

A new auxiliary equation method for finding travelling wave solutions to KdV equation*

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Abstract In this paper, a new auxiliary equation method is used to find exact travelling wave solutions to the (1+1)-dimensional KdV equation. Some exact travelling wave solutions with parameters have been obtained, which cover the existing solutions. Compared to other methods, the presented method is more direct, more concise, more effective, and easier for calculations. In addition, it can be used to solve other nonlinear evolution equations in mathematical physics.

Key words auxiliary equation method, travelling wave solution, KdV equation, homogeneous balance method

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1 Introduction

The research area of nonlinear evolution equations has been very active for the past few decades. There are various kinds of nonlinear evolution equations in the fields of physical and mathematical sciences. Much effort has been made to construct the exact solutions to nonlinear equations because of their important roles in the study of nonlinear physical phenomena. In recent years, the powerful and efficient methods for finding the analytic solutions to nonlinear equations have attracted a lot of interest of a diverse group of scientists, such as the homogeneous balance method^[1-3], the tanh-function method^[1-2,4-5], the tanh-coth function method^[1-2], the Painleve expansion method^[2-3,6], the auxiliary equation method^[7-9], the Jacobi elliptic function method^[1-2,6,10], the sine-cosine function method^[1-2,11], and the exp-function method^[2,12]. These methods have been used to solve nonlinear dispersive and dissipative problems.

In this paper, we give a new auxiliary equation method for finding the exact travelling wave solutions to the (1+1)-dimensional KdV equation. Some exact solutions with parameters have been obtained successfully, which include existing solutions. The results show that this

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method not only is effective and straightforward, but also can be used for many other nonlinear evolution equations in mathematical physics. Furthermore, this method includes the methods of [13–17], and it is better than those methods. It is also a powerful mathematical tool to obtain the exact travelling wave solutions for some high-dimensional or high-order nonlinear evolution equations.

2 Description of the method

In this section, we describe the method of finding the travelling wave solutions to nonlinear evolution equations as follows. First, a given nonlinear partial differential equation has the form

$$p(u, u_t, u_x, u_{tt}, u_{xx}, \dots) = 0. \quad (1)$$

Our method mainly consists of four steps:

Step 1 Take the complex solutions of (1) in the form

$$u(x, t) = u(\xi), \quad \xi = x - vt, \quad (2)$$

where v is a real constant. Under the transformation (2), (1) becomes an ordinary differential equation

$$Q(u, u', u'', \dots) = 0. \quad (3)$$

Step 2 Take the solutions of (3) in the more general form

$$u(\xi) = a_0 + \sum_{i=1}^m \left(a_i \left(\frac{G(\xi)}{G'(\xi)} \right)^i + b_i \left(\frac{G(\xi)}{G'(\xi)} \right)^{-i} \right), \quad (4)$$

where a_m and b_m are not zero at the same time, and a_0 , a_i , and b_i ($i = 1, 2, \dots, m$) are constants to be determined later. The integer m in (4) can be determined by balancing the highest order nonlinear terms and the highest order linear terms of $u(\xi)$ in (3). $G = G(\xi)$ satisfies the second-order linear ordinary differential equation

$$G'' + \lambda G' + \mu G = 0, \quad (5)$$

where λ and μ are constants to be determined later.

The explicit expressions for the general solution of (5) are as follows:

$$\begin{cases} \text{when } \lambda^2 - 4\mu > 0, & G(\xi) = c_1 \exp\left(\frac{-\lambda + \sqrt{\lambda^2 - 4\mu}}{2}\xi\right) + c_2 \exp\left(\frac{-\lambda - \sqrt{\lambda^2 - 4\mu}}{2}\xi\right); \\ \text{when } \lambda^2 - 4\mu = 0, & G(\xi) = (c_1 + c_2\xi) \exp\left(-\frac{\lambda}{2}\xi\right); \\ \text{when } \lambda^2 - 4\mu < 0, & G(\xi) = \exp\left(-\frac{\lambda}{2}\xi\right) \left(c_1 \cos\frac{\sqrt{4\mu - \lambda^2}}{2}\xi + c_2 \sin\frac{\sqrt{4\mu - \lambda^2}}{2}\xi \right). \end{cases}$$

Remark 1 Let $a_i = 0$, $i = 1, 2, \dots, m$. Equation (4) changes to

$$u(\xi) = a_0 + \sum_{i=1}^m b_i \left(\frac{G(\xi)}{G'(\xi)} \right)^{-i}. \quad (6)$$

The form of (6) has been used in [3–5, 7]. If we set $b_i = 0$ ($i = 1, 2, \dots, m$), (4) changes to

$$u(\xi) = a_0 + \sum_{i=1}^m a_i \left(\frac{G(\xi)}{G'(\xi)} \right)^i. \quad (7)$$

Step 3 Substitute (4) into (3) and collect all terms with the same order of $\frac{G}{G'}$ together. The left-hand side of (3) is converted into a polynomial in $\frac{G}{G'}$. Then, let each coefficient of this polynomial to be zero to derive a set of over-determined partial differential equations for $a_0, a_i, b_i (i = 1, 2, \dots, m), \lambda, \mu,$ and v .

Step 4 Solve the algebraic equations obtained in Step 3 with the aid of a computer algebra system (such as Mathematica or Maple) to determine these constants. Moreover, the solutions of (5) are well known. Then, substituting $a_0, a_i, b_i (i = 1, 2, \dots, m), v,$ and the solutions of (5) into (4), we can obtain the exact travelling wave solutions of (1).

3 Applications of the method

Consider the KdV equation^[13]

$$u_t + uu_x + \delta u_{xxx} = 0. \tag{8}$$

Choose the travelling wave transformation (2). Substituting (2) into (8), integrating it with respect to ξ once, and letting the integrating constant to be zero, we have

$$\delta u'' + \frac{1}{2}u^2 - vu = 0. \tag{9}$$

According to Step 2, we get $m = 2$. Therefore, we can write the solution of (9) in the form

$$u(\xi) = a_0 + a_1 \frac{G}{G'} + a_2 \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^2 + b_1 \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-1} + b_2 \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-2}, \tag{10}$$

where a_2 and b_2 are not zero at the same time. By using (5) and from (10), we have

$$\begin{aligned} u'' &= (\lambda a_1 + 2a_2 + \lambda \mu b_1 + 2\mu^2 b_2) + (\lambda^2 a_1 + 6\lambda a_2 + 2\mu a_1) \frac{G}{G'} \\ &+ (8\mu a_2 + 3\lambda \mu a_1 + 4\lambda^2 a_2) \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^2 + (2\mu^2 a_1 + 10\lambda \mu a_2) \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^3 + 6\mu^2 a_2 \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^4 \\ &+ (2\mu b_1 + 6\lambda \mu b_2 + \lambda^2 b_1) \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-1} + (3\lambda b_1 + 4\lambda^2 b_2 + 8\mu b_2) \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-2} \\ &+ (2b_1 + 10\lambda b_2) \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-3} + 6b_2 \left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-4}. \end{aligned} \tag{11}$$

Substituting (10) and (11) into (9), collecting the coefficients of $\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^i (i = 0, \pm 1, \pm 2, \pm 3, \pm 4)$, and letting it be zero, we obtain the system

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{a_2^2}{2} + 6\delta \mu^2 a_2 &= 0, \quad a_0 b_1 + a_1 b_2 - v b_1 = 0, \\ \frac{b_2^2}{2} + 6\delta b_2 &= 0, \quad a_1 a_2 + 10\lambda \mu \delta a_2 + 2\delta \mu^2 a_1 = 0, \\ \frac{b_1^2}{2} + a_0 b_2 - v b_2 + 3\lambda \delta b_1 + 4\lambda^2 \delta b_2 + 8\mu \delta b_2 &= 0, \quad b_1 b_2 + 10\lambda \delta b_2 + 2\delta b_1 = 0, \\ \frac{a_0^2}{2} + a_1 b_1 + a_2 b_2 - v a_0 + 2\delta a_2 + \lambda \delta a_1 + \lambda \mu \delta b_1 + 2\mu^2 \delta b_2 &= 0, \\ \frac{a_1^2}{2} + a_0 a_2 - v a_2 + 4\lambda^2 \delta a_2 + 8\mu \delta a_2 + 3\lambda \mu \delta a_1 &= 0, \\ a_0 a_1 + a_2 b_1 - v a_1 + 6\lambda \delta a_2 + \lambda^2 \delta a_1 - \lambda^2 \delta b_1 + 2\mu \delta a_1 - 2\delta \mu b_1 - 6\lambda \mu \delta b_2 &= 0. \end{aligned}$$

Solving this system by Mathematica, we obtain

$$a_0 = -12\delta\mu, \quad a_1 = -12\lambda\mu\delta, \quad a_2 = -12\delta\mu^2, \quad b_1 = b_2 = 0, \quad v = \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu), \quad (12)$$

$$a_0 = -2(\lambda^2\delta + 2\delta\mu), \quad a_1 = -12\lambda\mu\delta, \quad a_2 = -12\delta\mu^2, \quad b_1 = b_2 = 0, \quad v = -\delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu), \quad (13)$$

$$a_0 = -24\delta\mu, \quad a_1 = 0, \quad a_2 = -12\delta\mu^2, \quad b_1 = 0, \quad b_2 = -12\delta, \quad v = -16\delta\mu, \quad \lambda = 0, \quad (14)$$

$$a_0 = 8\delta\mu, \quad a_1 = 0, \quad a_2 = -12\delta\mu^2, \quad b_1 = 0, \quad b_2 = -12\delta, \quad v = 16\delta\mu, \quad \lambda = 0, \quad (15)$$

$$a_0 = -12\delta\mu, \quad a_1 = a_2 = 0, \quad b_1 = 0, \quad b_2 = -12\delta, \quad v = -4\delta\mu, \quad \lambda = 0, \quad (16)$$

$$a_0 = -4\delta\mu, \quad a_1 = a_2 = 0, \quad b_1 = 0, \quad b_2 = -12\delta, \quad v = 4\delta\mu, \quad \lambda = 0, \quad (17)$$

$$a_0 = -2\delta(\lambda^2 + 2\mu), \quad a_1 = a_2 = 0, \quad b_1 = -12\lambda\delta, \quad b_2 = -12\delta, \quad v = -2\delta(\lambda^2 + 2\mu), \quad (18)$$

$$a_0 = -12\delta\mu, \quad a_1 = a_2 = 0, \quad b_1 = -12\lambda\delta, \quad b_2 = -12\delta, \quad v = -12\delta\mu, \quad (19)$$

where λ , μ , and δ are arbitrary constants. By using (12)–(19), (10) can be written as

$$u(\xi) = -12\delta\mu - 12\lambda\mu\delta\frac{G}{G'} - 12\delta\mu^2\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^2, \quad \xi = x - \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu)t, \quad (20)$$

$$u(\xi) = -2(\lambda^2\delta + 2\delta\mu) - 12\lambda\mu\delta\frac{G}{G'} - 12\delta\mu^2\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^2, \quad \xi = x + \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu)t, \quad (21)$$

$$u(\xi) = -24\delta\mu - 12\delta\mu^2\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^2 - 12\delta\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-2}, \quad \xi = x + 16\delta\mu t, \quad (22)$$

$$u(\xi) = 8\delta\mu - 12\delta\mu^2\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^2 - 12\delta\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-2}, \quad \xi = x - 16\delta\mu t, \quad (23)$$

$$u(\xi) = -12\delta\mu - 12\delta\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-2}, \quad \xi = x + 4\delta\mu t, \quad (24)$$

$$u(\xi) = -4\delta\mu - 12\delta\left(\frac{G}{G'}\right)^{-2}, \quad \xi = x - 4\delta\mu t, \quad (25)$$

$$u(\xi) = -2\delta(\lambda^2 + 2\mu) - 12\lambda\delta\frac{G'}{G} - 12\delta\left(\frac{G'}{G}\right)^2, \quad \xi = x + 2\delta(\lambda^2 + 2\mu)t, \quad (26)$$

$$u(\xi) = -12\delta\mu - 12\lambda\delta\frac{G'}{G} - 12\delta\left(\frac{G'}{G}\right)^2, \quad \xi = x + 12\delta\mu t. \quad (27)$$

Substituting the general solutions of (5) into (20) and (21), we can obtain the travelling wave solutions of (8) as follows:

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu > 0$,

$$u_1(\xi) = \frac{48\delta\mu M^2 c_1 c_2 \operatorname{sech}^2(\frac{1}{2}M\xi)}{(-\lambda c_1 - M c_2 + (\lambda c_2 + M c_1) \tanh(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}, \quad (28)$$

where $M = \sqrt{\lambda^2 - 4\mu}$ and $\xi = x - \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu)t$;

$$u_2(\xi) = -2\delta(\lambda^2 + 2\mu) - \frac{48\delta\mu^2(c_1 - c_2 \tanh(\frac{1}{2}M\xi)^2)}{(-\lambda c_1 - M c_2 + (\lambda c_2 + M c_1) \tanh(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2} - \frac{24\lambda\mu\delta(c_1 - c_2 \tanh(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))}{-M c_2 - \lambda c_1 + (\lambda c_2 + M c_1) \tanh(\frac{1}{2}M\xi)}, \quad (29)$$

where $M = \sqrt{\lambda^2 - 4\mu}$ and $\xi = x + \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu)t$.

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu = 0$,

$$u_3(\xi) = \frac{12\delta\mu(\lambda^2(c_1 + c_2\xi)^2 - 4(c_2^2 + \mu(c_1 + c_2\xi)^2))}{(-2c_2 + \lambda(c_1 + c_2\xi))^2}, \tag{30}$$

where $\xi = x - \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu)t = x$;

$$u_4(\xi) = -2\delta(\lambda^2 + 2\mu) - \frac{48\delta\mu^2(c_1 + c_2\xi)^2}{(-2c_2 + \lambda(c_1 + c_2\xi))^2} + \frac{24\delta\lambda\mu(c_1 + c_2\xi)}{-2c_2 + \lambda(c_1 + c_2\xi)}, \tag{31}$$

where $\xi = x + \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu)t = x$.

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu < 0$,

$$u_5(\xi) = -12\delta\mu\left(1 + \frac{2\lambda(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))}{M(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))} + \frac{4\mu(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}{M^2(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}\right), \tag{32}$$

where $M = \sqrt{\lambda^2 - 4\mu}$ and $\xi = x - \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu)t$;

$$u_6(\xi) = -2\delta(\lambda^2 + 2\mu) - \frac{24\lambda\delta\mu(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))}{M(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))} - \frac{48\delta\mu^2(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}{M^2(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}, \tag{33}$$

where $M = \sqrt{\lambda^2 - 4\mu}$ and $\xi = x + \delta(\lambda^2 - 4\mu)t$.

Substituting the general solutions of (5) into (22), we can obtain the travelling wave solutions of (8) as follows:

When $\mu > 0$,

$$u_7(\xi) = -\frac{12\delta\mu(c_1^2 + c_2^2)^2 \sec^4(\sqrt{\mu}\xi)}{(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2}, \tag{34}$$

where $\xi = x + 16\delta\mu t$.

When $\mu < 0$,

$$u_8(\xi) = \frac{12\delta\mu(c_1^2 - c_2^2)^2 \operatorname{sech}^4(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi)}{(c_2 + c_1 \tanh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2(c_1 + c_2 \tanh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2}, \tag{35}$$

where $\xi = x + 16\delta\mu t$.

Substituting the general solutions of (5) into (23), we can obtain the travelling wave solutions of (8) as follows:

When $\mu > 0$,

$$u_9(\xi) = 4\delta\mu\left(2 - \frac{3(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2}{(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2} - \frac{3(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2}{(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2}\right), \tag{36}$$

where $\xi = x - 16\delta\mu t$.

When $\mu < 0$,

$$u_{10}(\xi) = 4\delta\mu\left(2 + \frac{3(c_2 + c_1 \tanh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2}{(c_1 + c_2 \tanh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2} + \frac{3(c_1 + c_2 \tanh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2}{(c_2 + c_1 \tanh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2}\right), \tag{37}$$

where $\xi = x - 16\delta\mu t$.

Substituting the general solutions of (5) into (24), we can obtain the travelling wave solutions of (8) as follows:

When $\mu > 0$,

$$u_{11}(\xi) = -\frac{12\delta\mu(c_1^2 + c_2^2)}{(c_1 \cos(\sqrt{\mu}\xi) + c_2 \sin(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2}, \quad (38)$$

where $\xi = x + 4\delta\mu t$.

When $\mu < 0$,

$$u_{12}(\xi) = -\frac{12\delta\mu(c_1^2 - c_2^2)}{(c_1 \cosh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi) + c_2 \sinh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2}, \quad (39)$$

where $\xi = x + 4\delta\mu t$.

Substituting the general solutions of (5) into (25), we can obtain the travelling wave solutions of (8) as follows:

When $\mu > 0$,

$$u_{13}(\xi) = -4\delta\mu \left(1 + \frac{3(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2}{(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\sqrt{\mu}\xi))^2} \right), \quad (40)$$

where $\xi = x - 4\delta\mu t$.

When $\mu < 0$,

$$u_{14}(\xi) = -4\delta\mu \left(1 - \frac{3(c_2 + c_1 \tanh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2}{(c_1 + c_2 \tanh(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi))^2} \right), \quad (41)$$

where $\xi = x - 4\delta\mu t$.

Substituting the general solutions of (5) into (26), we can obtain the travelling wave solutions of (8) as follows:

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu > 0$,

$$u_{15}(\xi) = -\frac{2\delta M(-4c_1 + c_2(\cosh(M\xi) + \sinh(M\xi)))\operatorname{sech}^2(\frac{1}{2}M\xi)}{(c_1 + c_2 \tanh(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}. \quad (42)$$

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu = 0$,

$$u_{16}(\xi) = \frac{\delta(\lambda^2(c_1 + c_2\xi)^2 - 4(3c_2^2 + \mu(c_1 + c_2\xi)^2))}{(c_1 + c_2\xi)^2}. \quad (43)$$

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu < 0$,

$$u_{17}(\xi) = \delta \left(-2(\lambda^2 + 2\mu) - \frac{3M(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}{(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2} - \frac{6\lambda M(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))}{c_1 + c_2 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi)} \right). \quad (44)$$

In (42)–(44), $M = \sqrt{\lambda^2 - 4\mu}$, $\xi = x + 2\delta(\lambda^2 + 2\mu)t$, and $\lambda = \pm 2i\sqrt{2\mu}$.

Substituting the general solutions of (5) into (27), we can obtain the travelling wave solutions of (8) as follows:

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu > 0$,

$$u_{18} = \frac{12\delta c_1 M \operatorname{sech}^2(\frac{1}{2}M\xi)}{(c_1 + c_2 \tanh(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}. \quad (45)$$

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu = 0$,

$$u_{19} = \frac{3\delta(\lambda^2 c_1 - 4(c_2 + \mu c_1)^2)}{(c_1 + c_2\xi)^2}. \quad (46)$$

When $\lambda^2 - 4\mu < 0$,

$$u_{20} = 3\delta \left(-4\mu - \frac{M(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2}{(c_1 + c_2 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))^2} - \frac{2\lambda M(c_2 - c_1 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi))}{c_1 + c_2 \tan(\frac{1}{2}M\xi)} \right). \quad (47)$$

In (45)–(47), $M = \sqrt{\lambda^2 - 4\mu}$, $\xi = x + 12\delta\mu t$, and $\lambda = \pm 2i\sqrt{2\mu}$.

Remark 2 In particular, if c_1 , c_2 , λ , and μ are taken as special values, the various known results in literatures can be rediscovered. For instance, if we set $c_2 = 0$, $c_1 \neq 0$, and $\mu < 0$, the solutions $u_{12}(\xi)$ and $u_{14}(\xi)$ can be written as

$$u_{21}(\xi) = -12\delta\mu \operatorname{sech}^2(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi), \quad (48)$$

where $\xi = x + 4\delta\mu t$, and

$$u_{22}(\xi) = -4\delta\mu + 12\delta\mu \tanh^2(\sqrt{-\mu}\xi), \quad (49)$$

where $\xi = x - 4\delta\mu t$.

Remark 3 $u_{21}(\xi)$ and $u_{22}(\xi)$ are the well-known solutions of the KdV equation (8) (see [1]). Besides, the solutions $u_j(\xi)$ ($j = 1, 2, \dots, 20$) have not been given in [1–3, 6–7, 9–11, 18–21] and other references.

4 Conclusions and discussions

The new auxiliary equation method has been used to find new travelling wave solutions to the (1+1)-dimensional KdV equations in this paper. Twenty-two exact travelling wave solutions with parameters c_1 and c_2 are successfully obtained, including some new and well-known solutions. Compared with other methods, our method is more direct, more concise, more effective, and easier for calculations. Furthermore, this method includes the methods of [13–17], and it is better than those methods. It is also a promising method of solving other nonlinear partial differential equations in mathematical physics. More importantly, this method can be used to obtain the exact travelling wave solutions and the non-travelling wave solutions of some high-dimensional or high-order nonlinear evolution equations. It will be given in other articles.

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