In memoriam—Edit Doron

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The Second *BJALL* International Conference, which took place on 14–16 November 2018 in Nantes, was the last conference in which Edit Doron participated both as an organizer and as a lecturer before her untimely death on March 27, 2019. It is therefore fitting that a memorial to Edit in *BJALL* begin with reference to that conference. And indeed, the nature of Edit's participation in that conference constituted a tribute to Edit herself as a researcher, colleague and mentor, and in retrospect was fitting as her last international public appearance.

Some background will help in explaining this statement. Edit had a life-long penchant for learning and studying languages—she learned languages as diverse as Malayalam, Irish and various dialects of Neo-Aramaic. But she had a particular love for Semitic languages, and most especially for the Hebrew lan-

guage, in all its manifestations. The phenomenon of the emergence of Modern Hebrew as a spoken language, after close to two millennia of being a language with no native speakers, piqued Edit's intellectual curiosity no end. Understanding the nature and status of the language before its "revival", the rapid development of a uniform grammar in the minds of the first generations of native speakers coming from widely diverse backgrounds, and the continued development of the language till today, all became the focus of her research over the last five years. Edit had always been passionate about her research, but these questions fired her passion most particularly. The project she undertook to study these questions was first launched with a research group hosted at the Mandel Scholion Interdisciplinary Research Center in the Humanities and Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University, of which I was proud to be a member, and was significantly promoted with the ERC grant she won in 2017, "The emergence of Modern Hebrew, a study case of linguistic discontinuity". In leading this project, Edit sought to bridge the gap between two academic communities—the traditional Hebrew language academic community whose research is published mainly in Hebrew fora and hence not accessible to the international community of linguists, and researchers in theoretical linguistics. A theoretical linguist to the core, Edit avidly read literature from the traditional Hebrew language academic community. Her vision was to bring the unique case of the revival of Hebrew speech to the attention of the international academic community working on language contact and language change and to bring the insights of theoretical work on these issues to bear on the understanding of the case of Hebrew.

Edit carefully composed the group of students and post-docs on her project. She hand-picked outstanding students, most of whom came from Hebrew studies, but included also some philologists with knowledge of the languages spoken as L1 by the revivers, and some students with a background in generative grammar. This varied group of students and scholars from communities which hitherto had little communication between them, cohered into a stimulating research group under Edit's leadership and guidance. The world of philology was opened before the students of generative grammar, and the world of formal linguistics was opened before the students of philology. With patience, grace, generosity and wisdom, Edit got the students working on specific phenomena in Hebrew, tracing the development of structures through the various stages of Hebrew, and focusing in particular on the possible influence of contact languages on this development. She slowly got students with no background in generative grammar to cast their analyses in theoretical terms, allowing them to see how the tools of formal linguistics can shed light on the phenomena they each studied. Edit then set as a goal to have a significant delegation from the

project present results of the project's research in the *BJALL* conference. Most of the students had never presented in English or appeared at an international conference outside Israel. Edit worked with them, tutored and trained them, until each had an insightful presentation, a polished poster or handout and was ready for the conference. The presentations were a success. The entire delegation returned with elated spirits fully energized and ready for more. The students were ready for much more, but fate had it that Edit was to be with them for only a few more months.

Ruth Stern, a PhD student from the Hebrew department and a member of this delegation, wrote the following (my free translation from her Hebrew) on the memorial website for Edit (<http://pluto.huji.ac.il/~edit/>):

This past winter Edit flew with the members of the research group to France. Edit, who could skip all the long lines at the airport with her disability card, decided to take us all along with her to the front of the line. "These are my girls [also *daughters*, in Hebrew—MRH]," she said. "Your girls/daughters?" the security person said in wonder. "Yes, my girls." said Edit with an inscrutable face.

Her girls.

That is how Edit related to us and that is how she related to me. From the start, she prodded me on, encouraging and supervising, dedicating her time and energy, and she always did so with ease as if she had all the time in the world, as if she had nothing else on her mind. She was generous and straightforward in her compliments, just as she was straightforward and sharp in her criticism. When she wrote a letter of recommendation for me, she invested countless hours, not only in writing the letter, but also in discussing with me how to best describe my research. Above all, Edit believed in me till I had no choice but to believe in myself as well.

Edit opened before me the world of linguistics with a storm and with unsurpassed energies, and with the same storm she entered my heart.

This tribute so vividly and precisely depicts many of the qualities for which Edit will be remembered by students, friends and colleagues around the world.

Edit's project was the pinnacle of a career in which all these qualities had been manifest. In the mid-eighties Edit returned to Israel from her post-doc position at Stanford soon after I moved to Israel after completing my Ph.D. I worked at Bar Ilan University and she at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. A burgeoning theoretical linguistics community was developing in Israel at that time, The Israel Association for Theoretical Linguistics was established, the departments in which generative grammar was taught were beginning to

flourish. Edit played a central role in promoting the cohesion of the Israeli linguistics community, building bridges between the linguistics departments, but also with cognitive science departments, philosophy departments, psychology departments, Hebrew departments and computer science departments. Through the years, we collaborated and became friends (and eventually members of the same department at HUJI). Edit was for me a model of honesty, decency and intellectual rectitude.

Edit's research activities constituted for her a fascinating personal intellectual journey. What drove her was a passion to understand the myriad mysteries of life and especially those aspects of life which intrigued her most and for which she had the intellectual tools to study. The sheer range of phenomena she studied and of sub-disciplines in linguistics and neighboring fields in which she had competence was amazing and ever-growing. Her analytic abilities were formidable. She harnessed her unique abilities to solve linguistic puzzle after puzzle. And she never rested. In fact, contrary to what is most common in academia, she never developed her own comfort zone, resting on the laurels of some academic achievement, carving out an area in linguistics to call her own and with which she will be always identified. Rather, after solving the puzzle she was working on, she immediately turned to the next. And she was optimistic in her journey—encouraged by current research that helps shed light on some phenomenon she had been puzzling over for years, excited about new collaborations providing us with fresh insight and bringing us closer to solving some other puzzle. And her optimism was infectious.

It was the understanding, the solution to the puzzle, never recognition, which interested her. She sought to gain insight from neighboring disciplines as well, and was eager to learn from everyone. This led her to numerous collaborations with researchers from different disciplines, schools of thought and academic rank. These included her pioneering work on indirect free discourse with literary scholar Dr. Moshe Ron, work on agreement and case marking in Neo-Aramaic with distinguished Semitic scholar Professor Geoffrey Khan, work on clitic placement with specialist in Syriac, Shraga Assif, and the more natural collaborations with many, many theoretical linguists. Edit's generosity, a hallmark of her personality mentioned by numerous people in their recollections of her, was apparent in these collaborations. She shared her knowledge and skills freely and never quibbled about credit. Indeed, there are numerous publications that have appeared over the years which would never have seen the light of day without the interest, time and attention Edit gave to their authors, though her name never appeared on them.

I mentioned that Edit's study of linguistics was a personal intellectual journey for her. I think that it was personal in the narrow sense—her special

interest in Semitic languages and the revival of Hebrew was part of a quest to understand her personal and national identity. During one of our last trips together, to work with colleagues in Berlin, we had but a short period of free time in Berlin. Edit knew exactly where she wanted to go—to the Pergamon Museum, and especially to the exhibitions from the Ancient Near East. She was enthralled by the ancient Semitic scripts so similar to Ancient Hebrew script, to the architecture of Assyrian temples reminiscent of the architecture of Ancient Israel. In the many hours we spent talking about the social, cognitive and linguistic aspects of the revival of Hebrew, she was torn between the awe she felt at the uniqueness of the phenomenon and the magnitude of the achievement of the revival, and the desire to understand the phenomenon in the context of other well-known processes of language transmission. How special, in the final analysis, was the status of Hebrew over generations? These puzzles kept her going till her final days.

Edit's leadership qualities and vision left a mark in too many places to mention here. She was larger than life—brilliant, daring and colorful. She was unabashedly individualistic, strong-minded, straightforward and honest. She had a great passion for life, a contagious *joie de vivre* and was unfailingly optimistic to the very end. She is already greatly missed by friends, colleagues and students in numerous academic communities throughout the world.

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