

Learning in Macroeconomic Models

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Overview

- Learning without feedback
- Learning with feedback
 - Simple adaptive learning
 - Least-squares learning
 - Bayesian versus least-squares learning
 - Adam & Marcet homework application

Learning without feedback

Setup:

- ❶ Agents know the complete model, except they do **not** know *dgp* exogenous processes
- ❷ Agents use observations to update beliefs
- ❸ Exogenous processes do not depend on beliefs
⇒ no feedback from learning to behavior of variable being forecasted

Learning without feedback & convergence

- If agents can learn the *dgp* of the exogenous processes, then you typically converge to REE
- They may not learn the correct *dgp* if
 - Agents use limited amount of data
 - Agents use misspecified time series process

Learning without feedback - Example

- Consider the following asset pricing model

$$P_t = E_t [\beta (P_{t+1} + D_{t+1})]$$

- If

$$\lim_{j \rightarrow \infty} \beta^{t+j} D_{t+j} = 0$$

then

$$P_t = E_t \left[\sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \beta^j D_{t+j} \right]$$

Learning without feedback - Example

- Suppose that

$$D_t = \rho D_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t, \varepsilon_t \sim N(0, \sigma^2) \quad (1)$$

- REE:

$$P_t = \frac{D_t}{1 - \beta\rho}$$

(note that P_t could be negative so P_t is like a deviation from steady state level)

Learning without feedback - Example

- Suppose that agents do not know value of ρ
- Approach here:
 - If period t belief $= \hat{\rho}_t$, then

$$P_t = \frac{D_t}{1 - \beta \hat{\rho}_t}$$

- Agents ignore that their beliefs may change,
 - i.e., $\hat{E}_t [P_{t+j}] = E_t \left[\frac{D_{t+j}}{1 - \beta \hat{\rho}_{t+j}} \right]$ is assumed to equal $\frac{1}{1 - \beta \hat{\rho}_t} E_t [D_{t+j}]$

Learning without feedback - Example

How to learn about ρ ?

- Least squares learning using $\{D_t\}_{t=1}^T$ & correct dgp
- Least squares learning using $\{D_t\}_{t=1}^T$ & incorrect dgp
- Least squares learning using $\{D_t\}_{t=T-\bar{T}}^T$ & correct dgp
- Least squares learning using $\{D_t\}_{t=T-\bar{T}}^T$ & incorrect dgp
- Bayesian updating (also called rational learning)
- Lots of other possibilities

Convergence again

- Suppose that the true dgp is given by

$$\begin{aligned} D_t &= \rho_t D_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \\ \rho_t &\in \{\rho_{\text{low}}, \rho_{\text{high}}\} \\ \rho_{t+1} &= \begin{cases} \rho_{\text{high}} \text{ w.p. } p(\rho_t) \\ \rho_{\text{low}} \text{ w.p. } 1 - p(\rho_t) \end{cases} \end{aligned}$$

- Suppose that agents think the true dgp is given by

$$D_t = \rho D_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t$$

- \implies Agents will never learn
(see homework for importance of sample used to estimate ρ)

Recursive least-squares

- time-series model:

$$y_t = x_t' \gamma + u_t$$

- least-squares estimator

$$\hat{\gamma}_T = R_T^{-1} \frac{X_T' Y_T}{T}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} X_T' &= \begin{bmatrix} x_1 & x_2 & \cdots & x_T \end{bmatrix} \\ Y_T' &= \begin{bmatrix} y_1 & y_2 & \cdots & y_T \end{bmatrix} \\ R_T &= X_T' X_T / T \end{aligned}$$

Recursive least-squares

$$R_T = R_{T-1} + \frac{(x_T x_T' - R_{T-1})}{T}$$

$$\hat{\gamma}_T = \hat{\gamma}_{T-1} + \frac{R_T^{-1} x_T (y_T - x_T' \hat{\gamma}_{T-1})}{T}$$

Proof for R

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \frac{X'_T X_T}{T} \stackrel{?}{=} \frac{X'_{T-1} X_{T-1}}{(T-1)} + \frac{x_T x'_T}{T} - \frac{X'_{T-1} X_{T-1}}{T(T-1)} \\
 & \left(\frac{T-1}{T} \right) X'_T X_T \stackrel{?}{=} X'_{T-1} X_{T-1} + \frac{T-1}{T} x_T x'_T - \frac{X'_{T-1} X_{T-1}}{T} \\
 & X'_T X_T - \frac{X'_T X_T}{T} \stackrel{?}{=} X'_{T-1} X_{T-1} + x_T x'_T - \frac{x_T x'_T}{T} - \frac{X'_{T-1} X_{T-1}}{T} \\
 & X'_{T-1} X_{T-1} + x_T x'_T \stackrel{?}{=} X'_{T-1} X_{T-1} + x_T x'_T \\
 & - \frac{X'_{T-1} X_{T-1} + x_T x'_T}{T} \stackrel{?}{=} - \frac{x_T x'_T + X'_{T-1} X_{T-1}}{T}
 \end{aligned}$$

Proof for gamma

$$\begin{aligned}
 (X'_T X_T)^{-1} & \stackrel{?}{=} (X'_{T-1} X_{T-1})^{-1} X'_{T-1} Y_{T-1} + \\
 \times X'_T Y_T & \quad (X'_T X_T)^{-1} \begin{pmatrix} x_T y_T \\ -x_T x'_T (X'_{T-1} X_{T-1})^{-1} X'_{T-1} Y_{T-1} \end{pmatrix} \\
 X'_T Y_T & \stackrel{?}{=} (X'_{T-1} X_{T-1} + x_T x'_T) (X'_{T-1} X_{T-1})^{-1} X'_{T-1} Y_{T-1} \\
 & \quad + \begin{pmatrix} x_T y_T \\ -x_T x'_T (X'_{T-1} X_{T-1})^{-1} X'_{T-1} Y_{T-1} \end{pmatrix} \\
 X'_T Y_T & \stackrel{?}{=} \begin{pmatrix} x_T y_T \\ -x_T x'_T (X'_{T-1} X_{T-1})^{-1} X'_{T-1} Y_{T-1} \end{pmatrix} \\
 & \quad + \begin{pmatrix} x_T y_T \\ -x_T x'_T (X'_{T-1} X_{T-1})^{-1} X'_{T-1} Y_{T-1} \end{pmatrix}
 \end{aligned}$$

Reasons to adopt recursive formulation

- makes proving analytical results easier
- less computer intensive,
 - but standard LS gives the same answer
- there are intuitive generalizations:

$$\begin{aligned}R_T &= R_{T-1} + \omega(T) (x_T x_T' - R_{T-1}) \\ \hat{\gamma}_T &= \hat{\gamma}_{T-1} + \omega(T) R_T^{-1} x_T (y_T - x_T' \hat{\gamma}_{T-1})\end{aligned}$$

$\omega(T)$ is the "gain"

Learning with feedback

- ① Explanation of the idea
- ② Simple adaptive learning
- ③ Least-squares learning
 - E-stability and convergence
- ④ Bayesian versus least-squares learning
- ⑤ Adam & Marcet homework environment

Learning with feedback - basic setup

Model:

$$p_t = \rho \hat{E}_{t-1} [p_t] + \delta x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t$$

RE solution:

$$\begin{aligned} p_t &= \frac{\delta}{1 - \rho} x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \\ &= a_{\text{re}} x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \end{aligned}$$

What is behind model

Model:

$$p_t = \rho \hat{E}_{t-1} [p_t] + \delta x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t$$

Stories:

- Lucas aggregate supply model
- Muth market model

See Evans and Honkapohja (2009) for details

Learning with feedback - basic setup

Perceived law of motion (PLM) at $t - 1$:

$$p_t = \hat{a}_{t-1}x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \quad (2)$$

Actual law of motion (ALM):

$$p_t = \rho \hat{a}_{t-1}x_{t-1} + \delta x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t = (\rho \hat{a}_{t-1} + \delta) x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t \quad (3)$$

Updating beliefs I: Simple adaptive

$$\text{ALM: } p_t = (\rho \hat{a}_{t-1} + \delta) x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t$$

Simple adaptive learning:

- $\hat{a}_t = \rho \hat{a}_{t-1} + \delta$
- could be rationalized if
 - agents observe x_{t-1} and ε_t
 - t is more like an iteration and in each iteration agents get to observe long time-series to update

Simple adaptive learning: Convergence

$$\hat{a}_t = \rho \hat{a}_{t-1} + \delta$$

or in general

$$\hat{a}_t - \hat{a}_{t-1} = T(\hat{a}_{t-1})$$

Simple adaptive learning: Convergence

Key questions:

- ❶ Does \hat{a}_t converge?
- ❷ If yes, does it converge to a ?

Answers: If $|\rho| < 1$, then the answer to both is yes.

Updating beliefs: LS learning

Suppose agents use least-squares learning

$$\begin{aligned}\hat{a}_t &= \hat{a}_{t-1} + \frac{R_t^{-1} x_{t-1} (p_t - x_{t-1} \hat{a}_{t-1})}{t} \\ &= \hat{a}_{t-1} + \frac{R_t^{-1} x_{t-1} ((\rho \hat{a}_{t-1} + \delta) x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t - x_{t-1} \hat{a}_{t-1})}{t} \\ R_t &= R_{t-1} + \frac{(x_{t-1} x_{t-1} - R_{t-1})}{t}\end{aligned}$$

Updating beliefs: LS learning

$$\begin{aligned}
 \hat{a}_t &= \hat{a}_{t-1} + \frac{1}{t} R_t^{-1} x_{t-1} (p_t - x_{t-1} \hat{a}_{t-1}) \\
 &= \hat{a}_{t-1} + \frac{1}{t} R_t^{-1} x_{t-1} ((\rho \hat{a}_{t-1} + \delta) x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t - x_{t-1} \hat{a}_{t-1}) \\
 R_t &= R_{t-1} + \frac{1}{t} (x_{t-1} x_{t-1} - R_{t-1})
 \end{aligned}$$

To get system with only lags on RHS, let $R_t = S_{t-1}$

$$\begin{aligned}
 \hat{a}_t &= \hat{a}_{t-1} + \frac{1}{t} S_{t-1}^{-1} x_{t-1} ((\rho \hat{a}_{t-1} + \delta) x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t - x_{t-1} \hat{a}_{t-1}) \\
 S_t &= S_{t-1} + \frac{1}{t} (x_t x_t - S_{t-1}) \frac{t}{t+1}
 \end{aligned}$$

Updating beliefs: LS learning

Let

$$\theta_t = \begin{bmatrix} a_t \\ S_t \end{bmatrix}$$

Then the system can be written as

$$\hat{\theta}_t = \hat{\theta}_{t-1} + \frac{1}{t} Q(\hat{\theta}_{t-1}, x_t, x_{t-1}, \varepsilon_t)$$

or

$$\Delta \hat{\theta}_t = T(\hat{\theta}_{t-1}, x_t, x_{t-1}, \varepsilon_t, t)$$

Note that

$$T(\cdot) = \frac{1}{t} Q(\cdot)$$

Key question

- If

$$\Delta \hat{\theta}_t = \frac{1}{t} Q(\hat{\theta}_{t-1}, x_t, x_{t-1}, \varepsilon_t, t)$$

then what can we "expect": about $\hat{\theta}_t$?

- In particular, can we "expect" that

$$\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \hat{a}_t = a_{\text{re}}$$

Corresponding differential equation

Much can be learned from following differential equation

$$\frac{d\theta}{d\tau} = h(\theta(\tau))$$

where

$$h(\theta) = \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} E[Q(\theta, x_t, x_{t-1}, \varepsilon_t)]$$

Corresponding differential equation

In our example

$$\begin{aligned}h(\theta) &= \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \mathbb{E} [Q(\theta, x_t, x_{t-1}, \varepsilon_t)] \\&= \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \mathbb{E} \left[\frac{S^{-1} x_{t-1} ((\rho a + \delta) x_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t - x_{t-1} a)}{(x_t x_t - S) \frac{t}{t+1}} \right] \\&= \left[\frac{MS^{-1} ((\rho - 1) a + \delta)}{M - S} \right]\end{aligned}$$

where

$$M = \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \mathbb{E} [x_t^2]$$

E-stability

$$\frac{d\theta}{d\tau} = h(\theta(\tau)) = \begin{bmatrix} MS^{-1}((\rho - 1)a + \delta) \\ M - S \end{bmatrix}$$

- **E-stability** if this system is stable
- important ingredient to establish stability of discrete-time system
see appendix

Importance of Gain

$$\hat{\gamma}_T = \hat{\gamma}_{T-1} + \omega(T) R_T^{-1} x_T (y_T - x_T' \hat{\gamma}_{T-1})$$

- Gain in least squares updating formula, $\omega(T)$, plays a key role in theorems
- $\omega(T) \rightarrow 0$ too fast: you may end up in something that is not an equilibrium
- $\omega(T) \rightarrow 0$ too slowly: you may not converge towards it
- So depending on the application, you may need conditions like

$$\sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \omega(t)^2 < \infty \text{ and } \sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \omega(t) = \infty$$

Bayesian learning

- LS learning has some disadvantages:
 - why "least-squares" and not something else?
 - how to choose gain?
 - why don't agents incorporate that beliefs change?
- Beliefs are updated each period
⇒ Bayesian learning is an obvious thing to consider

Bayesian versus LS learning

- LS learning \neq Bayesian learning with uninformed prior at least not always
- Bullard and Suda (2009) provide following nice example

Bayesian versus LS learning

Model:

$$p_t = \rho_L p_{t-1} + \rho_0 \hat{E}_{t-1} [p_t] + \rho_1 \hat{E}_{t-1} [p_{t+1}] + \varepsilon_t \quad (4)$$

- Key difference with earlier model:
 - two extra terms

Bayesian versus LS learning

The RE solution:

-

$$p_t = bp_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t$$

where b is a solution to

$$b = \rho_L + \rho_0 b + \rho_1 b^2$$

Bayesian learning - setup

- PLM:

$$p_t = \hat{b}_{t-1} p_{t-1} + \varepsilon_t$$

and ε_t has a known distribution

- plug PLM into (4) \implies ALM
 - but a Bayesian learner is a bit more careful

Bayesian learners understands they are learning

$$\begin{aligned}\hat{E}_{t-1}[p_{t+1}] &= \hat{E}_{t-1}[\rho_L p_t + \rho_0 \hat{E}_t[p_{t+1}] + \rho_1 \hat{E}_t[p_{t+2}]] \\ &= \rho_L p_t + \hat{E}_{t-1}[\rho_0 \hat{E}_t[p_{t+1}] + \rho_1 \hat{E}_t[p_{t+2}]] \\ &= \rho_L p_t + \hat{E}_{t-1}[\rho_0 \hat{b}_t p_t + \rho_1 \hat{E}_t[\hat{b}_{t+1} p_{t+1}]]\end{aligned}$$

- and he realizes, for example, that \hat{b}_t and p_t are both affected by ε_t !

Bayesian learners understand they are learning

- Bayesian learner realizes that

$$\hat{\mathbf{E}}_{t-1} [\hat{b}_t p_{t+1}] \neq \hat{\mathbf{E}}_{t-1} [\hat{b}_t] \hat{\mathbf{E}}_{t-1} [p_{t+1}]$$

and calculates $\hat{\mathbf{E}}_{t-1} [\hat{b}_t p_{t+1}]$ explicitly

- LS learner forms expectations thinking that

$$\begin{aligned} \hat{\mathbf{E}}_{t-1} [\hat{b}_t p_{t+1}] &= \hat{\mathbf{E}}_{t-1} [\hat{b}_{t-1} p_{t+1}] \\ &= \hat{b}_{t-1} \hat{\mathbf{E}}_{t-1} \left[\left(\rho_L p + \rho_0 \hat{b}_{t-1} + \rho_1 \hat{b}_{t-1} \right) p_t \right] \end{aligned}$$

Bayesian versus LS learning

- Bayesian learner cares about a covariance term
- Bullard and Suda (2009) show that Bayesian is similar to LS learning in terms of E-stability
- Such covariance terms more important in nonlinear frameworks
- Unfortunately not much done with nonlinear models

Homework Environment

$$P_t = \beta E_t [P_{t+1} + D_{t+1}]$$

$$\frac{D_{t+1}}{D_t} = a\varepsilon_{t+1}$$

with

$$E_t [\varepsilon_{t+1}] = 1$$

ε_t i.i.d.

Model properties REE

- Solution:

$$P_t = \frac{\beta a}{1 - \beta a} D_t$$

- P_t/D_t is constant
- P_t/P_{t-1} is i.i.d.

Adam, Marcet, & Nicolini 2009

PLM:

$$\hat{\mathbb{E}}_t \left[\frac{P_{t+1}}{P_t} \right] = \gamma_t$$

ALM:

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{P_t}{P_{t-1}} &= \frac{1 - \beta\gamma_{t-1}}{1 - \beta\gamma_t} a \varepsilon_t = \left(a + \frac{a\beta\Delta\gamma_t}{1 - \beta\gamma_t} \right) \varepsilon_t \\ \gamma_{t+1} &= \left(a + \frac{a\beta\Delta\gamma_t}{1 - \beta\gamma_t} \right) \end{aligned}$$

Model properties with learning

- Solution is quite nonlinear
 - especially if γ_t is close to β^{-1}
- Serial correlation.
 - in fact there is momentum. For example:

$$\gamma_t = a \ \& \ \Delta\gamma_t > 0 \implies \Delta\gamma_{t+1} > 0$$

$$\gamma_t = a \ \& \ \Delta\gamma_t < 0 \implies \Delta\gamma_{t+1} < 0$$

- P_t/D_t is time varying

Adam, Marcet, & Nicolini 2016

Perceived Law of Motion (PLM):

$$\hat{E}_t \left[\frac{P_{t+1}}{P_t} \right] = \gamma_t$$

Combining with FOC gives

$$\begin{aligned} P_t &= \beta E_t [P_{t+1} + D_{t+1}] \\ &= \beta (\gamma_t P_t + a D_t) \\ &= \frac{\beta a D_t}{1 - \beta \gamma_t} \end{aligned}$$

Adam, Marcet, & Nicolini 2016

Actual Law of Motion (ALM):

$$\begin{aligned}
 \frac{P_t}{p_{t-1}} &= \frac{\frac{\beta a D_t}{1-\gamma_t}}{\frac{\beta a D_{t-1}}{1-\beta\gamma_{t-1}}} \\
 &= \frac{1-\beta\gamma_{t-1}}{1-\beta\gamma_t} a \varepsilon_t \\
 &= \left(\frac{a - a\beta\gamma_{t-1} + a\beta\gamma_t - a\beta\gamma_t}{1-\beta\gamma_t} \right) \varepsilon_t \\
 &= \left(a + \frac{a\beta\Delta\gamma_t}{1-\beta\gamma_t} \right) \varepsilon_t \\
 \gamma_{t+1} &= \left(a + \frac{a\beta\Delta\gamma_t}{1-\beta\gamma_t} \right)
 \end{aligned}$$

Model properties with learning

- Model is quite nonlinear
 - especially is γ_t is close to β^{-1}
- Serial correlation
 - in fact there is momentum, For example:

$$\gamma_t = a \& \Delta \gamma_t > 0 \implies \Delta \gamma_{t+1} > 0$$

$$\gamma_t = a \& \Delta \gamma_t < 0 \implies \Delta \gamma_{t+1} < 0$$

- P_t/D_t is time varying

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Appendix

More on E-stability

Analyze the differential equation

$$\frac{d\theta}{d\tau} = h(\theta(\tau)) = \begin{bmatrix} MS^{-1}((\rho - 1)a + \delta) \\ M - S \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\frac{d\theta}{d\tau} = 0 \text{ if } M = S \text{ \& } a = \frac{\delta}{1 - \rho}$$

Thus, the (unique) rest point of $h(\theta)$ is the rational expectations solution

E-stability

$$\hat{\theta}_t - \hat{\theta}_{t-1} = \frac{1}{t} Q \left(\hat{\theta}_{t-1}, x_t, x_{t-1}, \varepsilon_t, t \right)$$

Limiting behavior can be analyzed using

$$\frac{d\theta}{d\tau} = h(\theta(\tau)) = \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} E [Q(\theta, x_t, x_{t-1}, \varepsilon_t)]$$

A solution θ^* , e.g. $[a_{RE}, M]$, is "*E-stable*" if $h(\theta)$ is stable at θ^*

E-stability

- $h(\theta)$ is stable if real part of the eigenvalues is negative:

- Here:

$$h(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} (\rho - 1) a + \delta \\ M - S \end{bmatrix}$$

\implies convergence of differentiable system if $\rho - 1 < 0$

- \implies convergence even if $\rho < -1$!

Implications of E-stability?

- Recursive least-squares: stochastics in $T(\cdot)$ mapping
 - \implies what will happen is less certain, even with E-stability

General implications of E-stability?

- If a solution **is not** E-stable:
 - \implies non-convergence is a probability 1 event
- If a solution **is** E-stable:
 - the presence of stochastics make the theorems non-trivial
 - in general only info about *mean dynamics*

Mean dynamics

See Evans and Honkapohja textbook for formal results.

- Theorems are a bit tricky, but are of the following kind:
If a solution f^ is E-stable, then the time path under learning will either leave the neighborhood in finite time or will converge towards f^* . Moreover, the longer it does not leave this neighborhood, the smaller the probability that it will*
- So there are two parts
 - mean dynamics: convergence towards fixed point
 - escape dynamics: (large) shocks may push you away from fixed point

Importance of Gain

$$\hat{\gamma}_T = \hat{\gamma}_{T-1} + \omega(T) R_T^{-1} x_T (y_T - x_T' \hat{\gamma}_{T-1})$$

- Gain in least squares updating formula, $\omega(T)$, plays a key role in theorems
- $\omega(T) \rightarrow 0$ too fast: you may end up in something that is not an equilibrium
- $\omega(T) \rightarrow 0$ too slowly: you may not converge towards it
- So depending on the application, you may need conditions like

$$\sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \omega(t)^2 < \infty \text{ and } \sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \omega(t) = \infty$$

Special cases

- In simple cases, stronger results can be obtained
- Evans (1989) shows that the system of equations (2) and (3) with standard recursive least squares (gain of $1/t$) converges to rational expectations solution if $\rho < 1$ (so also if $\rho < -1$).