

Thank you, Donka!



Louise McNally PhD 1992

Donka arrived at UCSC just in time to join my dissertation committee during my last year. At that time, not many linguistics departments had two formal semanticists (quite a few still had none), and I felt extremely fortunate when she arrived. Her discussion of “intensional descriptions” in Romanian existential sentences made a deep impression on me. In recent years, Donka has probably been best known for her research in Inquisitive Semantics, but I have most appreciated her work on nominal expressions. Some of my favorites: her 1997 paper showing that the scopal index at which a variable is valued could (and sometimes should) be teased apart from the index at which its descriptive content was valued; her 2003 book on incorporation

with Henriette de Swart, which again helped me to think in new ways about the relation between descriptive contents and reference; and most recently (and also more indirectly), her discussions of Hungarian reduplicated indefinites, which proved crucial to the development of my student Kata Wohlmuth's dissertation. It seems fitting -- a kind of closing parenthesis -- that Donka will be on her defense committee as well in just a few weeks.

Donka has always been a source of wise words. Perhaps those for which I am most grateful came early in my career, when it seemed like I would never get a job. Here I'll mention just one observation, on the subject



of what to aspire to in a linguistic analysis. She noted one day, in a class she was teaching on the subjunctive -- perhaps as part of her campus interview? --, that there will almost always be exceptions to any given analysis. We should aspire, she pointed out, to have a theory of the exceptions. Thank you, Donka, not just

for your support and guidance, but also for many wonderful visits over the years, in Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels, Paris, and of course Barcelona and Santa Cruz!

Chris Kennedy PhD 1997

One of the most difficult challenges of graduate school, in my opinion, is the challenge of figuring out how to move from the broad interests and big questions that pile up over the first three or so years of classes to a more

focused set of questions, and a strategy for addressing them, that can be turned into a dissertation, and eventually provide the foundation for a research program that can make actual progress on the original questions and interests. A few students are able to resolve this challenge on their own, but most struggle with it, and I was no exception, spending most of my third year of graduate school trying and failing to figure out what kind of research I wanted to do, and how I would go about doing it. I remember talking about this to Donka under the redwoods in the Stevenson courtyard, and she told me to stop trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and start paying closer attention to what I was thinking about when I wasn't trying to solve this problem. This made me realize what kind of work I wanted to do – something that connected syntax, semantics and pragmatics – and when the topic of comparatives popped into my head a month or so later, driving on I-5 through the San Joaquin valley, I knew I finally had a dissertation. The rest is history, and now I tell my students the same thing Donka told me when they're faced with this challenge. Thank you, Donka! And I'll be looking forward to your advice on what to do next!

Christine Gunlogson PhD 2001

Dear Donka,, your kindness to me has been matched only by your rigor. I'm sure I speak for many of your students when I say, thank you for both. With great fondness, Christine.

Lyndsey Wolter 2006

Donka, what I remember most about working with you was the island of serenity that you created for your students. No matter what else might be

going on in your life, somehow we always had time for a long, thoughtful conversation, and no matter how confused I might feel when I entered your office, I knew I would leave with a concrete plan to move my work forward. It's a model I think about a lot when I meet with my undergraduates. Now that your time is finally all your own, may it be full of joy.

Pete Alrenga 2007

Dear Donka-- I can still remember so clearly the afternoon when I asked you to be my dissertation adviser. Since then, you've been many things to me: teacher, advisor, mentor, friend, host, and I've always admired the grace with which you've inhabited those roles. I wish you (and Peter!) nothing but the best, for everything that comes next. Congratulations!



Kyle Rawlins PhD 2008

"Dear Donka, congratulations on your retirement! You were an amazing advisor to me, kind and patient, and a model that I have tried to emulate in my own advising. I hope to see you around for many years more."



Scott AnderBois PhD 2011

Many many thanks Donka for all that you have done! It feels like only yesterday that I was a first year grad student with absolutely no background in formal semantics. Your wise and generous teaching help me gain not just necessary technical skills but a way of approaching problems systematically and creatively, and perhaps most importantly the confidence to believe that with work I could cut it as a semanticist. Congratulations on your retirement, so glad that its first chapter will bring you to the East Coast!

Robert Henderson PhD 2012

Donka had a profound influence on my thinking, both in graduate school and going forward into my early career. She was always adamant that a technical solution was not enough. What one needed was a story, not just for why the data are the way they are, but for why the analysis works and where it fits into the history of the field. This was how you did research with a lasting impact, and it's why her research will continue to have a profound effect on the field. We can say Donka is retiring, but her work most definitely is not. It will continue to shape linguistics and philosophy of language for many years to come.

Oliver Northrup PhD 2014

Thank you, Donka, for the attention and care you put into advising me during my time at Santa Cruz. I have many fond memories of sitting with you in your home, talking about commitment. Congratulations on your retirement!



Hitomi Hirayama PhD 2019

Have a restful but fun and active retirement! Congratulations, Donka!
