EXAMPLE 1 Eigenvalue Problem

Find the eigenvalues and eigenvectors of the matrix

$$\mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} -4.0 & 4.0 \\ -1.6 & 1.2 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{16}$$

Solution. The characteristic equation is the quadratic equation

$$\det[\mathbf{A} - \lambda\mathbf{I}] = \begin{vmatrix} -4-\lambda & 4 \\ -1.6 & 1.2-\lambda \end{vmatrix} = \lambda^2 + 2.8\lambda + 1.6 = 0.$$

It has the solutions $\lambda_1 = -2$ and $\lambda_2 = -0.8$. These are the eigenvalues of **A**.

Eigenvectors are obtained from (14*). For $\lambda = \lambda_1 = -2$ we have from (14*)

$$\begin{aligned} (-4.0 + 2.0)x_1 + \quad 4.0x_2 \quad &= 0 \\ -1.6x_1 \quad + (1.2 + 2.0)x_2 &= 0. \end{aligned}$$

A solution of the first equation is $x_1 = 2$, $x_2 = 1$. This also satisfies the second equation. (Why?). Hence an eigenvector of **A** corresponding to $\lambda_1 = -2.0$ is

$$\mathbf{x}^{(1)} = \begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}. \qquad \text{Similarly,} \qquad \mathbf{x}^{(2)} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0.8 \end{bmatrix} \tag{17}$$

is an eigenvector of **A** corresponding to $\lambda_2 = -0.8$, as obtained from (14*) with $\lambda = \lambda_2$. Verify this. ■

4.1 Systems of ODEs as Models

We first illustrate with a few typical examples that systems of ODEs can serve as models in various applications. We further show that a higher order ODE (with the highest derivative standing alone on one side) can be reduced to a first-order system. Both facts account for the practical importance of these systems.

EXAMPLE 1 Mixing Problem Involving Two Tanks

A mixing problem involving a single tank is modeled by a single ODE, and you may first review the corresponding Example 3 in Sec. 1.3 because the principle of modeling will be the same for two tanks. The model will be a system of two first-order ODEs.

Tank T_1 and T_2 in Fig. 77 contain initially 100 gal of water each. In T_1 the water is pure, whereas 150 lb of fertilizer are dissolved in T_2. By circulating liquid at a rate of 2 gal/min and stirring (to keep the mixture uniform) the amounts of fertilizer $y_1(t)$ in T_1 and $y_2(t)$ in T_2 change with time t. How long should we let the liquid circulate so that T_1 will contain at least half as much fertilizer as there will be left in T_2?

Solution. ***Step 1.*** **Setting up the model.** As for a single tank, the time rate of change $y_1'(t)$ of $y_1(t)$ equals inflow minus outflow. Similarly for tank T_2. From Fig. 77 we see that

$$y_1' = \text{Inflow/min} - \text{Outflow/min} = \frac{2}{100}y_2 - \frac{2}{100}y_1 \qquad (\text{Tank } T_1)$$

$$y_2' = \text{Inflow/min} - \text{Outflow/min} = \frac{2}{100}y_1 - \frac{2}{100}y_2 \qquad (\text{Tank } T_2).$$

Hence the mathematical model of our mixture problem is the system of first-order ODEs

$$\begin{aligned} y_1' &= -0.02y_1 + 0.02y_2 && (\text{Tank } T_1) \\ y_2' &= 0.02y_1 - 0.02y_2 && (\text{Tank } T_2). \end{aligned}$$

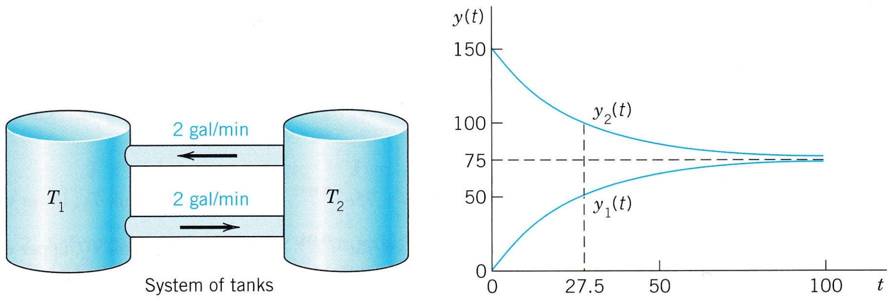

Fig. 77. Fertilizer content in Tanks T_1 (lower curve) and T_2

As a vector equation with column vector $\mathbf{y} = \begin{bmatrix} y_1 \\ y_2 \end{bmatrix}$ and matrix $\mathbf{A}$ this becomes

$$\mathbf{y}' = \mathbf{Ay}, \qquad \text{where} \qquad \mathbf{A} = \begin{bmatrix} -0.02 & 0.02 \\ 0.02 & -0.02 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Step 2. **General solution.** As for a single equation, we try an exponential function of t,

$$\text{(1)} \qquad \mathbf{y} = \mathbf{x}e^{\lambda t}. \qquad \text{Then} \qquad \mathbf{y}' = \lambda\mathbf{x}e^{\lambda t} = \mathbf{Ax}e^{\lambda t}.$$

Dividing the last equation $\lambda\mathbf{x}e^{\lambda t} = \mathbf{Ax}e^{\lambda t}$ by $e^{\lambda t}$ and interchanging the left and right sides, we obtain

$$\mathbf{Ax} = \lambda\mathbf{x}.$$

We need nontrivial solutions (solutions that are not identically zero). Hence we have to look for eigenvalues and eigenvectors of $\mathbf{A}$. The eigenvalues are the solutions of the characteristic equation

$$\text{(2)} \qquad \det(\mathbf{A} - \lambda\mathbf{I}) = \begin{vmatrix} -0.02 - \lambda & 0.02 \\ 0.02 & -0.02 - \lambda \end{vmatrix} = (-0.02 - \lambda)^2 - 0.02^2 = \lambda(\lambda + 0.04) = 0.$$

We see that $\lambda_1 = 0$ (which can very well happen—don't get mixed up—it is eigen*vectors* that must not be zero) and $\lambda_2 = -0.04$. Eigenvectors are obtained from (14*) in Sec. 4.0 with $\lambda = 0$ and $\lambda = -0.04$. For our present $\mathbf{A}$ this gives [we need only the first equation in (14*)]

$$-0.02x_1 + 0.02x_2 = 0 \qquad \text{and} \qquad (-0.02 + 0.04)x_1 + 0.02x_2 = 0,$$

respectively. Hence $x_1 = x_2$ and $x_1 = -x_2$, respectively, and we can take $x_1 = x_2 = 1$ and $x_1 = -x_2 = 1$. This gives two eigenvectors corresponding to $\lambda_1 = 0$ and $\lambda_2 = -0.04$, respectively, namely,

$$\mathbf{x}^{(1)} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \qquad \text{and} \qquad \mathbf{x}^{(2)} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

From (1) and the superposition principle (which continues to hold for systems of homogeneous linear ODEs) we thus obtain a solution

$$\text{(3)} \qquad \mathbf{y} = c_1\mathbf{x}^{(1)}e^{\lambda_1 t} + c_2\mathbf{x}^{(2)}e^{\lambda_2 t} = c_1\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + c_2\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \end{bmatrix}e^{-0.04t}$$

where c_1 and c_2 are arbitrary constants. Later we shall call this a **general solution.**

Step 3. **Use of initial conditions.** The initial conditions are $y_1(0) = 0$ (no fertilizer in tank T_1) and $y_2(0) = 150$. From this and (3) with $t = 0$ we obtain

$$\mathbf{y}(0) = c_1\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} + c_2\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} c_1 + c_2 \\ c_1 - c_2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 150 \end{bmatrix}.$$

In components this is $c_1 + c_2 = 0$, $c_1 - c_2 = 150$. The solution is $c_1 = 75$, $c_2 = -75$. This gives the answer

$$\mathbf{y} = 75\mathbf{x}^{(1)} - 75\mathbf{x}^{(2)}e^{-0.04t} = 75\begin{bmatrix}1\\1\end{bmatrix} - 75\begin{bmatrix}1\\-1\end{bmatrix}e^{-0.04t}.$$

In components,

$$y_1 = 75 - 75e^{-0.04t} \qquad \text{(Tank } T_1\text{, lower curve)}$$

$$y_2 = 75 + 75e^{-0.04t} \qquad \text{(Tank } T_2\text{, upper curve).}$$

Figure 77 shows the exponential increase of y_1 and the exponential decrease of y_2 to the common limit 75 lb. Did you expect this for physical reasons? Can you physically explain why the curves look "symmetric"? Would the limit change if T_1 initially contained 100 lb of fertilizer and T_2 contained 50 lb?

Step 4. **Answer.** T_1 contains half the fertilizer amount of T_2 if it contains 1/3 of the total amount, that is, 50 lb. Thus

$$y_1 = 75 - 75e^{-0.04t} = 50, \qquad e^{-0.04t} = \tfrac{1}{3}, \qquad t = (\ln 3)/0.04 = 27.5.$$

Hence the fluid should circulate for at least about half an hour. ■

EXAMPLE 2 Electrical Network

Find the currents $I_1(t)$ and $I_2(t)$ in the network in Fig. 78. Assume all currents and charges to be zero at $t = 0$, the instant when the switch is closed.

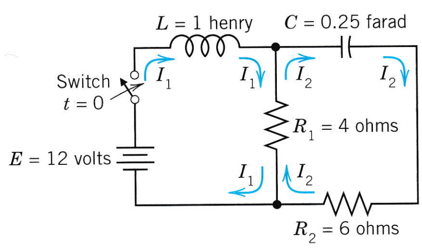

Fig. 78. Electrical network in Example 2

Solution. ***Step 1.*** **Setting up the mathematical model.** The model of this network is obtained from Kirchhoff's voltage law, as in Sec. 2.9 (where we considered single circuits). Let $I_1(t)$ and $I_2(t)$ be the currents in the left and right loops, respectively. In the left loop the voltage drops are $LI_1' = I_1'$ [V] over the inductor and $R_1(I_1 - I_2) = 4(I_1 - I_2)$ [V] over the resistor, the difference because I_1 and I_2 flow through the resistor in opposite directions. By Kirchhoff's voltage law the sum of these drops equals the voltage of the battery; that is, $I_1' + 4(I_1 - I_2) = 12$, hence

$$I_1' = -4I_1 + 4I_2 + 12. \tag{4a}$$

In the right loop the voltage drops are $R_2I_2 = 6I_2$ [V] and $R_1(I_2 - I_1) = 4(I_2 - I_1)$ [V] over the resistors and $(1/C)\int I_2\,dt = 4\int I_2\,dt$ [V] over the capacitor, and their sum is zero,

$$6I_2 + 4(I_2 - I_1) + 4\int I_2\,dt = 0 \qquad \text{or} \qquad 10I_2 - 4I_1 + 4\int I_2\,dt = 0.$$

Division by 10 and differentiation gives $I_2' - 0.4I_1' + 0.4I_2 = 0$.

To simplify the solution process, we first get rid of $0.4I_1'$, which by (4a) equals $0.4(-4I_1 + 4I_2 + 12)$. Substitution into the present ODE gives

$$I_2' = 0.4I_1' - 0.4I_2 = 0.4(-4I_1 + 4I_2 + 12) - 0.4I_2$$