

PREFACE

The Fourth European Congress on Sign Language Research that was held in September 1994 in Munich is linked to a series of congresses that were held in previous years: Brussels (1982), Noordwijkerhout (1985) and Hamburg (1989). The original purpose of these congresses was to provide an opportunity for European researchers, most of whom were working quite isolated, to meet each other, to discuss work and to start joint projects. This has worked quite well over the years. However, not only European researchers seem to be interested in such a platform. At the third Congress in Hamburg in 1989 many researchers from places outside of Europe had found their way to this congress. The proceedings of the Fourth European Congress reflect the work of a truly international group of researchers. There are papers on eight different sign languages such as German Sign Language, American Sign Language, Israeli Sign Language, Swedish Sign Language, Australian Sign Language, Canadian Sign Language, Sign Language of the Netherlands and British Sign Language. We have incorporated most of the papers that were presented in Munich. We have maintained the same order of papers as in the original program. The proceedings contain the work that has been done by a number of different researchers working in areas of sign language research such as linguistics, sociolinguistics, language acquisition and teaching, dictionaries and transcription methods. There are a few differences between the way in which some papers were originally presented and their current form. At the congress some presenters made an effort in presenting the contents of their papers in such a way that it would be more understandable for the audience. It was the first time in the city of Munich and the State of Bavaria that Sign Language had been given such a prominence. Consequently a number of deaf and hearing people – who were not necessarily familiar with the academic contents of the papers – attended the congress. As edi-

tors of the proceedings of this congress we choose however to present all papers in an academic format. The issues that were discussed at the workshops on bilingual education and dictionaries have been summarised in two different papers: 'Defining the bi in bilingual education' and 'Dictionaries: dilemmas and developments'.

Without a congress there would have been no proceedings. The Fourth European Congress represents a collaborative effort on the part of the Bavarian Deaf Association and the International Sign Linguistics Association (ISLA). We would like to thank Rudolf Gast, Rosie Hasenhütl and their colleagues, the Deaf Studies Research Unit in Durham and the NSDSK in Amsterdam for their contributions to the organisation of the congress. We wish to thank all authors who have contributed to this volume for their adequate reactions to most of our messages through various communication media. We would also like to thank the Dutch Foundation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Child and the Department of General Linguistics of the University of Amsterdam for the use of their facilities. We are grateful to Tomas Vollhaber and his colleagues from Signum Press who were responsible for the publication of the proceedings within a short period of time.

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