

PLM2026 Honorary lecture

How linguistics profited from interaction with other disciplines, from its beginnings until today

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I won't discuss cases, where everyday life expressions are the origin of metaphorical scientific notions with a new, previously not existing terminology and methodology, such as our development of the conception of Blind Alley Developments in young children's course of acquisition, which so far can be explained only by our model of Natural Linguistics. I'll start with the English 18th century classical scholar Richard Bentley, considered to be the founder of historical philology, whose conception of the family tree of Greek manuscripts inspired the reconstruction of the family tree of Indo-European languages. A later 18th century Scottish influencer was the theoretician of economy Adam Smith: he both created language typology and inspired Otto Jespersen to formulate his ideas on diachronic progress in language change. In the early 19th century Johann Wolfgang von Goethe conceived of morphology in biology as referring both to the whole part of a plant or animal and to the structures of its subparts. Both meanings have been taken over in linguistic morphology and this double character is valid still today. At about the same time interaction with prehistorical and palaeobiological research inspired the always improving reconstruction of the original home of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, which led to a new concept of reconstructed Indo-Hittite.

I'll finish my discussion of cases of interaction with two cases, where I have been the main linguistic conceptualiser: 1) my adaptation of the concept of superposition, as of light being understood as being propagated both as waves and particles at the same time from quantum physics to diachronic and acquisitional linguistics, where we introduced the possibility of balancing the two possibilities in both directions, which, as far as we know, does not exist in quantum physics; 2) my proposal of the new intertextual concept of chaining autonomous texts into supertexts and of rechaining them into second-order supertexts, as in chaining theatrical scenes into acts and in rechaining these into the second-order supertext of the whole drama. Here I was influenced by the practice of composers to chain movements into a whole sonata or symphony. Both a musical and a textual example is Johann Sebastian's chaining of German and Latin texts written by different authors into each day of his Christmas Oratorio and of rechaining the six days into the whole Oratorio, following the *ordo naturalis* of reflecting the intended chronological order performing the six parts by the order of their rechaining.

I'll try to distinguish always between interdisciplinary and (the more fruitful) transdisciplinary interaction, clearly hindered by my very differing amount of competence in the areas discussed.