

Universität des Saarlandes



Fachrichtung 6.1 – Mathematik

Preprint Nr. 183

**Boundary estimates for solutions of the
obstacle problem with two phases**

Darya Apushkinskaya and Nina Uraltseva

Saarbrücken 2006

Boundary estimates for solutions of the obstacle problem with two phases

Darya Apushkinskaya

Saarland University
Department of Mathematics
P.O. Box 15 11 50
66041 Saarbrücken
Germany
darya@math.uni-sb.de

Nina Uraltseva

St. Petersburg State University
Department of Mathematics
Universitetsky prospekt, 28 (Peterhof)
198504 St. Petersburg
Russia
uraltsev@pdmi.ras.ru

Edited by
FR 6.1 – Mathematik
Universität des Saarlandes
Postfach 15 11 50
66041 Saarbrücken
Germany

Fax: + 49 681 302 4443
e-Mail: preprint@math.uni-sb.de
WWW: <http://www.math.uni-sb.de/>

Abstract

For weak solutions of the two-phase obstacle problem

$$\Delta u = \lambda^+ \chi_{\{u>0\}} - \lambda^- \chi_{\{u<0\}} \quad \text{in } B_1^+, \quad \lambda^\pm \geq 0, \quad \lambda^+ + \lambda^- > 0,$$

satisfying the non-zero Dirichlet condition on the flat part of ∂B_1^+ , we obtain the optimal regularity, i.e., we show that u is a W_∞^2 -function.

1 Introduction

We consider a weak solution of the obstacle-problem-like equation

$$\Delta u = \lambda^+ \chi_{\{u>0\}} - \lambda^- \chi_{\{u<0\}} \quad \text{in } B_1^+ := \{x : |x| < 1, x_1 > 0\}, \quad (1)$$

satisfying the boundary condition

$$u = \varphi \quad \text{on } \Pi_1 := \{x : |x| \leq 1, x_1 = 0\}, \quad (2)$$

where Δ is the Laplacian, λ^+ and λ^- are non-negative constants such that $\lambda^+ + \lambda^- > 0$, and χ_E is the characteristic function of the set E . The Dirichlet data φ is supposed to satisfy the following conditions:

$$\varphi \text{ is a } W_\infty^3 \text{ - function,} \quad (3)$$

$$\exists L > 0 \text{ such that } |D'\varphi(x)| \leq L|\varphi(x)|^{2/3} \quad \forall x \in \Pi_1. \quad (4)$$

Observe that if the boundary data φ is non-negative (non-positive) then the solution u is so too, and we arrive at the classical one-phase obstacle problem. It is well-known (see [Je]) that the solution of the one-phase obstacle problem with $C^{2,\alpha}$ boundary data is a W_∞^2 -function up to the boundary, and this regularity is optimal.

The L_∞ -estimates of the second derivatives D^2u near Π_1 for solutions of the two-phase problem (1)-(2) are of main interest of this paper. Now we can state our main result.

Theorem. *Let u be a solution of the problem (1)-(2), with a function φ satisfying the assumptions (3) and (4). Suppose also that $\sup_{B_1^+} |u| \leq M$.*

Then for any $\delta \in (0, 1)$ there exists a positive constant C completely defined by $n, M, \lambda^\pm, \delta, L$, and by the norm of φ in the Sobolev space $W_\infty^3(\Pi_1)$ such that

$$\text{ess sup}_{B_{1-\delta}^+} |D^2u| \leq C.$$

Throughout this article we use the following notation:

$x = (x_1, x') = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)$ are points in \mathbb{R}^n , $n \geq 2$, with the Euclidean norm $|x|$.

χ_E denotes the characteristic function of the set $E \subset \mathbb{R}^n$;

∂E stands for the boundary of the set E ;

$\|\cdot\|_{p,E}$ denotes the norm in $L_p(E)$.

$v_+ = \max\{v, 0\}$;

$B_r(x^0)$ denotes the open ball in \mathbb{R}^n with center x^0 and radius r ;

$B_r^+(x^0) = \{x \in B_r(x^0) : x_1 > 0\}$; $B_r = B_r(0)$; $B_r^+ = B_r \cap \{x_1 > 0\}$.

$\Pi = \{(x, t) \in \mathbb{R}^{n+1} : x_1 = 0\}$; $\Pi_r = \Pi \cap B_r$.

D_i denotes the differential operator with respect to x_i ; $Du = (D_1u, D'u) = (D_1u, D_2u, \dots, D_nu)$ is the gradient of the function u ; D_ν stands for the operator of differentiation along the direction $\nu \in \mathbb{R}^n$, i.e., $|\nu| = 1$ and

$$D_\nu u = \sum_{i=1}^n \nu_i D_i u;$$

$D^2 = D(D)$ denotes the Hessian.

We adopt the convention that the index τ runs from 2 to n . We also adopt the convention regarding summation with respect to repeated indices.

We use letters N , L , and C (with or without indices) to denote various constants. To indicate that, say, C depends on some parameters, we list them in the parentheses: $C(\dots)$. We will write $C(\varphi)$ to indicate that C is defined by the Sobolev-norms of φ .

For a C^1 -function u defined in B_1^+ , we introduce the following sets:

$\Omega^\pm(u) = \{x \in B_1^+ : \pm u(x) > 0\}$;

$\Lambda(u) = \{x \in B_1^+ : u(x) = |Du(x)| = 0\}$;

$\Gamma(u) = \partial\{x \in B_1^+ : u(x) \neq 0\} \cap B_1^+$ is the free boundary. We emphasize that in the two-phase case we do not have the property that the gradient vanishes on the free boundary, as it was in the classical one-phase case; this causes difficulties.

$\Gamma^0(u) = \Gamma(u) \cap \Lambda(u)$; $\Gamma^*(u) = \Gamma(u) \setminus \Gamma^0(u)$. We observe that $\Gamma^*(u)$ is $C^{1,\alpha}$ -surface for any $\alpha < 1$.

From now on we suppose that $\sup_{B_1^+} |u| \leq M$. Together with the assumptions

(3) it provides for any $\delta \in (0, 1)$ the following estimates for u :

$$\|D^2u\|_{q, B_{1-\delta}^+} \leq N_1(q, M, \delta, \varphi), \quad \forall q < \infty, \quad (5)$$

$$\sup_{B_{1-\delta}^+} |Du| \leq N_2(M, \delta, \varphi), \quad (6)$$

$$\frac{|Du(x) - Du(y)|}{|x - y|^\alpha} \leq N_3(\alpha, M, \delta, \varphi), \quad \forall \alpha \in (0, 1). \quad (7)$$

Observe that the constants $N_1 - N_3$ depend on W_∞^2 -norm of φ .

Now we formulate an important tool used to prove Main Theorem. This is the celebrated monotonicity formula due to H.W. Alt, L.A. Caffarelli, and A. Friedman (see [ACF]).

Lemma 1. *Let x^0 be a point in \mathbb{R}^n , and let h_1 and h_2 be non-negative, sub-harmonic, continuous functions in the unit ball $B_1(x^0)$, satisfying*

$$h_1(x^0) = h_2(x^0) = 0, \quad h_1(x) \cdot h_2(x) = 0 \text{ in } B_1(x^0).$$

Then the functional

$$\Phi(r, x^0, h_1, h_2) := \frac{1}{r^4} \int_{B_r(x^0)} \frac{|Dh_1|^2}{|x - x^0|^{n-2}} dx \int_{B_r(x^0)} \frac{|Dh_2|^2}{|x - x^0|^{n-2}} dx$$

is monotone increasing in r , $0 < r < 1$.

2 Estimates of the tangential gradient near the boundary

Lemma 2. *Let u be a solution of Equation (1), and let e be a direction in \mathbb{R}^n . Then for $x \in B_1^+$ we have*

$$(i) \quad \Delta(D_e u(x)) = (\lambda^+ + \lambda^-) \frac{D_e u(x)}{|Du(x)|} \mathcal{H}^{n-1} \llcorner \Gamma^*(u),$$

$$(ii) \quad \Delta|u(x)| = \lambda^+ \chi_{\Omega^+(u)} + \lambda^- \chi_{\Omega^-(u)} + 2|Du(x)| \mathcal{H}^{n-1} \llcorner \Gamma^*(u),$$

where \mathcal{H}^{n-1} is the $(n-1)$ -dimensional Hausdorff measure of the surface $\Gamma^(u)$.*

Proof. For a proof of part (i) we refer the reader to (the proof of) Lemma 2 in [U1]. Part (ii) follows from direct computation. Indeed, for any test-function

$\eta \in C_0^\infty(\Omega)$ the value of the distribution $\Delta|u|$ on η equals

$$\begin{aligned} \langle \Delta|u|, \eta \rangle &:= \int_{\Omega^+(u) \cup \Omega^-(u)} |u| \Delta \eta dx = \int_{\Omega^+(u)} u \Delta \eta dx - \int_{\Omega^-(u)} u \Delta \eta dx \\ &= \int_{\Omega^+(u)} (\Delta u) \eta dx - \int_{\Omega^-(u)} (\Delta u) \eta dx + 2 \int_{\Gamma^*(u)} (D_\gamma u) \eta dx, \end{aligned}$$

where $\gamma = \gamma(x)$ is the unit normal to $\Gamma^*(u)$ chosen outward w.r.t. the set $\Omega^-(u)$, i.e., $\gamma(x) = \frac{Du(x)}{|Du(x)|}$. Application Eq. (1) to the right-hand side of the above identity finishes the proof. \square

Lemma 3. *Let the assumptions of Theorem hold. Then for arbitrary small $\delta > 0$ there exists constant N_δ such that*

$$|D_\tau u(x) - D_\tau \varphi(x')| \leq N_\delta x_1, \quad \text{for } x \in B_{1-\delta}^+, \tau = 2, \dots, n. \quad (8)$$

The constant N_δ is completely defined by $\delta, n, M, L, \lambda^\pm$ and by the norm of φ in the Sobolev space $W_\infty^3(\Pi_1)$.

Proof. We fix $\delta \in (0, 1/2)$ and $\tau \in \mathbb{N}, 2 \leq \tau \leq n$.

Consider in the cylinder $Q_\delta = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^n : 0 < x_1 < \sqrt{\delta}, |x'| < 1 - \delta\}$, the auxiliary functions

$$v^\pm(x) = \pm(D_\tau u(x) - D_\tau \varphi(x')) + |u(x)| - |\varphi(x')|,$$

and the barrier function

$$w(x) = N_4 \left(\frac{x_1}{\sqrt{\delta}} - \frac{x_1^2}{2\delta} \right) + N_5 \left((|x'| - 1 + 2\delta)_+ \right)^2$$

with positive constants N_4 and N_5 which will be chosen later.

It is easy to see that the inequalities

$$v^\pm(x) \leq w(x) \quad \text{in } Q_\delta \quad (9)$$

together with (6) imply the desired estimate (8). Therefore, it remains only to verify (9).

To prove (9), first we observe that $v^\pm(x) \leq w(x)$ for all $x \in \Lambda(u) \cap Q_\delta$. Indeed, for a point $y \in \Lambda(u) \cap Q_\delta$ elementary computation combining with

the inequality (7) for $\alpha = 1/2$, give

$$\begin{aligned} |\varphi(y')| &\leq \int_0^{y_1} |D_1 u(t, y')| dt = \int_0^{y_1} |D_1 u(y_1, y') - D_1 u(t, y')| dt \\ &\leq N_3 \int_0^{y_1} (y_1 - t)^{1/2} dt \leq N_3 y_1^{3/2}. \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

Taking into account the assumption (4) and the inequality (10) we arrive at

$$v^\pm(y) \leq |D_\tau \varphi(y)| \leq L N_3^{2/3} y_1 \leq w(y) \quad \forall y \in \Lambda(u) \cap Q_\delta,$$

if N_1 is chosen so that $N_1 \geq 2\sqrt{\delta} L N_3^{2/3}$.

Now we consider the sets $D^\pm := Q_\delta \cap \{x : v^\pm(x) > w(x)\}$. According to the above arguments D^\pm have no intersections with $\Lambda(u)$. If we show that D^\pm are empty then the proof of (9) is complete. Suppose, towards a contradiction, that at least one of the sets D^\pm is non-empty.

It is obvious that an appropriate choice of the constants N_4 and N_5 guarantees the inequality

$$v^\pm \leq w \quad \text{on} \quad \partial Q_\delta. \quad (11)$$

We emphasize also that the assumption (3) provides the estimate $\sup_{Q_\delta} \Delta(D_\tau \varphi) \leq N_6$, whereas the assumptions (3) and (4) guarantee $\sup_{Q_\delta} \Delta|\varphi| \leq N_7$, where the constants N_6 and N_7 are defined by the W_∞^3 -norm and W_∞^2 -norm of φ , respectively.

Next, the direct computation in combination with the above estimates for $\Delta(D_\tau \varphi)$ and $\Delta|\varphi|$, and the equalities from Lemma 2 yield

$$\Delta(v^\pm - w)|_{D^\pm} \geq -N_6 - N_7 + \frac{N_4}{\delta} - 2nN_5 + \sigma^\pm \mathcal{H}^{n-1}[\Gamma^*(u) \cap D^\pm],$$

where the measure densities σ^\pm are defined by the formula

$$\sigma^\pm(x) = 2|Du(x)| \pm \lambda \frac{D_\tau u(x)}{|Du(x)|}, \quad \lambda := \lambda^+ + \lambda^-.$$

We claim that $\sigma^\pm \geq 0$ on $\Gamma^*(u) \cap D^\pm$, respectively. Indeed, it suffices to show that for $x \in \Gamma^*(u) \cap D^\pm$ we have

$$2|Du(x)|^2 + \lambda \left(\pm D_\tau \varphi(x') + |\varphi(x')| + \frac{N_4}{2\sqrt{\delta}} x_1 \right) \geq 0. \quad (12)$$

Suppose that

$$2|D_1u(x)|^2 < \lambda|D_\tau\varphi(x')|; \quad (13)$$

otherwise (12) is proved. Arguing in the same way as in deriving (10) we get the estimate

$$\begin{aligned} |\varphi(x')| &\leq \int_0^{x_1} |D_1u(t, x')| dt \leq \int_0^{x_1} |D_1u(x_1, x') - D_1u(t, x')| dt + |D_1u(x)|x_1 \\ &\leq N_3(x_1)^{3/2} + |D_1u(x)|x_1. \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

If $N_3(x_1)^{3/2} < |D_1u(x)|x_1$ then the inequalities (4), (13) and (14) imply

$$|\varphi(x')| \leq 2|D_1u(x)|x_1 < 2\sqrt{\lambda|D_\tau\varphi(x')|}x_1 \leq 2\sqrt{\lambda L}|\varphi(x')|^{1/3}x_1,$$

and, consequently, $|D_\tau\varphi(x')| \leq L|\varphi(x')|^{2/3} \leq 2L\sqrt{\lambda L}x_1$. From here, increasing N_4 if it is necessary, we arrive at (12).

In the other case, i.e., if $|D_1u(x)|x_1 \leq N_3(x_1)^{3/2}$, the inequalities (4) and (14) guarantee that

$$|D_\tau\varphi(x')| \leq L|\varphi(x')|^{2/3} \leq (2N_3)^{2/3}Lx_1.$$

Again, increasing N_4 if it is necessary, we arrive at (12).

Now we are able to conclude that

$$\Delta(v^\pm - w)|_{D^\pm} \geq -N_6 - N_7 + \frac{N_4}{\delta} - 2nN_5 \geq 0, \quad (15)$$

provided by the choice of N_4 large enough.

Thanks to (11) and (15) we can apply the comparison principle to the functions v^\pm and w on the sets D^\pm , respectively, and deduce the inequalities

$$v^\pm(x) \leq w(x) \quad \text{in} \quad D^\pm = Q_\delta \cap \{x : v^\pm(x) > w(x)\},$$

which give the desired contradiction with our assumption that $D^\pm \neq \emptyset$ and complete the proof. \square

3 Boundary estimates of the second derivatives

Lemma 4. *Let the assumptions of Theorem hold, let an arbitrary $\delta \in (0, 1)$ be fixed, and let x^0 be an arbitrary point in $B_{1-\delta}^+$. Then*

$$\frac{1}{R^2} \int_{B_R(x^0)} \frac{|D^2u(x)|}{|x - x^0|^{n-2}} dx \leq C_\delta, \quad (16)$$

where R is defined by the formula

$$R := \begin{cases} \delta/2, & \text{if } x_1^0 > \delta/2 \\ x_1^0/2, & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases} \quad (17)$$

and C_δ depends on the same arguments as the constant $N_{\delta/2}$ from Lemma 3.

Proof. First of all, we observe that it is enough to show that

$$\frac{1}{R^2} \int_{B_R(x^0)} \frac{|D(D_\tau u)|^2}{|x - x^0|^{n-2}} dx \leq C_\delta, \quad (18)$$

for any tangential direction τ , since we can find the derivative $D_1 D_1 u$ from Eq.(1).

Each of the derivatives $D_\tau u$, $\tau = 2, \dots, n$, satisfies the integral identity

$$\int_{B_1^+} D(D_\tau u(x)) D\eta(x) dx = \int_{B_1^+} f D_\tau \eta(x) dx, \quad \forall \eta \in \overset{\circ}{W}_2^1(B_1^+), \quad (19)$$

where $f := \lambda^+ \chi_{\{u>0\}} - \lambda^- \chi_{\{u<0\}}$. Suppose now that we are given a point $x^0 \in B_{1-\delta}^+$ with some $\delta \in (0, 1)$ and $x_1^0 \leq \delta/2$.

In this case we set $\eta = \zeta^2 G(D_\tau u - D_\tau \varphi)$, where $\zeta \in C_0^\infty(B_{2R}(x^0))$ is a cut-off function such that $\zeta = 1$ on $B_R(x^0)$ and

$$|D\zeta| \leq \frac{N_8(n)}{R}, \quad |D^2\zeta| \leq \frac{N_8(n)}{R^2},$$

while G is defined by the formula $G(x) = \min\{|x - x^0|^{2-n}, \beta^{2-n}\}$ for some small β . Plugging η into (19) we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{B_1^+} |D(D_\tau u)|^2 \zeta^2 G dx &= - \int_{B_1^+} f D_\tau (D_\tau \varphi) \zeta^2 G dx + \int_{B_1^+} f (D_\tau u - D_\tau \varphi) D_\tau (\zeta^2 G) dx \\ &\quad - \int_{B_1^+} (D_\tau u - D_\tau \varphi) D(D_\tau u) D(\zeta^2 G) dx \\ &\quad + \int_{B_1^+} [f D_\tau (D_\tau u) + D(D_\tau \varphi) D(D_\tau u)] \zeta^2 G dx \\ &=: I_1 + I_2 + I_3 + I_4. \end{aligned}$$

Our next objective is to estimate these four integrals. For I_1 from (3) it follows that

$$I_1 \leq \sup_{B_{2R}(x^0)} |f| \sup_{B_{2R}(x^0)} |D_\tau(D_\tau\varphi)| \int_{B_{2R}(x^0)} \zeta^2 G dx \leq N_9(n, \lambda^\pm, \varphi) R^2.$$

Observe that due to Lemma 3 we have $|D_\tau u - D_\tau\varphi| \leq 2N_{\delta/2}R$ in $B_{2R}(x^0)$. Hence

$$I_2 \leq \sup_{B_{2R}(x^0)} |f| \sup_{B_{2R}(x^0)} |D_\tau u - D_\tau\varphi| \int_{B_{2R}(x^0)} D_\tau(\zeta^2 G) dx \leq N_{10}(n, M, \delta, \lambda^\pm, \varphi) R^2.$$

Further, we transform I_3 into $I_3 \pm \int_{B_1^+} (D_\tau u - D_\tau\varphi) D(D_\tau\varphi) D(\zeta^2 G) dx$, apply integration by parts, and take into account Lemma 3. As a result we get

$$\begin{aligned} I_3 &= \int_{B_{2R}(x^0) \setminus B_\beta(x^0)} \frac{1}{2} (D_\tau u - D_\tau\varphi)^2 \Delta(\zeta^2 G) dx + \frac{n-2}{\beta^{n-1}} \int_{\partial B_\beta(x^0)} \frac{1}{2} (D_\tau u - D_\tau\varphi)^2 dx \\ &\quad - \int_{B_1^+} (D_\tau u - D_\tau\varphi) D(D_\tau\varphi) D(\zeta^2 G) dx \leq N_{11}(n) N_{\delta/2}^2 R^2 + N_{12}(n, \varphi) N_{\delta/2} R^2. \end{aligned}$$

Finally, using $|f D_\tau(D_\tau u) + D(D_\tau\varphi) D(D_\tau u)| \leq \frac{1}{2} |D(D_\tau u)|^2 + |f|^2 + |D(D_\tau\varphi)|^2$, we obtain

$$I_4 \leq \frac{1}{2} \int_{B_1^+} |D(D_\tau u)|^2 \zeta^2 G dx + N_{13}(n, \lambda^\pm, \varphi) R^2.$$

Thus, collecting all inequalities, we arrive at

$$\int_{B_1^+} |D(D_\tau u)|^2 \zeta^2 \tilde{G} dx \leq N_{14}(n, M, \delta, \lambda^\pm, \varphi) R^2.$$

Letting $\beta \rightarrow 0$ we obtain (18) and, consequently, (16).

Turning to the case $x_1^0 > \delta/2$ we note that similar to (16) estimate

$$\frac{4}{\delta^2} \int_{B_{\delta/2}(x^0)} \frac{|D^2 u(x)|^2}{|x - x^0|^{n-2}} dx \leq C_\delta$$

follows easily from the Hölder inequality and (5). \square

Proof of Theorem. Let $\delta \in (0, 1)$ be fixed, let $x^0 \in \Omega^+(u) \cup \Omega^-(u)$ with $|x^0| < 1 - \delta$, let $\nu = \frac{Du(x^0)}{|Du(x^0)|}$, and let a direction $e \in \mathbb{R}^n$ be orthogonal to ν . Since $D_e u(x^0) = 0$, it follows that

$$C(n)|D(D_e u)(x^0)|^4 \leq \lim_{r \rightarrow 0} \Phi(r, x^0, (D_e u)_+, (D_e u)_-).$$

On the other hand, according to Lemma 1, we have the inequality

$$\Phi(r, x^0, (D_e u)_+, (D_e u)_-) \leq \Phi(R, x^0, (D_e u)_+, (D_e u)_-),$$

where R is defined by formula (17). Application of Lemma 4 enable us to estimate the right-hand side of the last relation by the constant C_δ^2 . This means that we obtained the estimate of all the derivatives $D(D_e u)(x^0)$ with $e \perp \nu$. It is evident that the derivative $D_\nu D_\nu u(x^0)$ can be now estimated from Eq. (1).

Since the Lebesgue measure of $\Gamma(u)$ is zero (see [W]), it remains only to note that the obtained estimate of the second derivatives at the point x^0 does not depend on $\text{dist}(x^0, \Gamma(u))$, as well as on x_1^0 . This finishes the proof. \square

References

- [ACF] H.W. Alt, L.A. Caffarelli, A. Friedman, *Variational problems with two phases and their free boundaries*, Trans. Amer. Math. Soc., **282** (1984), no. 2, 431-461.
- [Je] R. Jensen, *Boundary regularity for variational inequalities*, Indiana Univ. Math. J., **29** (1980), no. 4, 495-504.
- [U1] N.N. Uraltseva, *Two-phase obstacle problem*, in *Function Theory and Phase Transitions* (N.N. Uraltseva ed.), Probl. Mat. Anal., **22** (2001), 240-245 (Russian); English transl. in J. Math. Sci., **106** (2001), 3073-3077.
- [W] G.S. Weiss, *An obstacle-problem-like equation with two phases: pointwise regularity of the solution and an estimate of the Hausdorff dimension of the free boundary*, Interfaces Free Bound., **3** (2001), 121-128.

Acknowledgment. N.N. Uraltseva thanks, for hospitality and support, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and Saarland University, where this work was done.

This work was partially supported by the Russian Foundation of Basic Research (RFBR) through the grant number 05-01-01063.