International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management (IJSREM)
Volume: 09 Issue: 05 | May - 2025 SJIF Rating: 8.586 ISSN: 2582-3930

Automated Vehicle License/Number Plate Identification – Conversion from Image to Text using Deep Learning

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Abstract
Automated Vehicle License Plate Recognition (VLPR) systems have become a cornerstone in the development of intelligent transportation infrastructures. These systems enable a range of applications, including real-time traffic monitoring, automated toll systems, and law enforcement activities, by facilitating accurate vehicle identification. This paper proposes a comprehensive deep learning-based solution that combines advanced object detection models and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technologies to detect and read vehicle license plates directly from images. The integration of YOLOv5 for plate detection and Tesseract OCR for character recognition creates a reliable and efficient pipeline for license plate identification. Experimental evaluations conducted on a diverse dataset highlight the robustness and high accuracy of the proposed method across various environmental conditions, including different lighting and occlusion scenarios.

Keywords
License Plate Recognition, Deep Learning, YOLOv5, Tesseract OCR, Vehicle Identification, Image Processing, Computer Vision.

I. Introduction
The growth in vehicular population and the necessity for intelligent traffic systems have led to increased interest in automated vehicle identification technologies. One such technology, Vehicle License Plate Recognition (VLPR), plays a vital role in enabling smart infrastructure solutions. VLPR systems use image processing techniques to identify vehicles through their license plates and are widely used in applications such as access control, urban traffic enforcement, and automated billing in toll plazas.

Traditional LPR approaches relied heavily on hand-crafted features, segmentation methods, and fixed thresholds, which struggled under varying real-world conditions such as illumination changes, plate occlusion, and skewed angles. Recent advances in deep learning have significantly enhanced the capabilities of these systems. With the ability to learn hierarchical features and generalize across conditions, convolutional neural networks (CNNs) have emerged as a powerful tool for object detection and image classification.

This paper presents an end-to-end system that leverages YOLOv5 for license plate localization and Tesseract OCR for extracting textual information. The integration of these two technologies creates a highly accurate and robust pipeline capable of processing real-world vehicle imagery.

II. Related Work
The evolution of license plate recognition systems has seen a progression from rule-based image processing methods to machine learning and more recently, deep learning approaches. Early systems typically used techniques such as edge detection, morphological operations, and region growing for plate localization, followed by character segmentation and template matching for recognition.

Machine learning methods, including Support Vector Machines (SVMs) and K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), were later introduced for feature-based classification. These methods improved accuracy but were still limited by their reliance on feature engineering.

Deep learning models, especially CNNs, have transformed the field. Object detection networks like YOLO (You Only Look Once), SSD (Single Shot Detector), and Faster R-CNN have demonstrated real-time performance and high accuracy in localizing license plates. For character recognition, Convolutional Recurrent Neural Networks (CRNNs) and OCR systems like Tesseract have shown effectiveness in extracting text from complex image backgrounds.

This study builds upon these advancements, combining YOLOv5 for detection with the Tesseract engine for recognition, enhanced with dataset augmentation and post-processing steps.

III. Methodology

The proposed system comprises a two-stage pipeline:

1. License Plate Detection using YOLOv5: The YOLOv5 model, known for its balance of speed and accuracy, is used to detect license plate regions in vehicle images. The model is trained on a labeled dataset containing diverse vehicle and plate images.

2. Text Extraction with Tesseract OCR: The cropped license plate region from YOLOv5 output is passed to the Tesseract OCR engine, which converts the image into alphanumeric text. Custom training data and preprocessing enhance recognition accuracy.

Data collection involves gathering images from surveillance footage, mobile camera feeds, and online datasets. Images are annotated with bounding boxes around plates. Preprocessing includes grayscale conversion, contrast normalization, and augmentation to simulate real-world conditions.

YOLOv5 is trained using the Adam optimizer with cosine annealing for learning rate scheduling. The model converges over 100 epochs, showing robust performance in identifying plates across diverse image conditions.

IV. Experimental Results

The system was evaluated using a test dataset of 500 vehicle images. The evaluation metrics include Precision, Recall, and F1-Score. The performance for both detection and recognition stages is summarized in the table below:

Metric	Detection (%)	Recognition (%)
Precision	96.4	94.1
Recall	95.8	93.5
F1-score	96.1	93.8

The results indicate a high degree of accuracy, with slight performance degradation observed in scenarios involving extreme lighting, blurred images, or partial occlusions. Further error analysis showed that most misclassifications occurred due to low-resolution imagery and unusual font styles on license plates.

V. Conclusion

This research presents a comprehensive solution for automated license plate recognition by integrating YOLOv5 for detection and Tesseract OCR for text recognition. The proposed method demonstrates strong performance under a wide range of environmental conditions, making it suitable for real-world deployments in smart cities and transportation systems.

Future enhancements may include incorporating video input with real-time tracking, multilingual support for international plate formats, and deep-learning-based OCR models for improved accuracy over traditional engines.

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