Melinh K. Lai, Ph.D.

melinh@uchicago.edu
melinhlai.com

Division of the Humanities
University of Chicago
1115 East 58th Street
Chicago, IL 60637

PROFESSIONAL HISTORY

Assistant instructional professor/Program coordinator   2023 – Present
University of Chicago
Undergraduate Major in Cognitive Science
Division of the Humanities

Graduate student researcher/teaching assistant   2016 – 2023
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Department of Psychology
PI: Kara D. Federmeier

Post-baccalaureate Research Assistant/Lab Manager   2015 – 2016
Johns Hopkins University
Department of Cognitive Science
PI: Akira Omaki

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Psychology (specialization: Cognitive Psychology)   2019 – 2023
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Thesis: "Graded and Ungraded Expectations: Examining Prediction Dynamics During Active Comprehension"
Department of Psychology, Cognitive Division
Advised by Kara D. Federmeier

M.S. in Psychology   2016 – 2019
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Thesis: "The Fate of the Unexpected: Consequences of Misprediction on ERP Repetition Patterns"
Advised by Kara D. Federmeier

B.A. in Biology, Linguistics, Cognitive Science, cum laude   2011 – 2015
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Honors Thesis: "Kicking or Being Kicked: Using Acoustics as Cues to the Passive"
Advised by Karin Stromswold

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching assistant, PSYC 224, Cognitive Psychology   Fall 2016
Fall 2018

Instructor, PSYC 100, Intro to Psychology   Fall 2017

Instructor, PSYC 331, Cognitive Psychology Laboratory   Spring 2018★

Instructor, PSYC 224, Cognitive Psychology   Summer 2018★
Summer 2019★

Lecturer and course developer, PSYC 224, Cognitive Psychology (online course)   Fall 2020
Spring 2021

Instructor, BCOG 100, Introduction to Brain and Cognitive Science   Fall 2022★

★Ranked as Excellent Teacher by students

HONORS & AWARDS

Student Poster Award Winner	October 2020, October 2022
Society for Psychophysiological Research Annual Meeting	
Henry Rutgers Scholar	May 2015
Awarded for Outstanding Undergraduate Honors Thesis	
Winner, The Robert Jeffers Prize	May 2015
Awarded for Outstanding Contribution to the Linguistics Department	
Phi Beta Kappa Honors Society	2015
Dean's List	2011 – 2015
Rutgers University SAS Honors Program	2011 – 2015
James Dickson Carr Scholarship	2011 – 2015

FUNDING & SUPPORT

Alumni Advisory Board Graduate Student Travel & Research Award   Spring 2018
Psychology Department
University of Illinois
Total costs: $500

Graduate College Conference Travel Award   Spring 2018
University of Illinois Graduate College
Total costs: $300

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Journal reviewer:
Cerebral Cortex
Journal of Experimental Psychology: General
Neuropsychologia

Society membership:
Eastern Psychological Association
Linguistic Society of America
Society for the Neurobiology of Language
Society for Psychophysiological Research
    Poster Award Winner interview: https://sprweb.org/news/554866/An-Interview-with-SPR-Poster-Award-Winner-Melinh-Lai.htm
Psychonomics Society

SERVICE, COMMUNICATIONS & OUTREACH

Student science writer, Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology   2022 – present
    Write news articles and press releases highlighting scientists and research at BI
    Moderate public outreach research presentation & discussion forum
    Sample article: https://beckman.illinois.edu/about/news/article/2022/12/05/reading-for-pleasure-can-strengthen-memory-in-older-adults-beckman-researchers-find

Digital associate editor, Psychonomics Society   2022 – present
    Produce digital content (blog posts, podcasts) communicating recent publications to the general public
    Collected blog posts: https://featuredcontent.psychonomic.org/author/melinh-lai/

GSO Representative, University of Illinois   2017 – 2021
    Represented graduate students in the cognitive area to the Psychology department administration during recruitment drives.

Taskmaster, University of Illinois   2020
    Designed, judged, and wrote commentary for humorous tasks for graduate students and staff during early months of Covid-19 pandemic

WISE Mentor, Johns Hopkins University   2015 – 2016
    Oversaw introductory research project for high school research assistant as part of the Women in Science and Engineering program

Peer Instructor, Rutgers Aresty Research Center   2013 – 2015
    Led seminars and prepared assignments for undergraduates to help develop research skills; served as liaison between student researchers, faculty mentors, and ARC staff

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Publications

Lai, M. K., Rommers, J., & Federmeier, K. D. (2021). The fate of the unexpected: Consequences of misprediction assessed using ERP repetition effects. Brain Research, 147290. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brainres.2021.147290

Lai, M.K., Payne, B.R., Federmeier, K.D. (under revision). Graded and ungraded expectations: Prediction dynamics during active comprehension.

Lai, M.K., Federmeier, K.D. (in prep). Comprehension goals and statistical environment influence deployment of language comprehension strategies

Lai, M.K., Federmeier, K.D. (in prep). Active prediction and lexical versus semantic anticipation: N400 and anterior ERP components.

Chung, W., Lai, M.K., Stites, M.C., Bosch, N., Christianson, K. (in prep). How goals and meaning impact code-reading: An eye-tracking study.

Presentations

Lai, M.K., "Graded and ungraded expectations: Dynamic strategies in language comprehension". Seton Hall University Psychology Lunch Talk. South Orange, New Jersey. September 2022.

Lai, M.K., "Graded and ungraded expectations: Prediction dynamics during active comprehension". Cognitive Psychology Brown Bag Meeting. Champaign, Illinois. April 2022.

Lai, M.K., "Predict, Rinse, Repeat: Using ERP repetition patterns to investigate the mechanism of prediction". Northwestern University Cognitive Psychology Brown Bag Meeting. Evanston, IL. November 2019.

Lai, M.K., "Predict, Rinse, Repeat: Using ERP repetition patterns to investigate the mechanism of prediction". Cognitive Psychology Brown Bag Meeting. Champaign, Illinois. October 2019.

Lai, M.K., "The Fate of the Unexpected: Consequences of misprediction on ERP repetition patterns". Cognitive Psychology Brown Bag Meeting. Champaign, Illinois. September 2017.

Lai, M.K., de Lacy, P., Rehrig, G., Stromswold, K., "Predicting Whether a Sentence Will Be Passive". Eastern Psychological Association Meeting. New York, New York. March 2016.

Lai, M.K., "To Kick or Be Kicked: Using Acoustics as Cues to the Passive". Great Lakes Expo for Experimental and Formal Undergraduate Linguistics. East Lansing, Michigan. April 2015.

Posters

Lai, M.K., Federmeier, K.D., "Graded and ungraded expectations: Prediction dynamics during active comprehension". Society for Psychophysiological Research Annual Meeting. October 2022.
    Student Poster Award winner

Lai, M.K., Federmeier, K.D., "Graded and ungraded expectations: Prediction dynamics during active comprehension". Neurobiology of Language: Key Issues and Ways Forward. March 2022.

Lai, M.K., Federmeier, K.D., "The Fate of the Unexpected: Downstream repetition effects for prediction violations". Society for Psychophysiological Research Annual Meeting. October 2020.
    Student Poster Award winner

Lai, M.K., Federmeier, K.D., "The Fate of the Unexpected: Downstream repetition effects for prediction violations". Psychonomic Society 2019 Annual Meeting. November 2019.

Lai, M.K., Federmeier, K.D., "The Fate of the Unexpected: Consequences of misprediction on ERP repetition patterns". CUNY Conference on Human Sentence Processing. Davis, California. March 2018.

Lai, M.K., Federmeier, K.D., "The Fate of the Unexpected: Consequences of misprediction on ERP repetition patterns". Society for the Neurobiology of Language. Baltimore, Maryland. November 2017.

Lai, M.K., Stromswold, K., de Lacy, P., Rehrig, G., "Passive sentences can be predicted by adults". CUNY Conference on Human Sentence Processing. Gainesville, Florida. March 2016.

Lai, M.K., Stromswold, K., de Lacy, P., Rehrig, G., "Kicking or Being Kicked: Using Acoustics as Cues to the Passive". The Aresty Undergraduate Research Symposium. New Brunswick, New Jersey. April 2015.

Lai, M.K., Senior linguistics research showcase. Poster fair for graduating linguistics majors at Rutgers University. New Brunswick, NJ. April 2015.

Lai, M.K., Yeaton, J., Downes, C., Patel, A., Déprez, V., "When and How is Concord Preferred? An Experimental Approach". The Aresty Undergraduate Research Symposium. New Brunswick, NJ. April 2013.