

8

Systems of Linear First-Order Differential Equations

Linear Systems When each of the functions g_1, g_2, \dots, g_n in (2) is linear in the dependent variables x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n , we get the **normal form** of a first-order system of linear equations:

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{dx_1}{dt} &= a_{11}(t)x_1 + a_{12}(t)x_2 + \cdots + a_{1n}(t)x_n + f_1(t) \\ \frac{dx_2}{dt} &= a_{21}(t)x_1 + a_{22}(t)x_2 + \cdots + a_{2n}(t)x_n + f_2(t) \\ &\vdots \\ \frac{dx_n}{dt} &= a_{n1}(t)x_1 + a_{n2}(t)x_2 + \cdots + a_{nn}(t)x_n + f_n(t).\end{aligned}\tag{3}$$

Matrix Form of a Linear System If \mathbf{X} , $\mathbf{A}(t)$, and $\mathbf{F}(t)$ denote the respective matrices

$$\mathbf{X} = \begin{pmatrix} x_1(t) \\ x_2(t) \\ \vdots \\ x_n(t) \end{pmatrix}, \quad \mathbf{A}(t) = \begin{pmatrix} a_{11}(t) & a_{12}(t) & \cdots & a_{1n}(t) \\ a_{21}(t) & a_{22}(t) & \cdots & a_{2n}(t) \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{n1}(t) & a_{n2}(t) & \cdots & a_{nn}(t) \end{pmatrix}, \quad \mathbf{F}(t) = \begin{pmatrix} f_1(t) \\ f_2(t) \\ \vdots \\ f_n(t) \end{pmatrix},$$

then the system of linear first-order differential equations (3) can be written as

$$\frac{d}{dt} \begin{pmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \\ \vdots \\ x_n \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} a_{11}(t) & a_{12}(t) & \cdots & a_{1n}(t) \\ a_{21}(t) & a_{22}(t) & \cdots & a_{2n}(t) \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{n1}(t) & a_{n2}(t) & \cdots & a_{nn}(t) \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \\ \vdots \\ x_n \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} f_1(t) \\ f_2(t) \\ \vdots \\ f_n(t) \end{pmatrix}$$

or simply $\mathbf{X}' = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{X} + \mathbf{F}.$ (4)

If the system is homogeneous, its matrix form is then

$$\mathbf{X}' = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{X}.\tag{5}$$

DEFINITION 8.1.1 Solution Vector

A solution vector on an interval I is any column matrix

$$\mathbf{X} = \begin{pmatrix} x_1(t) \\ x_2(t) \\ \vdots \\ x_n(t) \end{pmatrix}$$

whose entries are differentiable functions satisfying the system (4) on the interval.

THEOREM 8.1.1 Existence of a Unique Solution

Let the entries of the matrices $A(t)$ and $F(t)$ be functions continuous on a common interval I that contains the point t_0 . Then there exists a unique solution of the initial-value problem (7) on the interval.

THEOREM 8.1.2 Superposition Principle

Let $\mathbf{X}_1, \mathbf{X}_2, \dots, \mathbf{X}_k$ be a set of solution vectors of the homogeneous system (5) on an interval I . Then the linear combination

$$\mathbf{X} = c_1\mathbf{X}_1 + c_2\mathbf{X}_2 + \cdots + c_k\mathbf{X}_k,$$

where the $c_i, i = 1, 2, \dots, k$ are arbitrary constants, is also a solution on the interval.

DEFINITION 8.1.2 Linear Dependence/Independence

Let $\mathbf{X}_1, \mathbf{X}_2, \dots, \mathbf{X}_k$ be a set of solution vectors of the homogeneous system (5) on an interval I . We say that the set is **linearly dependent** on the interval if there exist constants c_1, c_2, \dots, c_k , not all zero, such that

$$c_1\mathbf{X}_1 + c_2\mathbf{X}_2 + \cdots + c_k\mathbf{X}_k = \mathbf{0}$$

for every t in the interval. If the set of vectors is not linearly dependent on the interval, it is said to be **linearly independent**.

Let n solution vectors of the homogeneous system (5) on an interval I . Then the set of solution vectors is linearly independent on I if and only if the Wronskian

$$W(\mathbf{X}_1, \mathbf{X}_2, \dots, \mathbf{X}_n) = \begin{vmatrix} x_{11} & x_{12} & \cdots & x_{1n} \\ x_{21} & x_{22} & \cdots & x_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ x_{n1} & x_{n2} & \cdots & x_{nn} \end{vmatrix} \neq 0 \quad (9)$$

for every t in the interval.

THEOREM 8.1.6 General Solution—Nonhomogeneous Systems

Let X_p be a given solution of the nonhomogeneous system (4) on an interval I and let

$$X_c = c_1 X_1 + c_2 X_2 + \cdots + c_n X_n$$

denote the general solution on the same interval of the associated homogeneous system (5). Then the general solution of the nonhomogeneous system on the interval is

$$X = X_c + X_p.$$

The general solution X_c of the associated homogeneous system (5) is called the complementary function of the nonhomogeneous system (4).

8.2 HOMOGENEOUS LINEAR SYSTEMS

where k_1, k_2, λ_1 , and λ_2 are constants, we are prompted to ask whether we can always find a solution of the form

$$X = \begin{pmatrix} k_1 \\ k_2 \\ \vdots \\ k_n \end{pmatrix} e^{\lambda t} = K e^{\lambda t} \quad (1)$$

for the general homogeneous linear first-order system

$$X' = AX, \quad (2)$$

where A is an $n \times n$ matrix of constants.

Eigenvalues and Eigenvectors If (1) is to be a solution vector of the homogeneous linear system (2), then $\mathbf{X}' = \mathbf{K}\lambda e^{\lambda t}$, so the system becomes $\mathbf{K}\lambda e^{\lambda t} = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{K}e^{\lambda t}$. After dividing out $e^{\lambda t}$ and rearranging, we obtain $\mathbf{A}\mathbf{K} = \lambda\mathbf{K}$ or $\mathbf{A}\mathbf{K} - \lambda\mathbf{K} = \mathbf{0}$. Since $\mathbf{K} = \mathbf{I}\mathbf{K}$, the last equation is the same as

$$(\mathbf{A} - \lambda\mathbf{I})\mathbf{K} = \mathbf{0}. \quad (3)$$

The matrix equation (3) is equivalent to the simultaneous algebraic equations

$$\begin{aligned} (a_{11} - \lambda)k_1 + a_{12}k_2 + \cdots + a_{1n}k_n &= 0 \\ a_{21}k_1 + (a_{22} - \lambda)k_2 + \cdots + a_{2n}k_n &= 0 \\ &\vdots \\ a_{n1}k_1 + a_{n2}k_2 + \cdots + (a_{nn} - \lambda)k_n &= 0. \end{aligned}$$

Thus to find a nontrivial solution \mathbf{X} of (2), we must first find a nontrivial solution of the foregoing system; in other words, we must find a nontrivial vector \mathbf{K} that satisfies (3). But for (3) to have solutions other than the obvious solution $k_1 = k_2 = \cdots = k_n = 0$, we must have

$$\det(\mathbf{A} - \lambda\mathbf{I}) = 0.$$

This polynomial equation in λ is called the **characteristic equation** of the matrix \mathbf{A} ; its solutions are the **eigenvalues** of \mathbf{A} . A solution $\mathbf{K} \neq \mathbf{0}$ of (3) corresponding to an eigenvalue λ is called an **eigenvector** of \mathbf{A} . A solution of the homogeneous system (2) is then $\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{K}e^{\lambda t}$.

8.2.1 DISTINCT REAL EIGENVALUES

THEOREM 8.2.1 General Solution—Homogeneous Systems

Let $\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \dots, \lambda_n$ be n distinct real eigenvalues of the coefficient matrix \mathbf{A} of the homogeneous system (2) and let $\mathbf{K}_1, \mathbf{K}_2, \dots, \mathbf{K}_n$ be the corresponding eigenvectors. Then the general solution of (2) on the interval $(-\infty, \infty)$ is given by

$$\mathbf{X} = c_1\mathbf{K}_1e^{\lambda_1 t} + c_2\mathbf{K}_2e^{\lambda_2 t} + \cdots + c_n\mathbf{K}_ne^{\lambda_n t}.$$

EXAMPLE 1 Distinct Eigenvalues

Solve

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dx}{dt} &= 2x + 3y \\ \frac{dy}{dt} &= 2x - y. \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

$$\det(\mathbf{A} - \lambda \mathbf{I}) = \begin{vmatrix} 2 - \lambda & 3 \\ 2 & 1 - \lambda \end{vmatrix} = \lambda^2 - 3\lambda - 4 = (\lambda + 1)(\lambda - 4) = 0$$

we see that the eigenvalues are $\lambda_1 = -1$ and $\lambda_2 = 4$.

Now for $\lambda_1 = -1$, (3) is equivalent to

$$3k_1 + 3k_2 = 0$$

$$2k_1 + 2k_2 = 0.$$

Thus $k_1 = -k_2$. When $k_2 = -1$, the related eigenvector is

$$\mathbf{K}_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

For $\lambda_2 = 4$ we have

$$-2k_1 + 3k_2 = 0$$

$$2k_1 - 3k_2 = 0$$

so $k_1 = \frac{3}{2}k_2$; therefore with $k_2 = 2$ the corresponding eigenvector is

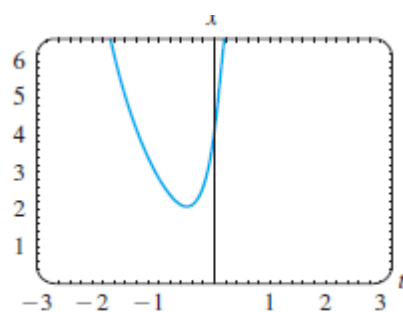
$$\mathbf{K}_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Since the matrix of coefficients \mathbf{A} is a 2×2 matrix and since we have found two linearly independent solutions of (4),

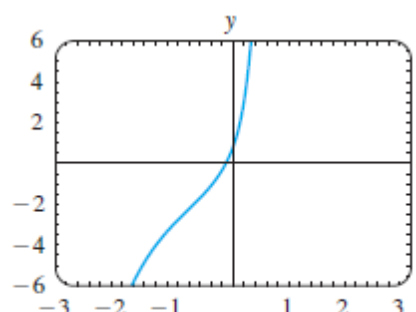
$$\mathbf{X}_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \end{pmatrix} e^{-t} \quad \text{and} \quad \mathbf{X}_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix} e^{4t},$$

we conclude that the general solution of the system is

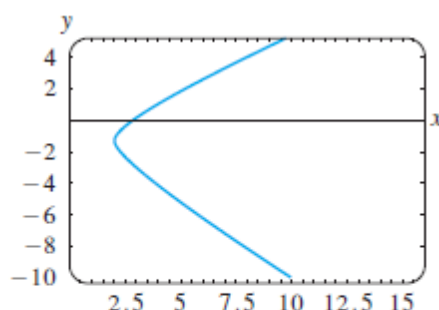
$$\mathbf{X} = c_1 \mathbf{X}_1 + c_2 \mathbf{X}_2 = c_1 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \end{pmatrix} e^{-t} + c_2 \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix} e^{4t}. \quad (5) \quad \equiv$$



(a) graph of $x = e^{-t} + 3e^{4t}$



(b) graph of $y = -e^{-t} + 2e^{4t}$



(c) trajectory defined by
 $x = e^{-t} + 3e^{4t}$, $y = -e^{-t} + 2e^{4t}$
 in the phase plane

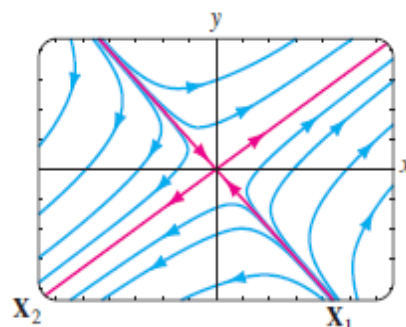


FIGURE 8.2.2 A phase portrait of system (4)

8.2.2 REPEATED EIGENVALUES

In general, if m is a positive integer and $(\lambda - \lambda_1)^m$ is a factor of the characteristic equation while $(\lambda - \lambda_1)^{m+1}$ is not a factor, then λ_1 is said to be an eigenvalue of multiplicity m . The next three examples illustrate the following cases:

- (i) For some $n \times n$ matrices A it may be possible to find m linearly independent eigenvectors K_1, K_2, \dots, K_m corresponding to an eigenvalue λ_1 of multiplicity $m = n$. In this case the general solution of the system contains the linear combination

$$c_1 K_1 e^{\lambda_1 t} + c_2 K_2 e^{\lambda_1 t} + \dots + c_m K_m e^{\lambda_1 t}.$$

- (ii) If there is only one eigenvector corresponding to the eigenvalue λ_1 of multiplicity m , then m linearly independent solutions of the form

$$\begin{aligned} X_1 &= K_{11} e^{\lambda_1 t} \\ X_2 &= K_{21} t e^{\lambda_1 t} + K_{22} e^{\lambda_1 t} \\ &\vdots \\ X_m &= K_{m1} \frac{t^{m-1}}{(m-1)!} e^{\lambda_1 t} + K_{m2} \frac{t^{m-2}}{(m-2)!} e^{\lambda_1 t} + \dots + K_{mm} e^{\lambda_1 t}, \end{aligned}$$

where K_{ij} are column vectors, can always be found.

EXAMPLE 4 Repeated Eigenvalues

Find the general solution of the system given in (10).

$$X' = \begin{pmatrix} 3 & -18 \\ 2 & -9 \end{pmatrix} X \quad (10)$$

Second Solution Now suppose that λ_1 is an eigenvalue of multiplicity two and that there is only one eigenvector associated with this value. A second solution can be found of the form

$$\mathbf{X}_2 = \mathbf{K}te^{-\lambda_1 t} + \mathbf{P}e^{-\lambda_1 t}, \quad (12)$$

where

$$\mathbf{K} = \begin{pmatrix} k_1 \\ k_2 \\ \vdots \\ k_n \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad \mathbf{P} = \begin{pmatrix} p_1 \\ p_2 \\ \vdots \\ p_n \end{pmatrix}.$$

To see this, we substitute (12) into the system $\mathbf{X}' = \mathbf{A}\mathbf{X}$ and simplify:

$$(\mathbf{A}\mathbf{K} - \lambda_1 \mathbf{K})te^{-\lambda_1 t} + (\mathbf{A}\mathbf{P} - \lambda_1 \mathbf{P} - \mathbf{K})e^{-\lambda_1 t} = \mathbf{0}.$$

Since this last equation is to hold for all values of t , we must have

$$(\mathbf{A} - \lambda_1 \mathbf{I})\mathbf{K} = \mathbf{0} \quad (13)$$

and

$$(\mathbf{A} - \lambda_1 \mathbf{I})\mathbf{P} = \mathbf{K}. \quad (14)$$

Equation (13) simply states that \mathbf{K} must be an eigenvector of \mathbf{A} associated with λ_1 . By solving (13), we find one solution $\mathbf{X}_1 = \mathbf{K}e^{-\lambda_1 t}$. To find the second solution \mathbf{X}_2 , we need only solve the additional system (14) for the vector \mathbf{P} .

SOLUTION From (11) we know that $\lambda_1 = -3$ and that one solution is $\mathbf{X}_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} e^{-3t}$. Identifying $\mathbf{K} = \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}$ and $\mathbf{P} = \begin{pmatrix} p_1 \\ p_2 \end{pmatrix}$, we find from (14) that we must now solve

$$(\mathbf{A} + 3\mathbf{I})\mathbf{P} = \mathbf{K} \quad \text{or} \quad \begin{aligned} 6p_1 - 18p_2 &= 3 \\ 2p_1 - 6p_2 &= 1. \end{aligned}$$

Since this system is obviously equivalent to one equation, we have an infinite number of choices for p_1 and p_2 . For example, by choosing $p_1 = 1$, we find $p_2 = \frac{1}{6}$.

However, for simplicity we shall choose $p_1 = \frac{1}{2}$ so that $p_2 = 0$. Hence $\mathbf{P} = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{2} \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}$.

Thus from (12) we find $\mathbf{X}_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} te^{-3t} + \begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{2} \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} e^{-3t}$. The general solution of (10) is then $\mathbf{X} = c_1 \mathbf{X}_1 + c_2 \mathbf{X}_2$ or

$$\mathbf{X} = c_1 \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} e^{-3t} + c_2 \left[\begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} te^{-3t} + \begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{2} \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} e^{-3t} \right]. \quad \equiv$$

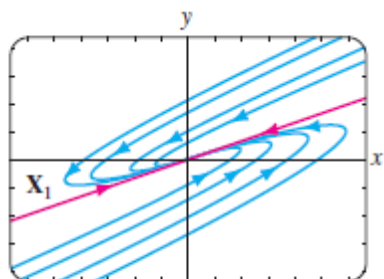


FIGURE 8.2.3 A phase portrait of system (10)

8.2.3 COMPLEX EIGENVALUES

If $\lambda_1 = \alpha + \beta i$ and $\lambda_2 = \alpha - \beta i$, $\beta > 0$, $i^2 = -1$ are complex eigenvalues of the coefficient matrix A , we can then certainly expect their corresponding eigenvectors to also have complex entries.*

For example, the characteristic equation of the system

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{dx}{dt} &= 6x - y \\ \frac{dy}{dt} &= 5x + 4y\end{aligned}\tag{19}$$

is $\det(A - \lambda I) = \begin{vmatrix} 6 - \lambda & -1 \\ 5 & 4 - \lambda \end{vmatrix} = \lambda^2 - 10\lambda + 29 = 0.$

From the quadratic formula we find $\lambda_1 = 5 + 2i$, $\lambda_2 = 5 - 2i$.

$$\mathbf{X} = c_1 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 - 2i \end{pmatrix} e^{(5+2i)t} + c_2 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 + 2i \end{pmatrix} e^{(5-2i)t}.\tag{20}$$

$$\mathbf{X} = C_1 \mathbf{X}_1 + C_2 \mathbf{X}_2,\tag{21}$$

where $\mathbf{X}_1 = \left[\begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \cos 2t - \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ -2 \end{pmatrix} \sin 2t \right] e^{5t}$

and $\mathbf{X}_2 = \left[\begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ -2 \end{pmatrix} \cos 2t + \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \sin 2t \right] e^{5t}.$

$$x = C_1 e^{5t} \cos 2t + C_2 e^{5t} \sin 2t$$

$$y = (C_1 - 2C_2) e^{5t} \cos 2t + (2C_1 + C_2) e^{5t} \sin 2t.$$

$$x = C_1 e^{5t} \cos 2t + C_2 e^{5t} \sin 2t$$

$$y = (C_1 - 2C_2) e^{5t} \cos 2t + (2C_1 + C_2) e^{5t} \sin 2t.$$

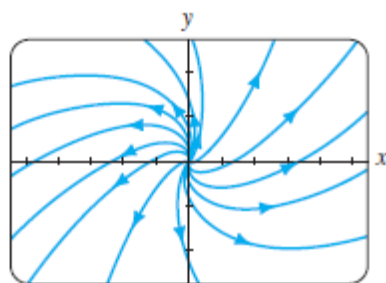


FIGURE 8.2.4 A phase portrait of system (19)

EXAMPLE 4 Variation of Parameters

Solve the system

$$\mathbf{X}' = \begin{pmatrix} -3 & 1 \\ 2 & -4 \end{pmatrix} \mathbf{X} + \begin{pmatrix} 3t \\ e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \quad (11)$$

on $(-\infty, \infty)$.

SOLUTION We first solve the associated homogeneous system

$$\mathbf{X}' = \begin{pmatrix} -3 & 1 \\ 2 & -4 \end{pmatrix} \mathbf{X}. \quad (12)$$

The characteristic equation of the coefficient matrix is

$$\det(\mathbf{A} - \lambda \mathbf{I}) = \begin{vmatrix} -3 - \lambda & 1 \\ 2 & -4 - \lambda \end{vmatrix} = (\lambda + 2)(\lambda + 5) = 0,$$

so the eigenvalues are $\lambda_1 = -2$ and $\lambda_2 = -5$. By the usual method we find that the eigenvectors corresponding to λ_1 and λ_2 are, respectively, $\mathbf{K}_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}$ and $\mathbf{K}_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -2 \end{pmatrix}$. The solution vectors of the homogeneous system (12) are then

$$\mathbf{X}_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} e^{-2t} = \begin{pmatrix} e^{-2t} \\ e^{-2t} \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad \mathbf{X}_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -2 \end{pmatrix} e^{-5t} = \begin{pmatrix} e^{-5t} \\ -2e^{-5t} \end{pmatrix}.$$

The entries in X_1 form the first column of $\Phi(t)$, and the entries in X_2 form the second column of $\Phi(t)$. Hence

$$\Phi(t) = \begin{pmatrix} e^{-2t} & e^{-5t} \\ e^{-2t} & -2e^{-5t} \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad \Phi^{-1}(t) = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{2}{3}e^{2t} & \frac{1}{3}e^{2t} \\ \frac{1}{3}e^{5t} & -\frac{1}{3}e^{5t} \end{pmatrix}.$$

From (9) we obtain the particular solution

$$\begin{aligned} X_p &= \Phi(t) \int \Phi^{-1}(t)F(t) dt = \begin{pmatrix} e^{-2t} & e^{-5t} \\ e^{-2t} & -2e^{-5t} \end{pmatrix} \int \begin{pmatrix} \frac{2}{3}e^{2t} & \frac{1}{3}e^{2t} \\ \frac{1}{3}e^{5t} & -\frac{1}{3}e^{5t} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 3t \\ e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} dt \\ &= \begin{pmatrix} e^{-2t} & e^{-5t} \\ e^{-2t} & -2e^{-5t} \end{pmatrix} \int \begin{pmatrix} 2te^{2t} + \frac{1}{3}e^t \\ te^{5t} - \frac{1}{3}e^{4t} \end{pmatrix} dt \\ &= \begin{pmatrix} e^{-2t} & e^{-5t} \\ e^{-2t} & -2e^{-5t} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} te^{2t} - \frac{1}{2}e^{2t} + \frac{1}{3}e^t \\ \frac{1}{5}te^{5t} - \frac{1}{25}e^{5t} - \frac{1}{12}e^{4t} \end{pmatrix} \\ &= \begin{pmatrix} \frac{6}{5}t - \frac{27}{50} + \frac{1}{4}e^{-t} \\ \frac{3}{5}t - \frac{21}{50} + \frac{1}{2}e^{-t} \end{pmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

Hence from (10) the general solution of (11) on the interval is

$$\begin{aligned} X &= \begin{pmatrix} e^{-2t} & e^{-5t} \\ e^{-2t} & -2e^{-5t} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} c_1 \\ c_2 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} \frac{6}{5}t - \frac{27}{50} + \frac{1}{4}e^{-t} \\ \frac{3}{5}t - \frac{21}{50} + \frac{1}{2}e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \\ &= c_1 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} e^{-2t} + c_2 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -2 \end{pmatrix} e^{-5t} + \begin{pmatrix} \frac{6}{5} \\ \frac{3}{5} \end{pmatrix} t - \begin{pmatrix} \frac{27}{50} \\ \frac{21}{50} \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{4} \\ \frac{1}{2} \end{pmatrix} e^{-t}. \quad \equiv \end{aligned}$$

EXERCISES 8.3

8.3.2 VARIATION OF PARAMETERS

In Problems 11–30 use variation of parameters to solve the given system.

$$\begin{aligned} 11. \quad \frac{dx}{dt} &= 3x - 3y + 4 \\ \frac{dy}{dt} &= 2x - 2y - 1 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 12. \quad \frac{dx}{dt} &= 2x - y \\ \frac{dy}{dt} &= 3x - 2y + 4t \end{aligned}$$

$$19. \quad X' = \begin{pmatrix} 3 & 2 \\ -2 & -1 \end{pmatrix} X + \begin{pmatrix} 2e^{-t} \\ e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \quad 23. \quad X' = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} X + \begin{pmatrix} \cos t \\ \sin t \end{pmatrix} e^t$$