

## Preface

This volume contains articles based on the authors' contributions to the Symposium on Language Acquisition and Language Evolution which was held at The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences in Stockholm on the 1st and 2nd of December 2011, by initiative and funding from the Department of Linguistics at Stockholm University.

The symposium was intended as an opportunity for scientists from different research areas to interact and discuss complex dynamic systems in relation to the general theme of "Language Acquisition and Language Evolution". Complex dynamic systems are characterised by hierarchical and combinatorial structures that can be found in quite different scientific domains. From a broad perspective, there are general parallels in the way human language, biological organisms and ecological systems are organised and the symposium aimed at discussing those issues from an interdisciplinary point of view.

The goals were largely achieved. The invited speakers were a small group of top researchers from Phonetics, Linguistics, Biology, Philosophy, Astronomy and Computer Sciences who contributed with very inspiring and insightful presentations that effectively stimulated fruitful discussions among all the participants. The articles in this volume represent the themes brought up by the speakers and capture the essential aspects raised by the speakers. Not surprising, however, the articles cannot do justice to the climate of spontaneous scientific debates and public involvement that the corresponding live presentations generated. They also fall short from conveying the glowing engagement of the class of interested and ambitious high-school students from Kungsholmens Gymnasium in Stockholm, who participated in the closing session of the symposium. Under the guidance of the science journalist Patrik Hadenius, the eagerness and interest of these high-school students flourished rapidly and their commitment to learn about scientific issues became one of the most memorable highlights of the symposium. It was extremely rewarding for all the speakers and enhanced even further the enthusiasm of the participating scientists. In the course of this friendly and intensive debate of scientific issues, the speakers found themselves literally surrounded by the high-school students in their pursuit to learn more and were extremely happy about that overwhelming interest!

We are proud to publish in this volume these important contributions on the broad theme of Language Acquisition and Language Evolution.

Stockholm, August 2013

Francisco Lacerda  
*francisco.lacerda@ling.su.se*