



National University
of computer and emerging sciences



Linear Algebra (MT-1004)

Lecture # 38



Spectral Decomposition

If A is a symmetric matrix with real entries that is orthogonally diagonalized by

$$\begin{aligned}
 P &= [\mathbf{u}_1 \quad \mathbf{u}_2 \quad \cdots \quad \mathbf{u}_n] \\
 A = PDP^T &= [\mathbf{u}_1 \quad \mathbf{u}_2 \quad \cdots \quad \mathbf{u}_n] \begin{bmatrix} \lambda_1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda_2 & \cdots & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & \cdots & \lambda_n \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{u}_1^T \\ \mathbf{u}_2^T \\ \vdots \\ \mathbf{u}_n^T \end{bmatrix} \\
 &= [\lambda_1 \mathbf{u}_1 \quad \lambda_2 \mathbf{u}_2 \quad \cdots \quad \lambda_n \mathbf{u}_n] \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{u}_1^T \\ \mathbf{u}_2^T \\ \vdots \\ \mathbf{u}_n^T \end{bmatrix}
 \end{aligned}$$

Multiplying out, we obtain the formula

$$A = \lambda_1 \mathbf{u}_1 \mathbf{u}_1^T + \lambda_2 \mathbf{u}_2 \mathbf{u}_2^T + \cdots + \lambda_n \mathbf{u}_n \mathbf{u}_n^T \quad (7)$$

which is called a *spectral decomposition of A* .*

NOTE:

The terminology spectral decomposition is derived from the fact that the set of all eigenvalues of a matrix A is sometimes called the spectrum of A

EXAMPLE 2 | A Geometric Interpretation of a Spectral Decomposition

The matrix

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 2 & -2 \end{bmatrix}$$

has eigenvalues $\lambda_1 = -3$ and $\lambda_2 = 2$ with corresponding eigenvectors

$$\mathbf{x}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ -2 \end{bmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad \mathbf{x}_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

(verify). Normalizing these basis vectors yields

$$\mathbf{u}_1 = \frac{\mathbf{x}_1}{\|\mathbf{x}_1\|} = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}} \\ -\frac{2}{\sqrt{5}} \end{bmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad \mathbf{u}_2 = \frac{\mathbf{x}_2}{\|\mathbf{x}_2\|} = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{2}{\sqrt{5}} \\ \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}} \end{bmatrix}$$

so a spectral decomposition of A is

$$\begin{aligned} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 2 & -2 \end{bmatrix} &= \lambda_1 \mathbf{u}_1 \mathbf{u}_1^T + \lambda_2 \mathbf{u}_2 \mathbf{u}_2^T = (-3) \begin{bmatrix} \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}} \\ -\frac{2}{\sqrt{5}} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}} & -\frac{2}{\sqrt{5}} \end{bmatrix} + (2) \begin{bmatrix} \frac{2}{\sqrt{5}} \\ \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \frac{2}{\sqrt{5}} & \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}} \end{bmatrix} \\ &= (-3) \begin{bmatrix} \frac{1}{5} & -\frac{2}{5} \\ -\frac{2}{5} & \frac{4}{5} \end{bmatrix} + (2) \begin{bmatrix} \frac{4}{5} & \frac{2}{5} \\ \frac{2}{5} & \frac{1}{5} \end{bmatrix} \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

where, as noted above, the 2×2 matrices on the right side of (8) are the standard matrices for the orthogonal projections onto the eigenspaces corresponding to the eigenvalues $\lambda_1 = -3$ and $\lambda_2 = 2$, respectively.

Now let us see what this spectral decomposition tells us about the image of the vector $\mathbf{x} = (1, 1)$ under multiplication by A . Writing \mathbf{x} in column form, it follows that

$$A\mathbf{x} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 2 & -2 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 3 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \quad (9)$$

and from (8) that

$$\begin{aligned} A\mathbf{x} &= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 2 & -2 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = (-3) \begin{bmatrix} \frac{1}{5} & -\frac{2}{5} \\ -\frac{2}{5} & \frac{4}{5} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + (2) \begin{bmatrix} \frac{4}{5} & \frac{2}{5} \\ \frac{2}{5} & \frac{1}{5} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \\ &= (-3) \begin{bmatrix} -\frac{1}{5} \\ \frac{2}{5} \end{bmatrix} + (2) \begin{bmatrix} \frac{6}{5} \\ \frac{3}{5} \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} \frac{3}{5} \\ -\frac{6}{5} \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} \frac{12}{5} \\ \frac{6}{5} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 3 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \end{aligned} \quad (10)$$

Formulas (9) and (10) provide two different ways of viewing the image of the vector $(1, 1)$ under multiplication by A : Formula (9) tells us directly that the image of this vector is $(3, 0)$, whereas Formula (10) tells us that this image can also be obtained by projecting $(1, 1)$ onto the eigenspaces corresponding to $\lambda_1 = -3$ and $\lambda_2 = 2$ to obtain the vectors $\left(-\frac{1}{5}, \frac{2}{5}\right)$ and $\left(\frac{6}{5}, \frac{3}{5}\right)$, then scaling by the eigenvalues to obtain $\left(\frac{3}{5}, -\frac{6}{5}\right)$ and $\left(\frac{12}{5}, \frac{6}{5}\right)$, and then adding these vectors (see Figure 7.2.1).

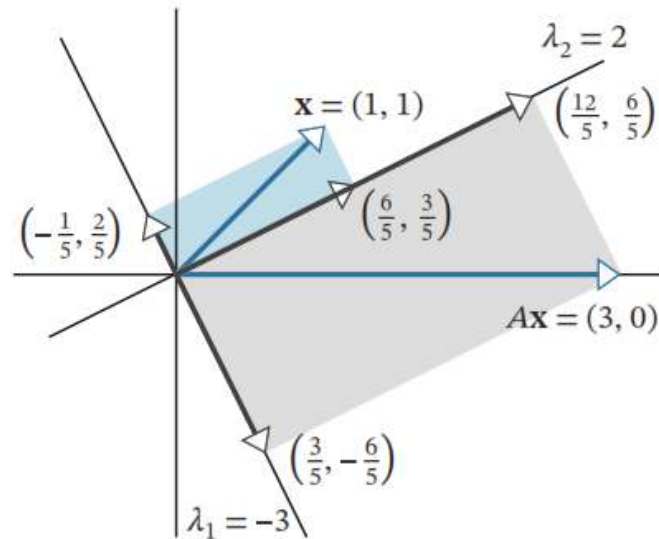


FIGURE 7.2.1