Continuous Face Detection and Verification During Online Examinations

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Abstract

I present a prototype of a system used to continuously detect and verify faces of examinees during online examinations, as well as a method of representation of the results of such verifications, and overall architecture of the system. The system consists of three modules: the client-side face detection, the serverside face verification, and the exam supervisor’s dashboard. Face detection occurs on each client’s computer using Single Shot Multibox Detection (SSD). The resulting image is aligned and cropped, then encoded into base-64 format and sent to the verification server via a POST request. Upon receiving such request, the server decodes the base-64 image, feeds it to the VGG-Face model to get a vector representation of the face and compares the Euclidean distance between said image and some predefined base image. The results of the last operation are sent to the exam supervisor’s dashboard via a POST request. The exam supervisor’s dashboard’s task is to receive and process such requests and represent the updated data in real time. In addition, the exam supervisor’s dashboard is responsible for configuration of the exam session, as well as generation of the clientside executables to allow easy and seamless process for the students.

Keywords: Real-Time Face Recognition, Client-Server Architecture, Online Examination.

## Motivation

The current solutions for online examination are variants of the following approach: the students connect to a third party-provided online meeting (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams), turn on their cameras, proceed to complete the exam. This method is flawed in terms of security against academic offenses. The most prevalent one, in my experience as a student, is the abuse of the fact that the exam supervisor has never seen students’ faces before the exam due to it not being required during the semester, as well as the absence of identity verification as a prerequisite to writing the exam. In other words, students may outsource (ask their friends to write the exam for them, pay a professional to do it, etc.) and get a passing grade regardless of whether they truly know the material presented during the semester. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when there was no other option other than online education and online exams, the students were incentivized to abuse this system and commit academic offenses and get a passing grade without opening the course textbook once during the semester. This effectively lowers the overall education level, potentially creating severe errors, that may be lethal in some cases, due to students-turned-professionals being unqualified. One may argue that the proportion of students cheating is marginal at best, however this problem is a hole in a ship that might lead to it sinking.

With an existing state-of-the-art face recognition technology, it is possible to prevent these problems by building and integrating security applications into existing infrastructures of academic institutions.

## Existing Procedures

Normally examinations are held in-person, which prevents students from committing academic offenses under the watchful eyes of the exam supervisors and their assistance. The identity of examinees is established and verified either on entrance to the exam room or during the exam itself: the examinees are asked to present a student identification card that contains the image of their face, first and last name(s), and the student ID number. This information is verified against a list of students registered for this exam, and the images in the identification card is matched with the face of the owner of the card. If these conditions are met, the examinee is cleared to write the exam. Examinees are not allowed to leave the exam room until they have turned in their exam papers, or their identity is verified once again on re-entry.

The described above procedure is put in place with security in mind, to prevent the problem mentioned in the previous section. It has been successful in preventing most cases of identity fraud in the context of examinations. However, currently there is no such procedure being used for online examinations.

## Proposed Procedure

The procedure I use in my application is modeled after the existing in-person exam protocol:

1. Before the start of the exam session, exam supervisors are required to create a list of students allowed to take the exam (first and last names, as well as student numbers).
2. The images of the students’ faces are then fetched from an already existing university database.
3. The client executables (access point for the students) are generated and distributed to the students.
4. The exam supervisor starts the exam session.
5. The students launch the executables, input their identification data (first, last names, student number)
6. The system verifies their faces throughout the duration of the whole exam.

The described above procedure replicates the in-person procedure except for the last step. Step 6 covers an edge case that is only possible during online examinations: it is not possible to fake one’s identity once it has been verified without leaving the examination room first. However, during online examinations it is possible. By ensuring continuous verification, the application prevents it from happening.

# Chapter 1. System Architecture

Any face recognition pipeline consists of at least four parts: face detection, alignment, face representation, and verification. The system consists of three modules: client-side face detection, server-side face verification, and exam supervisor’s dashboard. The pipeline stages are spread across the three modules to optimally distribute the stress and utilization of computational resources required of each stage.

## Exam Supervisor’s Dashboard

The Dashboard module is responsible for configuration of the session, executing compilation scripts, starting the verification server, and presentation of the verification results. Upon

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