

Invited lectures by

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**Thursday, September 17, 2015, 3 pm**

**Philological Faculty, Balkevičius lecture room**

**Mood (mode) and modality: a pair (triplet) apart**

The talk traces the current understanding of mood (or mode, *modus*) and modality (*modalitas*) back in time, in the Western tradition, giving pride of place to F.R. Palmer, G.H. von Wright for the 20th century, to I. Kant in the premodern period, and all the way back to Boethius, Priscian, Quintilian, Dionysius Thrax, Apollonius Dyscolus, and Protagoras. It sketches how there were and still are several notions of mood (and mode), the crucial ones being (i) a kind of speech act catogory (Protagoras), (ii) a typically morphological property of the verb relating to an inclination of the speaker’s mind (Dionysius Thrax), and (iii) a sentence operator (Boethius). I will show how these notions were problematic, how they got intertwined and how their domain was progressively taken over by a notion of modality. I will show how the confusion that characterizes current thinking is not exceptional and that one can learn from the earlier confusions.

**Friday, September 18, 2015, 1 pm**

**Centre of Scandinavian Studies, Lecture room 402**

**On comparative concepts and descriptive categories*, such* as they are**

In an influential article Haspelmath (2010) makes the radical claim that language-particular and cross-linguistic analysis are very different enterprises. We can describe his position in three points.

(α) Every language should be described in its own terms. The language-particular categories needed are called 'descriptive categories'.

(β) To engage in comparative linguistics, Haspelmath (2010) claims that the linguist needs to devise another set of categories, which he calls 'comparative concepts'. Their usefulness depends on their value for the formulation of cross-linguistic generalizations.

(γ) Descriptive categories and comparative concepts are taken to be different kinds of entities and one should not think that the comparative concepts are only more general, less specific categories.

We agree on (α) and (β) but not on (γ). Instead we maintain that descriptive categories and comparative concepts are the same sorts of entities, viz. sets or, more generally, arrangements of properties, and that they share some of these properties. The talk will make this point with an analysis of the English word *such* and its Swedish counterpart *sådan*.

Haspelmath, Martin (2010) 'Comparative concepts and descriptive categories in cross-linguistic studies', *Language* 86: 663-687

**Friday, September 18, 3 pm**

**Philological Faculty, Balkevičius lecture room**

**On the typology of negative indefinites**

This study focuses on the frequency and the typology of negative indefiniteness in what I call 'negative quantification', viz. the use of words like *nothing* in sentences that contain no clausal negator, such as *I saw nothing*, and of what is generally called 'negative concord', viz. the use of words like *nothing* in sentences that do contain a clausal negator, e.g. *You ain't seen nothing yet*. The frequency claim is based on a variety sample of 179 languages and it is in disagreement with recent statements, based on a misunderstanding of an influential use of the term 'negative indefiniteness'. The typology is also based on this sample but no less on the research literature. For this typology it is claimed that one needs to draw a distinction between strict and non-strict negative quantification, just like is commonly done for negative concord. The most important parameter is, like for negative concord, the position of the indefinite vis-à-vis the finite verb, but there are more parameters and it is a mistake to see the distinction between strict and non-strict negative concord and strict and non-strict negative quantification as simple two-way contrasts. I will show that subtypes of non-strict negative quantification and non-strict negative concord are very similar, thus defining a symmetrical system. A final claim is that negative quantification and negative concord are first and foremost properties of constructions, not of languages.

This cycle of lectures is presented in the framework of the research project *Grammatical Relations and their Non-Canonical Encoding in Baltic* (VP1-3.1-ŠMM-07-K “Support to Research Activities of Scientists and Other Researchers, Priority 3 “Strengthening of Capacities of Researchers and other Scientists” of the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development), conducted by Vilnius University.