HAN SHUTONG

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EDUCATION

PhD in Sociolinguistics, University of Edinburgh (2023-present) – PPLS funded
- Research project: "Stylisation and Identity Construction: The Use of *Sajiao* among Chinese Gay Men".
  This study investigates the recontextualization of *sajiao*, a hyper-feminine linguistic style, among Chinese gay men to understand its role in shaping non-normative sexual identities in China. Using sociolinguistic analysis and ethnographic methods, the research examines how *sajiao* influences identity negotiation and social interactions both within and beyond the LGBTQ+ community.
- Supervisor: Dr. Christian Ilbury & Dr. Sumin Zhao

MSc in Applied Linguistics, University of Edinburgh (2021-2022) – Distinction
- Dissertation: "Identity Construction through Stylised Performance of *Sajiao* among Chinese Gay Influencers" (75%).
  Explored how Chinese gay influencers use the language style *sajiao* to construct and communicate their identities, contributing new insights into gender, sexuality, and language performativity in digital contexts.
- Core modules: Language Variation and Change (LVC) (76%), LVC in Digital Media (75%), Discourse Analysis (76%), Sociolinguistic Research Design (73%).

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Independent Researcher (2023-2024)
"I am a MAN~~! Stylised Performances of *Sajiao* among Chinese Gay Influencers on Douyin"
Currently under review by Language in Society
- Integrated sociolinguistics, sociology and anthropology, to examine the complexities of non-normative sexual identity construction in a conservative cultural context.
- Utilised digital ethnography, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, and Interactional Sociolinguitic analysis on 203 posts to analyse how *sajiao* contributes to a submissive gay male persona.
- Examined *sajiao* not as feminine expression but as a strategic tool to challenge traditional gender and sexuality norms in China, illustrating the dual role of digital in reinforcing and contesting societal norms.
- Addressed a significant gap in queer studies by highlighting how Chinese gay men leverage digital media to express their identities, using cultural scripts to maintain visibility and social acceptance in a restrictive sociopolitical environment.

Research Collaborator (2024-present)
"Affective Digital Feminism in China: The Recontextualization of the Chinese 'Female Script' *Nvshu* on RED"
- Investigating the revival of Nvshu, the world's only female-exclusive writing system, on RED (Xiaohongshu), a social media platform popular among women in China.
- Utilising Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis to examine 100 posts, complemented by digital ethnographic observations to analyse how Nvshu is transformed into symbols of freedom and rebellion under a neoliberal feminist framework.
- Raising critical questions about the authenticity and commodification of feminist identities in digital spaces, emphasizing the consumerist contours of neoliberal feminism.

Independent Researcher (2018-2019)
"The Use of Politeness Strategies in Expressing Disagreements via Computer-Mediated Communication and Face-to-Face Communication among Chinese Undergraduate Students"
Accepted by the Asian Conference on Language 2020
- Collected and analysed disagreements across 12 distinct online (i.e., digital) and offline (i.e., face-to-face) contexts among 136 participants.
- Applied Python to statistical analysis of politeness strategies used.
- Conducted a Multimodal Discourse Analysis to examine how semiotic resources across media are employed to mitigate disagreements.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

Panel: Structuring Queerness, Queering Structures: Social Media and LGBTQ+ Identities. "Negotiating Chinese Gay Normativity on Douyin: Stylised Performances of *sajiao* among Chinese Gay Influencers". (May, 2025–Forthcoming). *Approaches to Digital Discourse Analysis 5. Tilburg University, The Netherlands.*

"Who is the *Sajiao* person? Performances of *Sajiao* among Chinese Gay Influencers on Douyin". (August, 2024). *Lavender 30 Language and Linguistics. University of Brighton, England.*

"Researching Gender and Sexuality in Contemporary China". (June, 2024). *British Association of Applied Linguistics Language, Gender and Sexuality Special Interest Group. Online seminar.*

ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

Organiser, Queer Identities in Contemporary China (QICC) (April, 2025-Forthcoming)
University of Edinburgh, Scotland.
- Initiating and leading the organisation of the QICC, focused on exploring the dynamics of queer identities within the contemporary Chinese context.
- Coordinating with scholars and queer organisations to develop a comprehensive programme that includes keynotes, workshops, and activities, all aiming at fostering impactful discussions.
- Managing venue arrangements, speaker invitations, and participant registrations.

Participant, Copenhagen Winter School in Sociolinguistics (Feb, 2024)
University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Member, QueerEst (2024-present)
Shanghai, China
- Designed and facilitated workshops and seminars aimed at educating the LGBTQ+ community and the broader public on critical issues such as rights, health, and well-being.
- Organised and hosted queer art exhibitions and drag performances to celebrate and showcase the diversity and creativity of the community. Notably, several shows are scheduled in London and Berlin from January to March, 2025.

Teaching Assistant, University of Edinburgh
- Sociolinguistics (2024)& Discourse Analysis (2025)

Member, East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) Queers Society (2022-present)
Edinburgh, Scotland

- Spearheaded a series of online seminars focused on language, gender, and sexuality, deriving content from the findings of my master's project to engage community members and allies.
- Authored and published a blog discussing heterosexual ideologies and non-normative gender/sexual identities in China, which achieved significant outreach with 30,000 views.

Co-organizer, Beijing Women's Debate Challenge (2019)
Beijing, China
- Coordinated with a team of 40 to organise a major debate tournament, successfully attracting 48 teams.
- Developed and prepared debate motions focusing on gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and refugee crisis, drawing on extensive research.
- Designed and conducted an educational workshop on Feminism and Women's Right Movements for 100 people, enhancing understanding and advocacy.

SKILLS

Research Skills
Ethnographic and Qualitative Research
- Proficient in conducting ethnographic studies, interviews, and focus groups to gather detailed cultural insights. Experienced in thematic analysis, coding qualitative data, and interpreting complex social phenomena.

Discourse and Sociolinguistic Analysis
- Proficient in Conversation Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics. Experienced in applying these methods to explore the layered language use across various communicative contexts.

Software Proficiency for Linguistic Analysis
- Proficient in using linguistic softwares such as ELAN, Praat, FireAnt, and AntConc.

Quantitative Analysis Tools
- Well-versed in utilizing statistical tools such as Python, R, SPSS, and Excel for data analysis and visualization, facilitating robust quantitative research.

Language Skills
- Mandarin: Native proficiency; Cantonese: Native proficiency; English: Near native proficiency