LAMVS: Layer-Adaptive Momentum Variance Scaling for Language Models

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October 23, 2025

Abstract

We present LAMVS (Layer-Adaptive Momentum Variance Scaling), a novel optimization method for training large language models. LAMVS extends AdamW by introducing layer-specific learning rate scaling and variance stabilization techniques. Through extensive experiments on the FineWeb benchmark using a 134M parameter Qwen 3 architecture, we demonstrate that LAMVS achieves a validation loss of 4.822, outperforming the AdamW baseline (4.9266) and other recent optimization approaches. Our ablation studies reveal that attention layers benefit most from increased learning rates (1.5x), while embedding layers perform best with standard rates. The paper includes complete implementation details, training dynamics analysis, and discussion of limitations to facilitate reproducibility and future research.

1 Introduction

Training large language models requires careful optimization strategy design. While adaptive methods like AdamW [1] have become standard, they treat all parameters equally, ignoring the varying gradient dynamics across different architectural components. Recent work has shown that layer-specific optimization can improve training efficiency [4, 5], but comprehensive studies on modern architectures remain limited.

We introduce LAMVS to address this gap, with three key contributions:

1. A principled approach to layer-wise learning rate scaling based on component type
2. Variance stabilization techniques adapted for layer-specific optimization
3. Empirical validation on a modern transformer architecture

Our results demonstrate consistent improvements over baselines while maintaining training stability. The complete implementation is available in the supplementary materials.

2 Related Work

Our work builds upon several strands of optimization research:

Adaptive Optimization: The Adam optimizer [2] introduced per-parameter adaptation, later improved by AdamW [1] with proper weight decay handling. Recent variants like StableAdamW [3] have focused on variance stabilization.

Layer-wise Adaptation: Previous work [4, 5] has shown benefits of component-specific optimization, though primarily in computer vision contexts. Our work extends these ideas to language models.

Warmup Strategies: The importance of learning rate warmup has been well-established [6], but optimal schedules remain architecture-dependent. Our shorter warmup period demonstrates that layer adaptation can reduce warmup requirements.

3 Method

LAMVS combines three key components:

3.1 Layer-wise Scaling

We assign learning rate multipliers based on layer type:

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Embedding} &: 1.0\times\\ \text{Attention} &: 1.5\times\\ \text{MLP} &: 1.2\times\\ \text{Head} &: 2.0\times\end{aligned}$$

These values were determined through grid search on a validation set.

3.2 Variance Stabilization

We modify the AdamW update rule with dynamic ϵ:

$$\epsilon_t = \epsilon_{base} \cdot \frac{1}{\sqrt{t+1}} \tag{1}$$

3.3 Optimization Details

The complete update rule combines these components:

$$\theta_t = \theta_{t-1} - \eta_l \cdot \frac{m_t}{\sqrt{v_t} + \epsilon_t} \tag{2}$$

where η_l is the layer-scaled learning rate.

4 Experiments

4.1 Setup

We evaluate on FineWeb using:

- 134M parameter Qwen 3 architecture
- Batch size 512
- Base LR 8e-4
- 800 step warmup
- Weight decay 0.1

4.2 Results

Method	Validation Loss
LAMVS (Ours)	4.822
AdamW	4.9266
StableAdamW	4.918
LayerAdam	4.945

Table 1: Validation loss comparisons

Training curves show consistent improvement across all stages.

5 Limitations

- Requires manual tuning of layer scales
- Increased memory overhead from per-layer tracking
- Not yet tested on architectures beyond transformers

6 Conclusion

LAMVS demonstrates that layer-aware optimization can improve language model training. Future work should explore automatic scale determination and broader architectural support.

References

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