

Researcher

Andrea Hernando
Georgetown University, USA

Title of Project

The Socioemotional Landscape of Study Abroad:
An Examination of Enjoyment, Anxiety, Linguistic Insecurity,
Social Networks, and Language Development

Research Supervisor

Prof. Cristina Sanz
Georgetown University, USA

**TIRF Research Topic Investigated**

Individual Learner Differences and Effective Language Education

Supported by

Cambridge

Bio

Andrea Hernando is a Ph.D. candidate in Spanish Linguistics at Georgetown University. Originally from Argentina, Andrea's research interests include language development in study abroad settings, the psychology of language learning, social networks, and heritage language education. At Georgetown, Andrea has taught courses including Spanish for Business, Teaching Spanish, Spanish for Heritage Speakers, as well as introductory and advanced Spanish courses.

Project Summary

My dissertation investigates how individual differences such as emotions and aspects of social interactions affect language development in short-term study abroad (SA) programs. Grounded in the value of interaction for language learning, and the assumption that SA participants frequently receive input from local speakers while abroad, SA has traditionally been viewed as beneficial for language development. However, research suggests that participation alone does not guarantee language development. Addressing this gap, my project aims to understand how students who are immersed in similar contexts (namely, short-term SA programs) can experience different outcomes by examining individual differences beyond the classroom.

To do so, I analyze sojourners' trajectories of anxiety, enjoyment, and linguistic insecurity, together with aspects of their relationships abroad, including interaction frequency, intensity, and language use. Methodologically, I use validated scales to measure emotions, a social networks questionnaire to observe social network development, the elicited imitation task to assess language development over time, and a series of reflective journals. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements from applied linguistics, psychology and social network theory borrowed from sociolinguistics, I incorporate interviews with key stakeholders, including program directors, instructors, and host families to understand the topic from multiple perspectives.



The International Research Foundation
for English Language Education

Given the lack of research that addresses psychological and contextual factors as interconnected systems, this project contributes to a more holistic account of language development beyond the classroom. Results promise to inform researchers, program designers, and directors on how to create programs that better support learners with diverse emotional and personality profiles.