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TOSHIKO YAMAGUCHI, *Basic Japanese vocabulary: An explanation of usage*. 2nd edn. Subang Jaya/Selangor: Pelanduk Publications, 2008. Pp. xii, 234. Pb. \$11.50.

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This handbook, targeted at Japanese language learners in their early stages, explains differences in meaning between pairs of homophones/synonyms. Yamaguchi, who is experienced in Japanese language teaching in Singapore and Malaysia, carefully selected 170 sets of homophones and synonyms and eleven single words/phrases on the basis of her teaching activities. Each target word has an indication of intonation, which encourages readers to pronounce the word correctly. In addition, the words appear with sentence examples written in Japanese orthography—a combination of *kanji* and *kana*. The examples are accompanied with their *kana*-gloss as well as English translation, exposing readers to Japanese characters and building up their reading skills simultaneously. In this second edition, forty-six new entries—both sets of homophones/synonyms and single words/phrases—have been added. Particularly, the chapter on culture is enriched with words that reflect Japanese cultural factors such as formality and gender differences in their use (Ch. 5). Moreover, a new chapter on Japanese idioms has been added (Ch. 8).

Ch. 1 deals with basic vocabulary items (nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs) with homophones that have the same part of speech (e.g. the verb *kaku* as in ‘write’ and ‘drew’). Readers can see which word fits in which context, and when the word is (un)grammatical, by means of sentence examples. In Chs. 2–7, Yamaguchi describes subtle distinctions between pairs of synonyms, illustrating that they cannot always be used interchangeably. Since context plays a significant role in distinguishing the correct usage of each word, she provides concrete situations with sample sentences as well as brief definitions. Ch. 3 focuses on pairs of synonyms consisting of native Japanese words and Sino-Japanese words that originate from Chinese (for example, the native Japanese *sake o nomu* and the Sino-Japanese *inshu suru*, both meaning ‘to drink alcohol’). The author notes that Sino-Japanese words are more likely to appear in formal writing such as newspapers, while native Japanese ones are used in ordinary writing. Ch. 4 compares foreign loan words with Japanese words. For instance, the loan word *draibu* (<*drive*) and the Sino-Japanese word *uten* have a different semantic scope. Although both refer to driving, the former suggests the pleasure of driving, and is thus limited to private cars, excluding

vehicles like trucks and taxis. Ch. 6 is concerned with colloquial terms including young people's vernacular words such as *kimoi*, a shortening of *kimochi warui* 'disgusting'. Ch. 7, on grammar, treats confusing pairs of grammatical particles such as *wa* and *ga*. Ch. 8 examines a number of frequent idioms and proverbs that are worth memorizing for daily use.

Grammatical terms are briefly explained throughout the book, making it easy for readers to follow. Moreover, quizzes after each chapter motivate learners to check their understanding of target words. This book is also a valuable resource for Japanese language teachers, offering detailed descriptions of the pairs of synonyms/homonyms that students regularly have difficulty with.

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KINGSLEY BOLTON AND HAN YANG (eds.), *Language and society in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Open University of Hong Kong, 2008. Pp. viii, 495. Pb. \$42.50.

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*Language and society in Hong Kong*, edited by two prominent scholars in the field, is a comprehensive and well-edited volume on the sociolinguistic situation in Hong Kong, providing an excellent overview of a wide range of issues pertinent to the sociolinguistics of Hong Kong. The volume is comprised of eighteen chapters and is divided into six sections, namely, the Hong Kong speech community, the sociolinguistics of Chinese, the sociolinguistics of English, code-switching and code-mixing, language and gender, and language planning and language policy.

Part 1 consists of three chapters that examine the language situation of Hong Kong as a speech community. The chapters discuss the complex relationship between the southern Chinese dialects and the Chinese language family as a whole (Mary Erbaugh), the changing sociolinguistic profile of Hong Kong with reference to data drawn from census data and language survey data (John Bacon-Shone & Kingsley Bolton), and a case study of language repertoire and language use in two Hong Kong Indian communities (Champa Detaramani & Graham Lock). Part 2 contains four chapters that explore the sociolinguistics of Chinese, particularly Cantonese and other varieties of Chinese in Hong Kong. Topics include language attitudes in Guangzhou, China (Ivan Kalmar, Zhang Yong, & Xiao Hong), an examination of written Cantonese from a folkloristic viewpoint (Wan-kan Chin), a sociolinguistic description of Hong Kong Cantonese (Peter Pan), and the academic debate on the standardization of Cantonese (Katherine Chen).