

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, Boston University

August 2025 — Present

Postdoctoral Scholar

- 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.

H&K Solutions, 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, San Diego State University

September 2019 – September 2024

Graduate Researcher

- 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.

- 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

- 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 (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

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

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

Palomar College ASL Department
Invited Guest Lecture

March 2024, March 2025

- 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 on sentence processing and eye tracking.

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

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