Social Metamorphosis
in the Context of Globalization in Japan:
Language, Discourse, Communication and Education

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PREFACE

The first 20 years of the 21st century have a great deal of sociocultural metamorphosis not only in our specific regions, but also on a global scale. Two apparent factors that have triggered this change includes on-going rapid globalisation as well as digitalisation. Continuous innovation in the realm of information technology has allowed for real-time communication worldwide from a variety of end-terminals; not merely text-messaging, but also web-based remote meeting capabilities.

This sociocultural metamorphosis, as a result of innovation, was arguably further accelerated by the unprecedented outbreak of a Novel Coronavirus, otherwise known as COVID-19, in early 2020. Unlike its surrounding countries including Malaysia and India, Japan did not have to experience strict lockdown to deal with this global crisis. Nevertheless, the pandemic which reportedly emerged originally in Wuhan City, China, exerted not a little influence on Japanese society. The working conditions of this country were hence subject to drastic change. To deal with this situation, a large number of Japanese companies decided to utilize web-based meeting systems to enable their employees to telework while maintaining in-house telecommunication infrastructure for sustainable business development. As of early June 2020, the pandemic is expected to slow down as the government took some measures to prevent its further spread. At the time of this writing, the efforts made to seek re-equilibrium seem to have resulted in a positive effect in that the number of newly infected patients is gradually but steadily decreasing. However, the situation is still unstable as a fundamental solution has not been discovered yet.

A number of social scientists argue that human beings will face more sociocultural metamorphosis in the next few decades along with continuous innovation and its potential subsequent outcomes; both positive and negative. As our vocation, we, researchers of social sciences and arts, should carefully observe this sociocultural metamorphosis, analyse its causes and mechanisms and provide some insights into how they should be addressed and thus be dealt with for the sake of sustainable development in quality of life for human beings. In this volume, we applied linguists try to take a look at the current sociocultural metamorphosis resulting from on-going rapid globalization and digitalisation by focusing on various kinds of sociolinguistic aspects of our academic interests.

Nakatake looked at the possible pedagogical functions of a writing centre at a Japanese university. Along with the diversification of students' needs, maintaining the school facilities as a part of an educational infrastructure is becoming a must at Japanese universities at present. Her analysis provides valuable insights into how the facility should be better incorporated in the sphere of higher education. Taniguchi, a pure bilingual of Japanese and English, discussed how children in bilingual families retained their bilingual literacy. As the number of bilingual children in Japan is increasing nowadays according to statistics, her research is deemed beneficial even to non-academic stakeholders. Ussher, a former assistant language teacher working in the domain of Japanese compulsory education, depicted the status quo of the JET programme, from his non-Japanese perspective. Kaimori, who courageously chose to write in Japanese to contribute to this current volume, administered a comparative analysis on the caused-motion constructions from a semantic point of view. Ano, who has recently debuted as a corporate English trainer, revisited the concept of strategic competence, with a special focus on business communication discourse. Finally, Sato delineated how Japanese businesspeople exhibit and receive disagreement in collective decision-making meeting simulations while communicating in English used as a lingua franca. All these studies, though they look at different respects, contributed to grasping the changing sociolinguistic circumstances of Japanese society. We hope that this book will encourage other researchers and educational practitioners to continue to look at the sociocultural metamorphosis of Japan and beyond, from various perspectives.

As the concluding remark, we would like to express our gratitude for all those who kindly supported us to complete this challenging publication project amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Index