

In Memoriam Anne Vainikka

Anne Tamm



Anne Vainikka

July 31, 1958 – June 16, 2018

In June 2018, Anne Vainikka, a coauthor of a contribution of this special issue passed away after a battle against cancer.

Anne Vainikka had a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, with a dissertation titled *Deriving Syntactic Representations in Finnish* (1989)—the second dissertation ever on Finnish syntax (the first was defended 13 years earlier by Hakulinen). Vainikka’s dissertation provides the groundwork for most work on Finnish syntax; the volume remains a valuable reference for Finnish syntacticians to date (the link to her dissertation is [here](#)).

Vainikka was also coauthor of the seminal article introducing the new phenomenon of partial null subjects (Vainikka & Levy 1999), for Finnish and Hebrew. Furthermore, Vainikka’s series of articles on Finnish structural case (1993, 2003, 2011) acts as the cornerstone for much work on Finnish case. Recently, Vainikka & Brattico (2014) describe the phenomenon of true long-distance case (in Finnish), occurring over several clause boundaries. Vainikka’s second field of specialization was language acquisition, including earlier work on various child languages (e.g. Vainikka [1993/4] on the development of L1 English case, and Varlokosta, Vainikka & Rohrbacher [1998] on L1 Greek root infinitives) and more recent work on naturalistic L2 acquisition with Martha Young-Scholten, culminating on their 2011 volume on the L2 acquisition of German syntax where their new approach “Organic Grammar” was presented. Vainikka was the CEO and founder of The Verb Company, and a Visiting Scholar at Johns Hopkins University and the University of Delaware.

Anne Vainikka was active as a mentor for young scholars; her PhD student Taija T. Saikkonen defended her thesis in Helsinki a few weeks before Anne passed away.

Various works were still in progress. With Karoliina Lohiniva, she was working on the Finnish *-kin* particle. In her last project, *Syntax of the Uralic Languages*, Vainikka accomplished something that could only be accomplished by her exceptional combination of sunny personality and high professionalism. Her goal was to raise awareness of the individual Uralic languages and preserve as much as possible of the enormous treasure trove of syntactic phenomena that they are, and to allow knowledge to flow freely without artificial boundaries imposed by various approaches to language.

In order to achieve these goals, she began to work on an edited volume titled *Uralic Syntax* with Cambridge University Press, co-organizing workshops on Uralic Syntax in Budapest and Tallinn, where modern syntacticians, traditionally trained Uralicists, typologists, field linguists and endangered Uralic language speakers were convened. In the design of the edited volume, general chapters covered more in-depth topics in modern syntax, typically including data from various Uralic languages. A uniform syntactic questionnaire formed the basis for describing the individual languages: Enets, Erzya, Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian, Inari Saami, Surgut Khanty, Mansi, Mari, Nganasan, Selkup, and Udmurt. Anne Vainikka brought together various types of expertise and talent, creating a vibrant new community where she is now sorely missed. A memorial page at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst will be available [here](#). An obituary on the LinguistList can be found [here](#), and a memorial written by Tom Roeper [here](#).

References

- Vainikka, Anne. 1989. Deriving Syntactic Representations in Finnish. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts. Distributed by GLSA, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Vainikka, Anne. 1993. Three structural cases in Finnish. In: Anders Holmberg & Urpo Nikanne (eds.) *Case and Other Topics in Finnish Syntax*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Holland. 129–159.
- Vainikka, Anne. 1993/4. Case in the development of English syntax. *Language Acquisition* 3: 257–325.
- Vainikka, Anne. 2003. Postverbal case realization in Finnish. In: Diane Nelson & Satu Manninen (eds.) *Generative Approaches to Finnic and Saami Linguistics*. CLSI Publications, Stanford. 235–266.
- Vainikka, Anne. 2011. Genitive case in Finnish reconsidered. *Biolinguistica Fennica Working Papers* 2: 1–32.
- Vainikka, Anne & Pauli Brattico. 2014. The Finnish accusative: Long distance case assignment by agreement. *Linguistics* 52: 73–124. doi.org/10.1515/ling-2013-0057
- Vainikka, Anne & Yonata Levy. 1999. Empty subjects in Hebrew and Finnish. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 17: 613–671. doi.org/10.1023/a:1006225032592
- Vainikka, Anne and Martha Young-Scholten. 2011. *The Acquisition of German: Introducing Organic Grammar*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Varlokosta, Spyridoula, Anne Vainikka & Bernhard Rohrbacher. 1998. Functional projections, markedness, and “root infinitives” in early child Greek. *The Linguistic Review* 15: 187–207. doi.org/10.1515/tlir.1998.15.2-3.187

Anne Tamm

Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary
tamm.anne@gmail.com