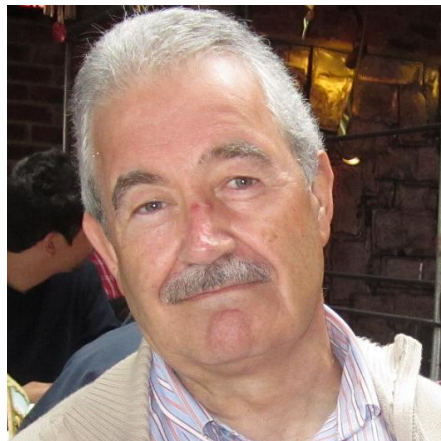




Francisco Gutiérrez Díez (1945-2012)

IN MEMORIAM



On January 23 Dr. Francisco Gutiérrez Díez, a professor in the Department of English at Murcia University, had a heart attack and died in the Faculty of Arts at the age of 67. He was invigilating an examination that morning when he suddenly felt unwell and had to leave the room; unfortunately, despite the immediate and invaluable assistance of several of his colleagues, nothing could be done to save him.

Francisco Gutiérrez was born in a village in northern Leon (La Ercina), but his parents soon moved to Ocejuna of Valdellorma, a nearby village, where he spent his childhood. The fifth in a family of eight children, he began his secondary education at a Dominican college in Leon. From there, he moved to Valencia to study Philosophy. It was in Valencia (where I was studying English Philology at the time) that we first met, although we did not immediately become close friends. This would happen years later when he was working as a

lecturer at the Gerona Teacher Training College, a branch of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, having returned from Georgetown School of Languages and Linguistics where he had spent some time improving his knowledge of English. It was in 1976 -when we met again at a conference- that he told me of his anxiety and concern about the language policy that was being implemented at the college where he was working. Since the then budding department of English at the University of Murcia was in need of teachers at that point in time, as head of department I encouraged him to join us and he did so, moving to Murcia in 1985 together with his wife, Ruth, and their two children, Gemma and David. From this date onwards until his recent death, Professor Gutiérrez became a key figure in our department, obtaining tenure as a senior lecturer in 1988, and eventually being appointed a professor of English in 2000.

From the human standpoint, Francisco Gutiérrez was both an excellent father and a loving husband, without any guile to him, as well as being a good friend, a generous person and a great member of our research team. Professionally, he was an excellent teacher, responsible, understanding, appreciated by his students (indeed, by all those who had any dealings with him) and academically rigorous. What remains for posterity is his seminal contribution to the field of contrastive phonetics and phonology (English vs. Spanish) where he made significant inroads into the areas of rhythm and intonation. He had a particularly good ear for phonetics, as exemplified in works such as his study on *The demarcative function of intonation in English, Castilian and Catalan* (his doctoral thesis), or *Models of English intonation: Intonational notation systems*, both of which constitute key references in the area of contrastive linguistics. He was also interested in the teaching and learning of pronunciation, with particular emphasis on the learning of rhythm (in fact, he was the head researcher in two national I+D projects and published more than thirty articles on this topic).

Those who were lucky enough to know Professor Gutiérrez personally find it hard to believe that he is no longer with us. We deeply mourn his untimely death as well as acutely feel the absence of a colleague who was so cheerful and dear to us all. In our hearts and minds will remain those virtues that we most appreciated in him, along with that smile (half innocent and half playful) with which he will no doubt continue to observe us.

Rafael Monroy