



In memory of Dubravko Kučanda
(*13 August 1950 – †20 December 2006)



Dubravko (3rd from the right) at his last conference
(CALs conference, Split, Croatia in May 2004)



Mario Brdar couldn't have been more right when he said that Dubravko "left a gap no one can fill, but that his influence will long remain" (Jezikoslovlje 2008: 10). Fifteen years after Dubravko's passing, we are once again honoring his memory with this Special Issue of Jezikoslovlje.

Our original obituary was a heartwarming remembrance of Dubravko's life, work, and spirit. No one could have painted in finer nuance who Dubravko was and what he meant for the Department and for Croatian linguistics than Mario, his closest colleague and friend. Dubravko was remembered as a pillar of functional linguistics in Croatia, a person respected by scholars at home and abroad, and beloved by those who knew him personally. He brought more to scholarly encounters than his keen linguistic eye. As Mario put it, with him, every conference was an adventure, a swirl of lively scientific discussions laced with jokes and thoughtful but fun lessons in (academic) life and living it well. His magnetic personality and unbridled enthusiasm for life and linguistics left no one untouched. He was a brilliant mind, yet still just a free, down-to-earth spirit.

None of this was lost on us, the Department recruits who came after Mario. Most, like Mario, were privileged to have been Dubravko's students. Some remember him ad-libbing his lectures, standing at the window of the lecture hall, cigarette lit. He virtually never read from notes, but narrated syntax with the craft of a master story-teller and a hypnotic conviction that broke even the most disinterested student in the back row. Some of us remember a graduating student presenting Dubravko with a hand-painted mug featuring the example of the notorious farmer and the poor little duckling in all manner of syntactic contortions.

We still retell anecdotes about Dubravko's mastery of improvisation. A favorite is the story of him sketching his presentation on a piece of paper, and having run out of that, completing it on a piece of tissue paper, all on the night before the conference. He was well-known for his dislike for any displays of deference and empty social etiquette. We all paid our share of "fines" – picking up the tab for drinks at the next conference – for every time we slipped and addressed him with the dreaded *Vi* (honorific 'you'). I will personally always remember him smiling away the criticism for wearing jeans and sneakers for my master's thesis defense. I have a sneaking suspicion that he would "forget" to deliver on his promise to behave in future and wear something proper when the time came for the defense of my dissertation. Sadly, he passed on before that event.

He truly loved his whole Department but was especially fond and protective of us, the Department novices. His family's obituary thank-you note says it all:



[...] Hvala svim djelatnicima Filozofskog fakulteta, profesorima, prijateljima i studentima, a posebno njegovim mladim kolegama-bivšim studentima koje je nesebično pomagao i usmjeravao, a koji su uspješno preuzeli, nastavili i proširili započeto. Oni su ga “držali”. Otišao je zadovoljan, već pomalo umoran, ali s još puno planova.

[...] A thank you goes out to all employees of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, professors, friends and students, especially to his young colleagues – former students to whom he gave selfless support and guidance, and who picked up, continued, and expanded on what was started. It was they who kept him going. He left content, even if already somewhat tired, but still with many plans for the future.

Gabrijela Buljan (with members of the English Department)

From Dubravko's biography

Dubravko was born on 13 August 1950 in Bjelovar. He graduated from the double-major program in English language and literature and German language and literature at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (Zagreb University) in 1976. Three years later he joined as an assistant the newly formed English Department at what is today known as the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Osijek (FFOS). Since then he taught various linguistic courses at FFOS's English Department. Soon after obtaining his MA degree from the University of Zagreb in 1982, Dubravko received a predoctoral grant to study at the University of Sheffield (1983) and shortly thereafter spent an academic year at the University of Antwerp (1986/87) as a Maystadt Fellow. This experience led to his long-lasting friendships with some of the key names in functional linguistics and no doubt cemented his career and charisma as a devoted functionalist with a soft spot for syntax. It was not a smooth career or life path for Dubravko. He experienced a number of serious health setbacks, but always managed to bounce back. He earned his PhD from the University of Zagreb in 1998, with a dissertation on clausal subjects in Croatian and English. His academic appointments as Assistant Professor and Associate Professor of English Linguistics at FFOS came in 1999 and 2003. Dubravko held a number of administrative positions at his home institution. He was also president (1988 to 1993) and a member (2003 and 2006) of the regional branch of the Croatian Applied Linguistics Society (CALs), and a member of a number of professional organizations like the International Pragmatics Association (IprA), Societas Linguis-

ticae Europaea (SLE), Association for Linguistic Typology (ALT), Croatian Society for English Studies and the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE).

Dubravko will mostly be remembered for his five-star publications. He was the pioneer of the Dikikian Functional Grammar type of functionalism in Central Europe and a keen aficionado of typology and contrastive linguistics. Much of his most insightful work in syntax came from his own two research projects viz. *Primary Grammatical Relations* (1988 to 1990) and *Syntactic Functions in English, German, Croatian and Hungarian* (1991 to 1995), but extended into the period beyond. Even when he started on his exploratory journey toward the then still young Cognitive Linguistics movement, his work remained soberly grounded and guided by the same critical eye that had made him stand out as the sentinel of research excellence from day one. Crucially, without Dubravko, *Jezikoslovlje* might have fallen into oblivion. It was thanks to his and Mario's effort that in 2002, after a two-year break, the journal was relaunched. What is more, it was largely in recognition of his and Mario's standing in the global linguistic community that the journal has been graced with an Editorial and Advisory Board that include the best of the world's best. For that we will all remain forever grateful.

From Dubravko's bibliography

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