LANGUAGE OUTREACH WITHIN A SCIENCE MUSEUM

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THE LANGUAGE POD
WHERE WE ARE
Cross-departmental consortium of faculty at OSU who all work on language – The Buckeye Language Network

Collectivist Organization: No fee to work in the pod but each contributes time and sweat
MISSION

Inform and excite people about language!

Research
Education
Outreach
SOME SPECIFIC GOALS

- **Researchers**
  - Collect data
  - Help them connect their work to the broader public

- **Students**
  - Teach them HOW to communicate about language to the public and WHY that is important to do
  - Get them interested in linguistics and language research

- **Public**
  - Teach people true things about how language works and show how researchers study language
  - Use language as a way to promote scientific thinking in general
RESEARCH

- **Fully Equipped Lab**
  - 2 eye-trackers, 3 PC’s, 7 iPads, and lots of other stuff
  - IRB umbrella protocol to recruit visitors

- **Data Collection**
  - From Ling, Psych, CSE, Speech & Hearing, Music, English
  - Looking at online prosody, regional dialect, speech processing, semantic acquisition, and more!
  - Over 3000 visitors run as participants in 2014

- **The Research IS a Form of Outreach!**
  - COSI bills us as “Research in Real Time”
  - Watching research happen and/or being in a study is a great way to show how language science works
The Pod Course
- Ohio State course for undergrads and grad students
- Training in principles of informal science learning
- Students conduct outreach demonstrations with visitors and assist in recruiting participants
- Feeder course for RA positions for many students

NSF REU Site: The Science of Language & The Language of Science
- Summer internship program for the next 3 years
- **Research is a form of outreach!**

- **Pod Fairs**
  - Several faculty come to the museum and conduct (new) demonstrations

- **Interactive Demonstrations**
  - Canonical form of outreach
  - Very similar to what others have done at other public venues, and also to what the COSI museum staff do for other sciences
INTERACTIVE DEMONSTRATIONS

- Cover a range of topics:
  - Speech Perception & Production
  - Phonological Structure
  - Reading & Writing
  - Language Diversity
  - Language Acquisition
  - Language & Cognition

- Many Formats/Multi-Modal
  - Ipad games, Videos, Models, Pictures, Bodies

- Supported by written guidelines
  - Under constant development and improvement
EXAMPLE:
SIGN LANGUAGE NUMBERS

- Sign languages are languages
- **Materials:** Your hands!
- **Pitch:** Wanna learn to count to 10 in sign language?
- **Interaction:** Teach visitors to count to 10 in ASL and BSL

- **Take-Home Messages:**
  - Sign languages are NOT pantomimes! They have structure and rules! And different sign languages have different rules.
  - Sign languages are not just manual versions of a spoken language. Even though people in the UK and USA speak English, ASL and BSL are different.
  - Some signs are iconic (or at least transparent) but most signs are not. You need to learn ASL just like you’d learn any other language.
EXAMPLE: STROOP TASK

- Reading is an automatic process
- **Materials:** $1 iPad App
- **Pitch:** Wanna play a game?
- **Interaction:** Have visitor play the game and feed thought questions about it.

**Thought Questions:**
- How can you improve? (Focus on letters not words; turn iPad upside down; take off your glasses)
- Who would be good at this game? (Children just learning to read, people who don’t read English, bilinguals)

**Take-Home Messages:**
- You can’t stop yourself from reading – even when you want to!
- Explain inhibitory control as a general cognitive process.
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