

Review Article

Constructive Case

MIRIAM BUTT

Rachel Nordlinger, *Constructive Case: Evidence from Australian Languages*. Stanford, California: CSLI Publications, 1998, 194 pages, ISBN 1-57586-136-4, US\$ 23.95.

1. Overview and background

Rachel Nordlinger presents an approach to case marking that is characterized by an in-depth knowledge of Australian languages, a solid theoretical foundation, and a central idea that is startlingly simple to grasp. By the end of the book, vagaries of Australian case systems such as case marking that is spread over discontinuous constituents, case stacking of up to four differing markers in a row, and the use of case markers to convey tense/aspect/mood information appear to the reader to be an eminently sensible way of organizing a language.

The first two introductory chapters lay out the basics of the formal framework assumed by Nordlinger and then go on to provide an overview and summary of the nonconfigurationality issue that has long accompanied discussions of the structure and characteristics of Australian languages. Nordlinger situates her views on case squarely within the discussion of nonconfigurationality in that she draws a typological and theoretical implication between a proliferation of case marking and the ability of a language to exhibit a large degree of word order freedom. Under this conception, a language such as English with its rigid order and negligible case marking lies at one end of the spectrum, while languages such as Warlpiri with its very free word order (the only hard and fast restriction appears to be that the auxiliary appear in second position (Simpson 1991)) and abundance of case marking lie at the other end of the continuum. This conception has long been a popular one,¹ but Nordlinger goes one step further in that she embeds this purported connection between case marking and configurationality into a theoretical discussion on the “competition” between morphology and syntax that has recently been the focus of Optimality Theoretical work within Lexical-Functional Grammar (Bresnan 1998).

Bresnan (1998) picks up on the typological idea that languages may differ in how they express one and the same functional notion. For instance, some languages may encode a discourse notion such as topic in terms of a particular phrase structural position (i.e., sentence initial), while others may employ a piece of morphology to accomplish the same purpose. Bresnan views the tension between morphology and syntax in terms of the interaction between different types of (language universal) constraints that may be ranked differently from language to language, resulting in the observation of differing language particular surface manifestations. In some languages, for example, the interaction and ranking of the relevant constraints is such that a morphological manifestation of topic identification is favored, in other languages the more optimal interaction of the constraints favors a structural position.²

Nordlinger uses the idea that morphology competes with syntax as a comfortable backdrop for her work but does not explicitly adopt Optimality Theory in her book. She does, however, assume that an Optimality Theoretic approach would not only be compatible with her analyses, but that it might also ultimately shed more light on some of the areas which as yet remain unresolved.

Despite the rather long discussion of nonconfigurationality and the connection to case marking, the establishment of this connection does not represent the central idea of the book. As such it is rather a pity that the presentation of the central idea of “constructive case” takes place in the chapter entitled: “Modelling nonconfigurationality” (Chapter 3). I see Nordlinger’s contribution to our understanding of case systems as being largely independent of the issue of nonconfigurationality and the theoretical idea that morphology can be seen as competing with syntax. That is, even if the link between nonconfigurationality and a prolific case marking system is called into question, and even if the idea that morphology competes with syntax somehow turned out to be erroneous, Nordlinger’s approach to case marking in Australian languages and its further potential applicability to other languages around the world would not necessarily have to fall as well: it fares quite well on its own merits.

Consider the Wambaya sentence from Nordlinger (p. 96) in (1).

- (1) *galalarrinyi-ni gini-ng-a dawu bugayini-ni*
 dog.I-ERG 3SG.MASC.A-1.O-NFUT bite big.I-ERG
 ‘The big dog bit me.’

Under the assumption of a clausal “blue-print” in terms of X'-Syntax, as is the case in many syntactic approaches, subjects, objects, verbs, and complements would all have their preordained positions. Constituents may have to move from their underlying positions in order to receive Case, have some features checked off, or because they are defined as gravitating towards a feature present elsewhere in the tree. Under this approach, the actual surface morphology such as the ergative *ni* and the inflectional person/number morphology on the

auxiliary are considered mere surface ("spell-out") manifestations of a bundle of syntactic features (e.g., Chomsky 1995).

Nordlinger takes just the opposite position in that she sees morphology as playing a large role in CONSTRUCTING the syntax of the clause, rather than being a mere by-product of an underlying abstract representation. Thus, in the Wambaya sentence above, she views the ergative *ni* as carrying the following pieces of syntactic information: (i) that there be a subject; (ii) that it be ergative; (iii) that the lexical item the ergative marks is either the subject of the clause, or that it is an adjunct which modifies the subject.

Within LFG's (Lexical-Functional Grammar) unification based formalism, discontinuous constituents such as in (1) are then rendered unproblematic. While not wanting to go through the mechanics of the analysis in detail (which Nordlinger does admirably thoroughly for a set of examples), the idea is simply this: both the 'big' and the 'dog' specify that they are parts of the subject, as shown in (2) and (3).

$$(2) \quad \left[\text{SUBJ} \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{PRED} & \text{'dog'} \\ \text{CASE} & \text{ERG} \end{array} \right] \right]$$

$$(3) \quad \left[\text{SUBJ} \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{CASE} & \text{ERG} \\ \text{ADJUNCT} & \left[\text{PRED} \quad \text{'big'} \right] \end{array} \right] \right]$$

These two sets of information are unified into the structure shown in (4) as a routine part of the clausal analysis within the formalism of LFG.

$$(4) \quad \left[\text{SUBJ} \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{CASE} & \text{ERG} \\ \text{PRED} & \text{'dog'} \\ \text{ADJUNCT} & \left[\text{PRED} \quad \text{'big'} \right] \end{array} \right] \right]$$

Thus at the level of f(unctional)-structure, which is the level of analysis represented by the boxes above, the information from the discontinuous constituents is united to give a coherent analysis.

Nordlinger's treatment of case in Australian languages is not the first analysis to have been presented within LFG. However, it still goes a step beyond previous approaches such as that of Simpson (1991) in that Nordlinger really wants to invest case markers with a large part of the constructive power. In Simpson's approach, for example, case markers do not specify any information about the kind of grammatical relation they are expecting to appear on. The specification of grammatical relations is left to annotations on the c(onstituent)-structure, i.e., is ultimately determined by the clausal syntax, rather than the morphology. In Simpson's approach, for example, the Wambaya 'dog' in our example would contain only the information shown in (5).

$$(5) \quad \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{PRED} & \text{'dog'} \\ \text{CASE} & \text{ERG} \end{array} \right]$$

Similarly, while Butt & King (1991), King (1995), and Butt (1995) also see case markers in Russian, Georgian, and Urdu as crucially contributing both semantic and syntactic information to a clause, they still require the verb to license the grammatical functions (such as subject, object, indirect object, and oblique), rather than seeing the case markers themselves as constructing the syntax of the clause.

As such, Nordlinger's approach represents a radical departure from current formal syntactic treatments of case. Furthermore, her work is remarkable in that she takes insights that are well-established in the typological literature seriously, and attempts to provide a formal vehicle that may (finally) succeed in conveying the insights into the world of formal syntax.

The above Wambaya example served as a simple illustration of Nordlinger's general approach. However, as the scope of her work includes more difficult issues such as case stacking (better known as *Suffixaufnahme* in the typological literature) and tense/aspect/mood marking, I propose to go into some of the issues addressed by Nordlinger. While the issues at hand will be examined critically, it should be noted that a review cannot do more than provide a flavor of the phenomena and issues addressed within Nordlinger's work.

2. Suffixaufnahme – Case stacking

Nordlinger's own primary fieldwork is on the Australian language Wambaya (see Nordlinger 1998 for a grammar of Wambaya). However, the book does not confine itself to exploring phenomena in Wambaya, but instead takes on a whole range of Australian languages:

Jingulu	Non-Pama-Nyungan (Barkly), Northern Territory
Jiwarli	Pama-Nyungan (Mantharta), Western Australia
Kalkatungu	Pama-Nyungan, Queensland
Kayardild	Non-Pama-Nyungan (Tangkic), Queensland
Martuthunira	Pama-Nyungan (Ngayarda), Western Australia
Pitta Pitta	Pama-Nyungan, Queensland
Wambaya	Non-Pama-Nyungan (Barkly), Northern Territory
Warlpiri	Pama-Nyungan (Nyungic), Northern Territory

In particular, Wambaya does not exhibit the phenomenon of *Suffixaufnahme* (or case stacking), whereas Kayardild allows the stacking of up to four cases, as shown in (6).

- (6) *Ngada mungurru*, [*maku-ntha* *yalawu-jarra-ntha*
 I know [woman-COBL catch-PST-COBL
yakuri-naa-ntha *thabuju-karra-nguni-naa-ntha*
 fish-MABL-COBL brother-GEN-INST-MABL-COBL

mijil-nguni-naa-nth].

net- INST-MABL-COBL]

'I know that the woman caught the fish with brother's net.'

Nordlinger (p. 134) from Evans (1995: 406)

Note that the oblique case in the above example is actually a type of complementizing case. Nordlinger sees this type of case as functionally distinct from the other types of case and as such puts the problem of complementizing case aside for the purposes of the book. However, as promised in various footnotes in the book, she has since undertaken to extend her analysis to include complementizing case as well (Nordlinger 2000).

Leaving aside complementizing case, the function of case stacking in Australian languages appears to be to "... identify the semantic relationship of their nominals within their clauses or sentences ..." (Plank 1995: 35) and also to indicate tense/aspect/mood marking (modal case) in those languages which employ this strategy (discussed by Nordlinger in Chapter 4 and here in the next section). Thus, in the Kayardild example in (6), the oblique (OBL) appears on all of the embedded nominals in order to indicate that they are all part of the embedded clause. The modal ablative (MABL) indicates past tense in the embedded clause, and the instrumental (INST) marks the instrumental use of the 'net'. The 'brother' is marked with this instrumental to indicate that it modifies the 'net'. The genitive on 'brother' indicates its adnominal function.

Nordlinger argues convincingly against alternative approaches such as that of configurationally determined case copying, or an analysis of the genitive marker as a simple piece of derivational morphology, and instead shows that the constructive case approach can account quite naturally for the phenomenon of case stacking. (That case stacking poses a serious problem for Chomsky & Lasnik's (1977) Case Filter and all subsequent versions of it goes without saying.)

In fact, to researchers familiar with the ambiguity and overgeneration problem that PP-attachment poses for natural language processing, the Australian method of case-stacking seems like an eminently sensible thing: if machine translation had begun by tackling Australian languages, entire chapters on PP-attachment would simply never even have been written.

3. The Principle of Morphological Composition

In order to give formal substance to the intuition that the case markers themselves indicate the grammatical relations and how they are embedded within one another, Nordlinger formulates a PRINCIPLE OF MORPHOLOGICAL COMPOSITION (pp. 102, 136), shown here in (7). This principle allows for successive embedding of layers of grammatical functions, as in example (4) in which the adjunct 'big' was embedded under the ergative subject 'dog'. How-

ever, the principle as formulated has two major drawbacks: (i) it is difficult to understand and interpret even for the experienced LFG-researcher; (ii) it goes beyond the standard formalism of LFG.

(7) PRINCIPLE OF MORPHOLOGICAL COMPOSITION:

Where x is a string of attributes:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{Stem} & \text{Aff} & \\ \textcircled{(\text{GF}^n \uparrow)} & ((\text{GF}^m \uparrow)) & x \end{array} \implies \begin{array}{ccc} \text{Stem} & & \text{Aff} \\ (\text{GF}^n \uparrow) & & ((\text{GF}^m (\text{GF}^n \uparrow)))x \end{array}$$

The principle is difficult to understand partly because it involves the use of inside-out functional designation. This formal device was first introduced in 1988. Despite the relative antiquity of the device, it still appears to be a difficult topic for many working within the framework (let alone outside of it).

The more usual way to work with representations within LFG is from the OUTSIDE-IN. That is, if there is a subject in a representation like (4), then it appears natural to want to write rules that are concerned with what features and properties may appear as the values of the subject, i.e., one is concerned with figuring out information about the subject: does it have an adjunct, what case is it, should it be allowed to topicalize, etc.? For the analyses of some linguistic phenomena, however, it is more natural to look at the representation from the “inside-out”. With respect to anaphora and reflexives (Dalrymple 1993), for example, the most natural treatment (within LFG at least) would assume that the subject-orientation of some reflexives, or the non-subject orientation of some pronouns should be checked by comparing information contained “inside” the entry for the reflexive or pronoun with information on the “outside” of the representation that the reflexive or pronoun is represented in. Hence the term “inside-out”.

It should now be clear why the formal device of inside-out functional designation is exactly right for Nordlinger’s approach: this device allows the case marker to look “outside” of itself and play an active role in the construction of grammatical function information such as SUBJ or OBJ. In the representation in (4), for example, the information CASE ERG is embedded inside the information that there is a SUBJ. This is as it should be because the ergative case is a property of the subject. Under Nordlinger’s approach, however, the information associated with the case marker also serves to indicate the presence of a grammatical function: in fact, she sees it as licensing the presence of the grammatical function. In order to be able to achieve this effect within LFG, the case marker needs to be able to look “outside” of itself and have some say as to the representation it is embedded in from the inside-out.

Another difficulty inherent in the formulation of the Principle of Morphological Composition is the composition bit. As is graphically illustrated in (7), the affix (e.g., the case marker) takes over the grammatical function specification of

the stem, thus creating the required levels of embedding in the representation. As a concrete example consider the construction of the adjective adjunct 'big' in (4) (note that this is also the example Nordlinger uses in order to illustrate how the principle works on p. 102). In this example, the principle instantiates to (8), thus providing exactly the right results.

$$(8) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} \text{Stem} & & \text{Aff} \\ \text{(ADJ } \uparrow \text{)} & ((\text{SUBJ } \uparrow \text{) } x) & \implies & \text{Stem} & & \text{Aff} \\ \text{(ADJ } \uparrow \text{)} & ((\text{SUBJ } \uparrow \text{) } x) & & \text{(ADJ } \uparrow \text{)} & ((\text{SUBJ } \uparrow \text{) } x) \end{array}$$

However, the type of "pattern-matching" needed in order to determine which grammatical functions should be substituted in where in fact goes beyond the formalism of LFG as currently defined. In the example above, the substitution is simple and obvious enough, but as soon as the examples become more complicated, the process of pattern-matching becomes more involved and goes beyond the mathematically rigorously circumscribed formalism of LFG. Nordlinger herself provides a good discussion of these issues in an appendix to the book.³

The comparative opaqueness of the Principle of Morphological Composition is a pity since the underlying intuition behind the Constructive Case approach is very easy to grasp and also appears to account for the observed facts very nicely. In my eyes, the situation is saved by the appendix in which Nordlinger works through the core examples within an alternative formalization that is within the bounds of the formalism as currently defined. I find this alternative to be much more appealing because it unpacks the work done by the Principle of Morphological Composition into several different steps, thus making it easier to understand what is happening.

In this alternative formalization, morphemes are put together in the old-fashioned way via the construction of sublexical trees. In this sublexical domain different types of stems and affixes are distinguished. Stems are assumed to be either of type N^{-1} or of type N . The former are bare stems which as yet have to combine with an affix to form a true N . The latter are N s which have already combined with an affix. Thus, a cycle of derivational and affixal morphology may be entered in a way that is familiar from theories such as Lexical Phonology (Kiparsky 1985). Furthermore, affixes are distinguished according to whether they are constructive or non-constructive. This distinction is also consonant with general morphological principles, which assume that not all affixes will exhibit the same kind of behavior.

Constructive affixes like the Warlpiri ergative require the presence of a particular grammatical function (SUBJ) via their inside-out designator ((SUBJ \uparrow)). Non-constructive affixes like the Warlpiri dual in (9b) mark such things as number and gender and just contribute information that is unified with the functional structure of the mother.

better to organize the various discussions pertaining to adjuncts into a separate chapter.

Section 3.3.5 deals with the notion of semantic case. In her pioneering work on Warlpiri, Simpson (1991) treated semantic case markers such as locatives on a par with prepositions in English. That is, the case markers were invested with predicative power and were analyzed as taking the nominal 'rock' in *pirli-ngka* (rock-LOC) as an object argument. In contrast, grammatical case markers such as the ergative were simply analyzed as feature carrying elements in the sense that they only contributed the information that a given nominal was ergative.

Given Nordlinger's Constructive Case approach, in which grammatical case markers such as the ergative play an active role in constructing the analysis of the clause (rather than merely contributing a feature), the adoption of an analogous role for semantic case markers seems logical. In order to illustrate the parallelism between the treatment of cases like the locative and cases like the ergative under Nordlinger's approach, sample (sub)lexical entries are shown in (10). The locative differs from the ergative in that it requires an adjunct in the representation where the ergative requires a subject. The locative also provides further some semantic information that makes up its locative nature (not shown here). Other than that, the two types of cases are treated the same under Nordlinger's approach.

- (10) a. ERG: (↑ CASE) = ERG
(SUBJ ↑)
b. LOC: (↑ CASE) = LOC
(ADJ ↑)

Chapter 3 presents a discussion of adjuncts which must be assumed to be adjoined at the verbal/clausal level: the locatives Nordlinger discusses serve to modify the verb. In Chapter 4, as part of the illustration of how the Principle of Morphological Composition works (see above), Nordlinger addresses the issue of adjuncts such as 'big' which serve to modify nominals as in the example 'big dog'. Under her approach, these two different types of adjuncts, as well as clause-level temporal adjuncts (Section 4.3), are treated the same. However, the discussion does not make at all clear whether syntactic differences between these different kinds of adjuncts exist. One would assume not, given the very flat c(onstituent)-structure that Nordlinger proposes throughout the book (and that appear to be very well motivated in the Australian context). In addition, Nordlinger makes the point that one advantage of her approach is that these different types of adjuncts can all be analyzed with one and the same mechanism, thus achieving greater generality and also explaining some hitherto mysterious uses of temporal adjuncts.

This very convincing treatment of the differing types of adjuncts takes a blow in Section 4.2.1.1, innocently labeled "Secondary Predication". Contrary to the

expectations engendered in the reader up to this point, it turns out that differing word orders go hand in hand with a difference in semantic interpretation. For example, the discontinuous adjunct in the Warlpiri clause in (11) has a different set of interpretive possibilities than the non-discontinuous adjunct in (12).

- (11) *kurdu-ngku ka wajili-pi-nyi wita-ngku*
 child-ERG PRES chase-NPST small-ERG
 a. 'The small child is chasing it.'
 b. 'The child is chasing it and she is small.'
- (12) *kurdu-ngku wita-ngku ka wajili-pi-nyi*
 child-ERG small-ERG PRES chase-NPST
 'The small child is chasing it.'

Simpson makes a syntactic distinction between (11) and (12) which allows her to capture the difference between these two types of readings. Nordlinger's approach as it stands up to this section cannot make such a distinction: both readings are collapsed. Nordlinger therefore proposes to postulate another type of adjunct, a "predicative adjunct", in order to be able to model secondary predication as in the (b.) reading of (11). However, because Nordlinger does not take advantage of the structural clue (continuous vs. discontinuous) in order to establish a difference between the two possibilities, it is not clear whether Nordlinger can really rule out the (b.) interpretation for sentences such as (12). Furthermore, the possibility of designating an ADJ-P(=predicative adjunct) must be encoded lexically in the entries for the case markers. This has the effect that while the Principle of Morphological Composition is allowed to retain its general applicability, the entries for the case markers become more messy. One could perhaps even go so far as to the level the charge that a generalization about the distribution of predicative adjuncts is being missed.

The essential question posed by the above discussion is whether Nordlinger's proposal of letting the case markers do all the work might not be too strong in the long run. A related issue is how the information as to grammatical functions provided by the case markers interacts with the argument structure of the verb. Presumably an ergative subject can only be licensed if the verb indeed subcategorizes for something like an agent argument. Nordlinger's book leaves open how the grammatical functions assigned by the case markers interact with the relationship between thematic roles and grammatical functions. Because Nordlinger's work does not address these issues, I suspect that the strong version of her constructive case theory will ultimately have to give way to a weaker version in which information contributed by the case markers interacts with other parts of the grammar, such as structural configuration and verbal subcategorization.

This observation is not meant as a deep criticism of Nordlinger's proposal. On the contrary, her very strong proposal for the role of case raises a number of

interesting issues from a very different perspective. It is the job of further research, perhaps by Nordlinger herself, perhaps by others, to push her proposal to its limits and investigate the consequences for other parts of the grammar. Working out the interactions between case, structural configurations, and verbal subcategorization is a challenging project in any language and Nordlinger's proposal provides a new impetus and some new insights.

It should also be pointed out that Nordlinger's analysis is flexible and strong enough to deal with issues other approaches find troublesome. One such issue is the interaction of number and case-stacking. Another is the anti-iconicity of Kayardild case-stacking. Iconicity in case-stacking describes a situation in which the order of the case affixes exactly mirrors the level of embedding in the clause. That this is not always the case in Kayardild is a potential problem for approaches which do not invest case markers with so much power in the role of case marking. Under Nordlinger's view of case, however, the issue can be dealt with quite elegantly (Section 5.3).

5. Tense/aspect/mood marking

The discussion dealing with the use of case for temporal, aspectual, or mood distinctions is limited to 9 pages in Nordlinger's book (Section 4.4). This topic is accorded its own section in this review due to my fascination with it and the comparative rarity of finding case systems associated with temporal, aspectual, or mood distinctions. Under Nordlinger's approach, in which case markers are invested with a great deal of power, an extension to dealing with case markers which contribute to the temporal, aspectual, and modal force of the clause follows very straightforwardly. By focusing on Kayardild, in which case is implicated in all three dimensions (as opposed to Pitta Pitta, in which only tense is implicated), Nordlinger guides the reader through a few examples so as to render the case marking system wholly straightforward and unsurprising.

This alone speaks for Nordlinger's approach. However, in comparison to the other discussions in the book, Nordlinger's approach feels more purely descriptive with respect to this phenomenon. That is, the mechanics of case-stacking in Kayardild in which "normal" case is interleaved with tense/aspect/mood does follow very straightforwardly, as does the contribution of information such as TENSE FUTURE to the f-structure representations. However, the analysis is not embedded in a theory of tense and aspect. Section 4.4 thus guides us through the mechanics of putting together the representations, but it does not help us much towards understanding what is really going on with this kind of case system. However, this dissatisfaction with the analysis is a function of the fact that the analysis would need to leave the morphosyntactic component of grammar and delve into very difficult (and often still unresolved) semantic issues in order to do this topic any real justice. Such a step cannot be expected of

Nordlinger's book, which is mostly concerned with morphosyntactic issues. Indeed, her work on the morphosyntactic issues with respect to case-stacking and the use of case in Australian languages must be seen as a necessary precursor for any intelligent work on the semantics of a tense/aspect/mood marking case system.

6. Summary

There are many further issues which I was not able to include within the confines of this review. The issue of head-marking vs. dependent-marking languages, for example, is addressed at some length by Nordlinger and she combines typological insights very nicely with her views on the interaction between morphology and syntax. Another issue is the question of how to analyze the distinctions made by case markers. Should one assume a tripartite distinction, as Nordlinger does for Wambaya even though there are only two overt case marking forms, namely *-ni* and a null marker (\emptyset), or should one only assume a binary opposition. This issue is addressed too briefly (pp. 77–78), in my opinion. On the other hand, Nordlinger addresses Simpson's analysis of Warlpiri at great length in order to justify her approach in opposition to Simpson's. For a reader who has a stake in Simpson's approach, this might be exactly the right strategy. For a reader like myself, however, who is willing to go through Nordlinger's proposals with an open mind, many of the passages addressing Simpson's analyses are too long and not interesting enough.

None of these critical remarks should be viewed as anything more than minor. If Nordlinger had spent the time addressing all the issues her readers found of interest in as much detail as possible, the book would have had to assume the proportions of a multi-volume tome and her central proposal with respect to the role of case markers at the morphology-syntax interface would have been buried and lost.

But perhaps it is useful to address at least one comment I have frequently come across, namely the concern that her formalization is in fact "too powerful" because it does not explicitly preclude or predict certain correlations and therefore does not contribute to an understanding of the simultaneous diversity and uniformity of the linguistic structures employed in the world's languages. A response to this detraction is perhaps found best in Nordlinger's own words (Nordlinger 2000):

While there is no doubt that the model of constructive case needs to be constrained in such a way that it does not allow linguistically impossible constructions, these constraints need to be empirically motivated. Until recently, many people may not have thought it possible for case morphology to do what it does in the Australian languages discussed in this paper. Thus, rather than running the risk of over-restricting the model at the outset, I have developed a model of case pow-

erful enough to account for a range of complex phenomena that have not been adequately incorporated into other formal theories of grammar. The constraints will come from future research applying this model to a wider range of data and developing an accompanying theory of possible case systems and functions.

In sum, Nordlinger's work is squarely within the Australian tradition of good and careful linguistics: Besides being well-referenced, the descriptive facts of a language are not only collected, but are also taken seriously and evaluated with respect to a theoretical position. In particular, the book represents one of very few works in which typological insights are combined with a rigorous formal syntactic underpinning. As such the book makes for a very rich and satisfactory reading and represents a solid contribution to the field.

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Notes

Correspondence address: Fachbereich Sprachwissenschaft, Fach D 186, Universität Konstanz, 78457 Konstanz, Germany; e-mail: miriam.butt@uni-konstanz.de

Thanks go to Frans Plank who not only instigated this review, but also provided comments, references, and objections. I have tried to do justice to his input – where I did not succeed, the fault is mine.

Abbreviations: Wambaya's four genders (masculine, feminine, vegetable, and neuter) are glossed as I, II, III and IV by Nordlinger. A stands for transitive subject, COBL for complementizing oblique, O for object, NFUT for non future tense, NPST for non past tense, MABL for modal ablative.

1. Although this conception is a popular one, it is one that does not appear to be quite correct (e.g., Steele 1978, Siewierska 1996, 1998). Instead, what appears to be true is that freedom in word order correlates with a powerful agreement or cross-reference system.
2. The view of morphology adopted is that of a separate morphological component whose job it is to form words (lexical items) that can then be fed into the syntax of a language. Note that this is not necessarily the standard view within formal syntax. In the theory of distributed morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993) or in the more recent assumptions of Chomsky (1995), morphological features are situated within the syntactic or phrase-structural component. The interaction between morphology and syntax as assumed by Nordlinger is presented in form of a very detailed diagram on p. 22 in Nordlinger's book.
3. The issue is not whether the LFG formalism **COULD** be changed to accommodate Nordlinger's ideas. The issue is whether it **SHOULD** be changed. Within LFG, the formalism generally lags behind the theoretical developments, implementing them once it is clear that the developments have indeed become a necessary and integral part of the theory. While this frustrates some primarily theoretically oriented

researchers, it has provided the theory with a remarkable stability and mathematic rigor.

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