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Preface

This volume results from a conference on the topic of *Bilingualism in Deaf Education* which was held in Stockholm in August 1993. The conference was organized by the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) and the Swedish Deaf Association (SDR) in co-operation with our departments, the Department of Sign Language and the Centre for Research on Bilingualism at Stockholm University. We had the pleasure of organizing its scientific programme. It was supported financially by the Swedish Government, WFD, UNESCO, SDR, and the Swedish organization of Handicapped International Aid Foundation. The conference was attended by approximately 300 participants from more than 80 countries, representing national associations of the deaf, representatives of ministries, departments and other authorities responsible for the education of the deaf. The papers presented, the majority of which are included in this book, numbered 21 and were given in oral or signed language. All presentations were interpreted into 34 different sign languages and into English, if not given in that language, French and Swedish. The work by the 46 sign language interpreters and 6 oral interpreters and the preparatory interaction between them and the presenters were proficiently organized and coordinated by Anna Hein. Gunnel Sträng was the secretary of the conference. Her indefatigable devotion to the complicated task of getting all practical ends together resulted in a smooth and well-oiled conference organization to the advantage of all involved.

The idea behind the conference was to share two decades of successful Swedish experiences of bilingual education for deaf children, using sign language as a medium of instruction and teaching written Swedish as a second language. The aim, therefore, was to make an international contribution to a positive development of the educational conditions and general living conditions for deaf people and to spread knowledge of the importance of sign language in education and other spheres of life. The develop-

ment of reasonable educational models for the deaf in Sweden has resulted from close co-operation between linguistic sign language researchers, educationalists, deaf organizations and parents of deaf children.

The content of this volume reflects our understanding that increased knowledge of sign language, of the processes of language acquisition and language use among deaf and hearing people, and of bilingualism are necessary prerequisites for a proper development of advantageous educational opportunities for deaf people. The papers, therefore, represent two overlapping areas of research and experience. In the first part of the book, the area of *sign language and bilingualism for the deaf* (Y. Andersson – Widell) is approached from a number of perspectives by deaf and hearing researchers and educationalists working directly on deaf issues. In the second part of the book (Skutnabb-Kangas – Hyltenstam) a number of issues from the area of *bilingualism and general linguistics* are treated by researchers with no or limited experiences of issues in deaf education. The papers in this section, therefore, present general information on language and bilingualism and draw attention to issues of immediate relevance to language and the use of language in all populations including the deaf. In many of these latter chapters, however, specific reference is made to studies on issues among deaf populations that are parallel to those treated on a general level.

As editors of this volume we would like to acknowledge the efficient help we have received from Linda Habermann in the area of text editing and reference standardization. We also greatly indebted to David Minugh for his professional final revision of the English of the book.

Inger Ahlgren • Kenneth Hyltenstam