

### In Memoriam – Maria Teresa Turell Julià 1949 – 2013

Núria Gavaldà & Malcolm Coulthard

Universitat Pompeu Fabra & Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

Maite, as she was universally known within the academic community died on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2013 after a long fight with leukaemia. She is survived by her daughter, Julia and her 2-year old granddaughter Alice, who brought great joy to the last months of her life.

Everyone who met Maite for the first time was struck by her energy, enthusiasm, determination and perspicacity. Those who were lucky enough to count themselves among her many friends benefitted from her warmth, kindness and an amazing generosity with her time. We are honoured to have been invited to write this appreciation.

One of Maite's most attractive features was her pioneering spirit, which was present throughout her academic career. Her doctoral dissertation, as well as much of her research during the 1980s and 90s, introduced Spanish academics to the main theoretical and methodological principles of sociolinguistics. Her research was, from the beginning, characterized by the scientific rigour in the treatment of data that would mark her subsequent research in the areas of language contact, multilingualism, language acquisition and latterly forensic linguistics, to which she dedicated most of her academic research and publications in the last twelve years. Indeed, she was instrumental in introducing the field into Spain running impeccably organised conferences, supervising a wide variety of post-graduate students and creating one of the first Masters degrees in Forensic Linguistics in the world.

In 2003, Maite set up the first forensic linguistics laboratory in Spain, ForensicLab, within a pre-existing research group that was investigating linguistic variation (UVAL). ForensicLab was based inside the Institute for Applied Linguistics (IULA), at Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) and under Maite's leadership, became a pioneer in teaching, research and expert witness work in forensic linguistics, not only nationally but also internationally. At the same time Maite, always an enthusiastic and gifted teacher, created and directed the first Master's Degree in Forensic Linguistics to be offered in Spanish. Always aware of the difficulty of creating a new degree almost single-handedly while at the same time training the next generation of scholars to continue the discipline, she ensured the highest quality input for her students by regularly inviting internationally recognised experts to contribute short intensive courses to her fledgling Mestrado.

At the same time, during the six-year period from 2007 and until shortly before she died Maite coordinated two high prestige Government funded research projects into linguistic features of idiolect. The main objective of these projects was the creation of an *Index of Idiolectal Similitude* that would measure linguistic variation and determine whether two given samples showed more inter- or more intra-speaker/writer variation. While constituting important basic research in itself, the Index had obvious casework applications, as it allows the researcher to express an opinion about the likelihood of two or more language samples having been produced by the same or by different individuals. Both these research projects set out to investigate not only three linguistic levels, the phonological, the morpho-syntactic and the discourse-pragmatic, but also three typologically distinct languages, Spanish, Catalan and English. At the beginning of 2013, when Maite was no longer able to devote as much time and energy to academic matters, she and her ForensicLab team were awarded funding for a third stage in order to continue refining the Index. Despite her absence, her team of researchers at ForensicLab is currently continuing with this project with the same energy that they learnt from her.

In 2011, Maite assumed with great pride the Presidency of the International Association of Forensic Linguists. She acted with typical energy and decisiveness whenever her illness permitted her to do so and she always returned, after the enforced absences for treatment, with renewed enthusiasm. The organisers of the regional conferences in Kuala Lumpur and Porto benefited greatly from her input and although not well enough to attend herself she sent a Presidential opening address to both.

Apart from these and many other academic achievements, Maite's life was also characterised by her continual engagement in both teaching and the transmission of her knowledge and the fruits of her research to the next generation. She still prepared her classes with the same meticulousness with which she had prepared her very first classes in the 70s. She would give of herself completely during each and every class, so much so that she taught an intensive MA course on Plagiarism in the same week that she was admitted to hospital for the very last time. She was utterly devoted to her students, especially the MA Forensic Linguistics students, as the teaching and dissemination of this field was one of her main academic objectives until the very end.

For a PhD candidate and inexperienced academician, meeting Maite and conducting research under her supervision was an unforgettable experience that would shape a student's career. Her continual professionalism was the first thing that would strike you, as she showed utter devotion and dedication to her work, great respect for fellow academicians, whether she shared their views or not, and unwavering loyalty to the university and scientific institutions, as well as to their representatives. Maite wanted not only to contribute to academia with her scientific research and the diffusion of her knowledge to younger generations, but also to be involved and to improve the structures and functioning of the university. In 2007, Universitat Pompeu Fabra gave Maite a special award in recognition of her contribution in the areas of teaching, management, institutional representation and research.

Another striking characteristic of Maite was her great vital strength. Working day-to-day with Maite was always stimulating. Whenever she came into the office she would fill the air with energy, and she would make you feel able to succeed in any new challenge and achieve any ambition. And even at the darkest moments of her health, when she could not be there in person, she would somehow provide you with a fireball of encouragement and

enthusiasm about the projects or research at hand, by telephone, email or SMS. She always managed to keep coordinating and making sure that her team would carry on progressing. Thus, under Maite's guidance, ForensicLab, IULA and Pompeu Fabra University hosted several international conferences and academic events on forensic linguistics, such as the 2<sup>nd</sup> European IAFL Conference on Forensic Linguistics / Language and the Law in 2006, the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Workshop on Forensic Linguistics / Language and the Law in 2010, and the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Summer School in Forensic Linguistic Analysis in 2012. Moreover, in 2009, the Universitat Pompeu Fabra gave ForensicLab a Knowledge Transfer Award within the field of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Maite was a true professor. All her past students are very lucky to have participated in her classes on an impressive array of topics in the areas of sociolinguistics and forensic linguistics. However, Maite's teaching went much further. Anyone who had the chance to encounter her would learn valuable lessons about professionalism, scientific rigour, passionate devotion to one's work, loyalty and genuine humility; but at the same time they learned the importance of standing up for oneself, of pushing beyond one's perceived mental limits and of facing challenges with excitement, and above all, of courage and vital strength. These lessons will be lifelong.

On April 24<sup>th</sup> 2014, the first anniversary of Maite's death, the Universitat Pompeu Fabra hosted a one day conference in her memory entitled *1<sup>st</sup> Conference on Variation and Forensic Linguistics in Honour of Maria Teresa Turell*. During the conference, in a gesture Maite would have very much appreciated, a book was launched that had been edited in her honour by three of her last collaborators, Raquel Casesnoves Ferrer, Montserrat Forcadell Guinjoan and Núria Gavaldà Ferré.

*Ens Queda la Paraula:  
Estudis de Lingüística Aplicada en Honor M. Teresa Turell*

The volume includes contributions from a selection of the national and international academics Maite had worked with, many of whom had contributed to the Master's degree.

Truly, we shall not look upon her like again...