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1	Improved the Protein Complex Prediction
2	with Protein Language Models
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#### Abstract

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AlphaFold-Multimer has greatly improved protein complex structure 17 prediction, but its accuracy also depends on the quality of the mul-18 tiple sequence alignment (MSA) formed by the interacting homologs 19 (i.e., interologs) of the complex under prediction. Here we propose a 20 novel method, denoted as ESMPair, that can identify interologs of a 21 complex by making use of protein language models (PLMs). We show 22 that ESMPair can generate better interologs than the default MSA 23 generation method in AlphaFold-Multimer. Our method results in bet-24 ter complex structure prediction than AlphaFold-Multimer by a large 25 margin (+10.7%) in terms of the Top-5 best DockQ), especially when 26 the predicted complex structures have low confidence. We further show 27 that by combining several MSA generation methods, we may yield even 28 better complex structure prediction accuracy than Alphafold-Multimer 20 (+22% in terms of the Top-5 best DockQ). We systematically analyze 30 the impact factors of our algorithm and find out the diversity of MSA of 31

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interologs significantly affects the prediction accuracy. Moreover, we show
 that ESMPair performs particularly well on complexes in eucaryotes.

34 Keywords: Protein Complex Structure Prediction, Protein Language Model

# 35 1 Introduction

Most proteins function in a form of protein complexes[1-5]. Consequently, 36 obtaining accurate protein complex structures is vital to understanding how 37 a protein functions at the atom level. Experimental methods, such as X-ray 38 crystallography and cryo-electron microscopy, are costly and low-throughput, 39 and require intensive efforts to prepare samples for structure determination. 40 The computational methods, termed as protein complex prediction (PCP) 41 or protein-protein docking, is an attractive alternative for solving complex 12 structures. PCP takes sequences and/or the unbound structures of individ-43 ual protein chains as inputs and then predicts the bound complex structures. 44 Traditional computational methods often rely on the global search paradigm, 45 such as fast-Fourier transform based methods like ClusPro [6], PIPER [7], and 46 ZDOCK [8] and Monte Carlo sampling-based methods like RosettaDock [9], 47 have been widely used in practice. These methods exhaustively search the con-48 formation space of a complex, and optimize score functions to obtain the final 49 structures. Since the conformation space is large, these methods have to make 50 restrictive constraints on the search space in order to obtain results within 51 a reasonable amount of time. Typical constraints include reducing the search 52 resolutions, making the input monomers rigid bodies, and using score func-53 tions that can be quickly evaluated [7, 8]. As a result, global search methods 54 have relatively low prediction accuracy and are used with more computation-55 ally intensive local refinement methods to obtain higher resolution predictions 56 [10]. To date, PCP is still a fundamental and longstanding challenge in com-57 putational structural biology [11, 12]. Various methods have been proposed 58 for PCP, but with limited accuracy. When only sequences are given as inputs, 59 PCP is even harder because the unbound structures of individual chains and 60 auxiliary information on the complex interfaces are unavailable. 61

In the last decades, deep learning has enabled substantial progress in quite 62 a few computational structural biology tasks, such as protein contact [13-15], 63 tertiary structure prediction [16-18], and cryo-electron microscopy structure 64 determination [19, 20]. Among these, co-evolution analysis based contact 65 [18, 21, 22] and structure prediction [23, 24] have made subprediction 66 stantial progress and demonstrated state-of-the-act accuracy for monomers. 67 These methods utilize the co-evolutionary information hidden in MSA to 68 infer inter-residue interactions or three-dimensional structures of the targets. 69 AlphaFold2 is the representative method, which has showed unparalleled accu-70 racy in CASP14 [16]. Recently, AlphaFold-Multimer [25], a derived version 71

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of AlphaFold2 for multimers, significantly outperforms prior protein com-72 plex prediction systems [6, 23, 24]. However, compared to the accuracy of 73 AlphaFold2 [16] on folding monomers, the accuracy of AlphaFold-Multimer on 74 predicting the protein complex structures is far from satisfactory. Its success 75 rate is around 70% and the mean DockQ score is around 0.6 (medium quality 76 judged by DockQ) [24]. The most important input feature to AlphaFold-77 Multimer is the multiple sequence alignment (MSA) [23, 24]. Compared with 78 AlphaFold2 [16] that takes the MSA of a single protein as the input, AlphaFold-79 Multimer needs to build an MSA of interologs for protein complex structure 80 prediction. However, how to construct such an MSA is still an open problem for 81 heteromers. It requires the identification of interacting homologs in the MSAs 82 of constituent single chains, which may be challenging since one species may 83 have multiple sequences similar to the target sequence (paralogs). Several algo-84 rithms have been proposed to identify putative interologs from genome data, 85 such as profiling co-evolved genes [26], and comparing phylogenetic trees [27]. 86 Genome co-localization and species information are two commonly used heuris-87 tics to form interologs for co-evolution-based complex contact and structure 88 prediction [25, 28]. Genome co-localization is based on the observation that. 89 in bacteria, many interacting genes are coded in operons [29, 30] and are co-90 transcribed to perform their functions. However, this rule does not perform 91 well for complexes in eukarvotes with a large number of paralogs, since it 92 becomes more difficult to disambiguate correct interologs [28, 31]. The other 93 phylogeny-based method for identifying interologs is first proposed in Com-94 plexContact [28] and later similar ideas are adopted by AlphaFold-Multimer. 95 This method first identifies groups of paralogs (sequences of the same species) 96 from the MSA of each chain, then ranks the paralogs based on their sequence 97 similarity to their corresponding primary chain, and last pairs sequences of 98 the same species and with the same rank together. However, they are all 99 hand-crafted approaches which merely take effects on the specific domains. 100 In this paper, we instead investigate general and automatic algorithms for 101 constructing MSAs of interologs for heterodimers effectively. 102

Representation learning via pre-training techniques has been prevailing in 103 different applications [34–37]. Inspired by this, protein language models [38– 104 40 (PLMs) have surged as the main regime for protein representation learning 105 built on a large amount of protein sequences, which benefits downstream tasks, 106 such as contact prediction [15, 39], remote homology detection [41, 42] and 107 mutation effect prediction [43]. PLMs can comprehensively capture the biologi-108 cal constraints and co-evolutionary information encoded in the sequence, which 109 is a plausible interpretation for their impressive performance on various down-110 stream tasks than canonical methods relying on dedicated hand-crafted traits. 111 To this, a natural question arises: Can we leverage the co-evolutionary 112 information featured by PLMs to build effective interologs? 113

In this paper, we mainly focus on *ab-initio* protein complex structure prediction, i.e., predicting the complex structure without prior information on the binding interfaces of the target complex. To our best knowledge, we are

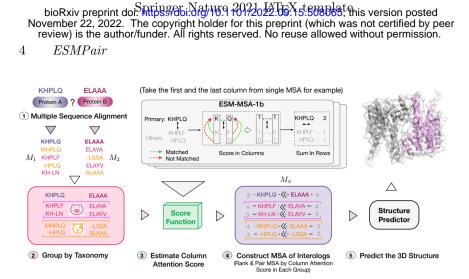


Fig. 1 Schematic illustration of ESMPair that builds interologs as the input to AlphaFold-Multimer. Given a pair of query sequences as input: 1) we first search the UniProt database [32] with JackHMMER [33] to generate the MSA for each query sequence, 2) sequences of the same taxonomy rank are grouped into the same cluster, 3) ESM-MSA-1b is applied to estimate the column attention score (ColAttn\_score) between each sequence homolog of MSA with the query sequence. 4) One interolog is obtained by directly concatenating two matched sequence homologs. We match two sequence homologs of the same taxonomy group with similar attention scores from the two query sequences, 5) AlphaFold-Multimer takes the interolog MSA as input to predict the complex structure.

the first to propose a simple yet effective MSA pairing algorithm that uses 117 the immediate output from protein language models to form joint MSAs, i.e., 118 MSA of interologs. In particular, we leverage column-wise attention scores from 119 ESM-MSA-1b [39] to identify and pair homologs from MSAs of constituent 120 single chains, coined as ESMPair. We conduct extensive experiments on three 121 test sets, i.e., pConf70, pConf80, and DockQ49. Compared with previous 122 methods, ESMPair achieves state-of-the-art structure prediction accuracy on 123 heterodimers (+10.7%, +7.3%, and +3.7%) in terms of the Top-5 best DockQ 124 score over AlphaFold-Multimer on three test sets, respectively). Moreover, we 125 find out that the ensemble strategies, which combine ESMPair with other MSA 126 pairing methods, significantly improve the structure prediction accuracy over 127 the standard single strategy. We further analyze the performance of complexes 128 from eukaryotes, bacteria, and archaea, and find out ESMPair performs the 129 best on eukaryotes for which identifying interologs is quite difficult [28, 31]. 130 Most strikingly, on a few targets where one of the constituent chains is from 131 eukaryotes while the other is from bacteria, ESMPair considerably outper-132 forms other baselines (+25%) in overall performance over AlphaFold-Multimer), 133 which strongly demonstrates that the PLM-enhanced MSA pairing method 134 is robust for targets from different superkingdoms. Then we exposit that the 135 diversity of interologs has a significant positive correlation with the predic-136 tion accuracy. Lastly, we explore other approaches that utilize the output of 137 ESM-MSA-1b. For example, we take the cosine-similarity score between the 138 sequence embeddings as the metric to build interologs, which performs on par 139 with the default protocol used in Alphafold-Multimer. Generally, ESMPair is 140

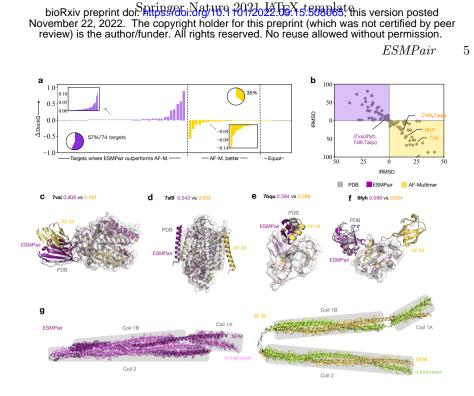


Fig. 2 Comparing ESMPair and AF-Multimer predictions on newly-release targets (a-f) and unresolved cases (g). a-f, The comparisons are made on the 74 targets whose release data is later on 2018-4-30. a, The bar charts show the relative performance gap between ESMPair and AF-Multimer on three categories: ESMPair outperforms AF-M.; AF-M. outperforms ESMPair; Equal performance. b, The interface and ligand RMSD distributions of predicted stuctures via ESMPair (Purple) and AF-M (Yellow). c-f, Four cases are further visualized. Among this, the ligand orientation are wrongly-predicted via AF-M. on 7VSI and 7AQU, while the binding site are wrongly-predicted by AF-M. on 7SL9 and 6FYH. g, The intermediate filament protein NFM-INA heterodimer structure predicted via ESMPair shows a four-helix bundle. The gray boxes show the interacting motifs of coil 1A, coil 1B and coil 2 of the two proteins.

the first simple yet effective algorithm that incorporates the strength of PLMs
into tackling the issues of identifying MSA of interologs. We believe ESMPair
will facilitate the fields of protein structure prediction which highly resorts to
the co-evolution information hidden in MSA.

### $_{145}$ 2 Results

In this section, we first briefly outline the framework of ESMPair for pro-146 tein complex prediction (Section 2.1). Then, we discuss our proposed methods 147 obtain better complex prediction accuracy than previous MSA pairing methods 148 (Section 2.2). We find out the ensemble strategy showcase the excellent perfor-149 mance that the default single strategy (Section 2.3). We further quantitatively 150 analyze several key factors and hyperparameters that may impact the perfor-151 mance of our method, and also explore the capability of different measurements 152 to distinguish acceptable predictions from unacceptable ones (Section 2.4). 153

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Table 1 DockQ scores and success rate of PLM-enhanced pairing methods and baselines. We report the average of Top-5 Best DockQ score, Top-1 Best DockQ score, and Success Rate (DockQ $\geq$ 0.23) (%) on pConf70, Quality49, and pConf80 test sets. For one test target, we predicted 5 different structures using the five AlphaFold-Multimer models. Subscript in red represents the performance gain of our method over the default MSA pairing strategy in Alphafold-Multimer (%).

Methods	1	pConf70		Q	uality4	ə	р	Conf80		
	Top5	Top1	$\mathbf{SR}$	Top5	Top1	SR	Top5	Top1	$\mathbf{SR}$	
Non-Pairing Methods										
Block	0.199	0.179	30.4	0.212	0.194	49.0	0.351	0.319	51.2	
Baseline Pairing Methods										
Genome AF-Multimer	0.215 0.234	$\begin{array}{c} 0.182 \\ 0.203 \end{array}$	33.7 <b>42.4</b>	$0.219 \\ 0.247$	$0.195 \\ 0.219$	49.0 58.0	$\begin{array}{c} 0.377 \\ 0.408 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.346 \\ 0.369 \end{array}$	$54.7 \\ 62.5$	
PLM-enhanced Pairing Methods										
InterLocalCos InterGlobalCos IntraCos	$\begin{array}{c} 0.218 \\ 0.224 \\ 0.235 \end{array}$	$0.180 \\ 0.182 \\ 0.199$	33.7 35.9 37.0	$0.236 \\ 0.229 \\ 0.251$	$0.210 \\ 0.206 \\ 0.219$	52.3 52.9 54.8	$\begin{array}{c} 0.389 \\ 0.391 \\ 0.400 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.353 \\ 0.350 \\ 0.362 \end{array}$	$56.5 \\ 57.1 \\ 58.3$	
ESMPair	$\begin{array}{ c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c c$		42.4 $(+0.0)$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.265 \\ (+7.3) \end{array}$	0.235 (+7.3)	58.7 (+1.2)	<b>0.423</b> (+3.7)	<b>0.378</b> (+2.4)	<b>63.1</b> (+1.0)	

#### <sup>154</sup> 2.1 ESMPair overview

The overall framework of ESMPair is illustrated in Fig. 1 with the details 155 in Methods. In complex structure prediction, predictors such as AlphaFold-156 Multimer make use of inter-chain co-evolutionary signals by pairing sequences 157 between MSA of constituent single chains of the query complex. Formally, 158 given a query heterodimer, we obtain individual MSAs of its two constituent 159 chains, denoted as  $M_1 \in \mathcal{A}^{N_1 \times C_1}$  and  $M_2 \in \mathcal{A}^{N_2 \times C_2}$ , where  $\mathcal{A}$  is the alphabet 160 used by PLM,  $N_1$  and  $N_2$  are the number of the sequences in MSAs  $M_1$  and 161  $M_2$ , and  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  are the sequence length. The MSA pairing pipeline aims at 162 designing a matching or an injection  $\pi : [N_1] \to [N_2]$  between MSAs from each 163 chain to build the MSA of interologs, dubbed as  $M_{\pi} \in \mathcal{A}^{N \times (C_1 + C_2)}$ , where N is 164 the number of the sequence in the joint MSA. In practice, the MSA of interologs 165  $M_{\pi}$  is a collection of the concatenated sequence {concat( $M_1[i], M_2[\pi(i)]$ ) : 166  $i \in \mathcal{P}$ , where  $\mathcal{P}$  is the indices of the sequences from  $M_1$  that can be paired 167 with any sequences from  $M_2$  according to the matching pattern  $\pi$ . Then MSA 168 of interologs is taken by predictors as input to predict the structure of the 169 query heterodimer. Our aim is to leverage the superiority of PLMs to explore 170 an effective matching strategy  $\pi$  that facilities the protein complex structure 171 prediction. 172

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# 2.2 ESMPair outperforms other MSA pairing methods on heterodimer predictions

**Overall evaluation.** For each test target we predict five 3D structures using 175 Alphafold-Multimer's 5 models and then report the average of Top-k (k=1, 5) 176 Best DockQ score of the predicted structures and the corresponding success 177 rate (SR) in Table 1. Our method outperforms the other methods. To be spe-178 cific, our method outperforms the AF-Multimer's default MSA pairing strategy 179 on all three test sets (0.259 vs. 0.234 on pConf70, 0.423 vs. 0.406 on pConf80, 180 and 0.265 vs. 0.242 on Quality49, in term of Top-5 DockQ score). Our exper-181 imental results confirm that our proposed column-wise attention based MSA 182 pairing method, denoted as ESMPair, is better than 1) the sequence similarity-183 based method used in AF-Multimer, and 2) the cosine similarity-based method 184 based on the mixed noisy residue embedding, i.e., ESMPair(InterLocalCos), 185 ESMPair(InterGlobalCos), and ESMPair(IntraCos). Hereinafter, we abbrevi-186 ate them as IntraLocalCos, InterGlobalCos, and InterCos. 187

Among all the MSA pairing methods, block diagonalization performs the 188 worst (-30% compared with ESMPair in terms of the average of Top-5 best 189 DockQ). The result indicates that the inter-chain co-evolutionary information 190 helps with complex structure prediction. Among MSA pairing baselines, AF-191 Muiltmer surpasses genetic co-localization by a large margin (+12.8% Top-5)192 DockQ). All the proposed PLM-enhanced pairing methods substantially out-193 perform the block diagonalization and the genetic-based methods. Even though 194 AF-Multimer may have overly optimistic performance using the default pair-195 ing method since the training MSAs are built using it, IntraCos MSA pairing 196 method performs on a par with AF-Multimer, and ESMPair further exceeds 197 it by a large margin  $(+4.2 \sim 10.7\%$  Top-5 DockQ score over three test sets). 198

Intra-ranking methods are superior to inter-ranking ones both in 199 effectiveness and scalability. From Table. 1, we can also see inter-200 ranking methods like InterLocalCos and InterGlobalCos underperform the 201 intra-ranking ones, i.e. IntraCos and ESMPair. We speculate that as ESM-202 MSA-1b pre-trains in the monomer data, it fails to directly capture the 203 underlying correlations across the constituent chains in the complex. Besides 204 heterodimers, when it extends to predict the structure of multimer with more 205 than two chains, intra-ranking strategies are the self-contained methods that 206 only need to rank the MSAs in each single chain, and then match MSA of the 207 same rank with other chains to build effective interologs with time complexity 208 of O(N), where N is the depth of MSA. While the inter-pairing strategies suf-209 fer from the exponential growth of combinations with increasing interacting 210 chains with the time complexity  $O(N^r)$ , where r is the number of chains in the 211 multimer. Thus, intra-ranking methods are more time-efficient and scalable 212 than inter-ranking ones. 213

ESMPair performs better on low pConf targets. As shown in Table. 1,
the performance gap between ESMPair and AF-Multimer becomes narrower
on pConf80 than on pConf70, with improvement ratio from 3.7% to 10.7%. To

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8 ESMPair

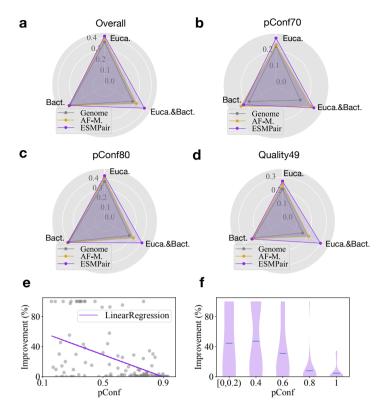


Fig. 3 Comparison of the prediction performance on different domains. a-d, We compare the DockQ score among ESMPair, AF-Multimer, and Genome on Eucaryote, Bacteria, and Eucaryote&Bacteria domains. The Euca&Bact. is a special domain means the two constituent chains in the heterodimer belong to the two domains respectively. Specifically, the heterodimers of our dataset are from Eucaryotes, Bacteria, Viruses, Archaea, Eucaryotes;Bacteria respectively. We group the data from Bateria, Viruses, and Archaea as the Bateria domain. In all test sets, ESMPair significantly outperforms other two baselines on the Eucaryote targets. e-f, The negative correlations between the relative improvement between ESMPair and AF-Multimer.

take an in-depth analysis, we quantitatively analyze the correlations between 217 the predicted confidence score (pConf) estimated by AF-Multimer and the 218 performance gap of the average of Top-5 Best DockQ score between ESM-219 Pair and AF-Multimer on Quality49, as illustrated in Fig. 3(e-f). The relative 220 improvement is negatively correlated (Pearson Correlation Coefficient is -0.49) 221 with the predicted confidence score. When pConf is less than 0.2, the relative 222 improvements even achieve 100%, while when pConf is more than 0.8, ESMPair 223 performs nearly on par with AF-Muiltimer. This is because AF-Multimer can 224 do well on a relatively easier target, it is very challenging to further improve it. 225

ESMPair has the higher prediction accuracy on eucaryote targets.
We further compare the DockQ distribution of ESMPair, AF-Multimer, and

228 Genome on three kingdoms, i.e. Eucaryote, Bacteria, and Eucaryote&Bacteria,

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as shown in Fig. 3(a-d), we can see that ESMPair rivals the other two MSA 220 pairing methods on the Eucarvotes data by a large margin (0.420 for ESMPair 230 , 0.402 for AF-Multimer, and 0.369 for Genome on the overall data). As we all 231 know that it is notoriously different to identify homologous protein sequences 232 for the Eucaryotes data, ESMPair has a desirable property to build effective 233 interologs on the Eucaryotes. While in the Bacteria data, three strategies have 23/ similar performance (around 0.35 on the whole data). Most strikingly, we find 235 ESMPair has an extraordinary performance on the Euca. & Bact. data over the 236 other two methods (0.394 for ESMPair, 0.314 for AF-Multimer, and 0.277 for 237 Genome on the overall data). We further check the performance gap for each 238 target from the Euca. & Bact. data. ESMPair performs significantly better on 230 the three out of six targets, 0.443 (ESMPair) versus 0.013 (AF-Multimer) on 240 5D6J, 0.289 versus 0.201 on 6B03, and 0.864 versus 0.854 on 7AYE. Besides, 241 ESMPair performs on par with AF-Multimer on the other three targets. These 242 results shed light on the robustness of protein language models. As PLMs are 243 pre-trained on billions of protein data [38-40], it can break the bottleneck 244 that other hand-crafted MSA pairing methods, such as genetic-based methods, 245 phylogeny-based methods, etc. which merely take effect in the specific domain. 246 While our proposed PLMs-enhanced methods can identify the co-evolutionary 247 signals effectively to build MSA of interologs across different superkingdoms. 248

ESMPair outperforms AF-Multimer on the most of newly-released 249 targets. We further select 74 targets that AF-Multimer does not train on [25]. 250 i.e., the targets whose release date is later than 2018-4-30 from the test dataset. 251 Then we compare the performance of predicted structures on these targets 252 between ESMPair and AF-Multimer in Fig. 2. From Fig. 2(a), ESMPair out-253 performs AF-Multimer on the most of targets (57%) with a relative larger 254 performance gap, while AF-Multimer outperforms ESMPair on fewer targets 255 (35%) with a relative lower gap. We further plot the distributions between 256 interface RMSD and ligand RMSD of predicted structures via ESMPair and 257 AF-Multimer in Fig. 2(b). The holistic distributions predicted by ESMPair 258 are closer to the origin of coordinates than that predicted by AF-Multimer, 259 which strongly proved ESMPair is superior to AF-Multimer on the predictions 260 of newly-released targets. 261

Furthermore, we show why ESMPair performs better than AF-Multimer 262 by analysing four PDB targets, 7VSI, 7AQU, 6FYH, and 7VSI. in Fig. 2(c-f). 263 Among these, 7VSI and 6FYH have a larger predicted iRMSD and lRMSD 264 variance by AF-Multimer, because AF-Multimer predicts the wrong binding 265 sites. While AF-Multimer predicts the right binding sites on 7SL9 and 7AQU 266 that have a smaller predicted iRMSD and lRMSD variance, it unfortunately 267 predicts the wrong ligand orientations. By contrast, our proposed ESMPair 268 correctly predicts the binding sites on the receptor and also places the ligand 269 in the approximately correct relative orientation. 270

To better illustrate the usage of ESMPair in predicting the protein complexes without known resolved 3D structures, we inspected the intermediate filament heterodimer formed between the neurofilament medium polypeptide bioRxiv preprint doi: <u>Ntps://doi.org/10.97072022.09.55508063</u>, this version posted November 22, 2022. The copyright holder for this preprint (which was not certified by peer review) is the author/funder. All rights reserved. No reuse allowed without permission.

10 ESMPair

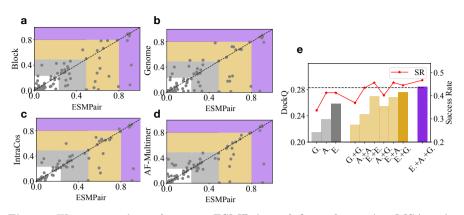


Fig. 4 The comparisons between ESMPair and four alternative MSA pairing approaches (a-d), and various ensemble strategy (e) on the targets from pConf70. (a-d), The coordinates of each point demonstrate the reported DockQ score of the target between ESMPair (x-axis) and other methods (y-axis). A point under the diagonal dash line implies ESMPair performs better than the compared method on this target. The highlight regions represent the incorrect (white), acceptable (grey), medium (yellow), and high-quality (purple) predicted models according to DockQ score. (e), The grey bars represent the performance of single strategies, where G. stands for Genome, A. is for AF-Multimer, and E. is for ESMPair. ESMPair is the best with 0.259 DockQ score and 42.4% Success Rate. The yellow bars show the ensemble performance of the two strategies. Among these, ESMPair + Genome performs the best with 0.277 DockQ score with 44.6% Success Rate. The purple bar implies the best performance about the ensemble of all the three strategies with 0.285 DockQ score with 46.8% Success Rate.

(NFM, UniProt ID P08553) and  $\alpha$ -internexin (UniProt ID P46660), which is 274 known to form an anti-parallel four-helix bundle [44, 45]. As shown in Fig. 2(g), 275 both ESMPair and AF-Multimer correctly predict the three binding interfaces 276 between the coil 1A, coil 1B and coil 2 motifs from NFM and  $\alpha$ -internexin. 277 However, ESMPair predicted the two coiled coils to pack as a four-helix bundle, 278 which is consistent with the experimental evidences, while the AF-multimer 279 predicted the two coiled coils to be separated. This case demonstrate the 280 potential to apply ESMPair to model unresolved protein complexes. 281

#### 282 2.3 Ensemble improves the prediction accuracy

From Fig. 4 (a-d), we found that different MSA pairing methods have their own 283 advantages, even block diagonalization performs slightly better than ESMPair 284 on about 30% targets, which implies that they can complement each other. To 285 verify that, we combine ten models predicted by any two of the MSA paring 286 methods, then we report the average of Top-5 Best DockQ score, as shown in 287 Fig. 4 (e). The ensem strategies, i.e., the vellow and purple bars, significantly 288 outperform the corresponding single strategy, i.e., the grey bars. Specifically, 289 the performance of intra-ensemble strategies surpass the corresponding single 290 strategy, for example, the DockQ score of ESMPair + ESMPair is 0.269 versus 291 0.259 of ESMPair, which demonstrates that simply increasing the number of 292 predictions of each model also benefits the structure prediction accuracy of 293

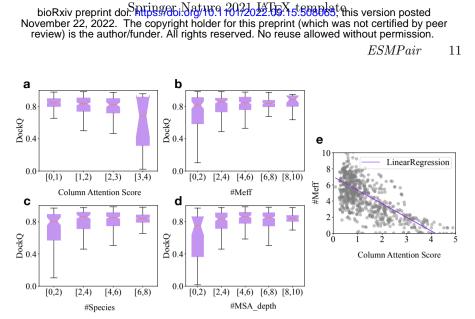


Fig. 5 Different factors affect the performance of structure prediction. The correlations between the average of Top-5 Best DockQ score (Y-axis) and (a) the column attention score predicted by ESM-MSA-1b, (b) the number of effective sequences measured by Meff, (c) the number of species, and (d) the depth of matched MSA. (e) The distribution of column attention score (X-axis) and the number of effective interologs in the paired MSA (Y-axis). The red curve is the visualization of the fitted linear regression model. The Pearson correlation coefficient is about -0.70, which strongly indicates that an increasing column attention score results in the decreasing number of effective interologs.

each target. Among the inter-ensemble strategies, ESMPair pluses any one of 294 the single strategy always have a better performance than the one without 295 ESMPair, for example, the SR of ESMPair + Genome is 44.6% versus 40.4%296 of AF-Multimer + Genome. Finally, the ensemble of all three strategies, i.e., 297 the purple bar, reaches the best performance with 0.285 DockQ score and 298 46.8% Success Rate, which motivates us that instead of merely using a single 299 strategy to build interologs, the ensemble MSA pairing strategy may be the 300 silver bullet to identify more effective interologs. 301

# <sup>302</sup> 2.4 More analytic studies of ESMPair: key factors, <sup>303</sup> hyperparameters, and measurements to identify <sup>304</sup> high-quality predictions

In this part, we analytically and empirically investigate the inherent properties of ESMPair. Generally, we find out the diversity of the formed MSA
of interologs has a strong correlation with the performance of ESMPair.
Moreover, we study the effect of different layers of ESM-MSA-1b [39] on identifying homologs. Lastly, we demonstrate the predicted confidence score output
by AlphaFold-Multimer is a rational measurement to discriminate correct
predictions from incorrect ones.

The diversity about MSA of interologs affects the predicted structure accuracy by ESMPair. We investigate the connections between the bioRxiv preprint doi: <u>Attps://doi.org/10.12012/022.09.15.508003.</u> this version posted November 22, 2022. The copyright holder for this preprint (which was not certified by peer review) is the author/funder. All rights reserved. No reuse allowed without permission.

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performance of ESMPair and some key factors of the formed MSA of interologs, 31/ such as the column-wise attention score (i.e., ColAttn\_score), the number of 315 effective sequences within MSA measured by Meff (i.e., #Meff), the number of 316 species (i.e., #Species), and the depth of MSA (i.e., MSA\_Depth). To be spe-317 cific, we predict 1.689 heterodimers sampled from PDB without filtering and 318 divide them into different regions according to the value of each factor. Notably, 319 for ColAttn\_score, we average the score of each single chain in interolog, then 320 re-scaling it in the logarithm form, and then averaging ColAttn\_score of all 321 interologs from the paired MSA as the final score of the target. For #Meff, 322 #Species, and MSA\_Depth, we directly calculate the corresponding statistics 323 based on the interologs. 324

The correlations between DockQ score and each of above factors are illus-325 trated in Fig. 5. #Meff, #Species, and MSA\_Depth have a similar trend that 326 the predicted structure accuracy improves with the increasing of these factors. 327 It implies that MSA with more diversity represents the more co-evolutional 328 information that benefits structure predictions of AF-Multimer, which also 329 meets with previous insights [39]. Moreover, the increasing ColAttn\_score 330 results in the decreasing structure prediction accuracy. Considering the self-331 attention mechanism in the protein language model, given a sequence as the 332 query, the self-attention mechanism aims at identifying the sequence with high 333 homology affinity, i.e., the sequence with a high similarity score [15]. Therefore, 334 a large ColAttn\_score indicates the MSA with a low #Meff, which potentially 335 results in an inaccurate structure prediction. To justify our speculation, we 336 explicitly characterize the dependency between ColAttn\_score and #Meff, as 337 shown in Fig. 5 (e). ColAttn\_score has shown a negative correlation to the 338 #Meff, with the Pearson correlation coefficient of -0.70, which elucidates that 339 a higher ColAttn\_score reflects MSA with lower sequence diversity. 340

ESMPair built on the last few transformer Layers has the bet-341 ter performance. As ESMPair leverages the column-wise attention output 342 by ESM-MSA-1b<sup>[39]</sup> to rank and match interologs, how do the column-wise 343 attention weight matrices by different transformer layers affect the efficacy of 344 ESMPair? To answer this, we use the DockQ score of predicted structures as 345 the metric to measure the quality of the input interologs built by ESMPair, as 346 shown in Supplement Fig. A2. ESMPair that based on the attention output of 347 layer 6 (0.258 DockQ score and 40.2% Success Rate), layer 7 (0.249 and 43.0%). 348 and AVG (0.262 and 42.2%) perform better than other layers. Overall, the AVG 349 aggregation of all the layers is relatively superior to others, thus we use AVG 350 as the default setting of ESMPair. What's more, ESMPair which built on the 351 last few layers (6-12th) identifies homologous sequences more precisely than 352 the former layers (1-5th). The phenomenon is consistent with the empirical 353 insights about how to effectively fine-tune the pre-trained language models in 354 the downstream tasks: the last few layers are the most task-specific, while the 355 former layers encode the general knowledge of the training data[46–48], thus 356 only aggregating latter layers may exploiting more homologous information 357 form MSAs. We leave this in future work. 358

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Predicted confidence score as an indicator to distinguish acceptable 350 models. Practically, besides the substantial improved DockQ performance 360 through ESMPair, it is also vital to figure out how to identify the correct mod-361 els (Dock $Q \ge 0.23$ ) from incorrect ones [24]. To achieve this, we also predict all 362 the 1,689 heterodimers via ESMPair, then we apply: 1) the predicted Confi-363 dence Score (pConf), 2) Interface pTM (ipTM), 3). predicted TM-score (pTM), 364 and 4) the number of contacts between residues from two chains (the distance 365 of  $C_{\beta}$  atoms in the residues from different chains within 8 Å) (Contacts) as the 366 metric to rank models, as shown in Supple. Fig. A1. From Fig. 1(a), we find 367 both pConf and ipTM are capable of distinguishing acceptable models from 368 unacceptable ones with AUC of 0.97. pTM has a worse performance with AUC 369 of 0.85, as pTM is used as the pessimistic predictor to measure the predicted 370 structure accuracy of each single chain, it ignores the interactions between 371 chains. Contacts merely count the number of interacting residues from dif-372 ferent chains, which hardly indicates the accuracy of the predicted structure. 373 pConf and iPTM both consider the structure in both the single chain and inter-374 faces, which are considerate indicators to validate the quality of the predicted 375 structure. We further quantify the interplays between pConf and DockQ score 376 of the predicted structure, as shown in Fig. 1(b), which further confirms the 377 strong correlations between pConf and the structure prediction accuracy. 378

# 379 3 Methods

In this part, we introduce the framework of our proposed PLMs-enhanced MSA
pairing method, i.e., ESMPair. Besides, we explore other promising alternative
pairing methods built on PLMs, such as InterGlobalCos, InterGlobalCos, and
IntraCos. The overall framework of ESMPair is illustrated in Fig. 1.

#### <sup>384</sup> 3.1 The PLM-enhanced MSA pairing pipeline

Previous efforts [38–40] have confirmed that protein language models (PLMs) 385 can characterize the co-evolutionary signals and biological structure con-386 straints encoded in the protein sequence. Moreover, the MSA-based PLMs [15, 387 39 further explicitly capture the co-evolutionary information hidden in MSAs 388 via axial attention mechanisms [49, 50]. In light of this, we adopt the state-389 of-the-art MSA-based PLM, i.e., ESM-MSA-1b [39], as the basis to explore 390 how to utilize them to build rational MSA of interologs to improve the protein 391 complex prediction based on Alphafold-Mutimer [25]. 392

**Column Attention (ESMPair).** The column attention weight matrix, which is calculated via each column of MSA via ESM-MSA-1b, can be treated as the metric to measure pairwise similarities between aligned residues in each column. Formally, for each chain, we have the MSA  $M \in \mathcal{A}^{N \times C}$ . The collections of column attention matrices are denoted as  $\{A_{lhc} \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times N} : l \in [L], h \in$  $[H], c \in [C]\}$ , where L is the number of layers in PLM, H is the number of attention heads of each layer, and C is the sequence length, i.e., the number of residues of each sequence. We first symmetrize each column attention matrix, bioRxiv preprint doi: https://doi.org/10.12012/022.05.15.50809.5.this version posted November 22, 2022. The copyright holder for this preprint (which was not certified by peer review) is the author/funder. All rights reserved. No reuse allowed without permission.

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and then aggregate the symmetrized matrices along the dimension of L, Hand C to obtain the pairwise similarity matrix among the sequences of MSA, denoted as  $S \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times N}$  (Eq.(1)). S is symmetric and its first row  $S_1 \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times N}$ can be viewed as measuring similarity scores between the query sequence and other sequences in the MSA,

$$S = \underset{l \in [L], h \in [H], c \in [C]}{\text{AGG}} \{ A_{lhc} + (A_{lhc})^{\top} \},$$
(1)

where  $\top$  represents the transpose operation and AGG is an entry-wise aggregation operator such as entry-wise mean operation MEAN(·), sum operator SUM(·), etc. Unless otherwise specified, AGG is specified as SUM(·) in this paper.

The MSA pairing strategy is specified as follows, for a query heterodimer, we first obtain  $S_1$  of individual MSAs of constituent single chains. Then we group sequences from the MSA by their species, and rank sequences according to their similarity score of  $S_1$  in each MSA, respectively. Finally, the sequences of each MSA with the same rank in the same species group are concatenated as interologs.

Cosine Similarity. The cosine similarity measurement has been thoroughly
explored by pre-train language models [51, 52]. Intuitively, as PLMs generate
residue-level embeddings for each sequence in the MSA, the sequence embedding can be directly obtained by aggregating all the residue embeddings in
the sequence. Thus we can calculate the cosine similarity matrix between each
sequence to measure their pairwise similarities.

To be more specific, we specify two MSA pairing strategies, i.e., Intraranking (IntraCos) and Inter-pairing, based on the cosine similarity measurement between sequence embeddings as follows:

Intra-ranking (IntraCos). Firstly, for all sequences from a given MSA 412  $M \in \mathcal{A}^{N \times C}$ , we obtain a collection of residue-level embedding  $\{E_{ln} \in \mathbb{R}^{C \times d}:$ 413  $l \in [L], n \in [N]$ , where d is the embedding dimension. For sequence  $n \in [N]$ , 414 we can obtain its sequence-level embeddings  $E_n = \text{AGG}_{l \in [L], c \in [C]}(E_{lnc})$  by 415 aggregating over all layers L and all residues C, where  $E_n \in \mathbb{R}^d$ . Then we 416 compute cosine similarities between the query sequence embedding,  $E_1$ , and 417 other sequence embeddings,  $\{E_n, \text{ where } n \neq 1\}$ , in the MSA to obtain the 418 pairwise similarity score matrix (IntraCosScore)  $S_1 \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times N}$ . After that, we 419 build interologs like ESMPair does. 420

Inter-ranking. Instead of ranking sequences in each MSA and matching sequences of the same rank, here we directly compute the similarity score matrix between sequences from different MSAs. Formally, given two MSAs  $M_1 \in \mathcal{A}^{N_1 \times C_1}$  and  $M_2 \in \mathcal{A}^{N_2 \times C_2}$ , we obtain two individual collections of sequence embeddings  $\{E_n^{(1)} : n \in [N_1]\}$  and  $\{E_n^{(2)} : n \in [N_2]\}$ . The interchain cosine similarity matrix is denoted by  $B \in \mathbb{R}^{N_1 \times N_2}$ , where  $B_{ij} =$  $\cos(E_1[i], E_2[j])$ . Without loss of generality, we assume  $N_i \leq N_j$ , we propose two algorithms to build interologs as follows: bioRxiv preprint doi Shtipsed Not 10 2012 12 15 15 50 00 this version posted November 22, 2022. The copyright holder for this preprint (which was not certified by peer review) is the author/funder. All rights reserved. No reuse allowed without permission.

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- 1. Global Maximization Optimization (InterGlobalCos). We for-120 malize the pairing problem as a maximum-weighted bipartite matching 430 problem. The weighted bipartite G = (V, E) is constructed as follows: 431 sequences from individual MSAs of two chains form the set of vertices in 432  $G, \text{ i.e., } V^{(1)} = \{M_i^{(1)} \in \mathcal{A}^{C_1} : i \in [N_1]\}, V^{(2)} = \{M_j^{(2)} \in \mathcal{A}^{C_2} : j \in [N_2]\},\$ 433 and  $V = V^{(1)} \cup V^{(2)}$ . There are no edges among sequences from the same 434 chain MSA, thus  $V^{(1)}$  and  $V^{(2)}$  are two independent sets. There is an 435 edge  $e_{ij}$  between  $M_i^{(1)}$  and  $M_j^{(2)}$  if these two sequences are from the same 436 species; the weight associated with  $e_{ij}$  is  $B_{ij}$ . An optimal MSA match-437 ing pattern can be obtained by Kuhn-Munkres (KM) algorithm<sup>[53]</sup> in the 438 polynomial time. 439
- 2. Local Maximization Optimization (InterLocalCos). KM algorithm 440 finds a global optimal solution. However, as suggested by [54], in each 441 species, the sequence that is most similar to the query sequence may be 442 more informative, while other sequences that are less similar may add 443 noises. Thus we propose a greedy algorithm that focuses on pairs that 444 have high similarity scores with the query sequence. We iteratively select 445 a pair of sequences (i, j) that have the largest score in B among sequences 446 that have not been selected before until reaching a pre-defined maximal 447 number of pairs. 448

Complex structure prediction of heteromers with more than two different chains. The proposed methods, such as ESMPair and IntraCos, can be easily extended to build MSA of interologs for heteromers with more than two different chains. In practice, we can rank the MSAs in each query sequence by the similarity matrix obtained by the corresponding metric, then we match them of the same rank in each species to build effective interologs.

#### 455 3.2 Settings

**Evaluation metric.** We evaluate the accuracy of predicted complex structures using DockQ [55], a widely-used metric in the computational structural biology community. Specifically, for each protein complex target, we calculate the highest DockQ score among its top-N predicted models selected by their predicted confidences from Alphafold-Multimer. We refer to this metric as the best DockQ among top-N predictions.

- 462 Datasets. In order to investigate how improving pairing MSAs can improve
  463 the performance of AlphaFold-Multimer, we construct a test set satisfying the
  464 following criteria:
- 1. There are at least 100 sequences that can be paired given the species constraints.
- 467 2. The two constituent chains of a heterodimeric target share < 90%</li>
   468 sequence identity.

We select heterodimers consisting of chains with  $20 \sim 1024$  residues (due to the constraint of ESM-MSA-1b and also ignore peptide-protein complex), and

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the overall number of residues in a dimer is less than 1600 (due to GPU mem-471 ory constraint) from Protein Data Bank (PDB), as accessed on March 3, 2022. 472 We use the default AlphaFold-Multimer MSA search setting to search the 473 UniProt database [32] with JackHMMER [33], which is used for MSA pairing. 474 We also search the Uniclust30 database [56] with HHblits [57], which is used for 475 monomers, i.e., block diagonal pairing. We further select those heterodimers 476 with at least 100 sequences that can be paired by AlphaFold-Multimer's default 477 pairing strategy. We define two dimers as at most x% similar, if the maximum 478 sequence identity between their constituent monomers is no more than x%. 479 Overall, we select 801 heterodimeric targets from PDB that are at most 40%480 similar to any other targets in the dataset, and satisfy the aforementioned two 481 criteria. Then we use AlphaFold-Multimer (using the default MSA matching 482 algorithm) to predict their complex structures. Based on their predicted con-483 fidence scores (pConf) or DockQ scores, 92 targets with their pConf less than 484 0.7 are denoted as the pConf70 test set. We select 0.7 as the low confidence 485 cutoff based on our fitted logistic regression models over 7,000 DockQ and 486 pConf pairs, because the conditional probability of the model having medium 487 or better quality given pConf equals 0.7 is slightly greater than 0.5 (around 488 0.6), while the probability is less than 0.5 if pConf equals 0.6. For more com-489 parisons, we also select 0.8 as the cutoff, which results in the pConf80 test set 490 of 168 targets, and 155 targets with their predicted DockQ scores less than 491 0.49 are denoted as the DockQ49 test set. 492

Baselines. Several heuristic MSA pairing strategies have been developed for
 protein complex contact and 3D structure prediction [17, 23].

Phylogeny-based method. The strategy is first proposed in ComplexCon-495 tact [28] for complex contact prediction and is widely adopted by the 496 community. AlphaFold-Multimer employed a similar strategy. This strategy 497 first groups sequences in an MSA by their species and then ranks sequences of 498 the same species by their similarity to the query sequence. When there is more 499 than one sequence in a species group, it joins two sequences of the same rank 500 within the same species group to form an interolog. AlphaFold-Multimer uses 501 this strategy and shows state-of-the-art accuracy in complex structure predic-502 tion [25]. Practically, we run the implementation code of Alphafold-Multimer 503 following the default setting of official repertory<sup>1</sup>. Notably, we only evaluate the 504 unrelaxed model without the template information for the time efficiency [16]. 505 Genetic distances. In bacteria, interacting genes sometimes are co-located 506 in operons and co-transcribed to form protein complexes [58]. Consequently, 507 we can detect interologs by the genetic distance of two genes. This strategy 508 pairs sequences of the same species based on the distances of their positions 509 in the contigs, which are retrieved from ENA. In our implementations, given 510 a sequence from the first chain, we pair it with the sequence from the second 511 chain that is closest to it in terms of genetic distance. If there are more than 512 one closest sequence, we select the one that has the lowest e-value to the query 513

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>https://github.com/deepmind/alphafold

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sequence of the second chain; the e-value is calculated by the MSA search
 algorithm used to construct the chain MSA.

*Block diagonalization.* This strategy pads each chain sequence with gaps to 516 the full length of the complex [23]. Therefore, each sequence in the constructed 517 joint MSA, except for the query sequence, will include non-gap tokens in 518 exactly one chain and gap tokens in other chains. By sorting sequences in the 519 joint MSA, we can make non-gap tokens to appear only in the diagonal blocks, 520 thus this strategy is termed as block diagonalization. In our implementations, 521 given a sequence from the first (second) chain, we append (prepend) non-gap 522 tokens to it until the number of non-gap tokens equals the length of the second 523 (first) chain. 524

Running environment. We conduct the experiments on an Enterprise Linux
 Server with 56 Intel(R) Xeon(R) Gold 5120 CPU @ 2.20GHz, and a single
 NVIDIA Tesla V100 SXM2 with 32GB memory size.

# 528 4 Conclusion & Discussion

This paper explores a series of simple vet effective MSA pairing algorithms 529 based on pre-trained protein language models (PLMs) for constructing effective 530 interologs. To our best knowledge, this is the first time that PLMs are used to 531 construct joint MSAs. Experimental results have confirmed the proposed ESM-532 Pair significantly outperforms the state-of-the-art phylogeny-based protocol 533 adopted by AlphaFold-Multimer. What's more, ESMPair performs particularly 534 better on targets from eukarvotes which are hard to be predicted accurately 535 by AF-Multimer. We further confirm that, instead of using the conventional 536 single strategy to build interologs, the ensemble MSA pairing strategy can 537 largely improve the structure prediction accuracy. Generally, ESMPair has a 538 profound impact on biological applications depending on the high-quilty MSA. 539 In the future, we will continue to explore more potential ways to leverage the 540 advantages of PLM in building and choosing MSA. We also looking forward to 541 applying our proposed methods to improve current MSA-based applications. 542

In this paper, we merely consider how to build effective Limitations. 543 interologs for heterodimers, which broadly benefits biological applications 544 depending on the high-quality MSA, such as the complex contact predic-545 tion [59, 60], complex structure prediction discussed in this paper, etc. 546 However, there also have a large proportion of homodimers in biological assem-547 blies. As it is trivial to build interologs for them, how to select high-quality 548 MSA for homodimers is a more challenging yet important question. Previ-549 ous work [39, 54] has an empirical insight that instead of using the full MSA 550 searched from the protein sequence database, we can select a few high-quality 551 MSA following some promisings, such as using the MSA maximizing the 552 sequence diversity [39], or choosing the MSA owning the largest sequence sim-553 ilarity with the primary sequence [54]. To date, few efforts have systematically 554 investigated the MSA-selection problem. We leave this for future work. 555

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As we propose a series of MSA paring methods built on the output of PLMs, the representation ability of the PLMs directly affects the performance of our proposed methods. In this paper, we choose the state-of-the-art protein language model so far, i.e., ESM-MSA-1b [39], to support our algorithms. However, it is always worth exploiting the potential correlations between different PLM configurations and the performance of our proposed PLM-enhanced methods to identify effective interologs.

Although ESMPair has advantages over the default strategy adopted by 563 AF-Multimer in identifying MSA of interologs, their success rate is similar. 564 After a deep analysis, we observe ESMPair outperforms AF-Multimer most 565 in acceptable cases (DockQ > 0.23), however it is notoriously difficult for 566 ESMPair to improve DockQ score of unacceptable cases to be acceptable 567 (Only 3% targets). As we follow the pipeline of the complex structure pre-568 diction via AF-Multimer (Fig. 1), thus the limited ability of AF-Multimer 569 becomes the bottleneck of the performance of ESMPair. Nevertheless, the 570 above extensive experimental results have proved ESMPair consistently out-571 performs AF-Multimer despite AF-Multimer having an inductive training 572 bias towards its default MSA pairing strategy. From the training process of 573 AF-Multimer, we know that the performance of structure prediction highly 574 depends on the quality of the input MSA. In light of this, we assume that if 575 AF-Muiltimer can fine-tune, or totally train from scratch based on ESMPair's 576 MSA pairing method, the accuracy of structure predictions may be further 577 improved. Moreover, compared with the conventional MSA pairing method 578 that only uses a single strategy to identify interologs, the ensemble strategy has 579 shown superior performance both in DockQ score and Success Rate without 580 fine-tuning AF-Multimer. We assure that the ensemble strategy proposes a new 581 perspective on how to comprehensively exploit the co-evolutionary patterns 582 among MSA, thus further having a wide impact on the biological algorithms 583 resorting to the input MSA. 584

# 585 5 Author Contributions

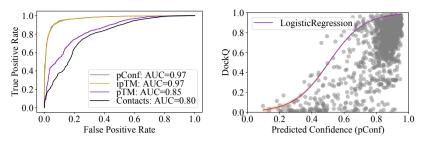
B.C proposed the main idea, conducted the main experiments, and wrote initial manuscript. Z.W.X, J.Z.Q, and Z.F.Y collected the experimental data,
designed experiments, and wrote the initial manuscript. J.B.X and J.T gave
the detailed instructions and refined the manuscript.

# 590 6 Data Availability

<sup>591</sup> Data that involved in this work can be obtained from Github: <sup>592</sup> https://github.com/allanchen95/ESMPair.

# <sup>593</sup> 7 Code Availability

The code of this study can be obtained from GitHub: https://github.com/allanchen95/ESMPair. bioRxiv preprint doi: Ntipsed Not 10.9 2012/02/02/05/1 this version posted November 22, 2022. The copyright holder for this preprint (which was not certified by peer review) is the author/funder. All rights reserved. No reuse allowed without permission. ESMPair 19



(a) ROC curve of different metrics.

(b) Linear correlations between pConf and DockQ.

Fig. A1 Different metrics assessment. a.ROC curve of different metrics of distinguish acceptable cases (DockQ $\geq$ 0.23) predicted by ESMPair. b.The distribution of predicted confidences (pConf, x-axis) and DockQ scores (left y-axis). And the conditional probability of the prediction having DockQ  $\geq$ 0.23 given pConf. The red curve is the visualization of the fitted logistic regression model.

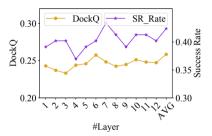


Fig. A2 The average of Top-5 Best DockQ scores of ESMPair based on the different layers of ESM-MSA-1b on the pConf70 dataset. AVG means that ESMPair is based on the column-wise attention matrix by averaging the one generated from all the twelve transformer layers.

# <sup>596</sup> Appendix A Supplement Material

The Number of Effective Interlogs (Meff). It counts the number of nonredundant interlogs in an MSA, which measures the amount of homologous information. Here we use the toolkit from RaptorX<sup>2</sup> to estimate the value of Meff. Specifically, we set 70% sequence identity as the cutoff to judge if two interlogs are redundant or not. If the number of interlogs (including itself) similar to interlog *i* is  $n_i$ , then the weight of interlog *i* is  $1/n_i$ . Finally, Meff is calucated by summing the weight of all interlogs.

Supplement Experiments. We conduct some additionally experiments
 listed here.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>https://github.com/j3xugit/RaptorX-3DModeling

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PDBID	EP	AFM	PDBID	EP	AFM	PDBID	EP	AFM
1AOK	0.343	0.221	1CXZ	0.012	0.012	1FAP	0.095	0.098
1GKA	0.565	0.552	1H2L	0.457	0.632	1H2M	0.458	0.394
1KMI	0.622	0.64	1MAF	0.322	0.316	1NW9	0.606	0.384
1S6C	0.232	0.23	1T6B	0.123	0.094	1UZX	0.576	0.586
1VG0 2AKA	$0.617 \\ 0.04$	$0.554 \\ 0.015$	1WRD 2F8E	$0.79 \\ 0.104$	0.784 0.019	1YHN 2H7Z	$0.076 \\ 0.693$	0.064 0.702
2VRW	0.918	0.306	3AU4	0.281	0.071	3BEG	0.209	0.313
3CPJ	0.283	0.25	30UN	0.04	0.018	3PIN	0.074	0.111
3PZD	0.051	0.308	3TUF	0.654	0.653	3V2A	0.332	0.332
3V6B	0.796	0.801	3VF0	0.04	0.038	3VMF	0.26	0.254
3W5K	0.044	0.052	3ZN1	0.896	0.882	4CZZ	0.9	0.912
4GFT 4LC9	$0.15 \\ 0.035$	0.076 0.027	4HUK 4N3B	0.027 0.29	0.052 0.295	4JEG 4P3Y	$0.282 \\ 0.008$	0.194 0.007
4LC9 4TU3	0.005	0.005	4WM0	0.29	0.295	4F31 4YBH	0.008	0.007
4YN0	0.092	0.084	4YOC	0.288	0.084	4YXC	0.156	0.166
5FOY	0.004	0.005	5H3J	0.238	0.299	5JJW	0.158	0.197
5JQY	0.341	0.479	5JZU	0.319	0.321	5KVM	0.189	0.248
5LN1	0.049	0.052	5N7E	0.048	0.04	5OJ6	0.49	0.384
5TAR	0.009	0.008	5TQB	0.104	0.203	5TVQ	0.007	0.007
5WHZ 5XLN	$0.043 \\ 0.315$	0.117 0.383	5WWL 5YY0	$0.475 \\ 0.139$	0.491 0.16	5XEQ 5Z51	$0.009 \\ 0.024$	$0.009 \\ 0.024$
5Z5K	0.058	0.053	6ABO	0.013	0.025	6B03	0.289	0.201
6DXO	0.197	0.203	6FYH	0.024	0.596	6HG4	0.044	0.044
6HTF	0.103	0.072	6JT1	0.295	0.292	6KIP	0.497	0.007
6LOJ	0.015	0.38	6M49	0.179	0.181	6N89	0.031	0.034
6POG	0.019	0.007	6QU1	0.037	0.039	6THL	0.01	0.01
6TTT 6WCW	0.903 0.193	$0.898 \\ 0.214$	6UML 6YT3	$0.348 \\ 0.761$	0.219 0.706	6W38 7A8T	0.013 0.016	0.01 0.004
7BQU	0.193	0.214 0.266	7CEG	0.007	0.006	7K2V	0.010	0.004
7LY5	0.004	0.145	7MRS	0.834	0.881	7RSI	0.034	0.034
7SL8	0.013	0.004	7VSI	0.01	0.906	1BQN	0.152	0.154
1KTZ	0.923	0.925	1M4U	0.019	0.019	1TXQ	0.025	0.025
2IWT	0.858	0.9	2Q2E	0.373	0.36	2QNA	0.504	0.506
2X1X	0.842	0.836	2XJY	0.707	0.697	2Y0I	0.734	0.745
2Y48 3C5X	$0.908 \\ 0.871$	0.881 0.89	2ZUP 3DI3	$0.675 \\ 0.681$	$0.658 \\ 0.688$	3AV0 3EUJ	$0.484 \\ 0.669$	0.376 0.716
3LBX	0.672	0.677	3MCA	0.527	0.52	3N40	0.238	0.269
3NQU	0.853	0.854	301H	0.374	0.043	30G6	0.835	0.824
30JA	0.481	0.507	3ZYI	0.577	0.583	4DBG	0.814	0.822
4DSS	0.01	0.01	4F3L	0.163	0.163	4F7G	0.715	0.66
4LD3	0.922	0.917	4LJO	0.113	0.73	40L0	0.586	0.582
4P2A 4RSI	$0.778 \\ 0.741$	$0.627 \\ 0.747$	4PW9 4UN2	$0.678 \\ 0.844$	0.732 0.819	4RGW 4WND	$0.916 \\ 0.779$	$0.922 \\ 0.765$
4XXB	0.872	0.88	4Y50	0.639	0.612	5BQC	0.085	0.085
5C46	0.006	0.006	5C58	0.66	0.721	5CHL	0.733	0.76
5D6J	0.443	0.013	5KP6	0.856	0.851	5ME5	0.949	0.952
5NRO	0.826	0.834	5T94	0.775	0.802	5W83	0.791	0.825
5YVI	0.917	0.912	5Z2W	0.787	0.805	5ZRZ	0.611	0.884
6AKM 6FKM	$0.244 \\ 0.692$	$0.813 \\ 0.651$	6EC0 6G4J	$0.795 \\ 0.773$	0.762	6EG0 6IRE	$0.69 \\ 0.438$	$0.666 \\ 0.422$
6IRT	0.502	0.051	6IW8	0.472	0.714 0.47	6JZE	0.438	0.422
6L5K	0.633	0.658	6LZ0	0.631	0.604	60BP	0.466	0.454
6OD1	0.448	0.34	6Q00	0.905	0.903	6S0A	0.602	0.634
6SF1	0.88	0.879	6UUI	0.779	0.786	6WO1	0.846	0.809
6ZPH	0.265	0.264	7AYE	0.856	0.864	7DCR	0.785	0.775
7JW7	0.025	0.008	7KNT	0.64	0.647	7LVS	0.754	0.748
1A6U 1F45	$0.334 \\ 0.445$	$0.335 \\ 0.457$	1ARO 1G4U	$0.108 \\ 0.315$	0.112 0.312	1CC1 1H2A	0.329 0.32	0.33 0.32
1HTR	0.329	0.329	1179	0.329	0.328	1JEQ	0.334	0.332
1KA9	0.331	0.327	1MHM	0.325	0.325	1NT2	0.257	0.258
1U0S	0.333	0.334	1V18	0.592	0.513	1WQ1	0.327	0.328
2107	0.277	0.445	2Q5W	0.316	0.313	2QK7	0.04	0.04
2QSF	0.269	0.274	2RD7	0.269	0.275	3A2F	0.188	0.187
3C7N 3NVM	$0.175 \\ 0.233$	0.177 0.232	3LQC 3P71	$0.475 \\ 0.266$	0.482 0.265	3NUH 3SU8	$0.338 \\ 0.007$	$0.366 \\ 0.835$
3U73	0.233	0.291	3WCY	0.200 0.465	0.447	3WWN	0.019	0.019
4C9B	0.305	0.306	4CRW	0.504	0.485	4DEY	0.328	0.327
4EHP	0.491	0.429	4GMN	0.128	0.13	4HG6	0.353	0.37
4KHA	0.383	0.385	4MRT	0.331	0.333	4N6R	0.32	0.319
4RCA	0.303	0.241	4RS1	0.33	0.33	4U1C	0.321	0.321
4YC7 5 CM2	0.304	0.311	4YL8	0.537	0.531	4ZN3	0.442	0.329
5CM2 5OW0	$0.333 \\ 0.324$	0.332 0.323	5HPK 5VPA	$0.44 \\ 0.532$	0.433 0.535	5L0W 5YQZ	0.299 0.31	0.3 0.31
5YWR	0.324 0.794	0.323	6GK2	0.332	0.335	6INE	0.31	0.31
6M7L	0.203	0.156	6NDU	0.818	0.81	60VM	0.281	0.284
6PFJ	0.324	0.325	6TX3	0.317	0.31	6UCC	0.825	0.821
6YXQ	0.481	0.477	7AX1	0.291	0.294	7BY2	0.401	0.423
7NKZ	0.335	0.335	7SL9	0.253	0.542			

Table A1The comparisons of Top-5 Best DockQ scores between ESMPair(EP) and AF-Multimer (AFM) on all test cases.

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