

Yue LI

Ph.D. Candidate, Linguistics, Purdue University

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West Lafayette, IN - 47906, USA

EDUCATION

2021-2026 **Ph.D., Linguistics, Purdue University, West Lafayette, USA.**

Dissertation: *Exploring the Animacy Effect on Object Relative Clause Production and Comprehension for L1 and L2 English*

Committee: Elaine Francis (advisor), Alejandro Cuza, Yan Cong, Mariko Wei, John Sundquist

Expected Graduation: August 2026 (Scheduled Defense Date: June 11th 2026)

2018-2021 **M.A., Linguistics, University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing, China.**

Thesis: *Effects of Word Limit on Sentence Length and Clause Length in Academic Journal Article Abstracts: A Synergetic Linguistic Perspective*

Committee: Yuan Gao (advisor), Zongxin Feng, Haiyang Sun

2014-2018 **B.E., Electrical Engineering, Hohai University, Nanjing, China.**

B.A. (double degree) English Language and Linguistics, Hohai University, Nanjing, China.

AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION

1. **Computational Linguistics:** language models as scientific testbeds, human-LLM alignment, mechanistic interpretability, controlled LM evaluation, and learnability
2. **Psycholinguistics:** sentence processing, language production, syntax- semantics interface

PUBLICATIONS

Books

In Progress Gómez-Alzate, E., Li, Y., and Cuza, A. **Language in Context: Ideologies, Policies, and Community-based Research.** *Routledge.* (Contract signed, in progress)

Peer-Reviewed Articles & Proceedings * – Equal contribution.

Under Review Li, Y. and Francis, E. **Rethinking Animacy in Relative Clauses: Accessibility and Competition Across Agent-Patient Configurations.** Under Review by *Cognitive Linguistics.*

Under Review Fang, S.*, Li, Y.*, and Cong, Y. **Processing of Quantifier Scope: Experimental and Modeling Evidence from English and Chinese.** Under Review by *Languages.*

Under Review Fang, S.*, Li, Y.*, and Cong, Y. **Language Models Approximate Human Sensitivity to the Syntax-Pragmatics Tension but Show Cross-Linguistic and Model Variation.** Under Review by *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications.*

2026 Li, Y., Cong, Y., and Francis, E. **Mechanistic Interpretability of Animacy Effects on Structure Choice in GPT-2.** *30th Conference on Computational Natural Language Learning (CoNLL 2026), San Diego, California, United States.*

2026 Fang, S.*, Li, Y.*, and Cong, Y. **Semantic Capacity in Language Learners and LLMs: A Case Study of Quantifier Scope.** In *The Fifteenth biennial Language Resources and Evaluation Conference (LREC 2026), Spain.*

2025 Fang, S., Li, Y., and Cong, Y. **Understanding Quantifier Scope with Large Language Models: How Many Children Climbed Trees?** In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society 2025 (CogSci 2025).*

2025 Li, Y., Cong, Y., and Francis, E. **Beyond Binary Animacy: A Multi-Method Investigation of LMs' Sensitivity in English Object Relative Clauses.** In *Proceedings of the 14th Workshop on Cognitive Modeling and Computational Linguistics (CMCL Workshop of NAACL 2025).*

2023 Li, Y., Gao, Y., and Lu, X. **Effects of Word Limit on Sentence Length and Clause Length in Academic Journal Article Abstracts: A Synergetic Linguistic Perspective.** *Journal of Quantitative Linguistics, 30(3-4), 322-342.*

In Preparation

In Prep Li, Y., Khodadadi, G., Sheu, V., and Fang, S. **Priming and Lexical Boost Effects in the Comprehension of English Object Relative Clauses.** Manuscript in preparation.

In Prep Fang, S., Li, Y., Lu, J., and Cong, Y. **Semantic Representation Generalization in BabyLMs**. Manuscript in preparation.

In Prep Francis, E., Li, Y., Khodadadi, G., Mack, M., Ok, S., Bahmanian, N., Fang, S., Michaelis, L., Sheu, V., and Weirick, J. **Effects of Verb Type and Prior Context on the Production of Relative Clause Extraposition in English**. Manuscript in preparation.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

2025-2026 **Purdue PROMISE Award**, \$1,000.

2024-2025 **Ross Lynn Research Scholarship**, \$28,000. Role: Research Assistant (PI: Elaine Francis)

2024-2025 **Purdue PROMISE Award**, \$1,000.

2025 **Purdue Symposium Grant** *Awarded to Purdue Linguistics Association* (\$1,500)

Role: President, Grant Applicant (with organization treasurer).

2024-2025 **Purdue Graduate Organization Grant** *Awarded to Purdue Linguistics Association* (\$1,180)

Role: President, Grant Applicant (with organization treasurer).

2023 **Gorilla and Prolific Grant**, *Gorilla Experiment Builder*, £1,500.

2023-2024 **Purdue PROMISE Award**, \$350.

2018-2020 **University of Chinese Academy of Sciences Scholarship**, ¥8,000/year.

2019 **UCAS Merit Graduate Student Award**.

2018 **Wu Ning Foreign Language Scholarship**.

2017 **Entrepreneurship Award**.

FUNDED PROPOSAL

Aug. 2024 **Agency of Grant:** Ross-Lynn Research Scholar Fund

Title of Grant: *The Role of Discourse Context, Prosody, and Verb Argument in Communicative Efficiency: Evidence from Relative Clause Extraposition in English.*

Duration of Funding: 08/12/2024-08/09/2025

Total Amount to be Requested: \$28,000

Role: Research Assistant (PI: Elaine Francis)

GRANT PROPOSALS SUBMITTED

July. 2025 **Agency of Grant:** National Science Foundation, SBE/BCS/Linguistics.

Title of Grant: *Structural Flexibility Enables Communicative Efficiency: The Case of Relative Clause Extraposition.*

Duration of Funding: 2026-2031.

Total Amount to be Requested: \$500,000

Role: Research Associate (PI: Elaine Francis).

Status: Not Funded

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2026 Li, Y., Cong, Y., and Francis, E. **Illuminating Human Language Production via Mechanistic Interpretability of LM Circuits: Animacy Effects on Sentence Structure Choice**, poster presentation, *Human Sentence Processing 2026*, MIT.

2026 Li, Y., Francis, E., Khodadadi, G., Mack, M., Ok, S., Bahmanian, N., Fang, S., Michaelis, L., Sheu, V., and Weirick, J. **Effects of verb type and prior context on the production of relative clause extraposition in English**, poster presentation, *Human Sentence Processing 2026*, MIT.

2026 Li, Y., Francis, E., and Mack, M. **Similarity-Based Interference in L2 Production of English Object Relative Clauses**, poster presentation, *Human Sentence Processing 2026*, MIT.

2026 Li, Y., and Francis, E. **Animacy Effects in Production and Comprehension of English Object Relative Clauses**, oral presentation, *Linguistics Society of America (LSA 2026)*.

2026 Fang, S., Li, Y., and Cong, Y. **Can LLMs Read Between the Scopes? A Cross-Linguistic Study of Quantifier-Negation Interpretations**, poster presentation, *Linguistics Society of America (LSA 2026)*.

2026 Li, Y., Francis, E., and Mack, M. **Animacy and L1-transfer in L2 English object relative clauses processing**, poster presentation, *American Association of Applied Linguistics 2026 (AAAL 2026)*.

- 2025 Fang, S., Li, Y., and Cong, Y. **Every horse didn't jump: Scope preferences and ambiguity in LLM interpretation**, *Experimental Pragmatics Conference 2025 (XPRAG 2025)*.
- 2025 Fang, S., Li, Y., and Cong, Y. **Understanding Quantifier Scope with Large Language Models: How Many Children Climbed Trees?** *2025 Annual Conference of the Cognitive Science Society (CogSci 2025)*.
- 2025 Li, Y. and Francis, E. **Animacy Effects on English Object Relative Clauses Production Among L1-English Speakers**, *2025 Chicago Linguistic Society Annual Conference (2025 CLS)*.
- 2025 Li, Y. and Francis, E. **Animacy Effects on Production and Comprehension of English Object Relative Clauses**, *38th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing (HSP)*, poster presentation.
- 2025 Fang, S., Li, Y. and Cong, Y., **Understanding Quantifier Scope with Large Language Models: How Many Children Climbed Trees?**, *2025 CLTA Annual Conference*, round table discussion.
- 2024 Li, Y. and Francis, E. **Animacy Effects on Structure Choice in English Relative Clauses by L1 and L2 Speakers**, *The 2024 International Workshop on Language Production (IWOLP 2024)*, [poster presentation](#).
- 2024 Li, Y. and Francis, E. **Animacy Effects on Structure Choice in English Relative Clauses by L1 and L2 Speakers**, *The 2nd Conference on Theory and Practice of Bilingualism (CTPB)*, oral presentation.
- 2024 Li, Y. and Francis, E. **Animacy Effects on Structure Choice in English Relative Clauses by L1 and L2 Speakers**, *Oral Presentation at the 2024 Purdue Linguistics Symposium*, oral presentation.
- 2023 Li, Y. and Gao, Y. **Subject-object Asymmetry Analysis in Chinese Adolescent English Learners**, *Oral Presentation at the 2023 Purdue Linguistics Symposium*, oral presentation.
- 2021 Li, Y., Gao, Y. **Syntactic Complexity and Readability in English Academic Writings: A Comparison Between Non-native and Native Speakers**, *American Association of Applied Linguistics Annual Conference (AAAL 2021)*, [poster presentation](#).
- 2020 Li, Y., Gao, Y. **Effects of the Text Size Restriction on Linguistic Units in Academic Journal Articles' Abstract Section**. *International Scientific Committee Abstracts, 22th International Conference on Applied Linguistics and Language Practice*, oral presentation.
- 2020 Li, Y., Gao, Y. **The Impact of Complex Phrasal Constructions on the Length of Linguistic Units in Academic Journal Articles**, *International Language and Linguistics Conference*, oral presentation.
- 2019 Li, Y., Gao, Y. **Corpus-based Comparative Study on the Use of Verb Valence in English Academic Journal Articles Between Chinese Writers and Native English Writers**, *2nd Symposium on English for Academic Purposes*, oral presentation.

INVITED TALKS

- May 2026 *Does a language model know what's alive?* **University of Chinese Academy of Sciences**
- May 2026 *From LLM-Human Behavioral Alignment to Mechanistic Interpretability: Animacy and Similarity-Based Interference in Object Relative Clauses*, **SEAL Lab & Experimental Meaning Group**, Northwestern University
- May 2025 **Gorilla Presents Webinar**
- Nov. 2024 **Gorilla Grant Psychology Research and Teaching Webinar**, Gorilla and Sage Publishing

TEACHING

- Fall 2025 Instructor, **Introduction to Linguistics (LING 201)**, Purdue, IN.
- Fall 2023 Instructor, **Introduction to Linguistics (LING 201)**, Purdue, IN.
- Spring 2023 Instructor, **Introduction to Linguistics (LING 201)**, Purdue, IN.
- Fall 2022 Instructor, **Chinese 101**, Purdue, IN.
- Spring 2022 Instructor, **Chinese 102**, Purdue, IN.
- Fall 2021 Instructor, **Chinese 101**, Purdue, IN.
- 2019-2020 Instructor, **Chinese Culture Public Lecture**, UCAS, China.

GUEST LECTURES

- Spring 2025 **LING 598 Statistical Modeling in Linguistics**, Purdue, IN.
- Fall 2024 **LING 398 Language Learning and AI**, Purdue, IN.

SERVICE

2024-2025 **Purdue Linguistics Association**, *President*, Purdue, IN. USA.

Chair, [Purdue Linguistics Symposium 2025 \(PLS 2025\)](#)

2024-2025 **The Data Mine**, *Graduate Data Science Researcher*, Purdue, IN. USA.

2023-2024 **Purdue Linguistics Association**, *Vice President*, Purdue, IN. USA.

2019-2020 **Chinese Culture Public Lecture**, *Project Leader, Operator*, UCAS, Beijing, China.

SKILLS

Programming Languages: Python, R, LaTeX, C.

Language Models & NLP: LLM evaluation (surprisal, prompting, minimal pairs), persona-based prompting, Hugging Face Transformers, minicons, OpenAI API, DeepSeek, Qwen, LLaMA, GPT, BERT

Mechanistic Interpretability: TransformerLens, activation patching, circuit analysis, ablation, layer-wise probing

Statistical Packages: SPSS, R (lme4, emmeans, ggplot2).

Experiment Control Software: Gorilla Experiment Builder.

Data Visualization: ggplot2, Matlab

Acoustic Phonetics: Praat, Montreal Forced Aligner.

Digital Art and Illustration: Procreate, SORA

NATURAL LANGUAGES

language **Mandarin Chinese** (native), **English** (advanced), **French** (intermediate)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

2023- **Association for Computational Linguistics (ACL)**

2024- **Linguistic Society of America (LSA)**

2025- **American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL)**