In memoriam

Anna Siewierska
(25 December 1955 – 6 August 2011)

Linguists throughout the world were shocked and deeply saddened this summer to learn that Anna Siewierska had died in a road accident in Da Lat, Vietnam on 6 August. She was holidaying there with her husband, taking a well-earned break after yet another busy year full of travel, lectures, teaching and research. This tribute, written on behalf of the Editor-of-Chief of *Jezikoslovlje*, the Editorial Board and the Board of Consulting Editors of which she was a member, is an expression of her colleagues' admiration and affection for one of the most striking personalities of contemporary linguistics.

I myself met Anna when she came to Amsterdam in 1990 to work with Simon C. Dik as a senior research fellow. Attracted to Dik's Functional Grammar as a theory that combined theoretical rigour with a strong orientation to language typology, Anna made a major contribution to FG in articles and conference presentations and above all in her book *Functional Grammar* (1991), which took a critical but sympathetic attitude to Dik's theory, placing it in the broader context of grammatical theory. Simultaneously with this work in the Netherlands, she led the EUROTYP work group on word order which in time would result in the massive volume edited by Anna and entitled *Constituent order in the languages of Europe* (1998). She also found time to gain her 'habilitation' at the University of Gdańsk in 1992. This qualification was but the most recent of her degrees: her MA and her PhD dissertations defended at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia were so brilliant that each resulted in a book, *The passive: A comparative linguistic analysis* (1984) and *Word Order Rules* (1988) respectively, both very frequently cited to this day. Anna never became a hard-core exponent of FG, but its principles and potential remained very important to her understanding of typology. In 2006 she wrote the article 'Linguistic typology: where functionalism and formalism almost meet', the title of which typifies the FG approach, as well as working with Kees Hengeveld and Jan Rijkhoff on their joint article 'Parts of speech systems as a basic typological parameter' (2004).

It was during her time in Amsterdam that Anna met her husband, Dik Bakker, a computational typologist who had studied with Simon Dik. I have wonderful memories of their wedding, celebrated in Amsterdam's Grand Hotel, and of exploring Santa Barbara CA with them, delighting in their easy company. Dik and Anna worked together on deepening and strengthening the empirical basis for Anna's typological work. They elaborated a massive database on agreement, personal pronouns and constituent order in hundreds of languages, a database which was to be integrated into the Leipzig-based project that resulted in the epoch-making *World Atlas of Language Structures* (2005). Together with Dik she made many conference presentations (with spectacular powerpoints, as I recall) and published such fine articles as 'The agreement cross-reference continuum: person marking in Functional Grammar' (2005), 'Towards a speaker model of Functional Grammar' (2004) and 'Another take on the notion Subject' (2007). Our deepest sympathy goes to Dik, whose companion in life and in work has been cruelly taken away.

The young woman who was born in Gdynia, Poland in 1955 and spent much of her childhood in Australia grew to become, for all her lack of physical statute, a towering figure in typological linguistics. In 1994, not yet 40 years old, she was appointed Professor of Linguistics and Human Communication at Lancaster University, going on to contribute strongly to its becoming one of the major forces in UK linguistics. In 2001-2002 she was accorded the honour of being appointed President of the Societas Linguistica Europæa, and from 2007 until her death she was President of the Association for Linguistic Typology. These honours were formal expressions of the deep respect in which she was held by all who came into contact with her. Anyone who has heard a conference talk by Anna will remember an elegant lady speaking in a refined accent, articulating bold hypotheses, arguing confidently, citing languages from the entire globe, expecting (and usually getting) total concentration from her listeners. Little wonder that many found her intimidating, but those who dared to ask a question or come up to her after her talk found Anna to be wonderfully friendly and surprisingly unpretentious. But behind this charming personality there was a totally dedicated academic who could be relied upon to submit high-quality work on time, as I again had occasion to note when working with Anna and her colleague Willem Hollmann on a Special Issue of *Functions of Language* about ditransitivity.

Anna's work covered many different aspects of morphosyntax. One area for which she is especially well known is the study of grammatical person (see her *Person* (2004), which I had the pleasure of reviewing for *Folia Linguistica*). In that book she dispels any naïve expectation that person is a straightforward category of grammar, showing both the language-internal systematicity of person

forms but also their cross-linguistic variety. Here, as throughout her work, her approach to explanation is functionalist: she stresses the cognitive and discourse factors that motivate the structure of person systems. Another area is transitivity, with major contributions on ditransitivity (a hot issue in contemporary typology) and on impersonal constructions, yielding two edited volumes, a Special Issue of the *Transactions of the Philological Society* (2008) and, this year, *Impersonal constructions: A cross-linguistic perspective*, with Andrej Malchukov. Yet Anna was not limited to exploring the typological implications of the data to be found in grammars of the languages of the world. Her social environment in Lancaster also inspired her to examine the morphosyntactic properties of Lancashire speech. This was never mere description, however: Anna always placed her findings in the broader context of theoretically informed language comparison.

Linguists are much richer for having benefited from Anna's work and her presence among them. But we feel poorer, too, for no longer having her among us.

J. Lachlan Mackenzie
VU University Amsterdam and ILTEC Lisbon

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