

CLUSTERING ANALYSIS OF VOWEL DATASET

Using K-Means Algorithm



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Introduction

Speech recognition is an important field that has long been a target for many studies. It is defined as the transcription of speech signals to a sequence of word or text (Jennings, 2006). Speech recognition technologies play a vital role in people's lives. Most importantly, they are a great aid for the visually and hearing-impaired community. One important part of speech recognition is the classification of voiced phonemes. A phoneme is what allows us to distinguish a word from another one in a given language. Every single phoneme has its own unique pattern and different phonemes can be differentiated in terms of their formant frequencies (Sarma M. and Sarma K., 2012). Plus, there are many variations in the way different speakers produce the same phoneme. Human naturally distinguish those sounds; however, this represents a challenging task in speech recognition.

The ability to correctly segment speech and identify the speaker provides many advantages in speech processing applications (Daqrouq and Tutunji, 2015). In previous studies, speaker identification systems have been implemented by analyzing the voiced and unvoiced elements, as well as the speech energy distribution. Some techniques employed in those systems for speaker classification include linear predictive modeling, discrete wavelet transform and wavelet packet transform (Daqrouq and Tutunji, 2015). However, there are times when there is little amount of or no labeled data points in a large dataset. In this case, clustering could be a good approach for the segmentation process. Clustering methods are unsupervised learning techniques that partition a dataset into groups of data points based on their similarities. This study aims to carry out vowel recognition using K-means clustering technique. The goal using this technique is to be able to segment individual vowel phoneme in a given speech using a set of specific characteristics, as well as identifying the gender of the speaker.

Method

K - means clustering is one of the most widely used clustering technique in machine learning. The algorithm is used to section datapoints into k groups or clusters based on their similarities by minimizing the sum of squared distance between the datapoints and their assigned cluster, hence reducing the variation within each group. The variation within a cluster is measured by the within sum of squares, which is given by (Ashour et al., 2018):

$$s_{j(g)}^{2} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_g} (x_{ij(g)} - \bar{x}_{j(g)})^{2}}{n_g - 1}$$
where

 N_g is the number of observations in the g^{th} cluster, and $x_{j(g)}$ is the mean of j^{th} variable in g^{th} cluster.

The algorithm is pretty simple to implement and only requires two parameters to work: the target number of clusters k and the dataset to partition. The algorithm undergoes iterative phases and for each phase, the steps include first randomly assigning each observation to one of the clusters and assign initial random centroid, computing the mean for each cluster and reassigning each observation to the nearest cluster by calculating the distance of each observation from the assigned cluster's mean value (Ashour et al., 2018). The iterative process is repeated until the sum of square errors can no longer be reduced in each cluster or the if specified, the maximum number of iterations has been reached.

Data Structure and Exploration

The vowel dataset (figure 1) analyzed in this paper has been taken from the UCI Repository of Machine Learning Database. It is a collection of ten different vowel sound of British English recorded from different speakers. The sound recognition was collected using a specific training set

(Deterding, 1989). The data contains 990 observations representing sound characteristics from a speaker for sound recognition. There are 14 total variables in the dataset, 10 of which are numerical independent variables (features 0-9) representing the sound wave, one categorical target variable (class) representing the vowel sound and the speaker name, sex, as well as the type of test.

The table in figure 3 shows that the vowel sounds are equally distributed. The summary of the data (figure 2) reveals that the variables have differing scales as they do not have the same range; however, each numerical data seems to have a small range, hence the data appears to be well spread over each range, eliminating the possibility of the presence of outliers in the data. Plus, the data does not contain missing values for any of the variables, which is beneficial since the k-means algorithm cannot handle missing values.

Data Preprocessing

Because k-means algorithm is a distance-based algorithm, it is not suitable for categorical variables. So, the class, train test, sex and speaker number variables were dropped for the analysis. The distribution for each feature variable can be observed in figure 4. The feature variables appear to be well distributed across their range, following normal like distribution. However, as mention above, the dataset is imbalanced, and the distributions will need to be rescale to the same range. This transformation is necessary to reduce the impact of large values on the algorithm (as it weights each dimension equally) and allow the comparison of a sole observation against the mean. Below is the summary of the transformed data, with variables having the same mean value.

```
> summary(newvowel)
   Feature0
                       Feature1
                                            Feature2
                                                                Feature3
Min.
        :-2.30988
                    Min.
                            :-2.685135
                                         Min.
                                                :-2.78002
                                                             Min.
                                                                    :-2.5347
                    1st Qu.:-0.706444
                                         1st Qu.:-0.65732
1st Qu.:-0.78713
                                                             1st Qu.:-0.7652
Median : 0.06702
                    Median :-0.004479
                                         Median :-0.09092
                                                             Median :-0.1080
Mean
        : 0.00000
                    Mean
                            : 0.000000
                                         Mean
                                                : 0.00000
                                                             Mean
                                                                    : 0.0000
 3rd Qu.: 0.69189
                    3rd Qu.: 0.728543
                                         3rd Qu.: 0.61665
                                                             3rd Qu.: 0.7646
        : 2.60388
                            : 2.716168
                                         Max.
                                                : 2.72319
                                                                    : 2.4517
                    Max.
                                                             Max.
   Feature4
                       Feature5
                                          Feature6
                                                              Feature7
        :-2.74050
                            :-2.4281
                                              :-3.31792
                                                                  :-2.84240
Min.
                    Min.
                                       Min.
                                                          Min.
1st Qu.:-0.69717
                    1st Qu.:-0.7191
                                       1st Qu.:-0.65516
                                                          1st Qu.:-0.75406
Median : 0.01002
                    Median :-0.1296
                                       Median : 0.05708
                                                          Median :-0.01492
        : 0.00000
                    Mean
                            : 0.0000
                                       Mean
                                              : 0.00000
                                                                  : 0.00000
                                                          Mean
                                                           3rd Qu.: 0.75605
 3rd Ou.: 0.71495
                    3rd Qu.: 0.6595
                                       3rd ou.: 0.65133
        : 3.21494
                            : 2.8098
                                       Max.
                                              : 3.04673
                                                                  : 2.96955
Max.
                                                           мах.
                         Feature9
   Feature8
        :-2.2976367
                      Min.
                              :-2.6634
Min.
1st Qu.:-0.7033519
                      1st Qu.:-0.7892
Median : 0.0008344
                      Median :-0.1410
        : 0.0000000
                      Mean
                              : 0.0000
 3rd Qu.: 0.6958128
                      3rd Qu.: 0.7324
Max.
        : 2.8272260
                      Max.
                             : 2.4294
```

Figure 6: Data Summary After Transformation

Clustering Analysis in R and Interpretation

Before starting the analysis, it is important to set a seed for R's random number generator (using the set.seed() function), as the k means algorithm begins with a randomly selected k number of centroids. This will allow the results of the analysis to be reproducible. One difficulty with k — means algorithm is deciding on the number of clusters k. A large k value may improve the stability, but it might also overfit the model, leading to the model struggling to generalize the overall pattern. One general rule to select a k value is applying the following formula:

 $k = \sqrt{2/n}$ where n is the total number of observations.

Experiment with k = 4

The algorithm was first run with the transformed data frame and k parameter set to 4. A plot animation was used to visualize the iterative processes, and the steps are displayed in figure

7. In step 1, the algorithm randomly chooses 4 centroids, then calculate the Euclidean distance between the observations and draw the clusters. This generates the two black, one red and one green clusters observed in step two of figure 7. Then the algorithm computes the mean of the clusters and repeat the steps until no more data point can be reassigned.

The result of the algorithm is displayed in figure 8. The algorithm converged after five iterations resulting in four clusters sizes of 193, 181, 211 and 405. Figure 8 shows the cluster means (centers) for the four groups across the 10 vowel features, as well as the cluster assignment for each observation in the dataset (clustering vector). Since the dataset has been standardized, a positive value a given cluster center indicates that its z-score is above the overall mean. For example, cluster 1 has the highest feature0 average among all clusters. Another important component of the results is the within sum of squares. This measures the variability of the observation within each cluster. In general, the total sum of squares within the clusters must be as small as possible. The within sum of squares for each of the 4 clusters was 1105.666, 1138.639, 1338.122, and 2490.789; and the total of within sum of squares was evaluated to 6073.216. This value measures the compactness of the clustering. Next, a cross tabulation was generated to compare the clusters against the sex variable from the original dataset. The result is shown below:

Female speakers are dominant in cluster 2 and 4, while Males are dominant in cluster 1 and 3. Overall, the algorithm was able to identify the speaker's gender with about 45% accuracy.

Experiment with k = 11

A second experiment was performed with k=11 to check how accurately the algorithm will recognize the eleven vowel phonemes in the dataset. The result of the algorithm is display in figure 9. The algorithm converged after six iterations the generated 11 clusters of sizes 99, 31, 106, 101, 129, 109, 49, 101, 126, 67, and 72. The total sum of squares within the clusters here is 4242.297 which is smaller than the one obtained with k=4, thus the variability of the observations within the clusters has decreased by increasing the k value. The generated clusters were then evaluated against the actual vowel class. The result is displayed below:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 1	10 1	L1
had	0	0	3	26	0	36	0	0	20	0	5
hAd	0	0	0	0	11	42	0	0	37	0	0
hed	6	0	0	10	15	30	7	4	18	0	0
hEd	35	0	0	0	12	1	0	0	35	7	0
hid	12	6	0	0	37	0	0	0	0	35	0
hId	24	0	0		31	0	0	0	15	20	0
hod	0	8	32	9	0	0	0	21	0	0	20
hod	0	14	27	16	0	0	0	27	0	0	6
hud	16	0	0	3	9	0	24	7	0	5	26
h∪d	6	3	14	10	12	0	18	15	0	0	12
hYd	0	0	30	27	2	0	0	27	1	0	3

cluster 6 is the dominant cluster for phoneme had, hAd and hed and cluster 5 is dominant for hid and hId. Plus, the algorithm correctly clustered approximately 35% of the vowel phonemes in the dataset.

Visualizing Both Experiment

A cluster plot was generated to compare both analyses. The dataset is multi-dimensional, having more than two variables. The plot of the dataset clusters in this state will be very noisy. A solution to this problem will be to apply a dimensionality reduction algorithm, like principal component analysis (PCA), that will pot the observations according to the principal components coordinates that explain the majority of the variance. The plots can be visualized below:

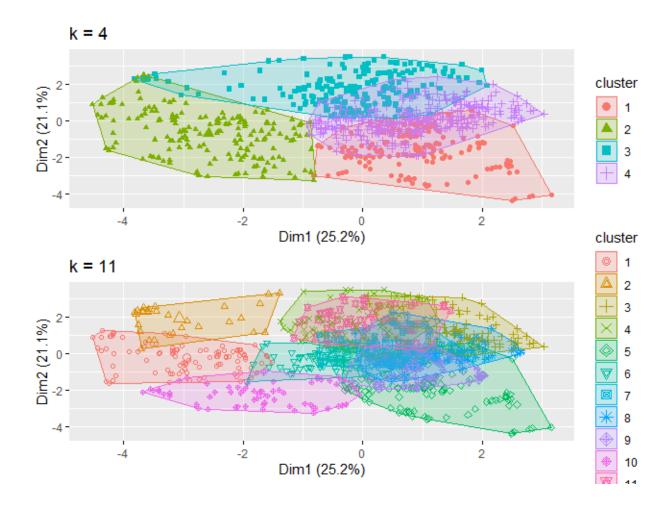


Figure 10: Cluster Plots for k=4 and k=11

The visualization reveals where the true delineations occur or not. The clusters in both plots are not fully separated and overlapped with each other, with 46. 3% of the point variability explained by each cluster. This may explain the low accuracy obtained in both experiments. Although the delineations can be observed with this visual assessment, the plot does not reveal the optimal number of clusters.

Determining the Optimal K Clusters

The optimal k value was determined using the elbow method. This technique uses the within-cluster homogeneity to measure the variability. Thus, the interest here is in the percentage

of variance explained by each cluster. The method works as follow: first perform clustering analysis with different k values; calculate the total within sum of squares (wss); plot the wss values against the k values. The optimal k is indicated by the point where the curve bend.

The Elbow method was computed using the fviz_nbclust function and the resulting plot is shown below:

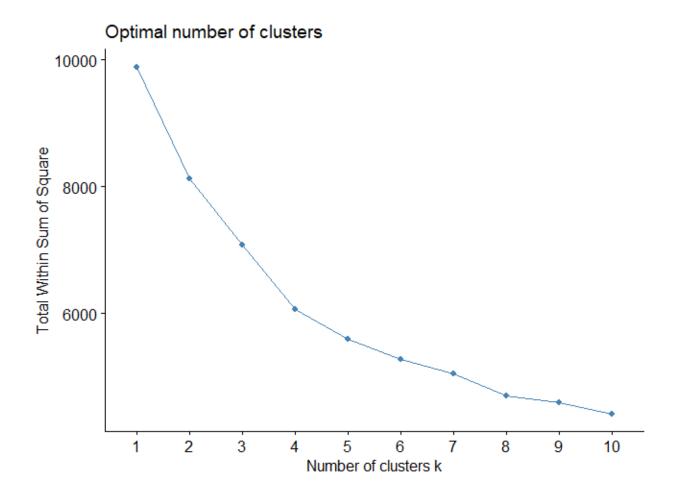


Figure 11: Total Within Cluster Sum of Squares Vs. Number of Clusters k

The graph suggest k = 5 to be the optimal number of clusters, as it is the k value where curve appears to bend. The cluster plot for the optimal k value can be visualized below

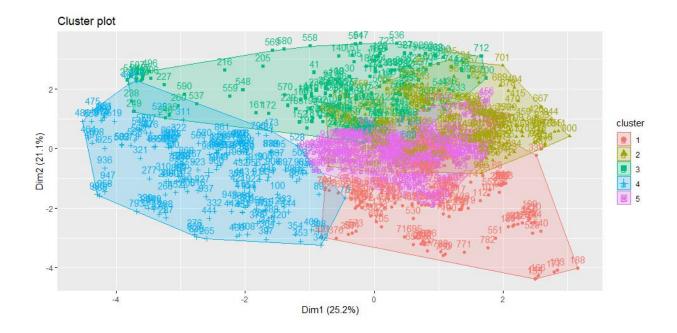


Figure 12: Cluster Plot for Optimal K = 5

The distance between the points in each cluster has significantly decreased, with the points closer to each other compare to the other two cluster plots (with k=4 and 11). However, the clusters are still overlapping. The cross tabulation was also rebuilt to compare the optimal number of clusters with the actual vowel sounds and actual gender distribution in the data. The results are below:

```
1 2 3 4 5
had 4 56 24 6 0
hAd 12 78 0 0 0
hed 19 35 10 14 12
hEd 27 21 0 42 0
hid 43 0 4 43 0
hId 51 0 0 39 0
hod 0 0 45 0 45
hod 0 10 37 3 40
hud 12 0 22 18 38
hUd 12 0 25 6 47
hYd 4 52 27 0 7

Cross Tabulation the Vowel Class
```

The algorithm was able to recognize 53% of the vowel sounds correctly, while the percentage for correct speaker's gender recognition was only 32%, lower than the one obtained with k = 4.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis show that the generated models were overall not able to accurately recognize all the eleven vowel phonemes or the speakers' gender. Thus, their application in real life will not be useful. With the determined optimal number of clusters (5), the algorithm correctly identified only 53% of the vowel sounds and 32% of the speaker's gender. Determining the optimal number of clusters slightly improve the model's performance for vowel recognition; however, it has significantly decreased the performance for speaker recognition.

It appears that the performance of the k-means algorithm is not solely dependent on the number of clusters. As seen in the analysis, the optimum k value can be used but still results in a bad performance, even with well prepared data. The problem could be with initialization of the algorithm. The algorithm starts by selecting a random number of data points as the initial set of centroids. It seems like the algorithm failed to optimize the centroid locations globally with the given dataset as it starts with a poor initialization. Thus, trying to improve the goodness of centroid initialization such that the initial centroids are as close as possible to the optimal cluster centers could be a great technique to optimize the model in this study.

References

Ashour A. et al., "Neutrosophic Set in Medical Image Analysis", 2018. Retrieved from:

https://sciencedirect.com/topics/computer-science/k-means-clustering

Daqrouq K. and Tutunji T., "Speaker Identification Using Vowels Features Through a Combined Method of Formants, Wavelets, and Neural Network Classifiers", 2015. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asoc.2014.11.016

Deterding D., "Speaker Normalization of Automatic Speech Recognition", University of Cambridge, 1989.

Jennings N. et al., "Cognitive Systems – information Processing Meets Brain Science". 2006

Sarma M. and Sarma K., "Segmentation of Assamese Phonemes Using SOM". Conference Paper

January 2012.

Appendix

```
> head(vowel)
  TrainTest SpeakerNumber Sex Feature0 Feature1 Feature2 Feature3 Feature4 Feature5
                   Andrew Male
                                -3.639
                                            0.418
                                                     -0.670
                                                               1.779
                                                                       -0.168
                                            0.496
                                                     -0.694
2
      Train
                   Andrew Male
                                  -3.327
                                                               1.365
                                                                       -0.265
                                                                                  1.933
3
                                 -2.120
                                            0.894
                                                     -1.576
                                                               0.147
                                                                       -0.707
                                                                                  1.559
      Train
                   Andrew Male
4
      Train
                   Andrew Male
                                  -2.287
                                            1.809
                                                     -1.498
                                                               1.012
                                                                       -1.053
                                                                                  1.060
5
      Train
                   Andrew Male
                                  -2.598
                                            1.938
                                                     -0.846
                                                               1.062
                                                                       -1.633
                                                                                  0.764
                   Andrew Male
                                  -2.852
                                            1.914
                                                     -0.755
                                                               0.825
                                                                       -1.588
                                                                                  0.855
      Train
  Feature6 Feature7 Feature8 Feature9 Class
1
    -0.388
              0.529
                      -0.874
                                -0.814
                                         hid
    -0.363
2
              0.510
                      -0.621
                                -0.488
                                         hId
3
    -0.579
              0.676
                      -0.809
                                -0.049
                                         hEd
    -0.567
              0.235
                      -0.091
                                -0.795
                                         hAd
5
     0.394
             -0.150
                       0.277
                                -0.396
                                         hyd
6
     0.217
             -0.246
                       0.238
                                -0.365
                                         had
>
```

Figure 1: Vowel Dataset Preview

```
> summary(vowel)
 TrainTest
                   SpeakerNumber
                                                           Feature0
                                         sex
 Length:990
                   Length:990
                                      Length:990
                                                        Min. :-5.211
Class :character
                   class :character
                                     class :character
                                                        1st Ou.:-3.888
Mode :character
                   Mode :character
                                     Mode :character
                                                        Median :-3.146
                                                        Mean :-3.204
                                                        3rd Qu.:-2.603
                                                        Max. :-0.941
   Feature1
                    Feature2
                                      Feature3
                                                        Feature4
                                                                         Feature5
                 Min. :-2.48700
Min.
     :-1.274
                                   Min. :-1.4090
                                                     Min. :-2.1270
                                                                      Min. :-0.8360
                 1st Qu.:-0.97575
                                   1st Qu.:-0.0655
                                                     1st Qu.:-0.7690
 1st Qu.: 1.052
                                                                      1st Qu.: 0.1960
                 Median :-0.57250
                                                                      Median: 0.5520
Median : 1.877
                                   Median : 0.4335
                                                     Median :-0.2990
Mean : 1.882
                 Mean :-0.50777
                                                     Mean :-0.3057
                                   Mean : 0.5155
                                                                      Mean : 0.6302
 3rd Qu.: 2.738
                 3rd Qu.:-0.06875
                                   3rd Qu.: 1.0960
                                                     3rd Qu.: 0.1695
                                                                       3rd Qu.: 1.0285
Max. : 5.074
                 Max.
                      : 1.43100
                                   Max.
                                         : 2.3770
                                                     Max.
                                                           : 1.8310
                                                                      Max.
                                                                            : 2.3270
   Feature6
                       Feature7
                                         Feature8
                                                            Feature9
Min. :-1.537000
                    Min. :-1.29300
                                      Min. :-1.61300
                                                         Min. :-1.68000
1st Qu.:-0.307000
                    1st Qu.:-0.09575
                                      1st Qu.:-0.70400
                                                         1st Qu.:-0.54800
                                      Median :-0.30250
Median : 0.022000
                    Median: 0.32800
                                                         Median :-0.15650
Mean :-0.004365
                    Mean : 0.33655
                                                         Mean :-0.07134
                                      Mean :-0.30298
 3rd Qu.: 0.296500
                    3rd Qu.: 0.77000
                                      3rd Qu.: 0.09375
                                                         3rd Qu.: 0.37100
      : 1.403000
                    Max. : 2.03900
                                      Max.
                                            : 1.30900
                                                         Max. : 1.39600
Max.
   class
Length:990
 Class :character
Mode :character
```

Figure 2: Data Summary

```
> table(vowel$Class)
had hAd hed hEd hid hId hod hOd hud hUd hYd
90 90 90 90 90 90 90 90 90 90
> |
```

Figure 3: Vowel class distribution

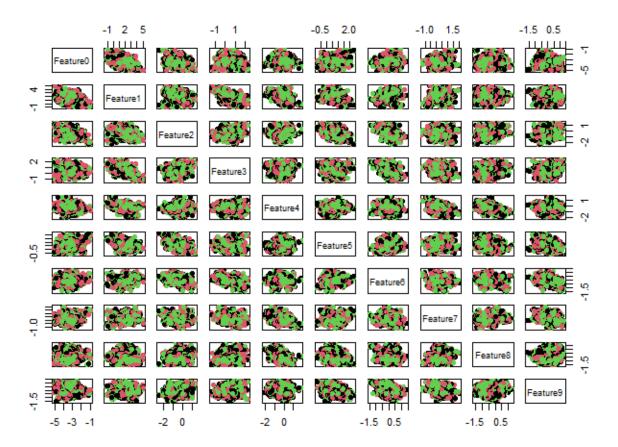
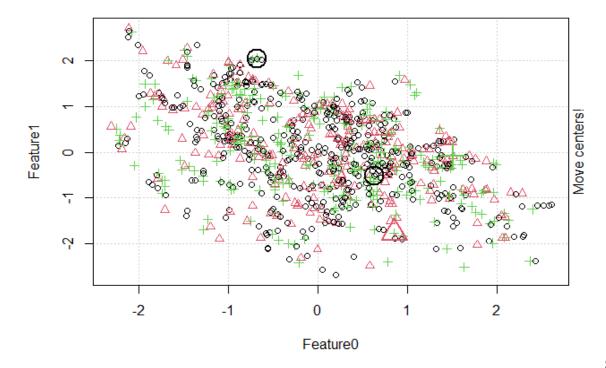


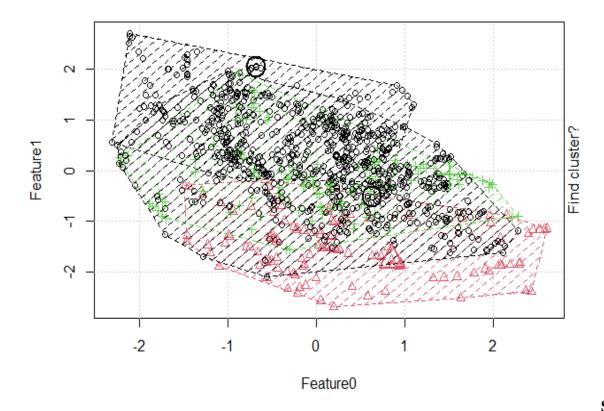
Figure 4: Vowel Features Plot

> apply(vowel,	function(vowe	 sum(is.na) 	(vowel)))			
TrainTest	SpeakerNumber	Sex	Feature0	Feature1	Feature2	Feature3
0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Feature4	Feature5	Feature6	Feature7	Feature8	Feature9	class
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 5: Checking Missing Values in the Dataset



Step 1



Step 2

Figure 7: K-Means Algorithm Steps per Iteration

```
K-means clustering with 4 clusters of sizes 193, 181, 211, 405
```

```
Cluster means:
    Feature0
             Feature1
                      Feature2
                               Feature3
                                          Feature4
                                                   Feature 5
 0.74790120 -0.9680898 -0.8570254
                               0.4714346
                                        0.09206420
                                                  1.2183727
2 -0.44934501 -0.6463731
                                        1.00938552 -0.4663031
                     0.7463631
                              1.0191980
                               0.1248977 -1.12925220 -0.4283782
3 -0.24278290
            0.3840590
                     0.7695085
4 -0.02910195
            0.5501195 -0.3260546 -0.7452225
                                        0.09334579 -0.1490303
    Feature6
             Feature7
                      Feature8
                               Feature9
1 -0.01131354
            0.6989178 -0.1042671 -0.7198085
2 -0.99109234 -1.2115625 -0.4311794
                               1.1353903
3 -0.25326696
            0.6778014
                     1.1886202
                               0.1560457
4 0.58027297 -0.1447270 -0.3768687 -0.2456994
Clustering vector:
 1
3
[75] 3 3 4 4 1 1 4 3 3 3 3 3 4 2 1 1 4 3 3 3 4 2 1 1 4 4 3 3 3 4 4 1 1 4 4 3 3 3 3 4
```

```
[149] 3 3 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 1 1 3 3 3
[223] 1 4 3 3 3 3 3 3 1 1 1 4 3 3 2 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 4 3 3 2 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 4 3 3 2 3 3 3 1 1 1 1 1 3
[260] 3 3 3 3 3 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 3 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 3 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 3 4
[334] 4 4 4 4 3 1 4 1 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 3 1 4 1 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 3 1 4 1 2 1 2 4 4 4
[371] 3 1 4 1 2 1 2 4 4 1 4 3 1 4 1 2 1 2 4 4 1 4 3 1 4 1 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 4 4 4
[408] 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 4 3 4 4 4 2 2 2
[445] 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 2 4 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 4
[519] 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 1 1 1 4 3 3 2 3 3 2 3 1 1 1 4 3 3 2 3 3 2 3 1 1 1 4
[963] 4 4 4 4 2 4 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 2 4 2 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 2 4
Within cluster sum of squares by cluster:
[1] 1105.666 1138.639 1338.122 2490.789
(between_SS / total_SS = 38.6 %)
```

Available components:

[1] "cluster" "centers" "totss" "withinss" "tot.withinss

[6] "betweenss" "size" "iter" "ifault"

Figure 8: K-Means Algorithm Results for k = 4

K-means clustering with 11 clusters of sizes 99, 31, 106, 101, 129, 109, 49, 101, 126, 67, 72

```
Cluster means:
     Feature0
                  Feature1
                               Feature2
                                           Feature3
                                                        Feature4
                                                                    Feature 5
   -0.5424369 -0.389358394
                             0.86127585
                                         1.14881991
                                                      0.84689675 -1.01154108
   -0.4587486 -0.247401142
                             1.89610829
                                         1.34991270 -0.90787335 -0.97759478
                             0.04832061 -1.08289434 -0.71571105 -0.23524187
   -0.2237317
               1.015774928
                             0.82945926 -0.08195518 -0.95515455 -0.49664212
    0.4015917
               0.060722179
    0.6799015 -0.949893971 -1.04784757
                                         0.67387726 -0.01390553
                                                                  1.53422894
6
    0.3717679
               0.003362592 -0.22134769 -0.34031903
                                                     0.17176136 -0.58232316
   -1.2520726
               0.594957049
                            0.74376866 -0.64745147
                                                      0.78912385 -0.30105013
   -0.4872090
               1.335522921 -1.00914360 -1.04336380
                                                     0.09098593
                                                                  0.45630209
    1.0059995 -0.510109662 -0.49190995 -0.47008759
                                                      0.32071760 -0.11226248
                                        1.06856901
10 -0.3941867 -1.376171279
                            0.54876891
                                                     1.57816437
                                                                  0.88280240
11 -0.9297012
               0.653016895
                            0.23678020
                                         0.58875271 -1.30965245 -0.07271604
     Feature6
                Feature7
                            Feature8
                                        Feature9
   -1.2424876 -1.2425397 -0.3677391
                                      1.32073209
               0.1434740
                           1.4771278
   -2.1327701
                                      1.50145248
3
    1.1544067
               0.3776276
                          0.3322201 -0.61503451
               0.9459220
   -0.5185805
                          1.0441117
                                      0.09542683
   -0.1145012
               0.9222478 -0.2056418 -0.76199553
    0.1907595 -0.7163591 -0.6102349
                                      0.85591997
    0.2728088
               0.6133792 -0.7510648 -1.04582082
    0.5905703 -0.3425493 -0.8286594
                                      0.09677104
    0.2193872
               0.1102411
                          0.1956831 -0.71943066
10 -0.2358249 -1.1590624 -0.9376400
                                      0.26445578
  Clustering vector:
                                                 9 11 11 11 11
  [1]
      5 5 5
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[226]
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                                                  4 11
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Figure 9: K-Means Algorithm Results for k = 11