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LANGUAGE RESEARCH AT THE CROSSROADS OF DISCIPLINES

While language has long been studied from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including linguistics, history, sociology and anthropology, psychology and cognitive science, and philosophy, recent years have witnessed a growing recognition of the necessity for interdisciplinary collaboration in linguistic research. This shift arises from acknowledging that language is an intricate and multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be fully comprehended by any single discipline alone. However, embracing an interdisciplinary approach to language, enables us to tackle complex research questions in a way that leads to a more holistic understanding of its many dimensions and comprehensive insight into its intrinsic traits. A topical example is the utilization of findings in natural language processing to advance our understanding of language production/comprehension and automate language-related tasks. Consideration of sociocultural and anthropological factors in the study of communication barriers, language endangerment, and language policies is another example.

Nevertheless, the benefits of interdisciplinary research in language/linguistics are quite clear, but challenges remain. Effective communication across disciplines poses a significant challenge, as researchers need to overcome differences in theories, terminologies, and methodologies. Another obstacle is securing funding and recognition, as disciplinary-focused research is commonly favoured by funding structures and academic departments. Overcoming these challenges requires not only advocacy for interdisciplinary research in academic institutions, funding agencies, and scholarly circles, but also fostering a centrifugal force within the academic community that would lead to a greater enthusiasm for interdisciplinary pursuits. Through the lens of my own research in discourse and pragmatics, this talk highlights the potential of interdisciplinary approaches in advancing our knowledge of language, emphasizing their benefits, challenges, and potential future directions.