

[1] Welcoming Remarks at the First Annual Meeting of the Joint Research Center for Language and Human Complexity, Nov. 7, 2014. WSYW

[2] In January 2013, I had the honor of joining in the inauguration of the Taiwan Society of Cognitive Neuroscience. It was at that meeting that Ovid Tzeng suggested to me the need of forming a joint center for research on language and human complexity. While such research has become quite prominent in the West, important aspects of Chinese language and culture are notably under-represented in this work.

[3] We also both felt that such a center must include the special strengths of Peking University, especially in view of the great linguistic and cultural diversity of Greater China. We were deeply encouraged when our colleagues at Peking University accepted our invitation. The Joint Research Center was formally established later in the year, on December 8, 2013, at a formal ceremony on this campus. Today marks our first annual meeting.

[4] The Center is a landmark in two important ways. On the one hand, it unites the talents of the three regions of Greater China, pooling the unique strengths each region has to offer. At the same time, it is strongly multi-disciplinary, connecting linguistics with psychology and cognitive neuroscience, supported by computer science and bio-engineering, and with the various disciplines concerned with human evolution, including anthropology and genetics.

[5] Humans are unique in the known universe, having become ‘masters of the planet’ only within the past 100 thousand years or so. A central source of our uniqueness is our diverse languages and cultures, built upon, as well as uniting, various highly complex aspects of the human mind, including sensori-motor skills and various memorial and computational processes. To understand these complex aspects of cognition, and their associated languages and cultures, as a function of the brain, is to understand what it means to be human.

[6] Toward this grand vision, our partners at Peking University continue to pioneer research on language diversity, leading to an understanding of how

language and culture interact. We will work closely together with many researchers on the Mainland toward enriching knowledge in this important area. Our partners in Taiwan are already at the forefront of research on reading and writing in Chinese, especially on how these contrast with other writing systems in the world. At the Chinese University of Hong Kong, our efforts have centered more on the spoken language, in particular on lexical tones, which are present in almost all the languages and dialects of China. We are especially interested in the relationships between tones in language and tones in music; both language and music are found in all human societies.

[7] Of course, segments of knowledge coming from the basic research prompted by our grand vision also have more immediate applications. For instance, some research findings are already being incorporated into school programs to help children in Taiwan to learn reading and writing, and to combat dyslexia. Both in Taiwan and at the Chinese University of Hong Kong there is ongoing research on how ageing affects language and cognition; this topic has particular social significance, given how the average age of the entire world has steadily increased over past decades and continues to rise.

[8] The three partners of the Joint Research Center have already collaborated successfully in several joint activities, including a 6-week course on the Biological Foundations of Language in Hong Kong in the Spring, a week-long Summer course in Cognitive Neuroscience in Taiwan, and a Workshop on Language and Human Complexity in Beijing in October. That our activities here in Greater China have also attracted the support of the international community can be clearly seen at this annual meeting, graced by scholars not only from the United States, but also from Finland, Israel, and Spain.

[9] It is of vital importance that our activities should closely involve and pass on to younger minds. Toward this end, all three partners are actively securing support for long term development, so that our activities can be enhanced not only in leading edge research, but also include training programs for graduate students and post-doctoral researchers to contribute to our cross-regional and multidisciplinary enterprise, so that the grand vision of our joint center will continue to blossom for many generations to come.

[1] 語言與人類複雜系統聯合研究中心第一屆年會歡迎詞，2014年11月7日。王士元

[2] 2013年1月，我有幸參與台灣認知神經科學學會的成立大會。在大會上，曾志朗跟我提及成立一個語言和人類複雜系統聯合研究中心的需要。這樣的研究在西方已然成為顯學，但有關中國的語言及文化等重要層面的研究，卻顯然還沒有受到應有的關注。

[3] 我們都覺得，鑒於大中華地區語言和文化的多樣性，這樣一個中心必須結合北京大學的特長。當北大的同事接受我們的邀約時，大家都覺得深受鼓舞。聯合研究中心於去年12月8日正式成立，正式的揭牌儀式在香港中文大學舉行。今天標示著我們的第一屆年會。

[4] 從兩個方面來說，我們的中心都具有里程碑的重大意義。一來，中心結合了兩岸三地的才俊之士，把各個區域的特有專長聚攏起來。同時，中心完全是多學科取向的，將語言學與心理學及認知神經科學共冶一爐，加上電腦科學、生物工程的支援，並把和人類演化相關的諸多學科，如人類學及遺傳學都聯結起來。

[5] 人類在已知的宇宙間是獨一無二的，但我們成為「地球的主宰」不過是最近十萬年左右的事。人類之所以會變得獨一無二，一個核心關鍵在於我們有不同的語言與文化，這些語言和文化，都奠基在眾多高度複雜的人類心智能力上，同時也須充分整合這些能力，如感覺運動技能、各種記憶和運算過程。能夠了解這些複雜的認知層面，以及與認知相關的語言文化和大腦之間的關係，才能理解人之所以為人的真正意義。

[6] 為了達到這個偉大的願景，在語言多樣性的研究上，我們的北大同僚持續居於執牛耳的地位，讓我們更了解語言和文化如何互動。我們也將繼續與大陸的研究人員密切合作，以充實與這個重要領域相關的知識。而我們的台灣同僚，在漢字讀寫上本來就引領著前沿的研究，尤其是漢字系統與世界上其他書寫系統的對比。在香港中文大學方面，我們的精力多半集中在口語，尤其是聲調上，因為中國境內的語言和方言幾乎都有聲調。我們尤其有興趣探索語言的聲調和音樂的音調之間的關係，因為所有的人類社會都同時擁有語言和音樂。

[7] 當然，由我們的偉大願景促發的基礎研究所帶來的知識，也可以發揮立即的應用功效。例如，有些研究成果已被應用在學校的課程中，以協助台灣兒童學習讀寫並克服失讀症。在台灣和香港中文大學，也都有研究正在進行中，以了解老化如何影響語言及認知；這個主題具有特殊的社會意義，因為全世界的平均年齡在過去數十年內穩定增長，而且勢必會繼續增加。

[8] 聯合研究中心的三方夥伴在許多合辦的活動中，已經累積了成功合作的經驗，包括春季在香港舉行為期六周的「語言的生理基礎」課程，在台灣為期一周的「認知神經科學暑期學校」，以及十月份在北京舉行的「語言及人類複雜系統工作坊」。從這次年會上可清楚看出，我們的活動也引發了國際學術界的興趣，與會學者不僅來自美國，也有從芬蘭、以色列和西班牙遠道而來的，為我們的年會增色不少。

[9] 我們的活動應該積極鼓勵年輕人的參與並傳承給年輕的一代，這是至關重要的。為達此目標，三方都在積極籌畫爭取長期發展所需的支援，以期中心的活動不僅可以在領先的頂尖研究上開拓視野，更可以籌辦針對碩博士研究生及博士後研究員的訓練課程，讓我們繼續對這個跨區域、多學科的研究事業做出貢獻，這樣我們聯合中心的偉大願景，在未來許多世代的手中才能持續不斷地開花結果。