Expanded Action Plan
Midterm Planning

Edward Hernández
College of William & Mary

Experience

> Describe ways in which you have observed issues of language and communication manifest in your previous volunteer, service-learning experience, civic engagement, or community-based research experiences.

I work with debaters. I judge debate. I teach debaters. I recruit and sometimes train judges. I have occasionally trained new and inexperienced coaches. Most of the time a volunteer. Frequently I'm asked for help. Rarely, I'm paid for my help. It's always community service and service learning.

Every issue in debate is (at least partially) an issue of language and communication. I often find myself faced with problems discussed in Lippi-Green (2011) and Cress, Collier, and Reitenauer (2013) in the real world. Language subordination is active just as Lippi-Green (2011) discusses it (ch. 5). I also find myself in a position to foster and use community partnerships. I need community partners both to help me in my service — other judges to staff events, students and faculty to hone my ideas — and to keep me in touch with community *needs* and *interests* (Cress et al., 2013, ch. 2) — current debaters, coaches, officials, and other judges — since the debate community is no longer the way I remember it from my high school years.

There is one issue with which I am constantly confronted, in working in debate: how to fairly evaluate students and their work. In debate, this is almost a completely a language issue. The student work which it is my job to evaluate *is* language. Students speak, and I am to assess it. Not only am I to assess it, I am supposed to say which of two students (or teams of students) is *better* — largely better at using language — which is a giant responsibility. I feel vastly unprepared for this, and I know other judges are unprepared as well. I still think that this needs to be changed.

Goals

> What are some of the specific goals you wish to accomplish through participation in Language Attitudes this fall?

I have a few different sorts of goals for Language Attitudes this year. I want to get started on my honors thesis. I hope to use the remaining papers for the class to narrow possible topics and develop ones that seem promising. I hope to use my joint office hours with you to do this as well. I hope to have a considerable chunk of at least the planning of my thesis done by the end of the semester.

I intend to keep judging debate. As I've said, I need to find new community partners, and identify current needs. I plan to do that, and I intend to talk about those experiences in my papers for this class, hopefully working toward honors topics. I'm still not sure whether I want to focus on debate for my honors project, but I know that debate always gets me thinking about the sorts of things that I *do* want to study. Even if I don't end up focussing on debate, I think I will probably want to focus on some linguistic topic relevant to education.

At the same time, I want to work with Isaiah on his ideas for middle schoolers. I think forensics is a great tool for teaching necessary skills, and I think that middle school is probably a better age to start than high school. Both forensics and middle schoolers are a bit out of my comfort zone, so I'm happy to have someone else to work with. I doubt I would do this sort of work alone, so I'm very excited to be doing it with him. I suppose it's also a personal goal to get Isaiah to see the light about gender roles. I think that having the sort of ideologies that he holds about the ways that boys and girls should be treated differently is detrimental to the kids, and not good practice for judging forensics or doing education.

Lastly, I want to get an idea of how I ought to be assessing students. As I've discussed in earlier papers, I do not want to enforce a code-switching model that in any way incentivizes Standardized English over other varieties. On the other hand, I don't want to set these kids up to fail with other judges or educators, who I can't expect to assess the way I do. I also struggle with identifying and correcting my biases. Just tonight, I was watching a documentary (Lee, 2006) which contained a spoken word poem that I assume was good, given that Spike Lee thought to include it. However, it didn't *sound* good to me. I don't have context for other New Orleans poets, or spoken word poets in general, so I don't know how to assess it. I worry that this sort of unfamiliarity with particular varieties, or deeply ingrained language subordination ideologies, will lead me to inadvertently prefer Standardized or White debate, speech styles, ideas, etc.. I want to work toward a system (or at least an ideological position or some other sort of goal) for assessing students' work fairly.

Maybe some subset of the assessment question will lead me to an honors topic.

Schedule

> Include an update about your schedule planning progress. Share what method you are using to schedule and what your major successes and challenges to schedule are.

I use a Google Calendar to schedule nearly everything in my life. I share calendars with my partner and my mom, so I can make sure to keep time open for real life outside school. I have a shared Google Drive folder with my coworkers in the SNaPP Lab, to make sure we can efficiently coordinate our time and avoid duplicating work (and comparable Google Docs with Prof. Cochrane and her other research assistant are in the works). This system works quite well for me, since it's shared among multiple devices and people effortlessly. It's been good for scheduling fixed events. However, I still have trouble scheduling more nebulous time commitments, like studying and sleeping.

This semester I've missed a single scheduled event, and I only missed it because I slept through my alarm. My calendar system definitely works to get me to events. My primary problem right now is that I don't record my commitments to studying, eating, and sleeping. I consistently find myself rushed to read or struggling to find time to sleep. I think I'm going to start scheduling meal times and trying to regulate my sleep schedule using my calendar. Hopefully that helps. Also, I plan to have a talk with Prof. Settle, about my involvement in the SNaPP Lab. My interests only tangentially intersect with the work being done in the lab, and while I enjoy working there, I fully intend to reduce the amount of work I do there. That should help my scheduling process immensely.

References

Cress, C., Collier, P., & Reitenauer, V. (2013). *Learning through serving: A student guidebook for service-learning and civic engagement across academic disciplines and cultural communities.* New York: Stylus.

Lee, S. (2006). *When the levees broke: A requiem in four acts.* Motion Picture.

Lippi-Green, R. (2011). *English with an accent: Language, ideology, and discrimination in the united states.* United Kingdom: Routledge.