

Sean T. Trott

Assistant Teaching Professor | University of California, San Diego
Ambiguity | Language and cultural evolution | Large language models

Phone: (707)-292-0136

Email: sttrott@ucsd.edu

Website: <https://seantrott.github.io/>

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Assistant Teaching Professor

2022-Present

Department of Cognitive Science, University of California, San Diego
Joint Appointment in *Computational Social Science*

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Student in Cognitive Science

2016-2022

University of California, San Diego
Advisor: Benjamin Bergen

B.A. in Cognitive Science, High Honors

2010-2014

University of California, Berkeley
Thesis advisor: Terry Regier

TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP

Note: although I develop material for all courses I teach, the “” means that a course design was either entirely re-envisioned or created from scratch.*

Primary Instructor

2021-Present

COGS 150*: Large Language Models and Cognitive Science [Winter, 2024]

COGS 153*: Language Comprehension [Fall, 2023]

CSS 1*: Introductory Programming for Computational Social Science [Fall, 2023]

COGS 14A: Introduction to Research Methods [Spring, 2023]

COGS 101C: Language [Winter, 2023]

CSS 2*: Data and Model Programming for Computational Social Science [Winter, 2023]

CSS 1*: Introductory Programming for Computational Social Science [Fall, 2022]
COGS 101C: Language [Spring, 2022]
COGS 14B: Introduction to Statistical Analysis [Summer 2021]
COGS 14B: Introduction to Statistical Analysis [Summer 2020]

Teaching Assistant

2016-2022

COGS 101C: Language [Winter, 2022]
COGS 137: Practical Data Science in R [Fall 2021]
COGS 101B: Learning, Memory, and Attention [Winter 2021]
COGS 109: Data Analysis and Modeling [Spring 2021]
COGS 153: Language Comprehension [Spring 2021]
COGS 14B: Introduction to Statistical Analysis [Fall 2020]
COGS 14B: Introduction to Statistical Analysis [Winter 2020]
COGS 14A: Introduction to Research Methods [Winter 2018]
COGS 100: Cyborgs Now and in the Future [Fall 2017]
COGS 101C: Language [Spring 2017]
COGS 3: Introduction to Computing [Winter 2017]

Mentorship

2023: Sidney Ma (Honors student), Yuhan Fu (Honors student), Kai Bian, Alice Li
2022: Owen Pi
2021: Monica Van (Honors student), Dan Kaliblotzky
2020: Alex Liebscher (Honors student)
2019: Stefanie Reed

Mentee-led Presentations and Publications

Liebscher, A., Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2020). Effects of Battle and Journey Metaphors on Charitable Donations for Cancer Patients. In *Proceedings of the Cognitive Science Society*.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

2020: **Course Design Workshop:** Teaching and Learning Hub, UC San Diego

HONORS AND AWARDS

Chancellor's Research Excellence Scholarship (CRES)

2018-2019

Why are some people better at inferring what others mean?

Mentors: Benjamin Bergen (Cognitive Science); James Hollan (Cognitive Science, CSE)

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Journal Articles

Trott, S., Jones, C., Chang, T., Michaelov, J., & Bergen, B. (2023). Do Large Language Models know what humans know? *Cognitive Science*, 47(7), e13309. [IF: 2.5]

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2023.) Word meaning is both categorical and continuous. *Psychological Review*. [IF: 8.247]

Ruytenbeek, N., Bergen, B., & **Trott, S.** (2023). Prosody and speech act interpretation: The case of French indirect requests. *Journal of French Language Studies*. [IF: 0.27]

DeLong, K., **Trott, S.,** Kutas, M. (2022). Offline dominance and zeugmatic similarity normings of variably ambiguous words assessed against a neural language model (BERT). *Behavior Research Methods*. [IF: 6.08]

Trott, S., Bergen, B., & Wittenberg, E. (2022). Spontaneous, controlled acts of reference between friends and strangers. *Language Resources and Evaluation*, 1-25. [IF: 1.358]

Morey, R. D., Kaschak, M. P., Díez-Álamo, A. M., Glenberg, A. M., Zwaan, R. A., Lakens, D., ... **Trott, S.** ... & Ziv-Crispel, N. (2022). A pre-registered, multi-lab non-replication of the action-sentence compatibility effect (ACE). *Psychonomic bulletin & review*, 29(2), 613-626. [IF: 4.41]

Trott, S., Reed, S., Kaliblotzky, D., Ferreira, V., & Bergen, B. (2022). The Role of Prosody in Disambiguating English Indirect Requests. *Language and Speech*, 00238309221087715. [IF: 1.47]

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2022). Languages are efficient, but for whom? *Cognition*, 225, 105094.

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2020). Why do human languages have homophones? *Cognition*, 205, 104449.

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2020). When Do Comprehenders Mentalize for Pragmatic Inference?. *Discourse Processes*, 1-21.

Trott, S., & Rossano, F. (2020). The Role of Entitlement in Formatting Preferences Across Requesters and Recipients. *Discourse Processes*, 1-22.

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2018). Individual Differences in Mentalizing Capacity Predict Indirect Request Comprehension. *Discourse Processes*, 1-33.

High-Impact Conference Proceedings¹

¹ In computational research (e.g., computational linguistics), conferences are the highest-impact venue for cutting-edge work.

Jones, C. R., **Trott, S.**, & Bergen, B. (2023, June). EPITOME: Experimental Protocol Inventory for Theory Of Mind Evaluation. In *First Workshop on Theory of Mind in Communicating Agents*.

Jones, C. R., Chang, T. A., Coulson, S., Michaelov, J. A., **Trott, S.**, & Bergen, B. (2022). Distributional Semantics Still Can't Account for Affordances. In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* (Vol. 44, No. 44). (Acceptance rate: 20.4%)

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2022). Can a pressure against homophones explain phonological neighborhoods?. In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* (Vol. 44, No. 44). (Acceptance rate: 20.4%)

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2021). RAW-C: Relatedness of Ambiguous Words—in Context (A New Lexical Resource for English). *Proceedings of the 59th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics and the 11th Joint International Conference on Natural Language Processing*. (Acceptance rate: 21.3%)

Trott, S., Torrent, T. T., Chang, N., & Schneider, N. (2020). (Re) construing Meaning in NLP. *Proceedings of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*. (Acceptance rate: 25.2%)

Liebscher, A., Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2020). Effects of Battle and Journey Metaphors on Charitable Donations for Cancer Patients. In *CogSci*. (Acceptance rate: ~20.4%)

Trott, S., Reed, S., Ferreira, V., Bergen, B. (2019). Prosodic cues signal the intent of potential indirect requests. *Proceedings of the 41st annual meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*. Montreal, Cognitive Science Society. (Acceptance rate: 18.2%)

Pending Articles

Trott, S. (Under Review). Can Large Language Models Help Augment English Psycholinguistic Datasets?

Trott, S. (Under Review). Large Language Models and the Wisdom of Small Crowds.

Jones, C., & **Trott, S.** (Under Review). Do Multimodal Large Language Models Show Evidence of Embodied Simulation?

Ruytenbeek, N. & **Trott, S.** (Under Review). Do prosodic cues convey intent directly or through contrastive marking? A study on French indirect requests.

PRESENTATIONS AND PANELS

Conference Presentations

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2022). Can a pressure against homophones explain phonological neighborhoods?. In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* (Vol. 44, No. 44). (Acceptance rate: 20.4%)

Trott, S., & Bergen, B. (2021). RAW-C: Relatedness of Ambiguous Words—in Context (A New Lexical Resource for English). *Proceedings of the 59th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics and the 11th Joint International Conference on Natural Language Processing*. (Acceptance rate: 21.3%)

Trott, S., Torrent, T. T., Chang, N., & Schneider, N. (2020). (Re) construing Meaning in NLP. *Proceedings of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*. (Acceptance rate: 25.2%)

Select Posters

Trott, S., Walker, D. (2023). Do Large Language Models Display the Fundamental Attribution Error? Presented at *Society for Judgment and Decision-Making (SJDM) 2023, in San Francisco, California*.

Trott, S., Semenuks, A., & Bergen, B. (2019). Sub-morphemic form-meaning systematicity: the impact of onset phones on word concreteness. In *The Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 2019, Montreal, Canada*.

Trott, S., Rossano, F. (2017). Theoretical Concerns for the Integration of Repair. *AAAI Fall Symposia Series: AI for Human-Robot Interaction. Arlington, Virginia*.

Trott, S., Bergen, B. (2017). A Theoretical Model of Indirect Request Comprehension. *AAAI Fall Symposia Series: AI for Human-Robot Interaction. Arlington, Virginia*.

Dodge, E., **Trott, S.**, Gilardi, L., & Stickles, E. (2017). *Grammar Scaling: Leveraging FrameNet Data to Increase Embodied Construction Grammar Coverage*. Technical report, AAAI SS-17-02.

- Trott, S., Eppe, M., & Feldman, J. (2016).** Recognizing Intention from Natural Language : Clarification Dialog and Construction Grammar. *Workshop on Communicating Intentions in Human-Robot Interaction*. Columbia University, New York University.
- Trott, S., Appriou, A., Feldman, J., & Janin, A. (2015).** Natural Language Understanding and Communication for Multi-Agent Systems. *AAAI Fall Symposium*, 137–141. Arlington, 2017.

Invited Talks

- Trott, S. (2023).** Word meaning is categorical and continuous. *Department of Cognitive Science, UC San Diego* (April 2023).
- Trott, S. (2023).** Using Large Language Models to understand human cognition. *Cogs 1, Winter 2023*.
- Trott, S., Bergen, B. (2018).** Mentalizing predicts perspective-taking during indirect request comprehension. *Center for Research in Language, UC San Diego*.

SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Department Service:

CSS Academic Support Lead [Fall, 2023 - *Present*]
CSS Hiring Committee [Fall, 2023]
CSS M.S. Admissions Committee [Winter, 2023]
Statistics Training Assistant [2019 – 2021]
Co-organizer of COGS 200 seminar [Spring, 2019]

Ad-Hoc Journal Reviewer

Natural Language Engineering
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
Cognitive Science
Mind and Language
Linguistics Vanguard

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE

Google

Research Intern (6/10/2019 – 9/10/2019)

- Proposed and implemented a system to analyze non-literal language use (e.g., metaphor, construal).
- Probed state-of-the-art language models (BERT) for evidence of construal.
- Wrote a paper for eventual publication in *ACL* (Trott et al, 2020).

Classy

Data Science Intern (6/20/2018 – 9/15/2019)

- Constructed a feature extraction pipeline (e.g., sentiment analysis, topic modeling) for charity campaigns.
- Conducted statistical analyses to predict measures of campaign success.

International Computer Science Institute

Research Assistant (6/2/2014 – 7/16/2016)

- Built an end-to-end system for Natural Language Understanding in a restricted domain.
- Created documentation and published papers about the NLU system in academic conferences (e.g., Trott et al., 2016).