

Dunia Catalina Méndez Vallejo

Contact

Princeton University
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Education

PhD

Dual PhD in: Linguistics and Hispanic Linguistics
 Institution: Indiana University. Bloomington, IN.
 Specialization: Syntax
 Thesis title: *Focalizing ser ('to be') in Colombian Spanish*
 Thesis directors: Yoshihisa Kitagawa and Miguel Rodríguez-Mondoñedo
 Conferred: October 2009

M.A.

In: Hispanic Linguistics
 Institution: Indiana University. Bloomington, IN.
 Conferred: January 2006

In: Linguistics
 Institution: Indiana University. Bloomington, IN.
 Conferred: December 2005

In: Semiological Studies
 Institution: Universidad Industrial de Santander. Bucaramanga, Colombia
 Thesis title: *Análisis Semiótico del Discurso Producido por los Jóvenes Universitarios de Bucaramanga acerca del Sujeto Tatuado.*
 Thesis director: José Horacio Rosales Cueva
 Conferred: February 2002.

B.A.

In: Language Teaching.
 Institution: Universidad Industrial de Santander. Bucaramanga, Colombia
 Conferred: October 1999.

Research and Teaching Interests

Primary areas:	Syntax and information structure; Syntax-prosody interface; Sociolinguistics; Morpho-syntactic variation; Hispanic Linguistics. Focalizing ser structure.
Secondary areas:	Pragmatics-prosody interface; Dialectology; Language change; Language reclamation and Indigenous languages.

Teaching Experience

Princeton University:	Associate Director of the Spanish Language Program Senior Lecturer (Fall 2013 – present). Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Princeton, NJ.
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SPA 102: Beginner's Spanish II (Spring '24, '25).
SPA 103: Accelerated beginning/intermediate Spanish (Fall '13, '14, '15, '17, '24).
SPA 105: Intermediate Spanish (Fall '14, Fall '20).
SPA 107: Intermediate/Advanced Spanish (Spring '15, Fall '21, Spring '22).
SPA 108: Advanced Spanish. (Spring '14, '20).
SPA 211: Varieties of Spanish. (Spring '15, '16, '17, '18, '19, '20, '22, '23, '24, '25, '26).
SPA 233: Languages of the Americas. (Fall '19, '20, '21, '22, '23, '24, '25).
SPA 304: Spanish in the Community (Fall '25, Spring '26).
SPA 307: Advanced Spanish. (Spring '14, '16, '18, '19, '21, '23; Fall '15, '16, '18, '19, '22, '23).
SPA 500: Methodology of SPA and POR Language Teaching. (Spring '17, '21, '26).

College of William & Mary:	Visiting Assistant Professor. (2012 – 2013). Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. Williamsburg, VA
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HISP 287: Spanish Phonetics. (Spring 2013). Basic concepts and methods in phonetics and phonology; improvement in pronunciation and fluency.

HISP 305: Advanced Grammar and Composition. (Fall 2012). Advanced study on specific grammar topics. Practice of writing and reading skills.

West Virginia University:

Teaching Assistant Professor. (2009 – 2012).
Department of World Languages, Literatures, and
Linguistics. Morgantown, WV

Linguistics 501: Structure of Spanish. (Spring 2010; Spring 2011; Spring 2012). Previously LING 401. Required course for M.A. students.

Linguistics 393: Language and Gender. (Spring 2012). Cross-listed course for Linguistics and Women Studies students.

Linguistics 311: Introduction to Structural Linguistics. (Fall 2011). Required course for all Foreign Language majors. Basic concepts and methods in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, among other linguistic fields.

Spanish 301: Conversation. (Fall 2009; Spring 2010; Fall 2010; Spring 2011; Fall 2011; Spring 2012). Intermediate level Spanish.

Spanish 393L: Spanish Pronunciation and Phonetics. (Spring 2010, Spring 2011). Basic concepts and methods in phonetics and phonology.

Spanish 493L: Hispanic Dialectology. (Fall 2010). Hybrid course offered to advanced Spanish majors and M.A. students. Overview of basic concepts and methodology regarding Spanish dialects, language contact, and linguistic policies.

Indiana University:

Associate Instructor. (2003 – 2009).
Department of Spanish and Portuguese.
Bloomington, IN

Linguistics 103: Introduction to the study of language. (Summer 2008). Offered by the Linguistics Department. Basic concepts and methods in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, among other linguistic fields.

Spanish 150: First Year Spanish. (Fall 2003; Spring 2004). Elementary level Spanish: essential grammar and vocabulary.

Spanish 200: Second Year Spanish I. (Fall 2008; Fall 2004). First part of the intermediate level: Basic grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing.

Spanish 250: Second Year Spanish II. (Spring 2005; Summer 2007). Second part of the intermediate level: Basic grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing.

Spanish 275: Introduction to Hispanic Culture. (Spring 2008; Fall 2006; Fall 2005). Review of the historical and cultural development of Spanish-speaking countries.

Spanish 310: Spanish Grammar and Composition. (Spring 2006). Advanced study on specific grammar topics. Practice of writing and reading skills.

Spanish 312: Introduction to Expository Writing in Spanish. (Spring 2007). Development of stylistic and academic writing. Practice of reading skills.

Spanish 326: Introduction to Hispanic Linguistics. (Fall 2007). Overview of basic linguistic concepts and topics: phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax.

University of Scranton:

Spanish Teaching Assistant. (2002-2003).
Department of Foreign Languages.
Scranton, PA.

Spanish 311: Spanish Conversation (Spring 2003). Development of self-expression in Spanish: Practice in both reading and speaking skills. Responsible for class preparation and evaluation following a common syllabus.

Spanish 312: Spanish Composition. (Fall 2002). Intensive writing practice, grammar, writing, analysis and composition. Responsible for class preparation and evaluation following a common syllabus.

Spanish 211: Intermediate Spanish I (Spring 2003). First part of the Intermediate level: Basic grammar topics, writing, and speaking. Responsible for class preparation and evaluation following a common syllabus.

Spanish 212: Intermediate Spanish II. (Fall 2002). Second part of the Intermediate level: Writing, speaking, and general topics on Hispanic culture. Responsible for class preparation and evaluation following a common syllabus.

Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA): Part time instructor. (2002)
Bucaramanga, Colombia.

Elementary English: Essential grammar and vocabulary. Development of speaking and listening skills. Computer-based course for students in the Tourism Program. Full course responsibilities.

Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino:

Part time instructor. (2001 - 2002).
Department of Foreign Languages
Bucaramanga, Colombia.

Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced English: Development of basic, intermediate, and advanced communication skills. Directed to undergraduate students fulfilling their foreign language requirement. Responsible for class preparation and evaluation following a common syllabus.

Universidad Industrial de Santander:

English instructor. (1998 - 2002).
Instituto de Lenguas
Bucaramanga, Colombia.

English Instructor. Taught basic, intermediate, and advanced English courses for teenagers and adults. Responsible for class preparation and evaluation following a common syllabus.

Methodology Instructor. Workshops directed primarily to elementary and secondary school teachers. Designed in partnership with the Department of National Education. Full course responsibilities.

Academic Service

Acting Co-Director. (Fall 2025-Spring 2026). Co-directing the Spanish Language Program. Princeton, NJ.

Associate Director. (Since August 2013). Co-directing the Spanish Language Program. Princeton, NJ.

Academic Adviser. (Since Fall 2023). Advising first- and second-year students at Yeh College. Princeton, NJ.

Faculty advisor for the ProCES Derian Summer Internship Program. (Summer 2025, Summer 2026). Project: Indigenous Language Activism: Lunaape Land, Language, and Belongings. Princeton, NJ.

Member of the Indigenous Language Initiative. (Since Fall 2023). Less Commonly Taught Languages committee and Indigenous Language faculty adviser. Princeton, NJ.

JP and Senior Thesis Advisor. (Since 2018). Supervising JP and Senior theses for undergraduate students in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, the Program in Linguistics, and the Department of Computer Science. Princeton, NJ.

Voces de Princeton Coordinator. (Since 2018). Supervising the [Voces de Princeton](#) project, conducting interviews, annotating transcribed texts, and editing videos. Princeton, NJ.

Affiliated LIN faculty member. (Since 2018). Participating in some Linguistics Program meetings. Sitting with the Committee. Princeton, NJ.

Fulbright National Screening Committee Member. (Since 2021). Reviewing applications and selecting candidates for the English Assistant Program.

Reviewer. (Since 2021). Reviewed abstracts for the *Hispanic Linguistic Symposium*, and papers for *Studia Linguistica*, and the *Princeton Undergraduate Research Journal*.

Member of the Spanish Language Programs at the Ivys. (Since 2024). Co-organizing biennially symposia for Spanish Language lecturers across the Ivy Leagues.

Member of the PCLS Advisory Committee. (2023-2025). Attending organizational meetings for budgetary and programmatic purposes. Princeton, NJ.

Presenter and facilitator for the Annual Munsee Language & History Symposium. (October 2024 and October 2025). IAS and Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Co-organizer CLTL Workshop. (October 2025). Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Facilitator for the Unami Language and History Symposium. (April 2025). IAS and Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

Faculty co-director PiA Program. (May-June 2024). Co-directing the trip and teaching an Advanced Spanish course. Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Faculty co-director PiS Program. (May-June 2023; May-June 2017). Co-directing the trip and teaching an Advanced Spanish course. Toledo, Spain.

Co-organizer Lunaape Language Camp. (Summer 2023). Helping Prof. Suzanne Akbari from IAS with logistical and administrative tasks. Princeton, NJ.

External Thesis Advisor. (2022). Supervised a senior thesis for students from the English Teaching program at the Universidad Industrial de Santander - Bucaramanga, Colombia.

Canvas Advisory Group Member. (2019). Participated in a series of workshops and meetings to help with the implementation of the Canvas LMS on campus.

Aprendo Coordinator. (April 2016-May 2019). Supervising the [Aprendo](#) project and creating materials for SPA 101-103. Princeton, NJ.

Tertulia Lingüística Coordinator. (August 2013-May 2019). Coordinating biweekly meetings with undergraduate and graduate students. Princeton, NJ.

SPA 103 Coordinator. (August 2013-2015). Supervising the SPA 103 course. Princeton, NJ.

Language Coordinator. (2012-2013). Supervising the 200-level sequence, creating placement tests and specific courses. Williamsburg, VA.

Coordinator of the 300-level sequence. (2009-2012). Creating and modifying 300-level courses and supervising SPAN 301 (Conversation) lecturers. Morgantown, WV.

Member search committee. (2011). Selecting candidates for the lecturer position in the Center for Women Studies. Morgantown, WV.

Faculty director study abroad trip to Argentina. (June 2012). Directing the trip and teaching an Intercultural Communications course. Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Co-organizer "Linguistics Seminar Series". (2011-2012). Coordinating linguistics talks in the Department of World Languages, Literatures, and Linguistics. Morgantown, WV.

Linguistics consultant. (Spring 2011). Revising word lists in Spanish for FACIT. These words lists are used in a cognitive study.

Co-organizer "2010 Colloquium on Literature and Film". (Fall 2010). Coordinating the 34th Departmental Colloquium, which included sessions in linguistics for the first time. Morgantown, WV.

Translator and Transcriber. (Since 2007). English-Spanish translation and transcribing services for Absolute Marketing Research. Bloomington, IN.

Invited speaker. (July 2008). *Jornada de ponencia de egresados de la Escuela de idiomas (Universidad Industrial de Santander, Colombia) sobre experiencias académicas en Estados Unidos y Europa.* Language Department. Universidad Industrial de Santander. Bucaramanga, Colombia.

Language Table Coordinator. (2006 - 2007). *Café Hispano* (Spanish Language Table). Organized and lead weekly meetings. Department of Spanish and Portuguese. Indiana University. Bloomington, IN.

Honors and Awards

2024	<i>ProCES Community Engagement Support</i> . SPA-LIN-LAS 233 project and 2025 Derian Summer Internship. Princeton University. Projected amount: \$28,000.
2023	<i>Innovation in Language Program Direction Award</i> . American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators, and Directors of Language Programs (AAUSC). Awarded to all three Program directors.
2022	<i>250th Anniversary Fund for Innovation in Undergraduate Education</i> . SPA 307 course development. Princeton University. Summer stipend.
2016	<i>250th Anniversary Fund for Innovation in Undergraduate Education</i> . Aprendo project. Princeton University. Amount: \$85,050.
2015	UCRHSS research grant. Research trip to Colombia. Princeton University. Amount: \$2,575.
2013	<i>250th Anniversary Fund for Innovation in Undergraduate Education</i> . SPA 211 course development. Princeton University. Summer stipend.
2012	Philpott-Pérez Research Award. Department of Modern Languages & Literatures. College of William & Mary. Williamsburg, VA.
2011	Judith Gold Stitzel Endowment. The Center for Women Studies. West Virginia University. Morgantown, WV.

Selected Publications

Book

Focalizing ser ('to be') in Colombian Spanish. An empirical study of a dialectally-marked syntactic phenomenon in Spanish. Lambert Academic Publishing: 2012.

Book chapters

Variación morfosintáctica en el español de Colombia: el caso de ser focalizador. *El español hablado en Colombia*. Bucaramanga, Colombia: Ediciones UIS. 2026.

The sociolinguistic situation of Colombians in the United States (with Orozco, R.). *US Colombianidades*. Under review.

Focus inside: evidence from Spanish and Chinese. With Hsu, Y-Y. In: Ting, J. and Y-Y. Hsu (Eds.), *Linguistic Interfaces in East-Asian Languages: A Festschrift in Honor of Yoshihisa Kitagawa*. Springer: 2024.

Understanding the Focalizing Ser structure: Going beyond syntax. In: Serrano, M. J. and M. Á. Aijón Oliva (Eds.), *Form and Meaning: Studies of Grammatical Variation and Communicative Choice in Spanish*. Berlin, Germany: Peter Lang Verlag: 2024.

Information structure inside Spanish TPs. In: Orozco, R. (Ed.), *New directions in Hispanic Linguistics*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: 2014.

On the syntax of the Focalizing ser ('to be') structure. In: File-Muriel, R. and R. Orozco (Eds.), *Linguistic studies in Colombian varieties of Spanish*. Vervuert/Iberoamericana: 2012.

Articles

The Aprendo platform: Leveraging digital technologies in beginning and intermediate Spanish courses (with Merino, A., Holgado-Lage, A. & L.A. Spino-Seijas). Under review.

Current Trends in Higher Ed. Language Instruction (with Bono, M. & G. Bilbao-Terreros). In preparation.

A syntactic-prosodic analysis of Focalizing 'ser' (with Flores, T.) *Lingüística y Literatura* 81, 60-88. 2022.

TP-internal focus and dialectal variation: The case of the Focalizing Ser. *Linguistics Vanguard*. Vol. 5 (1): 2019.

Ser Focalizador: Usos y variaciones. *Revista Internacional de Lingüística Iberoamericana (RILI)*. Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert. Vol. XIII (2: 26). 2015.

Changing the focus: An empirical study of the 'Focalizing ser' ('to be') in Dominican Spanish. *Isogloss*, Vol. 1 (1) 67-93: 2015.

Los efectos condicionantes del verbo en el uso variable de los pronombres personales de sujeto. With: Orozco, R. and L-A Vidal-Covas. *Actas del XVII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Lingüística y Filología de América Latina (ALFAL)*: 2014.

The M word: Face and politeness in Colombian Spanish. *Dialectologia*. 12: 2014.

Conversational and prosodic patterns in Spanish requests. *International Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)*, 7(2) 109-142: 2013.

Syntactic variation in Colombian Spanish: The case of the Focalizing ser (FS) structure. *Proceedings of the 39th LSRL Conference*. John Benjamins: 2011.

Some syntactic considerations regarding the *Focalizing ser* ('to be') construction in Colombian Spanish. *2008 WECOL Proceedings*. University of California. Davis, CA: 2009.

Preposed focused objects in Spanish. *TROPOS*. Michigan State University. East Lansing, MI: 2009.

Periphrastic and morphological future forms in Bogotá Spanish: A preliminary sociolinguistics study of upper-class speakers. *IULC Working Papers Online*: 08-03. 1-22: 2008.

Selected Presentations

Invited speaker

Current Developments in The Spanish Language Program at Princeton University (with M. Bono, G. Bilbao Terreros & A. Merino). *Segundo Encuentro de Programas de Español de Ivy Leagues*. Hanover, NH: April 2026.

Toward an Adaptive Placement Test for the Spanish Language Program (with M. Bono). *PCLS Talk Series*. Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.: April 2026.

Taking ownership of the curriculum: The transformation of the Spanish Language Program at Princeton University (with M. Bono & A. Bruzos-Moro). *AAUSC*. Virtual meeting: October 2024.

The Spanish Language Program at Princeton University (with M. Bono). *Primer Encuentro de Programas de Español de Ivy Leagues*. New Haven, CT: April 2024.

Bringing Spanishes into the language classroom through corpus-based pedagogic material (with A. Merino). *PCLS Lunch Talk Series*. Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.: December 2022.

La variación morfosintáctica en el español de Colombia. *Ciclo de conferencias: El español hablado en Colombia*. Grupo de investigaciones Glotta - Universidad Industrial de Santander: December 2020.

Voces de la periferia: retos y propuestas para enseñar una lengua local en los Estados Unidos, (with A. Faber, N. Cervantes, A. Holgado & P. Moscardó). *El futuro de la enseñanza del español en Estados Unidos (Instituto Cervantes)*. New York, NY: December 2017.

Estatus dialectal y estructura sintáctica del “Ser Focalizador”. *Asociación Alemana de Hispanistas (Hispanistentag)*. Heidelberg, Germany: March 2015.

Variación sintáctica y focalización: el caso del “Ser Focalizador”. *Congreso Internacional de la Asociación de Lingüística y Filología de América Latina (ALFAL)*. João Pessoa, Brazil: July 2014.

Focus inside: evidence from the Spanish FS construction. *Tuesday Seminar Series*. Department of Linguistics. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii, at Manoa: January 2011.

Peer-reviewed participation

Plurilingual literacies, community engagement, and critical language awareness (with Bono, M., Bruzos-Moro, A., Sagnier, C., Blaise, S. & T. Boster). *EDILIC*. Universität Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany: July 2025.

Más allá de la sintaxis: aproximaciones multidisciplinares en torno al Ser Focalizador. *I Simposio Internacional sobre Variación Gramatical y Construcción del Significado*. San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Spain. 2022.

- Creating pedagogical materials using spoken corpora to develop socio-pragmatic competence (with A. Merino). *PLL Conference*. Virtual presentation. 2022.
- Celebrating language and its varieties: Bringing Spanishes into the classroom (with A. Merino). *AATSP*. San Juan: Puerto Rico. 2022.
- Facilitating autonomous language learning and developing critical skills using an innovative Spanish learning platform (with A. Merino and A. Holgado-Lage). *Owning the L2 Curriculum - CLTL Symposium*. Virtual presentation. 2021.
- A syntactic-prosodic analysis of Focalizing 'ser' (with T. Flores). *Acoustical Society of America, 179th Meeting*. 2020.
- Exploring issues of sociolinguistic variation in the language classroom (with A. Faber, A. Merino & M. Bono). *AATSP*. San Diego, CA. 2019
- Voces de Princeton: Practical uses of an online audiovisual corpus of spoken Spanish (with B. Johnston). *NEALLT*. Philadelphia, PA. 2019
- Surveying dialectal variation in Spanish: The case of the Focalizing Ser structure. *Sociolinguistics Symposium 22*. Auckland, New Zealand. 2018.
- Engaging Critical Thinking in the Elementary and Intermediate L2 Classroom Using an Online Platform, (with A. Faber, A. Holgado Lage, A. Merino & L. A. Spino-Seijas). *49th Annual NeMLA Convention*. Pittsburgh, PA. 2018.
- Syntactic variation of focus marking: The case of the Focalizing Ser in Colombia. *XXI Deutscher Hispanistentag*. Munich, Germany. 2017.

Research and Fieldwork experience

Summer 2015	Linguistic variation in Colombia: The case of the Focalizing Ser (FS) structure. Data collection in five Colombian cities.
Summer 2013	Focus marking in Dominican Spanish. Conducted acceptability judgments and semi-production tests to analyze focus structures. Data collected in Santiago de Los Caballeros, Sosúa, and Santo Domingo.
Summer 2010	The socio-pragmatic meanings of the word <i>marica</i> ('fag') in Bucaramanga Spanish. Bucaramanga, Colombia. Collected data from university students at Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino and Universidad Industrial de Santander.
Summer 2008	Dissertation fieldwork. Bucaramanga, Colombia. Conducted acceptability judgments on the focalizing ser ('to be') construction, at Universidad Industrial de Santander.
Summer 2007	The production of requests in Bucaramanga Spanish. Bucaramanga, Colombia. Collected data from young female university students, at Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino and Universidad Industrial de Santander.

Membership in Professional Organizations

Since May 2015	American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages
Since April 2014	Asociación de Lingüística y Filología de América Latina
Since Sept. 2008	Linguistic Society of America
Since Sept. 2008	Indiana University Linguistics Club

Languages

Spanish	Native speaker.
English	Near-native speaker. Excellent reading/writing proficiency.
French	Intermediate speaker. Good reading/writing proficiency.
German	Intermediate learner.
Portuguese	Intermediate learner.
Hungarian	Elementary learner.
Quechua	Elementary learner.
Arabic	Elementary learner.