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Eye Based Interactive Communication System

Ashwini Sonawane[1], Nikita Deore[2], Rohan Sonawane[3], Prof. A. S. Nalge[4]

Department of AIML (Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning)[1234]

Loknete Gopinathji Munde Institute of Engineering Education & Research (LOGMIEER)s, Nashik, India

Abstract: *Eye-based communication systems, like the Blink-To-Speak language, are essential tools for individuals with motor neuron disorders, enabling them to articulate their needs and emotions. These systems leverage eye movements as a means of interaction, providing a vital communication channel for those with severe speech impairments. By interpreting specific eye gestures, users can effectively convey their thoughts, fostering a sense of independence and improving their quality of life. Many of the existing eye-tracking technologies tend to be complex and costly, limiting their accessibility in low-income regions. Using a mobile phone camera, the system captures real-time video frames to detect and track the user's eyes, leveraging advanced facial landmark detection. Four primary eye movements—Left, Right, Up, and Blink—form the basis of the Blink-To-Live communication model, allowing users to communicate a range of more than 60 daily commands. By translating sequences of three eye gestures, the system generates readable sentences that are displayed on a screen and can be vocalized through synthesized speech. Unlike other sensor-dependent systems, Blink-To-Live is designed for affordability, flexibility, and ease of use, making it accessible without the need for specialized software or hardware. A prototype has been tested on a range of participants, showing positive results in terms of ease of use, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness*

Keywords: Eye-tracking technology, Assistive communication, Speech impairments, Predictive text, social inclusion

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a basic human need, yet many individuals with speech impairments face substantial challenges in expressing their thoughts and emotions. Traditional aids, like speech-generating devices, often do not fully meet users' specific needs. Advances in technology have led to the development of more intuitive communication tools that leverage eye-tracking technology.

The Interactive Eye-Based Communication System (IEBCS) empowers individuals with speech impairments by enabling them to communicate using eye movements. This system utilizes eye gaze as a natural form of expression, offering a more direct and user-friendly solution compared to traditional methods. The IEBCS allows users to customize vocabulary options and includes predictive text features to enhance communication speed and autonomy.

This paper discusses the design and development of the IEBCS, focusing on its user-centred design principles and technical architecture, including eye-tracking technology and algorithms that translate eye movements into communication. The findings from pilot studies highlight improvements in communication speed, user satisfaction, and overall quality of life.

In a world where digital inclusion is becoming increasingly important, the IEBCS represents a significant advancement in assistive technology, enabling greater social interaction and inclusion for individuals with speech challenges. Through this research, we aim to provide valuable insights into the design and effectiveness of eye-based communication systems.

Core Logic

The project comprises two main components:

- Eye Detection: Detecting eye movements and blinks.
- Virtual Keyboard: A screen-based keyboard where letters are selected using eye movements.

II. OBJECTIVE OF SYSTEM

The Interactive Eye-Based Communication System (IEBCS) aims to improve communication for individuals with speech impairments by helping them express themselves more effectively. The system's primary objectives are:

- Facilitating Efficient Communication: Develop a fast, accurate system that enables users to communicate through eye movements.
- Enhancing User Autonomy: Create a customizable interface that allows users to select personalized vocabulary and phrases.
- Improving Accessibility: Design a user-friendly interface that accommodates various motor and cognitive abilities.
- Incorporating Predictive Text: Use machine learning algorithms to predict and speed up user selections.
- Supporting Social Interaction: Encourage natural and spontaneous communication with family, friends, and caregivers.
- Gathering Feedback for Improvement: Collect user feedback to refine and improve future iterations of the system.
- Conducting Empirical Research: Validate the system's impact on communication speed and user satisfaction through pilot studies.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

Eye tracking technologies play a crucial role across various fields, including cognitive science, psychology, computer science, and medicine, by digitizing how individuals interact with their environments. These technologies focus on recording eye movements, which is essential for applications like eye-based communication and interactions with computer systems.

There are primarily three types of eye-tracking methods. The first involves devices that are worn directly on the eyes, such as specialized glasses or lenses equipped with infrared sensors to monitor eye positions. The second method uses the electrical fields generated by the eyes, detectable even in low-light conditions, through electrodes placed around the eyes—an example being the electrooculogram (EOG) technique. Both of these approaches fall under the category of sensor-based eye tracking technologies due to their reliance on external sensors.

The third method employs computer vision techniques, which detect and track eye movements in real-time using a camera, without requiring direct contact or additional hardware.

The development of the IEBCS will follow a structured,
user-centred methodology with the following phases:

User Research and Needs Assessment

- Conduct interviews with individuals with speech impairments, caregivers, and professionals to identify challenges and requirements. Gather data on user preferences and common communication scenarios.

System Design and Prototyping

- Create an initial design framework for the system architecture and user interface.
- Develop prototypes to visualize functionalities and gather user feedback.

Eye-Tracking Integration

- Choose suitable eye-tracking hardware and software.
- Implement algorithms for converting gaze into text input.

Development of Communication Features

- Integrate customizable vocabulary libraries and predictive text functions.
- Create an adjustable interface customized to meet user preferences.

Iteration and Development

- Refine the system based on pilot study results, ensuring it meets user expectations.

Implementation and Training

- Develop training materials for users and caregivers.

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Long-Term Monitoring and Feedback

- Establish feedback loops to collect user experiences and continuously improve the system.

Module for detecting facial landmarks.

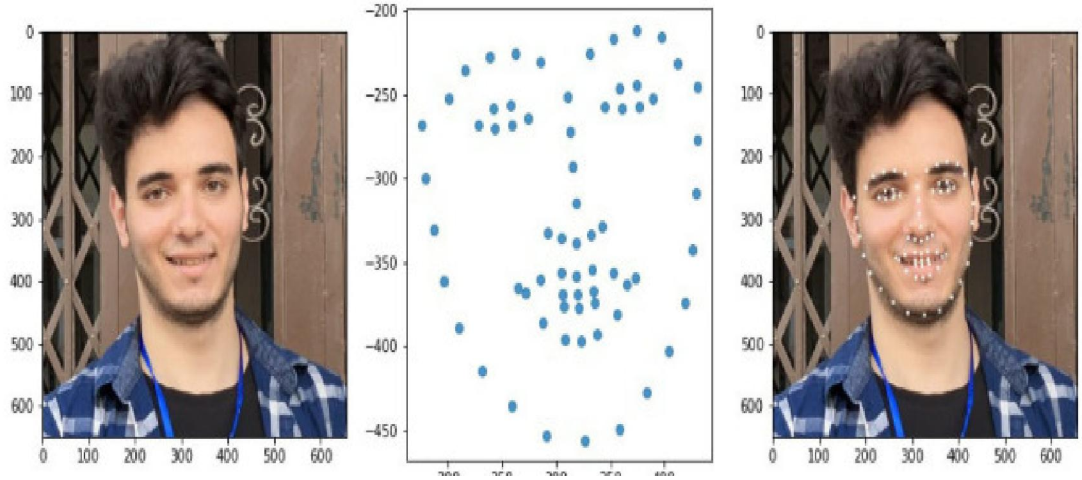

Figure 1- Facial landmark detection module.

IV. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of the Interactive Eye-Based Communication System (IEBCS) is structured to enable smooth communication between users, eye-tracking devices, and software. Eye-based communication system has two basic system components: a mobile application developed by a Google flutter framework and the other is a backend python module for video frames image analysis and processing. The patient's interactions with the Eye-based communication system start with a caregiver's opening the phone camera to track the patient's eye gestures.

Eye-based tracking applications such as Eye-Based Communication System have been introduced as assistive communication technology for patients with speech impairments. The devices that track the patient's eye range from expensive gaze-sensing keyboards such as Tobi Dynamo or Eye Transfer to special lenses, electrodes, or glasses with infrared sensors

The system architecture of the IEBCS includes the following components:

1. User Interface (UI) Layer

- Displays symbols, letters, and customizable options on the screen.
- It offers feedback to users by providing visual or auditory signals to confirm their selections.

2. Eye-Tracking Module

- Eye-tracking hardware captures gaze data and translates it into user inputs.
- Real-time processing of eye movements converts them into selections or cursor actions.

3. Communication Engine

- Machine learning algorithms provide predictive text suggestions.
- Text-to-speech (TTS)converts selected text into audible speech.

4. User Management System

- Stores individual user preferences and communication history.
- Allows configuration of system settings to match user needs.

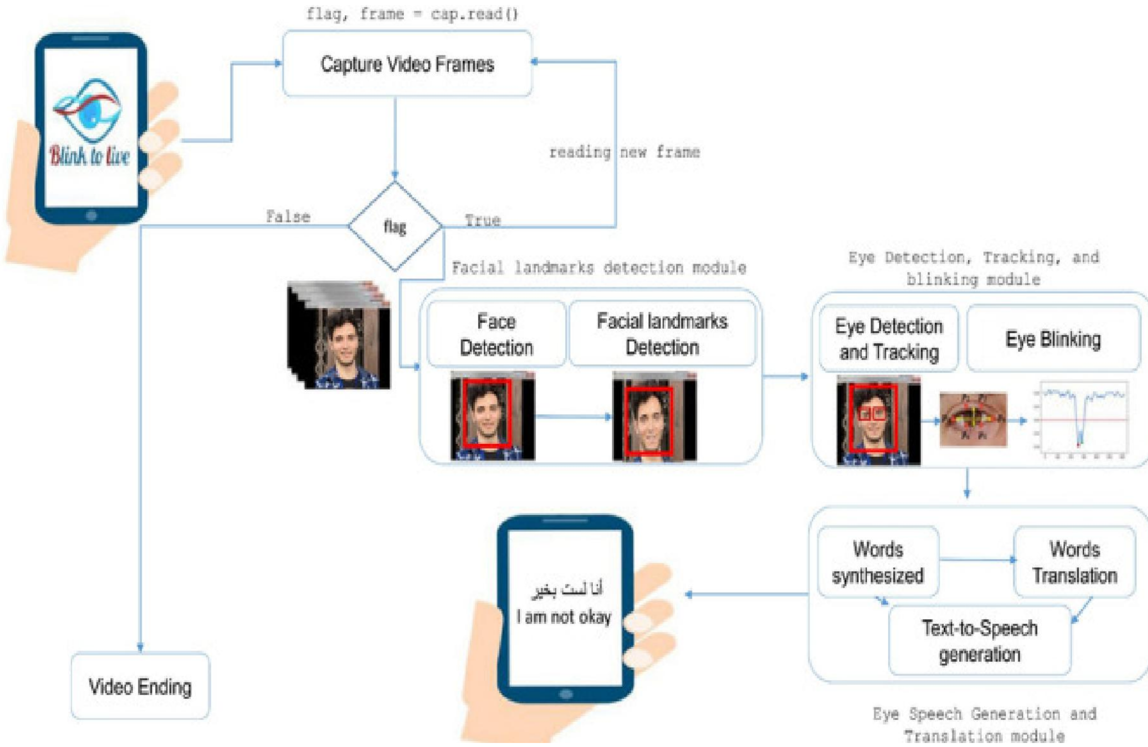

Figure 2- Eye based communication system Architecture

V. CONCLUSION

The Eye-Based Communication System offers an innovative and cost-effective solution for individuals with speech impairments, enabling them to communicate effectively through eye movements. By employing advanced computer vision techniques, the application translates various eye gestures into practical commands, facilitating emotional expression and daily interactions.

Looking ahead, we aim to enhance the system's performance by developing a high-speed backend that utilizes modern real-time image processing technologies. Incorporating reinforcement learning will improve the accuracy of eye tracking and gesture recognition, allowing for a more seamless communication experience.

Additionally, the application will adapt to each user's unique eye movement patterns and blinking behaviours, leading to a more personalized and efficient communication tool. The ability to integrate with various assistive devices enhances the system's functionality, allowing users to engage with their surroundings through eye movements.In summary, our Eye-Based Communication System represents a significant advancement in assistive technology, fostering greater independence and communication for those who rely on eye-based interactions.

VI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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