

Breaking Barriers in Marketing: Insights from a Linguist

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(Received: 10th April 2023; Revised: 10th May 2023; Accepted: 10th May 2023)

Darshika

Could you tell us about your background? (What was your major when you were an undergrad? What did you do for your Ph.D.?)

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

I earned my Bachelor's degree in English and went on to pursue a Ph.D. in Linguistics with a research focus on Acoustic Phonetics. Acoustic Phonetics is the study of the physical properties of sound in speech. It is a branch of phonetics that uses acoustic analysis to investigate linguistic phenomena such as tone, intonation, and vowel quality. For my doctoral dissertation, I studied citation tones and tonal coarticulation in Northern Pa-O and Southern Pa-O continuous speech. My study revealed the effectiveness of an adaptive method using polynomial equations to analyze tones. Through my research in Acoustic Phonetics, I aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the production of linguistic sounds, with a particular focus on their acoustic properties and how they relate to phonetic and phonological patterns in speech. By investigating these aspects of speech, my research aims to shed light on the complex interplay between language, culture, and society, and to contribute to the development of more accurate and effective methods for analyzing speech signals.

Darshika

Have you been working interdisciplinarily since you were a graduate student? Since when did you start to integrate linguistics into marketing, or vice versa? How did it happen? What made you think you should work interdisciplinarily?

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

I have been working interdisciplinarily since I was a graduate student. As a linguist, I always saw the potential for applying linguistic concepts to other fields, including marketing. I started to integrate linguistics into marketing when I noticed the role of language in branding and consumer behavior. This realization came about when my friends who own a business consulted me on language-related issues such as translation and slogan creation. Additionally, my wife's background in communication arts sparked my interest in marketing and consumer behavior.

After completing my Ph.D. and beginning my career as a linguistics lecturer at the Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University, I was inspired to develop a new course that would engage undergraduate students. That's when the idea for "Language and Marketing Communications"

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was born. My aim was to highlight the significance of linguistics in marketing and make it more comprehensible to a broader range of people.

Through my work as a linguistic consultant to businesses, I have become recognized in the business circle as an expert in marketing linguistics. Many companies have sought my advice and consultation on language-related issues such as branding, product naming, and slogan creation. In addition to my consultation work, my teaching in the field of language and marketing communications has also contributed to my reputation as an expert in this area.

I have worked with a range of businesses, from small startups to large multinational corporations, across various industries such as technology, jewelry, and consumer goods. My role as a linguistic consultant involves analyzing language use and its impact on consumer behavior, providing recommendations for effective branding and communication, and helping to develop marketing strategies that take into account linguistic factors.

Working with businesses has allowed me to apply my linguistic expertise in practical and meaningful ways, and to contribute to the development of effective communication strategies that benefit both businesses and consumers. It has also given me a unique perspective on the intersection of linguistics and marketing, and the potential for interdisciplinary work to create innovative solutions to complex problems.

I believe that interdisciplinary work is essential in today's world, where boundaries between fields are becoming increasingly blurred. By bringing together different disciplines, we can create innovative solutions to complex problems. In the case of linguistics and marketing, combining these two fields has the potential to create more effective marketing strategies that are based on a deeper understanding of how language affects consumer behavior.

Darshika

You help a marketing company name products, right? Could you tell me more about your role? And are there any differences working with people from academic institutions and with those from private companies?

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

I work as a consultant for marketing companies and help them name their products or create brand names and slogans. My role involves understanding the company's product, target audience, and the desired brand image, and then using my linguistic knowledge to come up with names and/or slogans that fit their requirements.

Moreover, as a linguist, my role in helping marketing companies name products involves analyzing the linguistic features of the brand name and assessing how it would be perceived by the target audience. This includes evaluating the sound symbolism, connotations, and cultural associations of the name. Additionally, I provide guidance on how to create a name that is memorable and easily pronounceable across different languages and cultures.

In addition to product and brand naming, I have also been involved in creating slogans for marketing campaigns. I work closely with companies to develop slogans that are catchy,

memorable, and effectively convey the desired message. To ensure effectiveness, I conduct tests to evaluate the impact of slogans on consumer behavior and perception.

In terms of differences between working with people from academic institutions and those from private companies, there are a few things to consider. When working with people from academic institutions, the focus is usually on conducting research, publishing papers, and advancing the field. On the other hand, when working with private companies, the focus is on meeting their specific needs and helping them achieve their marketing goals. This means that the approach and the language used can be different, as the priorities and goals of each group are not always the same.

Another difference is that working with private companies often involves more confidentiality and non-disclosure agreements. Companies are often protective of their brand names and product ideas, and therefore, I need to be careful about sharing any information outside of the project team. This can sometimes limit my ability to share my work with the academic community, as I am not always able to publish or present my findings publicly.

Additionally, in the business world, punctuality and meeting deadlines are extremely important. Private companies work on tight schedules and deadlines, and it is crucial to meet them in order to maintain a good working relationship. This means that I need to be even more organized and manage my time efficiently when working with private companies. It also emphasizes the importance of clear communication and setting realistic timelines from the start of the project.

Overall, I enjoy working with both academic and private sector clients, as each presents unique challenges and opportunities for me to apply my linguistic knowledge in different ways.

Darshika

What do you think linguists gain from working with people in the marketing field?

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

Linguists can gain a lot from working with people in the marketing field. Firstly, it provides them with an opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge of language in practice. By collaborating with marketing professionals, linguists can gain a deeper understanding of the language's impact on consumers' decision-making processes and how it can be used to influence them.

Furthermore, working with marketing professionals can provide linguists with new research opportunities, access to real-world data, and practical problems to solve. They can also learn about new technologies and methods used in marketing research that can enhance their linguistic research.

In addition, collaborating with professionals in different fields can broaden linguists' perspectives and help them understand how language is used and perceived outside of academia. This can lead to new research questions and ideas that may not have been considered otherwise.

Moreover, working in the marketing field can also provide linguists with the opportunity to make a tangible impact in the real world. By contributing to the development of effective communication strategies, linguists can help businesses and organizations achieve their marketing goals and improve their bottom line.

Overall, collaborating with people in the marketing field can be a valuable experience for linguists, providing them with new research opportunities, access to real-world data, and a chance to apply their theoretical knowledge in practice while making a real-world impact.

Darshika

I have heard that you teach a course on language and marketing. Could you tell me about the course and the students? (What is it about? Who are the students? Are they from different disciplines? What do students think about interdisciplinary topics?)

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

The course that I teach on language and marketing is offered through the Faculty of Arts, and the students who enroll come from a variety of disciplines, primarily from the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Commerce and Accountancy with a major in Marketing. The course has gained a lot of popularity among students from various faculties. The number of students who register for the course is several times greater than the number of available seats. Despite the limited number of seats, the course continues to attract a large number of students due to its interdisciplinary nature and practical applications in the fields of linguistics and marketing.

One of the main focuses of the course is to explore the intersection of linguistics and marketing and how language can be used effectively in advertising, branding, and other marketing activities. In addition, the course emphasizes the importance of evidence-based marketing research and experimental linguistics in developing effective marketing strategies. Students learn about the latest research methodologies and techniques used in both fields, and are encouraged to apply them in their group projects. This not only enhances their understanding of the theoretical concepts but also provides practical experience in conducting marketing research and using linguistic analysis to inform marketing strategies. By incorporating evidence-based approaches, students gain a deeper understanding of how language can be used effectively in marketing and are better equipped to develop impactful communication strategies.

Throughout the course, students work on group projects, with the requirement that the group members must come from at least two different faculties. This encourages interdisciplinary collaboration and helps students learn from each other's different perspectives.

The course also includes several competitions, in which guest speakers from private companies are invited to give a mission to the students, such as creating a product name and slogan, and designing an advertisement campaign. The students then work together in their groups to complete the mission, applying the knowledge and skills they have learned throughout the course.

I have found that the students generally have a positive attitude towards interdisciplinary topics, with Arts students being able to see how linguistics can be applied in the real world and Marketing students gaining a greater awareness of the power of language in marketing. The group

projects and competitions have also been successful in fostering collaboration between students from different faculties and helping them develop skills that are valuable in the workforce.

The feedback from students has been overwhelmingly positive. They appreciate the opportunity to learn from their peers with different academic backgrounds, and many have commented on how the course has broadened their perspectives on both linguistics and marketing. Working with friends from different faculties has been advantageous, as they have been able to bring different strengths and perspectives to the group projects. Students have also enjoyed the activities, which have given them a chance to apply their learning in a practical and engaging way. Overall, I think, the course has been successful in encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and fostering a deeper understanding of the role of language in marketing.

Darshika

Apart from marketing, have you worked in any other areas with your knowledge of linguistics?

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

I have worked on various projects outside of marketing with my knowledge of linguistics. Through my work in forensic phonetics, I have been able to apply my expertise to the legal system by providing insights into voice comparisons that can help to solve cases where language is a key factor. This work is particularly important in regions like Thailand, where there is limited knowledge of forensic phonetics. By expanding our understanding of this field, we can better serve communities and contribute to the administration of justice.

Similarly, my research on interprofessional communication has the potential to improve the quality of healthcare by enhancing collaboration between medical professionals from different fields. With my acoustic analysis of voice used in communication, we can identify areas where misunderstandings and communication breakdowns occur, leading to better training and support for healthcare providers.

In clinical phonetics, I have worked alongside speech-language pathologists to help individuals with communication disorders, such as speech impediments or language difficulties, to improve their speech and language skills. This work has the potential to transform people's lives, allowing them to communicate more effectively and achieve their full potential.

Finally, my work with the private company named Edsy has been particularly rewarding, as it allows me to contribute to improving access to quality English education for Thai students. By evaluating students' speaking fluency based on Thai English phonetics, we can identify areas where support and resources are needed, ultimately helping students to achieve their academic goals and succeed in their future endeavors.

Overall, I believe that linguistics has the potential to make a real difference in many areas, from the legal system to healthcare and education. I am grateful for the opportunities I have had to apply my expertise to these important areas, and I look forward to continuing to contribute in meaningful ways.

Darshika

What are channels you use for communicating about your work (academic journals, Facebook pages, podcasts, etc.)? Is there any particular channel you like? Why?

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

As a researcher and academic, I use several channels to communicate about my work. Firstly, I regularly publish my research findings in academic journals, which allows me to reach out to other scholars in my field and share my work with the wider academic community. Secondly, I present my research at conferences, which gives me the opportunity to meet other researchers in person, exchange ideas, and receive feedback on my work.

In addition, I use social media to communicate about my work. While I do not make all my posts public, I do share my formal and academic posts publicly on my Facebook account. This allows me to reach a wider audience beyond the academic community and share my work with interested individuals and groups.

Another channel I enjoy using is giving invited talks, both online and onsite. I find this to be a particularly effective way to communicate about my work, as it allows for lively and interactive discussions. During these talks, I have the opportunity to share my research findings, engage with the audience, and receive feedback on my work. Moreover, invited talks are usually up-to-date and allow me to share the latest developments in my field with interested individuals.

Finally, I have also given interviews to new/online media, which has allowed me to communicate my research to a broader audience. By discussing my work with journalists, I am able to share my findings and insights with the general public, and generate interest and awareness about the topics that I study.

I believe that effective communication is essential for researchers, and that using a variety of channels allows us to reach different audiences and engage with them in meaningful ways.

Darshika

I have heard that a large group of people are interested in what you are working on. How do you feel about public engagement? (Do you learn more from discussing with people? Do you like it when people share their opinions on what you are working on?)

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

As a researcher and academic, I am passionate about sharing my research with a broader audience through public engagement. It's a great opportunity to showcase the importance of linguistics and language-related issues in our daily lives. I am thrilled that people are interested in my work, and I believe it is crucial to communicate my research to the public in a way that is both informative and engaging.

I find public engagement to be a two-way street, where I can share my knowledge and expertise while also learning from others. When discussing my research with people outside of academia, I always gain new perspectives and insights that I may not have otherwise considered.

I believe that discussion and sharing of opinions can lead to new ideas and solutions to linguistic and language-related issues.

However, with the rise of online media, it is essential to be careful when engaging with the public. When giving an interview, I make sure to ask for the questions ahead of time, so I can organize my thoughts and ensure clarity in my responses. I also request to review the final draft before publishing to ensure that my ideas are accurately represented.

Overall, public engagement is a valuable opportunity to connect with others and broaden my understanding of different perspectives. It also allows me to promote a better understanding of the importance of language in our lives. I am committed to continuing my efforts in public engagement and look forward to exploring new ways to share my research with the public.

Darshika

Some believe that it is almost impossible for people working within humanities to conduct integrative and innovative study. Could you share your opinion on how to start working interdisciplinarily and being innovative? Also, what do you think policy makers should do to promote or support people to work interdisciplinarily?

Sujinat Jitwiriyanont

I strongly believe that interdisciplinary work is essential in advancing research and addressing complex societal issues. The humanities, in particular, can benefit greatly from collaborating with other disciplines, such as business, neuroscience, psychology, computer science, and sociology, among others.

As a linguist who has worked on interdisciplinary projects, I can attest that conducting integrative and innovative research in the humanities is indeed possible. However, it does come with certain challenges.

One challenge is bridging the gap between different fields and their respective methodologies, theories, and terminology. For instance, as a linguist working with marketers, I had to learn the basics of marketing concepts, such as brand positioning and consumer behavior, to effectively communicate and collaborate with my colleagues. This required some effort and time to learn and understand marketing language and techniques, which were different from my linguistic training.

Another challenge is finding common ground and goals for the project. Interdisciplinary projects can involve diverse stakeholders with different agendas and interests. As a linguist, my primary interest was in understanding how language shapes consumer behavior, while my marketing colleagues were more focused on developing practical solutions for their clients. It took some time to find a balance between these different objectives and to ensure that all parties were satisfied with the outcomes.

To start working interdisciplinarily, it's essential to be open-minded and curious about other disciplines. Seeking out collaborations with researchers from other fields who share

a common interest or goal is an excellent way to begin. It's also crucial to understand the language and approaches of other disciplines to communicate effectively and collaborate productively.

In terms of being innovative, interdisciplinary research projects often require thinking outside the box and challenging traditional disciplinary boundaries. As a linguist working with marketers, I found that combining linguistic theories and methods with marketing concepts led to novel insights into how language influences consumer behavior. It's essential to be open to new ideas and perspectives, even if they seem unconventional at first.

Policy makers can play a crucial role in promoting interdisciplinary work by providing funding and resources for collaborative research initiatives. They can also establish programs and incentives that encourage researchers from different disciplines to work together. For example, funding opportunities specifically for interdisciplinary projects can help overcome financial barriers to collaboration.

In summary, while there are challenges to conducting interdisciplinary research in the humanities, it is possible to overcome them by being open-minded, willing to learn, and finding common ground with collaborators. Policy makers can help promote and support interdisciplinary research by providing funding and incentives for collaboration. I have seen the benefits of interdisciplinary research firsthand and believe that it can lead to innovative and impactful outcomes.