

# Haberland, Hartmut

BENT PREISLER

Hartmut Haberland (b. 1948) is a German-Danish linguist whose main contributions to applied linguistics, within the areas of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, include being founder, in 1977 (with Jacob L. Mey), and coeditor of the internationally recognized *Journal of Pragmatics*. He was thus a prime mover in the redefinition of linguistics as an interdisciplinary study of language as social practice, at a time when linguistics was being strongly influenced by mentalism and transformational grammar. Haberland's earlier research also inquired into the role of language in what was later to be known as information technology, computer linguistics, and "man-machine" communication ([www.ruc.dk/~hartmut/](http://www.ruc.dk/~hartmut/)). Later work focuses on the relationship between languages in multilingual societies and the role of language in interactive speech communication, as reflected in phenomena such as language alternation and language choice. His research interests also comprise language policy, and he is a well-known participant in the Danish language debate concerning the relationship between Danish and English as an international language. He is a founding member of the international research center CALPIU (Cultural and Linguistic Practices in the International University), which was first conceived at Roskilde University in 2003 ([www.calpiu.dk](http://www.calpiu.dk)).

Haberland was born in Hanover, Germany, in 1948. He studied German Language and Literature, General Linguistics and Philosophy in (West) Berlin and Stuttgart. He wrote his MA thesis within the area of Computational and Algebraic Linguistics in 1971. Since 1974 he has been living and working in Denmark, becoming a Danish citizen in 2005, his place of employment being Roskilde University. His past international experience, besides periods of employment at the Freie Universität in Berlin and the University of Düsseldorf (Germany), includes teaching at Copenhagen University (Denmark) and being an exchange professor at the University of Athens (Greece) and a visiting scholar in Japan (Dokkyo University, Saitama Province, 1995) and China (Beijing University of Foreign Studies, 1996). He taught at the Guangzhou Summer School of Pragmatics, China (2006), and carried out research-related work in Osaka (Kansai University), Japan, and the Hong Kong Institute of Education (2009), where Haberland is a Senior Research Fellow (External) of RCLEAMS (Research Center into Language Education and Acquisition in Multilingual Societies). More information is available online ([www.ied.edu.hk/rcleams/](http://www.ied.edu.hk/rcleams/)).

The first widely known work (co-)authored by Haberland was a textbook, *Soziologie + Linguistik. Die schlechte Aufhebung sozialer Ungleichheit durch Sprache* (Hager, Haberland, & Paris, 1973), used at a number of universities in Europe for several years. The *Journal of Pragmatics* was founded by Haberland and Jacob Mey in 1977. In the editorial of the first issue, the authors defined pragmatics, not as an aspect or branch of linguistics, but as *a way of doing* linguistics (Haberland & Mey, 1977). There was thus no need for the classic distinction between "pure" and "applied" linguistics. Linguists were not to describe an abstract language "competence" but a concrete language "performance," which—just like any other social action—is a manifestation of social and societal conditions and practices. "The pragmatic question *par excellence* is therefore not: What does an utterance mean? But: How did this utterance come to be produced?" (p. 8), and the theoretical foundations of human socialization processes, including linguistic ones, are also the foundations of linguistics itself. As an extension of this line of thinking, Haberland's writings reflect

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a general concern with the relationship between interaction and text, spoken and written language: to be analyzed, an utterance has to be decontextualized, thereby becoming a text (entextualization), which can be recontextualized (e.g., Haberland, 1994, 1999).

As another, related topic to which he has made several important contributions, Haberland—himself of German origin—is concerned with *language contact* as an aspect of social and ultimately cultural contact, obviously inspired both by his own encounter and experiences of many years with Danish language and society, and by his cross-cultural marriage (his wife is Irish). This has led to a preoccupation with the functions of language in face-to-face interaction, particularly the (sociolinguistic) question of “what makes people choose one language over another, if they have a choice?” His early works dealt with the languages of smaller European nations. Not surprisingly, when the awareness dawned that English was becoming the language of globalization and the dominant *lingua franca* of the world, Haberland became interested in the functions of English vis-à-vis other languages within societies or environments, or both, where English is not a native language (e.g., Haberland, 1989). In 1991 he coauthored (with three other linguists all of whom were non-native speakers of Danish) a provocative and much debated article on the danger of the Danish language being swallowed up piecemeal as its various functions are gradually taken over by English (Haberland, Henriksen, Phillipson, & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1991), thus co-initiating the debate on the influence of English in Denmark, which is still going on. English is often believed to be taking over various social “domains” (e.g., advertising or education), so that by the same token the local languages suffer “domain loss.” As a worst-case scenario, Denmark is thought liable to become a “diglossic” (Fishman, 1967) society, with English as the high-status language used in official and public domains, and Danish the low-status language of informal, private domains among family and friends. However, Haberland’s critical analyses of the “domain (loss)” concepts have pointed out that “domains,” if anything, are empirically based constructs whose objective existence can only be verified through sociolinguistic research; as mere a priori subjective notions, “domains” cannot in themselves be used as a basis for sociolinguistic investigation.

Haberland’s critique, on sociolinguistic grounds, of the popular explanation of how English is supposed to be supplanting other languages, domain by domain, should be seen in relation to his general concern with the global role of English, inspired by concepts such as “hegemony” (Gramsci, 1992–6) and “globalism” (Beck, 2005), see Haberland (2009). Within the framework of the CALPIU research center his research focuses on the complementary notion of “localization,” analyzing the role of the local language (*in casu*, Danish) in transnational student mobility—particularly transnational students’ need for and success in using local languages as languages of internationalization.

Haberland is coeditor (with Jacob Mey and Kerstin Fischer) of a new international journal, *Pragmatics and Society*, which appeared in the summer of 2010.

**SEE ALSO:** Cross-Cultural Pragmatics; English as Lingua Franca; Language and Globalization; Linguistic Relativity and Second Language Acquisition; Multilingualism; Politeness and Face Research

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