

6.3 The Characteristic Polynomial

Consider the recurrence relation:

$$c_0T(n) + c_1T(n - 1) + c_2T(n - 2) + \dots + c_kT(n - k) = f(n)$$

This is the general form of a **linear** recurrence relation of **order k** with constant coefficients ($c_0, c_k \neq 0$).

The recurrence is **linear** as it only depends on the preceding values. That is, the recurrence relation is of the form

The recurrence is **linear** as there are no products of variables. If $f(n) = 0$, then the recurrence relation becomes a **linear homogeneous** recurrence relation of order k .

Note that we ignore **boundary conditions** for the moment.

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- ▶ $T(n)$ only depends on the k preceding values. This means the recurrence relation is of **order k** .
- ▶ The recurrence is linear as there are no products of $T[n]$'s.
- ▶ If $f(n) = 0$ then the recurrence relation becomes a linear, **homogenous** recurrence relation of order k .

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Observations:

- ▶ The solution $T[1], T[2], T[3], \dots$ is completely determined by a set of **boundary conditions** that specify values for $T[1], \dots, T[k]$.
- ▶ In fact, any k consecutive values completely determine the solution.
- ▶ k non-consecutive values might not be an appropriate set of boundary conditions (depends on the problem).

Approach:

- ▶ First determine all solutions that satisfy recurrence relation.
- ▶ Then pick the right one by analyzing boundary conditions.
- ▶ First consider the homogenous case.

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The Homogenous Case

The solution space

$$S = \{ \mathcal{T} = T[1], T[2], T[3], \dots \mid \mathcal{T} \text{ fulfills recurrence relation} \}$$

is a **vector space**. This means that if $\mathcal{T}_1, \mathcal{T}_2 \in S$, then also $\alpha\mathcal{T}_1 + \beta\mathcal{T}_2 \in S$, for arbitrary constants α, β .

How do we find a non-trivial solution?

We guess that the solution is of the form λ^n , $\lambda \neq 0$, and see what happens. In order for this guess to fulfill the recurrence we need

$$c_0\lambda^n + c_1\lambda^{n-1} + c_2 \cdot \lambda^{n-2} + \dots + c_k \cdot \lambda^{n-k} = 0$$

for all $n \geq k$.

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Dividing by λ^{n-k} gives that all these constraints are identical to

$$c_0\lambda^k + c_1\lambda^{k-1} + c_2 \cdot \lambda^{k-2} + \dots + c_k = 0$$

This means that if λ_i is a root (Nullstelle) of $P[\lambda]$ then $T[n] = \lambda_i^n$ is a solution to the recurrence relation.

Let $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_k$ be the k (complex) roots of $P[\lambda]$. Then, because of the vector space property

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Lemma 1

Assume that the characteristic polynomial has k *distinct* roots $\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_k$. Then *all* solutions to the recurrence relation are of the form

$$\alpha_1 \lambda_1^n + \alpha_2 \lambda_2^n + \dots + \alpha_k \lambda_k^n .$$

Proof.

There is one solution for every possible choice of boundary conditions for $T[1], \dots, T[k]$.

We show that the above set of solutions contains one solution for every choice of boundary conditions.

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Proof (cont.).

Suppose I am given boundary conditions $T[i]$ and I want to see whether I can choose the α'_i 's such that these conditions are met:

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We show that the column vectors are linearly independent. Then the above equation has a solution.

Computing the Determinant

$$\begin{vmatrix} \lambda_1 & \lambda_2 & \cdots & \lambda_{k-1} & \lambda_k \\ \lambda_1^2 & \lambda_2^2 & \cdots & \lambda_{k-1}^2 & \lambda_k^2 \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \vdots & \vdots \\ \lambda_1^k & \lambda_2^k & \cdots & \lambda_{k-1}^k & \lambda_k^k \end{vmatrix} =$$

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$$= \prod_{i=1}^k \lambda_i \cdot \begin{vmatrix} 1 & \lambda_1 & \cdots & \lambda_1^{k-2} & \lambda_1^{k-1} \\ 1 & \lambda_2 & \cdots & \lambda_2^{k-2} & \lambda_2^{k-1} \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \vdots & \vdots \\ 1 & \lambda_k & \cdots & \lambda_k^{k-2} & \lambda_k^{k-1} \end{vmatrix}$$

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$$\begin{vmatrix} 1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & (\lambda_2 - \lambda_1) \cdot 1 & \cdots & (\lambda_2 - \lambda_1) \cdot \lambda_2^{k-3} & (\lambda_2 - \lambda_1) \cdot \lambda_2^{k-2} \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \vdots & \vdots \\ 1 & (\lambda_k - \lambda_1) \cdot 1 & \cdots & (\lambda_k - \lambda_1) \cdot \lambda_k^{k-3} & (\lambda_k - \lambda_1) \cdot \lambda_k^{k-2} \end{vmatrix}$$

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$$\begin{vmatrix} 1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & (\lambda_2 - \lambda_1) \cdot 1 & \cdots & (\lambda_2 - \lambda_1) \cdot \lambda_2^{k-3} & (\lambda_2 - \lambda_1) \cdot \lambda_2^{k-2} \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \vdots & \vdots \\ 1 & (\lambda_k - \lambda_1) \cdot 1 & \cdots & (\lambda_k - \lambda_1) \cdot \lambda_k^{k-3} & (\lambda_k - \lambda_1) \cdot \lambda_k^{k-2} \end{vmatrix} =$$

$$\prod_{i=2}^k (\lambda_i - \lambda_1) \cdot \begin{vmatrix} 1 & \lambda_2 & \cdots & \lambda_2^{k-3} & \lambda_2^{k-2} \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \vdots & \vdots \\ 1 & \lambda_k & \cdots & \lambda_k^{k-3} & \lambda_k^{k-2} \end{vmatrix}$$

Computing the Determinant

Repeating the above steps gives:

$$\begin{vmatrix} \lambda_1 & \lambda_2 & \cdots & \lambda_{k-1} & \lambda_k \\ \lambda_1^2 & \lambda_2^2 & \cdots & \lambda_{k-1}^2 & \lambda_k^2 \\ \vdots & \vdots & & \vdots & \vdots \\ \lambda_1^k & \lambda_2^k & \cdots & \lambda_{k-1}^k & \lambda_k^k \end{vmatrix} = \prod_{i=1}^k \lambda_i \cdot \prod_{i>\ell} (\lambda_i - \lambda_\ell)$$

Hence, if all λ_i 's are different, then the determinant is non-zero.

The Homogeneous Case

What happens if the roots are not all distinct?

Suppose we have a root λ_i with multiplicity (Vielfachheit) at least 2. Then not only is λ_i^n a solution to the recurrence but also $n\lambda_i^{n-1}$.

To see this consider the polynomial

$$P[\lambda] \cdot \lambda^{n-k} = c_0\lambda^n + c_1\lambda^{n-1} + c_2\lambda^{n-2} + \dots + c_k\lambda^{n-k}$$

Since λ_i is a root we can write this as $Q[\lambda] \cdot (\lambda - \lambda_i)^2$.

Calculating the derivative gives a polynomial that still has root λ_i .

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This means

$$c_0 n \lambda_i^{n-1} + c_1 (n-1) \lambda_i^{n-2} + \dots + c_k (n-k) \lambda_i^{n-k-1} = 0$$

Hence,

$$\underbrace{c_0 n \lambda_i^n}_{T[n]} + \underbrace{c_1 (n-1) \lambda_i^{n-1}}_{T[n-1]} + \dots + \underbrace{c_k (n-k) \lambda_i^{n-k}}_{T[n-k]} = 0$$

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(after taking the derivative; multiplying with λ ; plugging in λ_i)

Doing this again gives

$$c_0 n^2 \lambda_i^n + c_1 (n-1)^2 \lambda_i^{n-1} + \dots + c_k (n-k)^2 \lambda_i^{n-k} = 0$$

We can continue $j-1$ times.

Hence, $n^\ell \lambda_i^n$ is a solution for $\ell \in 0, \dots, j-1$.

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The Homogeneous Case

Lemma 2

Let $P[\lambda]$ denote the characteristic polynomial to the recurrence

$$c_0T[n] + c_1T[n-1] + \dots + c_kT[n-k] = 0$$

Let $\lambda_i, i = 1, \dots, m$ be the (complex) roots of $P[\lambda]$ with multiplicities ℓ_i . Then the general solution to the recurrence is given by

$$T[n] = \sum_{i=1}^m \sum_{j=0}^{\ell_i-1} \alpha_{ij} \cdot (n^j \lambda_i^n) .$$

The full proof is omitted. We have only shown that any choice of α_{ij} 's is a solution to the recurrence.

Example: Fibonacci Sequence

$$T[0] = 0$$

$$T[1] = 1$$

$$T[n] = T[n - 1] + T[n - 2] \text{ for } n \geq 2$$

The characteristic polynomial is

$$\lambda^2 - \lambda - 1$$

Finding the roots, gives

$$\lambda_{1/2} = \frac{1}{2} \pm \sqrt{\frac{1}{4} + 1} = \frac{1}{2} (1 \pm \sqrt{5})$$

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$$\alpha \left(\frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2} \right) + \beta \left(\frac{1 - \sqrt{5}}{2} \right) = 1 \implies \alpha - \beta = \frac{2}{\sqrt{5}}$$

Example: Fibonacci Sequence

Hence, the solution is

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{5}} \left[\left(\frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2} \right)^n - \left(\frac{1 - \sqrt{5}}{2} \right)^n \right]$$

The Inhomogeneous Case

Consider the recurrence relation:

$$c_0T(n) + c_1T(n-1) + c_2T(n-2) + \cdots + c_kT(n-k) = f(n)$$

with $f(n) \neq 0$.

While we have a fairly general technique for solving **homogeneous**, linear recurrence relations the inhomogeneous case is different.

The Inhomogeneous Case

The general solution of the recurrence relation is

$$T(n) = T_h(n) + T_p(n) ,$$

where T_h is **any** solution to the homogeneous equation, and T_p is **one** particular solution to the inhomogeneous equation.

There is no general method to find a particular solution.

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The Inhomogeneous Case

Example:

$$T[n] = T[n - 1] + 1 \quad T[0] = 1$$

Then,

$$T[n - 1] = T[n - 2] + 1 \quad (n \geq 2)$$

Subtracting the first from the second equation gives,

$$T[n] - T[n - 1] = T[n - 1] - T[n - 2] \quad (n \geq 2)$$

or

$$T[n] = 2T[n - 1] - T[n - 2] \quad (n \geq 2)$$

I get a completely determined recurrence if I add $T[0] = 1$ and $T[1] = 2$.

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$T[1] = 2$ gives $1 + \beta = 2 \Rightarrow \beta = 1$.

The Inhomogeneous Case

If $f(n)$ is a polynomial of degree r this method can be applied $r + 1$ times to obtain a homogeneous equation:

$$T[n] = T[n - 1] + n^2$$

Shift:

$$T[n - 1] = T[n - 2] + (n - 1)^2$$

Difference:

$$T[n] - T[n - 1] = T[n - 1] - T[n - 2] + 2n - 1$$

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Shift:

$$T[n - 1] = 2T[n - 2] - T[n - 3] + 2(n - 1) - 1$$

$$T[n] = 2T[n - 1] - T[n - 2] + 2n - 1$$

Shift:

$$\begin{aligned} T[n - 1] &= 2T[n - 2] - T[n - 3] + 2(n - 1) - 1 \\ &= 2T[n - 2] - T[n - 3] + 2n - 3 \end{aligned}$$

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