



Markku Filppula

29.11.1949-9.4.2024

In memoriam



Photo: Heli Filppula

JUHANI KLEMOLA, BERND KORTMANN, MIKKO LAITINEN

Professor Markku Filppula died after a prolonged illness on the 9th of April, 2024, at the age of 74.

Markku Filppula was born on the 29th of November in 1949 in Mikkeli, where he spent his childhood and school years. He completed his MA at the University of Helsinki in 1975, majoring in English Philology, with General Linguistics, Romance Philology and General Literature as his minor subjects. In 1975 he also received a 12-month grant to study at the Department of Old and Middle English in University College Dublin, where his interest in Irish English was kindled. In 1977 he was appointed Assistant in English at the University of Joensuu, where he completed his Lic. Phil. in 1983. In 1982, before completing his licentiate degree, Markku Filppula began his PhD studies at University College, Dublin under the supervision of Professor Alan J. Bliss, who at the time was the preeminent expert in the history and development of Irish English. His PhD project involved extensive travel around Ireland on his Jawa motorcycle, and the fieldwork and dialect interviews he collected during those travels formed a cornerstone of all his work in Irish English. He completed his doctorate at the National University of Ireland (University College, Dublin (UCD)) in 1986, and UCD was the institution he always considered his alma mater.

Markku Filppula's academic career in Finland was focused at the University of Joensuu (which in 2010 became the University of Eastern Finland (UEF)). He was appointed an Associate Professor of English there in 1988, and in 1998 he became a full Professor. In addition, he was the Dean of UEF's Philosophical Faculty of UEF from 2010 until his retirement in 2017.

Markku Filppula either lead or co-lead four Academy of Finland-funded research projects, *English and Celtic in Contact* (2000–2002), *Vernacular Universals vs. Contact-Induced Language Change* (2005–2009), *Global English: Typological, contact-linguistic and second-language acquisition perspectives* (2010–2013) and *Changing English: Users and Learners Worldwide* (2014–2017). In addition, he was appointed to four 12-month terms as a Senior Research Fellow at the Academy of Finland (1990–91, 1996–97, 2001–02, 2007–08). He was elected to the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters in 2007.

As a language scholar, Markku Filppula is widely acclaimed not only for his groundbreaking work on present-day and earlier varieties of Irish English and other Celtic Englishes, but also for his contributions to the study of Contact Linguistics and World Englishes. Markku's publication profile is impressive. He was the author of *Hiberno-English in a Functional Sentence Perspective* (University of Joensuu Press, 1986) and one of the central works on Irish English, *The Grammar of Irish English: Language in Hibernian Style* (Routledge, 1999). Together with Juhani Klemola and his former doctoral student, Heli Paulasto, he published *English and Celtic in Contact* (Routledge, 2008) which has become the key reference point for scholars entering this field. He also co-edited several important volumes in his fields of interest. They included *The Celtic Roots of English* (University of Joensuu Press, 2002), *Dialects Across Borders* (Benjamins, 2005), *Vernacular Universals and Language Contacts* (Routledge, 2009), *The Oxford Handbook of World Englishes* (OUP, 2016), and *Changing English: Global and Local Perspectives* (Walter de Gruyter, 2017). Given Markku's long-standing intellectual interest in historical contact between the Insular Celtic languages and Anglo-Saxon, it was no surprise that he was invited in 2009, with Juhani Klemola, to guest edit a special issue of the international journal *English Language and Linguistics* dedicated to 'Re-evaluating the Celtic Hypothesis'. As an example of his tenacity as a scholar even when faced with rapidly deteriorating health, what will now become his last article, 'The Grammar of Irish English', was published in the *Oxford Handbook of Irish English* in the spring of 2024.

In addition to his extensive contribution to research and publishing, Markku Filppula was active in several professional organizations and scholarly communities, among other things as organizer of important international conferences and workshops, such as the much-remembered Methods XI conference in Joensuu in 2002 or the (enforced by the pandemic) all-online ISLE 6 conference for the International Society for the Linguistics of English. Not least due to these and other conferences and workshops, he put the University of Joensuu, later UEF, firmly on the global map of outstanding linguistic research. Nationally, Markku served as the Chairperson of the Linguistic Association of Finland between 1992 and 1994, and in 2003 he was appointed as the Director of LANGNET – the Finnish Graduate School in Language Studies – a position he held until 2011. During that period, he also

became the Director of NordLing, the Nordic Network of Graduate Schools in Language Studies (2006–2009), and reached out to Graduate Schools in Linguistics in other countries (e.g. the Swiss-German Hermann Paul School of Linguistics in Basle and Freiburg).

As one might expect, knowing Markku's deep passion for his subject, he remained research-active long after retiring despite his deteriorating health. He rarely missed the lively, monthly research breakfast meetings of the English department at UEF, which has lost a great advocate for the discipline both nationally and internationally. He will be greatly missed by his wide circle of friends and colleagues at home as well as abroad, but the memory of this hugely respected scholar will live on through his pioneering work. **N**

JUHANI KLEMOLA, TAMPERE UNIVERSITY

BERND KORTMANN, UNIVERSITY OF FREIBURG

MIKKO LAITINEN, UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND