

Robert Michael Harnish

(1941 – 2011)

After a long and serious illness, Robert Michael Harnish (*Mike*, to his friends and colleagues), one of the most prominent researchers of modern linguistic pragmatics, died in Tucson, Arizona on 24 October, 2011.

He studied at the linguistics and philosophy department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he received his PhD in 1971 and later taught at the department made famous by Noam Chomsky. From 1971 on, he was associated with the University of Arizona (Tucson), teaching at the Department of Philosophy and Department of Linguistics, which he co-founded in 1974. He also helped establish the cognitive science program in 1984. He retired in 2005 but remained an Emeritus Professor of both departments.

He was an internationally prominent researcher, his main areas of interest within pragmatics and cognitive sciences were speech-act theory, the pragmatic and communication-theoretic aspects of modality, analytic philosophy (Frege), and, in his last years, experimental pragmatics. He was one of the researchers establishing the status of experimental pragmatics within science.

He wrote ten books and several dozens of articles published by the most prestigious publishing houses and journals. The book he co-wrote with his colleague and friend, Kent Bach, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts* (1979), is one of the classics on speech acts and a must-read for researchers. He was one of the authors of *Linguistics*, a book that has had six editions at MIT Press (the last one published in 2010) and is one of the most significant introductory linguistics books worldwide. It is used as an introductory textbook in dozens of countries and has been translated to several languages. The chapters on pragmatics were written and always updated for the new editions by Mike.

He was well known among Hungarian linguists and philosophers as well. He was a guest professor several times at the University of Pécs, Szeged University and the Central European University in Budapest, and he gave lectures at the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He was a returning guest lecturer of the University of Graz in Austria and was often invited to give lectures and courses at many prestigious universities all over the world.

Mike was not only an excellent researcher, but a gifted speaker and a great teacher too. Everyone who was lucky enough to have participated in his lectures and seminars could confirm his brilliant knowledge and teaching abilities. The writer of these lines had the chance to experience this while attending his classes both in Hungary and in Arizona. He was able to have a glimpse at the extraordinary place where students were trained, from the B.A. through the M.A. to the Ph.D. level, to reach internationally renowned scientific standards and write such publications which demonstrated this.

Robert Michael Harnish, his exemplary researcher skills and his strong personality will be missed by his colleagues, his students and fellow-linguists alike.

József Andor