Introduction

This volume contains 21 chapters by 28 authors. Each chapter is a study in comparative syntax, many of them detailed studies of small structural differences between closely related languages or dialects. The theoretical framework is mainstream generative grammar (Principles and Parameters / Minimalism)—not an approach practiced by most fieldworkers I know. But I recommend you find a copy of this book and study some of the chapters anyway.

Linguists studying underdocumented languages are often the only ones who can carefully describe the interesting syntactic differences between closely related languages and dialects. This book demonstrates what such careful studies can look like, providing enough detail to be of value in determining how and why related languages can differ from one another.

As one of those fieldworkers that does not work within this theoretical framework, I will only attempt a summary of each chapter and not foolishly attempt theoretical critiques of the work. Of course, other theories could be applied to analyze morphosyntactic differences between closely related languages. Each theory will lead researchers to investigate different kinds of questions. In this case, the motivation for pursuing such comparative syntax comes from questions posed by the theory about the nature of syntactic structure and how languages can differ from one another.

Here are a few things one should be aware of before reading these chapters. The reader needs a basic knowledge of mainstream generative grammar, such as can be found in Radford 2004 or Carnie 2007. The chapters typically assume the Antisymmetry thesis of Kayne 1994, with the result that there is only binary rightward branching (in effect, all languages are underlyingly head-initial and SVO) and all variations on this basic order come from movement to the left (up the tree). Several of the chapters are also influenced by Cinque’s 1999 major cross-linguistic study of adverbs and functional heads. Keeping in mind the traditional distinction between lexical and functional elements, phrases such as NP and VP are projections from lexical items (noun and verb), while IP (Infl Phrase) and CP (Comp Phrase) are projections from functional items, such as tense, aspect, mood, complementizers, etc. Cinque’s cross-linguistic study is a preliminary
attempt to list all the functional elements found cross-linguistically and to locate their positions in the syntactic tree. Awareness of this background is assumed in most of the chapters.

**Macroparameters and microparameters**

Mainstream generative grammar assumes the nature of language can be accounted for by a set of universal principles and a limited set of parameters—on-off switches—that are part of the language faculty. There has been a lot of interest in the last three decades in discovering what principles are shared by all languages and what parameters need to be accounted for.

The early examples of parameters were major settings, sometimes with extensive ramifications for how languages could differ. Examples of such “macroparameters” are the subject-drop parameter, the configurationality parameter, the head directionality parameter, and Baker’s polysynthesis parameter (Baker 1996). An excellent reader-friendly introduction to this research can be found in Baker 2001. Because of the wide sweep of these proposed parameters, they have not only generated excitement but also criticism from both within and outside generative circles.

Work by Kayne and a number of authors in this volume focus instead on “microparameters”: the on-off settings of grammatical functions that can be seen most clearly in detailed comparisons of closely related languages and dialects. Kayne proposes the hypothesis that, “every functional element made available by UG [Universal Grammar] is associated with some syntactic parameter” (14).

**Some notes on comparative syntax, with special reference to English and French**

The first chapter by Kayne clearly explains the contribution that can be made by detailed comparisons of the syntax of closely related languages. Following the theory’s assumptions of structural uniformity across languages and a maximally simple syntax-semantics interface, Kayne includes statements that will bother many fieldworkers and typologists.

Kayne includes some discussion of the more substantial Greenbergian typologies and acknowledges the challenge any serious theory of syntax faces of explaining them. He also discusses the great advantage of doing syntactic research in one’s own language. Regarding grammars of languages where no native speaker is trained as a syntactician, he says, “even if there is a very good grammar available, my chances of gleaning something of theoretical importance are reduced even further (though not necessarily to zero)” (48).

However, it seems the likelihood of finding data of theoretical importance would be increased when even a non-native linguist compares parallel constructions from closely related languages: the similar data could help confirm the analysis at hand; and the nature of such variation (often of functional elements) could contribute to the cross-linguistic search for parameters. Such work even by fieldworkers who aren’t native speakers of the language(s) they’re studying would, I think, fit the spirit of the chapters in this volume.
On the grammatical basis of language development

Luigi Rizzi’s chapter provides evidence that a child’s language learning is “grammatically based but performance driven” (102). Presenting language acquisition data (from Germanic, Romance, and Semitic languages), he deals with the extensive dropping of elements in child language cross-linguistically. This includes the dropping of determiners, copulas, and subjects of main clauses even in languages such as English that don’t allow such dropping in the adult language. Rizzi argues that such cases of dropping are not random but are parameter selections made by the child. At an early stage, those parameter settings are chosen “which facilitate the task of the immature production system by reducing the computational load” (97). He presents the possibility that later these parameters are reset following Categorial Uniformity, “a rather natural economy principle” that results in overt mapping from meaning to syntactic categories (matching structural forms to semantic types). Such an overt mapping is the unmarked case once “the production system is fully in place”. It can be overridden: if (for example) the child encounters evidence in the adult language for some form of subject drop in the main clause, the dropping option is maintained. Otherwise (as in English or French), the dropping option is delearned following the principle of Categorial Uniformity.

Comparative syntax and language disorders

Arhonto Terzi looks at the ways research in Specific Language Impairment (SLI) and Broca’s Aphasia can contribute to and benefit from the study of comparative syntax. The study focuses on clitic placement in Greek using data from child language, normal adult speakers, and speakers with SLI. Terzi is careful to point out that syntactic structures resulting from language disorders “do not necessarily reflect properties of UG, but deviations from it” (113), so such studies contribute to comparative syntax in ways very different from other chapters in the book. Because of the “extremely slow rates of development” of SLI language, Terzi feels that it can serve as “a magnifying glass in time…making observations and correlations easier to see than in early language” (120). He provides an example from his own research that uncovered a correlation between misuse of the negative particle and omission of the subjunctive particle in Cypriot Greek that was noticeable in SLI data before it was found in data of normal language development.

Regarding the contribution of comparative syntax to the study of language disorders, Terzi focuses on potential “clinical markers,” forms that can identify “the grammar of the individual as being SLI” (124). He very tentatively suggests that a particular misplacement of pronominal clitics by Greek-speaking children is such a clinical marker (“namely, the fact that clitics were placed after the verb in all contexts where they should be preverbal”). Terzi argues that it is parallel to the use of the optional infinitive in English (“She like me.”) past age 5, which previous research presented as a clinical marker of SLI. If cross-linguistic research such as this can establish such clinical markers, Terzi believes they could contribute to effective therapy.

Object shift, verb movement, and verb reduplication

Enoch Oladé Aboh accounts for syntactic data from Gbe languages (Kwa, Niger-Congo) that display VO and OV word orders by postulating (1) verb movement to check features for aspect
and (2) object shift to check features for case. In OV structures, the verb can’t be moved to the left of the object “because the verb is stuck in an embedded nominalized small clause” (141). Further, he argues that in certain constructions in which no phrase is available to fill the subject position, a special OVV construction with reduplication is found.\(^6\) He says that this small clause analysis of OVV constructions “makes a number of predictions with respect to their distribution that are borne out across Kwa” (171).

Presenting comparative work within Gbe, Aboh builds on this analysis to “propose that the Gungbe sentence-final low tone, typical of imperfective and prospective constructions, is a nominalizing morpheme” (160). He compares this with similar constructions in Fongbe and Gengbe. He argues that these sentence-final elements are actually markers at the left periphery but “trigger leftward movement of their complements to their specifier positions,” so the markers appear as sentence-final.

**Finiteness and negation in Dravidian**

R. Amritavalli and K. A. Jayaseelan present a study comparing Dravidian syntax with non-Dravidian (English) syntax and comparing structures within the family, primarily between Kannada and Malayalam. They argue that the finite clause in Dravidian is not characterized by the presence of Tense, as is usually expected, but rather by the presence of Mood. Furthermore, they present evidence that the agreement morphology (absent in Malayalam but present in the other four major Dravidian languages) is “a reflex of Indicative Mood” (179). Their argument involves showing that forms that are sometimes glossed as “present” or “past” in Dravidian are actually markers of aspect. In negative clauses in Kannada, the main verb is a gerund or infinitive (with no agreement or tense specification) with “present” and “past” readings, respectively. The authors argue that this is because “the infinitive is specified for perfect aspect, the gerund for imperfect aspect” (185).

The comparison of similar constructions in Malayalam includes data from serial verbs in which “the interpretation of the entire sentence follows from the tense (or mood) of [the] final verb” (199).

Comparison of Dravidian (here, Kannada and Malayalam) with other language families suggests a parameter which accounts for how Dravidian differs from English (for example) by not having a Tense projection; rather, finiteness is realized in the Mood Phrase and apparent “tense” in the Aspect Phrase.\(^2\) Comparative study within Dravidian demonstrates the effect of a parameter for the presence or absence of overt agreement, bundled with aspect, and its interaction with negation: “Dravidian languages with overt agreement will not instantiate the same verb forms in negative clauses as in affirmative clauses; negative clauses will look very different from affirmative clauses in these languages” (212).

**On some descriptive generalizations in Romance**

Paola Benincà and Cecilia Poletto look at question formation, personal pronouns, and negation in Romance, especially the northern Italian dialects. Their aim is “to show how cross-linguistic variation can direct our research toward a precise path and thereby narrow down the number of
possible analyses of a given phenomenon” (222). This study includes good examples of implicational relations in typology and grammaticalization within a generative framework. They claim that if a Romance language has only one *wh-* word that behaves as a clitic, it will be the form for *what* or *where*; some have clitic forms for *who* and *how* but only if they have the former two; and the form for “*why* never behaves as a clitic and is always expressed by a compound” (223). They posit a similar implicational scale among direct object clitics, dative clitics, partitive/locative/subject clitics, the last ones only found in languages that manifest the preceding pronominal clitics. Yet another scale is presented involving the possibility of *wh-* forms in situ and *wh-*doubling.

For negative constructions in Romance (“to account for dialectal data”), they posit three postverbal and two preverbal positions (independent heads that block verb movement and clitics that do not). The choice of post- or preverbal negation is sensitive to verb movement and mood.

Clitics are seen as the result of a process in which forms come to encode “only the functional portion of their strong counterpart” (250). They serve as the more “movable” version of items that need to move to check their features (explaining why adverbs—which don’t need to move for feature-checking—don’t have clitic forms).

**Classifiers in four varieties of Chinese**

Lisa L.-S. Cheng and Ring Sybesma explore nominal classifiers in Mandarin, Wu (specifically Wenzhou), Min, and Cantonese and provide an account of the variation, distribution, and interpretation of three constructions: Numeral-Classifier-NP, Classifier-NP, and Bare NP. The complex data is well presented with helpful examples and tables laying out the different interpretations of each construction across the four language groups.

Their account is based on a distinction between the lexical and functional domains. When applied to NPs and reference, “lexical units refer to a concept [e.g., “dog”], while functional units allow the phrase to refer to actual instantiations of that concept in the real world [e.g., “a/the dog],” i.e., the functional units have a deictic function (277). For languages with determiners, this deictic function is carried out by the determiner; for languages with classifiers, it is carried out by the classifier. Such constructions are interpreted as either definite or indefinite but not generic. Furthermore, in some languages, the NP may receive a definite reading with no overt marking of definiteness (this is true for the three non-Cantonese varieties discussed in the paper).

These facts (and others not presented here) suggest a set of parameters that account for the variation: (1) languages with classifiers vs. languages with articles (setting Chinese varieties off from languages such as English); (2) whether definiteness is marked overtly or not; (3) whether or not an overt classifier is required with a numeral; and (4) whether or not a numeral is required to precede the classifier.

**Morphology and word order in “creolization” and beyond**

In this chapter, Michel DeGraff accomplishes two main tasks: he demonstrates the relation between the richness of verb inflection, object cliticization, and the parameter setting of verb-
movement (e.g., French) vs. verb-in-situ (e.g., Haitian Creole); and, as he has done elsewhere, argues against the treatment of creoles as linguistically “abnormal” examples of language change. His analysis reveals relations between creolization and studies of language acquisition and language change—“a triangulation of the mental bases of language creation” (343).

For example, he shows parallels between the loss of inflection from French to Haitian Creole and that from Old to Middle to Modern English or from Old Norse to Mainland Scandinavian (see comments on “The Scandinavian languages” below), all of which may have been due to “so-called imperfect learning by adult learners in contact situations” (310). His analysis assumes a parameter setting for verb-movement in which “V-in-situ is the innately preferred option,” the verb-movement option being “partly triggered by the right set of inflectional affixes on the verb.” His closing comparison of verb inflection and verb-movement in two other Romance-lexicon Creoles makes it clear there is no basic “Creole typology” in such matters.

**The Slavic languages**

Steven Franks discusses ten areas of syntactic variation within the Slavic language family, including case and agreement, the genitive of negation, numerals, argument structure and voice, wh-movement negation, binding, aspect, and word order. The variations can be accounted for by parameter settings that may have effects on other syntactic details. The ground he tries to cover is far too vast for a book chapter. Franks is well aware of this and provides numerous references to fuller treatments in the literature, including his book-length treatment of much of the same material (Franks 1995).

The genitive of negation refers to a construction found throughout the family in which the direct object, which is typically assigned accusative case, is marked with the genitive when under the scope of negation. Polish and Russian (among others) display an interesting variation in that such marking is obligatory in Polish but optional in Russian. At the same time, Russian marks some subjects (where we expect nominative case) with the genitive when negated—a feature that’s absent from Polish. Franks accounts for this by a (parametric) distinction in which the rule applies to the verb in Polish, actually changing its case-marking feature, restricting it to the direct object and rendering it obligatory. In Russian it applies to the relevant level of INFL (Agr or Asp) and so “applies blindly to direct objects in the scope of negation” (382).

Likewise, he presents evidence for parametric accounts of the variations found in domains that have generated a lot of interest in Slavic syntax: numerals that assign genitive case (inherent vs. structural); the passive reflexive construction (“variation in what case(s) the ‘passive’ morphology can absorb” (387); the “strikingly distinct” clitic system of Polish (due to Polish clitics being XPs rather than heads); multiple wh-movement (one wh-phrase moving “to check WH features, whereas the [others] move to check FOCUS features” (395).

In his final section, he briefly touches on topics that haven’t received as much attention: binding, aspect, and word order. For the latter, he notes that the only two Slavic languages that don’t allow left-branch extraction—Bulgarian and Macedonian—are also the only two with explicit determiners, another possible parameter with multiple effects.
The Scandinavian languages

Anders Holmberg and Christer Platzack focus on word order in Scandinavian languages. They first briefly survey the key syntactic features held in common throughout the family, most notably that like most other Germanic languages they are verb-second languages. They go on to discuss some of the word order differences between the Insular (using examples from Icelandic) and Mainland Scandinavian (with examples from Swedish) languages. The presentation is ordered syntactically from the bottom up: the order of content adverbials, the ordering of the verb particle vis-à-vis the object, then object shift, verb-raising, floating subjects, and finally issues of the left periphery.

The historically conservative features that Icelandic exhibits in the left periphery—stylistic fronting, oblique subjects, no expletive subject, as well as differences in embedded clauses—are all correlated with the retention of person inflection: “…the change from an Icelandic type of grammar to a Mainland Scandinavian type of grammar seems to coincide with the loss of person inflection on the tensed verb” (448).

The authors also discuss an area in which the syntax “does not follow the Mainland-Insular division”—the noun phrase. There is so much variation in how elements of the NP are combined, “almost every local dialect appears to have its own NP-syntax” (438).

Noun class, gender, and the lexicon-syntax-morphology interfaces: a comparative study of Niger-Congo and Romance languages

Alain Kihm’s presentation treats noun class systems, gender systems, and numeral classifiers—all of which are “expressions of a fundamental faculty of the human mind, namely, classification” (460)—as examples of a grammatical category he calls “Class.” Kihm’s account assumes familiarity with Distributed Morphology in which “the lexicon consists in roots that lack category.” (For clear presentations, see Marantz 1997 or Harley and Noyer 1999.) Thus the “light n” is to nouns as the light v (which are more common in the literature) is to verbs—determining the word class when they are merged with lexical roots.

This is what Kihm claims cross-linguistically “is the basic function of noun classes—namely, noun formation” (471),. Kihm demonstrates this with constructions from (the Bok variety of) Manjaku (Atlantic Niger-Congo). Like Bantu languages, Manjuku has a set of Class morphemes, including distinct forms conflating Class and Plurality.

Kihm, using the Manjaku example lik ‘water’ presents an analysis in which the lexical semantics are found within the “encyclopedia” (the realm of non-linguistic knowledge) but are linked to the lexicon and syntax. When inserted in a verb slot, lik takes on the category of a verb and means ‘to draw water (from a well)’; when inserted in a noun slot, it must bear a noun class morpheme—making it a noun.

Kihm then argues for a parallel analysis of gender classes in Romance languages: in both cases, the systems impose a classification on nouns. However, the Romance languages differ from the Niger-Congo languages in significant ways: they do not conflate noun classification and
derivation; and Plurality is associated with the main root, rather than with the Class feature. Most significantly, the Class morphemes are “meaningful roots in Manjaku but semantically empty functional items in Romance” (487). In Manjaku, the Class morphemes are “denoting” or semantically rich whereas in Romance, the Class morphemes are merely grammatical or “functional”—and Kihm argues that this accounts for their distinct morphosyntactic effects.

**Agreement and its placement in Turkic nonsubject relative clauses**

Jaklin Kornfilt presents three types of relative clause constructions found in Turkic languages. Like other head-final languages, the relative clause in Turkic languages precedes the head noun. As I mentioned earlier, in Kayne’s Antisymmetry hypothesis, all syntactic structures (before derivation) are considered head-initial, with all branching to the right. Kornfilt shows how an analysis that takes seriously the apparently counter-intuitive claim that Turkic clauses are underlying head-initial can account for head-final relative clause constructions in Turkic.

The three relative clause constructions differ in the details of agreement with the subject in the relative clause: one type has no agreement, another has agreement marked on the predicate within the clause, and the third type has agreement marked outside of the relative clause, on the head noun. Kornfilt’s approach provides a possible account for this apparent nonlocal agreement (which otherwise would violate a standard constraint in generative grammar). For a similar construction in Mongolian that has been analyzed as a case of subject raising, Kornfilt presents four arguments against the subject raising analysis.

**Qu’est-ce-que (qu)-est-ce-que? A case study in comparative Romance interrogative syntax**

Nicola Munaro and Jean-Yves Pollock present data from French and Northern Italian dialects involving the complexities of wh-questions. One fascinating result of their analysis involves constructions in which the wh-words appear to be in situ (“You’re going where?”). Thus in Bellunese (a Northern Italian dialect) where the wh-word must occur after the verb, there is evidence that it has, in fact, been fronted and then “the rest of the clause has itself crossed over the position in which the bare wh-words stand” (550).

Besides constructions with bare wh-words, the authors look at complex wh-phrases (e.g., “which book”), negation, embedded questions, and constraints on movement in complex constructions.

They argue that the data across these languages can be accounted for by five main points: the left periphery of the sentence in Northeast Romance has two positions that wh-words move to (following work by others); the clitic features of some of the operators; two parameters (whether an operator is overt or not and where negation is merged—at the higher or lower level of the left periphery); and that subject-clitic inversion constructions in NE Romance play a key role in positioning wh-clitics for movement (592).
Clitic placement, grammaticalization, and reanalysis in Berber

Jamal Ouhalla argues that, appearances notwithstanding, clitics in all Berber languages move by attraction to functional rather than lexical categories. The account is straightforward in those varieties that display a sentence-initial Tense morpheme to which a pronominal clitic attaches. Less obvious are examples where there is no overt sentence-initial Tense morpheme and the same clitic attaches to the main verb. Ouhalla gives evidence that the clitic in such cases has, in fact, moved to a null Tense, followed by inversion with the main verb to meet a general constraint forbidding clitics in Berber from being the “first word” within their domain and requiring their attachment to a prosodic base.

These two basic constraints—one syntactic and one prosodic—account for interesting variations on clitic constructions in the Berber languages presented.

Ouhalla’s discussion of comparative Berber syntax gives evidence for two kinds of diachronic developments that affect the placement of clitics: different degrees of grammaticalization of elements, from lexical categories to functional categories; and reanalysis of the syntactic constructions involved. Among his examples are kinship terms that have changed from inflected nouns to uninflected “preposition-like functional categories” (632).

Clitic placement in Western Iberian

In another study of clitic placement, Eduardo Raposo and Juan Uriagereka compare the rather well-behaved features of Spanish and Catalan with those of the Western Iberian (WI) languages, Portuguese and Galician, including the “bizarre pattern of clitic placement” in WI infinitival clauses. They account for data involving finite and nonfinite clauses in both WI and Eastern Iberian languages.

They argue that Romance clitics—considered determiners—move not (as some have argued) to match syntactic features but ultimately because of phonological constraints, requiring them to attach to a prosodic word. Usually, this simply involves attaching to a following noun; but if no noun follows, it moves to the verb. The final location of the clitic is determined by the presence or absence of affective features and agreement features in the sentence structure that trigger movement.

This is the only chapter in the book that explicitly employs the Minimalist concept of “phase,” in which specified levels of syntactic derivation provide output to the phonological and semantic components in a cyclic fashion.

Comparative Athapaskan syntax: arguments and projections

Keren Rice and Leslie Saxon, two of the more prominent specialists in Athapaskan studies, focus on the comparative syntax of pronominal forms, drawing on data from all branches of the Athapaskan family. They argue convincingly for a general Athapaskan syntactic clause structure with three positions for subjects (specifier in AgrSP, in NumP, and in VP) and two for objects (inside and outside the VP). Arguments for the distinction between VP-internal vs. VP-external
subjects include idioms, noun incorporation, word order, and morpheme order of subject inflection. The AgrSP position is the ultimate landing site for first- and second-person subject forms. (In some languages, the parallel position is “DiscP,” where one can find the “discoursally most prominent third-person” (729) nonsubject.)

Much of their discussion centers around the properties and licensing of the third-person object marker, y-, a form that marks the presence of two noncoreferential third-person forms in the same clause. The requirements on the noncoreferential clause-mate differ across the family: it must be a pronoun; or it must be definite; or it may be any DP (noun phrase or pronoun). The requirements for the argument marked by y- also differ across the languages: in Kaska it must be the direct object; in Mackenzie, it may be the direct or indirect object; and in (most) others it must simply be something other than nominative.

**Number agreement variation in Catalan dialects**

Gemma Rigau argues that differences in agreement in Catalan variants can be found in the functional category Tense (T). Data from existential constructions (including deontic existentials) show the difference in agreement between Ribagorçan Catalan (RC) and Central Catalan (CC): in the latter, the verb displays agreement in number with its object; in RC, there is no such agreement. Part of the account draws on a suggested analysis in Hale and Keyser 1998 of “locative” (L) agreement in Navajo, arguing that Tense has both L-person and L-number features.

Rigau offers a representation that can account for the fact that agreement features for person and number are formally distinct, claiming that the determining parameter is in T, which can “select a complete or incomplete verbal functional category” (789). The analysis is supported by related phenomena in other Romance languages.

**Classifiers and DP structure in Southeast Asia**

Andrew Simpson presents data from SE Asian languages that display significant variation of constituent orders within the DP, i.e., among the NP (noun plus modifiers), classifier (CL), numeral (Num), and demonstrative. His chapter is one of the more accessible ones to readers not familiar with Minimalism or Antisymmetry.

Simpson presents both diachronic and synchronic evidence in SE Asian languages for movement of the NP in some cases and head movement (of N, Num, or CL) in others to explain the different orderings. His analysis requires that Num and CL be associated with distinct semantic functions rather than a single-head position. The variation is “attributed to elements being in different stages of ongoing historical development and reanalysis” (833) and leads to the conclusion “that DPs in the variety of languages examined here may actually share a single, basic, highly regular underlying structure” (834).
The Celtic languages

Maggie Tallerman presents a summary of research on Celtic languages within generative grammar since the mid-70s, including comparisons between the two branches of Celtic—Brythonic (Welsh, Beton, Cornish) and Goidelic (Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Manx). She reviews the different attempts to account for the (largely) VSO word order found in the language family. The discussion focuses on what structural projections are needed to account for word order in finite and nonfinite clauses, in copular constructions, and in verb-second constructions found in the Brythonic languages. Agreement morphology presents perhaps one of the better-known problems in Celtic languages: the verb shows number and person agreement with the subject only when no lexical subject or (except for Welsh) no pronominal subject is present. Such a pattern has suggested that (at least certain) subject features have been incorporated into the verb, accounting for the complementary distribution. The last section reviews further details regarding subject-verb agreement (or its absence) and particles found in negative and fronted constructions.

Unlike other chapters in the volume, Tallerman does not try to present novel approaches to old problems but she does give a useful survey of literature that has implications for the generative analysis of VSO languages such as Celtic.

Preverbal elements in Korean and Japanese

John Whitman uses data from Korean and Japanese constructions largely to argue for Kayne’s Antisymmetry hypothesis. As noted earlier for Dravidian and Turkic, SOV languages would seem to pose a major challenge for a theory that assumes universal underlying SVO order and only allows right-branching and leftward movement. Whitman reviews structures in Korean and Japanese, arguing that even such SOV languages demonstrate consistent right-branching, given the position and scope of negation and auxiliaries. He argues that the post-verbal and preverbal negative forms in both languages exhibit behavior like *ne* and *pas* (respectively) in French and a similar account (as Spec and Head of NegP) provides an elegant analysis, in which the verb moves to the head of NegP and all the rest of the VP moves to a position above the NegP. This results in the observed SONegV order in such constructions.

Whitman also provides evidence for verb and complement raising in three further short sections: his analysis of the position and scope of negation in two periphrastic causative constructions in Korean; the two negative imperative constructions in earlier stages of Japanese; reanalysis of SNegOV order languages—apparent exceptions to his analysis in the opening section; and the behavior of preverbal tense, aspect, and mode markers in Japanese and Korean.

Continental West-Germanic languages

Jan-Wouter Zwart’s chapter, though written by a leader in Minimalist accounts of Dutch, is the least theory-bound presentation in the book. He provides a model of careful comparative syntax in the two branches of Continental West-Germanic: the Frisian group and the Dutch-German group, with most examples from Dutch. After a brief presentation of the apparent verb-final nature of these languages, he (briefly) claims they are most likely VO languages after all, given adjacency issues (a theory-internal reason) and their otherwise head-complement nature (a more
empirical argument). However, the chapter reads for the most part as a reference grammar of these language variants, covering word classes, grammatical functions, complementation types, pronouns, alternations, noun phrase structure (a term he uses here rather than “DP structure” again showing the reference grammar nature of this chapter), negation, coordination, and ellipsis. In each case he includes careful descriptions of the ordering of elements and, where relevant, differences found in structures among the languages involved.

There are several points at which one might expect a discussion of the relevance of some microparameter, such as in his detailed chart showing the different orders found in the sentence-final verb clusters or in his discussion of dialect differences in pronoun constructions. But Zwart leaves any such conjectures to the reader. (Most theory-specific discussion is included in the footnotes, where his commitment to Antisymmetry is clear but not necessary to appreciate his contribution.)

Notes

1 I’m thankful for comments from Cheri Black on an earlier draft of this review.

2 It should be noted that such comparative documentation is not important only for the academic community. When presented in a nontechnical manner, it can be of great worth to the language communities themselves when they see comparative descriptions of their own languages and language variants. Furthermore, such studies can have important implications for those involved in language policy, valuing the form of speech in a minority language group on its own terms and not as a “poorly spoken” variety of a related dominant language.

3 For a basic introduction that traces the history of the theory’s development by two former practitioners, now critical of the theory, a good choice would be chapters 2 and 3 of Culicover and Jackendoff 2005.

4 One in which “the same meaning always maps onto the same syntactic structure” (Culicover and Jackendoff 2005:6).

5 Thus, because “a given UG element is invariably associated with only one syntactic category,” the first sentence below is considered to be “formed [from the second] by incorporation of ‘enough’ into the verb ‘be’.”
   i. That argument does not suffice to make the point.
   ii. That argument is not enough to make the point.
Kayne presents this comparison of two English structures to point out what might be gained by comparing similar differences between languages.

6 He gives evidence for analyzing the OVV as a small clause, with a subject position filled by a null element which must be licensed. In this case, it is licensed by reduplication on the verb.

7 Note that these facts about Dravidian have been presented by others, especially in Bhatt 1999. This article, however, attempts to provide a parametric account for such facts.
The left-branch condition, first formulated in Ross 1967, says you can’t break off and move the left branch of a NP. So, in English, we can say “You are reading whose book?” or, “Whose book are you reading?” but not “Whose are you reading book?” Apparently, in most Slavic languages the last construction is fine.

Cf. the analysis, mentioned above, of Chinese classifiers in the Cheng and Sybesma chapter, as functioning at the level of the DP, adding the deictic or referring function to the describing function of the NP.

References


