



Aaron A. Wright

Post-Baccalaureate Research Scientist

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social mind in dialogue : language cognition in conversation

Last updated: Mar 9th, 2026

Research Interests

I study... *the social mind in dialogue*: how the human brain processes *language* and structures *conversation*

Specifically... *emotion & affect in conversation* | how do we represent others' mental and emotional states during conversation, and how do these representations guide conversational behavior?
miscommunication | why do we miscommunicate, and how do we anticipate, identify, and repair miscommunication?
culture & bilingualism | how does linguistic experience influence language cognition and communication?

Education

2024
Wenham, MA **B.S. in Cognitive Science of Language; Minors in Psychology, French**
Gordon College Honors Institute | *Kenneth L. Pike Honors*
 Advisor(s): *Susan Bobb, Ph.D., & Jeffrey Stevenson, Ph.D.*
Summa cum laude

Research Experience

† Principal Investigator

2024 - Present
Cambridge, MA **K. Lisa Yang Post-Baccalaureate Research Scholar**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology | *McGovern Institute for Brain Research, Brain & Cognitive Sciences*
EvLab | Advisor(s): *Evelina Fedorenko, Ph.D.†, & Agata Wolna, Ph.D.*
Neuroimaging and behavioral approaches, investigating the neural bases of language and bilingualism.

2023 - 2024
Framingham, MA **Neuropsychology Research Assistant**
Boston University Chobanian & Avedisian School of Medicine | *National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)*
Framingham Heart Study Brain Aging Program | Supervisor(s): *Julie Joyce, Emma Müller*
Psychometric data verification and clinical profile auditing, studying cognitive correlates of neurodegenerative diseases.

2023 - 2024
Wenham, MA **Research Assistant**
Gordon College School of Science, Technology, and Health | *Kinesiology*
MRI Brass Repository Project | Advisor(s): *Peter Iltis, Ph.D.†*
Structural neuroimaging and auditory analyses for clinical and behavioral profiling of brass instrumentalists.

Publications

Peer-reviewed

- Iltis, P. W., Frahm, J., Voit, D., **Wright, A.**, & Dever, A. (2024). A Descriptive Comparison of Oral Cavity Movements Between Brass Instrumentalists Performing Large Interval Slurs. *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*, 39(4), 169-176. [paper]

Preprints

- Wolna, A., **Wright, A.**, Casto, C., Lipkin, B., & Fedorenko, E. (2025). The extended language network: Language-responsive brain areas whose contributions to language remain to be discovered. *bioRxiv*, 2025-04. [preprint] [osf]

In preparation

3. Poliak, M., Wolna, A., **Wright, A.**, de Varda, A., Gibson, E., & Fedorenko, E. (in prep.). Intrinsic stimulus-related vs. contextual effects in the processing of structured and unstructured language stimuli.
4. Wolna, A., Swords, S., **Wright, A.**, Szewczyk, J. Diaz, M., Domagalik, A., Szwed, M., Wodniecka, Z., & Fedorenko, E. (in prep.). The language network, Broca's area, and motor cortex support / implement distinct stages of language production.
5. Wolna, A., **Wright, A.**, de Varda, A., Wodniecka, Z., Fedorenko, E. (in prep.). From words to stories: Engagement of language-specific and domain-general neural mechanisms in native and second language comprehension.

Posters & Presentations

* Presenting author(s) | Reverse chron.

1. Wolna, A. **Wright, A.***, Casto, C., Lipkin, B., & Fedorenko, E. (2025, April). *The extended language network: Language selective brain areas whose contributions to language remain to be discovered*. [Poster Presentation]. **Patrick J. McGovern Travel & Technology Awards Poster Session**, Cambridge, MA.
2. Wolna, A.*, **Wright, A.***, Wodniecka, Z., Fedorenko, E. (2025, March). *From words to stories: Engagement of language-specific and domain-general neural mechanisms in native and second language comprehension*. [Poster Presentation]. **Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Neuroscience Society**, Boston, MA.
3. Wolna, A.*, **Wright, A.**, Lipkin, B., & Fedorenko, E. (2024, October) *The extended language network: A large-scale characterization of language-responsive regions beyond the core fronto-temporal network*. [Poster Presentation]. **Society for Neurobiology of Language**, Brisbane, Australia.
4. Iltis, P. W., Frahm, J., Voit, D., Wright, A. A.*, & Dever, A. R*. (2024, February). *A descriptive comparison of oral cavity movements between brass instrumentalists performing large interval slurs*. [Symposium] **North Shore Sigma Xi Research Symposium**, Wenham, MA.
5. **Wright, A. A.***, Cho, Y.*, Dominguez, M. V.*, & Williams, A. L.* (2022, April). *Influence of interactive social dynamic roles on the use of accommodative speech*. [Symposium]. **Gordon College Undergraduate Research Symposium**, Wenham, MA.
6. **Wright, A. A.***, Niles, R. K.*, & Lee, S.* (2022, April). *EEG synchrony during mental attention tasks reflects differences in cognitive processing*. [Symposium]. **Gordon College Undergraduate Research Symposium**, Wenham, MA.
7. **Wright, A. A.***, Niles, R. K.*, Dambo, L. K.*, & Szumierz, C. S.* (2021, May). *The effects of concussions on the working memory in young adult athletes*. [Symposium]. **Gordon College Undergraduate Research Symposium**, Wenham, MA.

Competitive Funding

† Awarded | * Applied | x Declined

2025	NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program* National Science Foundation
2025 (Fall)	School of Science Quality of Life Grant† (\$2,000) Massachusetts Institute of Technology
2025 (Spring)	School of Science Quality of Life Grant† (\$2,000) Massachusetts Institute of Technology
2021 - 2024	Resident Advisory Grants† (\$20,390) Gordon College

Awards & Honors

† Funding awarded

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

2024 **BCS Spot Appreciation Award**

Gordon College

- 2023 **Dick and Judy Gross Servant Leadership Scholarship**[†]
 2023 **Marion Jackson Carter Endowment Award**[†]
 2023 - 2024 **Charles Diehm Scholarship**[†]
 2022 - 2024 **Wycliffe Scholarship**[†]
 2022 - 2024 **Kenneth L. Pike Honors**
 2020 - 2024 **Presidential Honors**
 2020 - 2024 **Harold John Ockenga (President's) Scholarship**[†]

Teaching Experience & Mentorship

Invited talks

- 2026 **Wright, A. A.** (2026, March). *Functional characterization of language processing in the human brain*. Neuroscience of Language (PSY380) guest lecture. [Gordon College School of Psychology and Human Services](#), Wenham, MA.

Positions

- 2023 - 2024 **Residence Life Fellow**
[Gordon College Residence Life](#) | *Office of Student Life*
- 2021 - 2024 **Resident Advisor, Apartment Coordinator**
[Gordon College Residence Life](#) | *Wilson, Ferrin, & Rider Halls*
- 2021 - 2022 **Teaching Assistant, Peer Mentor** | The Great Conversation (COR107 / COR110)
[Gordon College School of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) | *The Great Conversation (First-year writing seminar)*
- 2021 - 2022 **Teaching Assistant** | Research Methods I (PSY156)
[Gordon College School of Psychology and Human Services](#) | *Psychology*
- 2021 **Teaching Assistant** | Introduction to Linguistics (LIN201)
[Gordon College School of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) | *Linguistics*

Activities & Service

Academic investment & mentorship

- 2025 **MIT Summer Research Program (MSRP-Bio) Pal**
[Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) | *Brain & Cognitive Sciences*
 Provided mentorship and academic support to undergraduate scholars hosted in BCS labs.
 Mentee(s): **Clifton David** (Brooklyn College); **Polina Rafailova** (Bard College)
- 2022 - 2024 **President** | Psi Chi International Honors Society in Psychology (Gordon College Chapter)
[Gordon College School of Psychology and Human Services](#) | *Psychology*
- 2022 **President** | Psychology & Neuroscience Clubs
[Gordon College School of Psychology and Human Services & School of Science, Technology, and Health](#) | *Psychology, Neuroscience*

Scientific outreach & international experience

- 2025 **STEAM It Up! Cambridge-wide K-8 Family STEAM Night**
[Cambridge STEAM Initiative](#)
 Facilitated entertaining scientific activities for parents and children in the Cambridge community.
- 2025 **MGH Aspire Summer 2025 Adventure Camp Trailblazers**
[Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) | *McGovern Institute for Brain Research*
 Tour of the McGovern Institute for Mass General Brigham's Aspire program for young teens identifying with ASD.
- 2025 **Workshop: "Building a Personal Research Website"**
[Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#) | *McGovern Institute for Brain Research, Picower Institute for Learning and Memory*

Created and led three-part workshop series on designing a personal research website with GitHub Pages.

2023, 2025

Compass Path: Iceland

Reykjavík & Akureyri, Iceland

Relational, volunteer service for immigrant and refugee communities; organized extracurricular programming for local youth.

2023

Engage Lead: Cambodia

Phnom Penh, Cambodia | Royal University of Law and Economics, National University of Management

Assisted English teachers at Khmer universities; led IELTS prep workshops; participated in cross-cultural leadership training.

Additional training

2023

TESL/TEFL Certificate

Common Grace Linguistic and Educational Services

Contact: jstevenson@commongracellc.com | (509) 306-1339 [Alt.: jeffrey.stevenson@gordon.edu | (978) 867-4293]

Experimental Methodology & Skills

* Currently learning

Neuroimaging & analysis (fMRI)

Programming languages & platforms

Agent-based Modeling (ABM)

Probabilistic programming

Reproducible science & data

Behavioral experimentation

Data visualization & design

CONN Toolbox | Connectome Workbench | FreeSurfer | FSL | SPM

MATLAB | Python (Visual Studio Code) | R (RStudio) | [Julia](#)*

[Mesa](#)* | [Agents.jl](#)*

[Gen.jl](#)* | [PyMC](#)*

Positron | Git / GitHub | Quarto

Audacity | Praat | Prolific | [jsPsych](#)*

Adobe Illustrator

Selected Coursework

* Audit/listener (completed course work without formal credit)

Cognitive & behavioral neuroscience

Lab in Psycholinguistics*, Language and Meaning in Minds, Brains, & Machines*, Cognitive Science*, Language in the Mind and Brain*

Mathematics & machine learning

Linear Algebra*, Introduction to Machine Learning*, Computational Cognitive Science*, Introduction to Neural Computation*

Computer/Data science & statistics

Introduction to Programming, Data Science I & II

Memberships & Affiliations

2025 - Present **Cognitive Neuroscience Society (CNS)**

2021 - Present **Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology**

Languages

English speaking: native | reading: native | writing: native

French speaking: intermediate | reading: intermediate | writing: intermediate

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Well, that is one of the things to find out sometime. Isn't it splendid to think of all the things there are to find out about? It just makes me feel glad to be alive — it's such an interesting world. It wouldn't be half so interesting if we know all about everything, would it?

— *Anne of Green Gables, L. M. Montgomery*