Aaron A. Wright

Research Scientist | Lab Manager

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social mind in dialogue : language cognition in conversation

Last updated: Oct 27th, 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

2026 - Present
Providence, RI

Lab Manager
Brown University | Carney Institute for Brain Science, Cognitive and Psychological Sciences
Psychiatry, Embodiment, and Computation (PEAC) Lab | Advisor(s): Frederike Petzschner, Ph.D.†
Computational neuroscience, studying embodied intelligence, brain-body feedback loops, and their implications for psychiatry.

2024 - 2026
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 | Advisor(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

Reverse chron.

Peer-reviewed

1. Wolna, A., **Wright, A.**, Casto, C., Hutchinson, S., Lipkin, B., & Fedorenko, E. (2026). The extended language network: Language-responsive brain areas whose contributions to language remain to be discovered. *The Journal of Neuroscience, 46*(29), e0638252026. [paper] [osf] [press]

2. 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]

In preparation, preprint

3. Poliak, M., Wolna, A., **Wright, A.**, de Varda, A., Gibson, E., & Fedorenko, E. (in prep.). The language network rationally integrates expectations and evidence when processing degraded 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.

Organized symposia

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.

Invited talks

8. **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.

Grants & Fellowships

† Awarded | * Applied | x Declined

2025	**NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program**[x] | 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 & Mentorship Experience

Positions

2026 — *Providence, RI*
Teaching Assistant | Laboratory in EEG Methodology (CPSY-1197)
Brown University | *Cognitive & Psychological Sciences*
Instructor(s): Frederike Petzschner, Ph.D.

2026 — *Cambridge, MA*
Teaching Assistant | Language in the Brain (PSYC P-17501)
Harvard University Summer School | *Division of continuing Education*
Instructor(s): Saima Malik-Moraleda, Ph.D.

2025 — *Cambridge, MA*
MIT Summer Research Program (MSRP-Bio)
Massachusetts Institute of Technology | *Brain & Cognitive Sciences*
Provided mentorship and academic support to undergraduate scholars hosted in BCS labs.

2021 - 2022 — *Wenham, MA*
Teaching Assistant, Peer Mentor | The Great Conversation (COR107 / COR110)
Gordon College School of Humanities and Social Sciences | *The Great Conversation (First-year writing seminar)*
Instructor(s): Kerilyn Harkaway-Krieger, Ph.D.

2021 - 2022 — *Wenham, MA*
Teaching Assistant | Research Methods I (PSY156)
Gordon College School of Psychology and Human Services | *Psychology*
Instructor(s): Kaye Cook, Ph.D.; Ryan Daley, Ph.D.; Joshua Fox-Fuller, Ph.D.

2021 — *Wenham, MA*
Teaching Assistant | Introduction to Linguistics (LIN201)
Gordon College School of Humanities and Social Sciences | *Linguistics*
Instructor(s): Graeme Bird, Ph.D.

Mentees & Research Assistants

2026 - Present **Arwen Heffner** (Gordon College)
2026 - Present **Mia Engert** (Cedarville University)
2025 **Polina Rafailova** (Bard College) | MIT MSRP-Bio
2025 **Clifton David** (Brooklyn College) | MIT MSRP-Bio

Activities & Service

Academic service

2026 - Present **Outside Board Member** | Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Gordon 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.

Media coverage

2026 **The brain's language network is more extensive than previously thought**
Massachusetts Institute of Technology | *McGovern Institute for Brain Research*, MIT News
The extended language network: Language-responsive brain areas whose contributions to language remain to be discovered.

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, EEG)	CONN Toolbox | FieldTrip | FreeSurfer | FSL | SPM
Programming languages & platforms	MATLAB | Python (Visual Studio Code) | R (RStudio)
Reproducible science & data	Positron | Git / GitHub | Quarto
Behavioral experimentation	Audacity | Praat | Prolific | JATOS | jsPsych
Data visualization & design	Adobe Illustrator | InDesign

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