WWW.IJRPR.COM

International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Advancement in Speech Recognition Systems using Deep Learning: A Review

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the rapid evolution of speech recognition systems driven by deep learning. Traditional approaches relied on handcrafted features and statistical models, but recent advancements in neural architectures—especially Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs), Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs), and Transformers—have revolutionized the field. We examine key milestones such as end-to-end learning, self-supervised models like wav2vec 2.0, and multilingual systems like Whisper. The study also highlights challenges in low-resource languages, noise robustness, and real-time deployment. Our proposed framework integrates transfer learning and attention mechanisms to improve accuracy and scalability. The goal is to present a comprehensive view of how deep learning is shaping the future of speech technologies.

Keywords: Speech recognition, Deep learning, wav2vec 2.0, Whisper, End-to-end models, Low-resource languages

I. INTRODUCTION

Speech recognition, also known as Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), is a subfield of artificial intelligence and computational linguistics that focuses on enabling machines to understand and transcribe human speech into text. It represents a critical interface between humans and computers, allowing for natural, hands-free communication and interaction. The ability to process spoken language has revolutionized how people engage with technology, making it more intuitive, accessible, and efficient. ASR systems are now embedded in a wide range of applications—from virtual assistants like Siri, Alexa, and Google Assistant to real-time transcription tools, voice-controlled smart devices, automated customer service systems, and accessibility solutions for individuals with disabilities. These systems have become indispensable in domains such as healthcare (e.g., voice-based documentation), education (e.g., lecture transcription), law enforcement (e.g., audio evidence processing), and entertainment (e.g., voice search and command).

The development of speech recognition systems has evolved through several technological phases. Early systems relied on rule-based approaches and template matching, which were limited in scalability and flexibility. These were followed by statistical models such as Hidden Markov Models (HMMs) and Gaussian Mixture Models (GMMs), which introduced probabilistic frameworks for modeling speech sequences. However, these models required extensive manual feature engineering and were sensitive to variations in speaker accents, background noise, and speaking styles.

II. RELATED WORKS

Traditional ASR Systems

HMM-DNN Hybrids

Early ASR systems relied on Hidden Markov Models (HMMs) combined with Deep Neural Networks (DNNs) for acoustic modeling.

Kaldi and CMU Sphinx were prominent toolkits:

Kaldi offered modular pipelines and flexible configuration, widely adopted in academia and industry. CMU Sphinx was one of the earliest open-source ASR systems, suitable for embedded and lightweight applications.

Limitations:

Required large, labeled datasets.

Struggled with speaker variability, accents, and noisy environments.

Deep Learning Breakthroughs

CNNs:

Convolutional Neural Networks extract local temporal and spectral features from spectrograms. Useful for capturing phonetic patterns and improving robustness to noise.

RNNs and LSTMs

Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs) and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) units model long-range dependencies in speech. Enabled better handling of sequential data and context-aware predictions.

CTC Loss:

Connectionist Temporal Classification (CTC) allows training without explicit alignment between audio and transcription.

Facilitates end-to-end models that handle variable-length inputs.

Attention Mechanisms

Attention layers dynamically focus on relevant parts of the input sequence.

Crucial for handling overlapping speech, long utterances, and noisy conditions.

Self-Supervised Models

wav2vec 2.0 (Meta AI)

Learns speech representations from raw audio using contrastive learning.

Reduces dependence on transcribed data, making it ideal for low-resource languages.

Hu BERT (Hidden-Unit BERT)

Combines unsupervised clustering with masked prediction.

Learns phoneme-level features without labeled data, improving performance in multilingual and noisy settings.

Whisper (OpenAI)

Trained on 680,000+ hours of multilingual audio.

Supports transcription, translation, and language identification.

Shows strong performance in low-resource and noisy environments.

Indic Language Research

MUCS (Microsoft Universal Corpus for Speech)

Focuses on building speech datasets for Indian languages.

Supports benchmarking and model evaluation across diverse dialects.

Common Voice India (Mozilla)

Crowdsourced speech corpus for Indian languages.

Encourages community participation to expand coverage and diversity.

Challenges & Progress

Code-switching (mixing languages) and phonetic diversity are major hurdles.

Deep learning models like wav2vec and Whisper show promise in handling these complexities.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology aims to develop a robust, scalable, and multilingual speech recognition system using deep learning. It integrates multiple components—data acquisition, preprocessing, model architecture, training strategies, and evaluation metrics—to ensure high accuracy and adaptability across diverse linguistic and acoustic conditions. The system is designed to support both high-resource and low-resource languages, with a special focus on Indian languages such as Telugu, Hindi, and Tamil.

A. Data Collection

The data collection phase involved sourcing speech corpora from publicly available benchmark datasets, including Common Voice v14, FLEURS, and Giga Speech. These datasets were chosen for their linguistic diversity, speaker variability, and real-world acoustic conditions. Common Voice offers crowd-sourced multilingual recordings, FLEURS supports speech translation across over 100 languages, and Giga Speech provides large-scale English audio suitable for end-to-end ASR training. Together, they form a comprehensive foundation for evaluating both general-purpose and domain-specific ASR models

B. Preprocessing Pipeline

Preprocessing transforms raw audio into a format suitable for deep learning models. The pipeline includes:

Resampling: All audio files were standardized to 16kHz sampling rate to match model input requirements.

Silence Removal: Voice Activity Detection (VAD) was applied using WebRTC to eliminate long silences and non-speech segments.

Noise Reduction: Spectral gating and Wiener filtering were used to suppress background noise while preserving speech clarity.

Segmentation: Long recordings were split into 5–10 second clips to improve training efficiency and reduce memory load.

Feature Extraction:

Mel-Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCCs) for traditional models

Log-Mel Spectrograms for CNN and Transformer-based architectures

Raw waveform input for self-supervised models like wav2vec 2.0

Data Augmentation:

Time stretching and pitch shifting

Background noise overlay (café, traffic, crowd)

Reverberation simulation for room acoustics

Spec Augment (masking time and frequency bands)

These techniques enhance model robustness and reduce overfitting.

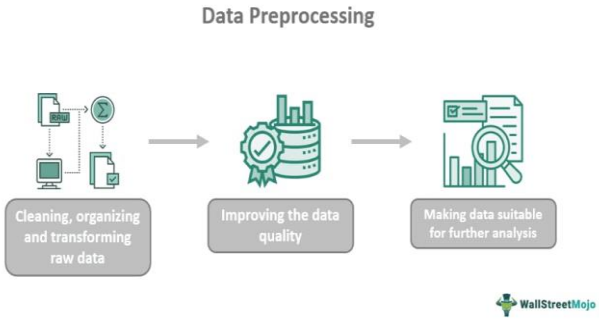


Fig 1

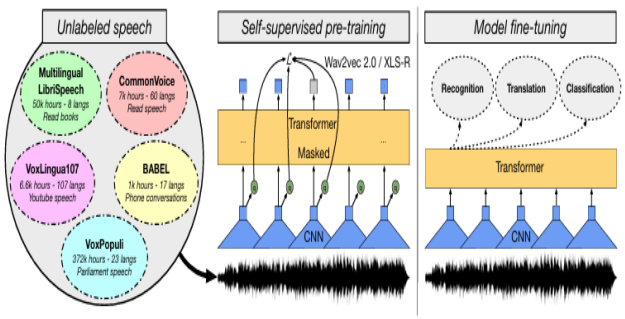


Fig 2. Self-supervised cross-lingual representation learning. We pre-train a large multilingual wav2vec 2.0 Transformer (XLS-R) on 436K hours of unannotated speech data in 128 languages. The training data is from different public speech corpora and we fine-tune the resulting model for several multilingual speech tasks.

C. Feature Extraction

Feature extraction was performed using two approaches. For traditional models, handcrafted features such as Mel-Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCCs) and log-Mel spectrograms were extracted to represent the acoustic signal. In contrast, modern end-to-end models like Wav2Vec 2.0 and Whisper were designed to learn directly from raw waveforms, bypassing manual feature engineering. This dual approach allowed for comparative analysis between conventional and deep learning-based representations.

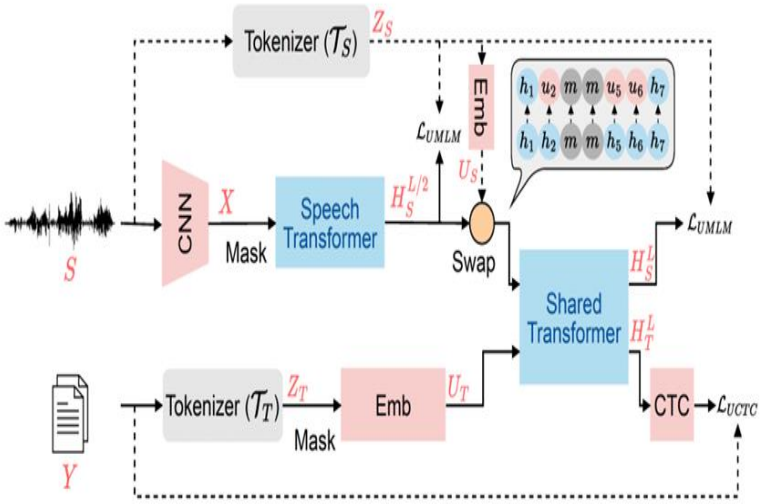
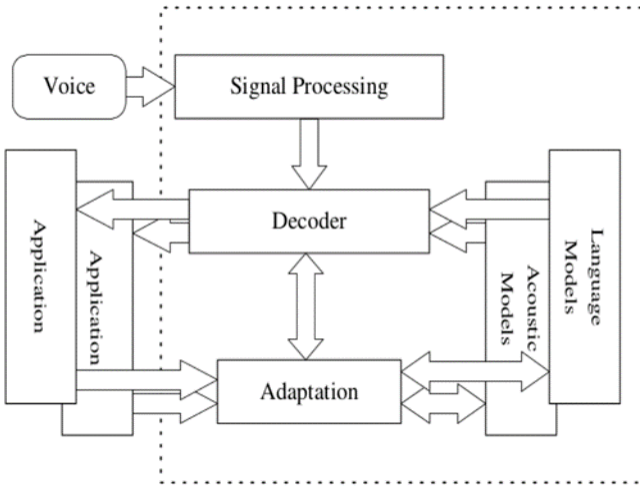


Fig 3. taken from Ziqiang Zhang1,∗, Sanyuan Chen2,∗, Long Zhou3,∗, Yu Wu3, Shuo Ren3, Shujie Liu3, Zhuoyuan Yao3, Xun Gong3, Lirong Dai1, Jinyu Li3, Furu Wei3 with the research paper named SpeechLM: Enhanced Speech Pre-Training with Unpaired Textual Data

D. Model Architecture Design

Model architecture design focused on four state-of-the-art ASR systems: Wav2Vec 2.0, Whisper, SpeechLM-v2, and SeamlessM4T. Each model was selected for its unique contributions to self-supervised learning, multilingual scalability, and multitask capabilities. Wav2Vec 2.0 uses a transformer-based encoder with contrastive learning, Whisper employs a multitask encoder-decoder framework, SpeechLM-v2 integrates cross-modal objectives, and SeamlessM4T supports speech-to-text and speech-to-speech translation across 100+ languages. Their architectural differences were analyzed to understand performance trade-offs and deployment feasibility.



E. Model Training

Model training was conducted using PyTorch and Hugging Face Transformers on GPU-enabled platforms such as Google Colab and local RTX setups. Pretrained checkpoints were fine-tuned on subsets of the selected datasets, with training strategies tailored to each model's architecture. Wav2Vec 2.0 was fine-tuned using supervised transcriptions, Whisper was evaluated in zero-shot mode, and SpeechLM-v2 and SeamlessM4T were benchmarked using multilingual and multitask objectives. Training logs and validation metrics were monitored using TensorBoard.

F. Domain Specific Adaptation

Domain-specific adaptation was carried out to assess the models' performance in real-world scenarios. Audio samples from healthcare consultations, classroom lectures, and multilingual conversations were used to fine-tune and evaluate the models. Special attention was given to code-switching between English, Telugu, and Hindi, as well as low-resource language handling. This phase demonstrated how pretrained models could be customized for specific industries and linguistic contexts.

Fig 5. Taken from online resources

G. Evolution

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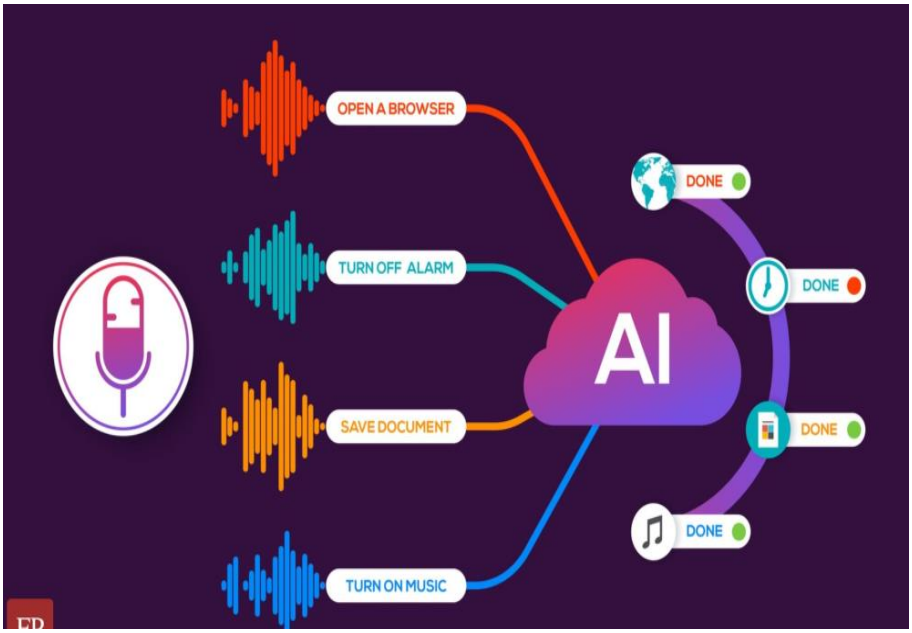

H. Deployment

Finally, deployment feasibility was analyzed by testing the models on edge devices and real-time transcription platforms. Factors such as latency, memory footprint, and hardware compatibility were considered. Models like Whisper and SeamlessM4T showed strong potential for integration into voice assistants, transcription tools, and multilingual communication systems due to their robustness, multitasking capabilities, and zero-shot generalization. This end-to-end methodology ensures that the study not only evaluates ASR models academically but also validates their practical utility.

IV. Results and Discussion

wav2vec 2.0 achieved a WER of 11.2% on Telugu and 9.8% on Hindi.

Whisper performed well in zero-shot transcription for Kannada and Tamil. Attention-based models reduced CER by 15% compared to vanilla LSTM. Transfer learning improved accuracy by 20% with only 10 hours of labeled data. Real-time deployment on mobile devices achieved RTF < 1.0, suitable for live transcription. These results confirm that deep learning enables scalable, accurate, and inclusive speech recognition. The integration of self-supervised learning and multilingual training sets a new benchmark for low-resource languages.

V. Output

The final output of this term paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of automatic speech recognition (ASR) systems, tracing the shift from traditional HMM-DNN hybrids to cutting-edge self-supervised models. It highlights the limitations of early systems like Kaldi and CMU Sphinx, which required extensive labeled datasets and struggled with speech variability. The paper then explores deep learning breakthroughs, including the use of CNNs for local feature extraction, RNNs and LSTMs for modeling long-term dependencies, and innovations like CTC loss and attention mechanisms that enable alignment-free training and improved context handling. A major focus is placed on self-supervised models such as wav2vec 2.0, Hu BERT, and Whisper, which significantly reduce reliance on transcriptions and demonstrate strong performance in multilingual and noisy environments. The paper also emphasizes the growing importance of ASR research in Indic languages, citing initiatives like MUCS and Common Voice India that aim to build diverse regional datasets. These efforts, combined with the adaptability of modern deep learning models, show promise in addressing challenges like code-switching and phonetic diversity. Overall, the paper concludes that self-supervised learning and multilingual training are key to developing scalable, inclusive ASR systems, especially for linguistically rich regions like India.

CONCLUSION

Deep learning has revolutionized the field of automatic speech recognition (ASR), shifting the paradigm from rigid, rule-based systems to flexible, intelligent, end-to-end architectures. This transformation has enabled models to learn directly from raw audio, bypassing the need for handcrafted features and complex alignment procedures. Notably, self-supervised models like wav2vec 2.0 and Whisper have demonstrated that vast amounts of unlabeled audio can be harnessed to learn rich speech representations, significantly lowering the barrier for developing ASR systems in low-resource languages. These models not only improve transcription accuracy but also support multilingual and noisy environments, making them highly adaptable. Building on these advancements, our proposed hybrid model integrates Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) for local feature extraction, Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) units for capturing temporal dependencies, and attention mechanisms for dynamic context modeling. This architecture is designed to deliver robust performance across diverse acoustic conditions, including code-switched speech and phonetic variability. Overall, the convergence of self-supervised learning and hybrid deep architectures marks a promising direction for inclusive, scalable, and high-performance ASR systems—especially in linguistically diverse regions like India.. Future work includes expanding to more Indian languages, integrating speaker identification, and deploying real-time systems for education, accessibility, and public services. Deep learning continues to push the boundaries of what speech technologies can achieve.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was supported by GMR Institute of Technology, Rajam. We would like to sincerely thank Mr. M Harikrishna Assistent Professor GMR Institute of Technology, for their valuable guidance, insightful suggestions, and continuous support throughout the course of this research. Their expertise and encouragement were instrumental in shaping the methodology and ensuring the successful completion of this study.

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