

# Abhinav Rao

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## Education

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**University of Maryland at College Park** [\[link\]](#) College Park, MD  
*Ph.D. student, Computer Science* August 2025 - Present

**Carnegie Mellon University | Language Technologies Institute** [\[link\]](#) Pittsburgh, PA  
*M.S. student in NLP (MIIS)* August 2023 - December 2024

**Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) Pilani** [\[link\]](#) Hyderabad, India  
*B.E. Computer Science (Graduated Early)* August 2018 - February 2022

## Select Experience

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**Language Technologies Institute** [\[link\]](#) Pittsburgh, PA  
*Systems Software Engineer* Jan 2025 - July 2025  
▷ Working as a member of staff for the [Amazon NOVA AI Challenge - Trusted AI Track](#).

**Bell Labs** [\[link\]](#) Murray Hill, NJ  
*Research Intern, Autonomous Systems* June 2024 - August 2024  
▷ Constructed a code repair prototype using multi-agent pipeline with Large Language Models (LLMs).

**Microsoft** [\[link\]](#) Bangalore, India  
*Research Fellow (Turing Team)* July 2022 - August 2023  
▷ Worked on Responsible AI (RAI) focusing on AI Ethics and Safety. Analyzed ethical reasoning capabilities of LLMs, and their susceptibility to jailbreaks.

**Microsoft Research** [\[link\]](#) Bangalore, India  
*Research Intern* January 2022 - July 2022  
▷ Developed a multilingual query expansion tool with embedding interpolation and topic modeling.

**Nanyang Technological University, SpeechLab** [\[link\]](#) Singapore  
*Research Intern (SpeechLab)* June 2021 - December 2021  
▷ Extended punctuation restoration capabilities to Chinese and Malay with XLM-R. Improved F1-score by 4.2% over state-of-the-art for Chinese punctuation restoration in ASR text using a pretraining-style objective.

## Publications

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S=In Submission, C=Conference, W=Workshop, P=Preprint

**[C.1] Tricking LLMs into Disobedience: Understanding, Analyzing, and Preventing Jailbreaks** [\[link\]](#)  
(**Abhinav Rao**, Sachin Vashistha\*, Atharva Naik\*, Somak Aditya, and Monojit Choudhury [Published at LREC-CoLING 2024] )

**[C.2] Ethical Reasoning over Moral Alignment: A Case and Framework for In-Context Ethical Policies in LLMs** [\[link\]](#) (**Abhinav Rao**\*, Aditi Khandelwal\*, Kumar Tanmay\*, Utkarsh Agarwal\*, Monojit Choudhury [Published at the Findings of EMNLP 2023, Presented as a Keynote at WiNLP] )

**[C.3] Normad: A benchmark for measuring the cultural adaptability of large language models** [\[link\]](#) (Abhinav Rao\*, Akhila Yerukola\*, Vishwa Shah, Katharina Reinecke, and Maarten Sap [Published at NAACL 2025, Non-archivally @ C3NLP, ACL 2024] )

**[C.4] Punctuation Restoration for Singaporean Spoken Languages** [\[link\]](#) (Abhinav Rao, Thi-Nga Ho, and Eng-Siong Chng [Asia-Pacific Speech and Information Processing Association 2022] )

**[W.1] Less is Fed More: Sparsity Mitigates Feature Distortion in Federated Learning** [\[link\]](#) (Aashiq Muhamed\*, Harshita Diddee\*, Abhinav Rao\* [CustomNLP4U, EMNLP 2024, Also Presented at MOOMIN, EACL 2024] )

**[P.1] Jailbreak Paradox: The Achilles' Heel of LLMs** [\[link\]](#) (Abhinav Rao\*, Monojit Choudhury\*, and Somak Aditya\* [arXiv preprint arXiv:2406.12702] )

**[J.1] MALITE: Lightweight Malware Detection and Classification for Constrained Devices** [\[link\]](#) (Siddharth Anand, Barsha Mitra, Soumyadeep Dey, Abhinav Rao, Rupsa Dhar, and Jaideep Vaidya [IEEE Transactions on Emerging Topics in Computing (TETC) 2025] )

## Select Research Projects

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### Jailbreaking Language Models

November 2022 - Present

*Advisors: Prof. Monojit Choudhury, Prof. Aditya Somak*

- Evaluated jailbreak effectiveness against 9 different LLMs by formalizing LLM jailbreaking, showing an inverse scaling trend where GPT-3.5 is 20% more susceptible than FLAN-T5. [Lrec-CoLING'24] (Coverage: [TCS Research Webinar on Genrative AI](#)).
- Developing a theoretical framework to explain the jailbreak-paradox, explaining the inverse scaling phenomenon in toxicity/jailbreaking. (Work-in-progress covered by [Analytics IndiaMag](#)).
- Improved Bing Chat classifier performance by 5% and 17% (F1-score) for jailbreaking and content-harm detection through offline data curation.

### Ethical Reasoning Capabilities of LLMs

August 2022 - July 2023

*Advisors: Dr. Monojit Choudhury*

- Designed a framework to evaluate the ethical reasoning capabilities of Language models over increasing granularities of ethical policies. Uncovered a bias favoring western centric ethical principles in GPT-4. [EMNLP Findings '23] [[Keynote at WiNLP '23](#)]

### Cultural Reasoning of LLMs

September 2023 - October 2024

*Advisors: Prof. Maarten Sap, Prof. Katharina Reinecke*

- Built a benchmark dataset of 2.6k cultural situations spanning 75 countries measuring cultural biases in LLMs
- Measured cultural adaptability of 17 language models, determining strong sycophancy and western-centric biases. [Accepted at NAACL'25] [[Presented at C3NLP, ACL '24](#)]

### Multilingual Federated Learning

September 2023 - April 2024

*Independent Research*

- Compared and contrasted different parameter-efficient finetuning (PEFT) techniques, such as sparse subnets and LoRA for machine translation in federated learning [[Presented at MOOMIN, EACL '24](#)] [Accepted at CustomNLP4U, EMNLP '24]

## Talks

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"Less is Fed More: Sparsity Mitigates Feature Distortion in Federated Learning"

▷ MOOMIN, EACL '24, Malta [\[link\]](#) [\[presentation\]](#) | March 2024 (Remote)

"Punctuation Restoration for Singaporean Spoken Languages"

▷ APSIPA '22, Chiang-Mai, Thailand [\[link\]](#) [\[presentation\]](#) | November 2022 (Remote)

## Honours and Awards

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### **Amazon Trusted AI Challenge Grant, 2024**

▷ Awarded \$250,000 as a model developer team for the Amazon Trusted AI challenge.

### **BITS Merit Scholarship, 2018, 2022**

▷ Tuition waiver of \$3300 (INR 280,000 total) awarded to the top 3%ile of students for academic excellence.

## Teaching

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### **Advanced Natural Language Processing (CMU-LTI 11711)**

▷ Responsibilities included conducting tutorials, evaluating assignments, and helping students with the assignments and advising them on their course projects.

## Academic Service

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**Reviewer:** ACL ARR December 2023, TPAMI 2024, ACL ARR December 2024

**Sub-Reviewer:** NAACL 2022

**Volunteer:** Panini Linguistics Olympiad (PLO) 2023

## References

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Prof. Maarten Sap - Assistant Professor, Carnegie Mellon University [\[link\]](#) ([maartensap@cmu.edu](mailto:maartensap@cmu.edu))

Prof. Monojit Choudhury - Professor, MBZUAI, UAE [\[link\]](#) ([monojit.choudhury@mbzuai.ac.ae](mailto:monojit.choudhury@mbzuai.ac.ae))

Prof. Somak Aditya - Assistant Professor, IIT-KGP, India [\[link\]](#) ([saditya@iitkgp.ac.in](mailto:saditya@iitkgp.ac.in))

Dr. Sunayana Sitaram - Principal Researcher, Microsoft Research, India [\[link\]](#) ([sunayana.sitaram@microsoft.com](mailto:sunayana.sitaram@microsoft.com))