Journal of Integer Sequences, Vol. 21 (2018),
Article 18.3.8

Improved Estimates for the Number of Privileged Words

Jeremy Nicholson and Narad Rampersad[1]
Department of Mathematics and Statistics
University of Winnipeg
515 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2E9
Canada
jnich998@hotmail.com
n.rampersad@uwinnipeg.ca

Abstract

In combinatorics on words, a word w of length n over an alphabet of size q is said to be *privileged* if $n \leq 1$, or if $n \geq 2$ and w has a privileged border that occurs exactly twice in w. Forsyth, Jayakumar and Shallit proved that there exist at least $2^{n-5}/n^2$ privileged binary words of length n. Using the work of Guibas and Odlyzko, we prove that there are constants c and n_0 such that for $n \geq n_0$, there are at least $\frac{cq^n}{n(\log_q n)^2}$ privileged words of length n over an alphabet of size q. Thus, for n sufficiently large, we improve the earlier bound determined by Forsyth, Jayakumar and Shallit, and generalize it for all q.

1 Introduction

The class of *privileged words* was recently introduced by Kellendonk, Lenz, and Savinien [6] and studied further by Peltomäki [7]. This is one of several classes, such as the classes of *closed words* and *rich words*, that are defined based on its members having borders satisfying certain properties. Recall that a *border* of a word w is a non-empty word that is both a prefix and a suffix of w. A word w is *privileged* if either

- w is a single letter, or

- w has a privileged border that occurs exactly twice in w.

The first few privileged words (up to length 4) over the alphabet $\{0, 1\}$ are

$$\epsilon, 0, 1, 00, 11, 000, 010, 101, 111, 0000, 0110, 1001, 1111.$$

Note that 0101 is not privileged because, although it has a border 01 that occurs exactly twice, this border is not itself privileged.

If one removes the condition requiring this border to be privileged from the above definition, one obtains the class of *closed words* studied by Fici [1]. Similarly, the class of rich words [3] can be obtained by the following definition: a word is *rich* if each of its closed factors whose longest border is a palindrome is itself a palindrome. For each of these classes of words, it is natural to try to count the number of words of each length in the class for a given alphabet size. For instance, Guo, Shallit, and Shur [5] gave a superpolynomial lower bound on the number of binary rich words, and Rukavicka [8] gave a subexponential upper bound (for any alphabet size).

Forsyth, Jayakumar, Peltomäki, and Shallit [2] looked at the problem of enumerating privileged words over a binary alphabet. The number of such words of length n is given by sequence A231208 of the Online Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences. This sequence begins

$$1, 2, 2, 4, 4, 8, 8, 16, 20, 40, 60, 108, \ldots$$

Forsyth et al. proved that there exist at least $2^{n-5}/n^2$ privileged binary words of length n. In their paper they sketch a method for potentially improving this estimate. In the present paper we apply some results of Guibas and Odlyzko [4] on the size of prefix-synchronized codes to carry out this method. We are thus able to obtain the following asymptotic improvement to the result of Forsyth, Jayakumar, and Shallit, and also generalize the result to arbitrary alphabets; since every privileged word is closed, this also gives a lower bound on the number of closed words of length n.

Theorem 1. *Let $q \geq 2$. There exist constants c and n_0 such that for $n \geq n_0$, there are at least $\frac{cq^n}{n(\log_q n)^2}$ privileged words of length n over an alphabet of size q.*

The estimates given in this theorem derive from the asymptotic analysis of maximal prefix-synchronized codes carried out by Guibas and Odlyzko [4]. Given an alphabet of size q, a block length N and a prefix P of length $p < N$, a *prefix-synchronized code* is a set of length-N codewords with the property that every codeword starts with a fixed prefix $P = a_1 a_2 \cdots a_p$, and furthermore, for any codeword $a_1 a_2 \cdots a_p b_1 b_2 \cdots b_{N-p}$, the prefix P does not appear as a factor of $a_2 \cdots a_p b_1 \cdots b_{N-p} a_1 \cdots a_{p-1}$. In other words, the border $a_1 a_2 \cdots a_p$ of $a_1 a_2 \cdots a_p b_1 \cdots b_{N-p} a_1 a_2 \cdots a_p$ occurs exactly twice in this word.

Next, we define $G(N) = G_P(N)$ as the size of a maximal prefix-synchronized code with these parameters. In other words, $G_P(N)$ is the number of q-ary words $a_1 \cdots a_{N+p}$ such that $a_k \cdots a_{k+p-1} = P$ for $k = 1$ and $k = N + 1$, and for no other k with $1 \leq k \leq N + 1$. If we take $n = N + p$ where the prefix P of length p is a privileged word, then $G_P(N)$ counts all words of length n with a privileged border P that occurs exactly twice in w. All these words are necessarily privileged words. If we sum up $G_P(N)$ over all privileged P of length p for some p, then we obtain a lower bound for the number of privileged words of length n.

2 Proof of Theorem 1

To prove Theorem 1 we begin with some lemmas. In all the following lemmas and for the rest of this document, q is the size of the alphabet and it will be a fixed integer ≥ 2, p is the size of the prefix P, and $Q = y_1 y_2 \cdots y_p$ is the *autocorrelation* of P, defined as follows. If $P = a_1 \cdots a_p$, then for $i = 1, \ldots, p$ we define

$$y_i = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } a_{i+1} \cdots a_p = a_1 \cdots a_{p-i}; \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

We also define the polynomial

$$f(z) = f_Q(z) = \sum_{i=1}^{p} y_i z^{p-i}.$$

The next series of lemmas are Lemmas 3–6 of [4].

Lemma 2. *If p is sufficiently large, then $1 + (z - q)f(z)$ has exactly one zero ρ that satisfies $|\rho| \geq 1.7$.*

Since there is only one such root ρ, it follows that this ρ is real. In what follows, the quantity ρ is the ρ specified by the previous lemma.

Lemma 3. *If p is sufficiently large, then*

$$\ln \rho = \ln q - \frac{1}{qf(q)} - \frac{f'(q)}{qf(q)^3} - \frac{1}{2q^2 f(q)^2} + O\left(\frac{p^2}{q^{3p}}\right).$$

Define R_Q by

$$R_Q \rho = \frac{(q-\rho)^2 \rho^{p-1}}{1 - (q-\rho)^2 f'(\rho)}.$$

Lemma 4. $G(N) = R_Q \rho^N + O((1.7)^N)$

Lemma 5. *If p is sufficiently large, then*

$$\ln R_Q = (p-2)\ln q - 2\ln(f(q)) + \frac{3f'(q)}{f(q)^2} - \frac{p-2}{qf(q)} + O\left(\frac{p^2}{q^{2p}}\right).$$

In what follows, c's, d's and Greek letters denote positive constants.

Lemma 6. *Let p be the unique integer such that*

$$\frac{\ln q}{q-1} q^p \leq N < \frac{\ln q}{q-1} q^{p+1}.$$

Let P be a prefix of length p and let $n = N + p$. There exist constants N_0 and d such that for $N > N_0$ we have

$$G_P(N) \geq dq^n/n^2.$$

(The constant d may depend on q but not on N.)

Proof. If $p = \lfloor \log_q N + \log_q(q-1) - \log_q(\ln q) \rfloor$, then $G(N) = R_Q \rho^N + O((1.7)^N)$ by applying Lemma 4. By Lemmas 3 and 5 we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\ln(R_Q \rho^N) &= \ln R_Q + N \ln \rho \\
&= (p-2)\ln q - 2\ln(f(q)) + \frac{3f'(q)}{f(q)^2} - \frac{p-2}{qf(q)} + O\left(\frac{p^2}{q^{2p}}\right) \\
&+ N \ln q - \frac{N}{qf(q)} - \frac{Nf'(q)}{qf(q)^3} - \frac{N}{2q^2 f(q)^2} + O\left(\frac{Np^2}{q^{3p}}\right).
\end{aligned}$$

Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned}
G(N) &= R_Q\rho^N + O((1.7)^N) = \exp(\ln(R_Q\rho^N)) + O((1.7)^N) \\
&= \frac{q^{N+p-2}}{f(q)^2} \exp\left(\frac{3f'(q)}{f(q)^2} - \frac{p-2}{qf(q)} - \frac{N}{qf(q)} - \frac{Nf'(q)}{qf(q)^3} - \frac{N}{2q^2f(q)^2} + O\left(\frac{Np^2}{q^{3p}} + \frac{p^2}{q^{2p}}\right)\right) \\
&\quad + O((1.7)^N).
\end{aligned}$$

Since the first digit of Q will always be a 1, $f(q)$ will have the leading term q^{p-1}. Let $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta$, and N_0 be positive constants such that the following inequalities are valid for all $N \geq N_0$.

$$0 \leq \frac{3f'(q)}{f(q)^2} \leq 3\frac{(p-1)^2 q^{p-2}}{q^{2p-2}} \leq \frac{3(p-1)^2}{q^p} \leq 2$$

$$\frac{p-2}{qf(q)} \leq \frac{p-2}{q^p} \leq \frac{p}{q^p} \leq 1/q$$

$$\frac{N}{qf(q)} \leq \frac{N}{q^p} \leq \frac{N}{q^{\lfloor \log_q N - \log_q(\ln q) \rfloor}} \leq \alpha \frac{N}{q^{\log_q N - \log_q(\ln q)}} \leq \alpha \frac{N \ln q}{N} \leq \beta$$

$$\frac{Nf'(q)}{qf(q)^3} \leq \frac{N(p-1)^2 q^{p-2}}{q^{3p-2}} \leq \frac{N(p-1)^2}{q^{2p}} \leq \frac{N}{q^p}\frac{(p-1)^2}{q^p} \leq 2\beta$$

$$\frac{N}{2q^2 f(q)^2} \leq \frac{N}{2q^{2p}} \leq \frac{N}{2q^{2\lfloor \log_q N - \log_q(\ln q) \rfloor}} \leq \frac{\delta N}{q^{2\log_q N}} \leq \frac{\delta N}{N^2} \leq \delta$$

$$\left|O\left(\frac{Np^2}{q^{3p}}+\frac{p^2}{q^{2p}}\right)\right| = \left|O\left(\frac{p^2}{q^{2p}}\right)\right| \leq \gamma.$$

Thus

$$\begin{aligned}
G_P(N) &= \frac{q^{N+p-2}}{f(q)^2}\exp\left(\frac{3f'(q)}{f(q)^2}-\frac{p-2}{qf(q)}-\frac{N}{qf(q)}-\frac{Nf'(q)}{qf(q)^3}-\frac{N}{2q^2f(q)^2}+O\left(\frac{Np^2}{q^{3p}}+\frac{p^2}{q^{2p}}\right)\right)\\
&\quad +O((1.7)^N)\\
&\geq \frac{d_1q^{N+p-2}}{f(q)^2} \geq \frac{d_1q^{N+p-2}}{((1-q^p)/(1-q))^2} \geq \frac{d_2q^{N+p-2}}{(1-q^p)^2} \geq \frac{d_2q^{N+p-2}}{q^{2p}-2q^p+1}\\
&\geq \frac{d_2q^{N+p-2}}{q^{2p}+1} \geq \frac{d_2q^{N+p-2}}{2q^{2p}} \geq \frac{d_3q^N}{q^p} \geq \frac{d_3q^N}{q^{\lfloor \log_q N+\log_q(q-1)-\log_q(\ln q)\rfloor}}\\
&\geq \frac{d_3q^N}{q^{\log_q N+\log_q(q-1)-\log_q(\ln q)}} \geq \frac{d_3q^N\ln q}{N(q-1)} \geq \frac{d_4q^N}{N} \geq \frac{d_4q^{n-p}}{n}\\
&\geq \frac{d_4q^{n-(\log_q N+\log_q(q-1)-\log_q(\ln q))}}{n} \geq \frac{d_4q^n\ln q}{nN(q-1)} \geq \frac{dq^n}{n^2}.
\end{aligned}$$

□

We can now complete the proof of Theorem 1.

Proof of Theorem 1. We define the function $B(n,q)$ as the number of privileged words of length n over an alphabet of size $q \geq 2$. Let $n = N+p$ where $p = \lfloor \log_q N + \log_q(q-1) - \log_q(\ln q)\rfloor$. Let n_0 be a constant such that whenever $n \geq n_0$ we have $p \geq N_0$, where N_0 is the constant mentioned in Lemma 6. Then for $n \geq n_0$, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
B(n,q) &\geq \sum_{\substack{P \text{ privileged}\\ |P|=p}} G_P(N)\\
&\geq \left(\frac{dq^n}{n^2}\right) B(\lfloor \log_q N+\log_q(q-1)-\log_q(\ln q)\rfloor, q)\\
&\geq \left(\frac{dq^n}{n^2}\right)\left(\frac{c_1q^{\lfloor \log_q N+\log_q(q-1)-\log_q(\ln q)\rfloor}}{(\lfloor \log_q N+\log_q(q-1)-\log_q(\ln q)\rfloor)^2}\right)\\
&\geq \left(\frac{c_2q^n}{n^2}\right)\left(\frac{q^{\log_q N+\log_q(q-1)-\log_q(\ln q)}}{(\log_q N+\log_q(q-1)-\log_q(\ln q))^2}\right)\\
&\geq \left(\frac{c_2q^n}{n^2}\right)\left(\frac{N(q-1)}{(\ln q)(1+\log_q N)^2}\right)\\
&\geq \left(\frac{c_3q^n}{n^2}\right)\left(\frac{N}{(\log_q q+\log_q N)^2}\right)
\end{aligned}$$

$$
\begin{aligned}
&\geq \left(\frac{c_3 q^n}{n^2}\right)\left(\frac{N}{(\log_q qN)^2}\right)\\
&\geq \left(\frac{c_3 q^n}{n^2}\right)\left(\frac{n}{(\log_q qn)^2} - \frac{p}{(\log_q qn)^2}\right)\\
&\geq \left(\frac{c_3 q^n}{n^2}\right)\left(\frac{n}{(\log_q qn)^2} - \frac{\log_q n}{(\log_q qn)^2} - \frac{1}{(\log_q qn)^2}\right)\\
&\geq \left(\frac{c_3 q^n}{n(\log_q n)^2}\right)\left(\frac{(\log_q n)^2}{(\log_q qn)^2} - \frac{(\log_q n)^3}{n(\log_q qn)^2} - \frac{(\log_q n)^2}{n(\log_q qn)^2}\right)\\
&\geq \frac{c q^n}{n(\log_q n)^2},
\end{aligned}
$$

since

$$\frac{(\log_q n)^2}{(\log_q qn)^2} - \frac{(\log_q n)^3}{n(\log_q qn)^2} - \frac{(\log_q n)^2}{n(\log_q qn)^2}$$

is positive and increases for $n > 2$. This completes the proof. $\square$

References

[1] G. Fici, Open and closed words, *Bull. Europ. Assoc. Theoret. Comput. Sci.* **123** (2017). Available at http://bulletin.eatcs.org/index.php/beatcs/article/view/508 .

[2] M. Forsyth, A. Jayakumar, J. Peltomäki, and J. Shallit, Remarks on privileged words, *Int. J. Found. Comput. Sci.* **27** (2016), 431–442.

[3] A. Glen, J. Justin, S. Widmer, and L. Zamboni, Palindromic richness, *European J. Combin.* **30** (2009), 510–531.

[4] L. Guibas and A. Odlyzko, Maximal prefix-synchronized codes, *SIAM J. Appl. Math.* **35** (1978), 401–418.

[5] C. Guo, J. Shallit, and A. M. Shur, Palindromic rich words and run-length encodings, *Inform. Process. Lett.* **116** (2016), 735–738.

[6] J. Kellendonk, D. Lenz, and J. Savinien, A characterization of subshifts with bounded powers, *Discrete Math.* **313** (2013), 2881–2894.

[7] J. Peltomäki, Introducing privileged words: Privileged complexity of Sturmian words, *Theoret. Comput. Sci.* **500** (2013), 57–67.

[8] J. Rukavicka, On the number of rich words, in *Developments in Language Theory: Proc. DLT 2017*, Lect. Notes in Comp. Sci., Vol. 10396, Springer, 2017, pp. 345–352.

2010 *Mathematics Subject Classification*: Primary 68R15.
Keywords: privileged word, rich word, closed word, border, enumeration.

(Concerned with sequence A231208.)

Received January 23 2018; revised version received May 2 2018. Published in *Journal of Integer Sequences*, May 7 2018.

Return to Journal of Integer Sequences home page.