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Understanding and solving trigonometric equations can sometimes seem daunting, especially when they involve multiple functions and complex expressions. The equation $\cos(4x/3) + \sin^2(3x/2) + 2\sin^2(5x/4) - \cos^2(3x/2) = 0$ is a prime example. This article aims to break down this equation step-by-step, providing clear explanations and methods to find its solutions. Whether you're a student preparing for exams or a math enthusiast seeking to deepen your understanding, this guide will help you navigate the intricacies of this trigonometric equation.

Understanding the Equation: Breakdown and Initial Observations

Before diving into solving the equation, it's essential to understand its components and identify possible strategies for simplification.

Equation Components

The given equation is:

$$\cos(4x/3) + \sin^2(3x/2) + 2\sin^2(5x/4) - \cos^2(3x/2) = 0$$

Key observations:

- The equation involves multiple trigonometric functions: cosine and sine.
- The angles are fractional multiples of x : $4x/3$, $3x/2$, and $5x/4$.
- There are squared sine and cosine terms, suggesting potential use of Pythagorean identities.

Step-by-Step Approach to Solving the Equation

To solve the equation effectively, we should aim to express all terms in similar forms, leverage trigonometric identities, and reduce complexity.

Step 1: Simplify the sine and cosine squared terms

Recall the Pythagorean identity:

$$- \sin^2\theta + \cos^2\theta = 1$$

Using this identity, the terms involving $\sin^2$ and $\cos^2$ can be related or combined.

In particular:

$$- \cos^2(3x/2) \text{ can be written as } 1 - \sin^2(3x/2).$$

Thus, the equation becomes:

$$\cos(4x/3) + \sin^2(3x/2) + 2\sin^2(5x/4) - [1 - \sin^2(3x/2)] = 0$$

Simplify the terms:

$$\cos(4x/3) + \sin^2(3x/2) + 2\sin^2(5x/4) - 1 + \sin^2(3x/2) = 0$$

Combine like terms:

$$\cos(4x/3) + 2\sin^2(3x/2) + 2\sin^2(5x/4) - 1 = 0$$

Step 2: Express all sine squared terms in terms of cosine

Using the identity:

$$- \sin^2\theta = (1 - \cos 2\theta)/2$$

Apply this to the sine squared terms:

$$1. \sin^2(3x/2) = (1 - \cos 3x)/2$$

$$2. \sin^2(5x/4) = (1 - \cos 5x/2)/2$$

Substitute into the equation:

$$\cos(4x/3) + 2 \left[(1 - \cos 3x)/2 \right] + 2 \left[(1 - \cos 5x/2)/2 \right] - 1 = 0$$

Simplify:

$$\cos(4x/3) + (1 - \cos 3x) + (1 - \cos 5x/2) - 1 = 0$$

Further simplifying:

$$\cos(4x/3) + 1 - \cos 3x + 1 - \cos 5x/2 - 1 = 0$$

Combine constants:

$$\cos(4x/3) + (1 - \cos 3x) - \cos 5x/2 + 1 = 0$$

Rearranged:

$$\cos(4x/3) - \cos 3x - \cos 5x/2 + 2 = 0$$

Expressing All Terms for Simplification

Now, the equation is:

$$\cos(4x/3) - \cos 3x - \cos 5x/2 + 2 = 0$$

The key challenge is to simplify the terms involving different angles: $4x/3$, $3x$, and $5x/2$.

Step 3: Use Sum-to-Product Identities

Sum-to-product identities are useful for combining or transforming sums/differences of cosines:

$$-\cos A - \cos B = -2 \sin [(A + B)/2] \sin [(A - B)/2]$$

Applying this to the first two terms:

$$\cos(4x/3) - \cos 3x = -2 \sin [(4x/3 + 3x)/2] \sin [(4x/3 - 3x)/2]$$

Calculate:

$$- (4x/3 + 3x) = (4x/3 + 9x/3) = 13x/3$$

$$- (4x/3 - 3x) = (4x/3 - 9x/3) = -5x/3$$

Therefore:

$$\cos(4x/3) - \cos 3x = -2 \sin(13x/6) \sin(-5x/6)$$

Since sin is odd:

$$\sin(-\theta) = -\sin \theta$$

Thus:

$$\cos(4x/3) - \cos 3x = -2 \sin(13x/6) (-\sin(5x/6)) = 2 \sin(13x/6) \sin(5x/6)$$

Now, the entire equation becomes:

$$2 \sin(13x/6) \sin(5x/6) - \cos 5x/2 + 2 = 0$$

Step 4: Express Remaining Cosine in Terms of Double Angles

Recall:

$$-\cos 5x/2 = \cos(5x/2)$$

To relate this to the previous angles, note that:

$$-5x/2 = (15x/6)$$

Now, the equation is:

$$2 \sin(13x/6) \sin(5x/6) - \cos(15x/6) + 2 = 0$$

Next, apply the cosine sum-to-product identity:

$$-\cos A = 2 \cos^2(A/2) - 1$$

Alternatively, express $\cos(15x/6)$ as $\cos(5x/2)$, which may be more straightforward.

Step 5: Solving the Equation for x

Now, the simplified form is:

$$2 \sin(13x/6) \sin(5x/6) - \cos(15x/6) + 2 = 0$$

Or:

$$2 \sin(13x/6) \sin(5x/6) = \cos(15x/6) - 2$$

This is a complex equation involving multiple angles, but we can proceed by considering specific strategies:

- Use substitution: Let's set:

$$A = x$$

- Explore the values of x that satisfy the equation by considering the periodicity and the range of sine and cosine functions.

Special Solutions and Numerical Methods

Given the complexity, exact algebraic solutions may be difficult or impossible to express plainly. Instead, consider:

Analytical Approach:

- Look for particular angles where sine or cosine functions take known values (0, 1, -1, $\sqrt{2}/2$, etc.).
- Use inverse trigonometric functions to approximate solutions.

Numerical Approach:

- Use graphing calculators or software like Desmos, WolframAlpha, or GeoGebra to plot the functions and find intersection points.

- Implement iterative methods (Newton-Raphson) for more precise solutions.

Practical Tips for Solving Similar Trigonometric Equations

When faced with complex trigonometric equations like $\cos^4 x/3 + \sin^2 3x/2 + 2\sin^2 5x/4 - \cos^2 3x/2 = 0$, keep these tips in mind: