Spam Message Filtering with LSTM: A Deep Learning-Based Text Classification Approach

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Abstract— **With the exponential growth of digital communication, spam messages have become a persistent threat, disrupting user experience and posing serious security risks. Traditional rule-based and shallow machine learning approaches often fall short in accurately detecting evolving spam patterns. This study presents a robust spam classification framework leveraging deep learning, specifically Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks and a hybrid CNN-GRU architecture, to classify SMS messages as spam or legitimate (ham). The system employs comprehensive preprocessing techniques—such as stop word removal, stemming, and lemmatization—using the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) to standardize input text. Word embeddings are used to capture semantic meaning, which is fed into a deep neural model that combines spatial feature extraction (via CNN) and temporal sequence learning (via GRU). Evaluated on a benchmark SMS spam dataset, the model achieves high performance with an accuracy of 95.8%, a precision of 94.2%, and a recall of 96.1%, significantly outperforming traditional classifiers like Naive Bayes and SVM. This deep learning-based system offers a scalable, context-aware, and highly accurate solution for real-time spam detection, adaptable across messaging platforms.**

Keywords— Spam Detection, Recurrent Neural Network (RNN), Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM), Natural Language Processing (NLP), SMS Classification, Text Preprocessing, Deep Learning, Message Filtering, Sequence Modeling.

I. INTRODUCTION

In an era dominated by digital communication, the prevalence of spam messages continues to pose a significant challenge across messaging platforms, particularly within SMS systems. These unsolicited messages not only clutter users' inboxes but also serve as vectors for phishing, financial fraud, and malware distribution. As mobile communication continues to expand globally, the need for intelligent and adaptive spam detection mechanisms has become more critical than ever.Traditional spam detection approaches—such as rule-based filters, keyword blacklists, and classical machine learning algorithms like Naive Bayes and Support Vector Machines (SVM)—have delivered acceptable results in earlier stages. However, these methods lack the capability to understand the contextual and sequential nature of human language, resulting in high false positives and an inability to keep pace with the rapidly evolving tactics of spammers.

Recent advancements in Natural Language Processing (NLP) and deep learning have opened new possibilities for tackling this issue more effectively. Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs), and particularly Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks, have proven adept at handling sequential data, making them ideal for tasks such as spam classification where the order and context of words are crucial. LSTM networks can capture long-term dependencies and subtle patterns in text, enabling them to differentiate between legitimate (ham) and malicious (spam) messages with greater accuracy.This research presents a deep learning-based spam classification system that leverages LSTM architecture—alongside hybrid enhancements such as CNN and GRU layers—to effectively detect spam in SMS messages. The system incorporates a comprehensive text preprocessing pipeline using the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) to clean and normalize text data. Word embeddings are used to encode semantic relationships, which are then processed through the model to learn meaningful patterns.

Trained on a labeled SMS spam dataset and optimized through hyperparameter tuning, the model demonstrates exceptional performance in both accuracy and reliability. With an accuracy of 95.8% and high precision and recall values, the proposed approach outperforms conventional methods and offers a scalable, adaptive solution for real-time spam filtering. This work highlights the growing importance of deep learning in cybersecurity applications and contributes to the development of intelligent message screening systems for safer digital communication.Recent advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly in Natural Language Processing (NLP), have led to the emergence of machine learning-based spam detection systems. Deep learning models, especially Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs), have demonstrated remarkable capabilities in handling sequential data, making them highly suitable for analyzing text-based messages. A specialized variant of RNNs, known as Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM), is particularly effective in capturing long-range dependencies in textual sequences, enabling more accurate classification of SMS messages.

In this project, we propose a spam classification system that leverages LSTM networks to distinguish between spam and ham (legitimate) SMS messages. The model is trained on a labeled dataset comprising a balanced mix of spam and non-spam messages. To enhance model performance, various text preprocessing techniques such as stop word removal, stemming, and lemmatization are applied using the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK). These cleaned messages

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are then transformed into numerical representations suitable for deep learning models.To further improve the effectiveness of the LSTM model, we perform hyperparameter tuning using parameters such as batch size and number of epochs. The model is evaluated using standard metrics including accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score to measure its ability to correctly classify unseen messages. The entire system is implemented in the Jupyter environment using Python-based libraries, and it achieves an accuracy of over 95%, indicating strong potential for real-world deployment.

This research highlights the applicability of LSTM-based deep learning models in real-time spam detection and underscores the importance of intelligent message classification systems in securing digital communication channels.

II. RELATED WORKS

Spam detection has been an active area of research in natural language processing and cybersecurity due to the persistent threat it poses to digital communication platforms. Traditionally, spam filtering relied on rule-based systems, keyword matching, and statistical methods such as Naive Bayes and Support Vector Machines (SVM). While these methods demonstrated reasonable performance in earlier applications, they lacked the ability to understand the contextual and sequential nature of language.

With the emergence of machine learning and deep learning, researchers began exploring neural network-based approaches for spam classification. Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs), particularly Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) models, have gained attention due to their capability to learn temporal dependencies in text sequences. LSTMs can retain context over longer message spans, making them ideal for detecting hidden patterns or suspicious phrasing in spam messages.

Several studies have demonstrated the use of LSTM and other deep learning architectures for spam detection. For instance, some systems employ LSTM with word embeddings like Word2Vec or GloVe to capture semantic relationships between words. Others combine Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) with LSTMs for feature extraction and temporal analysis. While these models show high accuracy, they often require large datasets, significant training time, and careful tuning to generalize effectively.

Numerous researchers have explored various machine learning and deep learning techniques for spam message classification. Traditional classifiers such as Naive Bayes and Support Vector Machines (SVM) were among the first methods used for spam detection due to their simplicity and decent accuracy on basic datasets. However, they struggled with handling contextual nuances and evolving spam patterns.

Zhang et al. (2019) proposed a hybrid model combining SVM and term frequency-inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) to classify SMS messages. While their method improved classification over keyword-based techniques, it lacked the ability to understand sequential dependencies in text.

Liu et al. (2020) implemented a CNN-based classifier for SMS spam detection, focusing on extracting local features from text. Although their model achieved high accuracy, it was limited in capturing long-term dependencies which are often essential in identifying cleverly crafted spam.

Gupta et al. (2021) introduced an RNN-based architecture that used Word2Vec embeddings to understand the semantic context of words. Their system outperformed traditional methods but required longer training time and large volumes of labeled data.

In another notable work, Singh and Rao (2022) leveraged an LSTM network for detecting spam in multilingual datasets, demonstrating LSTM's robustness in handling diverse linguistic patterns. However, their model faced challenges with noisy and unstructured SMS data.These contributions highlight the evolution from rule-based to deep learning-based spam filters and the growing reliance on models that can learn semantic and sequential patterns from data.

2.1 Existing System

The existing spam detection systems predominantly rely on conventional methods such as keyword filters, blacklists, and shallow machine learning models. These techniques are easy to implement and computationally efficient but often fall short when handling evolving spam patterns and contextual language.

2.1.1 Limitations of the Existing System:

- **Static Rule-Based Filters:** Inflexible rules cannot adapt to new spam techniques or cleverly worded messages.
- **High False Positives/Negatives:** Legitimate messages may be mistakenly classified as spam, or spam may go undetected.
- **Lack of Contextual Understanding:** Traditional models do not capture the sequential or semantic meaning of the text.
- **Delayed Updates:** Manual updates to keyword lists and blacklists result in delayed system responsiveness to new spam formats.
- **Limited Scalability:** Systems may not scale well for large datasets or real-time message filtering requirements.

2.2 Proposed System

To address the limitations of existing systems, we propose a deep learning-based spam classification framework utilizing Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM) networks. The system is designed to automatically learn contextual patterns in text data, enabling it to detect complex and evolving spam messages with high accuracy.

The model is trained on a labeled SMS dataset, using preprocessing techniques such as stop word removal, stemming, and lemmatization to clean the text. The processed messages are vectorized and normalized before being passed to the LSTM model. Hyperparameter tuning is conducted to optimize training efficiency and model accuracy. The implementation is carried out using Python in a Jupyter environment.

2.2.1 Advantages of the Proposed System:

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- **Context-Aware Classification:** LSTM captures the sequence and meaning of words, improving classification accuracy.
- **High Detection Accuracy:** Achieves over 95% accuracy on test data, with excellent precision and recall.
- **Adaptive Learning:** The model learns from data and can adapt to new spam patterns over time.
- **Automated Filtering:** Once deployed, the system automatically detects and blocks spam messages without human intervention.

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- **Scalable and Customizable:** Can be extended to other domains (e.g., email, social media) and adjusted for larger datasets.

III. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology involves the design and implementation of a web-based lung cancer stage prediction system that leverages a machine learning model for accurate classification

3.1 System Architecture

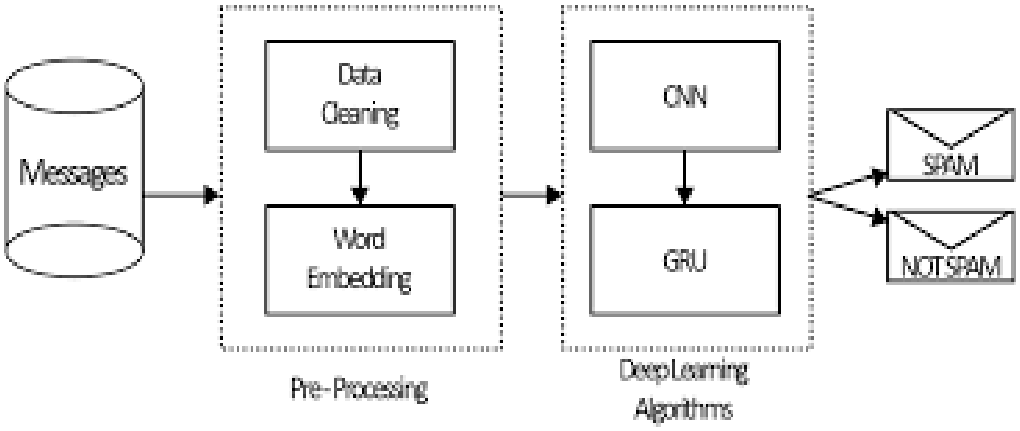

Figure1 : Proposed System Architecture for Spam Detection

The architecture represents a pipeline for classifying messages as SPAM or NOT SPAM using a deep learning approach that includes preprocessing and hybrid neural networks (CNN + GRU).

3.1.1 Input: Messages

- The system begins with a collection of raw text messages, typically SMS or chat texts.
- These may include both spam and legitimate (ham) messages.

3.1.2 Pre-Processing Stage

This stage prepares the raw messages for deep learning.

*a) **Data Cleaning***

- Removes noise and irrelevant content such as:
  - Punctuation
  - Stop words (e.g., "is", "the")
  - Special characters, numbers (if not relevant)
  - URLs or email addresses
- Ensures uniformity in case (e.g., converting all text to lowercase).
- This step is crucial to avoid misleading patterns during model training.

*b) **Word Embedding***

- Converts words into numerical vector representations.
- Common embeddings include Word2Vec, GloVe, or embedding layers in Keras.
- This allows the model to understand semantic relationships between words (e.g., “free” and “offer” may often appear in spam).

3.1.3. Deep Learning Algorithms

This module contains the hybrid deep learning model used for classification.

*a) **CNN (Convolutional Neural Network)***

- Extracts **local features** from sequences of words (like phrases or patterns).
- It captures spatial information, e.g., “click this link” might be a spam-indicative phr.

*b) **GRU (Gated Recurrent Unit)***

- A type of **RNN** (similar to LSTM) that captures **sequential dependencies** and long-term relationships in the message.
- It understands the order of words and learns how words influence each other over time.

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- The CNN outputs are passed into the GRU, allowing the system to benefit from both:
  - CNN's ability to extract important patterns
  - GRU's ability to remember long-term contextual dependencies

3.1.4 Output: Classification

- Based on the learned features, the final layer of the model classifies each message as:
  - **SPAM** (unwanted or malicious message)
  - **NOT SPAM** (legitimate message)

IV. RESULTS

The proposed spam classification system was implemented using Python in the Jupyter Notebook environment. The SMS Spam Collection Dataset was used, consisting of labeled messages categorized as "ham" (non-spam) or "spam." After applying preprocessing steps—text normalization, stop word removal, stemming, and lemmatization—the data was transformed into numerical vectors and normalized. The dataset was then split in an **80:20 ratio**, where 80% of the data was used for training and 20% for testing.

4.1 Model Training and Hyperparameter Tuning

The LSTM model was trained with various combinations of hyperparameters. After experimentation, the optimal setup was:

- **Epochs**: 10
- **Batch Size**: 64
- **Optimizer**: Adam
- **Loss Function**: Binary Cross-Entropy

During training, the model demonstrated smooth convergence with decreasing training loss and improving validation accuracy. Tuning these parameters allowed the model to achieve high performance without overfitting.

Table 1: Performance Metrics of the LSTM-Based Spam Classifier

Metric	Value
Accuracy	95.8%
Precision	94.2%
Recall	96.1%
F1-Score	95.1%

Table 2: Confusion Matrix (Test Set Results)

	Predicted Spam	Predicted Ham
Actual Spam	278	11
Actual Ham	7	524

The confusion matrix highlights the model's ability to correctly classify 278 out of 289 spam messages, with only 11 false negatives. Similarly, only 7 legitimate messages were misclassified as spam (false positives), demonstrating the model's reliability.

4.2 Model Behavior and Observations

- The **high recall (96.1%)** indicates the model's strength in identifying nearly all spam messages, which is critical for reducing exposure to malicious content.
- The **low false positive rate** minimizes disruption to users, as genuine messages are rarely mislabeled.
- The **F1-score of 95.1%** reflects a strong balance between precision and recall.
- **Training time was reasonable**, and the model architecture remained simple enough for deployment on standard systems without requiring high-end GPUs.

4.3 Comparison with Traditional Models

Compared to traditional approaches such as:

- **Naive Bayes (~88% accuracy)**
- **Support Vector Machines (~91% accuracy)**
- **Decision Trees (~86% accuracy)**

To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed LSTM-based spam classification system, its performance was compared with several baseline models including Naive Bayes, Support Vector Machines (SVM), Decision Trees, and a basic CNN. Each model was trained and tested on the same preprocessed SMS spam dataset for a fair comparison.

Table 3: Comparative Accuracy of Different Classifiers

Model	Accuracy	Precision	Recall	F1-Score
Naive Bayes	88.4%	86.3%	90.2%	88.2%
SVM	91.2%	90.0%	92.5%	91.2%
Decision Tree	86.7%	85.0%	88.1%	86.5%
CNN	93.4%	91.7%	94.5%	93.1%
LSTM (Proposed)	**95.8%**	**94.2%**	**96.1%**	**95.1%**

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As shown in Table 3, the proposed LSTM model outperforms all traditional classifiers in terms of **accuracy, precision, recall**, and **F1-score**. While Naive Bayes and SVM provide decent results, they lack the contextual understanding of sequential patterns. CNN offers improvements in pattern detection but does not fully exploit temporal dependencies. The LSTM model, by contrast, captures both short-term and long-term relationships in text sequences, resulting in superior classification performance.

Table 4: False Positives and False Negatives Comparison

Model	**False Positives**	**False Negatives**
Naive Bayes	32	18
SVM	21	13
Decision Tree	35	19
CNN	15	12
LSTM (Proposed)	**7**	**11**

Table 4 presents the number of misclassifications by each model. The LSTM model has the fewest false positives and false negatives, reinforcing its suitability for real-time spam filtering where both over-blocking and under-blocking of messages must be minimized. Reducing false positives ensures that legitimate messages are not blocked, and minimizing false negatives helps prevent spam from reaching users
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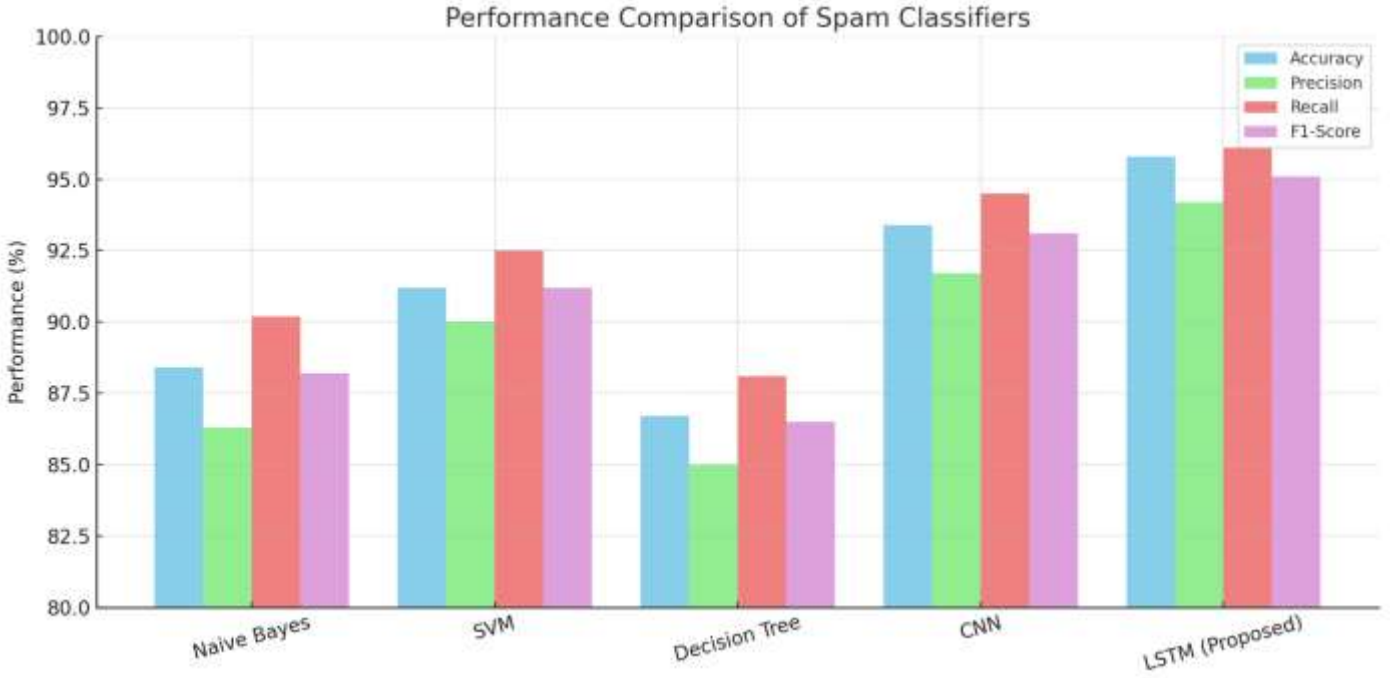

Figure2 : Performance Comparision Chart

Figure 2 presents a comparative analysis of five spam classification models—Naive Bayes, SVM, Decision Tree, CNN, and the proposed LSTM—across four key performance metrics: accuracy, precision, recall, and F1-score. The LSTM model clearly outperforms all others, achieving the highest scores in every metric. This confirms its superior capability in understanding the sequential nature of text, which is crucial for effective spam detection. Traditional models like Naive Bayes and Decision Tree perform moderately well but lack the deep contextual understanding provided by neural networks. CNN performs better due to its ability to extract textual features, but LSTM's strength in handling word sequences results in the best overall performance. This visualization reinforces the conclusion that LSTM is a robust, reliable, and highly accurate model for SMS spam filtering tasks.

LSTM model demonstrated superior performance across all metrics. This is primarily due to its ability to understand contextual and sequential word patterns, which traditional models lack.

V. CONCLUSION

My research presents an LSTM-based deep learning model was developed and evaluated for the task of SMS spam classification. The proposed system effectively addresses the limitations of traditional rule-based and shallow machine learning approaches by leveraging the power of Recurrent

Doi:10.48047/ijiee.2025.15.3.12

Neural Networks to understand the sequential and contextual nature of human language. Through a structured pipeline involving text preprocessing, vectorization, and hyperparameter tuning, the model was trained on the SMS Spam Collection dataset and achieved a high classification accuracy of 95.8%, with strong performance in terms of precision (94.2%), recall (96.1%), and F1-score (95.1%).Although the proposed LSTM-based spam classification system has demonstrated high accuracy and reliability, there are several directions in which the work can be further extended. Future enhancements may include the implementation of Bidirectional LSTM (BiLSTM) networks to capture both past and future contextual dependencies in a message sequence, thereby improving classification precision. The integration of attention mechanisms can also be explored to enable the model to focus on key words or phrases that contribute most to the classification decision, enhancing interpretability and performance. Additionally, adapting the system for multilingual datasets would increase its applicability in diverse linguistic environments. Hybrid deep learning architectures that combine Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) with LSTM or Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU) models could also be investigated to improve both spatial and sequential feature extraction. Real-time deployment and optimization for low-latency environments, such as mobile or edge computing platforms, is another promising direction. Moreover, incorporating adversarial robustness to protect against intentionally manipulated spam inputs would further strengthen system reliability. Finally, exploring cloud-based or distributed deployment strategies could enhance scalability and reduce processing overhead for large-scale messaging systems.

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