

A RULE OF THUMB

For Carl Bache

As Professor of English Language since 1984, Carl Bache has influenced the academic world through an impressive and wide range of contributions: his research in systemic functional grammar and cognitive linguistics, his comprehensive grammar book *Mastering English* (jointly with Niels Davidsen Nielsen), his participation in debates on research and education policy, and his service in the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, the Danish Councils of Independent Research and the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters. Not surprisingly, Carl's passion for learning, science and the arts has culminated in his appointment to the Board of Directors of the Carlsberg Foundation. But for those who know Carl, what perhaps impresses most is his integrity and his personal support and commitment in his roles as teacher, research supervisor, mentor and colleague. There is much to celebrate about Carl. Therefore twenty-three of his colleagues have joined in authoring this special issue of the journal *RASK* in his honour.

The essays have been gathered here under the title 'A Rule of Thumb', the cautionary tag that any student of Carl is likely to have heard him use when referring to grammatical principles. The title reflects Carl's strong awareness of the ways language constantly challenges our categories, norms and expectations when we try to deal with the complexities of human life. That language has the capacity to inspire wonder and surprise is a lesson that many have learned from Carl.