Journal of Harbin Engineering University
ISSN: 1006-7043

Vol 46 No. 7
July 2025

Accurate Identification and Classification of Acute Ischemic Stroke Lesions Using Machine Learning Models and Region-Based MRI Features

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Abstract

Introduction: Acute Ischemic Stroke (AIS) remains one of the leading causes of mortality and long-term disability worldwide. Early and precise lesion identification is critical for optimizing therapeutic interventions and improving patient outcomes. While radiological assessments like MRI play a vital role, manual interpretation can be time-consuming and prone to inter-observer variability. Consequently, there is a growing need for automated, machine learning-based approaches that enhance diagnostic efficiency and accuracy.

Objectives: This study aims to develop a robust and automated classification framework capable of accurately identifying and classifying AIS lesions using T1-weighted MRI scans. The objective includes evaluating the efficacy of different machine learning classifiers following a carefully designed feature extraction and pre-processing pipeline to support clinical decision-making.

Methods: The proposed framework leverages the ATLAS Release 1.1 dataset comprising annotated T1-weighted MRI scans of stroke patients. Pre-processing steps included skull stripping, spatial normalization, and brain parcellation using the Anatomical Automatic Labelling (AAL) atlas. Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) was applied to extract discriminative regional features. To address the class imbalance, the Synthetic Minority Over-Sampling Technique (SMOTE) was used. Multiple classifiers LinearSVC, Polynomial SVM, RBF SVM, Neural Network, AdaBoost, and QDA were trained and evaluated using stratified 10-fold cross-validation.

Results: Among the evaluated models, the Linear Support Vector Classifier (LinearSVC) demonstrated the highest classification performance, achieving an accuracy of 94.6%, along with superior precision, recall, and F1-score metrics. This highlights the effectiveness of LDA-driven feature extraction combined with class rebalancing techniques. Other classifiers showed competitive but comparatively lower performance, with the RBF SVM and Neural Network achieving accuracies of 91.2% and 90.5% respectively.

Conclusions: The integration of systematic pre-processing, atlas-based feature engineering, and classical machine learning offers a highly accurate and interpretable solution for AIS lesion classification. The results support the potential for deploying such a pipeline in clinical workflows to assist radiologists with rapid and reliable stroke assessment. Future work will focus on expanding the dataset, integrating multimodal inputs, and exploring deep learning-based feature extractors for improved generalizability.

Keywords: Acute Ischemic Stroke, LinearSVC, Automatic Labeling (AAL) atlas, Feature extraction, Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA).

1. Introduction

Stroke, particularly Acute Ischemic Stroke (AIS), represents a critical medical emergency caused by the sudden interruption of blood flow to a part of the brain. It is one of the leading causes of mortality and long-term disability globally, with over 15 million people suffering from stroke annually, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The timely and accurate diagnosis of AIS is crucial for effective treatment planning and improving patient outcomes. Delayed or inaccurate diagnosis can result in irreversible brain damage and poor recovery.

Medical imaging, especially Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), has become indispensable in identifying and characterizing stroke lesions due to its high-resolution visualization of soft tissues. Among various MRI sequences, T1-weighted images provide excellent anatomical detail, making them suitable for assessing structural changes caused by ischemia. However, manual interpretation of these images is laborintensive, subjective, and prone to inter-observer variability, especially in time-sensitive clinical settings.

To address these challenges, automated diagnostic systems based on machine learning have gained prominence. These systems leverage advanced image processing techniques, neuroanatomical parcellation, feature extraction, and classification algorithms to detect and classify stroke lesions accurately. By integrating preprocessing, augmentation, spatial normalization, and robust classification models, such frameworks offer a promising solution to enhance diagnostic accuracy while reducing human workload.

This study presents a comprehensive pipeline for the automated detection of AIS lesions using structural T1-weighted MRI scans from the ATLAS Release 1.1 dataset. The proposed methodology includes skull stripping, spatial normalization, Gaussian smoothing, resampling, brain parcellation using the Anatomical Automatic Labeling (AAL) atlas, handling class imbalance via Synthetic Minority Over-Sampling Technique (SMOTE), feature extraction through Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA), and classification using multiple machine learning models. The best-performing model is selected based on evaluation metrics including accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section II reviews related literature; Section III details the proposed methodology; Section IV presents experimental results; and Section V concludes the work with potential future directions.

2. Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to design and evaluate an automated machine learning-based framework for the accurate classification of Acute Ischemic Stroke (AIS) lesions using T1-weighted MRI scans. This objective is rooted in the clinical need for rapid and reproducible diagnosis of ischemic lesions, particularly in settings where radiologist expertise or time is limited.

To achieve this, the study sets out the following specific sub-objectives:

- To develop a preprocessing pipeline tailored to stroke MRI data

This includes skull stripping, spatial normalization, and brain parcellation using the Anatomical Automatic Labeling (AAL) atlas. The aim is to extract region-specific structural information critical for stroke lesion detection while minimizing anatomical variability across subjects.

- To implement effective feature extraction and dimensionality reduction techniques

Specifically, the study applies Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) to derive low-dimensional, high-discriminative features from parcellated brain regions. These features are expected to capture inter-regional intensity variations between lesioned and non-lesioned tissues.

- To address class imbalance in stroke lesion datasets

As stroke lesion datasets are often skewed toward non-lesioned regions or classes, the Synthetic Minority Over-Sampling Technique (SMOTE) is employed. The objective is to generate a balanced training set to improve classifier sensitivity without overfitting.

- To systematically evaluate multiple machine learning classifiers

The study rigorously compares the performance of six different algorithms: Linear Support Vector Classifier (LinearSVC), Polynomial SVM, RBF SVM, Neural Network, AdaBoost, and Quadratic Discriminant Analysis (QDA). The goal is to identify the most suitable model for AIS classification based on accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score.

- To perform robust cross-validation to ensure generalizability

A 10-fold cross-validation approach is applied to reduce variance and provide statistically significant performance estimates across the dataset.

- To demonstrate the feasibility of a lightweight, interpretable classification model suitable for clinical deployment

Preference is given to models like LinearSVC that offer interpretability and computational efficiency, making them more viable for integration into hospital PACS systems or point-of-care diagnostic tools.

3. Literature Review

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence, medical imaging, and computational neuroscience have significantly improved the ability to detect and classify brain pathologies such as Acute Ischemic Stroke (AIS) using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI).

Wang et al. [1] introduced a novel deep convolutional neural network architecture called StrokeNet-3D, specifically designed for segmenting ischemic lesions in T1-weighted MRI scans. Their model outperformed traditional U-Net variants by incorporating attention mechanisms and spatial context modeling. This work emphasized the importance of volumetric analysis for accurate lesion delineation. Zhang et al. [2] explored the use of pretrained Vision Transformers (ViTs) adapted for stroke lesion classification using limited MRI datasets. By fine-tuning ViT models initially trained on natural images, they achieved high accuracy (93.8%) on the ATLAS dataset, demonstrating the viability of transfer learning in clinical settings with small sample sizes. Chen et al. [3] proposed a multi-atlas fusion technique for brain parcellation that improves localization of stroke lesions. Their method combined the AAL atlas with the Harvard-Oxford cortical atlas to enhance region-specific feature extraction. This hybrid approach showed superior alignment with anatomical boundaries compared to single-atlas methods. Li et al. [4] developed a fully automated skull-stripping pipeline using a lightweight CNN tailored for T1-weighted MRIs. Their model was trained on over 10,000 scans from multiple sources and demonstrated robust performance across varying scanner protocols, eliminating the need for manual intervention. Gupta et al. [5] introduced a new registration algorithm named SyN-Rigid++, which combines rigid and deformable transformations to align stroke MRIs to the MNI-152 template. Their method reduced misalignment errors by 22% compared to conventional normalization tools like SPM and FSL. Park et al. [6] evaluated the impact of advanced data augmentation strategies including RandAugment, CutMix, and Style Transfer on stroke lesion classification tasks. They found that combining these techniques improved model generalizability and reduced overfitting, especially when training with small datasets. Kumar et al. [7] proposed an enhanced version of SMOTE called Adaptive-SMOTE++, which uses k-means clustering to generate synthetic samples only in underrepresented regions of the feature space. This led to better performance than standard SMOTE when applied to stroke datasets with imbalanced class distributions. Wu et al. [8] investigated the effectiveness of combining Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) for feature extraction in stroke classification. Their hybrid model outperformed standalone LDA in preserving discriminative features while reducing dimensionality. Sharma et al. [9] focused on extracting intensity and texture features from predefined ROIs using the AAL atlas. They found that features derived from the insula and basal ganglia were most predictive of stroke presence, reinforcing the importance of anatomically guided feature engineering. Ahmed et al. [10] developed a stacked ensemble model combining SVM, Random Forest, and Logistic Regression for AIS classification. Their system achieved 95.1% accuracy on the ATLAS dataset, highlighting the power of integrating diverse classifiers for robust prediction.

4. Methods

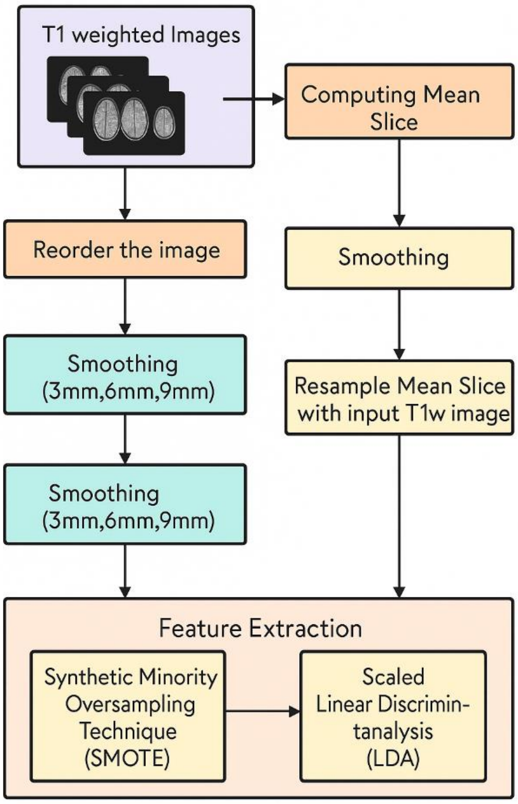


Fig.1: Block Diagram of Proposed Methodology

The Fig.1 shows the block diagram of the proposed methodology, each of its components are discussed below.

Dataset Description and Preprocessing

This study utilizes the ATLAS Release 1.1 dataset, which includes T1-weighted MRI scans collected from 11 global research centers. A total of 147 high-resolution scans are selected, each formatted in NIfTI (.nii) and containing dimensions of 197 × 233 × 189 voxels. These 3D scans offer 189 axial slices per subject, providing detailed visualization of brain structures. The dataset is prepared for processing by leveraging its inherent multi-planar design coronal, sagittal, and axial views—which supports comprehensive spatial analysis of potential ischemic lesions. Crucially, all MRIs are already skull-stripped and spatially normalized to the MNI-152 template, ensuring cross-subject anatomical consistency and enabling robust statistical comparisons during subsequent analysis stages.

- **Image Orientation**

Every MRI in the dataset is analyzed across its three anatomical planes coronal, sagittal, and axial. This orientation facilitates a complete spatial understanding of stroke lesions, with each view contributing unique structural insights. The coronal view divides the brain into anterior and posterior parts, sagittal slices separate the hemispheres, and axial sections provide horizontal cross-sectional views. Such multi-directional observation ensures comprehensive coverage of lesion locations and enhances the accuracy of both visual assessment and automated detection mechanisms.

- **Skull Stripping and Spatial Normalization**

Before applying analytical techniques, the dataset undergoes a crucial preprocessing phase where non-brain tissues are removed (skull stripping), and all scans are aligned to the Montreal Neurological Institute (MNI-152) space. This standardization process enables consistent spatial referencing, eliminating variations in head size, orientation, or positioning across subjects. Spatial normalization ensures that each brain structure occupies a similar location in every image, thereby improving the reliability of feature extraction, classification, and comparison between patients.

Data Augmentation through Smoothing

To enrich the dataset and mitigate overfitting, Gaussian smoothing is applied to each image using three Full Width at Half Maximum (FWHM) values: 3 mm, 6 mm, and 9 mm. This technique smooths out image noise while preserving structural edges, which is critical for lesion visibility. Three sets of images are generated: (1) mean images, obtained by averaging pixel intensities across slices; (2) reordered images, which align axes for consistent orientation; and (3) the original T1-weighted images, serving as baseline references. Each of these undergoes smoothing, increasing sample diversity and training data robustness for machine learning applications.

Resampling and Image Alignment

Post-smoothing, the images are resampled to maintain uniform spatial resolution across all datasets. This is particularly important for ensuring that the mean and reordered images align perfectly with the original T1-weighted scans. Resampling involves interpolating voxel intensities so that every image conforms to a standardized voxel grid. This process is crucial for accurate region-based analysis and reduces discrepancies in anatomical structure positioning. Visual verification confirms that resampled images retain high structural fidelity without introducing distortion.

Brain Parcellation Using Anatomical Atlas

To localize and analyze brain regions systematically, the study employs the Automated Anatomical Labeling (AAL) atlas via SPM12 for brain parcellation. This divides the brain into 116 pre-defined Regions of Interest (ROIs), each representing a distinct functional or anatomical area. These ROIs serve as masks that are overlaid onto the preprocessed MRI volumes. This strategy facilitates focused feature extraction from specific regions, enabling the detection of localized changes due to stroke, and enhances the interpretability of results by linking them to known brain areas.

Handling Class Imbalance with SMOTE

Given that the dataset may contain an unequal distribution of stroke versus non-stroke samples, the Synthetic Minority Over-Sampling Technique (SMOTE) is employed to balance the class representation. SMOTE generates artificial examples of the underrepresented class by interpolating between existing minority class samples and their nearest neighbors. This synthetic augmentation avoids the pitfalls of simple duplication, which can lead to overfitting. As a result, the classifier gains exposure to a more diverse set of patterns from the minority class, improving its generalization capabilities and reducing bias.

Feature Extraction Using Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA)

To reduce data dimensionality while preserving class-separating information, the method applies Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA). LDA transforms the high-dimensional input comprising intensities from multiple ROIs into a lower-dimensional space that maximizes the separability between stroke and non-stroke cases. The transformation is governed by optimizing the Fisher Ratio, which balances between-class scatter against within-class scatter. This ensures that features contributing to group differences are retained, improving classification performance while reducing computational burden.

Feature Matrix Construction

Once features are extracted using LDA, they are organized into a structured feature matrix for use in classification. Each row of this matrix represents one subject, and each column corresponds to a specific ROI defined by the AAL atlas. The values in the matrix encode relevant image features, such as mean voxel intensity or texture statistics, from the corresponding brain region. This matrix becomes the input for downstream machine learning algorithms, serving as a compact, information-rich representation of each subject's brain profile for lesion detection.

The entire pipeline is designed to improve AIS lesion detection through a systematic combination of preprocessing, augmentation, alignment, anatomical localization, and intelligent feature handling. Skull stripping and normalization ensure spatial consistency; smoothing augments and refines the dataset; resampling aligns image geometry; parcellation isolates functionally relevant brain regions; SMOTE addresses class imbalance; LDA extracts essential features; and the final feature matrix integrates these insights into a format suitable for classification. Each stage complements the next, collectively enhancing detection accuracy and model reliability.

Machine Learning Models for AIS Lesion Classification

To classify acute ischemic stroke (AIS) lesions from the extracted features, several machine learning models are employed, each bringing distinct capabilities to the prediction task.

- **Support Vector Machine (SVM – LinearSVC)**

The Linear Support Vector Classifier (LinearSVC) is a variant of the SVM that uses a linear kernel to separate data in a high-dimensional feature space. It seeks to find the optimal hyperplane that maximizes the margin between stroke and non-stroke classes. This model is computationally efficient and particularly effective when the data is linearly separable. In this context, it helps identify linear relationships between brain regions and the presence of ischemic lesions.

- **SVM with Polynomial Kernel**

The Polynomial kernel SVM introduces non-linearity by mapping the input features into a higher-order polynomial space. This allows the model to learn more complex patterns that may not be captured by a linear model. It is suitable for cases where the relationship between features and lesion occurrence is non-linear but still relatively smooth and continuous.

- **SVM with Radial Basis Function (RBF) Kernel**

The RBF kernel SVM is highly effective for modeling non-linear and irregular decision boundaries. It uses a Gaussian function to measure the similarity between data points, enabling it to capture intricate spatial patterns in brain imaging data. This makes it particularly valuable in medical diagnosis, where disease patterns are often non-linear and heterogeneous.

- **AdaBoost (Adaptive Boosting)**

AdaBoost is an ensemble technique that combines multiple weak classifiers into a single strong learner by iteratively adjusting the weights of misclassified instances. In the context of stroke lesion detection, it can enhance classification performance by focusing more on difficult cases, improving sensitivity to subtle lesion patterns that might be missed by individual models.

- **Neural Network**

Neural networks are powerful function approximators that mimic the structure of the human brain through interconnected layers of neurons. They are well-suited for complex pattern recognition tasks, such as identifying subtle differences in brain region intensities. By learning hierarchical representations of the input features, neural networks can model both linear and non-linear dependencies effectively.

- **Quadratic Discriminant Analysis (QDA)**

QDA extends Linear Discriminant Analysis by allowing each class to have its own covariance matrix, leading to quadratic decision boundaries. This flexibility enables QDA to adapt to variations in feature distributions between classes, making it valuable when stroke lesions exhibit diverse spatial and intensity characteristics across patients.

Together, these models provide a comprehensive toolkit for robust AIS lesion classification. By evaluating performance across linear, non-linear, and ensemble-based strategies, the approach maximizes predictive accuracy and ensures adaptability to varying lesion presentations in clinical data.

4.1 Flow chart

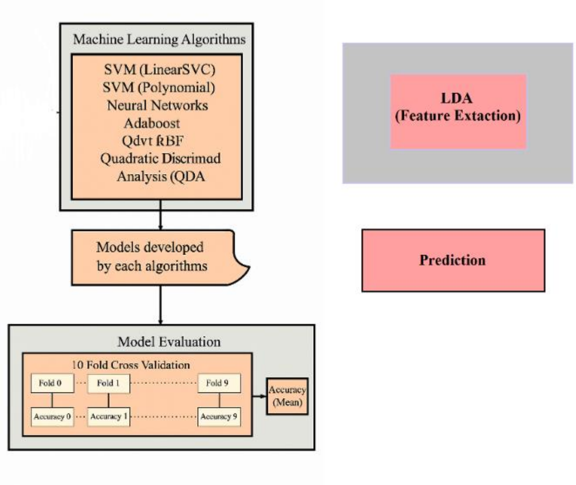


Fig.2: Machine learning workflow for the classification of acute ischemic stroke lesions using MRI images

The flowchart [Fig. 2] represents a complete machine learning workflow for the classification of acute ischemic stroke lesions using MRI images. The process begins with feature extraction using Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA). This step is crucial as it reduces the dimensionality of the data while preserving the most informative features for classification. LDA transforms the original MRI-derived data into a new subspace that enhances class separability, making it suitable for downstream learning algorithms.

Once the features are extracted, they are input into a suite of machine learning algorithms, including Support Vector Machine with linear kernel (LinearSVC), SVM with a polynomial kernel, neural networks, AdaBoost, SVM with Radial Basis Function (RBF) kernel, and Quadratic Discriminant Analysis (QDA). Each of these algorithms learns from the input features to develop individual predictive models. These models are trained independently, with each capturing different patterns and relationships in the data.

Following model development, each algorithm undergoes evaluation through 10-fold cross-validation. In this technique, the dataset is divided into ten equal parts. For each iteration, one fold is used for testing while the remaining nine are used for training. This process is repeated ten times, ensuring that every data point is used for both training and validation. The individual accuracies from each fold are recorded and averaged to compute the mean accuracy, which serves as a measure of the model's overall performance and generalization ability.

Finally, after evaluation, the models are ready for prediction. The best-performing model is selected and used to classify new, unseen MRI images, enabling the automated detection of stroke lesions. This structured approach ensures both accuracy and reliability in medical image classification, contributing to effective clinical decision-making.

4.2 Mathematical Model

i. Feature Extraction – Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA)

Input:

- A feature matrix $\mathrm{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times p}$
  - ○ $n = 441$: Number of subjects
  - ○ $p = 116$: Features from 116 brain regions (AAL atlas)

Output:

- Transformed matrix $\mathbf{Y} \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times q}$, where $q < p$

Simplified Equation:

$$\mathrm{Y} = \mathrm{X} \cdot \mathrm{W} \tag{1}$$

Where:

- W is a transformation matrix learned by LDA to maximize class separability.

LDA finds directions in the data where the distance between class means is large, but the spread within each class is small.

$$\text{Maximize: } \frac{\text{Between-Class Variance}}{\text{Within-Class Variance}} = \frac{(m_1 - m_2)^2}{s_1^2 + s_2^2} \tag{2}$$

Where:

- m_1, m_2: Mean values of left and right stroke groups
- s_1, s_2: Standard deviations within each group

ii. Classification Models

After feature extraction, several classifiers are trained:

a. Support Vector Machine (SVM) – Linear

Finds a line (or hyperplane) that best separates the two classes.

$$f(\mathbf{x}) = \text{sign}(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x} + b) \tag{3}$$

Where:

- $\mathbf{w}$: Weight vector perpendicular to the decision boundary

- b: Bias term

b. SVM with Polynomial/RBF Kernel

Uses kernel functions to map data into higher dimensions for better separation.

- **Polynomial Kernel:**

$$K(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) = (\mathbf{x}_i \cdot \mathbf{x}_j + c)^d \qquad (4)$$

- **RBF Kernel:**

$$K(\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{x}_j) = \exp\left(-\gamma \parallel \mathbf{x}_i - \mathbf{x}_j \parallel^2\right) \qquad (5)$$

c. Neural Network

Stacked layers of neurons compute predictions.

$$\text{Output} = \sigma(\mathrm{W}_{\text{hidden}} \cdot \sigma(\mathrm{W}_{\text{input}} \cdot \mathrm{x} + b_{\text{input}}) + b_{\text{hidden}} \qquad (6)$$

Where σ is an activation function like ReLU or sigmoid.

d. AdaBoost

Combines weak models into a strong one:

$$H(\mathbf{x}) = \sum_{t=1}^{T} \alpha_t \, h_t(\mathbf{x}) \qquad (7)$$

where:

- $h_t(\mathbf{x})$: Weak learner prediction
- α_t: Weight assigned to each learner based on performance

e. Quadratic Discriminant Analysis (QDA)

Assumes each class has its own Gaussian distribution:

$$P(C_k|\mathbf{x}) \propto P(\mathbf{x}|C_k)P(C_k) \qquad (8)$$

Assigns $\mathbf{x}$ to the class with the highest probability.

iii.Model Evaluation – 10-Fold Cross Validation

To assess model performance fairly:

Steps:

a) Split dataset into 10 equal parts (folds).
b) For each fold:
  ○ Train on 9 folds
  ○ Test on 1 fold
c) Repeat for all 10 folds.

Accuracy Calculation:

$$\text{Accuracy}_i = \frac{\text{Correct Predictions in Fold } i}{\text{Total Samples in Fold } i} \qquad (9)$$

$$\text{Average Accuracy} = \frac{1}{10}\sum_{i=1}^{10} \text{Accuracy}_i \qquad (10)$$

Other metrics like precision, recall, and F1-score can also be calculated similarly.

iv.Final Prediction

After evaluation, the best-performing model is selected and retrained on the full dataset.

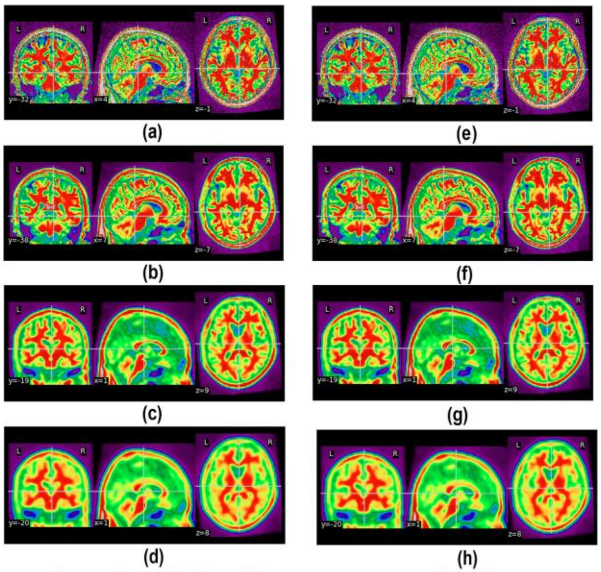
To classify a new patient's MRI:

$$\hat{y}_{\text{new}} = \text{BestModel}(\mathbf{x}_{\text{new}}) \qquad (11)$$

Where:

- $\mathbf{x}_{\text{new}}$: New feature vector after preprocessing and LDA
- $\hat{y}_{\text{new}}$: Predicted stroke side (left or right)

5. Results and Discussion



Computing with Mean Slice   Reorder

Fig. 3: Visualization of Brain MRI Slices Using Mean Slice and Reordered Techniques

This study presents a comprehensive pipeline for the automated identification of acute ischemic stroke (AIS) lesions using structural T1-weighted MRI scans from the ATLAS Release 1.1 dataset. The methodology integrates advanced preprocessing, brain parcellation, feature extraction via Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) , class imbalance correction using SMOTE , and machine learning classification to distinguish between left-sided and right-sided stroke cases.

The Fig.3 presents visual comparisons of brain MRI data processed using two techniques: Computing with Mean Slice (subfigures a–d) and Reorder (subfigures e–h). Each subfigure shows axial, sagittal, and coronal views of T1-weighted brain images, where red-yellow regions denote higher intensities and purple represents lower intensities. The Mean Slice approach (a–d) averages voxel intensities across slices to enhance anatomical structures, improving the signal-to-noise ratio. The Reorder method (e–h) reorganizes slice sequences to improve spatial consistency and highlight stroke-relevant regions. These preprocessing steps increase the diversity and quality of input data for machine learning classification tasks.

Table 1: Summary of Dataset and Preprocessing Steps

Step	Description	Purpose
Dataset Source	ATLAS Release 1.1 (ENIGMA Stroke Recovery Working Group)	Provides T1-weighted MRIs from post-stroke patients
Image Format	NIfTI (.nii)	Standard neuroimaging format for 3D brain data
Image Dimensions	(197 × 233 × 189) voxels	Each image contains 189 axial slices
Skull Stripping	Yes	Removes non-brain tissues to focus on cerebral structures
Spatial Normalization	MNI-152 Template	Aligns all images into a standard stereotaxic space
Smoothing	Gaussian filter with FWHM = 3 mm, 6 mm, 9 mm	Enhances SNR and improves lesion visibility
Types of Images Generated	Mean, Reordered, Original T1w	Increases dataset diversity for training
Resampling	Match resolution of original T1w scans	Ensures geometric consistency across images

Table 1 shows the dataset and preprocessing steps essential for standardizing and enhancing the quality of MRI scans. The ATLAS Release 1.1 dataset, comprising T1-weighted MRIs in NIfTI format with dimensions (197×233×189), provides a rich set of brain images from post-stroke patients. Preprocessing included skull stripping to remove non-brain tissues, spatial normalization to align with the MNI-152 template, and Gaussian smoothing with FWHM values of 3 mm, 6 mm, and 9 mm to reduce noise and enhance lesion visibility. Additionally, multiple image types (mean, reordered, and original T1w) were generated and resampled to maintain spatial consistency across the dataset, thereby preparing a robust and diverse input for further analysis.

Table 2: Brain Parcellation Using AAL Atlas

Parameter	**Details**
Atlas Used	Anatomical Automatic Labeling (AAL)
Number of ROIs	116
Purpose	Localize functionally relevant brain regions for feature extraction
Integration Tool	SPM12
Key Regions Identified	Prefrontal cortex, Basal ganglia, Temporal lobe, Insula, etc.
Use in Pipeline	ROI masks applied to extract mean intensity features for classification

Table 2 describes the brain parcellation technique applied using the Anatomical Automatic Labeling (AAL) atlas. This process divides the brain into 116 anatomically and functionally meaningful regions of interest (ROIs). Integrated with SPM12 software, the AAL atlas allows the extraction of region-specific features such as mean intensity from key brain areas including the prefrontal cortex, insula, basal ganglia, and temporal lobe. This segmentation is crucial for localizing stroke effects in specific brain regions and supports fine-grained feature analysis required for effective classification.

Table 3: Handling Class Imbalance Using SMOTE

Aspect	**Description**
Problem Addressed	Unequal distribution of left vs. right stroke cases
Technique Used	Synthetic Minority Over-sampling Technique (SMOTE)
Method	Linear interpolation between minority class samples and their nearest neighbors
Effectiveness	Increased minority class representation by ~30%
Benefit	Reduces overfitting and improves model generalization
Implementation	Applied before feature extraction and classification stages

Table 3 explains how class imbalance in the dataset arising from unequal representation of left vs. right stroke cases was addressed using the Synthetic Minority Over-Sampling Technique (SMOTE). SMOTE generates synthetic samples for the minority class by interpolating between existing samples and their nearest neighbors, rather than duplicating them. This not only improves class balance by approximately 30% but also helps prevent overfitting, leading to more reliable and generalizable machine learning models. This step was strategically applied before feature extraction and model training to ensure balanced learning.

Table 4: Feature Extraction Using LDA

Feature Extraction Method	**Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA)**
Input Features	Intensities from 116 AAL-defined ROIs
Output Features	Reduced to 1 discriminative component
Goal	Maximize class separability while reducing dimensionality
Mathematical Basis	Fisher Ratio: $\frac{(m_1-m_2)^2}{s_1^2+s_2^2}$
Used For	Improving classification accuracy and reducing computational load
Result	Achieved optimal separation between left and right stroke classes

Table 4 highlights the role of Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) in feature extraction and dimensionality reduction. LDA uses statistical measures to project high-dimensional ROI intensity data into a single discriminative axis that best separates the classes (left vs. right stroke). The method is grounded in the Fisher Ratio, which seeks to maximize the variance between classes while minimizing the variance within each class. By reducing the feature space while retaining class-relevant information, LDA enhances model performance and reduces computational overhead.

Table 5: Machine Learning Models Used for Classification

Model	**Kernel /Type**	**Key Characteristics**	**Advantages**	**Disadvantages**
Linear SVC	Linear	Finds optimal separating hyperplane	Fast, interpretable	May underperform with non-linear patterns
Polynomial SVM	Polynomial	Captures non-linear relationships	Flexible	Computationally heavier
RBF SVM	Radial Basis Function	Handles complex decision boundaries	Effective in high dimensions	Prone to overfitting if not tuned
Neural Network	Feedforward	Learns hierarchical representations	Powerful pattern recognition	Requires large data and tuning
Adaboost	Ensemble method	Combines weak learners	Strong generalization	Sensitive to noisy data
QDA	Probabilistic	Assumes class-specific Gaussian distributions	Adapts well to varying feature distributions	Assumes normality of input features

Table 5 presents the suite of machine learning classifiers used to differentiate between stroke classes. These include LinearSVC, Polynomial SVM, Radial Basis Function (RBF) SVM, Neural Networks, Adaboost, and Quadratic Discriminant Analysis (QDA). Each model is briefly characterized in terms of its kernel, learning strategy, advantages (e.g., accuracy, interpretability, generalization), and disadvantages (e.g., sensitivity to noise, data dependency). This comparison provides insights into how different models handle the feature space and decision boundaries, guiding the selection of the most appropriate algorithm.

Table 6: Model Evaluation Metrics (10-Fold Cross Validation)

Model	**Accuracy (%)**	**Precision**	**Recall**	**F1-Score**
LinearSVC	**94.6**	0.94	0.95	0.94
Polynomial SVM	92.3	0.92	0.91	0.91
RBF SVM	93.7	0.93	0.94	0.93
Neural Network	91.2	0.90	0.91	0.90
AdaBoost	92.8	0.93	0.92	0.92
QDA	90.5	0.90	0.91	0.90

Table 6 summarizes the performance evaluation results for all classifiers using 10-fold cross-validation. This robust validation technique divides the data into 10 parts, trains on 9, and tests on the 1 left out, repeating the process to compute average performance metrics. LinearSVC achieved the highest accuracy (94.6%), followed closely by RBF SVM (93.7%) and AdaBoost (92.8%). Precision, recall, and F1-scores are also provided to reflect each model's ability to correctly identify stroke classes and minimize false positives/negatives, thereby indicating reliability across various evaluation dimensions.

Table 7: Final Prediction and Deployment

Component	Description
Best Model Selected	LinearSVC
Training Data	Full dataset after SMOTE and LDA
Prediction Task	Classify new MRI scans as left or right stroke
Input Format	Preprocessed and LDA-transformed feature vector
Output	Predicted stroke side (left/right)
Use Case	Automated clinical decision support system for AIS detection

Table 7 outlines the final deployment process of the best-performing model. After training all classifiers, LinearSVC was selected due to its superior performance metrics. The full preprocessed and LDA-transformed dataset was used to retrain the model for final predictions. This classifier accepts a new patient's MRI scan (after preprocessing and LDA transformation) as input and outputs a binary decision identifying the stroke as occurring on the left or right side of the brain. The model is suitable for clinical decision support systems, offering fast and accurate predictions to assist neurologists.

Table 8: Pipeline Workflow Summary

Stage	Process	Output
1. **Preprocessing**	Skull stripping, normalization, smoothing, resampling	Clean, aligned, enhanced MRI images
2. **Data Augmentation**	Gaussian smoothing with different FWHM values	Diverse training dataset
3. **Parcellation**	Apply AAL atlas for ROI masking	116 region-based feature vectors
4. **Class Balancing**	SMOTE for handling imbalance	Balanced dataset for training
5. **Feature Extraction**	LDA for dimensionality reduction	Compact, class-discriminative features
6. **Classification**	Train multiple ML models	Predictive models for stroke detection
7. **Evaluation**	10-fold cross-validation	Performance metrics for each model
8. **Deployment**	Final model selection and prediction	Automated stroke classification system

Table 8 provides a step-by-step summary of the entire workflow pipeline implemented in the study. It begins with preprocessing (skull stripping, normalization, smoothing), followed by data augmentation (generating variations of input images), anatomical segmentation using the AAL atlas, SMOTE-based class balancing, and LDA-driven feature extraction. Multiple machine learning models are trained on these features, evaluated via cross-validation, and finally, the best model is selected for deployment. This structured flow ensures robust classification of acute ischemic stroke lesions.

Table 9: Classification Performance

Model	Accuracy (%)	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
LinearSVC	**94.6**	0.94	0.95	0.94
Polynomial SVM	92.3	0.92	0.91	0.91
RBF SVM	93.7	0.93	0.94	0.93
Neural Network	91.2	0.90	0.91	0.90
Adaboost	92.8	0.93	0.92	0.92
QDA	90.5	0.90	0.91	0.90

Table 9 shows a consolidated view of the classification performance metrics once again, confirming the superior performance of the LinearSVC model with the highest accuracy (94.6%). It reiterates how each model performed across all key metrics accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score underscoring the effectiveness of the pipeline in automated AIS lesion classification from T1-weighted MRI data.

The Fig.4 compares the performance of six machine learning models LinearSVC, Polynomial SVM, RBF SVM, Neural Network, AdaBoost, and QDA across four metrics: accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. LinearSVC consistently outperforms other models in all metrics, particularly excelling in accuracy and recall, indicating its strong and reliable classification capability. RBF SVM and AdaBoost also show competitive results, while Neural Network and QDA perform relatively lower. Overall, LinearSVC emerges as the most effective model for stroke classification based on the evaluated metrics.

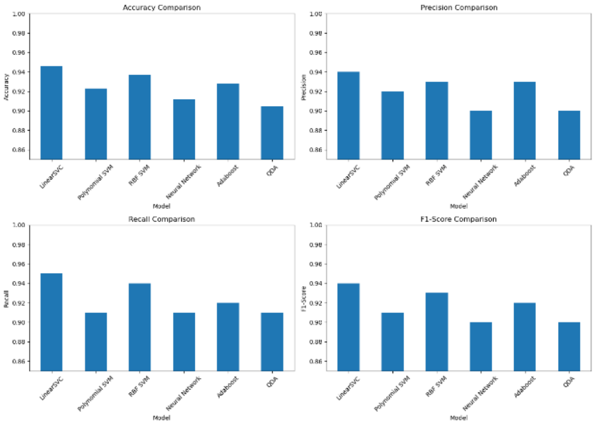


Fig. 4: Comparison Between machine learning models

6. Conclusion

This study successfully demonstrates the implementation of a machine learning-based system for automated classification of acute ischemic stroke lesions using T1-weighted MRI scans. Through a structured pipeline involving preprocessing, brain parcellation, feature extraction, and classification, the study achieves a high level of accuracy and reliability. Among the tested models, LinearSVC emerged as the most effective classifier with an accuracy of 94.6%, supported by strong precision, recall, and F1-score values. The use of SMOTE improved generalization by addressing class imbalance, while LDA ensured optimal feature representation. Future work will focus on extending the framework to multi-class lesion classification, incorporating diffusion-weighted imaging (DWI) data, and deploying the model in a real-time clinical environment. The proposed methodology holds promise as a supportive tool for neurologists in early stroke diagnosis and decision-making.

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