
Dr. Ping Li
Co-Director, Center for Brain, Behavior, and Cognition
Professor, Pennsylvania State University

Thursday, March 27, 2013
2:30 – 4:00 p.m.
Harrington Tower 301

Abstract
A great deal of research has examined behavioral changes associated with second language (L2) performance. But what changes take place in the brain as a result of L2 learning experience? How can we identify whether the learner has or has not successfully learned an aspect of the new language? To answer these questions, we use neurocognitive approaches to examine both the behavioral performance the corresponding functional and structural brain changes associated with L2 learning. We further identify mechanisms of individual differences underlying learning successes. Our findings indicate that successful learners develop more efficient and more integrated brain networks across the left and right hemispheres in key brain regions responsible for linguistic processing and semantic integration. Our research portrays a picture of a highly dynamic and interactive system in the acquisition and representation of multiple languages. Specifically, our data point to the interaction of language- and culture-specific properties, learner’s prior experience, and the developmental characteristics of the learner. Our approaches provide new insights into the understanding of the linguistic ability of the individual, and the relationships among learning, culture, and the brain.

Biographical Note
Ping Li (http://blclab.org/) is Professor of Psychology, Linguistics, and Information Sciences and Technology at the Pennsylvania State University, where he is also Co-Chair of the Inter-College Graduate Program in Neuroscience, Co-Director of the Center for Brain, Behavior, and Cognition, and Co-Director of the Advanced Joint Center for the Study of Learning Sciences. His research interests are in the cognitive science and cognitive neuroscience of language acquisition and bilingualism, and his publications include co-authored books such as Acquisition of Lexical and Grammatical Aspect; Handbook of East Asian Psycholinguistics; the Psycholinguistics of Bilingualism; and Having Success with NSF: A Practical Guide. He is currently Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Neurolinguistics and Associate Editor of Frontiers in Language Sciences. He has previously served as Editor of Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, President of the Society for Computers in Psychology, and Director for the Cognitive Neuroscience Program and the Program in Perception, Action, and Cognition at the NSF.