

n-gram analysis of biological sequences in R

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Introduction

biogram: the **R** package for the n-gram analysis of biological sequences.

n-grams: features describing the sequence.

biogram workflow:

1. Extract n-grams.
2. Change an alphabet.
3. Filter n-grams.

Biological sequences

Long chains of amino acids (proteins) or nucleotides (RNA or DNA).

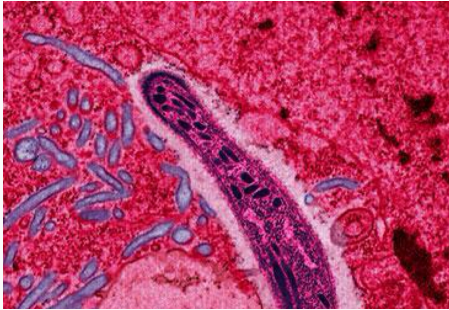
Sample protein sequence:

MRKLYCVLLLSAFEFTYMINFGRGQNYWEHPYQKSDVYHP

INEHREHPKEYQYPLHQEHTYQQEDSGEDENTLQHAYPID

HEGAEPAPQEQNLFSSIEIV...

Biological sequences



Plasmodium falciparum. Source: <http://www.protists.ensembl.org>

Protein of *Plasmodium falciparum*:

```
MRKLYCVLLLSAFETYMINFGRGQNYWEHPYQKSDVYHP  
INEHREHPKEYQYPLHQEHTYQQEDSGEDENTLQHAYPID  
HEGAEPAPQEQNLFSSIEIV...
```

Biological sequences



Plasmodium falciparum. Source: <http://www.protists.ensembl.org>

Protein of *Plasmodium falciparum*, malaria-causing parasite:

MRKLYCVLLLSAFETYMINFGRGQNYWEHPYQKSDVYHP

INEHREHPKEYQYPLHQEHTYQQEDSGEDENTLQHAYPID

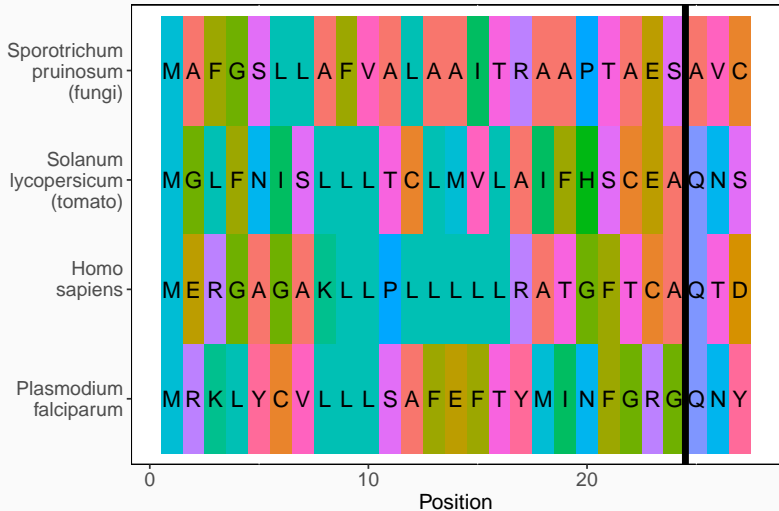
HEGAEPAPQEQNLFSSIEIV...

Biological sequences

Signal peptide (red): n-terminal amino acid sequence directing proteins to the endomembrane system and next to extracellular localizations.

MRKLYCVLLLSAFEFTYMINFGRGQNYWEHPYQKSDVYHP
INEHREHPKEYQYPLHQEHTYQQEDSGEDENTLQHAYPID
HEGAEPAPQEQNLFSSIEIV...

Biological sequences



Common patterns are hard to identify.

n-grams

n-grams

n-grams (k-tuples) are vectors of n characters derived from input sequence(s).

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
PF	M	R	K	L	Y	C	V	L	L
HS	M	G	L	F	N	I	S	L	L
SL	M	A	F	G	S	L	L	A	F
SP	M	E	R	G	A	G	A	K	L

1-grams: M, M, M, M, R, G, A, E

n-grams

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
PF	M	R	K	L	Y	C	V	L	L
HS	M	G	L	F	N	I	S	L	L
SL	M	A	F	G	S	L	L	A	F
SP	M	E	R	G	A	G	A	K	L

2-grams: MR, MG, MA, ME, RK, GL, AF, ER

n-grams

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
PF	M	R	K	L	Y	C	V	L	L
HS	M	G	L	F	N	I	S	L	L
SL	M	A	F	G	S	L	L	A	F
SP	M	E	R	G	A	G	A	K	L

3-grams: MRK , MGL , MAF , MER , RKL , GLF , AFG ,
ERG

n-grams

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
PF	M	R	K	L	Y	C	V	L	L
HS	M	G	L	F	N	I	S	L	L
SL	M	A	F	G	S	L	L	A	F
SP	M	E	R	G	A	G	A	K	L

2-grams (with a single gap): M-K, M-L, M-F, M-R, R-L, G-F, A-G, E-G

n-grams

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
PF	M	R	K	L	Y	C	V	L	L
HS	M	G	L	F	N	I	S	L	L
SL	M	A	F	G	S	L	L	A	F
SP	M	E	R	G	A	G	A	K	L

3-grams (with gaps): M - K - - C , M - L - - I , M - F - - L ,
M - R - - G , R - L - - V , G - F - - S , A - G - - L , E - G - - A

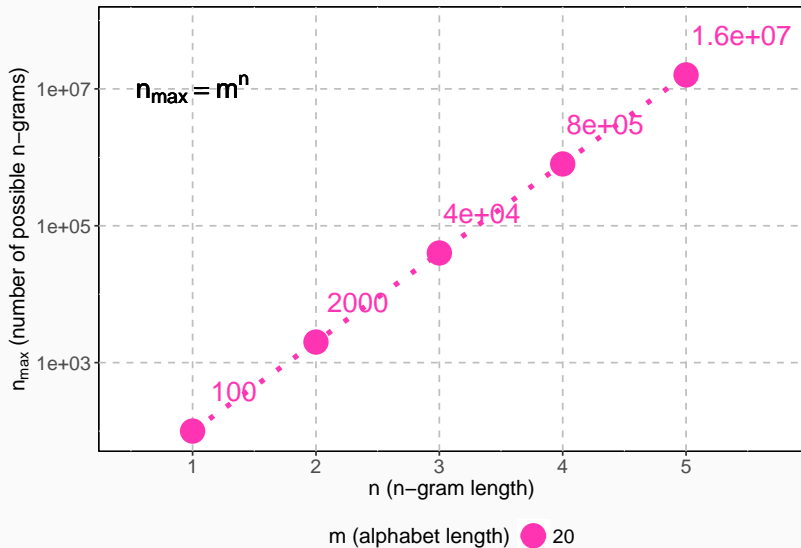
Proposed model

$$y \sim \text{n-gram}_1 + \text{n-gram}_2 + \dots + \text{n-gram}_n$$

Problems:

- large number of possible n-grams,
- the majority of n-grams is noninformative.

n-gram counts



n-gram counts

	A_0	C_0	D_0	E_0	F_0	...	L.F_0	M.F_0	N.F_0	...
PF	1	1	0	1	3	...	0	0	1	...
HS	2	2	0	1	2	...	1	0	0	...
SL	9	1	0	1	2	...	0	0	0	...
SP	4	1	1	1	1	...	0	0	0	...

The sparsity of the n-gram count matrix grows with n .

Sparse matrix representation

Packages:

- *Matrix*: S4, part of the base **R** distribution (499 depending or importing CRAN packages).
- *SparseM*: S4 (26 depending or importing CRAN packages).
- *slam*: S3, very small matrices (50 depending or importing CRAN packages).

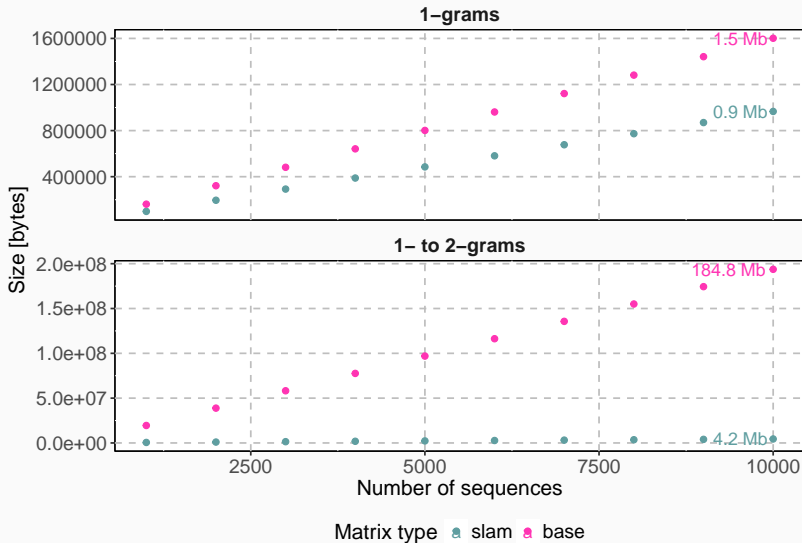
All packages add their methods to common functions and operators for dense matrices.

Packages:

- Matrix: S4, part of base R distribution, well-developed (499 depending or importing CRAN packages).
- SparseM: S4 (26 depending or importing CRAN packages).
- slam: S3, very small matrices (50 depending or importing CRAN packages, including *biogram*).

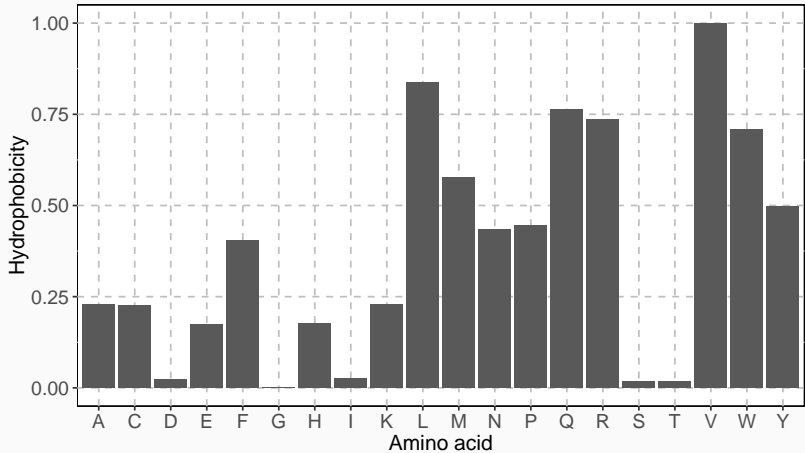
All packages add their methods to common functions and operators for dense matrices.

slam representation



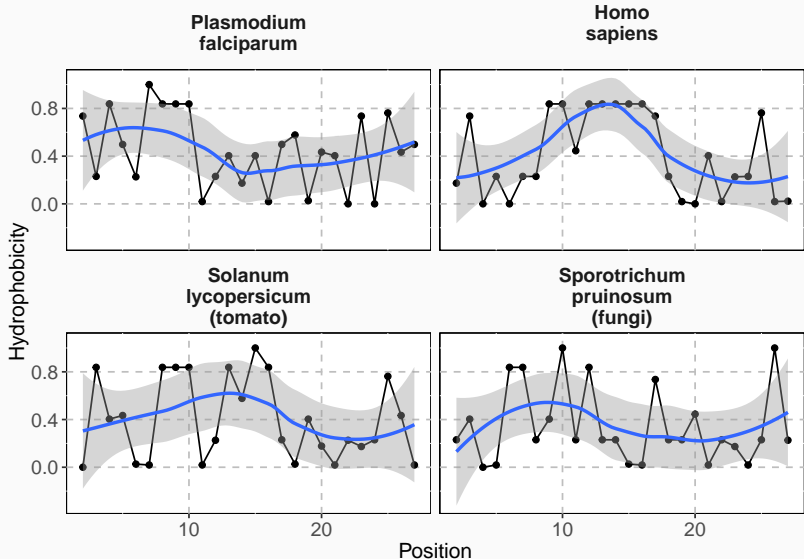
Reduction of the amino acid alphabet

Properties of amino acids

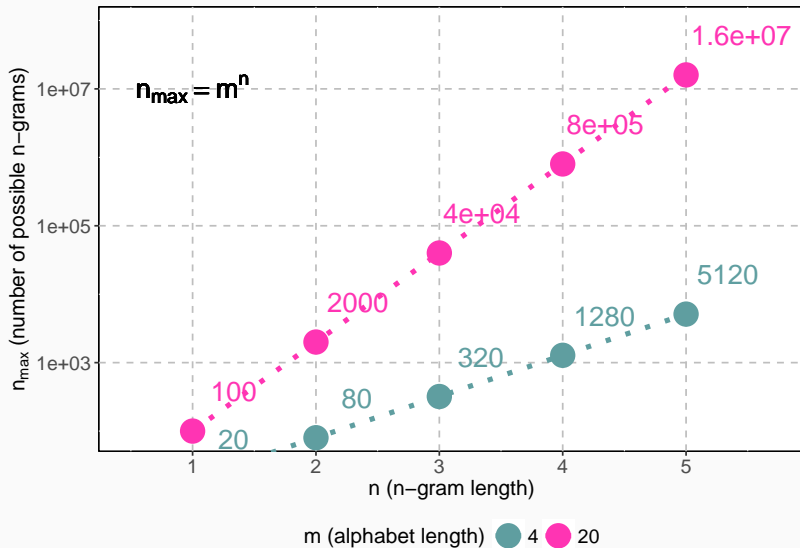


Amino acids may be described using their physicochemical properties.

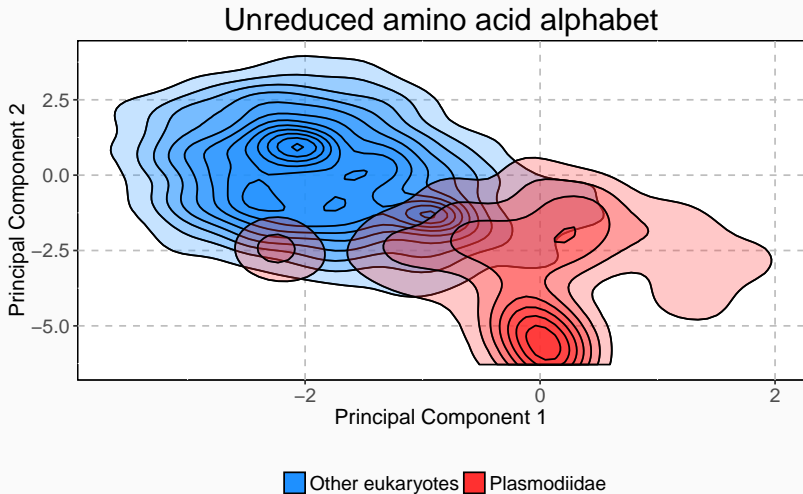
Properties of amino acids



Reduction of the alphabet



Reduction of the alphabet

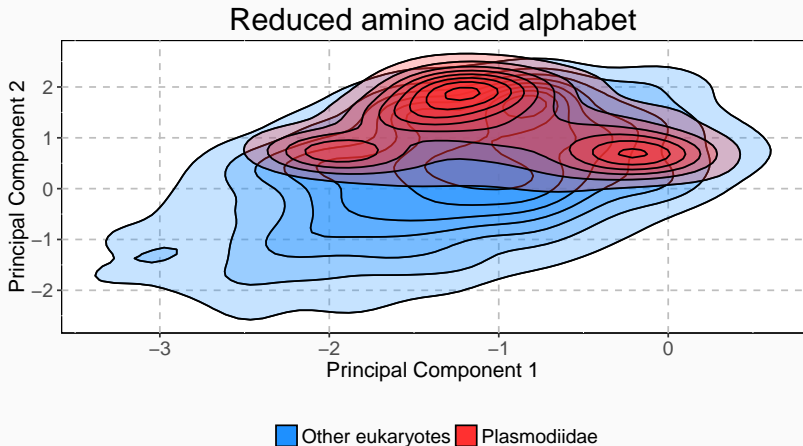


PCA analysis of amino acid frequency in signal peptides.

Reduction of the alphabet

Group	Amino acids
I	D, E, H, K, N, Q, R
II	G, P, S, T, Y
III	F, I, L, M, V, W
IV	A, C

Reduction of the alphabet



PCA analysis of amino acid frequency in signal peptides. Reduced amino acid alphabet groups together signal peptides belonging to *Plasmodiidae* and other eukaryotes.

Filtering n-grams

Permutation Test

Informative n-grams are usually selected using permutation tests.

During a permutation test we shuffle randomly class labels and compute a defined statistic (e.g. information gain). Values of the statistic for permuted data are compared with the value of statistic for original data.

Permutation Test

target	Original data	Permuted data 1	Permuted data 2	...
0	0	1	1	...
0	1	0	1	...
0	1	1	1	...
1	0	0	0	...
1	1	1	0	...
1	0	0	0	...

$$\text{p-value} = \frac{N_{T_P > T_R}}{N}$$

$N_{T_P > T_R}$: number of cases, where T_P (permuted test statistic) has more extreme values than T_R (test statistic for original data).

N : number of permutations.

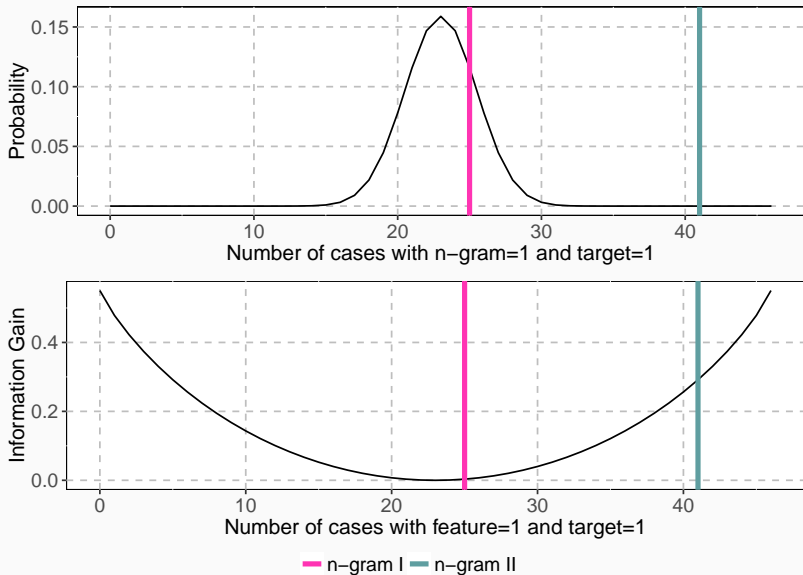
Quick Permutation Test is a fast alternative to permutation tests for n-gram data. It computes a probability for a given contingency table providing the exact p-value for the specific value level of the test statistic.

IG: 0.0032

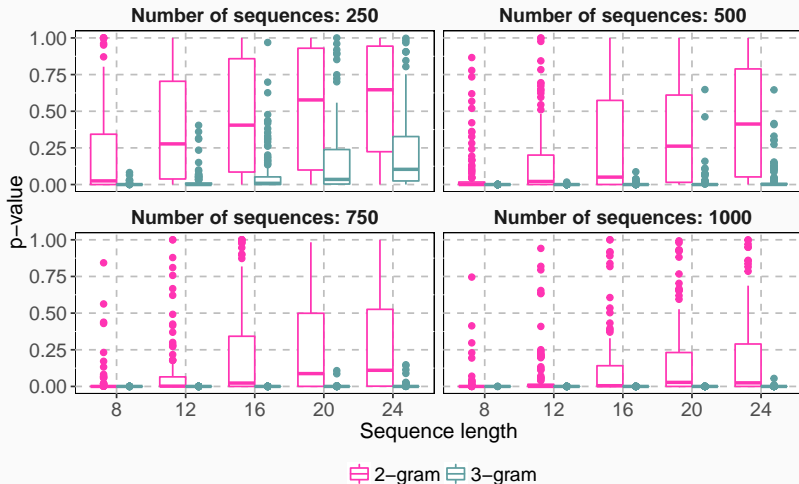
Target	n-gram I	Count
0	0	29
1	0	25
0	1	21
1	1	25

IG: 0.2917

Target	n-gram II	Count
0	0	45
1	0	9
0	1	5
1	1	41



Sensitivity of QuiPT



QuiPT works best for large data sets of short sequences.

Summary and conclusion

biogram: the **R** package for the n-gram analysis of biological sequences.

biogram workflow:

1. Extract n-grams (`count_ngrams()` and `count_multigrams()`).
2. Change an alphabet (`calc_ed()` and `calc_si()`).
3. Filter n-grams (`test_features()`).

biogram: the **R** package for the n-gram analysis of biological sequences.

<https://CRAN.R-project.org/package=biogram> (1.3)

<http://github.com/michbur/biogram> (1.4)

Burdukiewicz M, Sobczyk P, Rödiger S, Duda-Madej A, Mackiewicz P, Kotulska M. (2016) **Prediction of amyloidogenicity based on the n-gram analysis.** *PeerJ Preprints* 4:e2390v1

<https://doi.org/10.7287/peerj.preprints.2390v1>

A novel method of detecting amyloids, proteins involved in many neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's or Creutzfeldt-Jakob's diseases based on n-grams used to train a random forest classifier (from the *ranger* package).

Acknowledgements and funding

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- Paweł Mackiewicz,
- Małgorzata Kotulska,
- **biogram** package
(<https://cran.r-project.org/package=biogram>):
 - Piotr Sobczyk,
 - Chris Lauber.