A brief introduction - Liang Gong

My background
Before I came to Sweden I finished my bachelor in computer science in China. I worked as an IT engineer at an automatic company for 3 years before applying for my masters. I took my master in Human Computer Interaction in Uppsala. When I was doing my master project I got a chance to do it at Volvo Trucks in Gothenburg and that’s why I ended up doing my PhD at Chalmers. The thesis project I was doing at Volvo had a close collaboration with Björn Johanssons group. I found out they were trying to find new PhD students so it was quite a smooth process for me applying to Chalmers. After I started as a PhD here it took me some time to figure out which area I wanted to focus on. Right now I’m doing VR and AR applications for manufacturing. It’s still quite broad but I want to focus more on the interactions in the design part in VR and AR systems. Even though it has a lot of
advantages, people are not used to it. It's something completely new, how you interact with the system.

Being a PhD student in Sweden is something different. You have different roles, sometimes you’re a student, sometimes a teacher giving lectures or supervising thesis work and sometimes you work with companies. It’s difficult to explain it to my friends and family in China, they’re not used to this type of organisation or structure.

**A typical day for me at work**
It depends on what role I have that day. Sometimes I’m a student and then I might have an assignment to finish. Sometimes there are research projects, then you have meetings with industrial partners or have to plan experiments. I also spend a lot of time programming since I need it to test my ideas and for the actual implementation.

**What I wanted to be as a child**
When I was a child my parents asked me if I was going to be a scientist. At a certain point that was maybe in my mind but I was not sure what being a scientist even meant. When I was a little bit older I spent a lot of time playing football, and then I wished I could be a professional football player. It’s not that easy, especially when the chinese team is not very good. I think it would’ve ended up bad if I had gone with that idea.

**Why I became an engineer and what area I work in**
When I was growing up and saw something that was broken, I wanted to fix it. I wanted to create something new and better. I think that’s a fundamental thing for engineers, that type of logical thinking. Even when I was a child I thought engineering was interesting and something that I could do. I felt happy creating even a small thing that was functioning. It’s the self fulfilling feeling that makes me want to do this.

I just had my licentiate presentation and it was mostly about using VR for factory layout planning. It’s about how to quickly create a virtual model of a factory that’s realistic enough for different stakeholders to make better decisions about the layout. Right now I need to focus on how to make the interaction design, the user interface of VR assistance better, so everyone can easily learn how to use it.

**Why I chose Chalmers**
After I finished my master program I wanted to stay in Sweden a little bit longer. That meant I either had to find a job or continue studying. Even when I was applying for the master program, Chalmers was one of my choices. Even now I feel that it’s too good to be true to get paid to study. For my master program I had to pay the tuition fee but now I get paid to study.

I wanted to see the outside world and decided to study abroad. Even when I was in China I wanted to travel to different parts of China. I didn’t want to go to the US so Europe was the only choice for me. In Sweden you can apply in english so you don’t have to learn the language first. For example, in Germany or France you have to learn the language in order
to study there and that will take you several years. I also wanted to be in a small place, since it’s 10 million people in my hometown it’s quite crowded there.

**Three words I associate with Chalmers**

Engineering, Sustainability, Freedom