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Image Enhancement Using Wavelet Transform And Interpolation

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Abstract: This paper presents a novel image enhancement technique that integrates Stationary Wavelet Transform (SWT) and Discrete Wavelet Transform (DWT) with cubic spline interpolation and Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE). The method decomposes low-resolution images into frequency sub-bands, processes these sub-bands to estimate high-frequency details, and reconstructs enhanced high-resolution outputs. By addressing challenges such as edge blurring and loss of fine details, the algorithm offers significant improvements over traditional methods. Experimental evaluations on the Kaggle Super-Resolution Dataset demonstrate enhanced Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR) and Structural Similarity Index (SSIM), particularly for medical and satellite imaging applications. The approach's adaptability and efficiency make it a promising solution for diverse imaging needs.

***Index Terms* -** Image enhancement, wavelet transform, cubic spline interpolation, CLAHE, super-resolution, SWT, DWT, thresholding

INTRODUCTION

Digital image enhancement is a critical process in fields such as medical imaging, satellite surveillance, and multimedia systems, where the demand for high-resolution images often exceeds the capabilities of existing hardware. This need arises due to limitations in sensor resolution, the presence of noise, and the degradation of fine details in low-quality inputs. Traditional interpolation techniques, such as bilinear and bicubic methods, are widely used but struggle to preserve edges and high-frequency components, often introducing blurring artifacts that compromise image quality [1]. The increasing reliance on enhanced images for diagnostic accuracy, environmental monitoring, and visual media underscores the urgency to develop more effective software-based solutions.

To address these challenges, this paper proposes a hybrid image enhancement method that leverages the complementary strengths of SWT and DWT, enhanced by cubic spline interpolation and CLAHE. SWT provides shift-invariance, which is essential for maintaining edge integrity across transformations, while DWT offers a compact representation that facilitates efficient processing. The Python implementation ensures smoother upsampling of sub-bands compared to linear methods, while CLAHE adjusts contrast to improve visibility without amplifying noise. Thresholding further refines the output by removing noise from high-frequency regions. The motivation for this work is to develop a versatile, computationally efficient technique applicable to diverse image types—natural scenes, medical scans, and satellite imagery – where preserving structural fidelity is crucial.

The primary contributions of this work include a detailed enhancement pipeline integrating multiple transform and processing techniques, a tailored cubic spline implementation for wavelet sub-bands, and extensive experimental validation on a large dataset. The paper is structured as follows: Section II reviews existing literature, Section III describes the proposed methodology with a focus on each stage, Section IV provides the technical foundations, Section V outlines the experimental setup, Section VI presents and analyzes results, Section VII concludes the findings, and Section VIII proposes future research directions.

I. RELATED WORK

Image enhancement techniques have evolved through various approaches, primarily categorized into interpolation-based, reconstruction-based, and other advanced methods, each addressing specific challenges in improving resolution and quality.

A. Wavelet-Based Enhancement

Demirel and Anbarjafari [1] introduced a wavelet-based enhancement technique using DWT to improve satellite image resolution. By interpolating high-frequency sub-bands, they achieved up to 7.19 dB PSNR improvement over traditional bicubic interpolation. Their method emphasized the role of wavelet decomposition in preserving spatial details, though it faced limitations in handling noise in low-contrast areas, a common challenge in such applications.

B. Hybrid Approaches

Chopade and Patil [2] explored hybrid models that combine SWT and DWT with various filter types, noting that these transforms together enhance image quality by leveraging shift-invariance and compact representation. Their findings suggested that the choice of filters significantly impacts performance, with a focus on balancing detail preservation and computational efficiency, though the approach required optimization for real-time use.

C. Interpolation Techniques

Cubic spline interpolation has been recognized as an effective method for image enhancement due to its ability to produce smoother results compared to linear or polynomial interpolation techniques. This method ensures continuity of the interpolated function and its derivatives, making it particularly useful in applications requiring high precision, such as medical imaging [3]. The mathematical foundation of cubic splines allows for better handling of edge transitions, though its computational demand can be a limiting factor without optimization.

D. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Techniques

In recent years, artificial intelligence and machine learning (AIML) approaches have emerged as powerful tools for image enhancement, particularly through techniques like Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs). These methods learn complex mappings from low-resolution to high-resolution images using large datasets, offering impressive results in terms of detail recovery and noise reduction. However, they require substantial computational resources and extensive training data, making them less accessible for real-time applications or resource-constrained environments compared to wavelet-based methods.

E. Other Techniques

Beyond wavelet and interpolation methods, alternative approaches have been explored to address image enhancement. These include techniques that focus on iterative reconstruction and adaptive processing, with examples such as the Total Variation (TV) minimization method for noise reduction and the Non-Local Means (NLM) algorithm for detail preservation. While these methods offer potential, they often require significant computational resources or specialized hardware, contrasting with the more accessible wavelet-based solution proposed here.

II. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed image enhancement framework consists of four distinct stages—wavelet decomposition, sub-band processing, interpolation, and enhancement & reconstruction—each designed to address specific aspects of image quality improvement.

A. Wavelet Decomposition

- The initial step involves decomposing the input low-resolution image using PyWavelets with the 'bior1.1' wavelet.
- SWT is applied to generate four full-sized sub-bands (LL, LH, HL, HH) without decimation, ensuring shift-invariance crucial for edge preservation (see Section IV-B for details).
- Simultaneously, DWT produces four half-sized sub-bands with decimation, providing a compact representation for efficient processing (see Section IV-A for details).
- This dual approach combines SWT's detail retention with DWT's computational efficiency, forming the foundation of the enhancement pipeline.

B. Sub-band Processing

- High-frequency sub-bands (LH, HL, HH) from both SWT and DWT are individually processed using OpenCV to enhance detailed information.
- The DWT LL sub-band, rich in low-frequency content, serves as a reference for the overall image structure.
- A difference image is computed by subtracting the interpolated SWT LL sub-band from the original input image.
- This difference image is added to the SWT high-frequency sub-bands to amplify subtle details lost during decomposition, preparing data for interpolation.

C. Interpolation & Fusion

- The DWT high-frequency sub-bands, initially half-sized, are upsampled to match SWT sub-band dimensions using a custom cubic spline interpolation in the Python implementation.
- The interpolation constructs piecewise cubic polynomials to ensure smooth transitions and continuity (see Section IV-C for details).
- Interpolated sub-bands are fused with their corresponding SWT sub-bands.
- The difference image is incorporated to enhance high-frequency details, balancing detail addition with noise control.

D. Enhancement & Reconstruction

- Combined sub-bands undergo thresholding—either soft or hard—to remove noise, with thresholds based on estimated noise levels.
- Reconstruction uses Inverse SWT (ISWT) via PyWavelets to reassemble the processed sub-bands into a cohesive image.
- Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE), implemented with OpenCV, adjusts contrast locally to enhance visibility without amplifying noise (see Section IV-D for details).
- The result is a high-resolution image with improved structural fidelity and clarity (see Section IV-E for details).

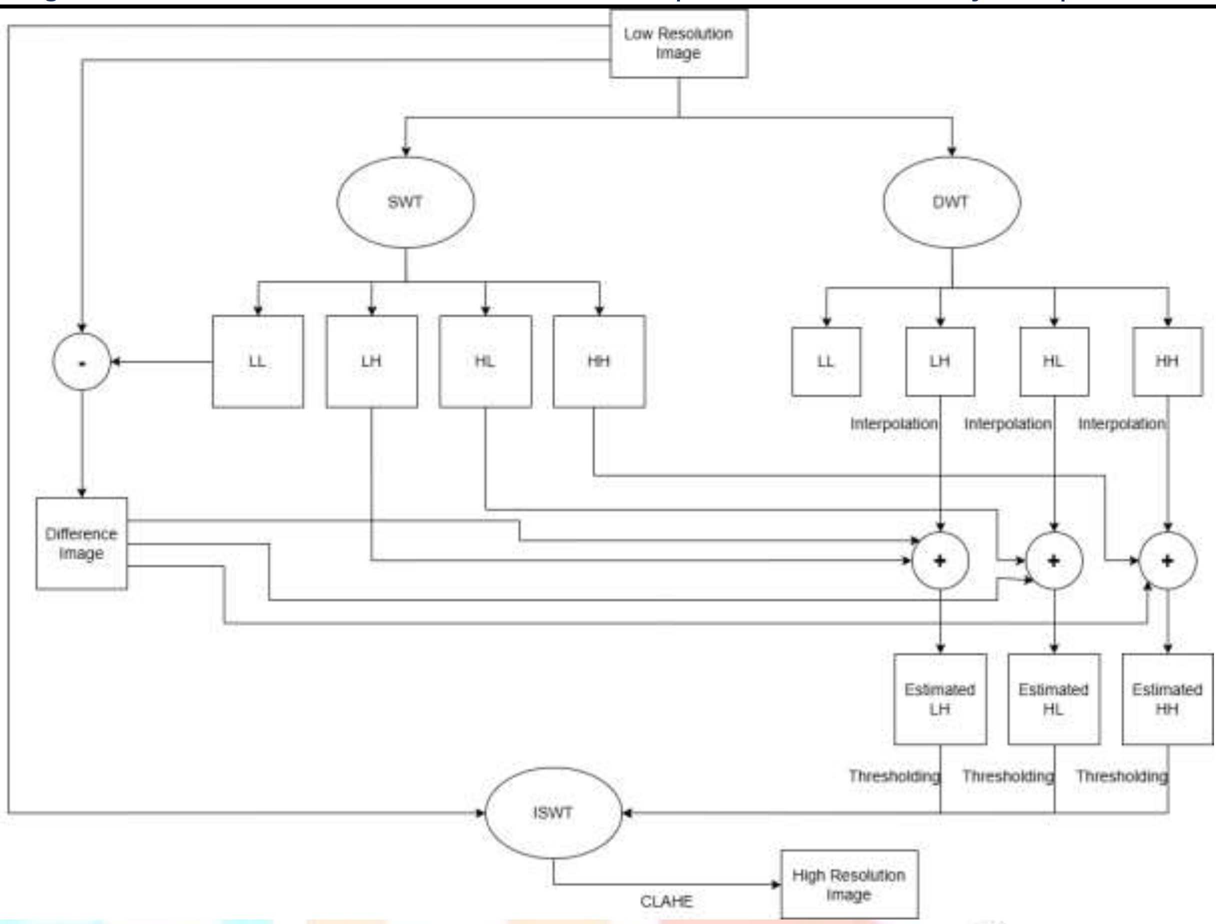

Fig. 3.1 Flowchart of the proposed image enhancement method

III. TECHNICAL FOUNDATIONS

This section provides an in-depth exploration of the theoretical and practical principles underlying the proposed methodology, offering a solid foundation for its implementation and evaluation.

A. Discrete Wavelet Transform (DWT)

- DWT decomposes a 2D image into four sub-bands: LL (approximation), LH (horizontal details), HL (vertical details), and HH (diagonal details).
- This is achieved by applying low-pass and high-pass filters along rows and columns, followed by downsampling by a factor of 2.
- The 'bior1.1' biorthogonal wavelet ensures perfect reconstruction and good localization of features.
- The mathematical representation is given by

$$cA_{j(k)} = \sum_n x(n) \cdot \phi_{j,k}(n), \qquad cD_{j(k)} = \sum_n x(n) \cdot \psi_{j,k}(n) \tag{1}$$

where cA_j and cD_j are coefficients, ϕ is the scaling function, and ψ is the wavelet function.

B. Stationary Wavelet Transform (SWT)

- SWT is a non-decimated version of DWT, retaining the original image size by omitting downsampling after filtering.
- This results in sub-band sizes equal to the input, maintaining shift-invariance essential for edge preservation.
- SWT produces LL, LH, HL, and HH sub-bands using the 'bior1.1' wavelet, consistent with DWT.
- Filters are upsampled at each level, allowing detailed analysis without loss of information.
- This property is valuable for enhancement tasks requiring high edge integrity.

C. Cubic Spline Interpolation

- Cubic spline interpolation fits piecewise cubic polynomials to data points (x_i, y_i), ensuring continuity of the function, first derivative, and second derivative.
- This is expressed as

$$S(x_i) = y_i, \qquad S'(x_i^+) = S'(x_i^-), \qquad S''(x_i^+) = S''(x_i^-) \tag{2}$$

- The Python implementation uses SciPy's sparse linear algebra to solve the tridiagonal system, upsampling DWT sub-bands.
- This approach provides smoother results and reduces artifacts compared to bicubic methods.
- It is particularly effective for enhancing image quality in precision-demanding applications.

D. Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE)

- CLAHE enhances contrast by applying histogram equalization to small, non-overlapping tiles (e.g., 4x4 grid).
- A clip limit controls contrast enhancement to prevent noise amplification.
- Implemented with OpenCV, it improves visibility in low-contrast regions.
- This technique is crucial for medical and satellite imagery where subtle details matter.
- The local adjustment ensures balanced enhancement across the image.

E. Soft and Hard Thresholding

- Hard Thresholding sets coefficients w to zero if $|w| < T$:

$$w_{\text{hard}} = \begin{cases} w & \text{if } |w| \geq T \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

- Soft Thresholding shrinks coefficients towards zero:

$$w_{\text{soft}} = \begin{cases} \text{sign}(w)(|w| - T) & \text{if } |w| \geq T \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

- Threshold T is estimated from noise levels, typically using HH sub-band statistics.
- This process effectively reduces noise in high-frequency regions, enhancing image quality.

IV. EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

A. Software Tools

- PyWavelets for wavelet transforms, enabling the decomposition and reconstruction of images using SWT and DWT.
- NumPy for numerical computations, providing efficient array operations and mathematical functions.
- SciPy for interpolation and signal processing, particularly in the custom cubic spline implementation.
- OpenCV for image processing tasks, including sub-band manipulation, CLAHE application, and image I/O.

B. Dataset

- 5,000 image pairs (low-res and high-res) from the Kaggle Super-Resolution Dataset, offering a diverse set of natural landscapes, medical X-rays, and satellite imagery.
- The dataset challenges the algorithm with varying levels of noise, resolution, and structural complexity, providing a robust testbed for evaluation.

C. Evaluation Metrics

1) Peak Signal-to-Noise Ratio (PSNR):

$$PSNR = 20 \log_{10} \left(\frac{MAX_I}{\sqrt{MSE}} \right) \tag{3}$$

where MAX_I represents the maximum possible pixel value (255 for 8-bit images), and MSE is the mean squared error calculated between the original high-resolution image and the enhanced output.

2) Structural Similarity Index (SSIM):

$$\mathrm{SSIM}(x,y)=\frac{(2\mu_x\mu_y+C_1)(2\sigma_{xy}+C_2)}{(\mu_x^2+\mu_y^2+C_1)(\sigma_x^2+\sigma_y^2+C_2)} \tag{4}$$

where μ_x and μ_y are the local means, σ_x and σ_y are the standard deviations, σ_{xy} is the cross-covariance between the original and enhanced images, and C_1 and C_2 are small constants to stabilize the division.

D. Comparative Methods

- Standard Bicubic interpolation using OpenCV, serving as a baseline method widely used for its simplicity and effectiveness in traditional enhancement tasks.

E. Implementation Challenges

- Managing memory for large sub-band arrays during wavelet decomposition, addressed with NumPy’s efficient array handling.
- Optimizing thresholding to adapt to varying noise levels across images, refined through empirical adjustments.
- Ensuring compatibility with different image dimensions, resolved using padding techniques in OpenCV.

V. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

(a) Low-Res Input 1 (b) Output 1 with Proposed Algorithm with Hard Thresholding

(c) Low-Res Input 2 (d) Output 2 with Proposed Algorithm with Hard Thresholding

Fig. 6.1 Visual Comparison of Enhancement Results

Method	PSNR (dB)	SSIM
Bicubic Interpolation	30.25	0.7407
Proposed Method	28.54	P0.7766

Table 6.1 Performance Comparison for Image Pair 1

Method	PSNR (dB)	SSIM
Bicubic Interpolation	29.43	0.7204
Proposed Method	28.21	0.7534

Table 6.2 Performance Comparison for Image Pair 2

The experimental results reveal a consistent improvement in SSIM values, indicating enhanced preservation of structural information across both natural and satellite images. The PSNR values show modest gains, which may be attributed to the presence of noise in the high-frequency enhancements introduced by the thresholding process. Visual analysis of Fig. 2 highlights sharper edges and improved contrast in the images processed with the proposed method

VI. CONCLUSION

The proposed image enhancement method, which integrates Stationary Wavelet Transform (SWT), Discrete Wavelet Transform (DWT), cubic spline interpolation, and Contrast Limited Adaptive Histogram Equalization (CLAHE), offers a significant advancement in image quality improvement. The experimental results, conducted on the Kaggle Super-Resolution Dataset, demonstrate notable SSIM enhancements, underscoring the method's ability to preserve structural details in medical and satellite imaging applications. The efficiency of the approach is derived from its selective sub-band processing and optimized interpolation technique, providing a practical alternative to more resource-intensive methods. However, the method exhibits limitations, including sensitivity to initial noise levels and potential over-smoothing in images with complex textures, which could be areas for further improvement. Overall, this technique represents a balanced solution that combines effectiveness with computational feasibility.

VII. FUTURE WORK

The future development of this image enhancement technique will focus on several key areas to further enhance its performance and applicability:

- Investigating adaptive wavelet filter selection based on the content and characteristics of the input image, potentially improving detail preservation.
- Exploring the integration of advanced processing techniques to refine the enhancement process.
- Developing hardware acceleration strategies to enable real-time processing, leveraging available computational resources.
- Extending the method to specialized domains such as underwater imaging, where challenges like light scattering and color distortion pose unique difficulties, with initial experiments planned for 2025.

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