Daoxin Li

daoxinli@unc.edu
https://daoxinli.github.io
Department of Linguistics
108 Smith Building, CB#3155
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3155

Education

2024	**Ph.D. in Linguistics**, University of Pennsylvania Dissertation: *Distributional learning of syntactic generalizations* Committee: Charles Yang (advisor), Kathryn Schuler (co-advisor), Julie Anne Legate, John Trueswell, Marlyse Baptista Certificates in Language & Communication Science; College & University Teaching
2019	**B.A. in English Language**, Tsinghua University

Professional Experience

2025-	**Assistant Professor**, Department of Linguistics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
2024-2025	**Postdoctoral Fellow**, Infant and Child Development Center, Northwestern University (PI: Sandra Waxman)

Research Interests

Computational and experimental study of language acquisition; Learnability; Syntax and semantics acquisition; Distributional learning; Word learning; Language and cognition; Psycholinguistics; Theoretical syntax; Quantitative methods

Awards & Honors

External

2024	Paula Menyuk Travel Award, the 49th Boston University Conference on Language Development
2024	Student Abstract Award (2nd Place), Linguistic Society of America
2023	Prize for the Best Original Research Article of the Year by an Untenured Scientist, *Language Acquisition*
2021	Paula Menyuk Award (awarded to student first authors of top-rated abstracts), the 46th Boston University Conference on Language Development

Northwestern

| 2024 | Conference Travel Grant, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs |

Penn

2019-2024	Benjamin Franklin Fellowship (full support for five-year Ph.D. studies)
2019, 2023, 2024	Research Travel Grant, Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GAPSA)
2023	Departmental Conference Travel Reimbursement Fund, Department of Linguistics
2019, 2022 (2×), 2023	Dean's Travel Subvention, School of Arts and Sciences
2021	Travel Grant, Graduate Student Government of the School of Arts and Sciences (SASGov)
2021	Professional Society Membership Grant, Graduate Student Government of the School of Arts and Sciences (SASGov)

Tsinghua

2019	Outstanding Graduate Award
2016-2018	Merit-based Undergraduate Scholarship for all school years
2018	Undergraduate Summer Research Travel Grant
2017	Academic Travel Award

Publications

G Google Scholar

\# → Trainee co-author

Book Chapters

Li, D. & Waxman, S. R. (Accepted). Infant word learning. In H. Nesi & P. Milin (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of language and linguistics* (3rd ed.). Elsevier. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-95504-1.00857-7 Advance online publication.

Refereed Articles

Li, D. (2024). Controlling overt subjects in Mandarin. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics*, *33*, 333–366. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10831-024-09280-2

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2024). Children can use distributional cues to acquire recursive structures. In L. K. Samuelson, S. L. Frank, M. Toneva, A. Mackey, & E. Hazeltine (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp. 1925–1932). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3d52v78v

Li, D., Yue, C. S., & Trueswell, J. (2024). Is it a bat or a thing? Referential contrast in the learning of homophones and superordinate terms. In L. K. Samuelson, S. L. Frank, M. Toneva, A. Mackey, & E. Hazeltine (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp. 2301–2307). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3h2521vb

Li, D. & Schuler, K. D. (2023). Acquiring recursive structures through distributional learning. *Language Acquisition*, *30*(3-4), 323–336. https://doi.org/10.1080/10489223.2023.2185522
Awarded *Language Acquisition* 2023 Best Paper by an Untenured Scientist.

Lyu, Q., Zheng, H., **Li, D.**, Zhang, L., Apidianaki, M., & Callison-Burch, C. (2022). Is *"my favorite new movie" my favorite movie*? Probing the understanding of recursive noun phrases. In M. Carpuat, M.-C. de Marneffe, & I. V. Meza Ruiz (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2022 Conference of the North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics* (pp. 5286–5302). Association for Computational Linguistics. https://aclanthology.org/2022.naacl-main.388

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2021). Distributional learning of recursive structures. In *Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society* (pp. 1437–1443). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/45221021

Yin, L., Joshi, R. M., **Li, D.**, & Kim, S.-K. (2020). Decisions about consonant doubling among non-native speakers of English: Graphotactic and phonological influences. *Reading and Writing*, *33*, 1839–1858. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-020-10017-5

Conference Proceedings with Refereed Abstracts

Li, D. & Schuler, K. D. (2025). Children can use distributional cues to acquire recursive structures. In A. Yedetore, R. D. Bonney, & Y. Zhang (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 49th Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 435–448). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press. https://www.lingref.com/bucld/49/BUCLD49-33.pdf

Li, D. (2024). Modelling the distributional learning of verb argument structure. In H. A. A. Al-Thagafi & J. Ray (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 48th Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 313–326). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press. https://www.lingref.com/bucld/48/BUCLD48-24.pdf

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2023). Distributional learning of recursive structures: The role of the structural representation. In P. Gappmayr & J. Kellog (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 47th Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 487–498). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press. https://www.lingref.com/bucld/47/BUCLD47-40.pdf

Li, D., Zhong[#], S., & Schuler, K. (2023). Adapting infant looking time paradigms for the web. In P. Gappmayr & J. Kellog (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 47th Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 499–504). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press. https://www.lingref.com/bucld/47/BUCLD47-41.pdf

Li, D. (2022). Passives, impersonals, and Voice in Sakha. In S. K. Lee, S. Asinari, & S. Lazakovits (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Workshop on Turkic and Languages in Contact with Turkic* (pp. 88–103, Vol. 7). Linguistic Society of America. https://doi.org/10.3765/ptu.v7i1.5308

Li, D. (2022). Syntactic bootstrapping mental verbs and perception verbs with limited morphosyntactic cues. In Y. Gong & F. Kpogo (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 46th Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 428–441). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press. https://www.lingref.com/bucld/46/BUCLD46-33.pdf

Li, D., Grohe, L., Schulz, P., & Yang, C. (2021). The distributional learning of recursive structures. In D. Dionne & L.-A. V. Covas (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 45th Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 471–485). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press. https://www.lingref.com/bucld/45/BUCLD45-36.pdf

Li, D. (2021). Controlling overt subjects in Mandarin. In P. Farrell (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America* (pp. 303–316, Vol. 6). Linguistic Society of America. https://doi.org/10.3765/plsa.v6i1.4973

Li, D., Yang, X., Roeper, T., Wilson, M., Yin, R., Kim, J., Merritt, E., Lopez, D., & Tero, A. (2020). Acquisition of recursion in child Mandarin. In M. M. Brown & A. Kohut (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 44th Boston University Conference on Language Development* (pp. 294–307). Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press. https://www.lingref.com/bucld/44/BUCLD44-24.pdf

Manuscripts in Submission

Li, D. & Schuler, K. D. (Revise & resubmit). Distributional learning of recursive structures: Linear cues and structural representation.

Li, D. & Schuler, K. D. (In revision). Children's distributional learning of recursive structures: Capacities and constraints.

Manuscripts in Preparation

Li, D. & Yang, C. (In prep). Productivity and the distributional learning of recursive structure.

Li, D. & Trueswell, J. (In prep). One meaning or two? The role of implicit referential contrast in the learning of homophones and superordinate terms.

Schuler, K. D., **Li, D.**, & Zhong[#], S. (In prep). Adapting the head turn preference procedure for the web.

Li, D. (In prep). Verb argument structure rules are learnable from distributional cues.

Li, D., Lobo, A., Nam, C., & Waxman, S. R. (In prep). Naming permits 12-month-olds to create new individual-level object representations that support reasoning about dynamic events.

Presentations

\# → Trainee co-author

Invited Talks

Li, D. (2025). *Learning recursive structures in artificial grammars: Humans vs. language models*. Cognitive Talk Series, Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill NC, Oct 2, 2025.

Li, D. (2024). *Distributional learning of syntactic generalizations: The case of verb argument structure*. School of Modern Languages, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta GA, Nov 4, 2024 (Virtual).

Li, D. (2024). *Adults and children can use distributional cues to acquire recursive structures*. The Learning and Development Lab, Georgetown University, Washington DC, Mar 26, 2024.

Li, D. (2024). *Modelling the distributional learning of verb argument structure*. The Integrated Language Sciences and Technology (ILST) Seminar, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA, Feb 9, 2024.

Li, D. (2023). *Distributional learning of recursive structures*. The Language Acquisition Lab, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst MA, Sep 21, 2023 (Virtual).

Li, D. (2022). *Adapting infant looking time paradigms for the web*. The Integrated Language Sciences and Technology (ILST) Seminar, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA, Oct 28, 2022.

Li, D. (2021). *Distributional learning of recursive structures*. The Integrated Language Sciences and Technology (ILST) Seminar, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA, Oct 1, 2021.

Schulz, P., **Li, D.**, Grohe, L., & Yang, C. (2020). *The distributional learning of recursive structures: The case of possessives in German*. The Language Acquisition Research Center (LARC) Roundtable, University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst MA, Oct 30, 2020. (Virtual).

Refereed Conference Presentations

Li, D., Lobo, A., & Waxman, S. R. (2025). *Infants' individual-level representations, established via naming, support reasoning in dynamic events* [Poster]. The 50th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 50), Boston University, Boston MA, Nov 6 – 9, 2025.

Lobo, A., **Li, D.**, Nam, C., LaTourrette, A., & Waxman, S. R. (2025). *Infants' mental representations of objects persist in an occlusion task* [Poster]. The 2025 Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD 2025), Minneapolis MN, May 1 - 3, 2025.

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2024). *Children can use distributional cues to acquire recursive structures* [Poster]. The 49th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 49), Boston University, Boston MA, Nov 7 - 10, 2024.

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2024). *Children can use distributional cues to acquire recursive structures* [Poster]. The 46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci 2024), Rotterdam, Netherlands, Jul 24 - 27, 2024.

Li, D., Yue, C. S., & Trueswell, J. (2024). *Is it a bat or a thing? Referential contrast in the learning of homophones and superordinate terms* [Poster]. The 46th Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci 2024), Rotterdam, Netherlands, Jul 24 - 27, 2024.

Li, D. (2024). *Modelling the distributional learning of verb argument structure* [Talk]. The 98th annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA 2024), New York NY, Jan 4 - 7, 2024.
awarded 2nd Prize for LSA Student Abstract Award.

Li, D. & Trueswell, J. (2024). *One meaning or two? The role of referential contrast in the learning of homophones and superordinate terms* [Poster]. The 98th annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA 2024), New York NY, Jan 4 - 7, 2024.

Li, D. (2023). *Modelling the distributional learning of verb argument structure* [Poster]. The 48th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 48), Boston University, Boston MA, Nov 2 – 5, 2023.

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2023). *Distributional learning of recursive structures: The role of the structural representation* [Poster]. The 45th Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci 2023), Sydney, Australia, Jul 26 – 29, 2023.

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2023). *Distributional learning of recursive structures: The role of the structural representation* [Poster]. The 36th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing (HSP 2023), University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh PA, Mar 9 – 11, 2023.

Li, D. & Trueswell, J. (2023). *Cross-situational learning homophones and general categories: The role of the referential domain* [Poster]. The 97th annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA 2023), Denver CO, Jan 5 – 8, 2023.

Zhong[#], S., **Li, D.**, & Schuler, K. (2022). *Adapting infant looking time paradigms for the web* [Talk]. The 47th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 47), Boston University, Boston MA, Nov 3 – 6, 2022.

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2022). *Distributional learning of recursive structures: The role of the structural representation* [Poster]. The 47th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 47), Boston University, Boston MA, Nov 3 – 6, 2022.

Lyu, Q., Zheng, H., **Li, D.**, Zhang, L., Apidianaki, M., & Callison-Burch, C. (2022). *Is "my favorite new movie" my favorite movie? Probing the understanding of recursive noun phrases* [Talk]. The 2022 Annual Conference of the North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics (NAACL 2022), Seattle WA, Jul 10 - 15, 2022.

Li, D., Zhong[#], S., & Schuler, K. (2022). *Adapting infant looking time paradigms for the web* [Talk]. The XXII Biennial International Congress of Infant Studies (ICIS 2022), Ottawa, Canada, Jul 7 – 10, 2022.

Lyu, Q., Zheng, H., **Li, D.**, Zhang, L., Apidianaki, M., & Callison-Burch, C. (2022). *Is "my favorite new movie" my favorite movie? Probing the understanding of recursive noun phrases* [Poster]. The 9th annual Mid-Atlantic Student Colloquium on Speech, Language and Learning (MASC-SLL 2022), Temple University, Philadelphia PA, Apr 30, 2022.

Li, D. (2022). *Passives, impersonals, and Voice in Sakha* [Talk]. The 58th annual meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society (CLS 58), University of Chicago, Chicago IL, Apr 22 – 24, 2022 (Virtual).

Li, D., Zhong[#], S., & Schuler, K. (2022). *Adapting infant looking time paradigms for the web* [Poster]. The 35th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing (HSP 2022), University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz CA, Mar 24 – 26, 2022 (Virtual).

Li, D. (2022). *Passives, impersonals, and Voice in Sakha* [Talk]. The 7th Workshop on Turkic and Languages in Contact with Turkic (Tu+7), University of Connecticut, Storrs CT, Feb 18 – 19, 2022 (Virtual).

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2022). *Acquiring recursive structures through distributional learning* [Talk]. The 96th annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA 2022), Washington DC, Jan 6 – 9, 2022.

Li, D. (2022). *Syntactic bootstrapping mental verbs and perception verbs with limited morphosyntactic cues* [Poster]. The 96th annual meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA 2022), Washington DC, Jan 6 – 9, 2022.

Li, D. (2021). *Syntactic bootstrapping mental verbs and perception verbs with limited morphosyntactic cues* [Talk]. The 46th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 46), Boston University, Boston MA, Nov 4 – 7, 2021 (Virtual).

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2021). *Distributional learning of recursive structures* [Poster]. The 43rd Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci 2021), University of Vienna, Austria, Jul 26 – 29, 2021 (Virtual).

Li, D. (2021). *Controlling overt subjects in Mandarin* [Talk]. The 33rd North American Conference on Chinese Linguistics (NACCL 33), University of Chicago, Chicago IL, Jun 24 – 25, 2021 (Virtual).

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2021). *Acquiring recursive structures through distributional learning* [Talk]. "Recursion across Languages: The Intricacies of Babel" Workshop, Bucharest, Romania, Jun 1 – 2, 2021 (Virtual).

Li, D. & Schuler, K. (2021). *Acquiring recursive structures through distributional learning* [Talk]. The 34th Annual CUNY Conference on Human Sentence Processing (CUNY 34), University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA, Mar 4 – 6, 2021 (Virtual).

Li, D., Grohe, L., Schulz, P., & Yang, C. (2021). *The distributional learning of recursive structures* [Short talk]. The 34th Annual CUNY Conference on Human Sentence Processing (CUNY 34), University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA, Mar 4 – 6, 2021 (Virtual).

Li, D. (2021). *Controlling overt subjects in Mandarin* [Talk]. The 95th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA 2021), San Francisco CA, Jan 7 – 10, 2021 (Virtual).

Li, D., Grohe, L., Schulz, P., & Yang, C. (2020). *The distributional learning of recursive structures* [Talk]. The 45th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 45), Boston University, Boston MA, Nov 5 – 8, 2020 (Virtual).

Li, D., Yang, X., Roeper, T., Wilson, M., Yin, R., Kim, J., Merritt, E., Lopez, D., & Tero, A. (2019). *Acquisition of recursion in child Mandarin* [Poster]. The 44th annual Boston University Conference on Language Development (BUCLD 44), Boston University, Boston MA, Nov 7 – 10, 2019. (Accepted as an alternate for talk).

Li, D., Yang, X., Roeper, T., Wilson, M., Yin, R., Kim, J., & Merritt, E. (2019). *Acquisition of recursion in child Mandarin* [Poster]. The 14th biennial conference on Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition (GALA 14), University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, Sep 12 – 14, 2019.

Yin, L., Joshi, R. M., **Li, D.**, & Kim, S.-K. (2019). *Graphotactic as well as phonological influences on decisions about consonant doubling among non-native speakers of English* [Talk]. The third annual conference of the Association for Reading and Writing in Asia (ARWA 2019), Birla Institute of Technology and Science Pilani, India, Feb 28 – Mar 1, 2019.

Teaching

F → fall, S → spring
U → undergraduate-level course, G → graduate-level course

As Instructor at UNC-Chapel Hill

2026 S	LING 89: First-Year Seminar - Language and Thought (U; 24 students)
2026 S	LING 490: Advanced Topics in Linguistics - Models of Language Acquisition (U & G; 4 students)
2025 F	LING 401: Introduction to Computational Linguistics (U & G; 19 students)

As Teaching Assistant at Penn

2023 F	LING 2700: Language Acquisition (U; 24 students)
2023 S	LING 0001: Introduction to Linguistics (U; 42 students)
2021 F	LING 300: Tutorial in Linguistics (U; 15 students)
2021 S	LING 001: Introduction to Linguistics (U; 37 students)
2020 F	LING 270: Language Acquisition (U; 41 students)

As Guest Lecturer at Penn

2023 F	"Experimental language acquisition" at LING 4000: Tutorial in Linguistics (U)
2021 F	"Statistics fundamentals" at LING 300: Tutorial in Linguistics (U)
2021 F	"Computational language acquisition" at LING 300: Tutorial in Linguistics (U)

Advising

N.B. All at UNC-Chapel Hill unless otherwise noted.

M.A. Students (Advisor)

2025-	Elisei Stakovskii (co-advised with Katya Pertsova)

M.A. Students (Thesis Committee Member)

| 2026- | Rebecca Galloway |
| 2025- | Yiran Li |

Undergraduate Research Assistants

2026	Anushri Ghoshal
2026	Norah Sun
2025	Lauren Delapenha (Northwestern; Weinberg College Summer Research Grant recipient)
2025	Sanjana Basava (Northwestern)
2024	Izabela Baran (Penn)
2023, 2024	Milana Korobko (Penn)
2023-2024	Zaid Tabaza (Penn; Lila R. Gleitman Undergraduate Summer Research Fellow)
2020-2021	Iris Zhong (Smith College)

Grants

2026	First-Year Seminar Enhancement Fund Project: Course enhancement for LING 89 - Language and Thought ($300) First-Year Seminar & Launch Progam, UNC-Chapel Hill
2024	Integrated Language Sciences and Technology (ILST) Research Grant Project: Children's distributional learning of recursive structures ($1,800) University of Pennsylvania
2019, 2022, 2023	Language and Communication Sciences (LCS) Research Fund Project: Cross-situational learning homophones and superordinate terms ($1,500) University of Pennsylvania
2018	Tsinghua Initiative Scientific Research Fund Project: Acquisition of serial verb constructions in Mandarin (10,000 RMB) Tsinghua University

Professional Service

To Field

| 2025- | Site Coordinator, North American Computational Linguistics Open Competition (NACLO) |
| 2024- | Mentor, Pop-up Mentoring Program, Boston University Conference on Language Development |

2024-2025	Member, Committee on Ethnic Diversity in Linguistics, Linguistic Society of America
2019-2024	Editorial Board, Penn Working Papers in Linguistics (PWPL)

Conference Organization

2024	Volunteer, the 3rd Experiments in Linguistic Meaning (ELM) Conference
2023	Volunteer, Locality in Theory, Processing and Acquisition Workshop
2022	Volunteer, the 35th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing
2021	Volunteer, the 34th CUNY Conference on Human Sentence Processing
2020-2021	Committee Chair, the 45th Penn Linguistics Conference
2019-2020	Organizing Committee, the 44th Penn Linguistics Conference
2019	Volunteer, the 2nd International Conference on Theoretical East Asian Psycholinguistics

To University & Department

2025-	Member, Salary Committee, Department of Linguistics, UNC-Chapel Hill
2021-2024	Mentor, Diversity & Equity Initiative (DivE In) in the Mind Sciences, Penn
2021-2023	Treasurer, Penn Graduate Linguistics Society
2022	Coordinator, Professional Development Workshop Series, Department of Linguistics, Penn
2018-2019	Co-founder & Vice President, Students' Linguistic Society of Tsinghua University

Reviewing

Journals

Collabra: Psychology
Journal of Child Language
Journal of Chinese Linguistics
Journal of East Asian Linguistics
Language Acquisition
Linguistic Inquiry
Perspectives on Psychological Science

Conferences

Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci)
Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing (HSP)
Annual Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society (CLS)
Biennial Conference on Generative Approaches to Language Acquisition (GALA)
Penn Linguistics Conference (PLC)

Memberships

Cognitive Science Society (CogSci)
International Congress of Infant Studies (ICIS)
Linguistic Society of America (LSA)

Professional Development

Member, National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD)
New Faculty Program, Institute for the Arts and Humanities, UNC-Chapel Hill

Skills

Experimental Methods

Artificial language learning, infant looking time, eye-tracking

Programming

C, Python, R, JavaScript, SQL, Shell, Git

Softwares & Tools

jsPsych, PCIbex, Prolific, Lookit, iCatcher+, CLAN, Praat, Audacity, Adobe Premiere, LaTeX

Languages

Mandarin Chinese: native
English: fluent
German, Latin: classroom
Sakha/Yakut: fieldwork

Last updated: January 2026