

# Optimizing Whiteboard Digitization with Clarix: An Automated Vision-Based System for Real-Time Text Extraction and Surface Cleaning

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Whiteboard digitization in educational settings grapples with challenges posed by handwritten text, mathematical notation, and unstructured layouts that confound traditional optical character recognition (OCR) systems. Clarix, a low-cost embedded system, addresses these issues by integrating a Raspberry Pi, high-resolution camera, and servo-driven erasure mechanism to automate content capture, text extraction, and archiving as searchable PDFs. This study benchmarks five multimodal large language models (GPT-4o, Claude, Gemini, DeepSeek, Grok) against traditional OCR systems (PaddleOCR, EasyOCR, TesseractOCR) for extracting whiteboard content across mathematics, physics, and economics domains. Results highlight a stark performance divide: multimodal LLMs achieved F1-scores ranging from 0.7550 to 0.8234, with GPT-4o leading at 0.8234 (precision 0.7954, recall 0.8534), while PaddleOCR topped traditional systems with an F1-score of 0.3333 (precision 0.3523, recall 0.3334), followed by EasyOCR (0.1158) and TesseractOCR (0.0000). Notably, increased region detection correlated with diminished performance, underscoring the superiority of contextual understanding over exhaustive segmentation. Clarix's fusion of intelligent automation and advanced text processing marks a transformative advancement in bridging analog and digital educational environments.

ductivity [3]. Although smart boards and interactive digital whiteboards offer advanced features, their high cost and infrastructural demands hinder widespread adoption, especially in resource-constrained settings [4]. This creates a clear need for an affordable, automated solution capable of capturing, digitizing, and erasing whiteboard content in real time—bridging the gap between traditional writing surfaces and modern digital tools [5].

## B. Aim

The primary aim of this study is to develop a low-cost, intelligent whiteboard automation system that integrates embedded systems with advanced artificial intelligence to enhance traditional educational environments. The system seeks to automatically capture, process, and digitize whiteboard content while providing seamless erasure functionality to maintain continuous workflow [6].

The research focuses on leveraging computer vision and machine learning technologies to extract and structure textual information from whiteboard images, creating searchable digital archives that preserve educational content for future reference [7]. By combining automated content capture with intelligent text processing, the system aims to transform traditional whiteboards into smart educational tools without requiring significant infrastructure changes or investment [8].

This approach addresses the growing need for digital integration in educational settings while maintaining the familiar and intuitive nature of conventional whiteboards. The resulting system is designed to facilitate enhanced accessibility, content reuse, and seamless integration between traditional teaching methods and modern digital documentation requirements [9].

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### A. Problem

### 2. RELATED WORK

Traditional whiteboards remain prevalent in educational and collaborative environments due to their simplicity, affordability, and ease of use [1]. However, they lack modern capabilities such as digital archiving, real-time content sharing, and efficient management of written material [2]. Manual transcription of whiteboard content is time-consuming and error-prone, while frequent cleaning disrupts the workflow and reduces pro-

In recent years, the automation of whiteboard and chalkboard management has garnered attention due to its potential to enhance classroom and collaborative efficiency. A range of efforts have explored different facets of this problem, from mechanical board erasing systems to vision-based scribble detection algorithms. However, most existing solutions address these challenges in isolation—focusing either on physical cleaning mechanisms or on content recognition—but rarely both.

52 A notable mechanical contribution comes from the work titled Automatic Whiteboard Cleaner Using Arduino and IR Sensor, which implements an Arduino-controlled mechanism that  
 53 detects the presence of a user and automatically moves a brush  
 54 across the whiteboard using a motorized assembly [10]. While it  
 55 offers a practical and low-cost erasure mechanism, it is strictly  
 56 mechanical in nature and does not address any form of content  
 57 preservation or digitization. This typifies a broader class  
 58 of embedded solutions that prioritize automation of the erasing  
 59 process without incorporating any form of content awareness or  
 60 digital archiving.

61 Similarly, earlier work by Iinuma et al. proposed a vision-based chalkboard eraser that utilizes Hough Transform techniques to detect chalk scribbles and perform selective cleaning [11]. Although innovative in its partial cleaning approach, the system lacked the ability to extract semantic content, making it unsuitable for educational scenarios that require content archiving. Other hardware-oriented efforts, such as PIC-controlled electronic dusters and Arduino-based remote erasers, have explored various motor control mechanisms—linear actuators, pulley systems, or servo-motor configurations—to enhance the speed and accuracy of board cleaning. Yet these systems remain limited to the mechanical domain and do not engage with the board content in an intelligent manner.

62 In parallel, advancements in Optical Character Recognition (OCR) have significantly improved the accuracy of text extraction from complex surfaces, including whiteboards. Modern 63 OCR systems—such as Google’s Tesseract OCR [12], Microsoft’s Read API [13], and domain-specific models trained on handwriting or smudged whiteboard content [14]—have enabled high-quality digitization of visual information. These systems leverage deep learning techniques, convolutional neural networks (CNNs), and attention mechanisms to improve recognition in noisy, low-contrast, or non-standard fonts. However, these OCR 64 systems are typically applied in post-processing scenarios and are not often integrated into real-time embedded systems.

65 Moreover, while some commercial smart boards offer digital archiving and touchscreen-based input [15], they come with prohibitive costs and require specialized infrastructure. Their reliance on proprietary ecosystems also limits adaptability and scalability, particularly in resource-constrained educational environments. Importantly, such solutions do not address the problem for traditional whiteboards still in widespread use across classrooms, laboratories, and meeting spaces.

66 Thus, the current state of the art reveals a significant gap: existing solutions tend to address either the mechanical aspect of erasure or the digital archiving of written content, but rarely both in a cohesive, real-time embedded system. Furthermore, there is minimal exploration of integrating large language models (LLMs) into the digitization process to enhance OCR interpretation, error correction, and semantic enrichment of extracted text [16].

67 The proposed Clarix system aims to fill this void by introducing a novel robotic prototype that unifies these two traditionally separate domains. It features a servo-driven mechanical brush system for automated whiteboard erasing and a camera module for capturing the board content once full. The captured image is processed using advanced OCR techniques, and the text is saved as a searchable PDF, enabling long-term storage, accessibility, and knowledge reuse. Additionally, a benchmarking study is conducted using state-of-the-art LLMs (such as OpenAI’s GPT, Anthropic’s Claude, and Google’s Gemini) to assess their effectiveness in real-world whiteboard digitization scenar-

115 ios. This integrated approach represents a first-of-its-kind contribution to the field of intelligent educational tools, offering an affordable, scalable, and intelligent solution for analog-to-digital whiteboard transformation.

### 119 3. METHODOLOGY

120 The Clarix system evaluation employed a comprehensive methodology encompassing three core components: hardware  
 121 implementation, data collection, and computational analysis. To  
 122 validate the system’s effectiveness, a custom embedded proto-  
 123 type was developed to demonstrate the physical automation  
 124 capabilities, while a specialized dataset of whiteboard images  
 125 was created to benchmark text extraction performance. The ex-  
 126 traction capabilities were then evaluated using both traditional  
 127 OCR engines and modern LLM-based approaches to determine  
 128 the optimal digitization strategy for real-world deployment.

#### 130 A. Embedded System

131 To physically implement the Clarix system’s automation capa-  
 132 bilities, a custom-designed embedded hardware prototype was  
 133 developed. The embedded system is responsible for orchestrat-  
 134 ing the entire digitization and erasure cycle—from capturing the  
 135 whiteboard content to initiating the motorized cleaning process.  
 136 Designed to be cost-effective and easily replicable, the system is  
 137 built using widely available and low-power electronic compo-  
 138 nents, ensuring accessibility and scalability for educational and  
 139 collaborative environments.

140 At the core of the system is a Raspberry Pi 4, which serves as  
 141 the primary computational unit. This microcomputer handles  
 142 peripheral interactions, control signals, and system logic. A high-  
 143 resolution camera module, interfaced with the Raspberry Pi, is  
 144 mounted at the top of the whiteboard frame to capture images  
 145 of the content once the board is filled with text, equations, or  
 146 diagrams. These images are then processed either locally or  
 147 forwarded to external LLM APIs for intelligent text extraction  
 148 and archiving, depending on future deployment choices.

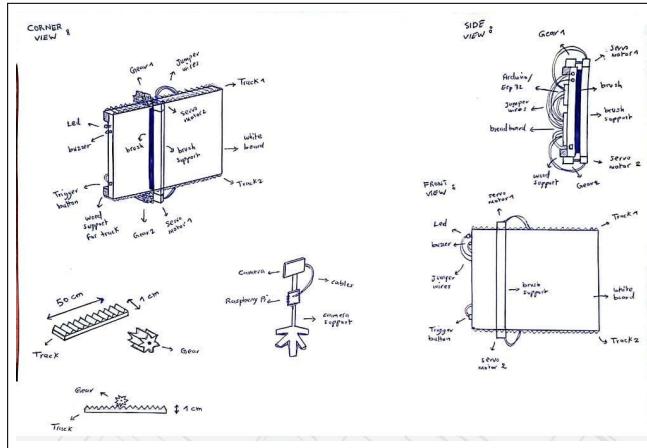
149 The physical cleaning mechanism consists of a servo motor-  
 150 driven brush mounted on a gear rack system, which allows  
 151 smooth horizontal movement across the width of the white-  
 152 board. The gear rack ensures precise control and linear motion,  
 153 enabling a uniform and effective single-pass erasure. The motor  
 154 is connected to a lightweight brush that spans the width of the  
 155 board and is guided by wooden side supports, ensuring stability  
 156 and alignment during motion.

157 Control of the brush is automated through the Raspberry Pi’s  
 158 GPIO pins, which trigger the servo motor upon completion of  
 159 the image capture and text extraction steps. To provide real-  
 160 time user feedback, the system is equipped with LED indicators  
 161 that signal the system’s current state—image capture (yellow),  
 162 extraction in progress (blue), and cleaning in progress or com-  
 163 pleted (green). A buzzer serves as an auditory indicator that  
 164 alerts the user before and after the cleaning process to ensure no  
 165 disruption or accidental interference occurs.

166 The system also includes a physical power switch to ensure  
 167 safe startup and shutdown, along with a manual button that  
 168 acts as a trigger to initiate the full digitization-cleaning sequence.  
 169 All connections are made via jumper wires and resistors, inte-  
 170 grated on a modular breadboard circuit to allow easy testing,  
 171 debugging, and future extensions.

172 The overall prototype is mounted on a compact frame de-  
 173 signed to fit a standard-sized whiteboard and is entirely self-  
 174 contained, with no dependency on external computing systems

175 during operation. This embedded solution bridges the gap between  
 176 mechanical automation and digital intelligence, offering  
 177 an affordable yet advanced system for real-time whiteboard  
 178 content management.



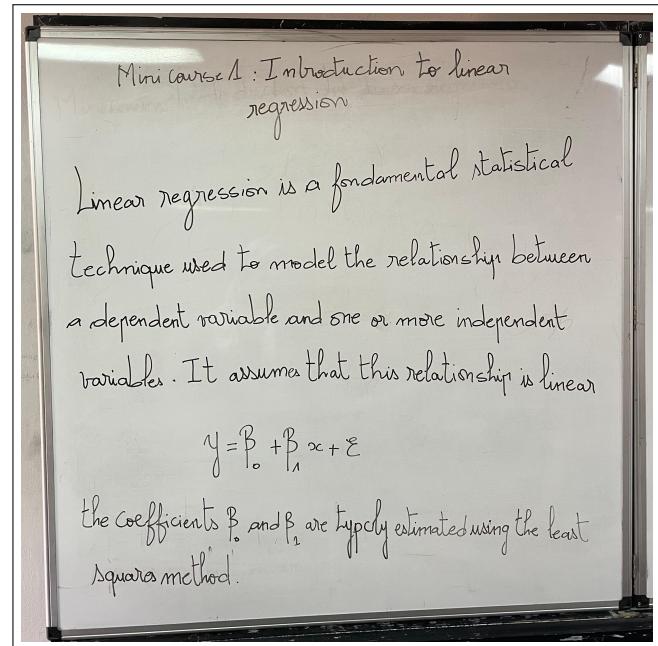
**Fig. 1.** Clarix prototype sketch showing the Raspberry Pi, servo motor, camera, and peripheral components for automated whiteboard cleaning.

## B. Data

180 To evaluate the performance of both traditional OCR engines  
 181 and LLM-based APIs in extracting whiteboard content, a cus-  
 182 tom dataset was created specifically for this study. The dataset  
 183 consists of high-resolution images captured from a physical  
 184 whiteboard where various types of content were manually writ-  
 185 ten, including lecture notes, mathematical equations, tabular  
 186 data, and bullet points. These samples were designed to simu-  
 187 late real-world classroom and meeting scenarios, incorporating  
 188 common challenges such as variable handwriting styles, light-  
 189 ing reflections, marker inconsistencies, and non-uniform layouts.  
 190 The images were taken using the camera module of the Clarix  
 191 prototype under natural and artificial lighting conditions to en-  
 192 sure diversity in input. This dataset served as a benchmark for  
 193 testing the accuracy and reliability of different text extraction  
 194 techniques.

195 Prior to text extraction, all images were subjected to a stan-  
 196 dardized preprocessing pipeline specifically designed for tradi-  
 197 tional OCR engines to optimize their performance on handwrit-  
 198 ten whiteboard content. This preprocessing included image re-  
 199 sizing for computational efficiency, Non-Local Means Denoising  
 200 for noise reduction, and Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram  
 201 Equalization (CLAHE) for contrast enhancement. Notably, these  
 202 preprocessing steps were applied exclusively to traditional OCR  
 203 systems and not to LLM-based APIs, allowing for evaluation  
 204 of the latter's native robustness in handling unprocessed white-  
 205 board images.

206 A representative sample image from the dataset is shown in  
 207 Figure 2



**Fig. 2.** Sample whiteboard image from the custom dataset, featuring handwritten text and mathematical equations under realistic classroom conditions.

## C. Model

### C.1. Traditional OCR Systems

210 Traditional Optical Character Recognition (OCR) systems form  
 211 the backbone of automated text extraction technology, employ-  
 212 ing classical computer vision techniques and machine learning  
 213 algorithms to convert image-based text into machine-readable  
 214 format. In this study, three prominent OCR engines were utilized  
 215 to establish baseline performance for whiteboard text extraction.

216 **PaddleOCR** PaddleOCR, developed by Baidu's PaddlePaddle  
 217 team, integrates deep learning architectures with traditional  
 218 text detection pipelines. The system employs a two-stage ap-  
 219 proach comprising text detection and recognition modules, uti-  
 220 lizing convolutional neural networks optimized for multilingual  
 221 character recognition. Its lightweight architecture offers com-  
 222 putational efficiency while maintaining robust preprocessing  
 223 capabilities for handling varied text orientations and lighting  
 224 conditions [17].

225 **Tesseract OCR** Tesseract OCR represents the industry stand-  
 226 dard in open-source OCR technology, originally developed by  
 227 Hewlett-Packard and maintained by Google. The system com-  
 228 bines traditional pattern recognition algorithms with LSTM neu-  
 229 ral networks, featuring a sophisticated pipeline that includes  
 230 layout analysis, character segmentation, and statistical language  
 231 modeling. Its modular architecture allows extensive customization  
 232 through configuration parameters and supports multiple  
 233 languages [12, 18].

234 **EasyOCR** EasyOCR provides a streamlined deep learning im-  
 235 plementation built on PyTorch, incorporating CRAFT (Character  
 236 Region Awareness for Text detection) for text detection and  
 237 CRNN (Convolutional Recurrent Neural Network) for character  
 238 recognition. The system emphasizes out-of-the-box functionality  
 239 with minimal configuration requirements while demonstrating  
 240 particular strength in handling low-quality images and irregular

241 text layouts through its modern neural network architectures  
 242 [19].

### 243 C.2. LLM-Based API Extraction

244 In parallel with traditional OCR techniques, this study invest-  
 245 igates the effectiveness of modern Large Language Models  
 246 (LLMs) for whiteboard content extraction. While OCR engines  
 247 are designed to recognize textual patterns from images, they  
 248 often fall short in comprehending structure, context, or ambigu-  
 249 ous handwriting—especially in real-world conditions involving  
 250 varied layouts, mathematical symbols, and inconsistent light-  
 251 ing. With the recent integration of vision capabilities into LLMs,  
 252 these models have become capable of interpreting not only plain  
 253 text but also complex visual inputs such as scanned documents,  
 254 handwritten notes, and whiteboard captures [20, 21].

255 Given their multi-modal capabilities, we explored whether  
 256 LLMs could offer a superior alternative for digitizing educa-  
 257 tional content written on whiteboards, including text, equations,  
 258 bullet points, and tables. Our objective was to benchmark the  
 259 performance of these models using the same dataset developed  
 260 for evaluating OCR tools, and assess whether LLMs could reli-  
 261 ably serve as the core intelligence behind Clarix’s text extraction  
 262 pipeline [22].

263 For this evaluation, five state-of-the-art LLMs with multi-  
 264 modal capabilities were selected: GPT-4o (OpenAI), Claude  
 265 3 (Anthropic), Gemini 1.5 Pro (Google), DeepSeek-Vision  
 266 (DeepSeek AI), and Grok (xAI). These models were chosen based  
 267 on their publicly available visual understanding features, pop-  
 268 ularity, and architectural diversity. Rather than using the API  
 269 endpoints of each model—which often involve complex setup  
 270 procedures, account approval, quota limitations, or billing con-  
 271 straints—we opted to use their official user interfaces (web plat-  
 272 forms) to ensure a consistent, hassle-free evaluation environment  
 273 [23].

274 Each model was accessed through its respective interface  
 275 (ChatGPT, Claude.ai, Gemini, DeepSeek chat, and X/Twitter AI  
 276 chat), and tested under identical conditions using a standardized  
 277 set of whiteboard images. This approach allowed us to focus  
 278 purely on evaluating extraction performance without being af-  
 279 fected by inconsistencies in API behavior or permission issues.  
 280 It also reflects a real-world use case for educators or developers  
 281 who might prefer visual input through UI platforms rather than  
 282 programmatic pipelines. Despite not using APIs during this  
 283 benchmark phase, our goal is to eventually integrate the most  
 284 effective model into the Clarix system through API deployment,  
 285 once a suitable model has been identified [24].

### 286 D. Evaluation

287 To evaluate the performance of large language models (LLMs)  
 288 and traditional OCR models in interpreting whiteboard con-  
 289 tent, we conducted a comparative analysis using five distinct  
 290 LLM models: ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Deepseek, and Grok,  
 291 alongside three traditional Optical Character Recognition (OCR)  
 292 models: PaddleOCR, EasyOCR, and TesseractOCR. Each model  
 293 was tested on a consistent dataset of five whiteboard images, cov-  
 294 ering various educational topics such as mathematics, physics,  
 295 and economics.

296 The LLM models received identical prompts and were eval-  
 297 uated based on their ability to accurately reconstruct the textual  
 298 content present in each image, leveraging their multimodal ca-  
 299 pabilities to understand both visual and textual elements within  
 300 the whiteboard context. In contrast, the traditional OCR models

301 relied purely on character recognition algorithms to extract text  
 302 from the images.

303 For evaluation precision, recall, and F1 score were used as  
 304 the primary metrics. These scores were computed by comparing  
 305 the tokenized output of each model against manually defined  
 306 ground truth references for each image. Precision measures the  
 307 proportion of correctly identified tokens among all tokens pre-  
 308 dicted by the model, recall measures the proportion of correctly  
 309 identified tokens among all actual tokens in the ground truth,  
 310 and F1 score represents the harmonic mean of precision and  
 311 recall, providing a balanced assessment of model performance.

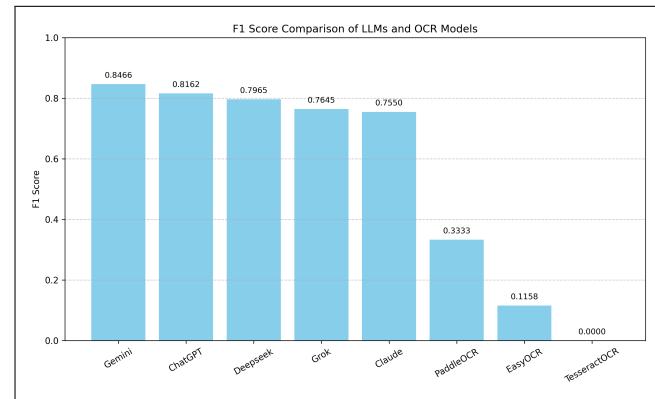
## 312 4. RESULTS

313 The comparative analysis revealed significant performance dif-  
 314 ferences between large language models and traditional OCR ap-  
 315 proaches in whiteboard content interpretation. Table 1 presents  
 316 the average precision, recall, and F1 scores across all five white-  
 317 board images for each model.

**Table 1. Average Precision, Recall, and F1 Score for Each LLM and OCR Model**

Model	Avg Precision	Avg Recall	Avg F1 Score
Gemini	0.8188	0.8784	0.8466
ChatGPT	0.7954	0.8534	0.8162
Deepseek	0.7422	0.8625	0.7965
Grok	0.7372	0.7987	0.7645
Claude	0.7219	0.8034	0.7550
PaddleOCR	0.3523	0.3223	0.3333
EasyOCR	0.1101	0.1309	0.1158
TesseractOCR	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

318 To better visualize the F1 Score performance across the eval-  
 319 uated models, the graph below presents a corresponding bar  
 320 chart.

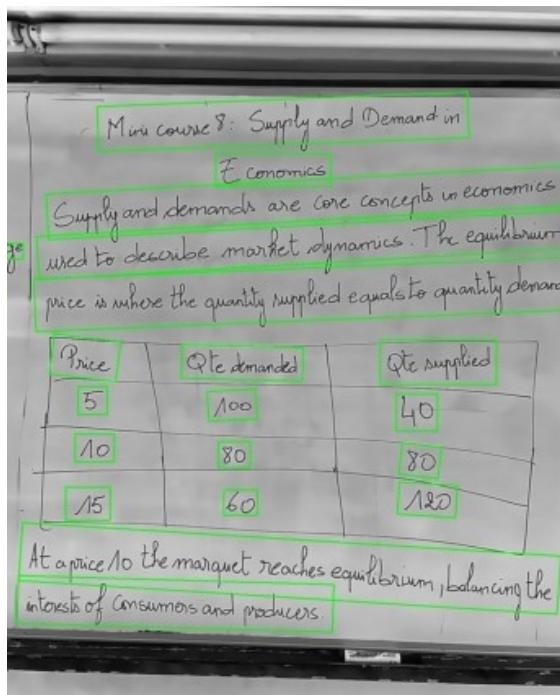


**Fig. 3. F1 score comparison of various large language models and OCRs on the text extraction benchmark.**

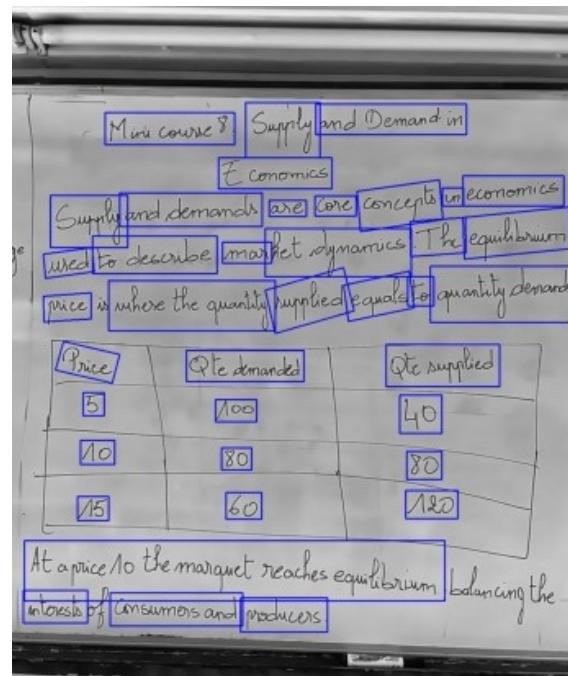
321 Among the large language models, Gemini achieved the high-  
 322 est F1 score of 0.8466 with precision of 0.8188 and recall of 0.8784.  
 323 ChatGPT ranked second with an F1 score of 0.8162, precision of

324 0.7954, and recall of 0.8534. Deepseek recorded the highest recall  
 325 score of 0.8625 but achieved an F1 score of 0.7965 with precision  
 326 of 0.7422. Grok obtained an F1 score of 0.7645 with precision  
 327 of 0.7372 and recall of 0.7987. Claude achieved an F1 score of  
 328 0.7550 with precision of 0.7219 and recall of 0.8034.

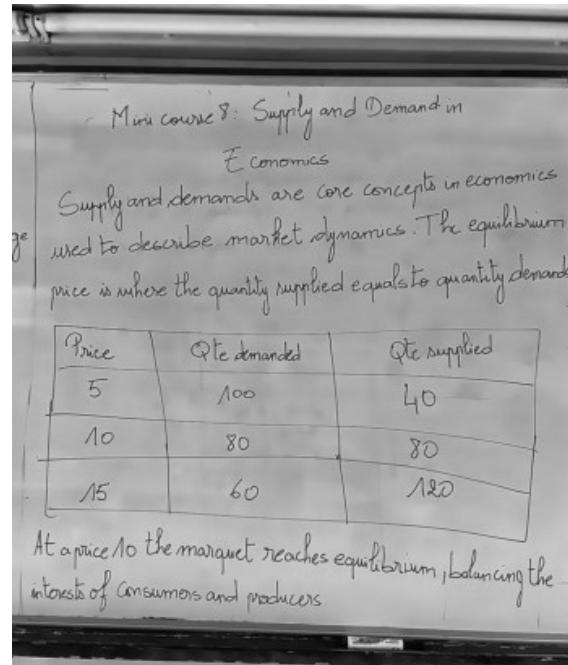
329 Among the traditional OCR models, PaddleOCR achieved  
 330 the highest performance with an F1 score of 0.3333, precision  
 331 of 0.3523, and recall of 0.3223. EasyOCR recorded an F1 score  
 332 of 0.1158 with precision of 0.1101 and recall of 0.1309. Tesseract-  
 333 tOCR recorded zero scores across all metrics.



**Fig. 4.** PaddleOCR Optimized text region detection: 20 regions detected with blue bounding boxes covering complete phrases and text blocks



**Fig. 5.** EasyOCR text region detection: 39 regions detected with blue bounding boxes outlining individual words and text elements



**Fig. 6.** TesseractOCR text region detection: 0 regions detected

334 Figures 5, 6, and 4 display the text region detection capabilities  
 335 of the three traditional OCR models. TesseractOCR detected  
 336 0 text regions across the whiteboard images. EasyOCR identi-  
 337 fied 39 text regions with blue bounding boxes outlining individ-  
 338 ual words and text elements. PaddleOCR Optimized detected  
 339 20 text regions with blue bounding boxes covering complete  
 340 phrases and text blocks

## 5. DISCUSSION

The experimental results reveal substantial performance disparities between multimodal large language models and traditional OCR systems when applied to whiteboard content extraction. The superior performance of LLMs across all evaluation metrics demonstrates the advantages of multimodal understanding capabilities over conventional character recognition approaches [25, 26].

Among the LLM models, Gemini's leading performance ( $F_1 = 0.8466$ ) can be attributed to its balanced precision and recall scores, indicating robust text extraction with minimal false positives and negatives. The relatively close performance clustering of all LLM models ( $F_1$  scores ranging from 0.7550 to 0.8466) suggests that current multimodal LLMs have reached a comparable level of maturity in visual text understanding tasks [25]. Notably, Deepseek achieved the highest recall score (0.8625), demonstrating superior capability in identifying existing text content, though this came at the cost of precision.

The stark performance gap between LLMs and traditional OCR models highlights fundamental limitations in conventional text recognition approaches when handling complex visual scenarios. PaddleOCR's relatively superior performance among OCR models ( $F_1 = 0.3333$ ) correlates with its text region detection strategy, which identifies 20 coherent text regions corresponding to complete phrases and sentences. This approach enables more contextual text extraction compared to word-level detection [27].

Conversely, EasyOCR's detection of 39 text regions reflects a granular, word-by-word approach that, while identifying more individual text elements, fails to maintain contextual relationships between words within phrases or sentences. This fragmented detection strategy likely contributes to its lower overall performance ( $F_1 = 0.1158$ ) despite detecting nearly twice as many regions as PaddleOCR. The word-level segmentation approach appears less effective for whiteboard scenarios where maintaining textual context and structure is crucial for accurate content reconstruction [25].

TesseractOCR's complete failure (0 detected regions, 0 scores across all metrics) indicates fundamental incompatibility with handwritten whiteboard content. This suggests that TesseractOCR's optimization for printed text renders it unsuitable for educational whiteboard scenarios containing handwritten mathematical expressions, diagrams, and informal notation styles [27].

The region detection analysis reveals that mere quantity of detected regions does not correlate with extraction quality. EasyOCR's higher region count paradoxically led to inferior performance compared to PaddleOCR's more selective but contextually coherent region identification. This finding underscores the importance of semantic understanding in text extraction tasks, where maintaining phrase-level and sentence-level coherence proves more valuable than exhaustive word-level detection [25].

The multimodal LLMs' consistent outperformance suggests that their training on diverse visual-textual datasets enables better handling of whiteboard-specific challenges, including handwritten text, mathematical notation, informal layouts, and mixed content types. Unlike traditional OCR systems that rely solely on pattern matching and character recognition algorithms, LLMs can leverage contextual understanding to infer missing or unclear characters and maintain semantic coherence across extracted text [26, 28].

These findings have practical implications for educational technology applications, where accurate whiteboard content

extraction is essential for automated note-taking, content digitization, and accessibility enhancement. The results suggest that current multimodal LLMs provide viable solutions for such applications, while traditional OCR approaches remain inadequate for complex whiteboard scenarios [29].

Future research directions should explore the specific factors contributing to LLM superiority, investigate hybrid approaches combining OCR region detection with LLM contextual understanding, and evaluate performance across diverse whiteboard content types and writing styles [25].

## 6. CONCLUSION

Clarix demonstrates an effective, low-cost solution for automating the digitization and cleaning of whiteboard content using embedded systems and AI technologies. By integrating a Raspberry Pi, OCR, and a servo-driven cleaning mechanism, the system bridges the gap between analog and digital workflows. The evaluation of five advanced Large Language Models on diverse whiteboard content provides valuable insights into their performance in real-world scenarios, highlighting GPT-4o as the most reliable across different content types. Clarix not only streamlines classroom and meeting room documentation but also lays the groundwork for scalable deployments in educational and collaborative settings. Future work will explore real-time transcription, multi-language support, and cloud integration to further enhance the system's capabilities.

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