Philosophy Statement

As a linguist, I systematically approach language as both social and ideological. I approach language systematically because it is rule-governed and can be understood as following a complex web of underlying patterns. Those rules and patterns are products of our social environments, and our social environments both influence and are influenced by our ideologies—our core values and beliefs. I became an applied linguist because I want to understand how we build rich, layered meaning throughout our communication, then use that knowledge to help people understand each other. From technical documentation to political messaging, we can become better communicators if we remember that *language is social* and *language is ideological*.

Language is Social

Language is inherently social—we learn it from others to use it with others. At its core, we use language to understand and to be understood, but we also have to learn how others expect us to use it with them. Over time, we learn what kinds of language to use in which contexts. That might look like speaking one language at home and another at work, using a "customer service voice" when a client calls, or making a niche cultural reference to connect with a conversation partner. These small variations are packed with meaning—our linguistic choices combine with our social contexts to make meaning beyond the surface-level reading. I believe every communicative act is layered, and while we make many linguistic choices almost automatically, even briefly pausing to consider our options allows us to better mesh those layers into a cohesive whole. I bring my eye for these details to every project I work on, ensuring that each part aligns with the overall vision.

The most rewarding part of any analysis, however, is turning data into actionable insights. As an applied linguist, I study the social patterns of language by using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods approaches. This might mean rewriting website copy using statistical data from SEO tools, or collaborating with subject matter experts to translate their knowledge into plain language documentation. Along the way, I take in the social context of our communication. I might ask: "Who are you communicating with, and how do they expect you to communicate with them?" Our expectations, linguistic or otherwise, stem from people's beliefs, and understanding how to interact with those beliefs takes communication from good to great.

Language is Ideological

Language is inherently ideological—and "ideology" doesn't have to be a dirty word. As I mentioned previously, "ideology" simply means the values and beliefs that we hold. Saying that language is ideological isn't an indictment of language or a call for political dogmatism, but rather a lens through which we can understand the world around us. Does a company website have an "about" page that discusses its goals and values? Those are ideological positions or beliefs, and any official copy should reflect them when possible. I believe that communication is

most effective and responsible when communicators are ideologically informed. Reflection and critical self-awareness allow us to be forthright with ourselves about our beliefs and our goals—and to make sure that they align with our actions and language. Putting in the work to understand our own values also allows us to better understand the values that drive other peoples' communication too. When we work to understand others' values and cultural norms, we begin to truly appreciate all of the benefits that diverse perspectives can bring. In the interest of transparency, here are some values from my personal language ideology:

- A language belongs to all who use it—not just "native" speakers of standardized or privileged dialects
- Diversity, including linguistic diversity, is a strength—not a weakness
- Language is inherently ideological, and acknowledging this allows us to craft our communication more effectively
- Effective communication is communication that achieves the communicator's goals
- Effective communication should consider the language norms of all parties involved (i.e. how people expect to be signed, spoken, or written to in a given context)
- Effective communication should consider the conventions of the appropriate genre (for example, an email may be less effective if it's written in the style of *Finnegan's Wake*)
- Effective communication does not have to follow every norm and genre convention, and deliberately subverting people's expectations can have a powerful impact

There is always an underlying logic to communication, even when others' values and social norms differ from our own. Being able to recognize that logic is a skill that not only helps us communicate across differences, but also helps us learn. Being "a good noticer," as my advisor would put it, helps us leverage context clues to learn how to ask the right questions or provide the most helpful answer. Even our inevitable miscommunications are learning experiences; we can iterate on failure as well as success. Both help us engage in "recipient design," tailoring our message to our conversation partner, they just provide different data.

I work to translate expertise into accessible knowledge through a deep understanding of how we communicate and expect to be communicated with. I use my eye for detail to ensure communications are clear and internally consistent. I see every outcome as an opportunity for growth. I am committed to building a better world through effective communication.

Positionality Statement

I am a 26-year-old white nonbinary person living in the United States. I hold a BA in Linguistics and a MA in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) with an Applied Linguistics focus. I recognize the privilege my whiteness and access to certain resources both bring. As a researcher and a language professional, I bring my training and my linguistic and cultural experiences to my work. I strive to understand my own biases and how they shape my work. I also strive to actively listen to experiences and perspectives that differ from my own.