\{l_i \mid e_i \in E\}$.) Without loss of generality we may assume that $C = k_1 k_2 \cdots k_c k_1$ and $e = k_1 k_2$. Set $l_c = k_1 \cup \cdots \cup k_c$ and $L_c = K_1 \cup \cdots \cup K_c$. Since C has no chords in G_l^o , all chords are in G_l^e . Thus we have $k_i k_j \subset H^o \cup G_l^e (= h(A_L))$ for any i, j ($1 \leq i < j \leq c$) except for $(i, j) = (1, 2)$. This implies $\text{Arf}(K_i \cup K_j) = 0$ for any i, j ($1 \leq i < j \leq c, (i, j) \neq (1, 2)$). The fact that C has no chords in G_l^o implies l_c is a proper link. By the hypothesis about the Arf invariants and Lemma 2.5, we have $\text{Arf}(L_c) = 2 \text{Arf}(l_c) = 0$ ($\in \mathbf{Z}_2$) and $\text{Arf}(K_i) = 2 \text{Arf}(k_i) = 0$ ($\in \mathbf{Z}_2$) ($i = 1, \dots, c$). Since L_c is link-homotopic to a trivial link, by Theorem 1.2, $\text{Arf}(K_1 \cup K_2) = 0$. This contradicts $e = k_1 k_2 \in E$. \square

By Claim, there is a band sum $L = K_1 \cup \cdots \cup K_n$ of l and $-\bar{l}'$ such that L is link-homotopic to a trivial link, $\text{Arf}(K_i) = 0$ ($i = 1, \dots, n$) and $\text{Arf}(K_i \cup K_j) = 0$ ($1 \leq i < j \leq n$). By Lemma 3.1, L is self pass-equivalent to a trivial link. Since L is a band sum of l and $-\bar{l}'$, we can construct a pass-annuli between l and l' . Lemma 2.1 completes the proof.

(ii) Since a #-move changes the value of the Arf invariant [7], by applying self #-moves, we may assume that $\text{Arf}(k_i) = \text{Arf}(k'_i)$ for any i . Theorem 1.1(i) and Lemma 2.2 complete the proof. \square

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