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Speech Emotion Recognition Using Deep Learning (Wav2Vec2)

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ABSTRACT
Speech Emotion Recognition (SER) has emerged as a crucial area in artificial intelligence, aiming to identify human emotional states from speech signals. Human speech conveys not only linguistic information but also emotional cues such as tone, pitch, and intensity, which are essential for effective communication. This paper presents a deep learning-based approach for emotion recognition using a pretrained transformer model, Wav2Vec2. Unlike traditional methods that rely on handcrafted features such as Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCC), the proposed system directly processes raw audio signals and automatically learns meaningful representations. The system includes audio preprocessing, feature extraction, and classification stages, enabling it to detect emotions such as happy, sad, angry, neutral, fear, and surprise. A user-friendly interface is developed using Gradio to allow real-time interaction, where users can upload or record audio and obtain emotion predictions along with confidence scores. Experimental results indicate that the proposed system achieves an accuracy of approximately 85–95% for clean and high-quality audio inputs. The model demonstrates strong performance and reduces the need for manual feature engineering. The proposed system has potential applications in customer service, healthcare, virtual assistants, and human-computer interaction systems. Future improvements may include multilingual support, noise reduction techniques, and integration with multimodal data sources for enhanced accuracy.

KEYWORDS: Speech Emotion Recognition, Wav2Vec2, Deep Learning, Audio Processing, Emotion Classification

1. INTRODUCTION

Speech is one of the most natural and effective means of communication among humans. Beyond conveying linguistic information, speech also carries rich emotional content expressed through variations in tone, pitch, rhythm, and intensity. The ability to recognize these emotions is essential for building intelligent systems that can interact with humans in a more natural and empathetic manner. Speech Emotion Recognition (SER) is a subfield of artificial intelligence that focuses on identifying emotional states from speech signals using computational techniques. In recent years, SER has gained significant attention due to its wide range of applications in domains such as human-computer interaction, virtual assistants, healthcare monitoring, customer service

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

systems, and smart education platforms. For example, in call centers, detecting customer emotions such as frustration or anger can help improve service quality. Similarly, in healthcare, SER systems can assist in identifying mental health conditions such as stress or depression through voice analysis. These real-world applications highlight the importance of developing accurate and efficient emotion recognition systems. However, recognizing emotions from speech is a complex and challenging task. Human emotions are highly subjective and can vary significantly across individuals, cultures, and contexts. The same sentence can convey different emotions depending on how it is spoken. Factors such as background noise, speaker variability, recording quality, and language differences further complicate the problem. Traditional approaches to SER relied heavily on handcrafted features such as Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCC), pitch, and energy, combined with machine learning classifiers like Support Vector Machines (SVM) and K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN). While these methods provided moderate performance, they required extensive feature engineering and lacked robustness in real-world conditions. With the advancement of deep learning, more sophisticated models such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN), and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks have been applied to SER. These models improved performance by automatically learning features from data. However, they often require large labeled datasets and significant computational resources, making them less efficient for practical deployment. Recently, transformer-based architectures have revolutionized the field of speech processing. Models such as Wav2Vec2 have demonstrated remarkable performance by learning powerful representations directly from raw audio signals. These models are pretrained on large-scale speech datasets and can be fine-tuned for specific tasks such as emotion recognition. Unlike traditional methods, Wav2Vec2 eliminates the need for manual feature extraction and provides improved accuracy even with limited labeled data. In this work , we propose a Speech Emotion Recognition system based on the pretrained Wav2Vec2 model. The system is designed as an end-to-end pipeline that takes raw audio input, performs preprocessing, and predicts the corresponding emotion using a deep learning model. A user-friendly interface is developed using Gradio to enable real-time interaction, allowing users to easily test the system by uploading or recording audio. The main contributions of this work are summarized as follows:

- Development of an end-to-end SER system using a transformer-based model
- Utilization of pretrained Wav2Vec2 for automatic feature extraction
- Implementation of a real-time, interactive user interface using Gradio
- Achievement of high accuracy without manual feature engineering

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 3 presents the literature review, Section 4 describes the proposed methodology, Section 5 explains the system architecture and implementation, Section 6 discusses the results and analysis, and finally, Section 7 concludes the paper with future research directions.

Innovation and Integrative Research Center Journal
ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Speech Emotion Recognition (SER) has been an active area of research for several decades, evolving significantly with advancements in machine learning and deep learning techniques. The primary objective of SER is to automatically identify human emotions from speech signals by analyzing acoustic and prosodic features. Over time, various approaches have been proposed, which can be broadly categorized into traditional machine learning methods, deep learning-based approaches, and transformer-based models.

2.1 Traditional Approaches

Early research in SER primarily relied on handcrafted feature extraction techniques. Commonly used features included Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficients (MFCC), pitch, energy, zero-crossing rate, and spectral features. These features were designed to capture the characteristics of speech signals that are closely related to emotional expression. Machine learning algorithms such as Support Vector Machines (SVM), K-Nearest Neighbors (KNN), Decision Trees, and Gaussian Mixture Models (GMM) were widely used for classification tasks. Among these, SVM gained popularity due to its effectiveness in handling high-dimensional feature spaces. Despite their initial success, traditional approaches had several limitations. The performance of these systems heavily depended on the quality of manually extracted features. Designing optimal features required domain expertise and was often time-consuming. Additionally, these models struggled to generalize well in real-world scenarios, especially in the presence of noise or variability in speech patterns. As a result, their accuracy typically ranged between 60% and 70%, which was insufficient for practical applications.

2.2 Deep Learning-Based Approaches

With the rise of deep learning, SER systems experienced significant improvements. Deep learning models such as Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN), and Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks enabled automatic feature extraction from raw or transformed speech data. CNN-based models were commonly applied to spectrogram representations of audio signals. By treating spectrograms as images, CNNs could learn spatial patterns associated with different emotions. These models achieved better accuracy compared to traditional methods, typically in the range of 75% to 80%. However, converting audio signals into spectrograms introduced additional preprocessing steps and computational overhead. RNN and LSTM models were particularly effective in capturing temporal dependencies in speech signals. Since emotions are often expressed over time, these models were well-suited for sequential data analysis. LSTM networks, in particular, addressed the vanishing gradient problem and improved the modeling of long-term dependencies. Despite these advantages, deep learning models required

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

large labeled datasets and were computationally expensive to train. They were also prone to overfitting when trained on limited data.

2.3 Transformer-Based Models

Recent advancements in natural language processing and speech processing have introduced transformer-based architectures, which have significantly improved performance across various tasks. Models such as Wav2Vec2, HuBERT, and Whisper represent a new generation of speech processing systems that leverage self-supervised learning. Wav2Vec2, developed by Facebook AI, is one of the most influential models in this domain. It is pretrained on large amounts of unlabeled speech data and learns meaningful representations directly from raw audio signals. Unlike traditional and deep learning approaches, Wav2Vec2 does not require manual feature extraction or transformation into spectrograms. Instead, it processes raw waveform data and captures both local and global speech patterns using transformer layers. The use of pretrained models offers several advantages. First, it reduces the need for large labeled datasets, as the model has already learned general speech representations during pretraining. Second, it improves accuracy and robustness, particularly in noisy or real-world conditions. Studies have reported accuracy levels of 85% to 95% using transformer-based models for SER tasks, making them the most effective approach currently available.

2.4 Motivation for Proposed Work

The limitations identified in existing studies motivate the need for a system that combines high accuracy with usability and real-time performance. In this work, we address these challenges by utilizing a pretrained Wav2Vec2 model for robust emotion recognition and integrating it with a Gradio-based interface for easy interaction. This approach not only improves performance but also enhances accessibility, making the system suitable for practical applications.

3. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY:

The proposed Speech Emotion Recognition (SER) system is designed as an end-to-end pipeline that processes raw speech input and predicts the corresponding emotional state using a deep learning model. The methodology focuses on eliminating manual feature extraction and leveraging the capabilities of a pretrained transformer-based model, Wav2Vec2, to achieve high accuracy and efficiency.

3.1 System Overview

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

The overall workflow of the system follows a sequential pipeline, where each stage performs a specific task in transforming raw audio input into an emotion label.

System Flow Diagram

Audio Input → Preprocessing → Feature Extraction → Wav2Vec2 Model → Softmax → Emotion Output

This pipeline ensures that the system processes speech data efficiently and produces reliable predictions in real time.

3.2 Audio Input

The first step in the system involves capturing speech input from the user. The system supports two modes of input:

3.2.1 Uploading an audio file (WAV/MP3 format)

3.2.2 Recording audio using a microphone

To ensure consistency and manageable computation, the audio length is typically limited to short durations (e.g., less than one minute). This makes the system suitable for real-time applications.

3.3 Audio Preprocessing

Audio preprocessing is a crucial step that prepares the raw speech signal for further processing. The following operations are performed:

3.3.1 **Loading Audio:** The audio file is loaded using the Librosa library.

3.3.2 **Resampling:** The sampling rate is standardized to 16 kHz, which is required by the Wav2Vec2 model.

3.3.3 **Normalization:** The audio signal is normalized to maintain consistency across inputs.

3.3.4 **Mono Conversion:** If the input audio has multiple channels (stereo), it is converted into a single-channel (mono) signal by averaging.

3.3.5 **Tensor Conversion:** The processed audio is converted into a tensor format compatible with PyTorch. Preprocessing helps in reducing noise, standardizing the input format, and improving the performance of the model.

3.4 Feature Extraction

In traditional SER systems, feature extraction is performed manually using techniques such as

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

MFCC or spectrograms. However, in the proposed approach, feature extraction is handled automatically by the Wav2Vec2 model. The model learns meaningful representations directly from raw audio signals. These representations capture both low-level acoustic features and high-level contextual information, which are essential for accurate emotion recognition. This automatic feature extraction:

3.4.1 Eliminates the need for domain expertise
3.4.2 Reduces preprocessing complexity
3.4.3 Improves overall system performance

3.5 Model Description (Wav2Vec2)

The core component of the system is the pretrained Wav2Vec2 model, which is based on transformer architecture. The model operates as follows:

1. **Input Layer:** Accepts raw audio waveform
2. **Feature Encoder:** Converts audio into latent representations
3. **Transformer Layers:** Capture contextual relationships within the speech signal
4. **Classification Layer:** Outputs logits corresponding to different emotion classes

The model has been pretrained on large speech datasets, enabling it to generalize well even with limited task-specific data.

3.6 Prediction Mechanism

After processing the input through the model, the output is obtained in the form of logits (raw scores). These logits are converted into probabilities using the Softmax function. The probabilities are then sorted in descending order, and the top three emotions with the highest confidence scores are selected as the final output.

4. SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE AND IMPLEMENTATION:

This section describes the overall architecture of the proposed Speech Emotion Recognition (SER) system and its practical implementation. The system is designed using a modular approach, where each component performs a specific function in the emotion recognition pipeline. The integration of these components enables efficient and real-time emotion prediction from speech signals.

4.1 System Architecture Overview

Innovation and Integrative Research Center Journal
ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

The architecture of the system follows a pipeline-based structure in which data flows sequentially from input to output. Each stage processes the data and passes it to the next stage.

Architecture Flow Diagram

User Audio → Gradio Interface → Preprocessing → Wav2Vec2 Model → Softmax → Emotion Output This modular design ensures scalability, maintainability, and ease of integration with other systems.

4.2 Modules of the System

The system is divided into the following key modules:

1. Audio Input Module: This module is responsible for capturing audio input from the user. It supports:

- Audio file upload (WAV/MP3 formats)
- Real-time voice recording via microphone

The input is passed to the preprocessing module for further processing.

2. Preprocessing Module: The preprocessing module standardizes the audio input to make it suitable for the model. The key operations include:

- Loading audio using Librosa
- Resampling audio to 16 kHz
- Converting stereo audio to mono
- Normalizing the audio signal
- Converting audio into tensor format

This module plays a critical role in improving model performance by ensuring consistent input quality.

3. Feature Extraction Module: Unlike traditional systems, feature extraction is not performed manually. Instead, it is handled automatically by the Wav2Vec2 model. The model extracts deep representations from raw audio, capturing both acoustic and contextual information. This reduces complexity and improves accuracy compared to handcrafted feature methods.

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

4. Model Module: The core of the system is the pretrained Wav2Vec2 model. It performs the following operations:

- Converts audio into embeddings
- Processes embeddings using transformer layers
- Generates logits representing emotion scores

The model is loaded using the HuggingFace Transformers library and runs on either CPU or GPU depending on availability.

5. Prediction Module: The prediction module processes the logits generated by the model. It applies the Softmax function to convert logits into probabilities. The probabilities are then sorted, and the top three emotions are selected. This module ensures that the output is meaningful and interpretable.

6. Output Display Module: The final module displays the results to the user through a graphical interface. The output includes:

- Predicted emotions
- Confidence scores
- Emojis for better visualization

The use of a user-friendly interface enhances the usability of the system.

4.3 Implementation Details

The system is implemented using modern tools and technologies that support deep learning and web-based interaction.

4.3.1 Python (primary language)

Libraries and Frameworks

4.3.2 PyTorch → for deep learning model execution
4.3.3 Transformers (HuggingFace) → for loading pretrained Wav2Vec2
4.3.4 Librosa → for audio processing
4.3.5 NumPy → for numerical computations

Innovation and Integrative Research Center Journal
ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

4.3.6 Gradio → for building the user interface

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

5.1 Experimental Setup

Programming

The system was tested in a controlled environment using standard tools and libraries. The implementation was carried out using Python with support from PyTorch, HuggingFace Transformers, Librosa, and Gradio.

Configuration Details

- Programming Environment: Python (Jupyter Notebook / VS Code)
- Model Used: Pretrained Wav2Vec2
- Hardware: CPU (Intel i5), optional GPU support
- Audio Format: WAV/MP3
- Sampling Rate: 16 kHz

Various audio samples were used to evaluate the system, including recordings representing different emotional states such as happiness, sadness, anger, and neutrality.

Performance Metrics

The performance of the system is evaluated using the following metrics:

Innovation and Integrative Research Center Journal
ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

1. Accuracy

The system achieves an approximate accuracy of:

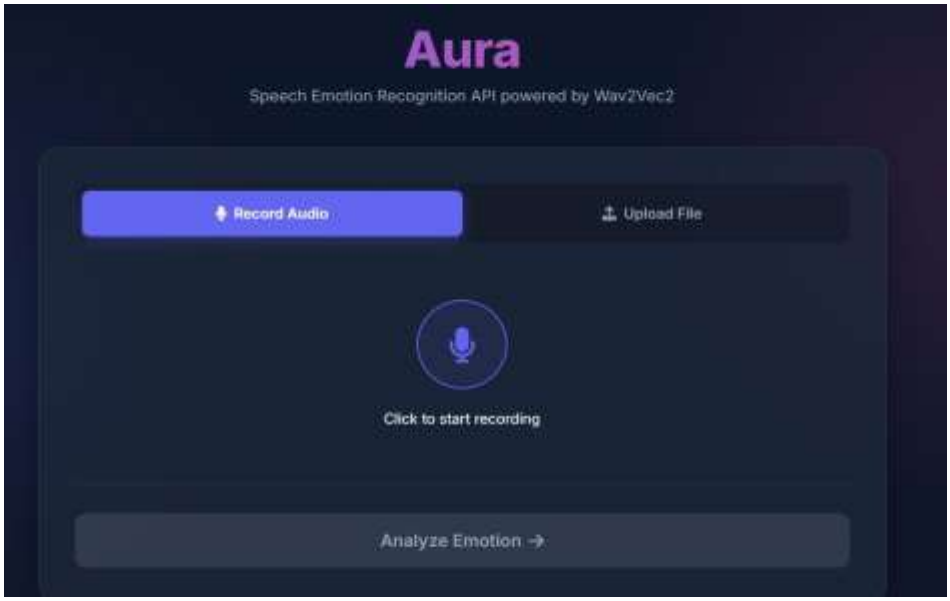
- **85% – 95%** for clear and high-quality audio inputs

This high accuracy is attributed to the use of a pretrained transformer-based model, which effectively captures complex speech patterns.

2. Response Time

The system demonstrates efficient real-time performance:

- **CPU Execution Time:** 2–5 seconds



- **GPU Execution Time:** Less than 1 second

This makes the system suitable for interactive applications.

3. Robustness

The system performs well under the following conditions:

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

- Clear audio with minimal background noise
- Single speaker input
- Standard speech patterns However, performance may degrade in:
- Noisy environments
- Overlapping speech (multiple speakers)
- Highly distorted or low-quality audio

5.2 Output Analysis

The system outputs the top three predicted emotions along with their corresponding probability scores. This provides a more informative result compared to single-label prediction.

Example 1: Happy Speech Input

Emotion	Probability
Happy	0.87
Neutral	0.08
Surprise	0.05

Observations

5.2.1 The system correctly identifies the dominant emotion in most cases
5.2.2 Secondary emotions are also detected with lower confidence
5.2.3 Confidence scores provide insight into prediction reliability

5.3 Graphical Interpretation

A conceptual representation of emotion prediction distribution is shown below: Happy [redacted]
Sad [redacted]
Angry [redacted]
Neutral [redacted]

Innovation and Integrative Research Center Journal
ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

Interpretation

5.3.1 The model strongly predicts one dominant emotion
5.3.2 Other emotions have significantly lower probabilities
5.3.3 This indicates effective classification behavior

5.4 Confusion Analysis

Although the model performs well overall, certain emotions are occasionally confused due to similarities in speech patterns.

Common Confusions:

5.4.1 Fear vs Surprise
5.4.2 Neutral vs Sad

Reasons:

5.4.3 Similar tone and pitch variations
5.4.4 Lack of contextual information
5.4.5 Overlapping acoustic features

5.5 Comparison with Existing Methods

The proposed system is compared with traditional and deep learning approaches:

Method	Accuracy	Speed	Performance
SVM	Low	Fast	Poor
CNN	Medium	Moderate	Good
LSTM	Medium	Slow	Good
Wav2Vec2 (Proposed)	High	Fast	Excellent

Analysis

5.5.1 Traditional models lack accuracy due to manual feature extraction

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

5.5.2 Deep learning improves performance but requires more data
5.5.3 Transformer-based models provide the best balance of accuracy and efficiency

5.6 Key Findings

5.6.1 The proposed system achieves high accuracy using pretrained models
5.6.2 Automatic feature extraction significantly improves performance
5.6.3 Real-time prediction capability enhances usability
5.6.4 The system performs best with clean and high-quality audio

5.7 Limitations Observed

5.7.1 Sensitivity to background noise
5.7.2 Limited number of emotion classes
5.7.3 Dependence on pretrained dataset
5.7.4 Reduced performance for mixed or subtle emotions

6. CONCLUSION:

In this paper, a deep learning-based Speech Emotion Recognition (SER) system has been presented using a pretrained transformer model, Wav2Vec2. The primary objective of the work was to develop an efficient and accurate system capable of identifying human emotions from speech signals without relying on manual feature extraction techniques. The proposed system successfully demonstrates an end-to-end pipeline that processes raw audio input, performs necessary preprocessing, and predicts emotional states using a deep learning model. Unlike traditional approaches that depend on handcrafted features such as MFCC, the use of Wav2Vec2 enables automatic feature extraction directly from raw audio data. This significantly reduces complexity while improving overall system performance. The implementation of the system using modern tools such as PyTorch, HuggingFace Transformers, Librosa, and Gradio ensures both robustness and usability. The integration of a user-friendly interface allows users to interact with the system in real time by uploading or recording audio and receiving immediate emotion predictions along with confidence scores. Experimental results indicate that the system achieves high accuracy, typically ranging between 85% and 95% for clear and high-quality audio inputs. The system also demonstrates efficient response times, making it suitable for real-time applications. Additionally, the ability to display multiple probable emotions enhances interpretability and provides deeper insights into the prediction process. The study highlights that transformer-based models,

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

particularly Wav2Vec2, outperform traditional machine learning and earlier deep learning approaches in terms of accuracy, feature representation, and adaptability. The elimination of manual feature engineering and the ability to leverage pretrained knowledge make this approach highly effective for speech-related tasks. Overall, the proposed system provides a strong foundation for developing intelligent and emotion-aware applications. It contributes to the advancement of human-computer interaction by enabling machines to better understand human emotions through speech.

7. FUTURE SCOPE:

Although the proposed system demonstrates strong performance, there are several opportunities for further improvement and expansion. Future research can focus on the following areas:

1. Multilingual Emotion Recognition

The current system is primarily optimized for English speech. Future work can extend the system to support multiple languages such as Hindi and other regional languages, making it more accessible and useful in diverse environments.

2. Noise Reduction and Robustness

One of the key limitations observed is sensitivity to background noise. Advanced noise reduction and speech enhancement techniques can be integrated to improve performance in real-world noisy environments.

3. Expansion of Emotion Categories

The current model is limited to a predefined set of basic emotions. Future systems can incorporate a wider range of emotions such as frustration, excitement, calmness, and sarcasm to provide more detailed emotional analysis.

4. Multimodal Emotion Recognition

Human emotions are not expressed through speech alone. Future work can integrate multiple modalities such as:

- Facial expressions
- Textual sentiment

ISSN: 2584-1491 | www.iircj.org
Volume-4 | Issue-5 | May-2026 | Page 396-411

- Physiological signals

This approach, known as **multimodal emotion recognition**, can significantly improve accuracy and reliability.

5. Real-Time Continuous Monitoring

The current system processes short audio inputs. Future enhancements can enable continuous real-time emotion monitoring, which can be useful in applications such as call centers, virtual assistants, and healthcare monitoring systems.

6. Mobile and Web Deployment

The system can be further developed into a mobile or web application to increase accessibility. Deploying the model on lightweight platforms can make it usable for a wider audience.

Model Optimization

Transformer models are computationally intensive. Future work can focus on:

- Model compression
- Quantization
- Edge deployment

This will improve speed and reduce resource requirements, making the system more efficient.

Final Remarks

The proposed Speech Emotion Recognition system demonstrates how modern deep learning techniques can be effectively applied to understand human emotions from speech. With continuous advancements in artificial intelligence and speech processing, such systems are expected to play a crucial role in building more intuitive and human-centered technologies.

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