



Malvina Nikandrou

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EDUCATION

PhD in Robotics and Autonomous Systems

Sept 2020 - Present

Edinburgh Centre for Robotics, Heriot-Watt University

Thesis: “*Continual Learning for Multimodal Language Models*”

Supervisors: Alessandro Suglia, Ioannis Konstas

BSc & MEng in Electrical and Computer Engineering

Sept 2012 - July 2019

National Technical University of Athens

Major: Computer Science

Thesis: “*Grounded Visual Question Answering Using Sequence-to-Sequence Modeling*”

Supervisor: Alexandros Potamianos

PUBLICATIONS

CROPE: Evaluating In-Context Adaptation of Vision and Language Models to Culture-Specific Concepts

Nikandrou M., Pantazopoulos G., Vitsakis N., Konstas I., Suglia A.

2025 Annual Conference of the Nations of the Americas Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics (NAACL), 2025

Shaking Up VLMs: Comparing Transformers and Structured State Space Models for Vision & Language Modeling

Pantazopoulos G., Nikandrou M., Suglia A., Lemon O., Eshghi A.

2024 Annual Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2024

Enhancing Continual Learning in Visual Question Answering with Modality-Aware Feature Distillation

Nikandrou M., Pantazopoulos G., Konstas I., Suglia A.

2024 ACL Third Workshop on Advances in Language and Vision Research, 2024

Learning To See But Forgetting To Follow: Visual Instruction Tuning Makes LLMs More Prone To Jailbreak Attacks

Pantazopoulos G.*, Parekh A.*, Nikandrou M.*, Suglia A. *equal contribution

2024 LREC-COLING Third Workshop on Safety for Conversational AI, 2024

Multitask Multimodal Prompted Training for Interactive Embodied Task Completion

Pantazopoulos G., Nikandrou M., Parekh A., Hemanthage B., Eshghi A., Konstas I., Rieser V., Lemon O., Suglia A.

2023 Annual Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2023

Quality-agnostic Image Captioning to Safely Assist People with Vision Impairment

Lu Y., Nikandrou M., Jiali J., Rieser V.

32nd International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), 2023

ViCA: Combining visual, social, and task-oriented conversational AI in a healthcare setting

Pantazopoulos G., Bruyere J., Nikandrou M., Boissier T., Hemanthage S., Binh S., Shah V., Dondrup C., Lemon O.

23rd ACM International Conference on Multimodal Interaction (ICMI), 2021

Best Paper Award Nomination

Data Augmentation using GANs for Speech Emotion Recognition

Chatziagapi A., Paraskevopoulos G., Sgouropoulos D., Pantazopoulos G., Nikandrou M., Giannakopoulos T., Katsamanis A., Potamianos A., Narayanan S.

20th Annual Conference of the International Speech Communication Association (Interspeech), 2019

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Behavioral Signals Technologies Inc.

Machine Learning Engineer

June 2018 - April 2020

Athens, Greece

- Developed text-based models for emotion recognition in conversational data
- Implemented algorithms to fuse textual and audio representations
- Carried out research in model robustness under varying noise conditions

TECHNICAL SKILLS

Programming Languages

Proficient: Python, Familiar: Bash

ML Frameworks & Libraries

PyTorch, PyTorch Lightning, Accelerate, DeepSpeed, FAISS, Scikit-learn

DevOps

Slurm, Docker, Kubernetes

Software & Tools

Git, Gradio, LaTeX

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Alexa Prize SimBot Challenge

Member of EMMA Team (Finalist)

Jan 2022 - April 2023

- Co-led modeling development
- Developed an agent that can execute missions collaboratively with users

Continual Learning for Visual Question Answering

Empirical Investigation and Future Directions

July 2021-Sept 2022

- Introduced a Continual Learning benchmark
- Analyzed how different factors of task similarity contribute to forgetting
- Demonstrated a modality gap in the rate of representation change

TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

Data Mining and Machine Learning

Enhanced lab helper supervising group projects

2022, 2023

Heriot-Watt University

Software Engineering Foundations

Lab helper and marker

2023

Heriot-Watt University

Hellenic Red Cross

Volunteer tutor to students of intercultural primary schools

Sept 2014 - June 2017

Athens, Greece

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

YRRSDS 2021 Workshop

Poster Presentation and Roundtable Discussion Participation

27 - 28 July 2021

Virtual Event

ALPS Winter School

Poster Presentation

17 - 22 Jan 2021

Virtual Event

AθNLP Summer School

18 - 25 Sept 2019

INVITED TALKS

CDT in Robotics and Autonomous Systems (CDT-RAS) 2022 Conference

Heriot-Watt University, University of Edinburgh

Oct 2022

- EMMA: Embodied MultiModal Agent for Language-guided Action Execution in 3D Simulated Environments, [slides]

ACADEMIC SERVICE

- **Reviewer:** ARR (February 2025, October 2024, June 2024, April 2024, February 2024), EMNLP 2023
- **Conference Volunteer:** CDT-RAS 2021 Conference, IEEE SLT2018 Conference

LANGUAGES

Greek (native), **English**, **German**, **Spanish**, **French**