

**Thomas Bak**

## **The Cognitive Effects of Language Learning Across the Lifespan**

The central topic of this conference is: “Linguistic transitions: languages for life” and in my talk I would like to discuss two types of transitions: those within the language and those in our understanding of it. Ageing is often depicted as a time of declining ability to learn languages and increasing rigidity in their use. I will challenge this view arguing that language learning is possible at any age and language use can change throughout lifetime, even after retirement. Importantly, these changes have relevant implications for cognitive ageing, can delay the onset of dementia and improve cognitive recovery after stroke. However, the recognition of the linguistic transitions across the lifespan is in itself a transition from static, modular models of language and its representation in the brain in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to the dynamic language networks of today, stressing connectivity and neuroplasticity, better suited to explain current research findings.