Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox

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EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor of Computational Linguistics, Georgetown University

Department of Linguistics

Washington, D.C. 8/2024 - present

ETH Postdoctoral Fellow, ETH Zürich

Department of Computer Science, Institute of Machine Learning

Zürich, Switzerland 9/2022 - 8/2024

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

- Computational and information-theoretic models of sentence processing and language acquisition
- Natural language processing, including machine learning and large language models
- Experimental psycholinguistics including syntactic processing, reading, experimental methods

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Linguistics, Harvard University

Cambridge, MA

Dissertation Title: "Informative Presupposition and Accommodation"

9/2017 - 5/2022

• Visiting student, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Department of Cognitive Science (Summer 2018)

B.A.S., Stanford University

Stanford, CA

Degree in in Symbolic Systems and Slavic Languages and Literature with Honors

9/2011 - 8/2015

Journal Articles

- [1] Jennifer Hu, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Siyuan Song, Kyle Mahowald, Roger Levy. "What Can String Probability Tell Us About Grammaticality?", Conditionally Accepted, Transactions of ACL, 2025
- [2] Metehan Oğuz, Cui Ding, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Zuzanna Fuchs. "Using MoTR to Probe Gender Agreement in Russian", Accepted, OpenMind, 2025
- [3] Brandon Waldon, Nathan Schneider, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Amir Zeldes, Kevin Tobia. "Large Language Models for Legal Interpretation? Don't Take Their Word for It", Georgetown Law Journal, 2025
- [4] Anna A. Ivanova, Aalok Sathe, Benjamin Lipkin, Unnathi Kumar, Setayesh Radkani, Thomas H. Clark, Carina Kauf, Jennifer Hu, R. T. Pramod, Gabriel Grand, Vivian Paulun, Maria Ryskina, Ekin Akyürek, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Nafisa Rashid, Leshem Choshen, Roger Levy, Evelina Fedorenko, Joshua Tenenbaum, Jacob Andreas. "Elements of World Knowledge (EWOK): A cognition-inspired framework for evaluating basic world knowledge in language models", Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics
- [5] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Michael Y. Hu, Alex Warstadt, Aaron Mueller, Leshem Choshen, Chengxu Zhuang, Adina Williams, Ryan Cotterell, Tal Linzen. "Bigger is not always better: The importance of human-scale language modeling for psycholinguistics", Journal of Memory and Language, 2025
- [6] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Cui Ding, Mrinmaya Sachan, Lena Jäger. "Mouse Tracking while Reading (MoTR): A New Incremental Processing Measurement", Journal of Memory and Language, 2024
- [7] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Tiago Pimentel, Clara Meister, Ryan Cotterell. "An Information-Theoretic Analysis of Targeted Regressions During Reading", Cognition, 2024.

- [8] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Tiago Pimentel, Clara Meister, Ryan Cotterell, Roger Levy. "Testing the Predictions of Surprisal Theory in 11 Languages," Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics, 2023.
- [9] Alexandre Cremers, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Benjamin Spector. "Exhaustivity and Anti-Exhaustivity in the RSA Framework: Testing the Effect of Prior Beliefs", *Cognitive Science*, 2023.
- [10] Tiago Pimentel, Clara Miester, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Roger Levy and Ryan Cotterell. "On the Effect of Anticipation on Reading Times", Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics, 2023.
- [11] **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Richard Futrell and Roger Levy. "Using Computational Models to Test Syntactic Learnability", *Linguistic Inquiry*, 2023.

Conference Proceedings

- [1] Cui Ding, Lena Jäger, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**. "Modeling Bottom-up Information Quality during Language Processing" Accepted, Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2025
- [2] Wesley Scivetti, Tatsuya Aoyama, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Nathan Schneider. "Unpacking Let Alone: Human-Scale Models Generalize to a Rare Construction in Form but not Meaning" Accepted, Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2025
- [3] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Cui Ding, Giovanni Acampa, Tiago Pimentel, Alex Warstadt, Tamar I. Regev, "Using Information Theory to Characterize Prosodic Typology: The Case of Tone, Pitch-Accent and Stress-Accent" to appear, Proceedings of the 2025 Conference of the Association of Computational Linguistics, 2025
- [4] Eleftheria Tsipidi, Samuel Kiegeland, Franz Nowak, Tianyang Xu, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Alex Warstadt, Ryan Cotterell, Mario Giulianelli. "The Harmonic Structure of Information Contours" *Proceedings of the 2025 Conference of the Association of Computational Linguistics*, 2025
- [5] Tamar I. Regev, Chiebuka Ohams, Shaylee Xie, Lukas Wolf, Evelina Fedorenko, Alex Warstadt, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Tiago Pimentel, "The time scale of redundancy between prosody and linguistic context" Proceedings of the 2025 Conference of the Association of Computational Linguistics, 2025
- [6] Xiulin Yang, Tatsuya Aoyama, Yuekun Yao, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, "Anything Goes? A Crosslinguistic Study of (Im)possible Language Learning in LMs" Proceedings of the 2025 Conference of the Association of Computational Linguistics, 2025
- [7] Tatsuya Aoyama, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, "Language Models Grow Less Humanlike beyond Phase Transition" Proceedings of the 2025 Conference of the Association of Computational Linguistics, 2025
- [8] Michael Hu, Aaron Mueller, Candace Ross, Adina Williams, Tal Linzen, Chengxu Zhuang, Ryan Cotterell, Leshem Choshen, Alex Warstadt, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, "Findings of the Second BabyLM Challenge: Sample-Efficient Pretraining on Developmentally Plausible Corpora" in *Proceedings of the 2024 BabyLM Challenge*, 2025
- [9] Eleftheria Tsipidi, Franz Nowak, Ryan Cotterell, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Mario Giulianelli, Alex Warstadt. "Surprise! Uniform Information Density Isn't the Whole Story: Predicting Surprisal Contours in Long-form Discourse" in *Proceedings of the 2024 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* (EMNLP), 2024
- [10] Samuel Kiegeland*, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox*, Afra Amini, David Robert Reich, Ryan Cotterell. "Reverse Engineering the Reader" in Proceedings of the 2024 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2024
- [11] Andreas Opedal, Eleanor Chodroff, Ryan Cotterell, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**. "On the Role of Context in Reading Time Prediction" in *Proceedings of the 2024 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP)*, 2024

- [12] Samuel Kiegeland, David Robert Reich, Ryan Cotterell, Lena Ann Jäger, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**. "The Pupil Becomes the Master" in *Proceedings of the 2024 ICML Workshop on LLMs and Cognition*, 2024
- [13] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Clara Meister, Ryan Cotterell, Tiago Pimentel. "Language Model Quality Correlates with Psychometric Predictive Power in Multiple Languages" in *Proceedings of the 2023 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP)*, 2023
- [14] Tiago Pimentel, Clara Meister, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Ryan Cotterell, Kyle Mahowald. "Revisiting the Optimality of Word Lengths", in *Proceedings of the 2023 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP)*, 2023
- [15] Lukas Wolf, Tiago Pimentel, Evelina Fedorenko, Ryan Cotterell, Alex Warstadt, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Tamar Regev. "Quantifying the redundancy between prosody and text", in Proceedings of the 2023 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2023
- [16] Lukas Wolf, Klemen Kotar, Greta Tuckute, Eghbal Hosseini, Alex Warstadt, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Tamar Regev. "WhisBERT: Multimodal Text-Audio Language Modeling on 100M Words", in Proceedings of the 2023 BabyLM Challenge, 2023
- [17] Alex Warstadt, Aaron Mueller, Leshem Choshen, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Chengxu Zhuang, Juan Ciro, Rafael Mosquera, Adina Williams, Bhargavi Paranjabe, Tal Linzen, Ryan Cotterell. "Findings of the BabyLM Challenge: Sample-efficient Pretraining on Developmentally Plausible Corpora", in Proceedings of the 2023 BabyLM Challenge, 2023
- [18] Clara Meister, Tiago Pimentel, Luca Malagutti, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Ryan Cotterell. "On the Efficacy of Sampling Adapters", in *Proceedings of the 61st Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics (Volume 1: Long Papers)*, 2023
- [19] Wangchunshu Zhou, Yuchen Jiang, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Ryan Cotterell, Mrinmaya Sachan. "Controlled Text Generation with Natural Language Instructions", in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML)*, 2023
- [20] Thomas Clark, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Edward Gibson, Roger Levy. "Which Evidence for Availability Effects on Speaker Choice in the Russian Comparative Alternation", in Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 2022
- [21] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Roger Levy, Kathryn Davidson. "Which Presuppositions are Subject to Contextual Felicity Constraints?", in Proceedings of the Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT), 2021
- [22] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Pranali Vani, Roger Levy. "A Targeted Assessment of Incremental Processing in Neural Language Models and Humans", in Proceedings of the 59th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics and the 11th International Joint Conference on Natural Language Processing (Volume 1: Long Papers), 2021
- [23] Pranali Vani, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Roger Levy. "Using the interpolated maze task to assess incremental processing in English relative clauses", in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, 2021
- [24] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Jon Gauthier, Jennifer Hu, Peng Qian, Roger Levy. "On the Predictive Power of Neural Language Models for Human Real-Time Comprehension Behavior", in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, 2020
- [25] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Peng Qian, Richard Futrell, Ryosuke Kohita, Roger Levy, Miguel Ballesteros. "Structural Supervision Improves Few-Shot Learning and Syntactic Generalization in Neural Language Models", in Proceedings of the 2020 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), 2020
- [26] Tristan Thrush, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Roger Levy. "Investigating Novel Verb Learning in BERT: Selectional Preference Classes and Alternation-Based Syntactic Generalization", in *Proceedings of the Third BlackboxNLP Workshop on Analyzing and Interpreting Neural Networks for NLP*, 2020

- [27] Jennifer Hu, Peng Qian, Jon Gauther, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Roger Levy. "A Systematic Assessment of Syntactic Generalization in Neural Language Models", in *Proceedings of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*, 2020
- [28] Jon Gauther, Jennifer Hu, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Peng Qian, Roger Levy. "SyntaxGym: An Online Platform for Targeted Evaluation of Language Models", in *Proceedings of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics: System Demonstrations*, 2020
- [29] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Roger Levy, Richard Futrell. "What syntactic structures block dependencies in RNN language models?", in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, 2019
- [30] Richard Futrell, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Takashi Morita, Peng Qian, Miguel Ballesteros, Roger Levy. "Neural language models as psycholinguistic subjects: Representations of syntactic state", in *Proceedings of the 2019 Conference of the North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Human Language Technologies, Volume 1 (Long and Short Papers), 2019*
- [31] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Peng Qian, Richard Futrell, Miguel Ballesteros, Roger Levy. "Structural Supervision Improves Learning of Non-Local Grammatical Dependencies", in Proceedings of the 2019 Conference of the North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Human Language Technologies, Volume 1 (Long and Short Papers), 2019
- [32] Aixiu An, Peng Qian, Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Roger Levy. "Representation of Constituents in Neural Language Models: Coordination Phrase as a Case Study", in Proceedings of the 2019 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing and the 9th International Joint Conference on Natural Language Processing (EMNLP-IJCNLP), 2019
- [33] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Roger Levy, Richard Futrell. "Hierarchical Representation in Neural Language Models: Suppression and Recovery of Expectations", in *Proceedings of the 2019 ACL Workshop Black-boxNLP: Analyzing and Interpreting Neural Networks for NLP*, 2019
- [34] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Benjamin Spector. "The Role of Prior Beliefs in The Rational Speech Act Model of Pragmatics: Exhaustivity as a Case Study", in *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*, 2019
- [35] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Roger Levy, Takashi Morita, Richard Futrell. "What do RNN Language Models Learn about Filler-Gap Dependencies?", in *Proceedings of the 2018 EMNLP Workshop BlackboxNLP: Analyzing and Interpreting Neural Networks for NLP*, 2018.

BOOK CHAPTERS

- [1] John Mansfield, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**. "Looking Forward: Linguistic Theory and Methods", *Under review*
- [2] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Jon Gauthier, Peng Qian, Jennifer Hu and Roger Levy "Learning Syntactic Structures from String Input", Algebraic Structures in Natural Language, 2022 (pp. 113-138). CRC Press.

Manuscripts and Theses

- [1] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, Roger Levy, Kathryn Davidson. "Presupposing Novel Information: A Cross-Trigger Experiment in English" lingBuzz preprint, 2023
- [2] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, "Informative Presupposition and Accommodation", Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2022.
- [3] Richard Futrell, **Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox**, Takashi Morita, and Roger Levy, "RNNs as psycholinguistic subjects: Syntactic state and grammatical dependency", arXiv preprint, 2018.

[4] Ethan Gotlieb Wilcox, "Revolutionary Linguistics: The Ideology of the Soviet Esperanto Movement 1917-1938", BA Honors Thesis, Stanford University, 2015

Invited Presentations

Invited Conference & Workshop Talks

- "Language Modeling in People and Machines", ICML Workshop on Large Language Models and Cognition, International Conference on Machine Learning, Vienna, Austria (7/24)
- "Using artificial neural networks to study human language processing: Two case studies and a warning", Workshop on Using Artificial Neural Networks for Studying Human Language Learning and Processing, Institute for Language Logic and Computation, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands (6/24)
- "Language Models as Cognitive Models: The Cases of Syntactic Generalization and Real-Time Language Comprehension", The Fourth International Conference on Theoretical East Asian Psycholinguistics, Seoul Korea (8/23)

Invited Colloquia

- "Cognition and LLMs: Using Artificial Neural Networks to Understand Human Language Processing", The Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Program in Cognitive Science Colloquium, Georgetown University (04/25)
- "Using artificial neural networks to study human language processing", Deep Linguistic Modeling Research Colloquium, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf (12/24)
- "Using Mouse Tracking for Reading (MoTR) to investigate agreement and attachment in online language comprehension", Department of Linguistics, University Marburg, Germany (11/24)
- "Information-Theoretic Perspectives on Language Comprehension", Complex Human Data Hub, University
 of Melbourne, Australia (10/23)
- "Learning and Processing Linguistic Structure in Humans and Machines", Department of Cognitive Science, Johns Hopkins University, USA. (2/23)
- "Using Computational Models to Test Syntactic Learnability", Department of Linguistics, University of Geneva, Switzerland. (12/22)
- "Structure and Statistical Processing in Humans and Machines", Department of Linguistics, Yale University, USA. (3/22)
- "Using Computational Models to Test Syntactic Learnability", Department of English, Dongguk University, Korea. (1/22)
- "Using Presuppositions to Introduce Novel Information", Department of Linguistics (Universals Colloquium Series), Harvard University, USA. (11/21)
- "How to Evaluate Neural Networks as Models of Linguistic Cognition", Department of English, Dongguk University, Korea. (2/21)

Lab Talks / Other Invited Presentations

- "Using artificial neural networks to study human language processing", Cognitive Science Seminar Series, University of Michigan, USA. (11/24)
- "Using artificial neural networks to study human language processing", Language and Intelligence Lab, MIT, USA. (11/24)
- "Structure and Statistical Processing in Humans and Machines", Language, Logic Learning Lab, UC Davis, USA. (5/22)

- "Neural Network Language Models and the Argument from the Poverty of the Stimulus", Department of Linguistics (Ling Lunch Series), Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA. (10/19)
- "Using Structure to Predict the next Word: What RNN Language Models Learn about Syntax", Computation and Psycholinguistics Lab, Johns Hopkins University, USA. (2/19)
- "What do RNN Language Models Learn about the Filler-Gap Dependency?", Psycholinguistics and Cognitive Science Laboratory, Ecole Normale Supérieure (Paris), France (8/18)

Grants and Awards

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- Senior Area Chair Award, Association for Computational Linguistics Annual Meeting
 Using Information Theory to Characterize Prosodic Typology

 08/2025
- Outstanding Paper Award, Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing 12/2023 Language Model Quality Correlates with Psychometric Predictive Power in Multiple Languages
- Outstanding Paper Award, Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing 12/2023

 Revisiting the Optimality of Word Lengths
- Best Honors Thesis, Division of Languages, Cultures and Literatures, Stanford University

 Revolutionary Linguistics: The ideology of the Soviet Esperanto movement, 1917-1938

Grants

- ETH Zurich Postdoctoral Fellowship

 Evaluating Large Language Models with Human Psycholinguistic Data

 1/2021 present
- Graduate Student Research Grant, Mind Brain Behavior Initiative, Harvard

 1/2021

 Experimental and computational assessment of presuppositions' contextual felicity constraints
- Graduate Student Research Grant, Mind Brain Behavior Initiative, Harvard

 Workshop on linguistics and climate change
- Graduate Student Research Grant, Mind Brain Behavior Initiative, Harvard

 Can neural nets learn linguistic dependencies?

 5/2018

Teaching and Advising

Teaching Experience

As a Primary Instructor (all at Georgetown University)

- Computational Linguistics Research Methods [Draft Syllabus, GU360 Course Site] F'25
- Introduction to Natural Language Processing [Syllabus, GU360 Course Site] F'24, S'25
- Information, Structure and Language (Graduate Seminar) [Syllabus, GU360 Course Site] F'24

$As \ a \ TA$

- Undergraduate Thesis Writing Workshop (Harvard) F'20, S'21
- Statistical Methods in Linguistics (Harvard)
 S'20
- Computational Psycholinguistics (MIT)

 S'20
- Language, Structure and Cognition (Intro to Linguistics Course, Harvard) F'19

Theses Supervised as Primary Advisor

• Samuel Kiegeland. "Reverse-Engineering the Reader: Aligning Language Models to Psychometric Data", Masters Thesis, ETH, Department of Computer Science, 2024.

- Cui Ding. "Mouse Tracking for Reading (MoTR): A New Incremental Processing Paradigm", Masters Thesis, University of Zürich, Department of Computational Linguistics, 2023.
 - -Awarded a "Semesterpreis" for outstanding thesis
- Lukas Wolf. "On the Contribution of Prosody to Language Comprehension in Large Language Models", Masters Thesis, ETH Zürich, Department of Computer Science, 2023.

Theses Supervised as Secondary Advisor / Committee Member

• Tatsuya Aoyama. "Inductive Bias, Emergent Structure, and Pretraining Data in Cognitive Modeling", PhD Thesis, Georgetown University, Department of Linguistics, 2025.

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Conference Organization

• Organizing Committee, BabyLM Challenge

2023-

- -Organized a shared task on sample-efficient language modeling with 30+ submissions
- The BabyLM Challenge was featured in a New York Times article about democratizing AI research

Departmental Service

Graduate Student Representative, Department of Linguistics, Harvard University

2020-2022

- Represent departmental graduate student interests to the faculty and university
- Implemented first ever department climate survey; ran graduate portion of new faculty search

Reviewing

- Journals: Nature (Springer), Cognitive Science (Wiley), Journal of Memory and Language (Elsevier); Open Mind (MIT Press); Behavior Research Methods (Springer); Journal of Linguistics (Cambridge); Language Acquisition (Taylor & Francis)
- Funding Agencies: NSF (Linguistics, 2025); European Research Commission (Advanced Grant, 2023)
- Conferences: ACL Rolling Review (2022, 2023, 2024, 2025), *ACL conferences (2020–2022), COLING (2022), CogSci (2021, 2025), Meaning in Context Workshop at ICLR (2021)
 - Outstanding reviewer recognition, EMNLP, 2020

Professional Experience

Transcendent Endeavors Computational Linguist	New York, NY 10/16 -8/17
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Freelance Translator and Editor	Moscow and Remote $10/15 - 10/16$
Palantir Product Quality Engineer Intern	Palo Alto, CA 6/14 -9/14

SELECTED TRANSLATIONS

All work co-translated from Russian with Mikhail Lion

- "Sanctions and Retaliation: Where Russia-U.S. Relations are Headed", Andrey Movchan, Carnegie Center Moscow. 2018.
- "Is Putin Losing Control of Russia's Conservative Nationalists?", Alexander Baunov, Foreign Affairs, 2017
- "The Accidental Formation of Russia's War Coalition", Konstantin Gaaze, Carnegie Center Moscow, 2017
- "Going to the People—and Back Again: The Changing Shape of the Russian Regime" (white paper), Alexander Baunov, Carnegie Center Moscow, 2017
- "The Snow Queen" (stage play), Evgeny Schwartz, produced by Dacha Theater, Seattle WA, 2016

REFERENCES

Roger Levy

Professor Department of Brain and Cognitive Science Massachusetts Institute of Technology rplevy@mit.edu

Richard Futrell

Associate Professor Department of Language Science University of California, Irvine rfutrell@uci.edu

Kathryn Davidson

Professor
Department of Linguistics
Harvard University
kathryndavidson@fas.harvard.edu

Ryan Cotterell

Assistant Professor Department of Computer Science Institute for Machine Learning ETH Zürich ryan.cotterell@gmail.com