

Research as engagement and other insights from the Language Science Station at Planet Word

Charlotte Vaughn, University of Maryland

Over the past several years, thousands of members of the public have encountered language science through the Language Science Station (LSS) at Planet Word, a pop-up research and engagement laboratory at the Planet Word museum in Washington, DC. At the LSS, we invite Planet Word visitors to participate in language-related research studies and to engage with student research assistants about our science. The guiding principle of the LSS is that we prioritize museum visitors' experiences with us as much as we value the data we collect from them. This means that the research studies we run are designed with participants' experiences at the center.

Aspiring to work in this way has transformed how I think about research more broadly. In the talk, I will share lessons learned from the LSS for doing public-facing research and engagement. Beyond those lessons, I discuss how this approach also has consequences for our research as language scientists in the lab and online. I suggest that our research studies are always communicating something with our participants, whether we are aware of it or not, and unpack the challenges and opportunities that presents to us as researchers.