

A Real Time Webcam Based Sign Language Translation System Using Computer Vision

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 13

Special Issue: 3

Month: February

Year: 2026

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

Citation:

A, Sangeetha Priya, et al. "A Real Time Webcam Based Sign Language Translation System Using Computer Vision." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2026, pp. 225–30.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v13iS3-i1-Feb.10285>

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Abstract

The communication between hearing impaired individuals and the general public still remains a challenge due to the lack of real time sign language interpretation systems. This paper presents a real time webcam-based sign language translation system using computer vision to facilitate efficient communication. The proposed system analyses live video feed from a standard webcam using a vision-based pipeline for hand gesture recognition. The proposed system employs hand landmarks to analyse the video feed using a strong computer vision framework, which assists in extracting precise spatial information from sign language gestures. The extracted information is then analysed and categorized to identify corresponding sign language symbols, which are then translated into readable text output in real time. The end of this research work reveals that the proposed approach is a cost effective and efficient solution for sign language translation. The solution will focus on processing, latency, and usability, making it useful for real world assistive communication problems. The experimental analysis proves the accuracy of the recognition in controlled lighting conditions and various orientations of the hand. The solution will prove that the proposed solution is cost effective and scalable for sign language translation. This research work validates the application of computer vision based assistive technology to enhance communication accessibility and inclusivity. The proposed system can be further extended to support the translation of a broader vocabulary set, dynamic signs, and multiple languages.

Keyword: Sign Language Recognition, Computer Vision, RealTime Translation, Hand Landmark Detection, Gesture Recognition, Assistive Technology, WebcamBased System, Human Computer Interaction

Introduction

Communication is a basic requirement for human beings that assists in social interactions, learning, and professional engagement. But hearingandspeech-impairedpeopleexperienceamajorcommunication barrier while interacting with the general public. Sign language is the

main mode of communication for hearing-impaired people, but it is unknown to the general public. This creates a communication barrier in real-life situations like education, healthcare, employment, and public services.

Recent developments in computer vision and AI technology have made it possible to explore new avenues for the development of assistive technology to overcome communication barriers. Visionbased gesture recognition systems have been proposed as a possible solution for sign language recognition without the need for any hardware devices such as sensor gloves or wearable devices. Compared to sensor-based systems, webcam-based systems are cost-effective and easily implementable, and they can be used by the general public.

Some research studies have explored the development of sign language recognition systems using deep learning models, image processing algorithms, and wearable sensor technology. Although these systems are promising in terms of accuracy, they are computationally complex, costly, or require a controlled environment. Some of these systems also have latency problems, making them inappropriate for real-time communication.

To address these issues, this paper proposes a real-time webcam-based sign language translation system using computer vision. The proposed system exploits the real-time video stream provided by a conventional webcam and processes it according to a vision-based hand landmark detection approach. The proposed system is designed to be latency-effective and compatible with conventional computing hardware.

Contributions

1. Development of a real-time sign language recognition system using a webcam-based approach.
2. Use of hand landmark detection for accurate gesture feature extraction.
3. Development of a lightweight gesture classification algorithm for real-time processing.
4. Development of a cost-effective assistive communication system without the need for specialized hardware.

The proposed system has the potential to exploit computer vision-based assistive technology for enhanced communication accessibility and inclusivity. The proposed system addresses the shortcomings of existing systems by not requiring wearable hardware and being real-time responsive, thus offering a practical solution to bridge the communication gap between hearing-impaired individuals and the general public.

Literature Review

Sign language recognition has gained considerable attention in the last few years due to the development in computer vision and AI technology. Several methods have been proposed by researchers to bridge the gap between the hearing-impaired community and the rest of the world. The current methods can be broadly categorized into sensor-based systems and vision-based systems.

Sensor-based systems include the use of wearable technology such as data gloves with flex sensors, accelerometers, or motion sensors to capture finger movement. These systems are known to provide high accuracy due to the precise capture of finger movement. However, the requirement of specialized hardware makes these systems relatively costly. Moreover, the use of wearable technology can be quite cumbersome for users.

Vision-based systems include the use of cameras to capture hand movement and image processing or machine learning algorithms for recognition. In the early days of sign language recognition, researchers used traditional image processing algorithms such as skin detection, edge detection, and contour detection to detect the hand region. Although these algorithms demonstrated some potential, they were highly sensitive to lighting conditions, background changes, and occlusions.

AI is transforming laptop creativity by bringing some genuinely advanced capabilities for photo editing, video creation, and content generation. By automating repetitive operations such as enhancing images, adjusting lighting, and suggesting content improvements, artificial intelligence (AI) programs enable artists to minimize the time spent on projects. Furthermore, people can enhance their work with real-time grammar and style suggestions from AI-supported writing assistants. Besides reducing the process, these artistic tools make it possible for users to produce work of professional quality with less effort. Upcoming laptops will continue to have even greater fantastic capabilities for productivity and creative software as technology advances further, making them even more valuable for both business and personal use.

However, with the advent of deep learning, there has been a growing trend of using convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs) for sign language recognition. The networks have significantly enhanced the recognition rate by automatically extracting spatial and temporal features from a large dataset. However, deep learning algorithms can be computationally expensive and require a large amount of data for training, GPUs, and heavy computations, which may not be that appropriate for implementation on general-purpose computing devices.

Recent advancements in the hand landmark detection solution approach have also enhanced the efficiency of gesture recognition systems. Keypointbased solutions detect keypoints for finger joints and palms, which are less image processing-dependent. This has enhanced the computational efficiency and robustness of the solution while ensuring optimal recognition performance.

Although significant developments have been achieved, it is observed that most of the existing solutions either require expensive hardware, heavy computations, or are incapable of providing smooth real-time performance. Therefore, there is a need for a cost-effective, lightweight, and real-time sign language translation solution that can be easily implemented on commonly available devices such as webcams.

The proposed work will help in overcoming the aforementioned problems by suggesting a real-time webcam-based sign language translation system using computer vision and hand landmark detection methods. The proposed system can be applied in assistive communication systems because it is easily accessible, has low latency, and can be implemented.

Proposed Methodology

The proposed system is a real-time webcam-based sign language translation system that employs computer vision algorithms for gesture recognition. The process for the proposed system is based on efficient hand detection, landmark extraction, and gesture classification for real-time text output. The overall process flow for the proposed system is shown in Fig. 1.

System Overview

The proposed system operates by capturing live video input from a standard webcam. The video input is then processed in a sequential manner to detect the presence of a hand and identify the key landmark points of the hand. The key landmark points of the hand are then processed to detect predefined sign language gestures, which are then translated to text output in real-time.

System Architecture

The proposed system is based on a modular approach for real-time sign language translation. It has five modules: Video Acquisition, Preprocessing, Sign Recognition, Interaction, and Output Display. The live video is captured using a webcam and then split into frames. The frames are then preprocessed involves resizing, detection. The output of the preprocessing stage is then put into a trained AI/ML model that identifies the sign and translates it into corresponding text or commands.

Video Acquisition

The proposed system begins with the acquisition of live video input from a conventional webcam. The video is processed frame by frame. The frames are then resized and preprocessed for standard input size and improved detection accuracy. Continuous frame acquisition enables smooth real-time interaction between the user and the system.

Hand Detection and Landmark Extraction

Hand detection and tracking are performed using a computer vision-based hand landmark detection system. The system is capable of detecting 21 keypoints in the hand, which represent finger and palm positions. The keypoints provide a structured representation of hand pose. For each detected hand, the (x, y, z) coordinates of the keypoints are extracted. The coordinates provide feature vectors for gesture recognition. Keypoint representation is less sensitive to background information and more robust in moderate lighting conditions.

Feature Processing

The extracted landmark points are normalized to make the system scale-independent and provide accurate classification outputs. The relative positions of the keypoints are analyzed to determine the gesture patterns. The structured feature set enhances the classification accuracy for different persons and hand orientations.

Gesture Classification

The gesture classification module interprets the processed landmark features and maps them to pre-defined symbols in sign language. The classification module compares the identified hand position with the pre-defined gesture patterns to identify the corresponding alphabet or symbol. The system is able to identify static sign gestures and display text output for successful gesture classification. The classification module is designed to be computationally efficient to support real-time processing.

RealTime Processing Mechanism

In real-time translation, the system processes the video frames sequentially with a negligible delay. This is achieved through efficient landmark detection and lightweight classification logic. The proposed architecture is suitable for a standard computing device without the need for a high-end graphical processing unit. The computational efficiency of the system makes it suitable for real-world assistive communication applications.

Result and Discussion

The proposed real-time webcam-based sign language translation system was tested to analyze the recognition accuracy, response time, and usability of the system. The system was tested in a controlled indoor environment using a standard webcam and a mid-range computer system.

Recognition Performance

The recognition performance of the system was tested using a fixed set of static sign language gestures. Several trials were performed to assess the recognition consistency of the system for varying hand orientations and lighting conditions. The experimental outcome reveals that the system delivers a reliable recognition performance for well-defined gestures under moderate lighting conditions.

The use of landmarks for detection ensures a consistent tracking of hand keypoints. This enhances the recognition consistency of the system. The recognition performance of the system remains high when the hand is prominently visible in the camera view. However, there might be a slight degradation in recognition performance for extreme variations in lighting conditions or partial occlusion of the hand.

Real Time Responsiveness

Real-time responsiveness is one of the major goals of the proposed system. The system processes video frames sequentially with negligible delays between gesture input and text output. During the experimental phase, the output was produced almost instantaneously after gesture stabilization to ensure seamless user interaction.

The system's efficient landmark detection mechanism and simple classification logic ensure a low computational overhead. The system works well on standard hardware platforms without the need for GPU acceleration.

Robustness Analysis

The system was analyzed for robustness with different environmental factors:

Lighting Conditions: The system performs well under normal indoor lighting conditions. However, under low-light conditions or high backlighting, the system may not be accurate.

Background Variations: Since the system uses hand keypoints for landmark detection, moderate background variations do not affect the system much.

Hand Orientation: The system performs well even under slight rotations and translations of the hand. These results confirm that the proposed system, using landmarks, is robust compared to the traditional color-based segmentation method.

Comparative Discussion

Compared to sensor-based systems, the proposed system is not a wearable system, making it cheaper and more convenient to use. However, deep learning-based systems, trained on large datasets, may be more accurate for complex gestures. The proposed system finds a balance between accuracy, efficiency, and usability, making it suitable for real-time assistive communication systems.

Limitations

Although the results are promising, the current system only supports static gestures and a small vocabulary set. Dynamic gesture recognition and sentence-level analysis have not yet been implemented. Moreover, the system may not perform well under extreme lighting conditions. Future enhancements can include dynamic gesture recognition and an expanded gesture database.

Conclusion

This paper has shown the viability of a real-time sign language translation system using a webcam and computer vision techniques. The proposed system uses the hand landmark detection method to provide spatial information for gesture recognition. The system translates the hand patterns into predefined symbols of sign language to provide real-time text output. The proposed system has shown that vision-based gesture recognition can be an efficient and cost-effective assistive communication system that does not require any hardware component, such as sensor gloves or wearable technology. The landmarks improve the computational complexity of the system while ensuring that the recognition is robust in a typical indoor environment. The system is also compatible with standard computing hardware.

Experimental results validate that the designed system is able to provide efficient recognition of static gestures with low latency, thus facilitating real-time interaction between the users and the translation interface. Although the designed system is currently capable of recognizing a small vocabulary and static signs only, it provides a robust platform for designing more sophisticated sign language interpretation systems. The significance of computer vision-based assistive systems in enhancing the accessibility of communication has been emphasized through this research. The designed system helps to fill the communication gap between hearing-impaired people and the rest of the world by providing a real-time translation solution.

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