RESEARCH ARTICLE

Feature Fusion for Performance Enhancement of Text Independent Speaker Identification

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Abstract

Speaker identification systems have gained significant attention due to their potential applications in security and personalized systems. This study evaluates the performance of various time and frequency domain physical features for text-independent speaker identification. Specifically, four key features—pitch, intensity, spectral flux, and spectral slope—were examined along with their statistical variations (minimum, maximum, and average values). These features were fused with log power spectral features and trained using a Convolutional Neural Network (CNN). The goal was to identify the most effective feature combinations for improving speaker identification accuracy. The experimental results revealed that the proposed feature fusion method outperformed the baseline system by 8%, achieving an accuracy of 87.18%.

Keywords: speaker identification, prosodic features, physical features, CNN, features fusion.

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1 Introduction

Speaker recognition, which utilizes speech signals to identify and verify a speaker's identity, is a crucial aspect of speech processing. It is divided into two primary applications: Speaker Identification and Speaker Verification [1]. Speaker identification is the process of determining the identity of an unknown speaker by comparing their speech signal with a database of known speakers. This involves a one-to-many comparison, where all enrolled voiceprints are evaluated in parallel to identify the most likely match [2]. In contrast, the speaker enrollment phase involves extracting and storing unique voice features in a database, while the identification phase performs parallel pattern matching to identify the speaker [1].

Speaker recognition systems can be classified into two categories: text-dependent and text-independent. In text-dependent systems, users are required to speak specific, pre-defined phrases [3]. On the other hand, text-independent systems can recognize speakers regardless of the content they speak, offering greater flexibility but requiring more sophisticated algorithms. While text-dependent systems tend to offer higher accuracy in controlled environments, text-independent systems are more adaptable and suitable for real-world

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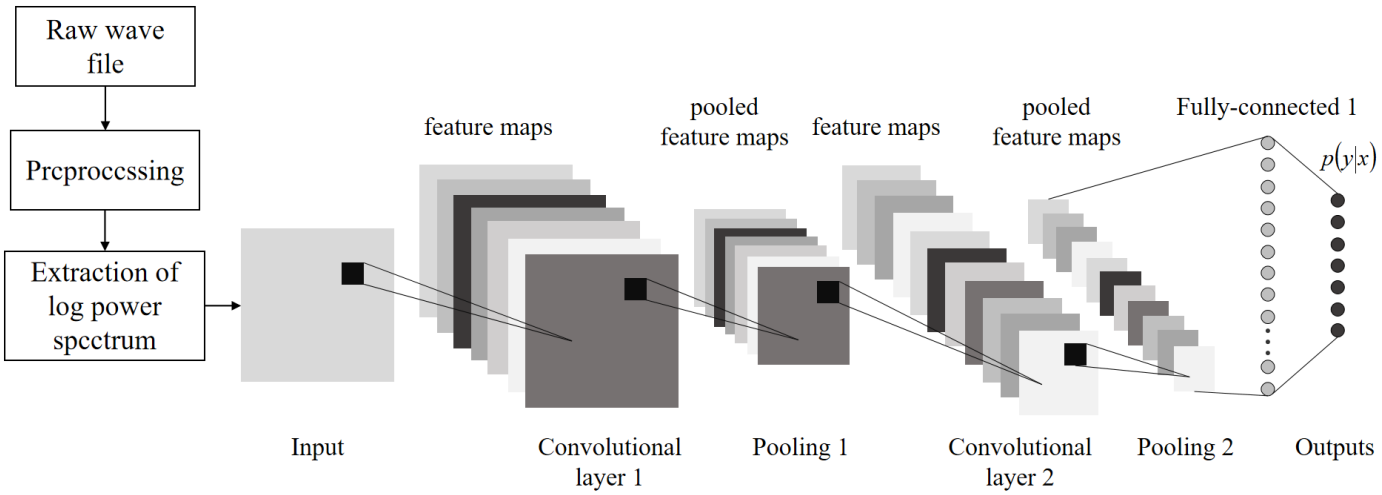

Figure 1. Baseline Architecture.

applications.

Research in speaker recognition has evolved significantly, focusing on improving feature extraction techniques, developing advanced classification models, and enhancing speaker verification systems, especially in handling impostor models [4]. The growing need for robust, versatile, and efficient speaker recognition systems has driven substantial progress in this area. However, challenges remain, particularly in optimizing systems to handle large-scale datasets and diverse acoustic conditions [15].

Although substantial research has been conducted in speaker recognition, there remains considerable potential for further advancements. There are many opportunities to optimize speaker recognition systems, including improving front-end processing, recognition algorithms, and speaker verification methods, as well as enhancing background models for unknown speakers [1]. Improvements can also be made in classification techniques or feature extraction methods to boost the system's performance [5, 27, 32]. These areas present exciting avenues for further improving the robustness and accuracy of speaker recognition systems.

In this study, we focus on enhancing the performance of text-independent speaker identification on a baseline architecture shown in Figure 1 by performing a comparative evaluation of various combinations of time- and frequency-domain features. Specifically, we explore Mel-frequency cepstral coefficient (MFCC), log-power spectral features, pitch, intensity, spectral slope, and spectral flux, in combination with convolutionally trained spectral features. Our objective is to evaluate the impact of these feature combinations on the accuracy of speaker identification systems. Experiments were conducted using the TIMIT dataset, where different feature combinations were tested to identify the most effective set for this task.

Additionally, we introduce a novel approach to text-independent speaker identification by employing feature fusion techniques to enhance the performance of CNNs. While earlier research has focused on individual features such as MFCCs, this work integrates acoustic, prosodic, and voice quality features to create a more comprehensive speaker representation. By combining these diverse features, we aim to improve speaker differentiation under varying conditions. The effectiveness of this feature fusion approach is demonstrated by its superior accuracy in speaker identification, which proves more robust to speech pattern variations compared to traditional methods [17, 18, 24].

2 Related Work

Feature extraction in speaker recognition involves both physical and perceptual features, which can be derived from the time domain or frequency domain. Some researchers have combined features from both domains to improve system performance [6, 25]. Classification techniques in speaker recognition commonly employ Hidden Markov Models (HMM) and Gaussian Mixture Models (GMM), which are two of the most prevalent methods in the field. In addition, hybrid techniques combining HMM with Deep Neural Networks (DNN) have been explored, as well as other models such as neural networks, Vector Quantization (VQ), and combinations like HMM-NN and GMM-VQ. More recent approaches have utilized CNN and Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN) for classification.

Among the latest advancements, the i-vector technique has set new benchmarks in performance.

Smarajit et al. [7] have proposed a fusion of MFCC and Perceptual Linear Predictive Coefficients (PLPC) with an ensemble of classifiers, using MFCC-GMM as the baseline system. Their system models speakers using GMM and was evaluated on the NTIMIT dataset, achieving a maximum accuracy of 70.48%. Jinxi et al. [8] enhanced speaker identification by fusing subglottal resonance features with cepstral features. Their system uses a two-stage process: first, cepstral features are used to narrow down the candidate speakers, and then subglottal resonance features are employed with a multilayer perceptron to identify the target speaker. The study also investigated the impact of noise on performance, showing robustness under varying noise conditions.

In [15], the combination of cepstral and spectral features with energy and power-related speech signal features was found effective for scene classification, demonstrating its utility in speech signal processing tasks. The production of speech is divided into three stages: the excitation phase, which provides the power for speech production; the articulation phase, which involves the vocal tract shaping the sound; and the final phase involving the lips and nasal cavity. The energy from the lungs and the pressure produced during exhalation are key factors that influence sound volume and intensity [9].

The study in [16] explores the integration of MFCC with Power Normalized Cepstral Coefficients (PNCC), demonstrating enhanced robustness against background noise and significant improvement in Speaker Identification Accuracy (SIA). Similarly, the work in [28] introduces a framework for calculating semantic similarity by incorporating meronymy and hyponymy relations within a weighted distance-based model. By leveraging WordNet's hierarchical structure, this method refines semantic distance calculations to capture nuanced contextual relationships. The conceptual overlap between these methodologies lies in the strategic fusion of complementary information sources—in speaker identification, the combination of spectral, prosodic, and voice quality features parallels the semantic feature integration, both aiming to enhance system performance under diverse and challenging conditions.

Feature extraction for speaker recognition tasks can be broadly classified into physical and perceptual categories. Physical features represent the inherent characteristics of sound signals without considering how the sound was produced. These features can be extracted from various domains, such as time, frequency, or cepstral domains. For instance, dynamic features like zero-crossing rates, amplitude, intensity, loudness, and energy are all time-dependent characteristics that provide valuable information for speaker recognition. On the other hand, perceptual features, which are based on human auditory perception, help in distinguishing speakers. These features include pitch, fundamental frequency, jitter, shimmer, and tonality, and are crucial for speaker differentiation [11].

Perceptual features, inspired by the structure of human auditory and vocal organs, play a vital role in understanding speech signals. These features are influenced by the way speech is produced and processed, which varies depending on the species of the speaker, whether it be a human, animal, or bird. Prosodic features, often referred to as suprasegmental phonology, encompass qualities such as pitch, loudness, and rhythm, which allow humans to recognize speakers without consciously focusing on them.

Many studies have explored the use of MFCCs in isolation for speaker recognition [21], while others have incorporated additional features like pitch or formants to improve performance [22]. Recently, using deep neural networks and hybrid feature sets, have achieved notable performance improvements by fusing spectral, prosodic, and voice quality features [23]. In comparison, our method's unique feature fusion approach—integrating not only spectral but also prosodic and voice quality features—provides a more robust and accurate system for speaker identification. Moreover, our model's ability to perform well with diverse feature sets in challenging conditions highlights its superiority over traditional systems based solely on MFCCs or pitch alone.

3 Methodology

The methodology of this study involved several key steps to enhance the performance of the text-independent speaker identification system. The focus began with the front-end processing of speech signals, which was critical for extracting the most relevant features for recognition tasks. The first step in this process was the segmentation of the speech signal into overlapping frames. As shown in Figure 2, the speech signal was preprocessed by dividing it into overlapping frames, with a frame length of 25 ms and a

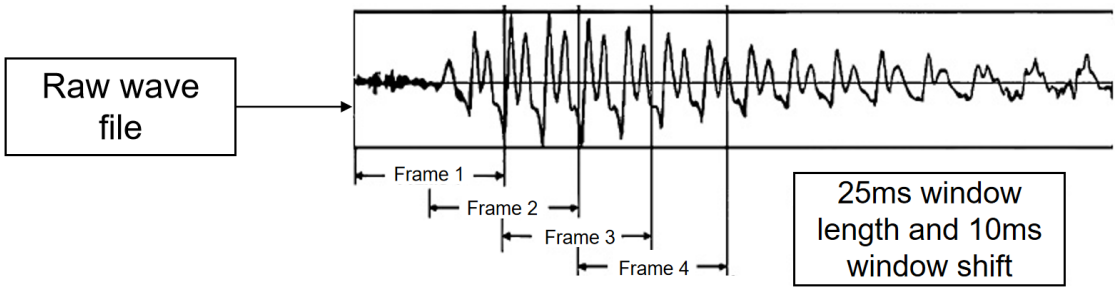

Figure 2. Preprocessing of speech signal (A).

hop length of 10 ms (60% overlap). This preprocessing method was crucial for extracting meaningful features from the raw speech signal [1, 2].

After segmentation, the extracted features were divided into time-domain and frequency-domain features, including pitch, intensity, spectral flux, and spectral slope, which had been proven to enhance speaker identification performance [3, 4]. These features were then combined with log-power spectral features, known for capturing key speaker characteristics such as voice quality and prosody [5, 6].

Once the features were extracted, a CNN model was employed to train the system using these features. The baseline system was based on a CNN architecture, which was trained on a combination of time- and frequency-domain features. The model was trained using a standard classification loss function, with accuracy as the primary performance metric. CNNs are particularly well-suited for learning hierarchical patterns in data and have been widely used in speaker recognition tasks [7, 8]. The performance of the system was evaluated by comparing the accuracy of speaker identification using various feature combinations.

In addition to feature extraction and model training, data augmentation techniques were implemented to improve the robustness of the model. This involved dividing each speaker's data into overlapping snippets of 90 frames, ensuring that all input data was of uniform length. This approach not only standardized the input but also increased the data for each speaker, enhancing the model's ability to generalize across different acoustic conditions [9, 10, 26]. The proposed system was tested on the TIMIT dataset, which provided a comprehensive collection of speech samples from a diverse set of speakers. The system's performance was evaluated in terms of classification accuracy, and the results were compared to baseline models to highlight the improvements made using the feature fusion and CNN-based approach.

After the raw speech signal was framed, the number of frames was determined based on the speech signal's length and the amount of overlap. Desired features were extracted from these frames for further analysis. Since the number of frames varied depending on the speaking speed and sentence length, each speech signal had a different number of frames. To train the model, it was necessary to ensure that each input had the same number of frames.

To increase the amount of data for each speaker and ensure consistent input lengths, data augmentation was applied by decomposing each audio sample into overlapping snippets of 90 frames. Each snippet was treated as a separate input to the model, ensuring that all inputs were of equal length. This approach increased the number of data points for each speaker, with overlapping snippets introducing variability while preserving the continuity of the original speech signal. The process was visually illustrated in Figure 3. This technique not only standardized input lengths but also helped simulate diverse acoustic variations through the overlap between snippets.

The features selected for this study included MFCCs,

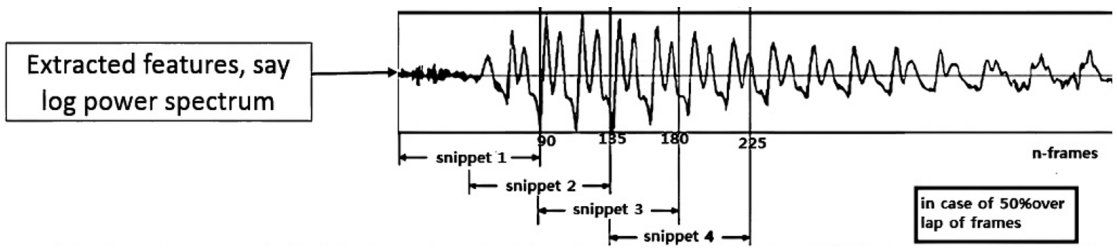

Figure 3. Preprocessing of speech signal (B).

prosodic features (such as pitch and speech rate), and voice quality features (e.g., jitter and shimmer). These features were chosen for their ability to capture key speaker-specific characteristics:

1. **Mel-frequency cepstral coefficients (MFCCs):** MFCCs are widely used for speaker recognition due to their ability to capture spectral properties that are robust across varying acoustic conditions [19].
2. **Prosodic features:** These include pitch and speech rate, which contribute to identifying speaker-specific intonation and rhythm. Such features have been shown to improve performance in noisy environments [20].
3. **Voice quality features:** Jitter and shimmer were selected as voice quality features. They provide additional speaker-specific characteristics, particularly useful in distinguishing speakers with similar speech patterns [19].

Combining these features enabled a more comprehensive representation of the speaker's vocal attributes.

After converting the speech signal into overlapping frames, several physical features were extracted. The four selected features—pitch, intensity, spectral slope, and spectral flux—were chosen for their relevance in speaker recognition tasks. Specifically:

1. **Pitch:** Harmonicity is critical to audio signal classification, and harmonic structure can be represented by multiple inharmonic peaks [14]. The most common method for pitch detection is based on the autocorrelation function, where the highest value within a region of interest is used to detect pitch [12]. Given a discrete-time signal $x[n]$, the autocorrelation function [16] $R_x(m)$ can be written as Equation 1:

$$R_x(m) = \lim_{N\to\infty} \frac{1}{2N+1} \sum_{n=-N}^{+N} (x[n]x[n+m]) \quad (1)$$

2. **Intensity:** Intensity is primarily controlled by the force with which air from the lungs passes through the larynx. For our calculations, intensity was computed as energy per unit area, which is a common approach for measuring intensity in speech signals.
3. **Spectral Flux:** Spectral flux is the calculation of the 2-norm of two normalized power spectra. In our work, the log of the calculated spectral flux was used, as using the simple spectral flux did not yield the desired convergence in the system. The spectral flux was defined as Equation 2:

$$\text{spectralFlux} = \log\left(\text{l2-norm}\left(\text{PS}(\text{frame}[i]) - \text{PS}(\text{frame}[i+1])\right)\right) \quad (2)$$

4. **Spectral Slope:** The spectral slope is a measure of the spectral slant of a sound signal and is calculated using linear regression.

Pitch and intensity were extracted using the PRAAT Parselmouth library in Python [13]. Pretrained AlexNet was used for model training, with the 5th convolution layer fine-tuned using log power spectrum features. The physical features were then concatenated on the fully connected layer for the final speaker identification task.

4 Dataset

The TIMIT dataset, utilized in this study, comprises 6,300 sentences spoken by 630 distinct speakers, including both male and female participants. Each speaker contributed 10 sentences, representing a diverse set of phonetic contexts. The speakers are distributed across eight distinct dialect regions of the United States, which reflect the geographical areas where they spent their childhood. These dialect regions are defined as follows:

- **dr1**: New England
- **dr2**: Northern
- **dr3**: North Midland
- **dr4**: South Midland
- **dr5**: Southern
- **dr6**: New York City
- **dr7**: Western (geographical boundaries poorly defined)
- **dr8**: Army Brat (frequent relocations during childhood)

These dialect regions were selected to capture a broad spectrum of linguistic diversity, which is crucial for evaluating the generalization capabilities of speech recognition systems. Notably, the dataset provides valuable insights into how speech characteristics vary across different regional accents and speaking patterns, thereby offering a robust framework for phonetic

Table 1. Dialect Region Distribution by Gender.

Region	#Male	Male (%)	#Female	Female (%)	Total (%)
1	31	63%	18	27%	49 (8%)
2	71	70%	31	30%	102 (16%)
3	79	67%	23	23%	102 (16%)
4	69	69%	31	31%	100 (16%)
5	62	63%	36	37%	98 (16%)
6	30	65%	16	35%	46 (7%)
7	74	74%	26	26%	100 (16%)
8	22	67%	11	33%	33 (5%)
Total	**438**	**70%**	**192**	**30%**	**630 (100%)**

and dialectal research in speech recognition. The percentage inclusion of male and female speakers by the above dialect regions is shown in Table 1.

5 Experiments

The TIMIT dataset was used for our experiments, which contained 6300 sentences spoken by 630 different speakers, including both males and females. Each speaker provided 10 recordings. Ten recordings per speaker are a limited amount for training a speaker model. To address the issue of insufficient training data, we employed convolutional feature learning using MFCC and the power spectrum of the sound signal, along with domain-specific data augmentation technique [29]. We first extracted features from the raw audio file by performing a short-time speech signal analysis. After this analysis, the output consisted of several frames based on the length of the sound signal. Our experiments used a 25 ms frame length with a 10 ms hop length.

To mitigate the problem of having too little training data for each speaker, we sliced each feature vector into a specific number of frames. We evaluated the performance of our model with different numbers of frames and various amounts of frame overlap to achieve the highest performance. The numbers of frames used in the analysis were 15, 30, and 90 frames, with overlap percentages of 50% and 70%. The results obtained using log power spectrum features of the speech signal, with the mentioned overlap percentages, and employing fully connected layers as the recognition model, are shown in Table 2.

We extracted the log power spectrum of the sound signal using Python's 'python_speech_features' library. Pitch and intensity were extracted using the PRAAT Parselmouth library in Python [13].

Table 2. Results with log power spectrum.

Number of frames	Frame overlap	Performance (%)
15	65	71.38
15	50	70.11
30	65	73.28
30	50	72.34
90	65	79.38
90	50	78.57

Furthermore, to test the performance, we separated the training and test data for each speaker. Specifically, out of the 10 recordings of each speaker, we used 2 recordings as test data and the remaining 8 recordings for training the speaker model.

By examining the results with different frame overlaps and numbers of frames, it is evident that using 90 ms frame snippets yields the most reliable results for the speaker identification system. Additionally, a 65% overlap of frames provided the best performance for this system. When using only the log power spectrum, the highest performance achieved was 79.38%. In subsequent experiments, we used 90 frames as the standard for training, considering the effectiveness of this frame length.

Next, we discuss the concatenation of individual features, as shown in Figure 4, and their variations, as well as combinations of various features. While extracting other features such as pitch, intensity, spectral slope, and spectral flux, we observed that each speaker exhibited specific ranges of values for these features. Based on this observation, we decided to use these value ranges for further experimentation.

5.1 Results With Spectral Slope

We performed experiments with different variations of spectral slope concatenated to trained log power spectral features, as shown in Table 3.

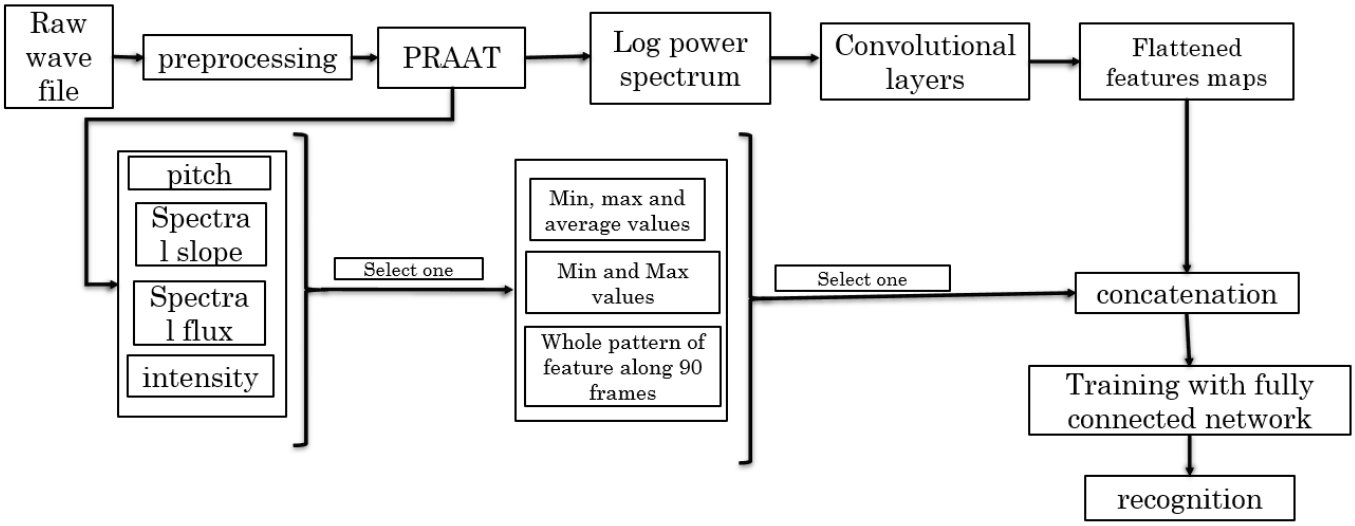

Figure 4. Model for concatenating individual features.

Table 3. Results with spectral slope.

Type of Feature	Frame overlap	Performance (%)
min, max, avg	50	83.65
min, max, avg	65	83.88
all values	50	83.11
all values	65	84.09
Min and max	50	83.57
Min and max	65	84.52

From the results, it can be concluded that each speaker has a very defined range of values for spectral slope, as the best results were achieved by concatenating the minimum and maximum values of the slope.

5.2 Results With Intensity

Similar to spectral slope, we performed experiments with different variations of intensity concatenated to trained log power spectral features, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results with intensity.

Type of Feature	Frame overlap	Performance (%)
Min, avg, max	50	86.32
Min, avg, max	65	85.98
all values	50	84.38
all values	65	85.18
Min and max	50	83.81
Min and max	65	85.06

The best results were achieved by concatenating the minimum, maximum, and average values of intensity, as indicated by the performance percentages for each variation of intensity values.

5.3 Results With Log Spectral Flux

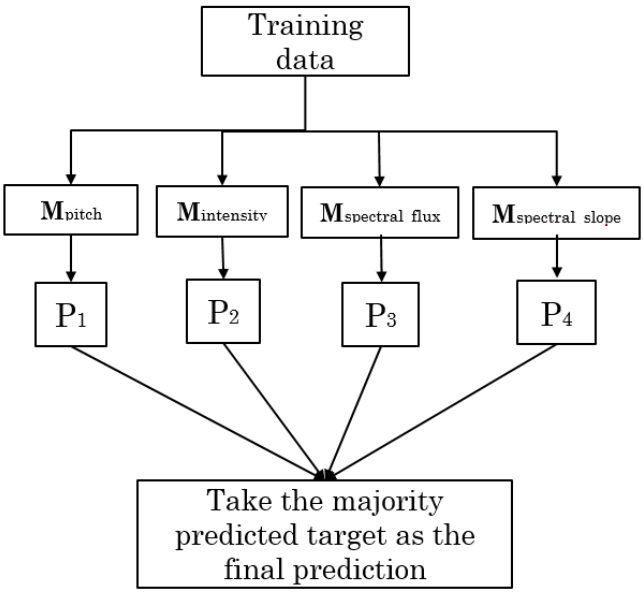

Figure 5. Process of majority vote.

Next, we performed experiments with different variations of Log Spectral Flux concatenated to trained log power spectral features, as shown in Table 5. Initially, we used simple spectral flux values, but the system could not converge with these values. However, we observed some results with concatenating the log spectral flux pattern over 90 frames, but it only achieved a 77% performance. After applying the log transformation to the spectral flux values, we obtained the following results.

Table 5. Results with log spectral flux.

Type of Feature	Frame overlap	Performance (%)
Min, max, avg	50	84.24
Min, max, avg	65	83.52
all values	50	82.98
all values	65	83.34
Min, max	50	83.11
Min, max	65	83.44

The best results were achieved by concatenating the minimum, maximum, and average values of log spectral flux, as indicated by the performance percentages.

5.4 Results With Pitch

We also performed experiments with different variations of Pitch concatenated to trained log power spectral features, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Results with pitch.

Type of Feature	Frame overlap	Performance (%)
Min, max, avg	50	81.18
Min, max, avg	65	82.23
all values	50	80.18
all values	65	80.98
min and max	50	81.38
Min and max	65	81.92

The best results were obtained by concatenating the minimum and maximum values of pitch, as shown by the performance percentages.

5.5 Results With Majority Voting

After performing experiments with individual features and their combinations, we conducted an experiment with majority voting to compare the results of our feature combinations with existing methods.

Majority voting is the process in which all models with individual features are used to predict the test data after training, as shown in Figure 5. The prediction given by the majority of the individual models is considered the actual prediction. The result of majority voting is shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Results with majority voting.

Type of Feature	Performance (%)
majority voting	84.54

5.6 Results With Different Combinations Of Features

After performing experiments with individual features, we also experimented with combinations of features, following Figure 6, to identify which combinations performed best for the task of text-independent speaker identification. The results are shown in Table 8.

5.7 Discussion

The findings of this study suggested that combining spectral slope and intensity features yielded favorable results in speaker recognition tasks. Specifically, the highest recognition accuracy was achieved by integrating Mel-Frequency Cepstral Coefficients

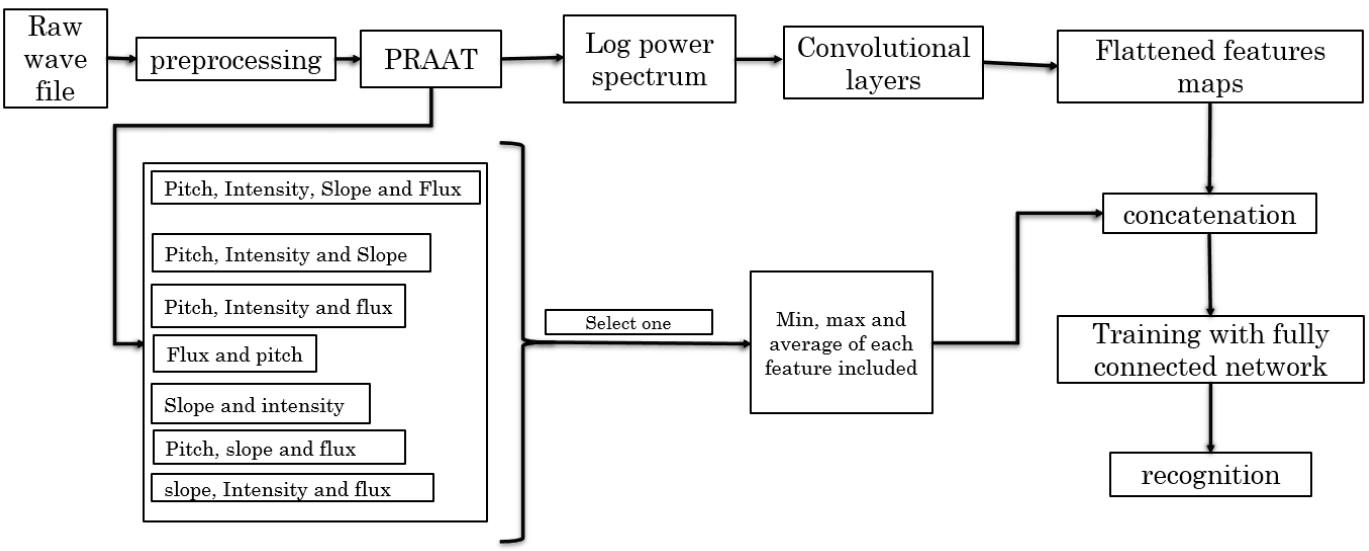

Figure 6. Model for combination of features.

Table 8. Results with combinations of features concatenated.

Type of Feature	Frame overlap	Performance (%)
P, I, SS, LSF	50	82.98
P, I, SS	50	85.38
P, I, SF	50	84.34
I, SS	50	87.18
P, LSF	50	83.44
P, SS, LSF	50	81.84
I, SS, LSF	50	84.85

(MFCCs) with prosodic features. This outcome was attributed to the complementary nature of these feature sets. MFCCs captured detailed spectral information essential for speech sound characterization, while prosodic features, such as rhythm, pitch, and tempo, helped distinguish speakers based on vocal patterns. The synergistic use of both feature types allowed the model to generalize better across speaker variations, improving recognition accuracy. Combining spectral and prosodic features enhanced speaker discrimination by providing both phonetic (sound-based) and non-phonetic (tone-based) information, aiding differentiation in noisy or variable acoustic conditions.

The inclusion of voice quality features improved performance, especially in distinguishing speakers with similar-sounding voices. These features, sensitive to speaker-specific attributes like timbre and resonance, added differentiation not fully captured by MFCCs and prosodic features. Combining spectral, prosodic, and voice quality features enhanced the robustness of the speaker recognition system. Moreover, transformer models like mBERT can enhance speaker recognition by providing robust multilingual contextual embeddings, improving the system's ability to understand and process diverse linguistic features [30, 31].

6 Conclusion

This study demonstrated the scientific value of feature fusion techniques in enhancing the performance of text-independent speaker identification systems. The proposed method, which combined complementary features such as spectral slope and intensity, resulted in a significant improvement in system robustness and accuracy. By capturing both phonetic and prosodic speaker characteristics, the feature fusion approach provided a more comprehensive representation of the speaker's identity, crucial for real-world, noisy environments. The experimental results revealed that the fusion method outperformed the baseline system by 8%, achieving an accuracy of 87.18%. These findings highlight the potential of integrating spectral and prosodic features with advanced machine learning techniques to improve speaker recognition systems, especially in challenging conditions where traditional methods may struggle.

Although the feature fusion approach outperformed conventional methods, further investigations are needed to explore combining additional feature sets or advanced neural network architectures to enhance generalization. Future work could expand the dataset to include more speakers from diverse acoustic environments to improve robustness. Additionally, exploring data augmentation techniques like generative models may boost performance in data-limited scenarios. These advancements would help speaker identification systems operate effectively in real-world conditions, supporting the ongoing development of speech recognition technologies.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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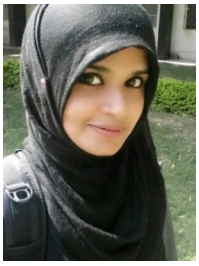

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