Some notes on summer plans for linguists

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Before I list some reasonable expectations, I do want to say that if you are going to do very little work outside your personal needs/responsibilities over the summer, that is totally understandable, and you should be clear about it so you don't feel bad later. However, if you are in a position to devote some time for linguisticky things, then the following notes apply. So, here goes...

Summer is a chance to re-tool and up-skill. Here are some specific things to consider:

1. **Prepare a list of to-dos for the summer:** this could be writing a comp, working on skills...

2. **Prepare a reading list on a specific topic**: this has helped me a lot over the last few years. Typically, 25-30 papers is a very reasonable target, as it would mean about a paper every 3-4 days for three months.

3. **Work on your writing**: there are free online courses available for you to follow (example: Coursera, edX), and really nice books you can read on the topic (examples: Stephen Heard, Paul Silvia, Paul Silvia again). A lot of graduate time is wasted on writing and re-writing based on edits. If you become a better writer, you are likely to save a TON of time. So, you should really value this.

4. **Work on programming and analysis skills**: You could do a variety of free online R/Stats/Python courses on DataCamp[1] and Coursera. You could also do online courses provided by Harvard (link). Getting some programming savvy is likely to save you a lot of time in innumerable ways in grad school and later in life.

5. **Read about the philosophy of science**: Most of us can benefit from reading about the philosophy of science! My favourite kind of philosophy of science is the kind that analyses historical cases and deconstructs a set of important examples; the best way to learn this stuff is to learn from the past. I also think that many people can benefit deeply from seeing how the natural sciences navigated questions/quandaries similar to the ones we face in linguistics and cognitive science more generally. While this perspective might not give us solutions for our issues, it does provide valuable food for thought. Specifically, it disabuses us of any naïve notions of the "scientific method" we might have (note: there is no such singular "method" as far as I can see, and so I appreciate the philosophers who highlight that point). Here is a short write-up on where you can start if you are interested.

My own experience over the last few years has been that having a clear, and most importantly **reasonable**, goal for the summer leads to a very productive break (and equally importantly, a stress-free/guilt-free break). One problem I faced early on was that I planned for too much, and this led to inevitable failure and consequent disappointment. So, be careful to be reasonable. Of all the above, the one that has made me happiest is creating a reading list and following through on it. So if you had to pick only one, then I recommend that's what it should be :). Note, I am not including necessities like comps...

If you do it right, you will have PLENTY of time to relax, and will also come back next semester refreshed and more focussed.

Finally, if any of you want to sit down and discuss your plans for the summer with me over the next few weeks, please make an appointment and we can talk about it. I really want to encourage you to develop a plan that works for you, if you can.

Hope these thoughts help.

P.S. - Feel free to share this document with others if you think it might help them.

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[1]You have free access to DataCamp courses through MSU SSDA (go here to register).