

# Taehyeon Kim

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## INTERESTS

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- **Thinking/action alignment:** Training sycophancy-free models where internal reasoning genuinely drives external behaviour; inference-time and training-time solutions.
- **Self-improving training loops:** Eval-harness design, feedback wiring, and rapid model iteration via RFT/RL pipelines (RPO, DPO, AdaSTaR-style self-taught data generation).
- **Agentic AI:** Multi-step planning, reliable action-taking, policy-aligned agents – from research prototypes to production systems.
- **LLM inference:** Speculative decoding, vLLM/SGLang optimization, serving-cost reduction for production agent deployment.

## EDUCATION

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### Ph.D., Graduate School of AI

Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) - Advisor: Prof. Se-Young Yun Mar 2020 - Feb 2025  
• Thesis: *Efficient and Effective Inference-time Decoding Strategies for Foundational Models*

### M.S., Graduate School of Data Science

Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) - Advisor: Prof. Se-Young Yun Mar 2018 - Feb 2020  
• Thesis: *Orthogonal Feature Regularization: A Novel Approach for Training Robust Models*

### B.S., Mathematical Sciences & Minor, Intellectual Property Minor Program

Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) Mar 2013 - Feb 2018

## WORK EXPERIENCES

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### LG AI Research @ Seoul, South Korea

Apr 2025 – Present

- **Tech lead:** Expert-domain AI search system – end-to-end pipeline from retrieval to agentic reasoning.
- **Agentic Orchestration:** Built multi-tool harness with parallel retrieval, LLM query decomposer/planner, and structured examination modeling (novelty & inventiveness judgment), wired via tool-use endpoints.
- **LLM alignment & RL:** SFT, DPO, GRPO-based training (RPO – adaptive thinking via root-token policy, ACL 2026 [C15]); novel DPO for small-large model collaboration; SIMPER for math/coding (in preparation).
- **Research:** Contrastive thinking decoding; sycophancy-free inference-time alignment via vLLM extension (ICML under review [U4]); adaptive self-taught data generation for RFT, co-corresponding author (NeurIPS 2025 [C12]); LLM negotiation-agent benchmark MERIT (ACL 2026 [C13]); multi-drafter speculative decoding (ACL 2026 Findings [C14]).
- **Retrieval & Reranking:** Trained domain dense retrievers (text-embedding) with cross-encoder rerankers; contrastive learning (hard-negative mining, curriculum sampling).
- **Multi-modal:** Designed VLM fine-tuning experiments for diagram understanding; evaluated cross-modal fusion (image+text) strategies for retrieval grounding.

### Google Research @ NYC, USA

Oct 2023 – Dec 2023

- **PhD Intern:** Fast parallel decoding techniques on large language models (published to NeurIPS24 [C10])
- *Working with: Adrian Benton, Ananda Theertha Suresh, and Kishore Papineni*

### Dynamo AI (YC-backed) @ SF, USA

Jan 2023 – Aug 2023

- **Full research contributor (6+ months):** Privacy-preserving federated learning for enterprise AI; contributed to closing B2B contracts with automotive clients while simultaneously publishing a first-author NeurIPS 2023 paper [C5] (*with Eric Lin*).

### National Institute of Meteorological Sciences (NIMS) @ South Korea

Mar 2022 – Jun 2023

- **Research Manager:** Transformer-based precipitation forecasting; NeurIPS 2022 Competition award (40+ researchers).

### Qualcomm @ Seoul, South Korea

Jun 2021 – Dec 2021

- **PhD Intern:** CV & ML research for autonomous driving report (*Working with: Heesoo Myeong*)
- Designing resource-efficient and accurate backbone for ADAS (published at ICML22W [W3], U.S. patent [P1]).

## PUBLICATIONS

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- C15 **Kim, T.**, Lee, H., Jang, Y. & Lee, M. (2026). Efficiently Learning To Reason or Not to Reason: Root-token Policy Optimization for Adaptive Thinking, The 64th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (**ACL 2026**) (**Oral**), Jul. 2026.
- C14 **Kim, T.\***, Jung, D.\* & Yun, S.. (2026). Multi-Drafter Speculative Decoding with Alignment Feedback, The 64th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (**ACL 2026 Findings**), Jul. 2026.
- C13 Oh, J., Aghazada, M., Shin, Y., Yun, S. & **Kim, T.†** (2026). MERIT Feedback Elicits Better Bargaining in LLM Negotiators, The 64th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (**ACL 2026**), Jul. 2026.
- W9 Kim, Y., Yi, E., Kim, M., Yun, S.†, **Kim, T.†** (2025). Guiding Reasoning in Small Language Models with LLM Assistance, **CoLM 2025** Workshop: Test-time Scaling and Reasoning Models.

- C12 Koh, W., Oh, W., Jang, J., Lee, M., Kim, H., Kim, A., Kim, J., Lee, J., **Kim, T.**†, Yun, S.† (2025). AdaSTaR: Adaptive Data Sampling for Training Self-Taught Reasoners, *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems 39 (NeurIPS 2025)*, Dec. 2025.
- C11 Koh, W., Yoon, J., Lee, M., Song, Y., Cho, J., Kang, J., **Kim, T.**, Yun, S., Yu, Y., Lee, B. (2025). C<sup>2</sup>: Scalable Auto-Feedback for LLM-based Chart Generation, *The 2025 Annual Conference of the Nations of the Americas Chapter of the ACL (NAACL 2025) (Oral)*, May. 2025.
- J2 **Kim, T.**, Kim, D. & Yun, S.. (2024). FLR: Label-Mixture Regularization for Federated Learning with Noisy Labels, *Transactions on Machine Learning Research (TMLR)*.
- W8 **Kim, T.\***, Jung, D.\* & Yun, S.. (2024). A Unified Framework for Speculative Decoding with Multiple Drafters as a Bandit, *NeurIPS 2024 Workshop: Efficient Natural Language and Speech Processing (ENLSP-IV)*.
- C10 **Kim, T.**, Suresh, AT., Papineni, K., Riley, M., Kumar, S. & Benton, A., (2024). Exploring & Improving Multi-token Prediction (Block Draft) in Language Modeling, *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems 38 (NeurIPS 2024)*, Dec. 2024.
- C9 Ho, N.\*, Bae, S.\*, **Kim, T.**, Jo, H., Kim, Y., Schuster, T., Fisch, A., Thorne, J. and Yun, S. (2024). Block Transformer: Global-to-Local Language Modeling for Fast Inference, *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems 38 (NeurIPS 2024)*, Dec. 2024.
- C8 Yi, E.\*, **Kim, T.\***, Jeung, H., Chang, D. and Yun, S. (2024). Towards Fast Multilingual LLM Inference: Speculative Decoding and Specialized Drafters, *The 2024 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP 2024)*, Nov. 2024.
- W7 **Kim, T.**, Suresh, AT., Papineni, K., Riley, M., Kumar, S. & Benton, A., (2024). Exploring and Improving Drafts in Blockwise Parallel Decoding, *ICML 2024 Workshop: Efficient Systems for Foundation Models (Es-FoMo)*.
- C7 **Kim, T.\***, Kim, J.\*, Lee, G.\* & Yun, S.. (2024). Instructive Decoding: Instruction-Tuned Large Language Models are Self-Refiner from Noisy Instructions, *Twelfth International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR 2024) (Spotlight, Top 5%)*, May. 2024.
- C6 Yang, Y., **Kim, T.** & Yun, S.. (2024). Leveraging Normalization Layer in Adapters with Progressive Learning and Adaptive Distillation for Cross-Domain Few-Shot Learning, *The 38th Annual AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI 2024)*, Feb. 2024.
- C5 **Kim, T.**, Lin, E., Lee, J., Lau, C. & Muguntahn, V.. (2023). Navigating Data Heterogeneity in Federated Learning: A Semi-Supervised Federated Object Detection, *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems 37 (NeurIPS 2023)*, Dec. 2023.
- C4 Gruca et al. Weather4cast at NeurIPS 2022: Super-Resolution Rain Movie Prediction under Spatio-temporal Shifts, *Proceedings of the NeurIPS 2022 Competition and Demonstration Track*, in *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research 220:292-313 (2022)*.
- W6 **Kim, T.**, Kang, S., Shin, H., Yoon, D., Eom, S., Shin, K. & Yun, S.. (2022). Region-Conditioned Orthogonal 3D U-Net for Weather4Cast Competition, *NeurIPS 2022 Workshop: Weather4Cast Competition*.
- W5 Eom, S., **Kim, T.** & Yun, S.. (2022). Layover Intermediate Layer for Multi-Label Classification in Efficient Transfer Learning, *NeurIPS 2022 Workshop: Has it Trained Yet? (HITY)*.
- W4 Shin, J., **Kim, T.** & Yun, S.. (2022). Revisiting the Activation Function for Federated Image Classification, *NeurIPS 2022 Workshop Federated Learning*.
- W3 **Kim, T.** & Yun, S.. (2022). Supernet Training for Federated Image Classification under System Heterogeneity, *ICML 2022 Workshop on Dynamic Neural Networks (Oral)*.
- J1 **Kim, T.** & Yun, S.. (2022). Revisiting Orthogonality Regularization: A Study for Convolutional Neural Networks in Image Classification, *IEEE Access*, Jun. 2022.
- W2 **Kim, T.**, Myeong, H. & Yun, S.. (2022). Revisiting Architecture-aware Knowledge Distillation: Smaller Models and Faster Search, *ICML 2022 Hardware Aware Efficient Training (HAET) Workshop*, July 2022.
- C3 **Kim, T.\***, Ko, J.\*, Cho, S., Choi, J. & Yun, S.. (2021). FINE Samples for Learning with Noisy Labels., *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems 35 (NeurIPS 2021)*, Dec. 2021.
- C2 **Kim, T.\***, Oh, J.\*, Kim, N., Cho, S., & Yun, S. Y. (2021). Comparing Kullback-Leibler Divergence and Mean Squared Error Loss in Knowledge Distillation. *In the 30th International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI 2021)*, Aug. 2021 (acceptance rate: 13.9%)
- W1 **Kim, T.\***, Ahn, J.\*, Kim, N.\*, & Yun, S. (2020). Adaptive Local Bayesian Optimization Over Multiple Discrete Variables. *Workshop at NeurIPS 2020 Competition Track on Black-Box Optimization Challenge*, Dec. 2020.
- C1 **Kim, T.**, Kim, J. & Yun, S. (2019). Efficient Model for Image Classification With Regularization Tricks. *Proceedings of the NeurIPS 2019 Competition and Demonstration Track*, in *Proceedings of Machine Learning Research 123:13-26*.
- T **Kim, T.**. Orthogonal feature regularization : a novel approach for training robust models, Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST)

## UNDER REVIEW PAPERS

- U3 **Kim, T.** et al. (2025). Masked-SIMPER: Improving Collaborative Reasoning, In preparation.

U2 **Kim, T.** et al. (2025). Contrastive Thinking Decoding, *International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML 2026)*, Under review.

U1 Bartholet, M.\*, **Kim, T.\***, Beuret, A. Yun, S. & Buhmann, J. (2024). Hypernetwork-Driven Model Fusion for Federated Domain Generalization, Under review.

## US PATENTS

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P1 **Kim, T.**, Myeon, H. (2023). Trust-Region Aware Architecture Distillation for Sample-Efficient Neural Architecture Search, Qualcomm Inc..

## AWARDS @ COMPETITIONS

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**4th Award in NeurIPS 2022 Competition: Weather4Cast** Dec 2022

- Homepage: <https://www.iaiai.ac.at/weather4cast/>
- Subjects: Precipitation Forecast, Segmentation, Video

**8th Award in NeurIPS 2020 Black-Box Optimization Challenge** Dec 2020

- BBO-challenge homepage: <https://bbochallenge.com/>
- Subjects: Auto-ML, Bayesian Learning, Hyperparameter Optimization.

**2nd & 3rd Awards in NeurIPS 2019 MicroNet Challenge, CIFAR-100 Track.** Dec 2019

- MicroNet-challenge homepage: <https://micronet-challenge.github.io/>
- Subjects: Image Classification, Model Compression.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

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**Technical Reviewer (ICML '26): Gold** Jul 2026  
Top 25% of Reviewer (Free Registration).

**Google Conference Scholarship** Dec 2024  
Exploring & Improving Multi-token Prediction (Block Draft) in Language Modeling

**Google Cloud Platform (GCP) Credit Award** Mar 2024  
Gemma Academic Program

**Winner, 2022 Qualcomm AI Fellowship** Oct 2022  
FINE Samples for Learning with Noisy Labels.

**Best Poster Awards, KAIST AI 21/22 Workshop** Jan 2022  
1. FINE Samples for Learning with Noisy Labels.  
2. Comparing Kullback-Leibler Divergence and Mean Squared Error Loss in Knowledge Distillation

## LEADERSHIP

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**Tech Lead & Research Manager @ LG AI Research** Apr 2025 – Present  
• Leading a team of 10 researchers (5 PhDs) across retrieval, LLM alignment, and agentic systems.  
• Defining research roadmap, mentoring junior researchers, and managing cross-team project delivery.

**1st Representative of doctoral students @ KAIST AI** Mar 2021 – Feb 2022  
• Construct organizations  
• Being an intermediary between the professors and the students

**Lab master @ OSI LAB** Mar 2020 – Feb 2021  
• Optimization and Statistical Inference Laboratory (OSI LAB), KAIST.  
• Construct organizations (e.g., seminar, lab policy, funding)  
• Being an intermediary between the advisor and the students

**Vice Captain @ KAIST Representative Cheerleading Group** Oct 2014 – Nov 2015  
• A.K.A. Encouraging Leaders of KAIST (ELKA)  
• KAIST festival planning and promotion  
• 2015 Gwangju Summer Universiade - University Student U Cheering Festival **1st prize**  
• Team building, Funding, Management.

## INVITED TALKS

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**Naver AI Lab Seminar** Jan 2025  
• LLM Inference-Time Strategies and its Beyond.

**Microsoft Research Seminar** Jan 2025  
• Instructive Decoding and its Beyond.

**Squeezebits Efficient AI Seminar** Jun 2024  
• Towards Fast LLM Inference: Speculative Decoding and Efficient Architectures

**KCC 2024** Jun 2024  
• Navigating Data Heterogeneity in Federated Learning: A Semi-Supervised Federated Object Detection

<b>HyperConnect Seminar</b>	Jan 2023
• Personalized Federated Learning on System Heterogeneity under Label Noise	
<b>KSC 2022</b>	Dec 2022
• FINE Samples for Learning with Noisy Labels	
<b>Naver Clova AI Seminar</b>	Jun 2019
Orthogonal Feature Regularization: A Novel Approach for training robust model	

## SKILLS & OTHERS

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<b>Reviewer</b>	<b>Conference:</b> NeurIPS {2022, 2023, 2024}, ICML {2022, 2023, 2024}, AutoML-Conf 2022, ECCV 2022, KDD 2023, ICLR {2024, 2025}, ARR 2024. <b>Journal:</b> Pattern Recognition.
<b>Coding</b>	Python, PyTorch, L <sup>A</sup> T <sub>E</sub> X, ...
<b>AI in Art</b>	Surplus human, Vania Oh, Junbeom Shin, <b>Taehyeon Kim</b> , 2022. • AI with Weird Wonderland, 22.03.10 - 22.03.16, CELINE PARK GALLERY, Organized by Next interface lab.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCES

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<b>AI Lecturer @ ELICE, Mathematics in ML</b>	Jan 2022 – Feb 2022
• Teaching the mathematics for gradient descent in ML (4 lectures, theory and code quiz, exams) • Attendee: LG Employees.	
<b>AI Mentor @ Curinc, Introduction to Deep Learning</b>	Jun 2021 – Jul 2021
• Teaching the overview of deep learning in Curinc, Seoul, Korea (70 hours during 7 weeks) • Attendee: Undergraduate at UC Berkeley, Boston University, and Florida International University.	
<b>TA @ LG, Computer Vision &amp; Deep Learning</b>	Oct 2020 – Nov 2020
• Attendee: LG Employees in the LG AI CAMP Module(3), LG, Academy, Korea • Image classification and semantic segmentation using public COVID dataset in Kaggle.	
<b>Advisory Committee @ National Science Museum, Deep Learning</b>	Mar 2020 – Oct 2020
• AI Exploration Program, National Science Museum, Korea. • Attendee: Advanced students (Science High School) • Subjects: reinforcement learning, object detection, image classification, evolutionary algorithm.	
<b>TA @ KAIST Data Science, Introduction to Deep Learning</b>	Mar 2019 – Jul 2019
• Dept. Knowledge Service Engineering, KAIST, Korea. • Attendee: Graduate Students	
<b>TA @ LG, Computer Vision &amp; Deep Learning</b>	Jan 2019 – Jan 2019
• Theories and practices for deep learning in the LG AIB Intermediate CAMP, LG Academy, Korea.	
<b>Lecturer @ Samsung, Python Basics</b>	Jan 2019 – Jan 2019
• Python code implementation in the Samsung SW Academy Start CAMP, Samsung SW Academy, Korea. • Subjects: Chatbot, basic python (e.g., for loop, condition)	
<b>Lecturer @ KAIST, Regular Leadership Course</b>	Mar 2017 – Dec 2017
• KAIST Lecture: Personality/Leadership 3 - Liberal Arts Required (2017 Spring & 2017 Fall) • Subjects: Sports leadership, Team leadership. • Students: undergraduate freshman in KAIST	

## Scholarship & Fellowship

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<b>Graduate School of AI, KAIST Funding</b> \$ 20,000 per year	Mar 2020 – Present
<b>National scholarship for graduate studies, Korea Student Aid Foundation</b> \$ 16,000 per year	Mar 2018 – Feb 2020
<b>Full Academic scholarship, KAIST</b> \$ 3,000 per year	Mar 2013 – Aug 2017