A PDE is called **quasilinear** if it is linear in the highest derivatives. Hence a second-order quasilinear PDE in two independent variables x, y is of the form

$$au_{xx} + 2bu_{xy} + cu_{yy} = F(x, y, u, u_x, u_y). \tag{1}$$

u is an unknown function of x and y (a solution sought). F is a given function of the indicated variables.

Depending on the discriminant $ac - b^2$, the PDE (1) is said to be of

elliptic type	if	$ac - b^2 > 0$	(example: *Laplace equation*)
parabolic type	if	$ac - b^2 = 0$	(example: *heat equation*)
hyperbolic type	if	$ac - b^2 < 0$	(example: *wave equation*).

In this section we consider the **Laplace equation**

$$\nabla^2 u = u_{xx} + u_{yy} = 0 \tag{2}$$

and the **Poisson equation**

$$\nabla^2 u = u_{xx} + u_{yy} = f(x, y). \tag{3}$$

These are the most important elliptic PDEs in applications. To obtain methods of numeric solution, we replace the partial derivatives by corresponding **difference quotients,** as follows. By the Taylor formula,

$$(4)\quad \begin{aligned} &\text{(a)}\quad u(x + h, y) = u(x, y) + hu_x(x, y) + \tfrac{1}{2}h^2 u_{xx}(x, y) + \tfrac{1}{6}h^3 u_{xxx}(x, y) + \cdots \\ &\text{(b)}\quad u(x - h, y) = u(x, y) - hu_x(x, y) + \tfrac{1}{2}h^2 u_{xx}(x, y) - \tfrac{1}{6}h^3 u_{xxx}(x, y) + \cdots \end{aligned}$$

Continued

We now substitute (6a) and (6b) into the ***Poisson equation*** (3), choosing $k = h$ to obtain a simple formula:

$$u(x + h, y) + u(x, y + h) + u(x - h, y) + u(x, y - h) - 4u(x, y) = h^2 f(x, y). \tag{7}$$

This is a **difference equation** corresponding to (3). Hence for the ***Laplace equation*** (2) the corresponding difference equation is

$$u(x + h, y) + u(x, y + h) + u(x - h, y) + u(x, y - h) - 4u(x, y) = 0. \tag{8}$$

h is called the **mesh size.** Equation (8) relates u at (x, y) to u at the four neighboring points shown in Fig. 452b. It has a remarkable interpretation: u at (x, y) equals the mean of the values of u at the four neighboring points. This is an analog of the mean value property of harmonic functions (Sec. 18.6).

Those neighbors are often called E (East), N (North), W (West), S (South). Then Fig. 452b becomes Fig. 452c and (7) is

$$u(E) + u(N) + u(W) + u(S) - 4u(x, y) = h^2 f(x, y). \tag{7*}$$

Continued

EXAMPLE 1

Mixed Boundary Value Problem for a Poisson Equation

Solve the mixed boundary value problem for the Poisson equation

$$\nabla^2 u = u_{xx} + u_{yy} = f(x, y) = 12xy$$

shown in Fig. 457a.

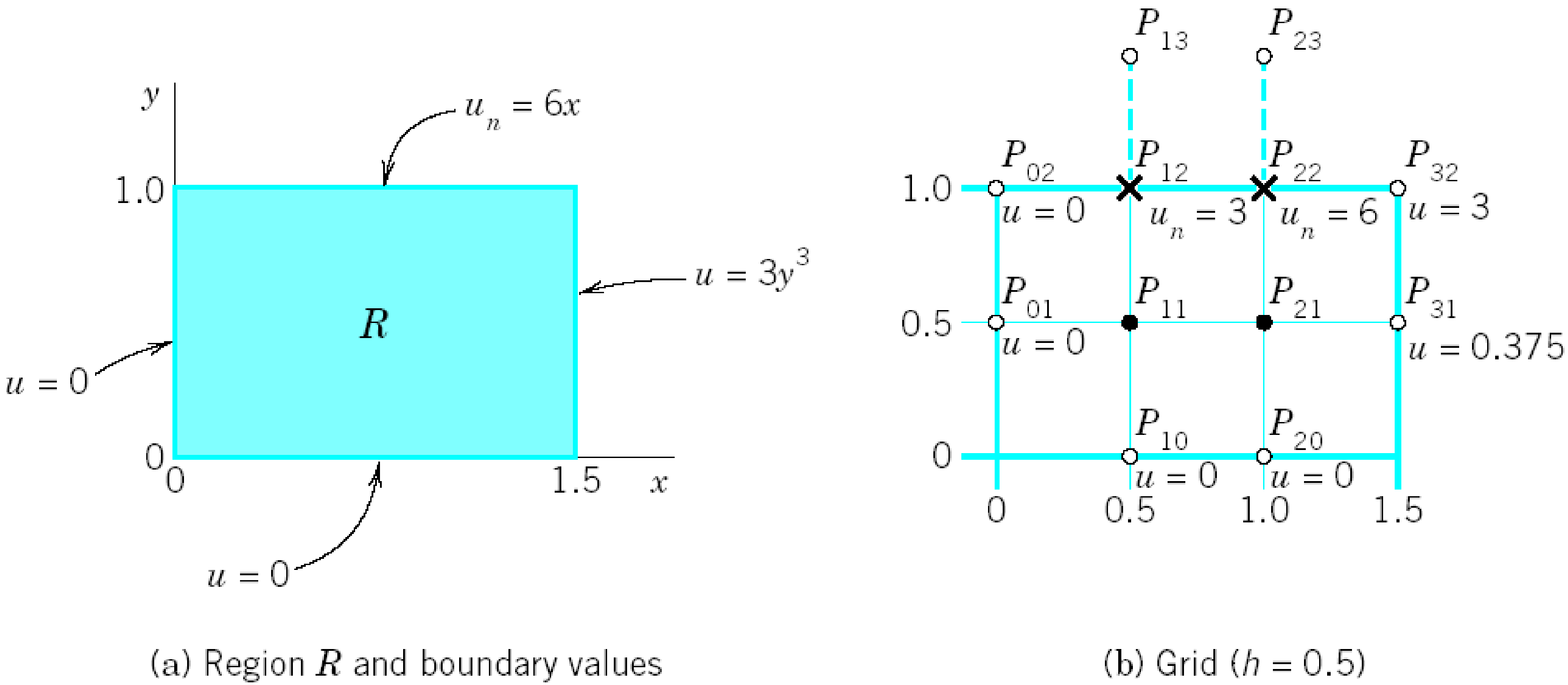

Fig. 457. Mixed boundary value problem in Example 1

Solution. We use the grid shown in Fig. 457b, where $h = 0.5$. We recall that (7) in Sec. 21.4 has the right side $h^2 f(x, y) = 0.5^2 \cdot 12xy = 3xy$. From the formulas $u = 3y^3$ and $u_n = 6x$ given on the boundary we compute the boundary data

$$(1) \qquad u_{31} = 0.375, \qquad u_{32} = 3, \qquad \frac{\partial u_{12}}{\partial n} = \frac{\partial u_{12}}{\partial y} = 6 \cdot 0.5 = 3, \qquad \frac{\partial u_{22}}{\partial n} = \frac{\partial u_{22}}{\partial y} = 6 \cdot 1 = 6.$$

P_{11} and P_{21} are internal mesh points and can be handled as in the last section. Indeed, from (7), Sec. 21.4, with $h^2 = 0.25$ and $h^2 f(x, y) = 3xy$ and from the given boundary values we obtain two equations corresponding to P_{11} and P_{21}, as follows (with -0 resulting from the left boundary).

$$\text{(2a)} \qquad \begin{aligned} -4u_{11} + u_{21} + u_{12} \qquad\qquad &= 12(0.5 \cdot 0.5) \cdot \tfrac{1}{4} - 0 = 0.75 \\ u_{11} - 4u_{21} \qquad + u_{22} &= 12(1 \cdot 0.5) \cdot \tfrac{1}{4} - 0.375 = 1.125 \end{aligned}$$

The only difficulty with these equations seems to be that they involve the unknown values u_{12} and u_{22} of u at P_{12} and P_{22} on the boundary, where the normal derivative $u_n = \partial u/\partial n = \partial u/\partial y$ is given, instead of u; but we shall overcome this difficulty as follows.

We consider P_{12} and P_{22}. The idea that will help us here is this. We imagine the region R to be extended above to the first row of external mesh points (corresponding to $y = 1.5$), and we assume that the Poisson equation also holds in the extended region. Then we can write down two more equations as before (Fig. 457b)

Continued

$$u_{11} \quad - 4u_{12} + u_{22} + u_{13} \quad = 1.5 - 0 = 1.5$$

(2b)

$$u_{21} + u_{12} - 4u_{22} \quad + u_{23} = 3 - 3 = 0.$$

On the right, 1.5 is $12xyh^2$ at (0.5, 1) and 3 is $12xyh^2$ at (1, 1) and 0 (at P_{02}) and 3 (at P_{32}) are given boundary values. We remember that we have not yet used the boundary condition on the upper part of the boundary of R, and we also notice that in (2b) we have introduced two more unknowns u_{13}, u_{23}. But we can now use that condition and get rid of u_{13}, u_{23} by applying the central difference formula for du/dy. From (1) we then obtain (see Fig. 457b)

$$3 = \frac{\partial u_{12}}{\partial y} \approx \frac{u_{13} - u_{11}}{2h} = u_{13} - u_{11}, \qquad \text{hence} \qquad u_{13} = u_{11} + 3$$

$$6 = \frac{\partial u_{22}}{\partial y} \approx \frac{u_{23} - u_{21}}{2h} = u_{23} - u_{21}, \qquad \text{hence} \qquad u_{23} = u_{21} + 6.$$

Substituting these results into (2b) and simplifying, we have

$$2u_{11} \quad - 4u_{12} + u_{22} = 1.5 - 3 = -1.5$$

$$2u_{21} + u_{12} - 4u_{22} = 3 - 3 - 6 = -6.$$

Together with (2a) this yields, written in matrix form,

Continued

$$
(3) \qquad \begin{bmatrix} -4 & 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & -4 & 0 & 1 \\ 2 & 0 & -4 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 & 1 & -4 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} u_{11} \\ u_{21} \\ u_{12} \\ u_{22} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0.75 \\ 1.125 \\ 1.5 - 3 \\ 0 - 6 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0.75 \\ 1.125 \\ -1.5 \\ -6 \end{bmatrix}.
$$

(The entries 2 come from u_{13} and u_{23}, and so do -3 and -6 on the right). The solution of (3) (obtained by Gauss elimination) is as follows; the exact values of the problem are given in parentheses.

$$
u_{12} = 0.866 \quad \text{(exact 1)} \qquad u_{22} = 1.812 \quad \text{(exact 2)}
$$

$$
u_{11} = 0.077 \quad \text{(exact 0.125)} \qquad u_{21} = 0.191 \quad \text{(exact 0.25)}.
$$