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PREFACE

Patrick HEINRICH and Yuko SUGITA (University of Duisburg-Essen)

Despite the oft-pronounced view that the twenty-first century constitutes the “Asian century”, Asian languages remain marginally treated throughout Europe. Language learning and exchange programmes in the European Community, for instance, continue to neglect non-Western languages, despite the fact that demand for East Asian languages such as Japanese, Chinese and Korean is growing across Europe. As it stands, the current language education policies in Europe do not fully reflect the changes brought about by the forces of globalisation.

This book originates in a symposium on Japanese as Foreign Language (JFL) convened at the University of Duisburg-Essen in March 2006. The symposium was inspired by the observation that globalisation exerts an ever-growing pressure on language choices, linguistic behaviour and language policies in large parts of the world. Such changes notwithstanding, much of current foreign-language education is still being pursued according to teaching paradigms and ideological views of language that arose in the age of modernisation, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At the symposium, we examined current paradigms and practices with a particular focus on the pressures and changes within established practices in relation to new insights into the cognitive processes of foreign language learning. Three topics were discussed in relation to JFL: (1) new learners and/or new paradigms; (2) interaction in contact situations; and (3) cognitive processes in language learning. The first issue is addressed by the contributions of Bernard Spolsky, Tessa Carroll, Christian Galan, Shikama Ayako and Patrick Heinrich. Interaction in contact situations is addressed in the papers by Jiří V. Neustupný and Sau Kuen Fan, while cognitive processes are considered in the contributions by Yoshioka Keiko, Ando Yuka, Gerhard Dillmann, Sugita Yuko and Irina Shport. Existing teaching practices cannot, however, be enriched by research in language learning and teaching alone. Commitment from language teachers is indispensable, and we hope that this publication will provide an incentive for more discussion and research into these three topics.

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acknowledged here. We owe further thanks to Yoshioka Kaoru who assisted in preparing the symposium and discussed many of the papers with us, and to Tessa Carroll for helping us to render our international varieties of English more consistent and reader-friendly. We are also grateful to Florian Coulmas for his continuous support and his willingness to publish this book as part of the monograph series of the German Institute for Japanese Studies.

Neither the conference nor the book would ever have happened without the presence of Jiří V. Neustupný at Duisburg-Essen University during the winter semester 2004–05. Jiří shared his insights into JFL with us and encouraged us to address issues relating to JFL in Europe. Hoping that this publication marks only the start of more research to come, we dedicate this book to him with our gratitude.