

University of Macau Linguistics Seminar

Title: “English, local languages and other languages in university internationalization”

Speakers: Dr. Hartmut Haberland (Roskilde University & CALPIU Research Center – Denmark)

Date: Wednesday, March 10th, 2010

Time: 18.15

Venue: HG03

Language: English

Abstract

International (or more properly, according to Hannerz 1996, transnational) communication can happen in many languages. Focus has recently been mostly on English as the ‘lingua franca of the world’, but maybe unduly so; since there are alternatives. Especially when it comes to transnational student mobility, the local language of the host university can become the language of internationalization.

As a starting point, I distinguish with Ulrich Beck (1997) *globalization* as a historical process from its result, viz. the ever changing degree of *globality* in world society, and from the ideology that is both the result and the bearer of globalization, viz. *globalism*. English has reached a degree of globality unprecedented by any language, but it is rather a part of the ideology of globalism to claim that English “is everywhere”.

Still, most universities focus in their internationalization strategy heavily on offering programs rather in English than the local language. At Copenhagen Business School, 56.4% of the students at MA level followed courses in English in 2009. Many students come to Denmark from abroad, follow the English-language programs offered, but are motivated to learn Danish, the local language. Why?

Three universities with different language ecologies are presented: Roskilde (Denmark), Lleida (Catalonia, Spain) and the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd, Hong Kong SAR, China). For each of these universities, a specific interplay between the local language or languages, English and other international languages is characteristic. Need and opportunity to use the local language or languages vary in all these places, but many students have the desire, and develop the capacity, to do so.

Two roles that English can play in internationalization are distinguished: it can be the language appropriate to the ideology of globalism and its choice is the answer to the supposed pressures of a global language market. It can also be a pragmatic choice based on the available language resources of university students and staff.

Ironically, English as the language of globalism has no alternative and no competitor – ironically, because the ideology of globalism sees all human relationships as relationships between competitors in a global market. As a pragmatic choice in transnational communication, the role of English is variable and alternatives exist. In my lecture, I mention at least the following alternatives: Spanish as a world language, Esperanto, “Scandinavian” receptive multilingualism and internationalization through the local language.

About the author

Hartmut Haberland is an Associate Professor (Reader) in German and General Linguistics at Roskilde University. Degree in Linguistics and Philosophy from Freie Universität, Berlin. Co-founder (in 1977) of the *Journal of Pragmatics* and co-editor of the new journal *Pragmatics and Society* as well as of *Acta Linguistica Hafniensia*. He has also taught in Berlin, Düsseldorf, Copenhagen and Athens, and was a one-time guest at Beijing University of Foreign Studies, Dokkyo University (Soka, Japan) and Kansai University (Osaka, Japan). He is an external Senior Research Fellow of the Research Center into Language Education and Acquisition in Multilingual Societies (RCLEAMS) in Hong Kong.

Main research interests: sociolinguistics, pragmatics, linguistic aspects of human-machine interaction and history of linguistics.

Recent publications include articles on language policy issues, multilingualism and language alternation.