Dear Reader,

For the past semester, our BiCo Linguistic Diversity class has worked to put together *Our Languages*. With extensive time spent in and out of the classroom, we have built from the ground up a project that incorporates research, documentation, community work, and more. Doing this sort of work has not been easy, and for all our successes, without any particular pre-configured instructions or guidelines we occasionally hit some walls.

In the following pages, you will find a number of procedures to follow and tips to keep in mind if you are hoping to create your own community-oriented research project. This is not specific to linguistics--these steps may apply to any kind of open ended research or project. You will also get a closer look into some of the problems and successes our team encountered throughout the course of our own experience. Reflecting carefully on the experiences we had, I have written this document with acknowledgement of what did and did not work for our group. I also acknowledge that what worked for us may not be exactly what works for you. Rather, I am hoping that the advice contained in this document can be helpful when viewed through the lens of our own experiences and applied as necessary for your team's particular needs.

Putting together a project like this is no easy task, but it doesn't have to be impossible. If you go into your work with a plan, a purpose, and an intended outcome, you are all the more likely to succeed. This document is here to be your guide, but it aims not to tell you exactly what to do--rather, it is here to hold your hand through the ups and downs you will encounter along the way, and to offer up advice that may help steer you towards success. Before you begin, read these tips and consider them carefully. You don't have to follow them in order; in fact, these are are things to keep in mind throughout the process. Of course, you don't have to follow them at all if you don't want to--only you and your team can decide what's best for your own situation. However, whatever path you choose to take, I hope these tips will help guide you through it.

Best,

Sophie Brous, Linguistic Diversity Spring 2019

Part 1: Starting Out

When we sat down for our first class of the semester, I don't think any of us knew exactly what to expect. Professor Lillehaugen presented us with the basic facts: We'd be drawing from a number of sources, looking at readings, videos, and more to understand linguistic diversity across the world, and along the way we'd be developing some sort of project to explore this diversity at the BiCo. However, what she didn't know yet was what this project would look like. It would be up to us to figure it out.

For the first few classes, we put off beginning the project and focused on the subject matter. Completing readings and writing assignments, we covered the basics of linguistics, read about languages we didn't know about, and reflected on those that we did have in our lives. This brings us to our first step:

1. Get everyone on the same page.

Whether you're a class full of beginners, a room of experts, or at varying levels, it's always important to make sure everyone on your team understands each other. This step may not be entirely necessary depending on your team's background--our class was introductory level, but you may all be super experienced seniors--but it's always a good idea to give a basic overview before you begin to make sure you haven't missed anything. It may seem obvious, but making sure everyone on your team receives a basic education on terms, concepts, and methods in your field makes it much easier to work together and come to agreement on all the details of your work. Additionally, if all the group members are on the same page, it is less likely that someone will feel left out, lost, or unable to communicate their thoughts.

2. Appoint a scribe.

It is easy to overlook the importance of documenting this process, but while it may seem frivolous or tedious, the act of simply writing things down is more helpful than you may even

realize--that is, until you don't do it. Our class's inconsistencies in documentation went unnoticed until it was too late, and we realized that from the beginning we should have been taking it all down. Having a scribe is immensely helpful if you ever want to look back at a thought process, review a list of tasks and who they have been assigned to, or if you want to create a resource after the fact (like this document!)

3. Consider your intentions and/or goals.

It may sound obvious, but in order to come up with a truly great idea, you need to know exactly why you are doing it. A successful project will have meaning and purpose: What is the intended outcome? Who is going to benefit from your work? Are you hoping to gather information, or create a resource? Only once you have a larger goal in mind can you start mapping out the smaller details.

4. Look to past work for inspiration.

Not only is it absolutely fine to look elsewhere for ideas for your project, it's recommended! When our class began brainstorming for our project, the first place we looked for guidance was a project implemented by students at NC State. The students created a whole campaign, *The Language and Life Project*, which combined videos, workshops, a website, and more to raise awareness for language diversity on their campus and across the country. Not only did watching their videos provide inspiration for our format and goals, it also showed us what wouldn't work as well for our own project. Even if the details of your project aren't exactly the same, having a source can help you to recognize what you do and do not want to put into your work. Of course, don't forget to give credit where credit is due--inspiration is great, but plagiarism is not.

Part 2: The Game Plan

Now that you've done some research and spent some time thinking and reflecting, it's time to begin the process of designing your project. In the following section, you will find some tips on how to ensure that your work starts out smoothly.

5. Decide on a format.

Make sure you have an outline of what format your project will take before you start putting all your energy into something. Don't start building a website, making a video, or planning an event if you think you're likely to change it--decide what you want before you put in the work! It's okay to alter things along the way, but it's best to start with a solid outline so your time and work aren't wasted. Our class spent a lot of time going back and forth on the format of our project, but had we decided earlier on that we would be focusing on a survey, website, and interviews, we could have saved plenty of time.

Of course, an important factor in your plan is knowing what is possible. This brings us to our next point...

6. Know the feasibility.

Before undertaking any kind of project, it's a good idea to double check and make sure that it's feasible first. If you're not 100% sure that your project is possible within constraints of time and your institution, you may run into trouble. Knowing your own institution or organization is especially important--every place is different and will have different rules, so make sure you brush up on these, and never assume something will be easily allowed or approved. For example, if you're planning to build a website (and aren't a master programmer), make sure that you know the constraints and capabilities of the platform you are using to do so. If you have a grand idea for an ongoing project but don't have the time to do something long term, it might make sense to shorten the time scale a little bit. If you plan to do research, make

sure it will be possible to get every team member certified, design the research, get it approved by your IRB, and actually execute it. It may seem obvious, but it's easy to get caught up in an idea and to feel subsequently let down when you find out you won't be able to do it exactly the way you thought.

Also, keep in mind that while it's not a good feeling to have to make sacrifices in order to make your project more feasible, it's better to have an imperfect but doable project than a perfect one that's impossible to execute.

7. Plan out research (in as much detail as possible!) and get it approved (as early as possible!!).

If you're doing any kind of research, this step is imperative to making sure that you get the results you're hoping for. Perhaps the biggest difficulty our class struggled with throughout the semester was the race for IRB approval. Because we took a while to send out our initial research proposals for approval, we sent out our survey very late. While this would have been okay on its own, we ran into a huge issue when we discovered we would need separate approval from Haverford and Bryn Mawr's IRBs, meaning there was a huge time gap in between sending out the two. Our problems only increased from here: by the time we sent out the proposal for our follow-up interviews, we were running so low on time that we had to scale back by a huge amount.

Let this be a warning to you: if you're definitely going to be doing research and you're on any kind of limited time scale, get it approved early on in the game. Consider what kinds of questions you'll be asking, who you'll be targeting for participation, and what kinds of results you're expecting or what kind of hypothesis you have. Doing all these things will ensure not only that you have a much smoother process of collecting data, it will make it easier for you to sort through and interpret the data as well.

8. Have a backup plan.

Even if you have a seemingly perfect idea and plan everything carefully, there's no guarantee that things will go exactly as planned. Our class hit another wall when our plans to create a video containing interviews with community members was denied by Haverford's IRB. Because we heard back from the IRB with only a week of class remaining, we were left scrambling to reconfigure this portion of the project. While we ended up working something out--we transcribed our interviews instead of videotaping them--it would have been much easier (and less time consuming!) had we determined a backup plan. Even if you take all other precautions, it's always possible that something will go wrong, so it's better to be safe than sorry.

9. Assign roles and teams.

Everything is easier when you're organized, and assigning smaller roles and teams within the larger group is one of the easiest ways to stay organized. There are several reasons for this. First of all, creating subgroups helps to balance the workload, so everyone has something to do and no one is left doing nothing. Next, it ensures that everyone is working on what they are best at and most interested in. If you don't know how to program, you can join the video group, and if you don't like editing videos you can join the group writing blog posts. Splitting up the work also makes it easier to keep track of what is getting done and what still remains. Even if your groups are fluid and changing, it still makes life easier to do things on a smaller scale. That being said, working in groups won't be effective if you can't follow the next point:

10. Communicate between groups.

While dividing up your group is absolutely helpful, it can definitely make it trickier to communicate crucial information to the whole group, so make sure to carve out time to regroup and report your progress in order to keep things functioning smoothly. It is easy to lose focus of

the bigger picture when every group is working on something different, so every member should be kept up to date on what is happening on the whole. It may even be beneficial for people to switch groups from time to time to allow more input from more viewpoints.

  In addition to meeting in person, it can be helpful to use tools online, such as an online board (for example, Trello, which is what our team used), or even a shared google doc. Also, don't forget tip #2--documentation is just as important within groups as it is on the whole, and it is arguably even more necessary when you are split up because it makes it much easier to share what you have been working on when you can look back at your notes.

Part 3: The Process

Once you've got the basic ideas in place and set up a plan for how you're going to execute your project, it's time to focus in on the process of doing the work. Below are some tips for simplifying the process of your work and some points to consider in order to make sure your work is as effective as possible.

11. Craft everything with intention and thought.

Words matter. If you want the finished product to reflect the amount of time and work you put into it, the terminology you use must be carefully considered. Pay attention to the inclusivity of the language you use, and be careful to select the phrasing that most accurately depicts the message you're trying to put out. Our team put in a huge amount of effort to ensure that every element of our project was clearly worded and explained. For example, when crafting a list of intentions, we had originally entitled them our "goals." However, we felt that the word "intention" was a more accurate way to display the actual intended meaning: while we hoped our project would have a certain outcome, we couldn't be sure it would happen, and we knew that these intentions were only a starting point rather than a final destination.

Additionally, while it's important to be thoughtful and mindful throughout the project, it is especially crucial when crafting things like interview or survey questions. Your questions should not only be easy to understand, they must be carefully constructed not to lead the participant or to show bias. Even the order of the questions is important--think extremely carefully before you perform any kind of research to avoid creating biased results. One effective way to test your survey is to actually take it yourself. Our class performed several test runs of our survey in order to ensure that our questions were easily answerable, that they lacked bias, and that there was ample room to include all the information we wanted. If you're doing an interview, think carefully about the questions--how would you answer them yourself? If they feel too constricting, it might be a good idea to change or reword them.

12. Training is crucial.

If you're working with other people, such as in an interview or class setting, don't skimp out on training and practice. Even if you think you know what you're doing, practice will help you feel more confident and in control of the situation. When you actually get to it, you will thank yourself! To prepare for the interview portion of our project, our class practiced interviewing each other and took notes on what was working and what wasn't. Becoming an interviewer, interviewee, and listener helped us to get a feel for what it would be like to perform the interview, but it also taught us what to do to ensure the comfort of the interviewee as well. With the help of practice, we boosted our interview skills and went in more prepared on what exactly to do during our sessions.

13. Keep a schedule.

Keeping a schedule is a hugely important part of this process, especially if you're working on a limited time scale like we were (we only had a single semester). You don't need to do everything 100% on time, but if you want to get everything done before the deadline, creating a schedule and sticking to it is the most effective way to do so. Set deadlines for team members! Set deadlines for subgroups! Additionally, if you're working with people outside your groups (for example, if you're performing interviews or taking videos of others), don't just think about your own schedules--think about theirs as well. Need a substantial amount of time with your participants/interviewees/subjects? Don't schedule everything during finals week. The more time people have, the more people you can recruit and get sufficient data, footage, or audio from. It's inconsiderate to waste the time of your subjects, and using your time inefficiently also harms your ability to create the highest quality work. If you keep your time and planning organized now, you'll produce far better work in the long run.

14. Don't let setbacks get you down.

No matter how much planning you put in and how careful you are, issues can always crop up in this kind of work. As I've already discussed, our team encountered a number of setbacks, from trouble with IRB approval to difficulty interpreting data to being forced to scrap an entire idea. It's easy to let these problems get you down, but keep in mind that it happens to everyone! Most research teams run into problems, but no matter what happens, the work that you've put in is still valuable and worthwhile. Additionally, while there may not be a solution to every problem, there will always an alternative available if you are willing to put in the work to make it happen.

15. Make it simple.

If you're creating something that other people will see, you'll want it to be neatly organized, easily understandable, and well-designed. People are more likely to use resources if they are aesthetically pleasing and easy to use--if the resource is confusing, contains terms they don't understand without an explanation, or layed out in a non-intuitive way, they may be overwhelmed and leave without getting the full intended benefit. Keeping things clean and concise may take a little extra work, but it will absolutely increase the likelihood of more people accessing and appreciating your work.

16. Make it fun!

At the same time, simple doesn't have to mean boring! If simplicity draws people in, fun will increase your audience by tenfold. No matter what format you're working with, it's possible to make it fun and exciting. If you're building a website, add a splash of color. If you're designing a workshop, add in an interactive activity. Fun doesn't have to mean 'not educational'--if done right, an exciting project can engage people *through* education.

17. Reflect frequently.

It's easy to get caught up in the work you're doing at the moment, but it's also important to take a step back and reflect on what you've accomplished and what you still need to work on. Whether your reflections are done in a group, individually, or both, it's never a waste of time to stop for a moment and think deeply about what you're really doing. One great way to do this is to read some materials that are relevant to the topic you're working on. Each week, our class read chapters of textbooks, written reports, and journal articles related to linguistic diversity and discrimination in various settings (government, the courtroom, etc.), wrote reflections about these readings, and came together as a class to discuss them. Doing these reflections allowed us to think about the impact our work could have from a number of different perspectives and forced us to constantly reconsider the implications behind linguistic diversity and discrimination, but importantly it also kept us motivated to continue pushing on despite the setbacks we occasionally faced. Simply reminding yourself of the importance of your work is an incredible motivator, and reflecting throughout the process will help to keep you aware of the meaning behind everything you are doing.

Part 4: The Finished Product

You've created a plan and executed it, but now what? There's still more work to be done, so here are a few things to think about once you're ready to go public with your project.

18. Don't forget to advertise.

Why put in the work if there's no one to participate and no audience to appreciate it? Make sure that you're adequately advertising the project, whether you're making it known that you have a survey to take, interviews to take part in, a video to watch, or a class to attend. Putting yourself out there will help you gain more participants, spread your message more effectively, and pave the way for more work to be done later.

19. Prepare for the future.

What will you do with your findings? Will you start a new, related project, or pass it off to another team? Consider if you want future work to be done with your own, or whether there are other extensions you will want to add. If you do want your work to continue, think carefully about what you will need to do this. For example, if you want to do a follow-up study, think about the how the design of your original study affects your ability to do so. Putting these tools in place now will make your life much easier later.

20. Debrief.

The process of creating a project like this can be incredibly rewarding, but it can also be exhausting. If you end the project without talking things through, you might be left feeling that you have questions unanswered or ideas unheard. Collecting your thoughts and discussing your results with the whole team is a great way to wrap things up and get closure.

21. Celebrate!

Of course you should feel accomplished, because you just took on a whole self-designed project! Go ahead and feel proud of the work you and your team did, and celebrate the effort you put in and the things you achieved during this process. Let your successes inspire you to continue this work, and the setbacks you encountered teach you what to do differently in the future.

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