[Report 2]

Assessment of: Stefan Müller: Grammatiktheorie.

This is an impressive and very useful piece of work. I know of no other book which covers in as much detail the main players of grammatical theory. It covers not only the history of different formal approaches towards grammar, but also current developments and most importantly it provides a way to compare these theories by systematically exploring particular concepts of grammar that play a role in all of them: grammatical relations, word-order effects and displacement, as well as valency-changing operations, etc.. It is useful for readers of all theoretical orientations, with little or no background in linguistic theory but also for scholars who are interested in familiarizing themselves with other frameworks. The discussion is thoughtful and very clear. The formalisms and terminology is clearly explained. There is enough discussion so the reader (even a beginning linguist) will be able to use and apply the formalisms of any of the frameworks discussed. This may be especially useful for someone who is interested in determining whether, for a given phenomenon, different theories make different empirical predictions or whether they are simply notational variants of each other.

In terms of its empirical coverage, the book draws mostly on data from German and English, with occasional reference to other languages. As a result, the analytical constructs that are covered are centered around Indo-European languages, especially Germanic. This certainly reflects the state of the field – though there is currently a growing body of research on understudied languages. Some of the issues discussed are less relevant to some of these languages, which are often organized in rather different ways from the more familiar Indo-European languages. Thus, for someone who is interested in analyzing a non-Indo-European language the book in its current form may be a bit too narrow. A chapter on parametric variation and typology may be useful to reach an even broader audience.

Another aspect of grammatical theory that I was surprised not to see covered is interface issues. In particular, in recent years, especially since the advent of minimalism, there is an emphasis on determining how narrow syntax interfaces with other areas of the grammar: phonology, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics. Issues pertaining to the interfaces might well be discussed. The way one views the architecture of grammar will influence ones view on how such issues will play out and what kinds of interactions one might expect.

In sum, in my opinion this book is definitely worth being translated. What I would recommend for such a translation would be that the data covered are less focused on German. How feasible the addition of more cross-linguistic material as well as more interface issues are, I don't know. But it would definitely make the book even stronger as it already is.