

Téa Wright

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Research Interests

Cognitively-inspired NLP, multimodality, interactive language acquisition, low-resource NLP

Experience

Graduate Student Researcher, UC Berkeley, Berkeley AI Research

Aug 2024 – Present

Advisor: Alane Suhr

Developing a reinforcement learning pipeline to fine-tune VLMs as pragmatic interlocutors; utilizing implicit reward modeling of overlooked signals (e.g., gaze) to align model generation with human intent. Generating synthetic data for OCR post-correction systems and investigating how improved OCR may improve low-resource translation through retrieval-augmented few-shot learning.

Undergraduate Research Assistant, University of Colorado Boulder

Jun 2023 – May 2024

Advisors: Katharina von der Wense, Alexis Palmer, James Martin

Developed automatic metrics for contextual support in LLM-generated stories to support preschool vocabulary learning. Explored effects of OCR quality on encoder-only model adaptation for Lakota. Documented linguistic resources and presented a full thesis.

Education

University of California, Berkeley

Aug 2024 – Present

Ph.D. in Computer Science

Advisor: Alane Suhr

Coursework: Natural Language Processing; Information Theory; Computer Vision; Learning and Decision Making; Data-centric LLMs; Large Scale Vision, Language, and Action Models; Computational Models of Language Use; Deep Reinforcement Learning

University of Colorado Boulder

Aug 2020 – May 2024

B.S. in Computer Science

GPA: 4.00

Relevant Coursework: Machine Learning; Advanced Data Science; Artificial Intelligence; Algorithms; Automata and Formal Language Theory; Writing in Science and Society; Programming Languages; Cognitive Science; Robotics; User Interfaces; Software Development; Data Structures; Natural Language Processing; Machine Learning and Linguistics

University of Carlos III, Madrid, Spain

Aug 2022 – Dec 2022

Education Abroad - Hispanic Studies

Grants and Awards

- NSF Graduate Research Fellowship (2025)
- UC Berkeley Chancellor's Fellowship (2024–2025)
- CU Boulder Graduating Student Research Award (2024)
- CU Boulder Chancellor's Recognition Award (2024)

- CRA Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award - Honorable Mention (2023–2024)
- Joseph A. Sewall Award, Sewall Esteemed Scholars Program (2020–2024)

Publications

- **Téa Wright**, Alane Suhr. *Learning to Refer from Estimated Listener Gaze: A Reinforcement Learning Approach*. In preparation for submission to COLM 2026.
- Nicholas Tomlin, Naitian Zhou, Eve Fleisig, Liangyuan (Circle) Chen, **Téa Wright**, Lauren Vinh, Laura X. Ma, Seun Eisape, Ellie French, Tingting Du, Tianjiao Zhang, Alexander Koller, Alane Suhr *Characterizing Language Use in a Collaborative Situated Game*. Under review for ACL 2026.
- Maria Valentini*, **Téa Wright***, Ali Marashian, Jennifer Weber, Eliana Colunga, Katharina von der Wense. *Measuring Contextual Informativeness in Child-Directed Text*. COLING 2025.
- Jennifer Weber, Maria Valentini, **Téa Wright**, Katharina von der Wense, Eliana Colunga. *Evaluating LLMs as Tools to Support Early Vocabulary Learning*. CogSci 2024.
- Maria Valentini, Jennifer Weber, Jesus Salcido, **Téa Wright**, Eliana Colunga, Katharina von der Wense. *On the Automatic Generation and Simplification of Children's Stories*. EMNLP 2023.

Leadership & Outreach

Workshop Organizer – Workshop on Pragmatic Reasoning in Language Models: Language Models as Language Users (PragLM) – COLM 2025

Advisory Board Member – Coalition for Language Equity in AI Research (CLEAR)

Technical Skills

Languages: Python, C++, bash

ML Tools: PyTorch, Hugging Face (Transformers, PEFT, Accelerate)

Data Science: Numpy, Pandas, scikit-learn, matplotlib

Infrastructure: Git, Linux, Conda, W&B

Volunteering

Admissions Reviewer, UC Berkeley (Jan 2025)

Volunteer, COLING 2025, Abu Dhabi (Jan 2025)

Volunteer, EMNLP 2023, Singapore (Dec 2023)

Languages

English (Fluent), Spanish (Conversational), Japanese (Conversational), Korean (Beginner)

Activities

Language learning, fashion, piano, travel, hiking, mountain biking