

# Li Sun

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## RESEARCH INTERESTS

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**Machine learning:** Un-/Self-supervised learning, Adversarial learning, Generative models  
**Natural language processing:** Language model pre-training, Model robustness

## EDUCATION

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**Boston University** *Jan 2023 - Apr 2024 (Expected)*  
*PhD student in Computer Engineering* Boston, MA  
Advisor: Prof. Kayhan Batmanghelich

**University of Pittsburgh** *Aug 2019 - Dec 2022*  
*PhD student in Intelligent Systems (Transferred to BU)* Pittsburgh, PA  
*M.Sc. in Intelligent Systems (Artificial Intelligence)*  
GPA: 3.93/4.00, advisor: Prof. Kayhan Batmanghelich

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

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Robinson, J., **Sun, L.**, Yu, K., Batmanghelich, K., Jegelka, S., & Sra, S. (2021). Can contrastive learning avoid shortcut solutions? In *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS)*.

**Sun, L.**, Yu, K., & Batmanghelich, K. (2021). Context Matters: Graph-based Self-supervised Representation Learning for Medical Images. In *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)*.

Saeedi, A., Utsumi, Y., **Sun, L.**, Batmanghelich, K. & Lehman L. (2022). Knowledge Distillation via Constrained Variational Inference. In *Proceedings of the AAAI Conference on Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)*.

**Sun, L.**, Chen, J., Xu, Y., Gong, M., Yu, K., & Batmanghelich, K. (2022). Hierarchical Amortized GAN for 3D High Resolution Medical Image Synthesis. In *IEEE journal of biomedical and health informatics*

## WORK EXPERIENCE

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**Microsoft** *June 2022 - Aug 2022*  
*Research Intern, manager: Dr. Dinei Florencio*  
- Designed and implemented a hierarchical language model for open-vocabulary language understanding  
- Experiments demonstrated that our model outperforms baselines, and it is more robust to textual corruptions and domain shifts  
- Manuscript under review

**Microsoft** *Mar 2019 - Aug 2019*  
*Research Intern, manager: Dr. Eric I-Chao Chang*  
- Developed fine-grained model that makes use of anatomical structure for chest radiograph interpretation  
- Achieved improved results on thoracic diseases that are subtle and require close observation  
- Developed reinforcement learning model for interpretable life support device detection

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

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**Languages:** Python, R, Shell, Java, C++  
**Softwares:** PyTorch, Tensorflow

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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### **Avoiding Shortcut Solutions in Contrastive Learning**

*Nov 2020 - May 2021*

*Mentor: Prof. Suvrit Sra, MIT & Prof. Kayhan Batmanghelich, University of Pittsburgh*

- Analyzed feature suppression in contrastive learning, and explained why feature suppression can occur when optimizing the InfoNCE loss
- Studied the relation between instance discrimination tasks and feature learning; concretely, adjustments to instance discrimination difficulty leads to different features being learned
- Proposed implicit feature modification, a simple and efficient method that reduces the tendency to use feature suppressing shortcut solutions and improves generalization
- Highlighted by World Economic Forum and MIT News

### **Hierarchical Language Model for Open-vocabulary Language Understanding**

*June 2022 - Dec 2022*

*Mentor: Florian Luisier & Dinei Florencio, Microsoft*

- Introduced a novel pre-trained language model with hierarchical two-level architecture: one at the word level and another at the sequence level
- Our model directly operates on character sequence with soft inductive bias on word boundary, relieving explicit sub-word or word-level vocabulary
- Demonstrated that our hierarchical model attains better performance on noisy text and cross-domain tasks

### **Context-aware Self-supervised Learning for Medical Images**

*May 2020 - Sept 2020*

*Mentor: Prof. Kayhan Batmanghelich, University of Pittsburgh*

- Proposed a self-supervised representation learning method for volumetric medical images that accounts for anatomical context, which is from both local anatomical profiles and graph-based relationship
- Proposed method that provides task-specific explanation for the predicted outcome
- Short version accepted by Medical Imaging meets NeurIPS workshop (Oral), long version paper accepted by AAAI

### **Hierarchical Amortized GAN for 3D High Resolution Medical Image Synthesis**

*Jan 2020 - Nov 2020*

*Mentor: Prof. Kayhan Batmanghelich, University of Pittsburgh*

- Proposed a novel end-to-end GAN architecture that can generate high-resolution volumetric images while being memory efficient
- Discovered that moving along certain directions in latent space results in explainable anatomical variations in generated images
- Short version paper accepted by Medical Imaging meets NeurIPS workshop, long version under review

### **Brain Tumor Segmentation and Survival Prediction with Deep Learning**

*May 2018 - Aug 2018*

*Mentor: Prof. Lin Luo, Peking University*

- Developed an ensemble model of 3D CNNs to segment brain tumor from multimodal MRI scans, then extracted radiomic features from segmented tumor combined with clinical features to predict patients' overall survival
- Ranked 2nd place and 5th place out of 60+ teams in 2018 MICCAI BraTS challenge on survival prediction task and segmentation task respectively, received prize from Intel AI
- Paper accepted by MICCAI BrainLes 2018 workshop and was invited for spotlight presentation