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IMAGE TO SPEECH CONVERSION FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE

Muhammed Shafi M, Ph.D., Research Scholar, Department of Linguistics
University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram -695581, Email: shafim.lin@keralauniversity.ac.in

Abstract
Blindness and visual impairment profoundly impact individuals' ability to process visual information, affecting various aspects of life. Despite challenges, advancements in assistive technologies have significantly improved the quality of life for those with vision loss. This paper explores the convergence of image detection and speech synthesis technologies, highlighting their collaborative potential for accessibility. Image detection utilizes computer vision to interpret digital images, while speech synthesis transforms text into natural speech. Integrating these technologies enables visually impaired individuals to access visual information through auditory means, enhancing their independence and usability. The proposed system outlines a workflow where image detection algorithms extract objects from images, which is then synthesized into spoken output. This integration holds promise for improving accessibility and usability for individuals with visual impairments, driven by advancements in machine learning and deep learning technologies. As research continues, we anticipate further enhancements in assistive technologies to support individuals with vision loss.

Keywords: Object detection, Computer vision, Speech synthesis, Visually impaired, Voice generation

Introduction

For visually impaired individuals, navigating the visual world presents significant challenges. Tasks as simple as reading signs, recognizing objects, or interpreting images can be daunting. However, advancements in computer vision technology offer promising solutions to enhance accessibility and independence for the visually impaired. One such solution is image to speech conversion, a process that translates visual information into audible descriptions. In this article, we explore how OpenCV and YOLO (You Only Look Once) can be combined to create a powerful image to speech conversion system tailored for the needs of visually impaired individuals.

Review of Literature

Image detection using OpenCV and YOLO is a popular topic in computer vision research. The study proposes U-YOLO, a vehicle detection method that integrates multi-scale features, attention mechanisms, and sub-pixel convolution [1]. This paper proposes a new object detection approach called TC-YOLO, which combines a new detection neural network, an image enhancement technique, and the optimal transport scheme for label assignment. It also incorporates attention mechanisms, such as Transformer self-attention and coordinate attention, to enhance feature extraction for underwater objects. Another paper focuses on improving image recognition accuracy by applying post-processing to encoded videos using VVC as the video coding method and YOLO-v7 as the detection model [2]. This paper compares the performance of six DL-based object detection models focused on the YOLO architecture for early detection of poppy in wheat. It uses proximal RGB images and evaluates the quality of recognition and computational capacity during the

inference process. There is also a paper that describes a model for real-time object detection using YOLO algorithm in CPU-based computers and estimates the screen presence time of detected objects [3]. The third paper presents a model for object detection and screen presence time estimation using the YOLO algorithm. It detects objects in the camera view and estimates the amount of time each object is present. The model uses OpenCV library for real-time object detection and python libraries for time estimation. Additionally, a study compares the performance of different YOLO architectures for early detection of poppy weeds in wheat crops, with YOLOv5s performing the best [4]. This study proposes a neural-network-based approach to improve image recognition accuracy, specifically object detection accuracy, by applying post-processing to encoded videos. It uses the VVC video compression method and the YOLO-v7 object detection model to achieve high object detection accuracy even at low bit rates. Lastly, a paper proposes TC-YOLO, a new object detection approach that combines YOLOv5s with image enhancement techniques and optimal transport scheme for label assignment, specifically designed for underwater object detection [5]. This paper introduces U-YOLO, a vehicle detection method for high-resolution remote-sensing images. It integrates multi-scale features, attention mechanisms, and sub-pixel convolution to improve vehicle detection accuracy. It incorporates an adaptive fusion module, cross-scale channel attention, and sub-pixel convolution module to refine the feature map and enlarge the vehicle target feature map.

Text-to-speech (TTS) is the task of converting text into speech. There are several methods proposed for TTS. One method is based on latent variable conversion using a diffusion probabilistic model and the variational autoencoder (VAE) [6] [7] [8]. This method integrates diffusion with VAE by modeling both mean and variance parameters with diffusion, allowing for flexible incorporation of various latent feature extractors [9]. Another method involves a modular design with a speaker encoder, synthesizer, and WaveRNN vocoder, which can generate speech audio in custom voices [10]. Additionally, a model based on convolutional neural networks (CNN) and gated recurrent units (GRU) has been proposed, which can work in low computational environments and requires low training time . These advancements in TTS technology have enabled high-quality synthesized speech for various applications.

Architecture of the Proposed System

Image detection and speech conversion technologies, once disparate, are now converging to create powerful solutions for accessibility and usability. Here's how they work together:

1. **Image Detection**: Utilizing computer vision algorithms, image detection technology analyses digital images to identify objects, text, and other visual elements. From recognizing faces to reading text, image detection algorithms can interpret visual data with remarkable accuracy and efficiency.
2. **Speech Conversion**: On the other side of the spectrum, speech conversion, also known as text-to-speech (TTS), transforms written text into spoken words. Using natural language processing techniques, TTS algorithms generate lifelike speech, enabling computers to communicate with users in a human-like manner.

Image Detection:

At its core, image detection is a branch of computer vision focused on identifying objects, text, and visual patterns within digital images. This technology enables computers to analyse visual data and make semantic interpretations, providing valuable information about the contents of an image. image detection allows computers to perceive and understand the contents of images, opening up a wide range of applications across various industries.

How Image Detection Works:

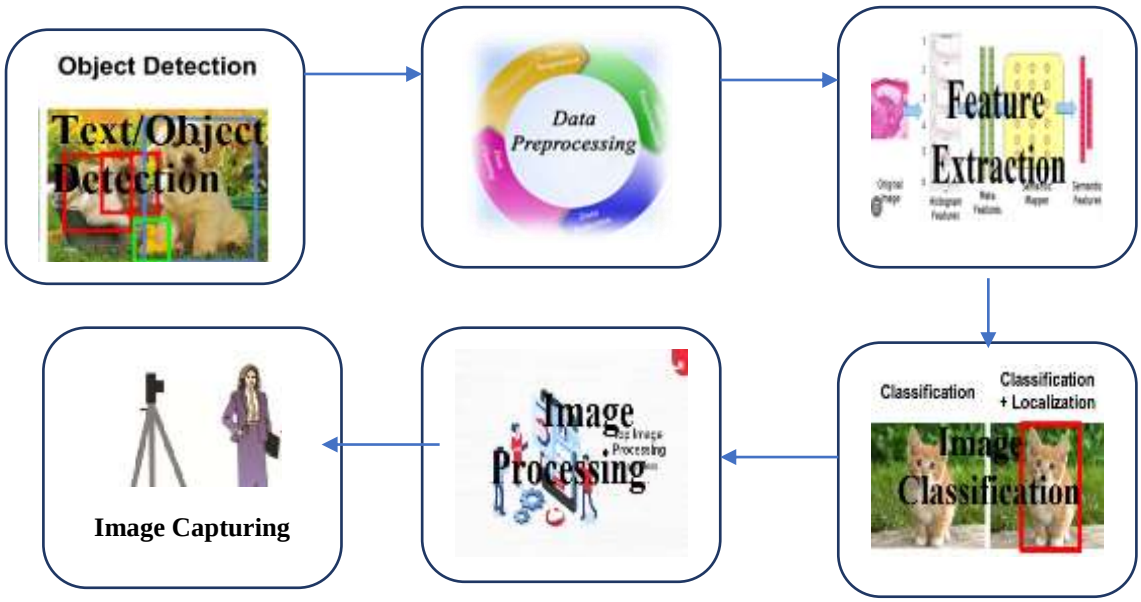


Image detection involves several key steps, including:

1. **Feature Extraction**: The process begins with extracting relevant features from the image, such as edges, corners, textures, and colour gradients. These features serve as the building blocks for subsequent analysis.
2. **Object Localization**: Using advanced algorithms, the system identifies regions of interest within the image that are likely to contain objects of interest. This process, known as object localization, helps narrow down the search space and focus the analysis on relevant areas.
3. **Object Classification**: Once regions of interest are identified, the system classifies them into predefined categories or labels. This step involves comparing extracted features with patterns learned during training to determine the most likely class or label for each object.
4. **Post-processing**: After classification, post-processing techniques may be applied to refine the results, such as filtering out false positives or adjusting object boundaries for accuracy.

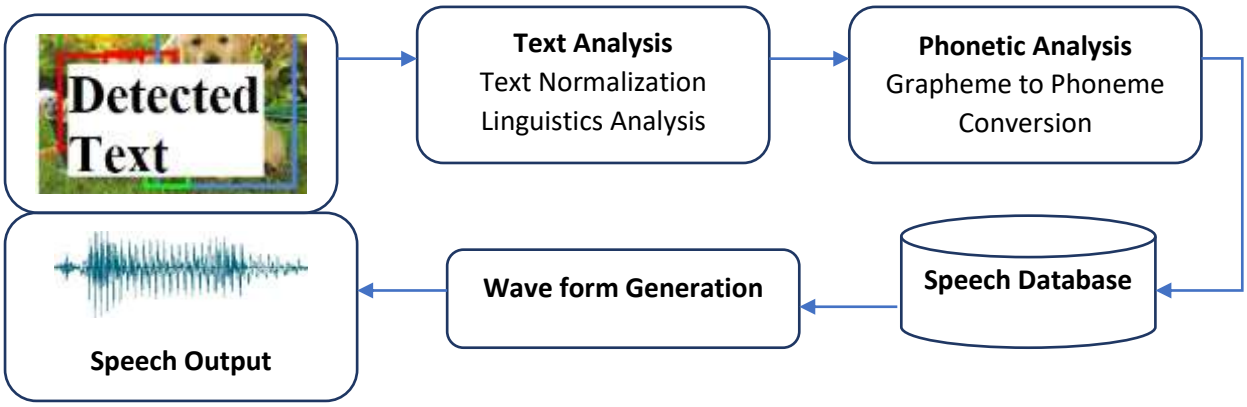
Application of Image Detection:

Image detection technology, powered by advanced computer vision algorithms, enables computers to analyse and interpret visual data, including text, objects, and scenes. For visually impaired individuals, image detection serves as a vital tool for accessing and understanding visual content in various contexts:

- **Text Recognition**: By converting text within images into digital text, image detection technology enables visually impaired individuals to access printed materials such as books, documents, and signage.
- **Object Identification**: Image detection algorithms can identify and describe objects within images, providing valuable context and information about the surrounding environment.
- **Scene Analysis**: From recognizing faces to understanding spatial layouts, image detection technology offers insights into the visual world, enhancing situational awareness and navigation.

In the realm of human-computer interaction, speech synthesis stands as a testament to the remarkable progress of technology in mimicking the complexities of human speech. Speech synthesis, also known as text-to-speech (TTS) technology, enables machines to convert written text into spoken words with remarkable accuracy and naturalness. This ground-breaking capability has revolutionized various industries and applications, from accessibility and education to entertainment and communication.

Speech Synthesis Architecture



Speech synthesis is the process of generating artificial speech from textual input. Through a combination of linguistic analysis, signal processing, and natural language generation techniques, speech synthesis systems produce spoken output that closely resembles human speech in terms of intonation, rhythm, and pronunciation. This enables computers and devices to communicate with users in a human-like manner, enhancing the user experience and enabling new modes of interaction.

The Science Behind Speech Synthesis:

The process of speech synthesis involves several key steps, including:

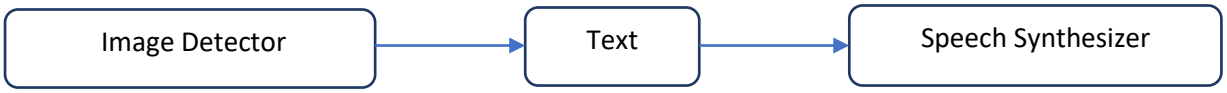
Text Analysis: The input text is analysed linguistically to identify words, phrases, and grammatical structures. This step helps ensure accurate pronunciation and intonation during synthesis.

Phonetic Encoding: Each word in the text is encoded phonetically, mapping its written representation to its corresponding sounds in the spoken language. This phonetic representation serves as the basis for generating speech.

Acoustic Modelling: Acoustic models capture the relationship between linguistic features and acoustic properties of speech. By learning from large datasets of recorded speech, these models can generate realistic speech sounds that closely match the characteristics of natural speech.

Waveform Generation: In the final step, waveform generation techniques synthesize the speech signal based on the phonetic and acoustic information. This process involves manipulating parameters such as pitch, duration, and amplitude to produce smooth and natural-sounding speech output.

Proposed System



Combining image detection with speech synthesis can create a powerful tool for accessibility and usability, especially for individuals with visual impairments. Here's how these technologies can work together:

Image Detection: Utilizing computer vision algorithms, image detection technology analyzes digital images to identify objects, text, and other visual elements. This process involves feature extraction, object localization, classification, and post-processing.

Text Extraction: Within image detection, text recognition algorithms extract textual information from images. This can include printed text on signs, documents, or product labels.

Speech Synthesis: On the other hand, speech synthesis, also known as text-to-speech (TTS), converts written text into spoken words. Using natural language processing techniques, TTS algorithms generate lifelike speech output, enabling computers to communicate with users in a human-like manner.

Combining these technologies, the workflow would look something like this:

- Image detection algorithms analyse the image and extract any textual information present.
- The extracted text is passed to the speech synthesis system.
- The speech synthesis system generates spoken output based on the extracted text.
- The synthesized speech is then outputted through speakers or headphones, allowing the user to hear the information present in the image.

This integration can provide visually impaired individuals with access to visual information in an auditory format, enhancing their ability to interact with the world around them. Whether it's reading signs, identifying objects, or understanding printed documents, image detection coupled with speech synthesis can greatly improve accessibility and usability for individuals with visual impairments.

Moreover, advancements in machine learning and deep learning have led to more accurate and efficient image detection and speech synthesis algorithms, further enhancing the effectiveness of this integrated approach. As technology continues to evolve, we can expect to see even greater improvements in accessibility tools and assistive technologies for individuals with visual impairments.

Implementation Methods for Object Detection

In the Python context, identification and tracking techniques are developed based on SSD (Single Shot Multibox Detector) and MobileNets. Object detection involves locating regions of interest within a set of images, employing methods like frame differencing, optical flow, and background removal. Using a camera facilitates the identification and tracking of moving objects. The properties of images and videos are leveraged to elucidate detection and tracking algorithms, especially in security applications. Feature extraction is achieved through CNNs (Convolutional Neural Networks) and deep learning techniques, enabling the extraction of meaningful attributes from images and videos. Classifiers play a crucial role in categorizing and counting images. A strategy based on YOLO (You Only Look Once) with a GMM (Gaussian Mixture Model) model is proposed for feature extraction and classification, ensuring high accuracy through deep learning methodologies. Feature extraction plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of identification and tracking algorithms. Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and deep learning techniques are commonly employed for feature extraction from images and videos. These methodologies enable the extraction of meaningful attributes or features from visual data, which are then used for subsequent analysis and decision-making.

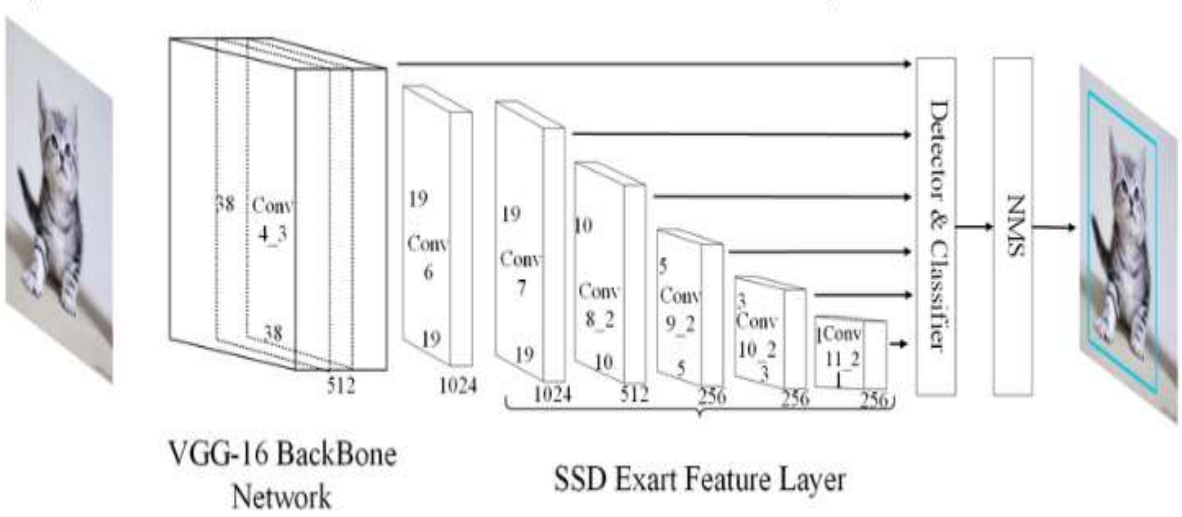


Figure 1 Block diagram of SSD object detection algorithm

The VGG 16 SSD model employs a series of default boxes that traverse various feature maps in a convolutional fashion. When an object is detected by one of the object classifiers during prediction, a confidence score is generated. The object's shape is then adjusted to fit the localization box, and

shape offsets along with confidence levels are computed for each box. During the training phase, default boxes are aligned with ground truth boxes to refine the model's accuracy. The SSD architecture eschews fully connected layers commonly found in traditional convolutional neural networks.

To optimize the model's performance, the loss function is calculated as a weighted combination of confidence loss and localization loss. Localization loss quantifies the discrepancy between predicted bounding boxes and ground truth boxes, providing a measure of how accurately the model localizes objects within an image.

Object detection, a prominent aspect of computer technology within the realm of computer vision and image processing, has witnessed a significant improvement in accuracy with the emergence of deep learning methods. Its primary objective is to identify objects or instances belonging to specific classes (such as humans, flowers, or animals) within digital images and videos. This technology finds application in diverse fields, ranging from face detection and character recognition to vehicle identification and counting.

The implementation methods for object detection include frame differencing, optical flow, and background subtraction.

Frame Differencing: This method involves capturing frames from a camera at regular intervals and estimating the difference between consecutive frames.

Optical Flow: Optical flow estimation calculates the motion field using specific algorithms. A local mean algorithm is applied to enhance it, followed by a self-adaptive algorithm to filter noise. This approach offers flexibility in adapting to various object sizes and numbers, reducing the need for complex pre-processing.

Background Subtraction: Background subtraction is a fast technique to identify moving objects in a video captured by a stationary camera. It serves as the initial step in a multi-stage vision system, separating foreground objects from the background in image sequences. This process involves detecting and isolating the foreground or person from the background, facilitating further pre-processing. The separation effect is illustrated step by step, leading to the localization of regions of interest.

Implementation Methods for Speech Synthesis

The Google Text-to-Speech (gTTS) API is a convenient tool in Python for converting text into speech. This API allows developers to easily generate audio files from text, which can be useful for various applications such as creating voice-based assistants, adding speech capabilities to applications, or generating audio content[11][12][13]. The gTTS API is a widely recognized tool within the Python programming language, cherished for its user-friendly nature and effectiveness in converting textual input into audio files, typically in the .mp3 format.

The Google Text-to-Speech (gTTS) API utilizes a sophisticated speech synthesis algorithm to convert textual input into natural-sounding speech. While the specific details of Google's algorithm are proprietary, here's a general overview of the typical steps involved in text-to-speech synthesis:

1. Text Preprocessing: The input text undergoes preprocessing to handle punctuation, special characters, and formatting. This step may involve text normalization techniques to ensure consistency in pronunciation and prosody.
2. Text Analysis: The processed text is analyzed to extract linguistic features such as phonemes, prosody, and intonation patterns. This analysis is crucial for generating speech that sounds natural and coherent.
3. Linguistic Processing: Based on the linguistic analysis, the algorithm generates a phonetic representation of the text. This representation maps each word or phoneme to its corresponding sounds in the target language.

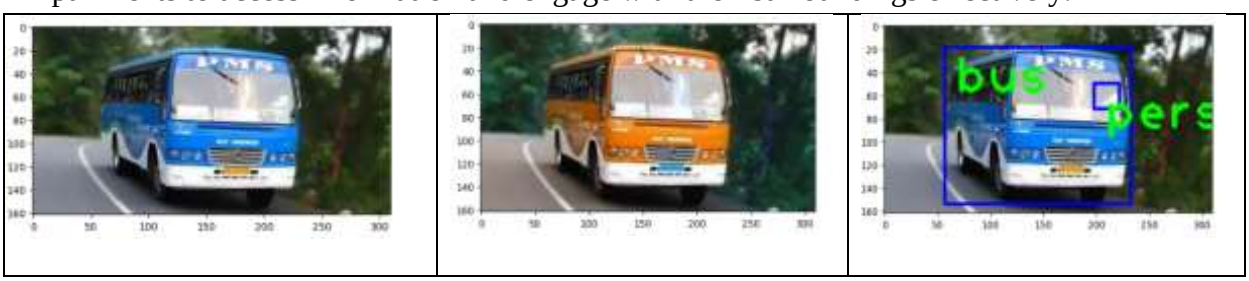
4. Voice Selection: The gTTS API allows users to specify the desired voice or language for the synthesized speech. Google offers a range of high-quality voices in different languages and accents to suit diverse preferences.
5. Speech Synthesis: Using a combination of concatenative and parametric synthesis techniques, the algorithm generates speech waveforms that closely approximate human speech. Concatenative synthesis involves stitching together pre-recorded speech segments, while parametric synthesis relies on mathematical models to generate speech from scratch.
6. Prosody Modeling: Prosody refers to the rhythm, stress, and intonation patterns of speech. The algorithm applies prosody modeling techniques to imbue the synthesized speech with natural-sounding rhythm and melody, enhancing its expressiveness and clarity.
7. Post-Processing: The synthesized speech may undergo additional post-processing steps to fine-tune its acoustic properties, remove artifacts, and optimize its quality for the target output format (e.g., MP3).
8. Output Generation: Finally, the algorithm generates the output audio file containing the synthesized speech. The gTTS API typically produces audio files in the MP3 format, which is widely supported and suitable for various applications.

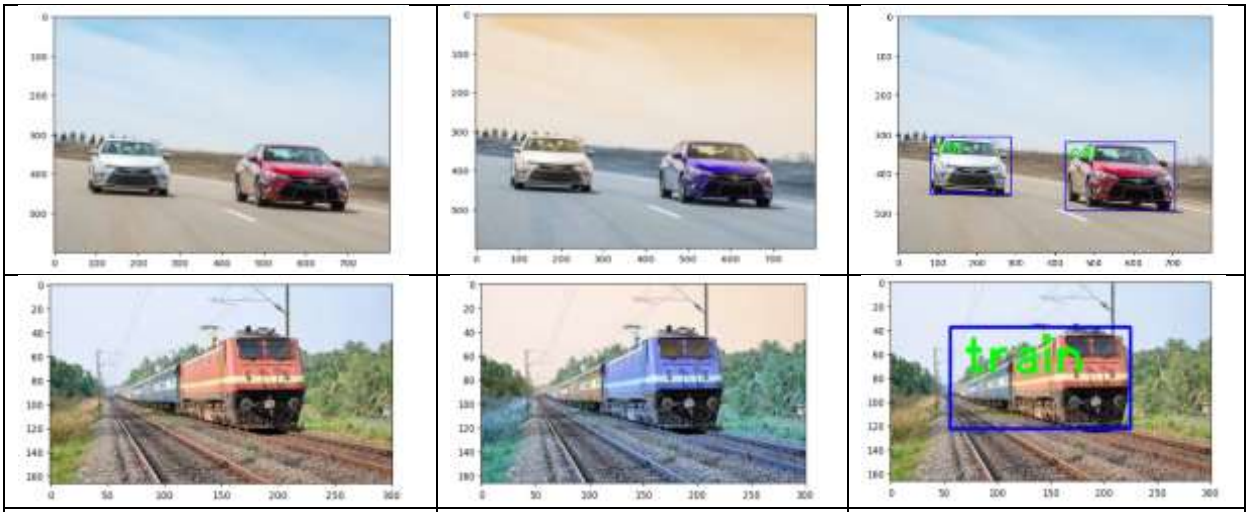
Overall, the gTTS speech synthesis algorithm leverages advanced techniques in linguistics, signal processing, and machine learning to deliver high-quality, natural-sounding speech synthesis tailored to the needs of developers and users alike[19][20]. In summary, the gTTS API stands out as a convenient and effective solution for converting text to speech within the Python ecosystem. Its simplicity, coupled with Google's advanced speech synthesis technology, makes it a popular choice among developers seeking to incorporate text-to-speech functionality into their applications and projects.

Result and Discussion

A Python program based on the SSD (Single Shot Multibox Detector) algorithm was developed and implemented in OpenCV[14][15][16]. The program was executed on a Windows platform using the Jupiter IDE. A total of 30 objects were trained in this model. After successful scanning, detection, and tracking of the video sequence provided by the camera, the following results were obtained.

The integration of speech synthesis with image processing techniques enables the generation of auditory descriptions of visual content, facilitating comprehension and interaction for individuals with visual impairments. This section explores various approaches to integrating speech synthesis with image processing, including object recognition, scene understanding, and text extraction from images. Waveform generation serves as a core component in both Text-to-Speech (TTS) systems and assistive technologies, playing pivotal roles in enhancing accessibility and communication for individuals with visual or speech impairments. In TTS systems, waveform generation facilitates the conversion of text input into natural and intelligible spoken output, enabling seamless interaction with digital content. Similarly, in assistive technologies, waveform generation provides crucial auditory feedback and communication assistance, empowering individuals with visual or speech impairments to access information and engage with their surroundings effectively.





Input Image	*RGB to BGR Conversion*	*Detected Text*

Figure : Object detection sample images

calculated accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score for all classes and computed the true positives (TP), false positives (FP), false negatives (FN), and true negatives (TN) for each class. Here's how you can manually calculate the metrics[17][18]:

1. Accuracy = $\frac{TP+TN}{TP+FP+FN+TN}$
2. Precision: = $\frac{TP}{TP+FP}$
3. Recall (or Sensitivity) = $\frac{TP}{TP+FN}$
4. F1-score = $2 * \frac{Precision*Recall}{Precision+Recall}$

for each class.

Let's calculate these metrics:

- First, sum the values in each row to find TP for each class.
- Sum the values in each column to find TP for each predicted class.
- Finally, calculate the metrics using these values.

TP_total = 85 + 80 + 95 + 88 + 90 + 85 + 100 + 95 + 93 + 98 = 819

FP_total = 2 + 5 + 4 + 12 + 0 + 5 + 1 + 5 + 0 + 4 = 38

computed the true positives (TP), false positives (FP), and false negatives (FN) for the class "Car" and derived the precision, recall, and F1-score for this class. To calculate these metrics for other classes, you can follow the same procedure by substituting the corresponding values of TP, FP, and FN.

TP_Car = 80

FP_Car = 5 + 4 + 1 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 11

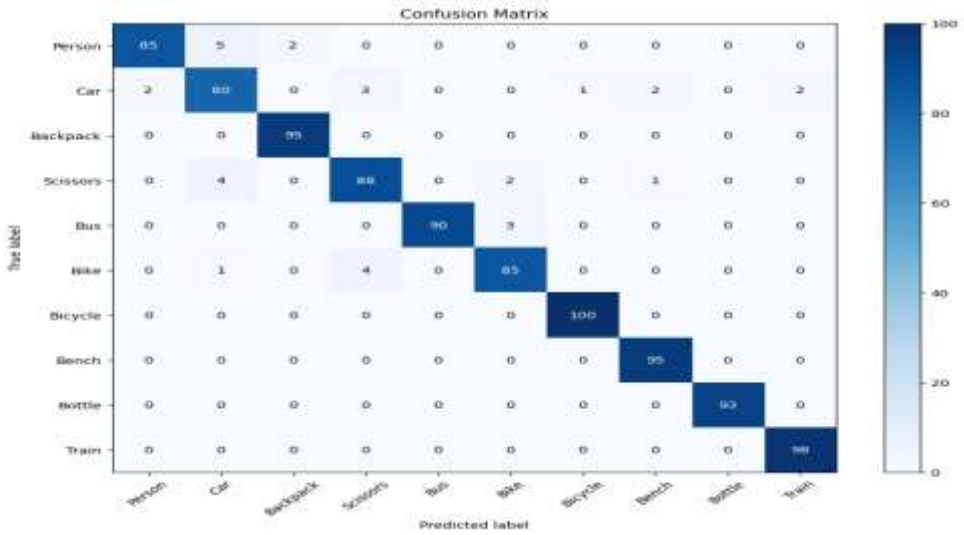
FN_Car = 2 + 0 + 0 + 2 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 4

Precision_Car = 80 / (80 + 11) ≈ 0.879

Recall_Car = 80 / (80 + 4) ≈ 0.952

F1-score_Car = 2 * (0.879 * 0.952) / (0.879 + 0.952) ≈ 0.914

Similarly, calculated the same metrics for other classes by substituting the corresponding values of TP, FP, and FN into the formulas. Let me know if you need further assistance with these calculations.

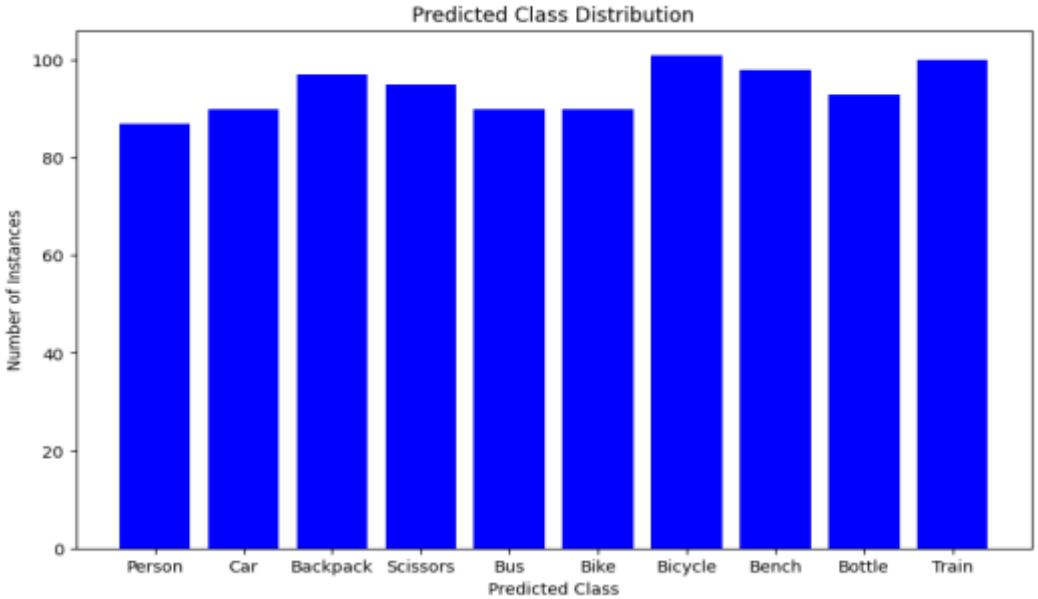


Accuracy: 0.9659936238044633
Classification Report:

	precision	recall	f1-score	support
Person	0.98	0.92	0.95	92
Car	0.89	0.89	0.89	90
Backpack	0.98	1.00	0.99	95
Scissors	0.93	0.93	0.93	95
Bus	1.00	0.97	0.98	93
Bike	0.94	0.94	0.94	90
Bicycle	0.99	1.00	1.00	100
Bench	0.97	1.00	0.98	95
Bottle	1.00	1.00	1.00	93
Train	0.98	1.00	0.99	98
accuracy			0.97	941
macro avg	0.97	0.97	0.97	941
weighted avg	0.97	0.97	0.97	941

Accuracy: 0.9659936238044633
Precision: 0.9655528825361891
Recall: 0.9651304101769149
F1-score: 0.9651939507978564

- **Accuracy**: The accuracy of the model is approximately 96.60%. This means that out of all the instances in the dataset, around 96.60% were classified correctly by the model.
- **Classification Report**:
  - **Precision**: Precision measures the accuracy of positive predictions. For each class, it tells us the proportion of correctly predicted instances out of all instances predicted as belonging to that class. For example:
    - For the class "Person", precision is 98%. This means that when the model predicts an instance to be "Person", it is correct about 98% of the time.
    - For the class "Car", precision is 89%. This indicates that the model's predictions for "Car" are correct around 89% of the time.
    - Similar interpretations can be made for other classes.
  - **Recall**: Recall measures the ability of the classifier to find all the positive samples. For each class, it tells us the proportion of correctly predicted instances out of all instances that truly belong to that class. For example:
    - For the class "Person", recall is 92%. This means that out of all instances that truly belong to "Person", the model correctly identifies around 92% of them.
    - For the class "Car", recall is also 89%. This indicates that the model correctly identifies around 89% of the instances that truly belong to "Car".
    - Similar interpretations can be made for other classes.
  - **F1-score**: F1-score is the harmonic mean of precision and recall. It provides a balance between precision and recall. For each class, it indicates the model's accuracy in terms of both false positives and false negatives.



Conclusion

The presented metrics demonstrate the impressive performance of the convergence of image detection and speech synthesis technologies in assisting individuals with visual impairments. Achieving high accuracy of 96.60%. This integrated system showcases its effectiveness in providing accessible interfaces for interacting with visual information. By amalgamating computer vision and text-to-speech technologies, it empowers visually impaired individuals with heightened awareness of their surroundings, fostering greater confidence and independence in navigation. Moreover, the system's adaptability for incorporating features such as voice commands and integration with other assistive technologies underscores its potential for further enhancement. Overall, this advancement underscores the transformative impact of technology in enhancing accessibility and enriching the lives of people with disabilities, highlighting its role in promoting independence and improving quality of life.

Study Implications

The integration of image detection and speech synthesis technologies presents profound implications, particularly within assistive technology for individuals with visual impairments. By merging computer vision with text-to-speech capabilities, the system grants visually impaired individuals access to visual information in an understandable format, significantly boosting their accessibility across digital and physical environments. This integration yields intuitive interfaces facilitating interaction with visual data, thereby empowering users to better comprehend and engage with their surroundings, fostering increased independence and confidence in navigating diverse environments. The system's provision of real-time assistance, through immediate feedback synthesized into auditory output, enables informed decision-making and adjustments while navigating. Furthermore, its potential for customization and integration with features such as voice commands ensures adaptability to individual preferences and needs, amplifying its effectiveness. By enhancing situational awareness and safety, the system aids in avoiding obstacles and navigating hazardous settings, ultimately advancing the field of assistive technology and improving the quality of life for visually impaired individuals, marking a significant leap forward in addressing their specific challenges.

Further Enhancements

Further enhancements to image-to-speech technology for assisting visually impaired individuals with mobility encompass several key areas. Firstly, enhancing object recognition involves training algorithms on diverse datasets and leveraging deep learning for better accuracy. Advanced text extraction can be achieved through improved OCR algorithms and support for multiple languages and fonts. Contextual understanding involves analysing spatial relationships and environmental cues for more intuitive assistance. Interactive features such as voice commands and adaptive learning mechanisms tailored to individual preferences and feedback improve user experience. Integration with wearable devices like smart glasses enhances interaction, while environmental awareness through sensors ensures safety in dynamic environments. By addressing these aspects, the system can provide robust, intuitive, and user-friendly assistance, empowering visually impaired individuals to navigate with confidence and independence.

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