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Computational Thinking
Sample Solutions to Exercise 11

1 Limitations of Neural Networks

A neural network can in theory approximate any continuous function given a sufficiently large number of hidden nodes. Therefore, only c) and e) cannot be represented, as those functions are not continuous.

2 An Ill-Designed Network

a) $\hat{f}(x|a,b) = 1 \cdot \tanh(100 * 0.9) = 1$ (given numerical precision)

b) $\frac{dL}{db} = \frac{dL}{d\hat{f}} \cdot \frac{d\hat{f}}{db} = (-f(x) + \hat{f}(x|a,b)) * \tanh(ax) = 0.1 \cdot \tanh(90) = 0.1$

c)

$$\frac{dL}{db} = \frac{dL}{d\hat{f}} \cdot \frac{d\hat{f}}{d\tanh(ax)} \cdot \frac{d\tanh(ax)}{d(ax)} \cdot x \tag{1}$$

$$= (-f(x) + \hat{f}(x|a,b)) * b * (1 - tanh^2(ax)) * x \tag{2}$$

$$= 0.0 \text{ (since } 1 - \tanh^2(90) = 0). \tag{3}$$

d) $a_new = a$, $b_new = b - 0.1 \cdot \frac{dL}{db} = 0.99$. The weight a which causes the issue did not get any update due to a vanishing gradient, which causes the problem to persist for further updates.

e) If we do the same calculations for $x = 0.9$ again we find that $\frac{dL}{da} \approx 3099.56$. This yields $a_{new} = a - \alpha\frac{dL}{da} \approx -308.956$ and following updates will again have the vanishing gradient problem. The first update suffers from what is called an exploding gradient here.

[**Bonus**] The hyperbolic tangent is close to linear around the origin, a decent approximation would therefore be given by $0 < a << 1$ and $b = 1/a$.

3 Gradient Descent with Momentum

a) $\beta = 0$

b) Roughly at the same point where the light green cross is, as the loss surface is flat which leads to a gradient close to zero.

c) The update is much bigger into the direction of the global optimum as m_w is dominated by the bigger gradient from the preceding step.

d) In the global optimum.

e) The large gradients in the first few iterations might dominate m_w and drive the optimization across the global optimum up the hill into the local optimum on the right.