

## **Functional grammar – Syntax and its content**

Wednesday March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010

1 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Teacher: Lars Heltoft, Roskilde University

This seminar is about grammatical method in the sense that its focus is on interpretation procedures applied to grammatical data, not to methods of gathering data. Functional schools converge in their common interest in the relation between form and function, expression and content, but they differ with respect to sets of other assumptions about the nature of the linguistic object and the possible analyses that follow from these.

Descriptive adequacy is a difficult notion and adequate analyses do not offer themselves in any straightforward manner. To illustrate this point, I shall offer a discussion about the role of distribution, dependency, constituency and linearity in Croft's Radical Construction Grammar, with a focus on the analyses that follow from the way these notions are understood and applied.

Examples will vary from simple (but subtle) problems of labelling to more complex cases of relations between content syntax – or semantax (Henning Andersen) – and expression syntax.

A simple appetiser for you to consider: Almost any English grammar will tell you that this language has past participles (*walked, hired, bent, sung, etc.*). But is 'past participle' an adequate notion, or is it just an arbitrary label? Is it 'past' and is it a 'participle'?

For those of you who can read German – once learnt, never forgotten – I enclose an excerpt from Peter Eisenberg's initial reflections on the relation between Sprachfunktion und Sprachstruktur.