

Melissa Evans, Ph.D.

Scientist | Human Factors

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Professional Profile

Dr. Melissa Evans' expertise includes human memory, speech and language processing, cognition and attention, and statistical analysis. Her background is in studying how adults engage in conversation and how they later remember what they discussed. She has experience designing, conducting, and analyzing experiments to assess the cognitive processes that underlie communication in both neurotypical adults and adults who have sustained brain-damage. At Exponent, she applies her expertise to investigate human factors in communication of risk and compliance with warnings, pedestrian and transportation incidents, consumer product use, and premises issues (i.e., slips, trips and falls). Dr. Evans has also conducted research with North Carolina State University and the United States government to assess how intelligence analysts might utilize emerging artificial intelligence (AI) technology to streamline their ability to find and analyze relevant data. She is additionally experienced in science communication and has received awards for her research at conferences worldwide.

Prior to joining Exponent, Dr. Evans completed her Ph.D. in Psychology at Vanderbilt University. Her research included studies on interpretation of ambiguous language, the effects of repetition on truth judgements, memory for questions, and the contexts that guide retellings of stories and conversations. She designed new methodologies to process conversation data and assess the ways in which conversation is transformed in memory. Additionally, she collaborated with the Medical Center at Vanderbilt University to study audience design and narrative retellings in individuals who have sustained a moderate-severe traumatic brain injury and individuals with hippocampal amnesia.

Academic Credentials & Professional Honors

Ph.D., Psychological Sciences, Vanderbilt University, 2025

M.S., Psychological Sciences, Vanderbilt University, 2022

B.A., Psychology & Communication, Butler University, 2020

2023 Psychonomic Society Graduate Conference Award

2023 SARMAC Student Caucus Best Poster Award

Prior Experience

Graduate Researcher, Vanderbilt University, 2020-2025

Human Factors Researcher, North Carolina State University Laboratory for Analytic Sciences, 2024

Professional Affiliations

The Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

The Psychonomics Society

Publications

Clough S, **Evans MJ**, Duff MC, Brown-Schmidt S. Reduced temporal organization of narrative recall in adults with moderate-severe traumatic brain injury. *Cortex* 2025; 190:86-109.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cortex.2025.06.007>.

Evans MJ, Clough S, Duff MC, Brown-Schmidt S. Temporal organization of narrative recall is present but attenuated in adults with hippocampal amnesia. *Hippocampus* 2024; 34:438–451.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hipo.23620>.

Brown-Schmidt S, Jaeger CB, **Evans MJ**, Benjamin AS. MEMCONS: how contemporaneous note-taking shapes memory for conversation. *Cognitive Science* 2023; 47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.13271>.

Evans MJ, Jenkins MD, Berry JN. Low but not moderate amounts of caffeine increase co-consumption of ethanol in C57BL/6J mice. *Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior* 2021; 208.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pbb.2021.173221>

Presentations

Clough S, Kekes-Szabo S, **Evans MJ**, Casilio M, Brown-Schmidt S, Duff MC. Nonverbal signals of multiparty audience design in adults with moderate-severe traumatic brain injury. Poster presentation, The International Society for Gesture Studies Conference, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 2025.

Evans MJ, Andreoli N, Heller D, Brown-Schmidt S. Recognition memory for questions and their answers. Poster presentation, the 38th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing, College Park, MD, 2025.

Evans MJ, Polyn S, Gardner B, Brown-Schmidt S. The organization of memory for conversations. Poster presentation, the 38th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing, College Park, MD, 2025.

Evans MJ, Kekes-Szabo S, Clough S, Brown-Schmidt S, Duff MC. Multiparty audience design in adults with moderate-severe traumatic brain injury. Poster presentation, the 65th Annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, New York City, NY, 2024.

Evans MJ, Clough S, Duff MC, Brown-Schmidt S. The organization of memory for language following memory impairment. Poster presentation, the 37th Annual Conference on Human Sentence Processing, Ann Arbor, MI, 2024.

Clough S, Kekes-Szabo S, **Evans MJ**, Casilio M, Brown-Schmidt S, Duff MC. Nonverbal signals of multiparty audience design in adults with moderate-severe traumatic brain injury. Paper presentation, the International Cognitive-Communication Disorders Conference, Orange, CA, 2024.

Kekes-Szabo S, Clough S, **Evans MJ**, Casilio M, Brown-Schmidt S, Duff MC. How do adults with moderate-severe traumatic brain injury communicate in a group? An investigation of audience design in multiparty conversation. Paper presentation, the International Cognitive-Communication Disorders Conference, Orange, CA, 2024.

Evans MJ, Brown-Schmidt S. What did you ask? Recognition memory for questions is worse than memory for answers. Poster presentation, the 64th Annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, San Francisco, CA. 2023.

Evans MJ, Clough S, Duff MC, Brown-Schmidt S. Temporal contiguity for narrative recall in clinical populations with memory impairment. Poster presentation, the 14th Biennial meeting of the Society for Applied Research in Memory and Cognition, Nagoya, Japan, 2023.

Clough S, **Evans MJ**, Brown-Schmidt S, Duff MC. Reduced temporal contiguity of narrative recall in adults with moderate-severe traumatic brain injury. Poster presentation, IBIA 14th Biennial World Congress on Brain Injury, Dublin, Ireland, 2023.

Brown-Schmidt S, Jaeger C, **Evans MJ**, Benjamin AS. MEMCONS: how contemporaneous note-taking shapes memory for conversation. Spoken presentation, the Annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, Boston, MA, 2022.

Evans MJ, Hong MK, Brown-Schmidt S. Recall of ambiguous homographs is shaped by conversational partners. Poster presentation, the 63rd Annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, Boston, MA, 2022.

Brown-Schmidt S, Jaeger C, **Evans MJ**, Benjamin AS. MEMCONS: how contemporaneous note-taking shapes memory for conversation. Poster presentation, the 16th Annual Conference on Empirical Legal Studies, Charlottesville, VA, 2022.

Evans MJ, Brown-Schmidt S. Recall of ambiguous homographs is shaped by context and language goals. Poster presentation, the 62nd Annual meeting of the Psychonomic Society, virtual, 2021.

Project Experience

Assessed intelligence analysts' information processing methods and analysis preferences to design generative AI summaries that would best facilitate a streamlined workflow.

Peer Reviews

Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition