Lecture 11: Subspaces and Spanning Sets

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Lecture 11: Linear Transformations and Subspaces

The Image and Kernel of a Linear Transformation

$T : \mathbb{R}^3 \to \mathbb{R}^3$ is the linear transformation with $M_T = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 0 \\ 2 & -1 & 5 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$.

The image of T is the subset of $\mathbb{R}^3$ consisting of all elements $T(v)$, where $v \in \mathbb{R}^3$. This is the set of all vectors of the form

$$a \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + b \begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + c \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 5 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

In matrix terms, this is the column space of M_T.

The kernel of T is the set of all vectors v in $\mathbb{R}^3$ with $T(v) = 0$. This is the set of all column vectors whose entries a, b, c satisfy

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 0 \\ 2 & -1 & 5 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} a \\ b \\ c \end{bmatrix} = a \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + b \begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + c \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 5 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}.$$

In matrix terms this is the (right) nullspace of M_T.

Example: The kernel is a **line** and the image is a **plane**

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 0 \\ 2 & -1 & 5 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} a \\ b \\ c \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \Rightarrow \left[\begin{array}{ccc|c} 1 & 2 & 0 & 0 \\ 2 & -1 & 5 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 & 0 \end{array}\right] \to \left[\begin{array}{ccc|c} 1 & 0 & 2 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{array}\right]$$

The kernel/nullspace is $\boxed{\{(-2,1,1)t,\ \ t \in \mathbb{R}\}}$ a line in $\mathbb{R}^3$.

That $(-2,1,1)$ is in the kernel of T means that (for example) Column 3 of M_T is a linear combination of Columns 1 and 2.

$$-2\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + 1\begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + 1\begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 5 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \Longrightarrow \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 5 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = 2\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} - \begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

It follows that every linear combination of all three columns of M_T is actually a linear combination just of Columns 1 and 2.

The column space of M_T is $\left\{ a\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + b\begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} : \ a,b \in \mathbb{R} \right\}$, a plane in $\mathbb{R}^3$.

Subspaces

Definition A (non-empty) subset V of $\mathbb{R}^n$ is a subspace if

- It is closed under addition: $u + v \in V$ whenever $u \in V$ and $v \in V$.
- It is closed under scalar multiplication: $ku \in V$ whenever $u \in V$ and $k \in \mathbb{R}$.

Examples

1. $\{(x, y, z) \in \mathbb{R}^3 : x + y + z = 1\}$ is not a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^3$. The vectors $(1, 0, 0)$ and $(0, 1, 0)$ belong to this set but their sum $(1, 1, 0)$ does not.
2. $\{(x, y, z) \in \mathbb{R}^3 : (x, y, z) \cdot (1, 2, 3) = 0\}$ is a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^3$.
3. $\{(x, y, z) \in \mathbb{R}^3 : (x, y, z) \cdot (1, 2, 3) \neq 0\}$ is not a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^3$. For example, $(1, 4, 1)$ and $(-5, -2, -1)$ belong to this set but their sum $(-4, 2, 0)$ does not.
4. The kernel of any linear transformation is a subspace.
5. The image of any linear transformation is a subspace.

Exercise Prove these last two points.

How to make subspaces

Let $S = \{v_1, \dots, v_k\}$ be any (finite) subset of $\mathbb{R}^n$.

The subset of $\mathbb{R}^n$ consisting of all linear combinations of the elements of S is a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^n$, denoted by $\langle S \rangle$ or $\langle v_1, v_2, \dots, v_k \rangle$ and called the linear span (or just span) of S.

Proof (that $\langle S \rangle$ is a subspace).
Closed under addition: let $u, v \in \langle S \rangle$. Then $u = a_1 v_1 + a_2 v_2 + \cdots + a_k v_k$, and $v = c_1 v_1 + c_2 v_2 + \cdots + c_k v_k$, where the a_i and b_i are scalars. We need to show that $u + v \in \langle S \rangle$, which means showing that it is a linear combination of $v_1, \dots, v_k$. This is straightforward after everything has been set up, since $u + v = (a_1 + c_1)v_1 + (a_2 + c_2)v_2 + \cdots + (a_k + c_k)v_k$. So S is closed under addition.

Closed under scalar multiplication: let $u \in \langle S \rangle$ and $c \in \mathbb{R}$. We need to show that cu is a linear combination of $v_1, \dots, v_k$. We know that $u = a_1 v_1 + a_2 v_2 + \cdots + a_k v_k$, for scalars $a_1, \dots, a_k$. Then $cu = ca_1\, v_1 + ca_2\, v_2 + \cdots + ca_k\, v_k$, so $cu \in \langle S \rangle$.

Spanning Sets

Let V be a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^n$ (possibly V is all of $\mathbb{R}^n$). A subset S of V is called a spanning set of V if $\langle S \rangle = V$.

This means that every element of V is a linear combination of the elements of S.

Example The set $\{e_1, e_2, e_3\}$ is a spanning set of $\mathbb{R}^3$, where (as usual) $e_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$, $e_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$, $e_3 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$. This is saying that every element of $\mathbb{R}^3$ is a linear combination of e_1, e_2, e_3. For example

$$\begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -3 \\ 4 \end{bmatrix} = 2e_1 - 3e_2 + 4e_3.$$

Remark A set S of three column vectors in $\mathbb{R}^3$ is a spanning set of $\mathbb{R}^3$ if and only if each of e_1, e_2, e_3 is a linear combination of elements of S.

This occurs if and only if the 3×3 matrix whose columns are the vectors in S has an *inverse*.

Questions about Spanning Sets

1. Does $\mathbb{R}^3$ have a spanning set with fewer than three elements?
2. Does every spanning set of $\mathbb{R}^3$ have exactly three elements?
   NO (why not?)
3. Does every spanning set of $\mathbb{R}^3$ contain one with exactly three elements?
4. If V is a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^3$, does V have a spanning set with at most three elements?
5. If V is a proper subspace of $\mathbb{R}^3$ (i.e. not all of $\mathbb{R}^3$) does V have a spanning set with fewer than three elements?

Note A pair of vectors in $\mathbb{R}^3$ (if they are not scalar multiples of each other) span a plane. Adding a third vector (if it does not lie in this plane) gives a spanning set for all of $\mathbb{R}^3$.