Emily Saunders, PhD

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Website

EDUCATION

San Diego State University/ University of California, San Diego; San Diego, CA
August 2024

PhD, Joint Doctoral Program in Language and Communicative Disorders

The University of Texas at Austin; Austin, TX **May 2019**

Bachelor of Arts in English
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics
Minor in American Sign Language

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Dynamics of visual attention, language and literacy development, cognitive development, psycholinguistics, bimodal bilingualism

RESEARCH & PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Language and Visual Attention Laboratory (Directors: Dr. Amy Lieberman and Dr. Naomi Caselli); Boston University

Postdoctoral Scholar August 2025 — Present

- I conduct research focusing on the dynamics of visual attention between deaf children and their signing caregivers using head mounted eye-trackers during naturalistic interactions, both independently and in collaboration with other researchers.
- As a senior researcher, I also supervise a team of five graduate research assistants. In addition to mentoring student researchers, my responsibilities include designing and implementing training protocol for data annotation, monitoring coding progress, and managing project assignments.

H&K Solutions (Project Directors: Dr. Melissa Herzig and Dr. Jenny Singleton); California Department of Developmental Services

November 2024 — May 2026

Research Project Manager (Part time)

- I provided logistic and administrative support for a multi-state team of researchers, including scheduling, fiscal management, and compliance with state of California policies. Our team developed an assessment tool for professionals working with deaf and hard-of-hearing adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Communication Profile Assessment for Support and Success (COMPASS) tool will be used by state-contracted assessors and service providers beginning in late 2026.

Laboratory for Language and Cognitive Neuroscience (Director: Dr. Karen Emmorey); San Diego State University

Graduate Researcher September 2019 – September 2024

- Throughout graduate school, I managed multiple studies concurrently, including a multi-year collaborative project working with several universities (SDSU, UT Austin, University of South

Florida, Gallaudet University, RIT). In addition to my graduate studies, I supervised two undergraduate interns as part of an NSF-funded internship offered by SDSU, including designing and leading a comprehensive training program in eye-tracking methodology, data collection, and analysis. I also presented research findings in both English and American Sign Language at numerous domestic and international conferences.

Signed Languages Lab (Director: Dr. David Quinto-Pozos); UT Austin
Undergraduate Research Assistant August 2017 – 2019

- As an undergraduate, I collected data for a study investigating bilingual vocabulary development for deaf children, working with fourth and fifth grade students from Texas School for the Deaf. Data collection involved behavioral assessments targeting English reading skill, ASL vocabulary, fingerspelling skill, nonverbal IQ, and working memory.

PUBLICATIONS

**Denotes mentored students*

Saunders, E., Emmorey, K., & Schotter, E. (2026). Morphological processing in the parafovea during sentence reading for deaf and hearing readers. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *47*, e38. doi:10.1017/S0142716426100848

Campbell, E., Kraus, K., Pontecorvo, E., **Saunders, E.**. & Lieberman, A. (in press). Language Acquisition and Language Access: What Research and Data Tell Us. In M. Hatrak (Ed.), *Writing Appropriate IFSPs and IEPs for Deaf Children: Emphasizing Language Acquisition and Access First.*

Sehyr, Z., Fillet, L., Billot-Vasquez, K., **Saunders, E.,** & Emmorey, K. (2026). Orthographic representations in American Sign Language fingerspelling. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, *47*, e18. doi:10.1017/S0142716426100617

Emmorey, K., Akers, E. M., **Saunders, E.,** *Bannazadeh, M., *Droubi, E., Cooley, F. G., & Schotter, E. R. (2025). Assessing the effects of sign language experience versus deafness on the leftward reading span. *Cognitive Science,* 49(12), e70162. https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.70162

Sinclair, G, Cooley, F. G., Stringer, C., **Saunders, E.,** Emmorey, K., & Schotter, E. (2025). The impact of an enhanced perceptual span on landing position: Evidence from hearing and deaf readers. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance.* https://doi.org/10.1037/xhp0001391

Cooley, F., Emmorey, K., **Saunders, E.,** & Schotter, E. (2025). Presenting the Signers' Eye-movements in English Reading (SEER) Corpus: An eye-tracking dataset of reading behaviors by deaf early signers and hearing non-signers. *Behavior Research Methods.*

Saunders, E., *Helms, H., & Emmorey, K. (2025). Morphological awareness and reading skill for deaf and hearing adults. *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, enaf042. https://doi.org/10.1093/jdsade/enaf042

Cooley, F., Emmorey, K., **Saunders, E.,** Sinclair, G., Stringer, C., & Schotter, E. (2025) Deaf readers' increased reliance on word length and predictability, but not frequency, to support reading efficiency. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition.* https://doi.org/10.1037/xlm0001415

Schotter, E. R., Stringer, C., **Saunders, E.,** Cooley, F. G., Sinclair, G., & Emmorey, K. (2024). The role of perceptual and word identification spans in reading efficiency: Evidence from hearing and deaf readers. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General,* 153(10), 2359–2377. https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0001633

Saunders, E., Mirault, J., & Emmorey, K. (2024). Activation of ASL signs during sentence reading for deaf readers: evidence from eye-tracking. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, 1-9.*

Stringer, C., Cooley, F., **Saunders, E.,** Emmorey, K., & Schotter, E. R. (2024). Deaf readers use leftward information to read more efficiently: Evidence from eye tracking. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 0(0)*. https://doi.org/10.1177/17470218241232407

Saunders, E., & Quinto-Pozos, D. (2021). Comprehension benefits of visual-gestural iconicity and spatial referencing. *Second Language Research,* 39(2), 363-386.

Quinto-Pozos, D., Muroski, K., & **Saunders, E.** (2019). Pronouns in ASL-English simultaneous interpretation. *Journal of Interpretation,* 27(1), 3.

Manuscripts Under Review

Higgins, M., **Saunders, E.,** & Lieberman, A (revision under review). Looking for language in all the right places: Parent signing supports deaf children's development of visual attention for language. *Language Learning and Development.*

In Prep

Saunders, E., Midgley, K., Holcomb, P., & Emmorey, K. Assessing the strength of the morpho-orthographic segmentation route for deaf readers using event-related potentials.

Saunders, E., Sampson, T., Campbell, E., Yu, C., & Lieberman, A. Visual attention patterns of deaf toddlers during shared picture book reading in ASL.

DISSERTATION

Saunders, E. C. (2024). *Eyes on Morphology: Investigating the Role of Morphological Processing for Deaf Readers*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (3117707765).

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Saunders, E., Sampson, T., Campbell, E., Yu, C., & Lieberman, A (2026, November). *Visual attention patterns of deaf toddlers during shared picture book reading in American Sign Language* [Poster presentation]. Boston University Conference on Language Development. Boston, MA, United States.

Saunders, E., Higgins, M., & Lieberman, A. (2026, July). *Predictors of gaze shifting and attention in young deaf signing children* [Oral presentation]. International Congress on Infant Studies. Panama City, Panama.

Saunders, E., Higgins, M., & Lieberman, A. (2026, April). *Allocation of visual attention among deaf children in interactive play and independent sign recognition* [Poster presentation]. Cognitive Development Society, Montreal, Canada.

Saunders, E., Schotter, E., & Emmorey, K. (2026, March). *Morphological processing in the parafovea during sentence reading for deaf readers* [Poster presentation]. 39th Conference on Human Sentence Processing, Boston, MA, United States.

Saunders, E., Schotter, E., & Emmorey, K. (2024, November). *Morphological processing in the parafovea during sentence reading for deaf readers* [Oral presentation]. Psychonomic Society 65th Annual Meeting, New York City, NY, United States.

Saunders, E., Schotter, E., & Emmorey, K. (2024, August). *Morphological processing in the parafovea during sentence reading for deaf readers* [Oral presentation]. European Conference on Eye Movements (ECEM), Maynooth, Ireland.

Saunders, E., Stringer, C., Sinclair, G., Cooley, F., Schotter, E., and Emmorey, K. (2023, November). *Predictors of Word and Sign Superiority Effects for Deaf Readers* [Poster presentation]. Psychonomic Society 64th Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, United States.

Saunders, E., Mirault, J., and Emmorey, K. (2023, August). *Activation of ASL signs during sentence reading for deaf readers: evidence from eye-tracking* [Oral presentation]. Architectures and Mechanisms for Language Processing (AMLaP) 29, San Sebastian, Spain.

Saunders, E., Mirault, J., and Emmorey, K. (2022, September). *Activation of ASL signs during sentence reading for deaf readers: evidence from eye-tracking* [Poster Presentation]. Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR) 14, Osaka, Japan (Conference attended virtually).

Saunders, E., Mirault, J., and Emmorey, K. (2022, August). *Activation of ASL signs during sentence reading for deaf readers: evidence from eye-tracking* [Oral presentation]. European Conference on Eye Movements (ECEM), Leicester, United Kingdom.

Saunders, E., Midgley, K., Holcomb, P., and Emmorey, K. (2022, April). *Assessing the strength of the morpho-orthographic segmentation route for deaf readers* [Poster presentation]. Cognitive Neuroscience Society (CNS), San Francisco, CA, United States.

Saunders, E., Sehyr, Z., and Emmorey, K. (2021, July). *Examining spelling error patterns in ASL Fingerspelling and English* [Oral presentation]. Society for the Scientific Study of Reading (SSSR), Virtual Conference.

Saunders, E., and Quinto-Pozos, D. (2019, September). *Benefits of Iconicity in Acquisition and Comprehension of a Signed Second Language* [Poster presentation]. Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR) 13, Hamburg, Germany.

Saunders, E., and Quinto-Pozos, D. (2019, April). *Benefits of Iconicity in Acquisition and Comprehension of a Signed Second Language* [Poster presentation]. UT Austin Liberal Arts Research Week, Austin, TX, United States.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND INVITED GUEST LECTURES

Department of Cognitive Science, University of California, San Diego
Teaching Assistant

- Language, Culture, and Cognition (Professor Bryan Rill) Spring 2023
- Language, Culture, and Cognition (Professor Lera Boroditsky) Spring 2022

School of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences, San Diego State University
Teaching Assistant

- Sign Languages and Deaf Culture (Professor Amanda Keare) Spring 2021

Laboratory for Language & Cognitive Neuroscience, San Diego State University
Internship Mentor Summer 2024

- Designed and supervised an NSF-funded summer internship on eye-tracking research, mentoring two deaf undergraduate students in study design, data collection, and analysis/interpretation of results. Work from this internship resulted in a peer-reviewed publication co-authored with both undergraduate intern researchers.

Palomar College ASL Department March 2024, March 2025
Invited Guest Lecture

- Invited to present a guest lecture introducing ASL students to the Laboratory for Language and Cognitive Neuroscience and summarizing the lab's current research, including eye-tracking, ERP, and fMRI research.

UC San Diego Department of Education February 2024, May 2024
Invited Guest Lecture

- Invited to present a guest lecture introducing a class of undergraduate education majors to the use of eye-tracking methodologies to study language processing, specifically reading.

Gallaudet University PhD in Educational Neuroscience Program September 2023
Invited Guest Lecture

- Invited to present about ongoing eye-tracking research from a collaborative NSF grant to Gallaudet University professors and students.

WORKSHOPS ATTENDED

Jump Start to Teaching Skills August 2026
Boston University

- Attended a week-long workshop on developing foundational knowledge and skills related to teaching and teaching-intensive faculty roles; earned BU Postdoctoral Teaching Skills badge.

Inclusive Assessment of Multimodal Multilinguals (IAM3) Institute June 2022
University of Stockholm, Stockholm, Sweden

- One of eight students selected from the United States to participate in a two-week institute focusing on the assessment of multiple languages in multiple modalities (signed, spoken, written), centering multilingual children and how they use their languages.

UC Davis/San Diego State University ERP Bootcamp August 2021
San Diego, CA

- Attended a two-week virtual bootcamp focusing on EEG and ERP methodology and analysis.

GRANT APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED

Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Individual Postdoctoral Fellowship (Parent F32) April 2026
National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

- Proposal “Development of visual attention and early literacy practices for deaf children across early childhood” submitted April 2026.

Ruth L. Kirschstein Individual Predoctoral Fellowship (Parent F31) December 2022
National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

- Proposal “Investigating the role of morphological processing for deaf readers” discussed but not funded.

HONORS AND AWARDS

College of Health and Human Services Student Travel Award August 2022

- Received a scholarship in support of conference attendance. Award was used to offset the financial cost of presenting at an international conference.

Rapoport-King Thesis Scholarship October 2018

- Received a $3500 scholarship recognizing students completing a thesis as a part of the Departmental Honors Program, awarded based on academic record and quality of thesis proposal.

Student Research Showdown, Third Place Winner November 2018

- Awarded third place of twenty-seven entries in a video competition for undergraduate researchers at The University of Texas at Austin. Submitters created two-minute videos about their research aimed at a general audience, which were voted on by UT students and judged by a faculty panel.

AFFILIATIONS

International Congress of Infant Studies (ICIS) April 2026 – Present

Cognitive Development Society January 2026 – Present

Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) March 2024 – Present

Psychonomic Society June 2023 – Present

Women in Cognitive Science (WiCS) November 2023 – Present

Cognitive Neuroscience Society (CNS) January 2022 – Present

Society for the Neurobiology of Language (SNL) September 2020 – Present

Society for the Scientific Study of Reading (SSSR) March 2020 – Present

VL2 Student Network November 2019 – Present

Sign Language Linguistics Society August 2019 – Present

SKILLS

Computer: DataVyu, EyeLink 1000+ and Portable Duo, SR Research Experiment Builder and Data Viewer, R/R Studio, ELAN, Praat, STATA, OpenSesame

Languages: English, American Sign Language