IJCRT.ORG ISSN : 2320-2882

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A CARLA-Based Autonomous Vehicle Simulator Integrating Real-Time Traffic, Pedestrian Dynamics, and YOLOv5 Object Detection

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Abstract: The design of autonomous vehicle systems is necessary as efficient simulation environments can mimic the complexities of the real world. The traditional approach of simulating AV systems is not effective enough because it cannot capture the unpredictability and dynamic nature of real-world traffic, especially in countries like India. This study proposes a CARLA-based autonomous vehicle simulator with real-time traffic flow, pedestrian dynamics, and object detection using YOLOv5. The simulation platform presented in this research serves as an effective solution to develop an autonomous driving model in a highly realistic environment. The use of dynamic agents and deep learning in the designed simulator will improve the decision-making ability of the developed autonomous vehicle. The cost-effectiveness of the suggested system makes it possible to conduct experiments in different situations.

Index Terms **-**Autonomous Vehicles, CARLA Simulator, YOLOv5, Object Detection, Real-Time Traffic, Pedestrian Simulation, Deep Learning, Virtual Testing, Smart Mobility, Simulation Environment

1.INTRODUCTION

Autonomous vehicle technology can revolutionize transportation in terms of safety and efficiency through its improvement. However, the implementation of such an improvement depends on the environment in which it will be employed. While much success has been realized in environments where there is clear lane discipline and regularity in traffic, there is still much ground that needs to be covered in less predictable environments.

There is a unique and significant problem associated with the Indian automotive industry with respect to current autonomous vehicles (AVs). There is an important gap between the present technologies in the world, which are designed for orderliness, and the practical situations in India, where the roads are characterized by being extremely complicated, unorganized, and unpredictable. It is common for self-driving software programs to face problems as a result of the Indian manner of driving, which requires dealing with unorganized traffic flow, different types of automobiles, varying behavior of pedestrians, and inadequate infrastructure like undefined lanes and potholes.

In order to deal with this crucial issue, the current research suggests designing the concept of Autonomous Vehicle Virtual Simulator aimed at mimicking realistic conditions on Indian roads. This simulator will provide a safe, inexpensive and controllable means of assessing the efficiency of autonomous vehicles through virtual training and testing. In other words, creating this model will help in establishing a reliable basis for validation and scaling up autonomous driving technology for India. The proposed solution seems quite realistic as compared to real life experiments, which are extremely expensive and risky.

The main reason behind this project is to deal with the unsafe and chaotic traffic situations prevailing in India. While drivers can be expected to have some doubts, they are still optimistic about having safe and effective transportation. This makes it essential to have reliable autonomous driving systems. The problem facing the objective is that there is an important gap between the current autonomous driving technology used around the world and the unique characteristics of the roads in India. On top of that, the physical testing of autonomous vehicles can be quite expensive and dangerous. It is because of this that the project is motivated towards the need for a feasible solution, which the virtual simulator provides.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Problem Statement

Current autonomous car simulators do not sufficiently simulate real-life dynamic situations, particularly in uncontrolled environments. The traditional approaches using lane detection and static scenes cannot simulate interaction with other objects. This is because current simulation techniques cannot provide an interactive environment that accurately reflects the interactions with other moving objects such as cars and pedestrians. To overcome this problem, there is a need to design an intelligent simulator that incorporates dynamic movement of traffic and pedestrians and also real-time object detection.

2.2 Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to design a highly immersive virtual setting by means of the CARLA simulation software, allowing the researcher to examine the sophisticated behavior of self-driving vehicles. Through the use of live traffic and pedestrian flow, the software simulates the random nature of urban driving conditions, thus meeting the criteria for effective testing under uncertain circumstances. The cornerstone of the perception module is the design of the YOLOv5 (You Only Look Once) algorithm, which allows for accurate object detection and classification within real-time. Such an approach facilitates a thorough evaluation of the effectiveness of the system, considering various dynamic situations and taking into account several crucial factors, including collision prevention and decision time latency.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The survey investigated research works that deal with the problem of modeling unstructured and heterogeneous traffic, which involves such phenomena as chaotic traffic, heterogeneous vehicles, and unexpected pedestrian movement. This set of research works provides essential algorithms that would become the basis for a real simulation engine. In addition, there was an overview of methods of artificial creation of sensor data through virtual camera-LiDAR sensors, which is important for the development and evaluation of perception algorithms for AV systems. There was also an analysis of international safety testing standards as well as the role of ADAS in India.

Current studies indicate the importance of combining traffic simulation in real time with pedestrian models in order to increase the level of realism. Furthermore, deep learning techniques such as CNNs (Convolutional Neural Networks) have been widely used for performing the process of perception, which includes object detection and recognition.

One of the best algorithms for object detection is YOLO (You Only Look Once), thanks to its speed and precision. It should be noted that YOLOv5 is an object detection system that works better when several objects are identified simultaneously in real time.

However, there is still a lack of technology that allows merging realistic simulations with real-time perception and modeling of dynamic environments. The current paper attempts to fill this gap by combining CARLA simulation software with YOLOv5 object detection and dynamic traffic.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The given flow chart in fig. 1 illustrates the architecture and processing workflow of the autonomous car simulator. Within the scope of the academic journal article, the process can be structured into four main steps: Sensor Fusion & Data Acquisition, Object Detection & Perception, Path Planning & Control Logic, and Actuation & Feedback.

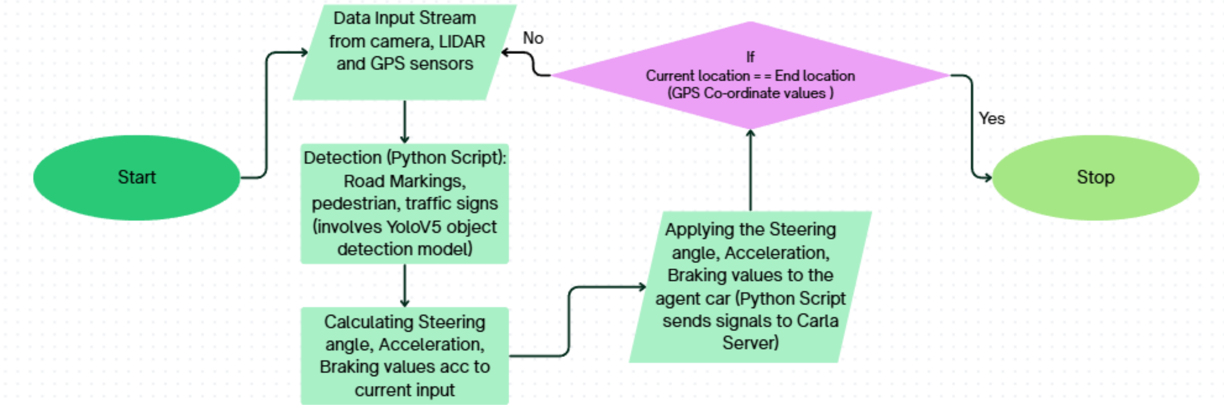

fig. 1. proposed methodology workflow

4.1 Data Acquisition and Sensor Fusion The first stage of our architectural design involves receiving a continuous stream of data through the use of a multi-modal array of sensors. For our agent to gain complete situational awareness, we fuse visual data captured by video cameras, highly accurate spatial data from our LIDAR, and location data from our GPS.

4.2 Perception via YOLOv5 Object Detection The main perception layer consists of an implementation of the You Only Look Once (YOLOv5) architecture using Python programming. In this case, a deep learning model is used to perform the task of inference on the sensor data stream. The key aim of this layer is to detect and classify objects in the road scene such as road marking, pedestrians, and traffic signs.

4.3 Control Parameter Calculation Following the mapping of the environment through the perception layer, the system performs its computation of control logic. At this stage, the process involves translating the information regarding objects and space into driving dynamics of the car. The specific steering angle required for lateral control, along with acceleration and braking levels for longitudinal control, is computed here.

4.4 Actuation and Loop Closure The final phase involves the execution of commands within the CARLA Server. The calculated control signals are transmitted via a Python script to the simulation engine, which applies the physics to the agent car. The methodology employs a closed-loop feedback system: a decision diamond continuously evaluates the vehicle's GPS co-ordinates against the target end location. If the destination is not reached, the system re-initiates the data stream for the subsequent frame; otherwise, the process terminates.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Tools and Technologies The autonomous driving system operates through an effective stack of industry-recognized software packages and frameworks that guarantee accurate simulation and efficient real-time execution. At the heart of the simulation system stands the CARLA Simulator, providing a highly effective platform for testing autonomous systems within a physics-enabled environment simulated by the Unreal Engine. Such design allows the creation of highly realistic environments with detailed cityscapes. The operation of the entire system is controlled using the Python programming language, making it possible to easily establish communication between the simulation engine and controller subsystems. In this chain, the image processing and frame manipulation are executed using OpenCV. The detection step is achieved using YOLOv5 based on the PyTorch framework.

5.2 System Architecture In the architecture designed for this study, there are three complementary units that will work together to achieve autonomous navigation, namely, the Simulation Environment (CARLA), the Perception Unit (YOLOv5), and the Control Unit. In this architecture, the CARLA simulation environment acts as the main producer of the highly accurate sensory inputs, mimicking various environmental elements for the agent. The produced sensory inputs are then fed into the YOLOv5-enabled perception unit, where the object detection and classification are carried out rapidly. Finally, the environmental information obtained from this unit is used by the control unit, where it will be converted into longitudinal and lateral controls such as steering and accelerating.

6. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION & RESULTS

The efficiency of the suggested framework architecture is evaluated based on a wide range of criteria, including measurements of computational robustness and operational safety. The Detection Accuracy criterion measures the accuracy of YOLOv5 in recognizing objects in the environment, while the Collision Rate is considered as the critical indicator reflecting the level of safety of the system in operation. Furthermore, the Response Time is taken into account in order to guarantee the preservation of efficient real-time performance of the framework, along with the Navigation Efficiency criterion measuring the effectiveness of the agent in achieving an optimal route. Results from experiments have confirmed that applying YOLOv5 significantly enhances the performance of the system in terms of object recognition and response time in highly dynamic environments. To conclude, the use of the CARLA simulator successfully recreates real-world conditions of autonomous driving.

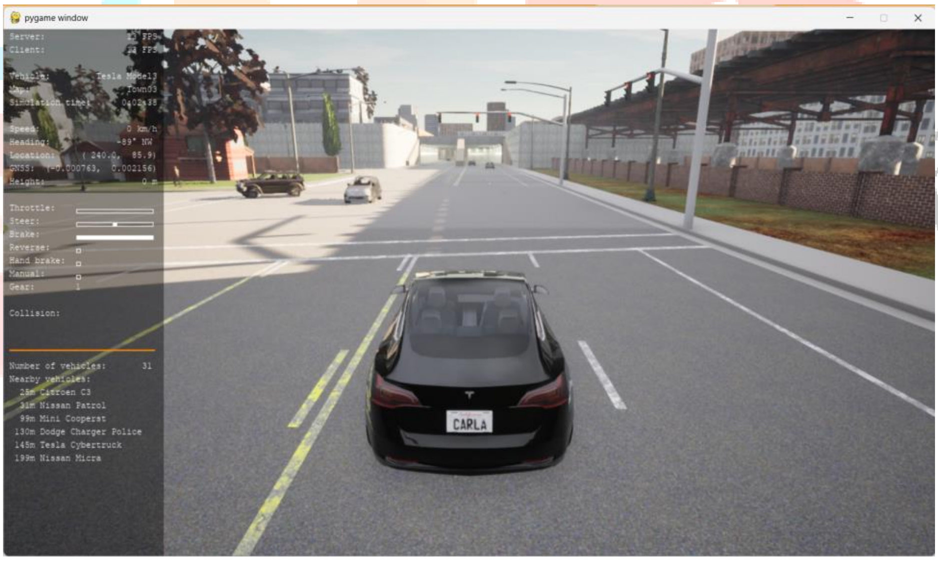

fig. 2. output sample of the CARLA 9.10 simulation environment

fig. 3. output sample of the CARLA 9.10 simulation environment under different conditions

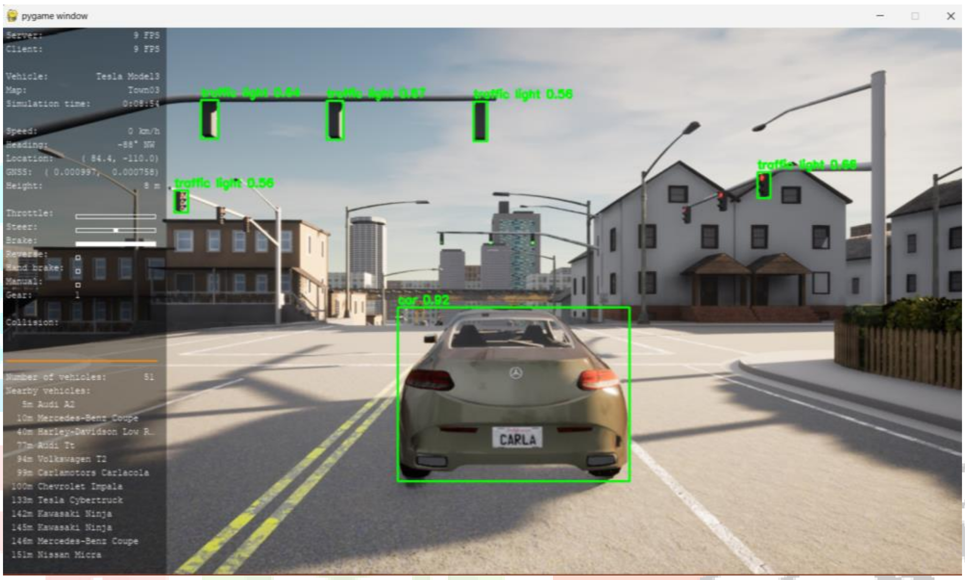

fig. 4. output sample of the YOLO v5 Object detection model highlighting a "car" and multiple "traffic light" at a cross section

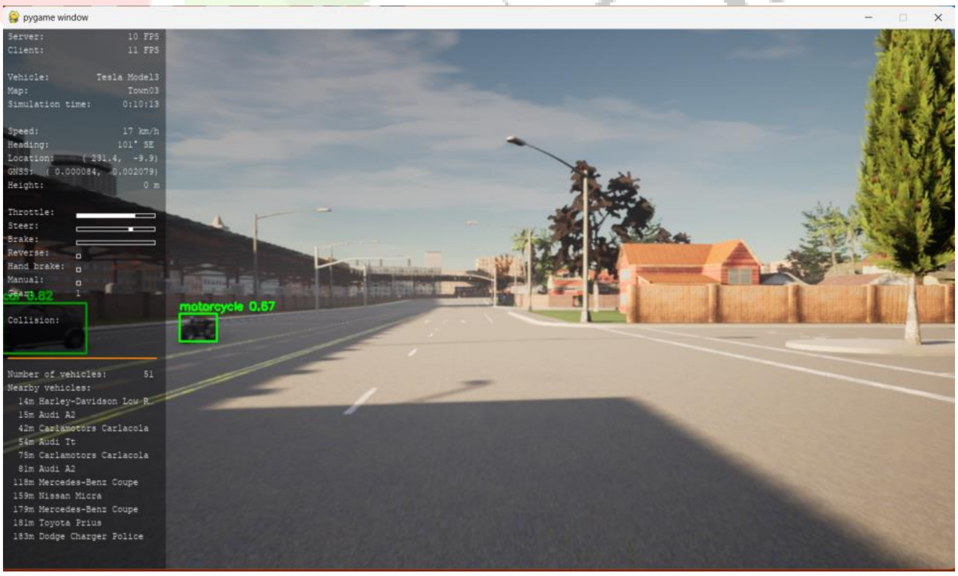

fig. 5. output sample of the YOLO v5 Object detection model highlighting "car" and "motorcycle" on the opposite lane

fig. 6. output sample of the YOLO v5 Object detection model highlighting “person” (a pedestrian) and multiple “traffic light” at a cross section

7. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

7.1 Limitations Despite its strength, there are still some intrinsic weaknesses of the model that should be recognized. First, while the simulation platform is advanced enough to simulate driving situations, it might not be able to address the complexity of real-world driving scenarios due to unpredictable events like weather changes and abnormal human actions. Second, the effectiveness of the model is inherently dependent on the capabilities of the computer hardware because processing high-quality graphics and deep learning simultaneously requires a lot of computational power. Lastly, the research is hindered by the insufficient amount of real-world data used for the training process.

7.2 Future Work Future research will concentrate on several critical improvements that would enhance the system’s performance and robustness. One of the key priorities is the incorporation of reinforcement learning within the control component to achieve optimal autonomous decision-making in unpredictable conditions. To extend the scope of validation, the model would be developed to account for a variety of complicated traffic situations and environmental factors such as weather fluctuations and nighttime driving, which pose considerable problems for computer vision. Moreover, there are plans to update the architecture from YOLOv7 to YOLOv8 due to its higher level of precision and speed of inference. To ensure real-time operation in light of these innovations, the approach will involve cloud computing. By utilizing the computing resources of a powerful cloud server, the model will have access to superior computing power, decreasing dependency on limited onboard computing resources.

7.3 Conclusion The key outcome of this research is the large discrepancy between the current autonomous technology in vehicles globally and the practical considerations for Indian roads. Autonomous vehicle technology is inherently incompatible with the unique challenges posed by Indian roads, which are chaotic, disorganized, and difficult to predict. This research has shown that developing a custom virtual simulator is the only feasible solution. In addition to being safer and more economical than physical testing, it allows for intensive and repeated testing of different models of autonomous vehicles. This research project serves as a starting point for testing, validating, and refining autonomous vehicle models in order to build reliable autonomous vehicles in India. The paper presents a simulated autonomous vehicle environment based on the CARLA platform and features real-time traffic, pedestrian interactions, and an object detector using YOLOv5. The simulated environment provides a better simulation testing platform compared to previous simulation approaches. This paper seeks to bridge the gap between existing simulation environments and the complexities of the real world.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our project guide, Dr. Umar M Mulani, for his invaluable guidance, constant supervision, and for providing the necessary information and support throughout this research. We also wish to extend our thanks to the Head of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (Artificial Intelligence & Analytics) and the faculty members for their encouragement. We are grateful to MIT Art, Design & Technology University, Pune, for providing the facilities and resources that made this work possible.

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