

ZIXUAN KE

Website ◊ Github (\approx 1k stars) ◊ Google Scholar (\approx 2.5k citations, 25 h-index) ◊ zke4@uic.edu

BIOGRAPHY

I am a research scientist at the Salesforce AI Research. I build **lifelong agentic systems**, for an **ever-changing world** characterized by **emerging** domains, events, tools, experiences, or agents. My research advances this through: (1) **Reasoning and Agents (RL)** (Preprint26a,26b, TMLR25, ICLR25, SEA@NeurIPS25, NeurIPS25, ICLR26) (2) **Post-training (RL, SFT, CPT)** (EMNLP25, ACL24, ICLR23, EMNLP22a, 22b) (3) **Continual Learning** (ICML23, NeurIPS20,21,22, Preprint22) (4) **NLP** (EMNLP23, NAACL21, EMNLP21) (5) **Argument Mining** (ACL18,19; IJCAI18,19).

EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of Illinois at Chicago	<i>Aug. 2019 - May 2024</i>
Ph.D. in Computer Science. GPA 4.0/4.0. Advisor: Bing Liu Large Language Model and Continual Learning	
M.Sc., The University of Texas at Dallas	<i>Aug. 2017 - Jun. 2019</i>
M.Sc. in Computer Science. Advisor: Vincent Ng Argument Mining	
B.Sc., South China Agricultural University	<i>Aug. 2013 - Jun. 2017</i>
B.Sc. in Computer Science	

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Salesforce AI Research, Research Scientist	<i>May 2024 - present, Palo Alto, CA</i>
Agents, Reasoning and Post-training. Manager: Shafiq Joty Preprint26, ICLR26, TMLR25, SEA@NeurIPS25, NeurIPS25, EMNLP25, ICLR25	
Google DeepMind, Research Intern	<i>Summer 2023, Mountain View, CA</i>
Retrieval-augmented Generation. Mentors: Weize Kong, Cheng Li, Mingyang Zhang and Qiaozhu Mei ACL24: Bridging the Preference Gap between Retrievers and LLMs	
Meta AI, Research Intern	<i>Summer 2022, Menlo Park, CA</i>
Continual Conversational Summarization. Mentors: Haoran Li, Wenhan Xiong and Asli Celikyilmaz EMNLP23: Sub-network Discovery and Soft-masking for Continual Learning of Mixed Tasks	
Amazon Science, Applied Scientist Intern	<i>Summer 2021, Seattle, WA</i>
Multi-domain Imbalanced Learning. Mentors: Mohammad Kachuee and Sungjin Lee Preprint: Domain-Aware Contrastive Knowledge Transfer for Multi-domain Imbalanced Data	
Tencent AI Lab, Research Intern	<i>Summer 2020, Sunnyvale, CA (Remote)</i>
Document Grounded Dialogue Generation. Mentors: Chen Li and Xiaoyang Wang	
Alibaba Group, Research Intern	<i>Summer 2019, Hangzhou, China</i>
Semantic Matching for E-commerce Search Engine. Mentors: Hongbo Deng	
IBM, Research Intern	<i>Summer 2016, Shenzhen, China</i>
Dialogue Act Classification for E-Commerce Chatbot.	

SELECTED FIRST-AUTHORED PUBLICATIONS

Full list on Google Scholar

- [1]  **MAS-Orchestra: Understanding and Improving Multi-Agent Reasoning Through Holistic Orchestration and Controlled Benchmarks**
Zixuan Ke, Yifei Ming, Austin Xu, ..., Semih Yavuz, Caiming Xiong, Shafiq Joty
Preprint, 2026
- [2]  **Demystifying Domain-adaptive Post-training for Financial LLMs**
Zixuan Ke, Yifei Ming, Xuan-Phi Nguyen, Caiming Xiong, Shafiq Joty
Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2025. **Oral, Best Paper Nomination**
- [3]  **MAS-Zero: Designing Multi-Agent Systems with Zero Supervision**
Zixuan Ke, Austin Xu, Yifei Ming, Xuan-Phi Nguyen, Caiming Xiong, Shafiq Joty
SEA@NeurIPS, 2025. **Oral**
- [4]  **A Survey of Frontiers in LLM Reasoning: Inference Scaling, Learning to Reason, and Agentic Systems**
Zixuan Ke, Fangkai Jiao, Yifei Ming, Xuan-Phi Nguyen, Austin Xu, Do Xuan Long, Minzhi Li, Chengwei Qin, Peifeng Wang, Silvio Savarese, Caiming Xiong, Shafiq Joty
NeurIPS Tutorial, 2025; *Transaction on ML Research (TMLR)*, 2025. **Survey Certification Award**
- [5]  **Bridging the Preference Gap between Retrievers and LLMs**
Zixuan Ke, Weize Kong, Cheng Li, Mingyang Zhang, Qiaozhu Mei, Michael Bendersky
Association for Computational Linguistic (ACL), 2024
- [6]  **Continual Pre-training of Language Models**
Zixuan Ke*, Yijia Shao*, Haowei Lin* and Bing Liu
International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR), 2023
- [7]  **Sub-network Discovery and Soft-masking for Continual Learning of Mixed Tasks**
Zixuan Ke, Bing Liu, Wenhan Xiong, Asli Celikyilmaz, and Haoran Li
Findings of Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP-Findings), 2023
- [8]  **Parameter-level Soft-masking for Continual Learning**
Tatsuya Konishi, Mori Kurokawa, Chihiro Ono, **Zixuan Ke**, Gyuhak Kim, and Bing Liu
International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML), 2023
- [9]  **Adapting a Language Model While Preserving its General Knowledge**
Zixuan Ke, Yijia Shao, Haowei Lin, Hu Xu, Lei Shu and Bing Liu
Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2022a
- [10]  **Continual Training of Language Models for Few-Shot Learning**
Zixuan Ke, Haowei Lin, Yijia Shao, Hu Xu, Lei Shu and Bing Liu
Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2022b
- [11]  **A Multi-Head Model for Continual Learning via Out-of-Distribution Replay**
Gyuhak Kim, **Zixuan Ke**, Bing Liu
Conference on Lifelong Learning Agents (CoLLAs), 2022
- [12]  **Continual learning of natural language processing tasks: A survey**
Zixuan Ke and Bing Liu
Preprint, 2022
- [13]  **Achieving Forgetting Prevention and Knowledge Transfer in Continual Learning**
Zixuan Ke, Bing Liu, Nainzu Ma, Hu Xu and Lei Shu
Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS), 2021
- [14]  **CLASSIC: Continual and Contrastive Learning of Aspect Sentiment Classification Tasks**
Zixuan Ke, Bing Liu, Hu Xu and Lei Shu
Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2021

- [15]  **Adapting BERT for Continual Learning of a Sequence of Aspect Sentiment Classification Tasks**
Zixuan Ke, Hu Xu and Bing Liu
Conference of the North American Chapter of Association for Computational Linguistics: Human Language Technologies (NAACL-HLT), 2021
- [16]  **Continual Learning of a Mixed Sequence of Similar and Dissimilar Tasks**
Zixuan Ke, Bing Liu and Xingchang Huang
Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS), 2020
- [17]  **Continual Learning with Knowledge Transfer for Sentiment Classification**
Zixuan Ke, Bing Liu, Hao Wang and Lei Shu
European Conference on Machine Learning and Principles and Practice of Knowledge Discovery in Databases (ECML-PKDD), 2020
- [18]  **Automated Essay Scoring: A Survey of The State of the Art**
Zixuan Ke and Vincent Ng
International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), 2019
- [19]  **Give Me More Feedback II: Annotating Thesis Strength and Related Attributes in Student Essays**
Zixuan Ke, Hrishikesh Inamdar, Hui Lin and Vincent Ng
Association for Computational Linguistic (ACL), 2019
- [20]  **Learning to Give Feedback: Modeling Attributes Affecting Argument Persuasiveness in Student Essays**
Zixuan Ke, Winston Carlile, Nishant Gurrapadi and Vincent Ng
International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI), 2018
- [21]  **Give me more feedback: Annotating argument persuasiveness and related attributes in student essays**
Winston Carlile, Nishant Gurrapadi, **Zixuan Ke** and Vincent Ng
Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL), 2018

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Invited Talks & Classes:

- Toward Effective and Efficient Multi-Agent Systems
 Live Talk at CAMEL, Jan 23, 2026
- Adaptation of Large Lanaguge Models
 Tutorial at NAACL (Solo Speaker), May 3, 2025
 Talk at Visa Research, Mar 4, 2025
- Adapting Large Language Models for the Dynamic World
 Talk at Snowflake, Feb 1, 2024
 Talk at Salesforce AI Reseasrch, Jan 11, 2024
 Talk at Google DeepMind, Nov 9, 2023
- Continual Pre-training in Language Models , Talk at ContinualAI, Remote, April 27, 2023.
- Continual Learning in NLP. Tutorial at DEIM23, Remote, March 6, 2023
- Lifelong and Continual Learning. A Short PhD Course, Aalborg University, 2022.

Services:

- Area Chair: ICML, ACL Rolling Review
- PC Member: ICLR, NeurIPS, ICML, ACL Rolling Review, TPAMI, TKDE and more