

## Sean T. Trott

Assistant Professor | University of California, San Diego  
Cognitive Science | Psycholinguistics | Large Language Models

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## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### Assistant Teaching Professor

2022-Present

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

## EDUCATION

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### 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

## HONORS AND AWARDS

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### Kavli Institute for Brain and Mind Innovative Research Grant

2025-2026

*A universal code for meaning in biological and artificial neural networks.*  
Meenakshi Khosla, Lily Weng, **Sean Trott**, Pamela Riviere, Shreya Saha

### 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)

### UC San Diego Teaching Awards (*Nominated by department*)

2021

## PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

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### Journal Articles

**Trott, S.**, Walker, D. E., Taylor, S. M., & Coulson, S. (2025). Turing Jest: Distributional Semantics and One-Line Jokes. *Cognitive Science*, 49(5), e70066.

Schoenegger, P., Park, P. S., Karger, E., **Trott, S.**, & Tetlock, P. E. (2025). AI-augmented predictions: Llm assistants improve human forecasting accuracy. *ACM Transactions on Interactive Intelligent Systems*.

Zeelenberg, R., Pecher, D., van der Meijden, M. E., **Trott, S.**, & Bergen, B. (2025). Non-native Language Comprehenders Encode Implied Shapes of Objects in Memory. *Cortex*.

**Trott, S.** (2024). Large Language Models and the Wisdom of Small Crowds. *Open Mind*, 8, 723-738.

**Trott, S.** (2024). Can large language models help augment English psycholinguistic datasets? *Behavior Research Methods*, 1-19.

Jones, C., Bergen, B., & **Trott, S.** (2024). Do Multimodal Large Language Models and Humans Ground Language Similarly? *Computational Linguistics*, 1-25.

Jones, C., **Trott, S.**, & Bergen, B. (2024). Comparing Humans and Large Language Models on an Experimental Protocol Inventory for Theory of Mind Evaluation (EPITOME). *Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics (TACL)*.

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

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

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

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*.

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

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.

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

**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.

## Peer-Reviewed Conference Proceedings

He, Z., **Trott, S.**, Khosla, M. (2025, November.) Seeing Through Words, Speaking Through Pixels: Deep Representational Alignment Between Vision and Language Models. *Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (EMNLP), Main Conference*.

Vinaya, H., **Trott, S.**, & Coulson, S. (2025, September). Vision Language Model Representations Predict EEG Response to Visual and Auditory Attributes in Property Verification. *Architectures and Mechanisms for Language Processing*.

Rivière, P. D., Parkinson-Coombs, O., Jones, C., & **Trott, S.** (2025, July). Does Language Stabilize Quantity Representations in Vision Transformers? In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* (Vol. 47, No. 47).

Rivière, P. D., Beatty-Martínez, A. L., & **Trott, S.** (2025, April). Evaluating Contextualized Representations of (Spanish) Ambiguous Words: A New Lexical Resource and Empirical Analysis. In *Proceedings of the 2025 Conference of the Nations of the Americas Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Human Language Technologies (Volume 1: Long Papers)* (pp. 8322-8338).

Shin, H., & **Trott, S.** (2024, June). Do language models capture implied discourse meanings? *The 2024 Meeting of the Society for Computation in Linguistics (SCiL)*.

Jones, C., **Trott, S.**, & Bergen, B. (2024). Does Reading Words Help You Read Minds? In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* (Vol. 46, No. 46).

Vinaya, H., **Trott, S.**, & Coulson, S. (2024) Effects of Distributional and Sensorimotor Distance Measures on the EEG during Property Verification. In *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society* (Vol. 46, No. 46).

Jones, C., & **Trott, S.** (2024, May). Multimodal Large Language Models Show Evidence of Embodied Simulation. *The 2024 Joint International Conference on Computational Linguistics, Language Resources and Evaluation*. Torino, Italy. (Acceptance rate: ~33%)

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 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics and the 11<sup>th</sup> 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 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics*. (Acceptance rate: 25.2%)

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

## Pending Articles

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

Conde, J., Martínez, G., Arriaga, C., Trott, S., & Reviriego, P. (Under Review). LLM estimates of word characteristics.

## PRESENTATIONS AND PANELS

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### Conference Symposia

**Trott, S.** [Co-organizer and Speaker]. (2025). The role of language in human and machine intelligence. *Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society*. Full organizer list: Lupyan, G., Trott, S., Zettersten, M., Gentry, H., Griffiths, T., & Ivanova, A.

## Invited Talks

**Trott, S. (2025).** Psychology Meets LLM-ology. *Department of Psychology, Rutgers University-Newark*. (January 29, 2025.)

**Trott, S. (2025).** Cognitive Science Meets LLM-ology. *Department of Cognitive Science, UC San Diego*. (January 17, 2025.)

**Trott, S. (2024).** Large Language Models as Model Organisms—Opportunities and Challenges. *Department of Linguistics Colloquium, UC San Diego*. (November 4, 2024.)

**Trott, S. (2024).** Large Language Models as Model Organisms—Opportunities and Challenges. *BetterUp Invited Speaker*. (April 2, 2024.)

**Trott, S. (2024).** Using Large Language Models to understand human cognition. *Weinberg Institute for Cognitive Science, University of Michigan*. (February 19, 2024.)

**Trott, S. (2024).** Do Large Language Models Know What We Know? *COGS I, Winter 2024*. (January, 2024).

**Trott, S. (2023).** Using Large Language Models to understand human cognition. *COGS I, Winter 2023*. (February, 2023).

**Trott, S. (2022).** Word meaning is both categorical and continuous. *Department of Cognitive Science, UC San Diego* (April, 2022).

## Conference Presentations

**Trott, S. (2025).** Do we know enough to know what language models know? *Annual Cognitive Science Society* [Symposium Presentation] (San Francisco, CA).

Jones, C., Bergen, B., & **Trott, S.** (2024). Do Multimodal Large Language Models and Humans Ground Language Similarly? *Computational Linguistics*, 1-25. (Presented at EMNLP 2024.)

**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 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational*

*Linguistics and the 11<sup>th</sup> 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 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics.* (Acceptance rate: 25.2%)

## Select Posters and Workshop Presentations

Vinaya, H., Coulson, S., & **Trott, S.** (2025). Vision Language Model Representations Predict EEG Response to Visual and Auditory Attributes in Property Verification. *Society for Neurobiology of Language.*

He, Z., **Trott, S.,** & Khosla, M. (2025). Many-to-Many, Yet Convergent: Insights into the Alignment of Vision and Language Models. *8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Cognitive Computational Neuroscience.*

**Trott, S.,** & Rivière, P. D. (2024). Measuring and Modifying the Readability of English Texts with GPT-4. *Third Workshop on Text Simplification, Accessibility, and Readability (TSAR) at EMNLP 2024.*

Chkhaidze, A., Coulson, S., **Trott, S.,** & Kiyonaga, A. (2024, October). *Visual imagery vividness predicts degree of embodied simulation during language comprehension.* Paper presented at the Embodied and Situated Language Processing Conference (ESLP), Naples, Italy.

Arnett, C., Rivière, P., Chang, T., & **Trott, S.** (2024). Different Tokenization Schemes Lead to Comparable Performance in Spanish Number Agreement. In *Special Interest Group on Computational Morphology and Phonology (SIGMORPHON), North American Association for Computational Linguistics (NAACL).*

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.*

**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.

## TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP

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*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

2020-Present

CSS 211\*: Statistical Methods for Computational Social Science [Fall, 2025]  
COGS 150\*: Large Language Models and Cognitive Science [Spring, 2025]  
CSS 100\*: Advanced Programming for Computational Social Science [Spring, 2025]  
CSS 100\*: Advanced Programming for Computational Social Science [Spring, 2024]  
COGS 101C: Language [Spring, 2024]  
COGS 150\*: Large Language Models and Cognitive Science [Winter, 2024]  
CSS 2\*: Data and Model Programming for Computational Social 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**

2023-2024: Yuhan Fu (Honors student), Kai Bian (Faculty Mentor Program), Alice Li (Faculty Mentor Program), Sydney Taylor (Faculty Mentor Program)  
2022-2023: Owen Pi  
2021-2022: Monica Van (Honors student), Dan Kaliblotzky  
2020-2021: Alex Liebscher (Honors student)  
2019-2020: 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**

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

## **SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

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### **Service to the Field:**

Program Committee Member, *COLING 2025*

### **Department Service:**

[UC San Diego] CSS Academic Support Lead [Fall, 2023 - *Present*]  
[UC San Diego] CSS Hiring Committee [Fall, 2023]  
[UC San Diego] CSS M.S. Admissions Committee [Winter, 2023; Winter, 2024]  
[UC San Diego] Statistics Training Assistant [2019 – 2021]  
[UC San Diego] Co-organizer of COGS 200 seminar [Spring, 2019]

### **Reviewer**

2025: *National Science Foundation* ad-hoc panel member.

### **Journal Reviewer**



**2025:** *Open Mind* (2x), Workshop on Cognitive and Computational Linguistics (3x), *Cognitive Science*, *Cognition*, *Cognitive Science* conference (1x), *Language Resources and Evaluation*, Conference on Language Modeling (4x), *PeerJ Computer Science*, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, *Computational Linguistics*, *EMNLP* (4x), *Behavior Research Methods*, *Trends in Cognitive Science*, *Linguistics Vanguard*, *Mechanistic Interpretability Workshop* (2x).  
**2024:** *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*, *Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing* (8x), *Computational Linguistics*, *Behavior Research Methods*, *COLING* (5x)  
**2023:** *Natural Language Engineering*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*  
**2022:** *Cognitive Science*, *Mind and Language*, *Linguistics Vanguard*, *Behavior Research Methods*, *Frontiers in Communication*

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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### 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).