

Education	The University of Texas at Dallas o Ph.D. in Computer Science o Advisor: Zhiyu Zoey Chen	2024 - Apr. 2027 (<i>anticipated</i>) Dallas, TX, USA
	Virginia Tech (transferred out) o Ph.D. in Computer Science	2023 - 2024 Blacksburg, VA, USA
	Soochow University o M.S. in Computer Science o Advisors: Wenliang Chen , Xiabing Zhou	2020 - 2023 Suzhou, Jiangsu, China
	Nanjing University of Posts and Telecommunications o B.Eng. in Computer Science o Top 3% in the Department; Principal's Award	2016 - 2020 Nanjing, Jiangsu, China
Research Summary	My current research focuses on post-training (e.g., reinforcement learning) and synthetic data generation to evaluate and equip Large Language Models (LLMs) with reliable and advanced capabilities. I am particularly interested in developing controllable LLM Agents . Topics include complex instruction following , smart agentic search , and instruction hierarchy enforcement . Before the era of LLMs, my work primarily focused on improving the dialogue abilities of language models, such as maintaining self-consistency and safety in conversation, as well as understanding the speaker's core semantic meaning and emotions.	
Employment	Zoom GenAI o <i>Research Intern</i> (Mentor: Kaiqiang Song) o Topic: Complex Instruction Following	Jun. 2025 - Aug. 2025 Seattle, WA
	Tencent AI Lab o <i>Research Intern</i> (Mentors: Haitao Mi , Linfeng Song) o Topics: Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback	May. 2024 - Jul. 2024 Seattle, WA
	Tencent AI Lab o <i>Research Intern</i> (Mentor: Lifeng Jin) o Topics: Dialogue Understanding, Semi-supervised Learning	Dec. 2021 - Dec. 2022 Shenzhen, China
Papers (Selected)	The full publication list is at Google Scholar . * denotes equal contribution.	
	<u>Instruction Following</u>	
	[1] Complex Logical Instruction Generation o <i>Preprint</i> o Mian Zhang , Shujian Liu, Sixun Dong, Ming Yin, Yebowen Hu, Xun Wang, Steven Ma, Song Wang, Sathish Reddy Indurthi, Haoyun Deng, Zhiyu Zoey Chen, Kaiqiang Song	
	[2] Robust Instruction Following via Reinforcement Learning o <i>Preprint</i> o Mian Zhang , Peilin Wu, Kaiyu He, Simin Ma, Xinlu Zhang, Xinya Du, Kaiqiang Song, Zhiyu Chen	

Tool Using & Agentic Search

- [1] HiPRAG: Hierarchical Process Rewards for Efficient Agentic Retrieval Augmented Generation
 - ICLR 2026
 - Peilin Wu, **Mian Zhang**, Kun Wang, Wentian Zhao, Kaiyu He, Xinya Du, Zhiyu Chen
- [2] Search Wisely: Mitigating Sub-optimal Agentic Searches By Reducing Uncertainty
 - EMNLP 2025
 - **Mian Zhang***, Peilin Wu*, Xinlu Zhang, Xinya Du, Zhiyu Zoey Chen
- [3] LiveMCP-101: Stress Testing and Diagnosing MCP-enabled Agents on Challenging Queries
 - Preprint
 - Ming Yin, Dinghan Shen, Silei Xu, Jianbing Han, Sixun Dong, **Mian Zhang**, Yebowen Hu, Shujian Liu, Simin Ma, Song Wang, Sathish Reddy Indurthi, Xun Wang, Yiran Chen, Kaiqiang Song

Healthcare & Psycho-counseling

- [1] Preference Learning Unlocks LLMs' Psycho-Counseling Skills
 - Preprint
 - **Mian Zhang**, Shaun M. Eack, Zhiyu Chen.
- [2] CBT-Bench: Evaluating Large Language Models on Assisting Cognitive Behavior Therapy
 - NAACL 2025
 - **Mian Zhang***, Xianjun Yang*, Xinlu Zhang, Travis Labrum, Jamie C. Chiu, Shaun M. Eack, Fei Fang, William Yang Wang, Zhiyu Chen.

Dialogue Consistency, Safety & Understanding

- [1] Inconsistent dialogue responses and how to recover from them
 - EACL 2024
 - **Mian Zhang**, Lifeng Jin, Linfeng Song, Haitao Mi, Dong Yu.
- [2] SafeConv: Explaining and Correcting Conversational Unsafe Behavior
 - ACL 2023 Oral
 - **Mian Zhang**, Lifeng Jin, Linfeng Song, Haitao Mi, Wenliang Chen, Dong Yu.
- [3] Friend-training: Learning from Different but Related Tasks
 - EACL 2023
 - **Mian Zhang**, Lifeng Jin, Linfeng Song, Haitao Mi, Xiabing Zhou, Dong Yu.
- [4] Emotion Recognition in Conversation from Variable-Length Context
 - ICASSP 2023
 - **Mian Zhang**, Xiabing Zhou, Wenliang Chen, Min Zhang.

Selected Awards	Tinker Research Grant from Thinking Machines	2025
	Researcher Access Program from OpenAI	2025
	Outstanding Graduate Award at Soochow University	2023
	First-class Scholarship at Soochow University	2020 - 2021
	Principal's Award	2019
	CUMCM National First Prize (top 1%)	2018
	First-class Scholarship at NJUPT	2017 - 2019