Hongli Zhan

Ph.D. Candidate, UT Austin

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Education

2021 –   **Ph.D. in Computational Linguistics**.
Department of Linguistics, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX
- *Advisor:* Dr. Junyi Jessy Li
- *Committee:* Dr. Junyi Jessy Li, Dr. Desmond C. Ong, Dr. David I. Beaver, Dr. Kyle Mahowald

2017 – 2021   **B.A. in English Linguistics**.
School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China

Industry Experience

Summer 2025   **Research Scientist Intern**, *IBM Research*.
IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center, Yorktown Heights, NY
- Manager: Dr. Raya Horesh; Mentors: Dr. Muneeza Azmat & Dr. Pin-Yu Chen

Summer 2024   **Research Scientist Intern**, *IBM Research*.
IBM Thomas J. Watson Research Center, Yorktown Heights, NY
- Manager: Dr. Raya Horesh; Mentors: Dr. Muneeza Azmat & Dr. Mikhail Yurochkin
- Work resulted in a first-authored paper at ICML 2025 [C6] & a first-authored patent, and was incorporated as part of the features in IBM's Granite Guardian

Refereed Publications

* denotes equal contributions

(C stands for conference publications, J for journals, and P for patents)

In Conference Proceedings

[C6] 2025   **Hongli Zhan**, Muneeza Azmat, Raya Horesh, Junyi Jessy Li, and Mikhail Yurochkin. SPRI: Aligning large language models with context-situated principles. In *Proceedings of the 42nd International Conference on Machine Learning* **(ICML)**, 2025. [26.9% acceptance rate (3,260 out of 12,107 submissions)].

[C5] 2024   **Hongli Zhan**, Allen Zheng, Yoon Kyung Lee, Jina Suh, Junyi Jessy Li, and Desmond C. Ong. Large language models are capable of offering cognitive reappraisal, if guided. In *Proceedings of the 1st Conference on Language Modeling* **(COLM)**, 2024. [28.8% acceptance rate (299 out of 1,036 submissions)].

[C4] 2024   Yoon Kyung Lee, Jina Suh, **Hongli Zhan**, Junyi Jessy Li, and Desmond C. Ong. Large language models produce responses perceived to be empathic. In *Proceedings of the 12th IEEE International Conference on Affective Computing and Intelligent Interaction* **(ACII)**, 2024. [36.7% acceptance rate (44 out of 120 submissions)].

[C3] 2023   **Hongli Zhan**, Desmond C. Ong, and Junyi Jessy Li. Evaluating subjective cognitive appraisals of emotions from large language models. In Houda Bouamor, Juan Pino, and Kalika Bali, editors, *Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics: EMNLP 2023* **(EMNLP Findings)**, pages 14418–14446, Singapore, December 2023. Association for Computational Linguistics. [45.4% acceptance rate (1,758 out of 3,868 submissions)].

[C2] 2023 Tiberiu Sosea*, **Hongli Zhan***, Junyi Jessy Li, and Cornelia Caragea. Unsupervised extractive summarization of emotion triggers. In Anna Rogers, Jordan Boyd-Graber, and Naoaki Okazaki, editors, *Proceedings of the 61st Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Volume 1: Long Papers)* **(ACL)**, pages 9550–9569, Toronto, Canada, July 2023. Association for Computational Linguistics. [23.5% acceptance rate (910 out of 3,872 submissions)].

[C1] 2022 **Hongli Zhan***, Tiberiu Sosea*, Cornelia Caragea, and Junyi Jessy Li. Why do you feel this way? summarizing triggers of emotions in social media posts. In Yoav Goldberg, Zornitsa Kozareva, and Yue Zhang, editors, *Proceedings of the 2022 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* **(EMNLP)**, pages 9436–9453, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, December 2022. Association for Computational Linguistics. [22.1% acceptance rate (715 out of 3,242 submissions)].

Professional Activities

Organization and Service

2023 – 2024 **Organizer**, *Natural Language Learning Reading Group*, UT Austin.

Student Volunteer, *ACL 2023*.

Reviewing

2025 **Conference on Language Modeling**, *(COLM)*.

2025 **Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics**, *(ACL)*.

2024 **IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation**, *(ICRA)*.

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

Teaching Experience

The University of Texas at Austin

Fall 2024 **LIN 371: Machine Learning for Text Analysis**, *Guest Lecturer*.
Instructor: Prof. Junyi Jessy Li

Spring 2024 **LIN 371: Machine Learning for Text Analysis**, *Graduate Teaching Assistant*.
Instructor: Prof. Junyi Jessy Li

Spring 2023 **LIN 306: Intro to the Study of Language**, *Guest Lecturer*.
Instructor: Seyeon Park

Fall 2022 **LIN 373N: Machine Learning Toolbox for Text Analysis**, *Graduate Teaching Assistant*.
Instructor: Prof. Junyi Jessy Li

Fall 2021 **LIN 350: Computational Semantics**, *Graduate Teaching Assistant*.
Instructor: Prof. Katrin Erk

Mentoring

2024 – **Marco Cheung**, *B.A. in Linguistics & Computer Science*, UT Austin.

2023 – 2024 **Allen Zheng**, *B.S. in Computer Science (Turing Honors) & Mathematics*, UT Austin.

Fellowships & Awards

Fall 2024 **Professional Development Award for Attending COLM 2024**, *UT Austin*, 1,200 USD.

Fall 2023 **Professional Development Award for Attending EMNLP 2023**, *UT Austin*, 1,160 USD.

Fall 2022 **Professional Development Award for Attending EMNLP 2022**, *UT Austin*, 1,200 USD.

Spring 2022 **COLA Supplemental Graduate School Fellowship**, *UT Austin*, 5,000 USD.

2021 **Outstanding Graduate**, *Shanghai Jiao Tong University*.

2021 **Outstanding Undergraduate Thesis Award**, *Shanghai Jiao Tong University*.

Invited Talks

Oct 11, 2023   **Can I Cheer You Up? Psychologically-Grounded Emotional Support: Leveraging LLMs for Targeted Re-Appraisals**, *Computational Affective and Social Cognition Lab (CASCogLab)*, Department of Psychology, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.

Feb 22, 2023   **An Introduction to Computational Linguistics**, *Westlake High School*, Austin, TX.