

Austin German

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Research Interests

homesign & emerging sign languages, sign language typology, language documentation, linguistic ethnography

Academic Appointments

2024-present NSF Postdoctoral Research Fellow. Department of Linguistics, University of Chicago. Faculty sponsor: Diane Brentari.

Education

- 2024 PhD in Linguistics. The University of Texas at Austin. Thesis: *The emergence of linguistic structure in Zinacantec Family Homesign*. Supervised by Richard Meier and David Quinto-Pozos. <https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/56536>
- 2021 MA in Linguistics. The University of Texas at Austin. Thesis: *The emergence of combinatorial structure in Zinacantec Family Homesign*. Supervised by Jenny Singleton and David Quinto-Pozos.
- 2018 BA in Linguistics (with Distinction) & BS in Cognitive Science. University of California, San Diego. Thesis: *Constructing space in Zinacantec Family Homesign*. Supervised by Gabriela Caballero and John B. Haviland.

Journal Publications

- Under review **Austin German**. Conventionalization of size-and-shape specifiers in Zinacantec Family Homesign. *Sign Language & Linguistics*.
- Under review **Austin German**. The impact of interaction of lexical and sub-lexical variation in Zinacantec Family Homesign. *Glossa*.
- 2024 **Austin German**. Metalinguistic discourse in an emerging sign language. *Languages* 9(7):240. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages9070240> [Part of special issue “Coexpressivity, Gesture, and Language Emergence: Modality, Composition, and Creation”].
- 2023 **Austin German**. Abrupt grammatical reorganization of an emergent sign language: the expression of motion in Zinacantec Family Homesign. *Diachronica*. <https://doi.org/10.1075/dia.22039.ger> [Part of thematic issue “The historical linguistics of signed languages”]
- 2023 Laura Horton, Lynn Hou, **Austin German**, & Jenny Singleton. Sign language socialization and participant frameworks in three indigenous Mesoamerican

communities: A qualitative comparative study. *Research on Children and Social Interaction*. <https://doi.org/10.1558/rcsi.24314>

2022 Cornelia Loos, **Austin German**, Richard P. Meier. Simultaneous structures in sign languages: acquisition and emergence. *Frontiers in Psychology* 13:992589. doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.992589.

2021 Gabriela Caballero & **Austin German**. Grammatical tone patterns in Choguita Rarámuri (Tarahumara). *International Journal of American Linguistics* 87:2, pp. 149-178. doi.org/10.1086/712980.

Book chapters

In press **Austin German**. Serial verb constructions in Zinacantec Family Homesign. In Loos, C., Pfau, R., & Sümer, B. *Serial predicates across modalities*. Language Science Press.

Under review **Austin German**. Size-and-shape specifiers in Zinacantec Family Homesign: Conventionalization and iconicity. In Shield, A., Cormier, K., Rathmann, C., & Quinto-Pozos, D. *Advances in the understanding of modality in sign, gesture, and speech [Festschrift for Richard Meier]*. Cambridge University Press.

Conference presentations

Paper Presentations

2025 **Austin German**. The distribution of lexical and phonological variation in Zinacantec Family Homesign. Sign Language Contact, Variation, & Change. University of Birmingham, Birmingham UK. August 20-21.

2025 **Austin German**. The impact of interaction on lexical and sub-lexical variation in Zinacantec Family Homesign. Chicago Linguistics Society, University of Chicago. May 9-11.

2024 **Austin German**. Birth order effects on argument structure devices in Zinacantec Family Homesign. To be presented at SIGN10 [in International Sign]. University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus, Trinidad & Tobago. December 9-12. [Abstract in international sign: <https://youtu.be/bPMtBx2BS7s?si=jW8XA3hioUR49bo->].

2024 **Austin German**. Functions and conventionalization of size-and-shape specifiers in Zinacantec Family Homesign. [Presented live in ASL with pre-recorded English voiceover]. 16th Conference of the High Desert Linguistics Society. University of New Mexico. Albuquerque, New Mexico. November 1-3.

2023 **Austin German**. Convencionalización léxica en una lengua de señas emergente de Zinacantán. Tenth Conference on Indigenous Languages of Latin America (CILLA-X). The University of Texas at Austin. November 9-11.

- 2022 **Austin German.** Evidence of an emergent classifier system in Zinacantec Family Homesign. Cognitive and Cultural Influences on Language Emergence. May 25-27. Virtual workshop. doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.35673.39523.
- 2022 **Austin German.** The emergence of combinatorial structure in Zinacantec Family Homesign. Paper presentation at the 96th Annual Meeting of the Linguistics Society of America. January 6-9. Washington, D.C. doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24768.20485
- 2021 **Austin German.** The emergence of segmentation in Zinacantec Family Homesign. Paper presentation at the 20th meeting of the Texas Linguistics Society. March 5-6. The University of Texas at Austin.
- 2019 **Austin German.** Grammatical development in a Mayan sign language. Paper presentation at the Ninth Conference on Indigenous Languages of Latin America (CILLA-IX). The University of Texas at Austin. October 10-12.
- 2019 Gabriela Caballero & **Austin German.** Grammatical tone patterns in Choguita Rarámuri (Tarahumara). Paper presentation at the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas (SSILA). January 6-12. New York, NY.

Posters

- 2022 **Austin German.** Evidence of an emergent classifier system in Zinacantec Family Homesign. 14th conference on Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR14). National Museum of Ethnology (MINPAKU). Osaka, Japan. September 27-29. [doi.org.10.13140/RG.2.2.13434.36804](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.13434.36804)
- 2022 **Austin German.** The roots of spatial grammar in Zinacantec Family Homesign. 14th conference on Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR14). National Museum of Ethnology (MINPAKU). Osaka, Japan. September 27-29. doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.16789.81123
- 2021 Lynn Y.S. Hou, Laura Horton, **Austin German**, & Jenny Singleton. (2021). Sign Language Socialization in Three Indigenous Mesoamerican Communities: A Qualitative Comparative Study. 46th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development. Virtual Conference. November 4-7.
- 2019 **Austin German.** Emerging functions of manual holds in Zinacantec Family Homesign. 13th conference on Theoretical Issues in Sign Language Research (TISLR13). Universität Hamburg. Hamburg, Germany. September 26-28.
- 2018 **Austin German.** Eye gaze and simultaneous constructions in Zinacantec Family Homesign. 8th annual meeting of the International Society for Gesture Studies (ISGS8). Cape Town, South Africa. July 4-8.

Invited presentations

- 2025 **Austin German.** *The non-gestural nature of size-and-shape specifiers in Zinacantec Family Homesign.* Center for Gesture, Sign & Language. University of Chicago. October 18th.
- 2025 **Austin German.** *The sociolinguistic distribution of (sub)lexical variation in Zinacantec Family Homesign.* Invited talk presented at University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Linguistics. Santa Barbara, CA. April 17th.
- 2025 **Austin German.** *The sociolinguistic distribution of (sub)lexical variation in Zinacantec Family Homesign.* Invited talk presented at San Diego State University, Department of Linguistics & Asian/Middle Eastern Languages. San Diego, CA. April 16th.
- 2025 **Austin German.** *Una lengua de señas emergente de Zinacantán, Chiapas.* Keynote presentation [in Mexican Sign Language] at the 12^a Reunión Nacional de Sordos e Intérpretes de LSM. San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. February 22.
- 2024 **Austin German.** *Conventionalization of iconic handshapes in Zinacantec Family Homesign.* Center for Gesture, Sign & Language. University of Chicago. October 18th.

Other projects

- 2020 David Quinto-Pozos, Jenny Singleton, Richard Meier, Donna Altuna, Susie Tiggs, Caitie Coons, **Austin German**, Eric Hale, & Adam Sales. *86th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature; Senate Bill 54: Evaluating the performance of RDSPD students.* Report to the Texas Education Agency. University of Texas at Austin. Austin, Texas.
- 2020 David Quinto-Pozos, Jenny Singleton, Richard Meier, Donna Altuna, Susie Tiggs, Caitie Coons, **Austin German**, Eric Hale, & Adam Sales. *86th Regular Session of the Texas Legislature; Senate Bill 54: Evaluating the performance of RDSPD students.* Report to the Legislative Budget Board. University of Texas at Austin. Austin, Texas.
- 2017 Gabriela Caballero, Lucien Carroll, Patrick Mullen, Sean Stein, **Austin German**, Klaus Kim & Andres Aguilar (compilation, analysis). Choguira Rarámuri annotated corpus and lexical database. [Web interface designed by Russell Horton, and further developed by Lucien Carroll]. <http://field.ucsd.edu/raramuri/> (documentation available at <https://github.com/ucsd-field-lab/kwaras>).

Grants

- 2024- National Science Foundation Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (NSF-SPRF). *The emergence of phonological structure in a family homesign system* (BCS 2404654). PI: **Austin German**; Co-PI: Diane Brentari. \$170,000

- 2022- National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (NSF-DDRIG).
 2024 *The emergence of linguistic structure in a family homesign language* (BCS 2141436). PI: Richard P. Meier; Co-PIs: **Austin German**, David Quinto-Pozos. \$15,741.

Fellowships

- 2023 Graduate Continuing Fellowship, UT Austin.
 2022 College of Liberal Arts Provost's Competitive Continuing Fellowship.
 2020 Carl J and Tamari M. Tricoli Fellowship.
 2020 Joel Sherzer Award, Center for Indigenous Languages of Latin America, UT Austin.
 2018 Graduate recruitment fellowship, UT Austin.

Awards

- 2024 College of Liberal Arts Dean's Distinguished PhD Graduate Award. UT Austin.

Research Experience

- 2020-2021 Graduate research assistant. Child Language Lab, Department of Linguistics, The University of Texas at Austin. P.I.: Jenny Singleton.
 2020 Graduate research assistant. Department of Linguistics, The University of Texas at Austin. *Examining methods and standards for evaluating certain Texas regional day school program for the deaf (RDSPD) students*. P.I.: David Quinto-Pozos.
 2017-2018 Undergraduate research assistant. Department of Linguistics, University of California, San Diego. *A Reference Grammar of Choguila Raramuri (Tarahumara) [ISO 639-3: tar]*. P.I.: Gabriela Caballero Hernández.
 2016-2017 Undergraduate research assistant. Center for Research in Language, University of California, San Diego. *Zinacantec Family Home Sign: Structure and Socialization in the First and Second Generations of a Spontaneous Emerging Sign Language*. P.I.: John B. Haviland.

Student Engagement

BA Thesis Readership

- 2024 Alredo Tuz Baas. *Preferencias en el uso de marcos de referencia espaciales entre los usuarios sordos y bilingües de la Lengua de Señas Maya Yucateca*. [Preferences in the use of spatial frames of references between deaf and bilingual users of Yucatec Maya Sign Language]. BA Thesis. Universidad de Oriente, Valladolid, Mexico. Supervisor: Olivier Le Guen. Readers: **Austin German**
 2021 Uicab, Ana Rocío. (2021). *Estudio comparativo del léxico de la Lengua de señas Maya Yucateca en tres comunidades de la Península de Yucatán: Chemax, Chicán y Trascorral*. [Comparative study of the lexicon of Yucatec Maya Sign Language in three communities of the Yucatán Peninsula: Chemax, Chicán, and Trascorral]. BA Thesis. Universidad de Oriente, Valladolid, Mexico. Supervisor: Olivier Le Guen. Readers: **Austin German** & Josefina Safar.

Research Mentorship

- 2022-2023 Undergraduate research assistant (for credit, *ASL 357: Undergraduate Research*). Trained in sign language transcription using ELAN, with a focus on segmentation of utterances into clauses and coding word order.
- 2022-2023 Undergraduate research assistant (paid). Trained in sign language transcription using ELAN, with a focus on annotating classifier handshapes.

Teaching Experience

- 2024 Teaching Assistant. *American Sign Language Program*. UT Austin.
- 2022 Instructor of record. *Introduction to the study of language*. UT Austin.
- 2021 Teaching Assistant. *American Sign Language Program*. UT Austin.
- 2020 Teaching Assistant. *Dying languages: what world linguistic diversity means for us*. Instructor: Anthony Woodbury. UT Austin.
- 2019 Teaching Assistant. *Introduction to the study of language*. Instructor: David Quinto-Pozos. UT Austin.
- 2017 Teaching Assistant. *English conversation and fluency*. UCSD Extension English Language Institute.

Service

University committees

- 2022-2024 College of Liberal Arts Graduate Student Advisory Council, UT Austin
- 2022-2023 Member of search committee for Assistant Professor in sign language linguistics. Department of Linguistics, UT Austin.
- 2020-2021 Alternate Graduate Student Assembly Representative for the Department of Linguistics, UT Austin.
- 2019-2020 Primary Graduate Student Assembly Representative for the Department of Linguistics, UT Austin.
- 2018-2019 Alternate Graduate Student Assembly Representative for the Department of Linguistics, UT Austin.

Conference organization

- 2020-2021 Co-organizer, Friends of Uto-Aztecan Conference. (Virtual Conference).
- 2018-2019 Co-organizer. Symposium About Language and Society, Austin (SALSA) XXVII. UT Austin.

Professional Memberships

Linguistic Society of America (LSA).

Sign Language & Linguistics Society (SLLS).

Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas (SSILA).

Technical Skills

Extensive experience with ELAN.

Basic knowledge of R/RStudio.

Fieldwork experience

2025	Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico. 5 weeks.
2025	Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico. 3 weeks.
2024	Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico. 4 weeks.
2023	Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico. 6 weeks.
2022	Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico. 6 weeks.
2019	Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico. 6 weeks.
2017	Zinacantán, Chiapas, Mexico. 1 week.

Languages

English	<i>native</i>
American Sign Language	<i>proficient</i>
Spanish	<i>proficient</i>
Zinacantec Family Homesign	<i>intermediate</i>
Tsotsil	<i>elementary</i>
Mexican Sign Language	<i>elementary</i>
Tagalog	<i>elementary/heritage language</i>