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## **Irina Nikolaeva, ed. *Finiteness. Theoretical and empirical foundations***

**Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm**

**Published Online:** 2009-06-16 | **DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1515/FLIN.2009.006>

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## REVIEW ARTICLE

Irina Nikolaeva, ed. 2007. *Finiteness. Theoretical and empirical foundations*. (Oxford Linguistics). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. xiv + 537. ISBN 9780199213733 (hb); ISBN 9780199213740 (pb).

Reviewed by MARIA KOPTJEVSKAJA-TAMM, Stockholm University


The traditional notion of finiteness started as a morphological category involving a grouping of verb forms into two classes, FINITE vs. NONFINITE. Like many other traditional notions, finiteness and its related concepts have been “borrowed” from the Greco-Latin tradition for the purpose of describing certain grammatical phenomena in other languages. And, as the case often is with such traditional notions, this has resulted in various inconsistencies in the application of the finiteness label for different languages – and indeed, for a single language (cf. Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993 for an overview of the major problems). Starting with descriptive practices, only a minority of modern reference grammars of lesser-known languages use notions like “finite” at all. In modern linguistic theories, on the other hand, a variety of uses of finiteness are to be found, from those which consider it a key notion to those that question its very relevance. In addition, many phenomena that are related to finiteness are rarely discussed in this connection. The volume under review here is therefore an important and timely milestone in the research on finiteness, both in focusing on finiteness-related phenomena and their analysis and, even more crucially, in bringing together researchers with different background and with different research interests. The volume to a large extent stems from the Finiteness Conference of the Sonderforschungsbereich 471 that took place on 11–13 May 2001 at the University of Konstanz, organized by Irina Nikolaeva and Frans Plank.

The volume comprises an introduction by Irina Nikolaeva and eleven chapters, these divided into four main parts. The introduction provides an excellent summary of the main approaches to finiteness and of the book’s

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## About the article

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