

Helen Trugman In Memoriam

The untimely death of Helen Trugman on September 13, 2012 from cancer, just four days short of her fiftieth birthday, was a brutal shock for those who knew her closely, even though the sad event was not wholly unexpected. Helen had undergone a serious operation two years earlier, but in the fall of 2011 she became ill again, and by spring 2012 it became clear that her chances of recovery were minimal.

Helen was born in the former Soviet Union, in Kharkov, Ukraine, and immigrated to Israel in 1990 together with her husband Alex and the older of their two sons, Daniel. A second son, Alon, was born some years later. She had been an outstanding student at Kharkov State University from 1979–84, studying English literature, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and translation, and received her MA with distinction in 1984. Her MA thesis was on stylistic aspects of the *there*-insertion construction and already showed her interest in linguistics. She worked as a high school English teacher in Kharkov, and when she arrived in Tel Aviv she decided that it was time to continue studying and registered as a student in the Linguistics Department at Tel Aviv University. It was her first exposure to generative linguistics, and she was greatly excited by it. Helen wrote a Ph.D. dissertation, *The Syntax of Russian DPs, and DP-Internal Agreement Phenomena*, under the supervision of Alex Grosu. From 1995, when she gave a paper at the first Formal Description of Slavic Languages (FDSL) meeting in Leipzig, she was a regular participant in international conferences, in particular the FDSL meetings in Europe, and Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics (FASL) meetings in North America.

Like most graduate students in the humanities in Israel, Helen worked to support herself throughout her studies. She taught EFL at the Holon Institute of Technology beginning in 1991, and from 1996–2006 she was head of the EFL Division there. She continued to teach at the Holon Institute after completing her dissertation and was active in the community of EFL teachers in Israel. She was involved in developing teaching materials, training and mentoring new teachers, and was active in setting up programs for teaching EFL to students with

learning disabilities. She was instrumental in setting up the Forum of Academic College English Teachers in Israel. At the memorial service held about two months after her death, colleagues from the EFL community spoke warmly of the influence she had had on them as a mentor and friend as well as of the high professional standards she demanded from them and from herself.

Helen's active career as a theoretical linguist was carried on in parallel with all her other professional academic responsibilities. Despite the demands of her EFL teaching career, Helen continued to write and publish scholarly articles, to present her research at a wide variety of international linguistics conferences, and to collaborate with linguists from Israel and abroad, earning well-deserved recognition by her peers. And all the time she devoted herself to her family (of course, she would have said) whom she greatly loved.

Helen was a striking person, warm, energetic, demanding both of herself and of others. She was a person of deep personal and professional integrity, straightforward and honest in her personal relations and in her academic life, with a sense of academic responsibility towards her data and the problems she was trying to solve and a determination to get things right. This resulted in a perfectionism which could sometimes be exhausting for her collaborators, but which won her respect from her friends and colleagues, as well as resulting in a series of scholarly papers which make a lasting contribution to Slavic linguistics. Her Ph.D. adviser, Alex Grosu, feels that in the over twenty years he worked with her he learned as much from her concerning various aspects of the syntax and semantics of nominal constructions in Russian as she may have learned from him. Friends and colleagues remember her enthusiasm and her eagerness to collaborate, her warmth and her love of life, and the pleasure she took in getting to know people and in making and keeping friends.

In 2011, Helen was looking for new academic challenges and joined Susan Rothstein's research group in the Linguistics Program of the English Department at Bar-Ilan University as a part time post-doctoral researcher. She quickly became an integral part of the group and began expanding her interest in the syntactic-semantic interface, beginning a new research project on the distribution and interpretation of bare noun-adjective phrases in Russian. That year, two papers were accepted for presentations at conferences, one on Polish adjectives with Bożena Cetnarowska and one single-authored paper in which she

reported on the results of her new project. Sadly, her illness returned and she was unable to travel to either conference, but in the months following, despite the rapid deterioration of her health, she continued to work and to prepare the papers for publication. Her final paper, on bare singular kind-denoting terms in Russian, appeared in the proceedings of FDSL-9 shortly after her death.

Throughout her illness, in which she was supported and cared for with devotion by her husband and sons, she showed the same courage, humor, and determination that had characterized every other aspect of her life. Friends and colleagues mourn the loss of someone who left the mark of her personality and her work on all she came in contact with.

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