

Foreword

With this volume, friends and colleagues worldwide wish to honour Sten Vikner on his 60th birthday on the 9th of December 2019 and celebrate not only his birthday, but also his contribution to the field of Linguistics.

Although he was born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and now makes his home in Denmark's second largest city, Aarhus, Sten is truly an international scholar. This is evident from his degrees, awarded in four different countries: *Dr. Phil. Habil.*, University of Tübingen, Germany (Vikner 2001c); *Docteur ès lettres*, University of Geneva, Switzerland (Vikner 1990); *Cand. Phil.*, University of Copenhagen, Denmark; M.A., University College London, U.K. He has held visiting positions in six different countries: University of Cambridge, U.K.; Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies, Wassenaar; Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA; University of Tromsø, Norway; University of Lund, Sweden; University of Aarhus, Denmark; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA, USA.

Of his many publications, it is fitting to first mention that which established him as one of the foremost linguistic authorities on Germanic verb movement (Vikner 1995) and which remains a frequently cited monograph 25 years later. A large part of his subsequent work is focused on the distribution and structure of the verb and the verb phrase, i.e. the VP headed by V. It is, therefore, appropriate that the title, *The Sign of the V*, features the 'V', the verb, incorporating his initials, S.V. The title brings in one of his other interests, detective fiction, in particular the Sherlock Holmes novels. Those familiar with the Holmes stories will recognise the word play on the novel *The Sign of the Four*; or in this case, the Roman V for 'five'. The front-page artwork features the oak tree, which grows in a branching pattern that is highly reminiscent of a binary branching syntactic tree, the version of generative grammar that Sten has always argued for (e.g. Vikner 2011). Those in search for further symbolism will note the eerie background, suggestive of a Holmes novel; readers may also recognise that the font face is Baskerville.

The four projects for which Sten has been investigator reveal the range of his scientific research area. He has an interest in theoretical syntax, evident from the project *Optimality-theoretic syntax of German and the other Germanic languages* and publications on Optimality Theory (e.g. Engels & Vikner 2014; Heck et al. 2002; Vikner 2001b,c). Another of his theoretical interests focuses on the similarities between formal and functional linguistic theories; he has long advocated facilitating dialogue among researchers who work in different frameworks. This theoretical

comparative work first involved clause structure (e.g. Bjerre et al. 2008; Vikner & Jørgensen 2017) and later nominal syntax with the project *Similarities and differences between clauses and nominals – Comparative syntax across theoretical approaches*. He is also an established authority on object shift, cf. the project: *Object positions – Comparative syntax in a cross-theoretical perspective* (Vikner, 1994a, 2001b, 2005a, 2017c; Engels & Vikner 2013a, 2014). While constantly concerning himself with advancing theory, Sten has been thorough in perusing empirical data. For example, he has contributed to the database of variation in Danish through his involvement in the project *Danish Dialect Syntax*, where he and Henrik Jørgensen collaborated.

The comparative approach to the study of linguistics has always been important to Sten, whether comparing theories or languages (e.g. Vikner 2007). The scope of comparison is sometimes the Germanic family, as in his PhD dissertation, 1995 monograph, and Habilitation, as well as in subsequent work (Vikner 1990, 1995, 2001c, 2005b, 2017 a,b). At other times, the comparison is narrower, e.g. the Scandinavian languages (Johnson & Vikner 1994; Thráinsson & Vikner 1995; Vikner 1997a). He does also attend to his native language, Danish (Kizach & Vikner 2018; Vikner 1988, 1991) or focus on comparisons with some of the less widely spoken Germanic languages, such as Faroese (Heycock et al. 2012), Yiddish (Vikner 2003) and Afrikaans (Biberauer & Vikner 2017). Although he is well known for his work on verb movement, particularly the clausal left periphery (Schwartz & Vikner 2007; Vikner 1991, 2017a; Vikner, Christensen & Nyvad 2017), Sten has not neglected the nominal domain (Vikner 2001a, 2014; Wood & Vikner 2011). He has also worked on tense, aspect, modality and event structure (Grimshaw & Vikner 1993; Thráinsson & Vikner 1995; Vikner 1988). Judging from the many co-authors in the reference list, it is evident that Sten is a team player, collaborating, over the years, with many colleagues internationally, but also very close to home, including his father (S. Vikner & C. Vikner 1997; C. Vikner & S. Vikner 2008).

Sten's colleagues are grateful for his service to the field, particularly his work as editor of the *Nordic Journal of Linguistics* (2001–2015), his continual support of young researchers as head of the PhD programme *Language, Linguistics & Cognition*, University of Aarhus (2011–2016) and his work as head of the research programme in *Language Science*, University of Aarhus. Thank you, Sten, and many happy returns.

Ken Ramshøj Christensen, Henrik Jørgensen, and Johanna L. Wood
Aarhus. November 2019.

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¹ For reasons of space this is a selective, rather than a complete, list of Sten Vikner's publications.

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