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I'm a CS PhD student at Leiden University, broadly interested in artificial intelligence. My research focuses on reinforcement learning for robotics and game AI.

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## Education

- 2020–Present **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Computer Science**, *Leiden University*, the Netherlands.
- Topic: Intrinsically Motivated Reinforcement Learning
  - Application: Robotics, Games
  - Supervision: Dr. Thomas M. Moerland, Dr. Mike Preuss, Prof. Aske Plaat
- 2018–2020 **Master of Science (MSc) Computer Science**, *Leiden University*, the Netherlands.
- Specialization: Reinforcement Learning
  - Master's thesis: Reinforcement Learning for Navigation Tasks
- 2014–2018 **Bachelor of Engineering (BE) Computer Science**, *Beijing Language and Culture University*, China.
- Courses: Data Structure, Linear Algebra, Advanced Mathematics, Mathematical Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, etc.

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## Publications / Pre-print

*Guiding Skill Discovery with Foundation Models* Zhao Yang, Thomas Moerland, Mike Preuss, Aske Plaat, Vincent Francois-Lavet and Edward Hu. In submission, 2025

*World Models Increase Autonomy in RL* Zhao Yang, Thomas Moerland, Mike Preuss, Aske Plaat and Edward Hu. In submission, 2024

*Continuous Episodic Control* Zhao Yang, Thomas M. Moerland, Mike Preuss and Aske Plaat. IEEE Conference On Games, 2023

*Two-Memory Reinforcement Learning* Zhao Yang, Thomas M. Moerland, Mike Preuss and Aske Plaat. IEEE Conference On Games, 2023

*First Go, then Post-Explore: the Benefits of Post-Exploration in Intrinsic Motivation* Zhao Yang, Thomas M. Moerland, Mike Preuss and Aske Plaat. ALOE workshop @ICLR, 2022

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## Applied Projects

- 2023 **Reinforcement Learning Educational Suite**, *Designed and implemented environments and interactive tutorials for reinforcement learning beginners.*

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## Teaching Assistant, Mentorship

- 2022, 2023, 2024 **Deep Reinforcement Learning (master CS course).**
- 2023 **Video Games for Research (master CS course).**
- 2023 **Seminar Advanced Deep Reinforcement Learning (master CS course).**
- 2024 **Master Thesis Mentorship**, *Reinforcement Learning for Stock Market.*

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## Community service

- 2023–current **Co-Host**, *Belgium-Netherlands-Luxembourg Reinforcement Learning Seminar Series.*
- 2021–current **Reviewer**, *Various venues, including RLC, ICRA, AAMAS, ICAPS, EWRL.*

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## Personal experience

I used to be the chair of The Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the Netherlands, Leiden, 2021. I did a product manager internship at Meituan-Dianping, China, 2018. I am also a big fan of sports.