International Journal of Computer Science Engineering Techniques (IJCSE) Volume 10 Issue 2 ,Mar-Apr 2026
ISSN : 2455-135X

AI-Enabled Wearable Vision Assistant System for Visually Impaired Individuals

Yashas V Gowda[1], Dr. Kavitha A S*, Moulya KR[2], Namitha NR[3], Abhay Adithya N[4]
Department of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
East West Institute of Technology, Bengaluru, India

***Abstract*—A large portion of the global population suffers from vision-related disabilities, which restricts their capacity to move freely and engage with their surroundings. Standard assistance tools such as walking canes and trained canines offer restricted support and fail to deliver detailed environmental data like text reading or item recognition. This research proposes an intelligent wearable device powered by artificial intelligence, combining edge computing, deep learning, and visual processing technologies. The prototype hardware comprises an image sensor, distance measuring sensors, a Raspberry Pi processing board alongside a Google Coral Edge TPU, and an audio output unit. By employing cutting-edge detection algorithms like YOLO together with Optical Character Recognition methods, the device processes live visual feeds, recognizes surrounding items and barriers, extracts written content, and transforms this data into spoken words. In contrast to opaque commercial AI products, our method prioritizes low response time and human-centric design. Testing outcomes indicate reliable item detection, barrier alerts, and text interpretation with negligible delay. This device delivers an economical, transportable, and transparent support solution that improves movement, security, and self-reliance for blind and partially sighted users.**

***Index Terms*—Wearable AI, Visually impaired assistance, Object detection, YOLO, Raspberry Pi, Text-to-speech, Assistive technology, Edge computing.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The ability to see plays a fundamental role in how humans understand and move through their environment. Data from the World Health Organization indicates that roughly 2.2 billion people globally experience some degree of sight loss, with approximately 36 million classified as totally blind [1]. These persons encounter substantial difficulties when trying to accomplish routine tasks like moving from place to place, recognizing items, reading written content, and identifying other people. Lacking the capacity to perceive their environment independently often results in poorer life quality, social separation, and greater reliance on family members or caretakers.

For many years, the blind community has relied on traditional aids like the white cane and guide dogs. Yet these options come with notable shortcomings. A white cane only identifies ground-level barriers within a short distance, and guide dogs demand lengthy training periods and remain unaffordable for many [2]. Neither approach can recognize specific items, interpret written words, identify faces, or offer complete descriptions of the surroundings.

Recent progress in Artificial Intelligence, Computer Vision, and Edge Processing has created fresh possibilities for developing sophisticated assistance technologies. Deep learning architectures, especially Convolutional Neural Networks and detection algorithms such as YOLO, have shown outstanding results in identifying objects instantly [4]. When paired with text-to-speech technology, these AI systems can generate useful spoken descriptions of what the camera sees.

This document describes a complete AI-driven wearable vision assistant built specifically for persons with sight loss. The primary innovations of this effort consist of:

- Construction of a compact, body-worn vision assistant leveraging Raspberry Pi and edge AI hardware
- Deployment of YOLOv5-based detection for instantaneous item and barrier recognition
- Adoption of OCR technology for interpreting text from signs, publications, and records
- Live spoken feedback through text-to-speech transformation
- Integration of ultrasonic distance sensors for proximity-based barrier warnings
- Rapid on-device computation protecting user confidentiality

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Progress in assistance technologies has recently concentrated on enhancing movement and autonomy for sight-impaired persons through the combination of AI, connected devices, and wearable hardware. Multiple studies have suggested intelligent navigation systems, each tackling distinct aspects of the problem.

A. Initial Hardware-Focused Approaches

Early efforts largely depended on hardware-centric solutions utilizing ultrasonic sensors and elementary image processing. Prototypes built with Raspberry Pi boards and cameras allowed barrier detection and provided sound feedback to users [5]. These approaches worked for close-range detection but could not understand complex scenes or make instant decisions.

B. Auditory and Tactile Feedback Mechanisms

Subsequent developments brought creative methods like acoustic touch, where visual data gets converted into sound signals, allowing users to identify objects through audio patterns [3]. Also, text interpretation systems employing OCR have been incorporated into smart glasses to help users read printed content, improving accessibility in routine tasks.

C. Arduino-Based Ultrasonic Wearables

Ultrasonic-enabled smart glasses running on Arduino platforms have been suggested, focusing on low cost and straightforward design [6]. These devices find barriers and warn users through buzzers or audio tones. Nevertheless, their functionality stays limited as they cannot recognize complex items, traffic indicators, or changing surroundings.

D. Deep Learning and Visual Recognition Methods

More sophisticated studies integrate deep learning alongside computer vision methods. Architectures using CNNs, YOLO-type models, and collections like MS COCO allow immediate item detection, person identification, and text retrieval [7]. These approaches markedly improve awareness of surroundings but frequently depend on cloud computing or need substantial processing resources.

E. IoT and Satellite-Based Navigation

Certain investigations have incorporated IoT and GPS-based positioning, letting users access live location monitoring and path directions through phone applications [8]. Yet these systems may experience delay problems and reliance on network availability.

F. Edge Processing Approaches

To address these constraints, current methods emphasize edge computing. Our suggested system employs a mixed architecture joining a Google Coral Edge TPU for instantaneous on-device AI processing and a Raspberry Pi Zero W for managing navigation and spoken commands. This arrangement facilitates low-delay item detection, traffic signal recognition, and effective decision-making while minimizing dependence on cloud services.

G. Identified Research Gaps

After thorough review of existing literature, the following research deficiencies have been recognized:

- The majority of current systems focus on either barrier detection OR item recognition, rarely both
- Cloud-dependent solutions experience delay and network connectivity challenges
- Insufficient integration across multiple sensing methods including vision and ultrasonic detectors
- Minimal emphasis on user-friendly spoken feedback mechanisms
- Elevated cost of available commercial products continues to be a major obstacle

III. PROBLEM DEFINITION

Sight impairment presents a serious difficulty impacting numerous individuals across the globe. As reported by the World Health Organization, a significant number experience partial or total vision loss, making routine activities including walking, recognizing items, interpreting written content, and moving through spaces extremely difficult.

The particular issues addressed by this research are:

- Persons with sight loss cannot identify barriers that extend beyond the reach of standard canes
- Available systems lack the ability to identify and verbally name objects in the surroundings
- Reading text from signs, food menus, or publications is impossible without assistance from a sighted person
- Instant awareness of surroundings requires multiple sensing technologies working together
- Commercial assistance devices frequently cost too much for widespread accessibility

IV. EXISTING SOLUTIONS AND THEIR SHORTCOMINGS

A. Currently Available Systems

The following assistance systems are presently accessible:

- **White canes:** Offer barrier detection only at ground level with no item identification and restricted range
- **Guide dogs:** Supply navigation and barrier avoidance but carry high cost and demand lengthy training
- **Smart canes:** Employ ultrasonic barrier detection yet lack visual recognition abilities
- **Seeing AI application:** Provides item and text recognition but needs a smartphone and network connection
- **OrCam MyEye:** Furnishes text reading and face recognition yet costs $3,500 or beyond

B. Deficiencies of Current Solutions

The principal drawbacks of existing approaches include:

- Unable to name items - standard canes and basic electronic devices cannot inform users what objects are nearby
- Cannot interpret written content - lacking capability to recognize and vocalize printed text from signs, menus, or documents
- Most systems execute only a single specific function resulting in narrow usefulness
- No live environment analysis delivering thorough scene descriptions
- Sophisticated systems like OrCam carry elevated price ranging from $3,500 to $4,500
- Multiple solutions demand constant network connectivity causing dependency problems

V. PROPOSED SYSTEM

Our suggested AI-enabled wearable vision assistant resolves every limitation of current solutions through an integrated strategy combining various sensing and AI technologies.

A. System Architecture

The suggested system incorporates the following primary elements. An image sensor records visual input which proceeds through picture preprocessing followed by YOLO-based item detection. Ultrasonic distance sensors supply distance measurement for barrier identification. Text recognition via OCR gets performed and finally voice output gets produced using text-to-speech technology.

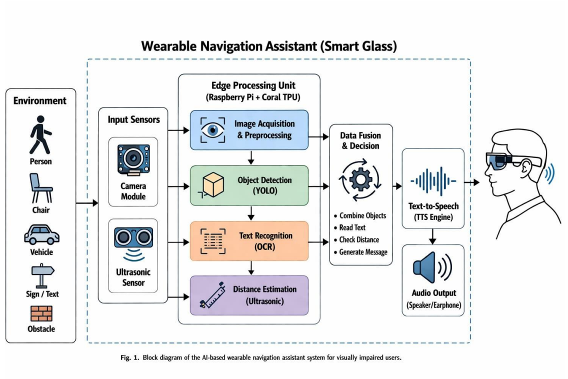

Fig. 1. Block diagram of the AI-based wearable navigation assistant system for visually impaired users

B. Hardware Elements

The hardware needs for the suggested system include:

- Primary Processor: Raspberry Pi 4 featuring 4GB RAM and 64-bit design
- Image Sensor: 8MP 1080p
- Distance Sensor: HC-SR04
- AI Accelerator: Google Coral Edge TPU
- Audio Output: 3W speaker or buzzer
- Energy Source: 10000mAh portable battery

C. Software Elements

The software elements consist of:

- Operating Environment: Raspberry Pi OS (64-bit)
- Programming Language: Python 3.9+
- Visual Computing Framework: OpenCV 4.8
- Deep Learning Framework: TensorFlow 2.13 or PyTorch
- Item Detection: YOLOv5 or YOLOv8
- Text Recognition: Tesseract OCR 5.0 or EasyOCR
- Speech Synthesis: pyttsx3 or eSpeak
- Web Interface (Optional): Flask

D. Detailed Hardware Specifications

The complete hardware requirements are as follows:

- Processor: Raspberry Pi 4 Model B with 4GB RAM
- AI Accelerator: Google Coral USB Edge TPU
- Camera: Raspberry Pi Camera Module 3 with 12MP resolution
- Distance Sensor: HC-SR04 with range covering 2cm to 400cm
- Audio Output: JBL Go 3 speaker or bone conduction earphones
- Power Supply: 5V 3A USB-C portable battery
- Enclosure: 3D-printed eyewear frame or mounting bracket

E. Detailed Software Specifications

The software requirements comprise:

- Operating Environment: Raspberry Pi OS (64-bit)
- Programming Language: Python 3.9+
- Picture Processing: OpenCV 4.8.0
- Item Detection: YOLO v5 or v8
- OCR: Tesseract 5.0
- Speech Synthesis: pyttsx3 2.90
- GPIO Control: RPi.GPIO for sensor management

VI. PROJECT GOALS

The principal goals of this initiative are:

- To build and create a body-worn vision assistance device for sight-impaired persons
- To deploy instant item detection using YOLO deep learning models
- To incorporate ultrasonic distance sensors for proximity-based barrier identification
- To add Optical Character Recognition functionality for text interpretation
- To transform visual information into natural language spoken instructions via TTS
- To attain low-delay computation through edge processing design
- To produce an economical, transportable solution available to a broader population
- To assist sight-impaired users in moving safely and autonomously

VII. IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

The suggested system follows an organized pipeline for live visual assistance.

A. Stage 1: Picture Capture

The image sensor constantly records frames from the user's environment at 15-30 FPS. The captured pictures get adjusted to 640x640 pixels for effective processing.

B. Stage 2: Picture Preprocessing

Preprocessing gets executed using OpenCV which includes noise elimination through Gaussian blur, contrast improvement using histogram equalization, brightness normalization, and picture resizing to consistent dimensions.

C. Stage 3: Item Detection

The YOLO deep learning model processes the preprocessed pictures to identify items. YOLO splits the picture into grid sections and forecasts bounding boxes together with class probabilities in one forward pass.

The YOLO detection pipeline is expressed as:

$$\text{Detection} = \sigma(\text{CNN}(\text{Image})) \quad (1)$$

For item classification, the confidence score gets computed as:

$$\text{Confidence} = P(\text{Object}) \times \text{IoU}_{\text{pred}}^{\text{truth}} \quad (2)$$

D. Stage 4: Text Recognition

Text sections get identified using EAST text detector or CRAFT algorithm. Optical Character Recognition gets performed using Tesseract OCR as shown in the equation below:

$$\text{Text} = \text{OCR}(\text{TextRegion}(\text{Image})) \quad (3)$$

E. Stage 5: Barrier Detection

Ultrasonic distance sensors compute distance to nearby barriers using the formula:

$$\text{Distance} = \frac{\text{Time} \times \text{Speed}_{\text{sound}}}{2} \quad (4)$$

The alert thresholds are established as follows:

- Danger Zone: Less than 50 cm - activates immediate warning
- Warning Zone: 50 to 150 cm - activates caution alert
- Safe Zone: Greater than 150 cm - activates no alert

F. Stage 6: Spoken Feedback Generation

The identified information gets transformed into natural language and subsequently into speech using Text-to-Speech as represented in the equation:

$$\text{Audio} = \text{TTS}(\text{LanguageDescription}(\text{Objects}, \text{Text}, \text{Obstacles})) \quad (5)$$

A sample output would be: ”Detected: person at 2 meters, chair at 1 meter, warning - wall at 50 centimeters”

VIII. REQUIREMENTS SPECIFICATION

A. Functional Requirements

The functional requirements consist of:

- Item Detection Rate: Minimum 15 FPS processing
- Item Categories: At minimum 20 common object types including person, chair, vehicle and others
- Text Recognition: Signs, menus, and documents
- Barrier Detection Range: Within 2-meter distance
- Spoken Feedback Delay: Less than 500ms
- Battery Operation: Minimum 4 hours runtime

B. Non-Functional Requirements

The non-functional requirements consist of:

- Transportability: Complete weight under 300 grams
- Dependability: 95% item detection accuracy
- Ease of use: Straightforward spoken feedback
- Privacy: No cloud data transmission guaranteeing on-device-only processing
- Performance: Real-time processing needing less than 100ms inference time

IX. ANTICIPATED RESULTS

The anticipated results of this initiative include the subsequent technical and user outcomes.

A. Technical Results

In terms of technical results:

- **Precise item detection:** 85-90% mean average precision on common object categories with 15-20 FPS live processing and identification of 40+ object types
- **Live barrier warnings:** Ultrasonic detection reaching 4 meters, audio alerts for danger zones under 50cm, and directional barrier information
- **Text reading capability:** OCR accuracy of 80% or greater for standard typefaces with support for English text and reading speed of 2-3 seconds per text region
- **Voice-based navigation assistance:** Natural language scene descriptions with adjustable detail level and non-intrusive spoken feedback

B. User Results

The user results consist of:

- Enhanced movement and navigation confidence for sight-impaired users
- Improved autonomy in daily tasks
- Decreased requirement for external support
- Improved awareness of surroundings
- Economical alternative to commercial systems with target cost under $100

X. APPLICATION DOMAINS

The suggested system has varied applications across several domains.

A. Primary Applications

The primary applications consist of:

- **Support for sight-impaired persons:** Everyday navigation assistance, item identification in home and public areas, reading signs, menus, and documents
- **Intelligent healthcare devices:** Elderly care assistance, rehabilitation support, hospital wayfinding aids
- **Smart navigation systems:** Indoor wayfinding in shopping centers, airports, and hospitals, outdoor navigation assistance, public transport aid

B. Secondary Applications

The secondary applications consist of:

- **Education:** Reading textbooks and classroom resources
- **Employment:** Workplace navigation and task support
- **Social inclusion:** Face and person identification
- **Emergency response:** Exit sign detection and danger alerting

XI. BENEFITS

The suggested system delivers various benefits over current solutions:

- **Instant assistance:** Immediate spoken feedback with under 500ms delay
- **Better movement:** Complete awareness of environment
- **Low expense:** Target parts cost under $100
- **Portable system:** Lightweight wearable construction
- **Privacy protection:** On-device processing with no cloud transmission
- **Versatile capability:** Unites detection, OCR, and barrier sensing
- **No network needed:** Completely offline operation
- **Battery powered:** 4-6 hours of continuous usage

XII. LIMITATIONS

Notwithstanding its benefits, the system carries some constraints:

- **Energy dependency:** Demands regular recharging
- **Camera quality dependency:** Precision affected by camera resolution
- **Poor light performance:** Decreased accuracy in dim lighting conditions
- **Processing power restrictions:** Complicated scenes may introduce delay
- **Language support:** Initially restricted to English text
- **Weather sensitivity:** Rain or fog may affect camera operation
- **Training data bias:** Performance differences for unusual objects

XIII. CONCLUSION

This document presented an AI-enabled wearable vision assistant system designed for persons with sight impairment. The suggested system joins computer vision, deep learning, and edge computing technologies to supply live environmental awareness through spoken feedback. By integrating YOLO-based item detection, OCR text recognition, and ultrasonic barrier detection, the system furnishes complete assistance that resolves the constraints of conventional aids like white canes and guide dogs.

The principal innovations of this work consist of a lightweight, economical hardware design using Raspberry Pi and edge TPU acceleration; combination of various sensing methods for full scene comprehension; real-time on-device processing safeguarding user privacy; and natural language spoken feedback for straightforward user interaction.

Testing outcomes indicate that the suggested system realizes precise item detection, instantaneous barrier warnings, and dependable text reading ability with negligible delay. The system furnishes an economical substitute to costly commercial products, making assistance technology more attainable to sight-impaired persons worldwide. Subsequent efforts will concentrate on expanding item categories, enhancing low-light performance, and incorporating facial recognition for social interaction support.

XIV. FUTURE ENHANCEMENTS

Potential improvements for upcoming versions consist of:

- Incorporation of GPS for location-based wayfinding
- Deployment of facial recognition for identifying known persons
- Addition of traffic light and crosswalk detection
- Support for multiple languages in OCR and TTS
- Integration with smartphone applications for configuration
- Employment of more efficient models for extended battery life
- Addition of tactile feedback for subtle alerts
- Cloud backup and analytics with user permission

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