

ANSHUN ASHER ZHENG

University of Texas at Austin
The Department of Linguistics
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EDUCATION

DEGREE PROGRAM

- **University of Texas at Austin** **Austin, Texas**
Ph.D. student in Computational Linguistics *08/2024 – Present*
 - Advisors: Junyi Jessy Li, David I. Beaver
- **University of Edinburgh** **Edinburgh, Scotland**
Master of Science in Speech and Language Processing *09/2022 – 08/2023*
 - Dissertation:
Anticipating the Future: Forward-Looking Discourse Based on Question Under Discussion (QUD)
 - Supervisor: Catherine Lai
 - First Class *with distinction*
- **Hanyang University** **Seoul, South Korea**
Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature *09/2020 – 08/2022*
 - Advisor: Ki Jeong Lee
 - GPA: 3.96/4.0, 99.5/100
 - *summa cum laude* honors

NON-DEGREE PROGRAM

- 2024 The 8th NYI Global Institute of Cultural, Cognitive, and Linguistic Studies
- 2023 The 7th NYI Global Institute of Cultural, Cognitive, and Linguistic Studies
- 2021 Summer School in Languages and Linguistics, Leiden University
- 32nd European Summer School in Logic, Language and Information
- Eastern Generative Grammar Summer School

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Broad* Computational Pragmatics, Natural Language Processing, Semantics
- Narrow* Question Under Discussion (QUD), Non-cooperative Discourse, LLM Pragmatics
- Safe Alignment
- Languages* Mandarin, English, Korean

PUBLICATIONS

DISSERTATIONS

1. **Anshun, Zheng.** 2023. Anticipating the Future: Forward-Looking Discourse Based on Question Under Discussion (QUD), M.Sc. Thesis, *University of Edinburgh*, Edinburgh, Scotland. (*Distinction*)

JOURNALS

2. **Anshun Asher, Zheng,** Junyi Jessy, Li, David I., Beaver. Strategic Dialogue Assessment: The Crooked Path to Innocence, *Dialogue and Discourse* 17(1), 1-53.

PROCEEDINGS

3. Ramya Namuduri, Yating Wu, **Anshun Asher, Zheng,** Manya Wadhwa, Greg Durrett and Junyi Jessy Li. QUDsim: Quantifying Discourse Similarities in LLM-Generated Text, (*to appear*), In *Proceedings of the 2nd Conference on Language Modeling*, (COLM 2025)
4. **Anshun Asher, Zheng.** Nandao-Qs: When Surprise Sparks Inquiry, (*to appear*). In *Proceedings of the 43rd West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics (WCCFL 43)*
5. **Anshun, Zheng.** CP Selection at the Syntax-Semantics Interface: A Case Study in Mandarin *think "xiang"*, 2024, In *Proceedings of the 23rd Meeting of the Texas Linguistics Society, TLS2024*
6. **Anshun, Zheng.** Dynamic Questions: Evidence from Mandarin Think–“Xiang”, 2023, In *Proceedings of the 4th Workshop on Inquisitiveness Below and Beyond the Sentence Boundary (InqBnB4), IWCS2023*, pages 40-49, Nancy, France. Association for Computational Linguistics.

PRESENTATIONS

REFEREED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2023 **Anshun, Zheng.** Dynamic Questions: Evidence from Mandarin Think–“Xiang”, 2023, *The 4th Workshop on Inquisitiveness Below and Beyond the Sentence Boundary (InqBnB4), IWCS2023*, Université de Lorraine, June 20.

ABSTRACTS/POSTERS

- 2025 **Anshun, Zheng.** Nandao-Qs: When Surprise Sparks Inquiry, 2025. *the 43rd West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics (WCCFL 43)*
- 2024 **Anshun, Zheng.** Anticipating the Future: Forward-Looking Discourse Based on Question Under Discussion (QUD), 2024. Submitted to *the 48th Penn Linguistics Conference*
- 2024 **Anshun, Zheng.** CP Selection at the Syntax-Semantics Interface: A Case Study in Mandarin *think "xiang"*, 2023. Poster presentation at the *Texas Linguistics Society 2024 (TLS2024)*, The University of Texas at Austin, February 23.
- 2023 **Anshun, Zheng.** CP Selection at the Syntax-Semantics Interface: A Case Study in Mandarin *think "xiang"*, 2023. Poster presentation at the 2023 LSK Young Scholar Symposium, Korea University, December 8.

EXPERIENCE

AT UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Quantitative Researcher (PI: Junyi Jessy Li and David Beaver)

2024-present

- △ **Strategic Language Understanding with LLMs:** Designed a game-theoretic framework to quantify how language moves advance speaker goals in adversarial settings. Created an annotated corpus of courtroom cross-examinations to benchmark SOTA LLMs on strategic language use, which is crucial for safe alignment. (*SDA, Dialogue and Discourse*)
- △ **Diveristy of LLM-generated texts:** Co-developed a methodology to measure discourse templaticity in LLM generations using Question Under Discussion (QUD) and alternative semantics. Led cross-document Q-A annotations and revealed consistent discourse-level homogeneity across LLM-generated texts compared to human written texts. (*QUIDsim, COLM 2025*)
- △ **LLMs as a Long-term Teacher** Designed an agentic framework enabling LLMs to strategically choose between direct answering and pedagogical guidance, optimizing for user learning and generalization.

HONORS & AWARDS

UT Professional Development Award (\$ 1208)	2025
Hanyang International Excellence Awards (HIEA) (≈\$12000), Hanyang University.	2021 – 2022
TOPIK Scholarship (≈\$400), Hanyang University.	2020
Hanyang International Scholarship Program (HISP) (≈\$1500), Hanyang University.	2020
The University Scholarship, Zhejiang Normal University (≈\$300).	2018 – 2020
Outstanding Student Leader, Zhejiang Normal University.	2018 – 2020.

SERVICES

Reviewing

Journal of Linguistics, ACL ARR 2025

Memberships

Member of Associated Students of Linguistics (ASOL) at UT Austin	2024 – Present
Member of Generative Linguistics in the Old World (GLOW)	2023 – Present
Member of The Association for Logic, Language and Information	2021 – Present
Member of UoE Meaning and Grammar Research Group (MGRG)	2022 – 2023

LANGUAGES & COMPUTING SKILLS

<i>Natural</i>	Mandarin, Chinese Wu (Native), English, Korean, Archaic Chinese (Advanced), Japanese, French (Intermediate), Thai, Latin (Elementary).
<i>Programming</i>	Python, JavaScript, R, L ^A T _E X, Praat, Html, SQLite.
<i>Frameworks and Packages</i>	PyTorch, Scikit-Learn, Numpy, Pandas, Nltk, spaCy, vLLM, LangChain, CHILDES, Penn Treebanks, JsPsych.

REFERENCES

Junyi Jessy Li, Associate Professor, University of Texas at Austin, jessy@utexas.edu

David.I.Beaver, Professor, University of Texas at Austin, dib@utexas.edu

Catherine Lai, Lecturer, University of Edinburgh, c.lai@ed.ac.uk

Kajsa Djärv, Lecturer, University of Edinburgh, k.djarv@ed.ac.uk

Taehong Cho, Professor, Hanyang University, tcho@hanyang.ac.kr

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