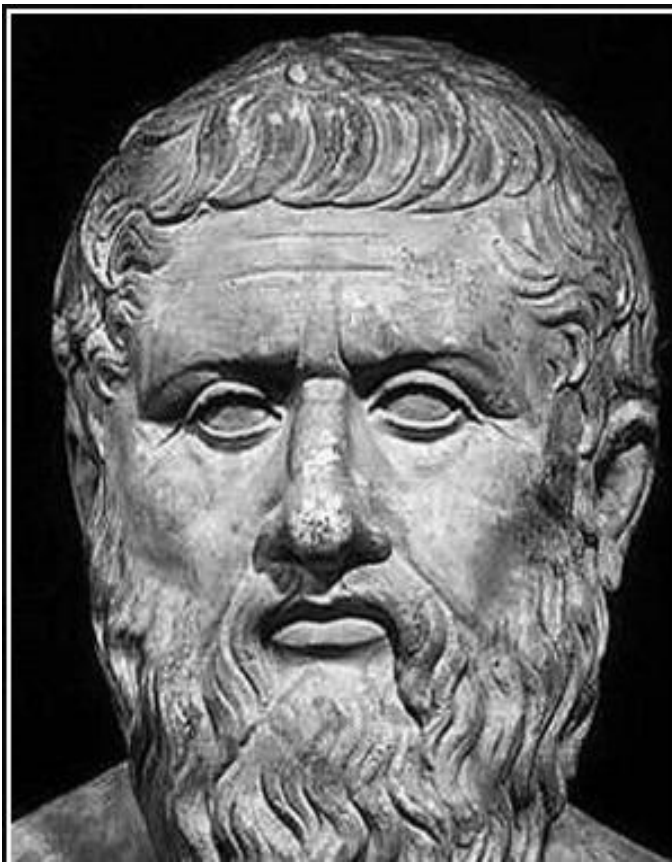- **Language Universals**
-Definition
-Why do language universals exist
-Importance of language universals

- **Two Major Approaches Taken to the Linguistic Universals**
-Universal Grammar
-Typological Universals
-Typological Universals vs. Universal Grammar

- **Language Typology**
-Language Typology and Typological Universals

- **Classification of Universals**
-Implicational vs. Non-implicational
-Absolute Universals vs. Tendencies

- **Markedness**

- **The Accessibility Hierarchy**

- **Types of Typological Universals**

- **Online Resources**

- **Critique**

- **Typological Universals & SLA**

- **Studies focusing on markedness**
-Markedness differential hypothesis (Eckman, 1977)
-Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan & Comrie, 1977)

- **Universal generalizations and Interlanguage Grammar**

- **Universals as Constraints on Interlanguage Grammar**

- **Universals as Strategies for Intervention in Interlanguage Grammar**

- **Functional Typology (Aspect Hypothesis)**

- **Falsifiability**

If particulars are to have meaning, there must be universals.

— Plato —

statements of what is possible and impossible in languages (Finegan, 2011).

LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS

What is common to all languages (Mc Laughlin, 1989)

Why do language universals exist?

Original Language Hypothesis
- ❖ all of the languages in the world derive historically from the same language

Universals and Perception
- ❖ languages are symptoms of how all humans perceive the world and conduct verbal interactions

Acquisition and Processing Explanations
- ❖ psychological explanations that have no physical basis.

Social Explanations
- ❖ basis on cognition and others reflect the fact that language is a social tool.

Finegan, 2011

Importance of Language Universals

Universals state what is possible in human language and what is not.

They help us to understand brain and principles that govern interpersonal communication in all cultures.

They help us to understand what in the human brain and social organization of everyday life enables people to communicate through language.

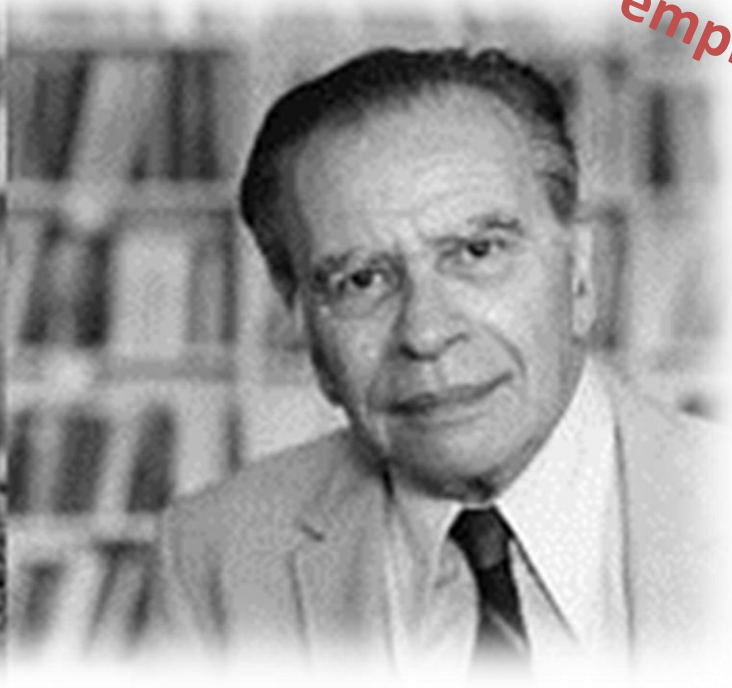Finegan, 2011

Two Major Approaches Taken to the Linguistic Universals

rationalism

empiricism

Noam Chomsky

Joseph H. Greenberg

LANGUAGE TYPOLOGY VS. UNIVERSAL GRAMMAR

Universal Grammar	Language Typology
❖ Theory driven	❖ Data driven
❖ Abstract principles that apply to all languages	❖ Less abstract
❖ Generally derived by deduction	❖ Based on readily observable data
❖ In-depth analysis of the properties of a language	❖ Examination of the surface features of a wide range of languages

(Van Patten & Benati, 2010; McLaughlin, 1989)

LANGUAGE TYPOLOGY

Greenberg and his followers → analyzing data from a representative sample of world's languages in order to extract universal patterns

To what extent different languages are structured according to universal principles

(McLaughlin, 1989, p. 83)

LANGUAGE TYPOLOGY

The study of patterns exhibited in languages worldwide (Gass & Selinker, 2008)

A field of study in which patterns that exist among the languages of the world are researched and the possible variation found in human languages described (McLaughlin, 1989)

The specification of language universals based on discerned patterns

The limits define the universals

LANGUAGE UNIVERSALS AND LANGUAGE TYPOLOGY

Language universals

Complementary to each other

Language typology

What is common to all languages

Variation that exists between languages

LANGUAGE TYPOLOGY

«In developing a typology, researchers examine actual representations of a particular parameter to determine whether the various logical possibilities are found across languages.» (McLaughlin, 1989, p. 83)

Universal: languages with VSO basic word order have prepositions (Greenberg, 1974)

1. **VSO with prepositions**
2. **VSO without prepositions**
3. **Non-VSO with prepositions**
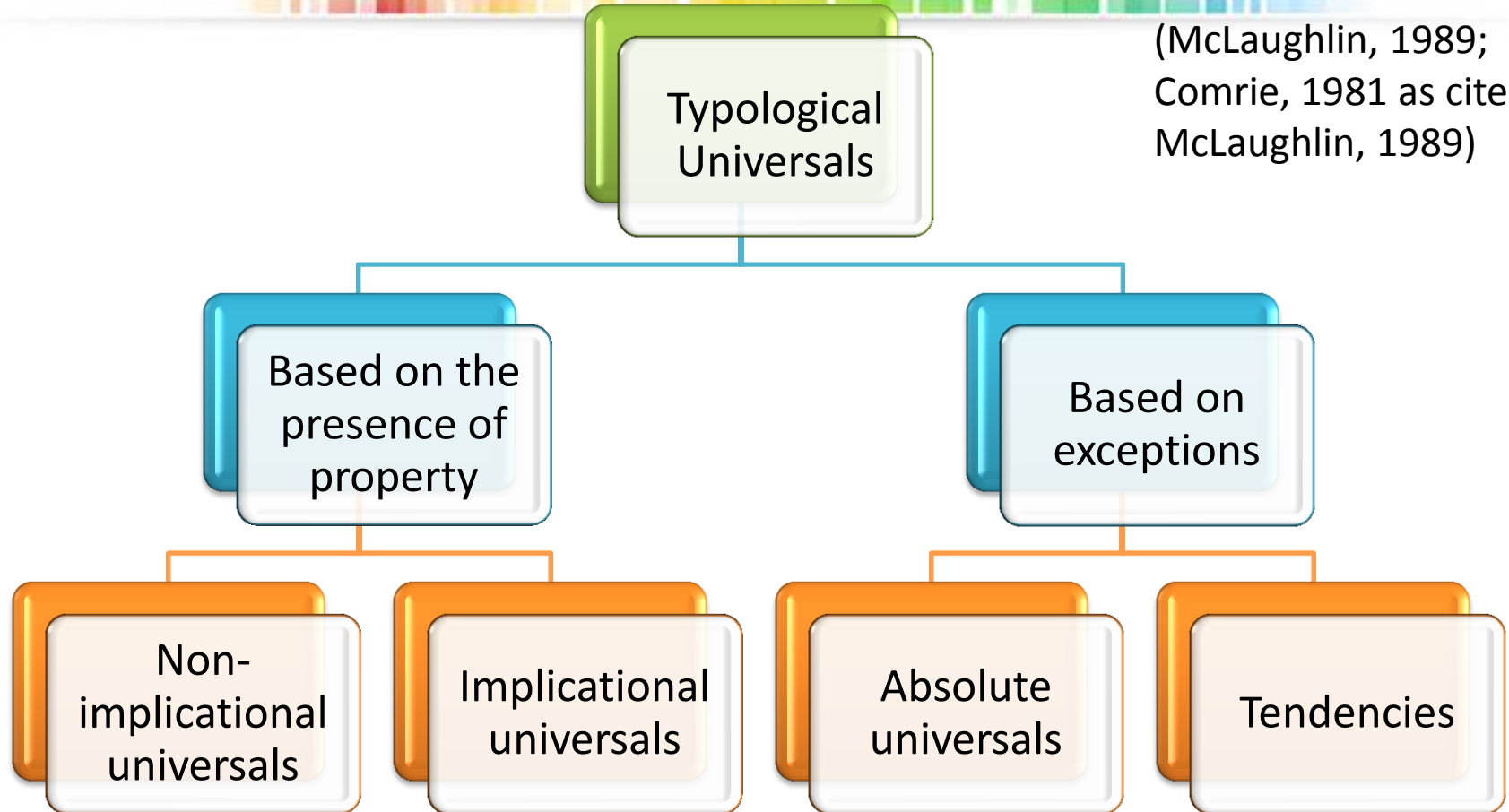4. **Non-VSO without prepositions**

	Prepositions	
VSO	Present	Absent
Present	(1) Welsh	(2) –
Not present	(3) English	(4) Japanese

Figure 4.1. The four logical possibilities of languages involving the presence or absence of VSO word order and the presence or absence of prepositions (based on Comrie 1981).

CLASSIFICATION OF UNIVERSALS

Typological Universals

(McLaughlin, 1989; Comrie, 1981 as cited in McLaughlin, 1989)

Based on the presence of property

Based on exceptions

Non-implicational universals

Implicational universals

Absolute universals

Tendencies

Non-implicational vs. Implicational Universals

Non-implicational

Present or absent in natural languages without reference to any other properties of the given langauge

Languages have vowels (Mc Laughlin, 1989, p. 84)

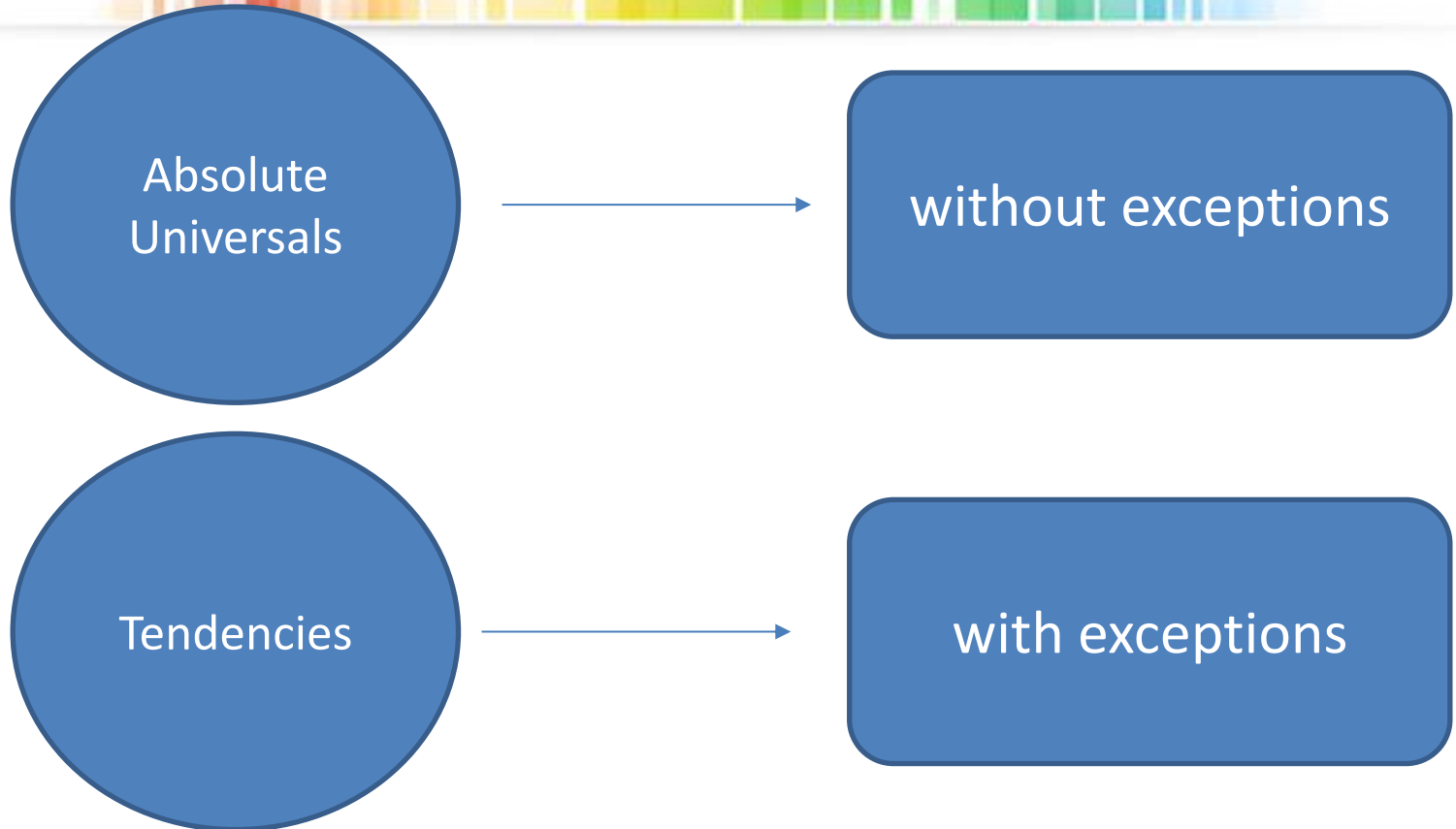# Non-implicational vs. Implicational Universals

implicational → Relate the presence of one property to the presence of some other property

In languages with prepositions, the genitive almost always follows the governing noun, while in languages with postpositions it almost always precedes nouns (Greenberg, 1963, p. 78)

Absolute Universals vs. Tendencies

Absolute Universals vs. Tendencies

|	Absolute universal/ Tendency	Non-implicational/ Implicational
All languages have vowels.	Absolute	Non-implicational
All languages have nasal consonants.	Tendency (some Salishan languages)	Non-implicational
If a language has a VSO as its basic word order, it has prepositions.	Absolute	Implicational
If a language has SOV basic word order, it will have postpositions.	Tendency (Persian is SOV with prepositions)	Implicational

McLaughlin, 1989

Markedness

❖An observation of the implicational relationship between categories (Mc Laughlin, 1989)

❖ A linguistic concept related to how common or typical a feature is (Van Patten & Benati, 2010)

Markedness

Implicational Relationships

A → B
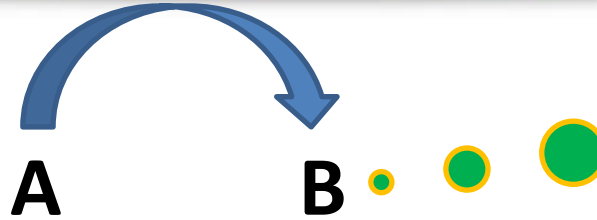
A is more marked than B

HOWEVER

However, it is not possible to define typological markedness on the basis of implicational relationships, because there are no two categories, A and B, that co-exist in the language and have an implicational relationship. In such cases, markedness is based on frequency (McLaughlin, 1989).

Markedness

Something that is more common or ubiquitous is considered less marked or unmarked, while something less common or less natural is considered marked or more marked.
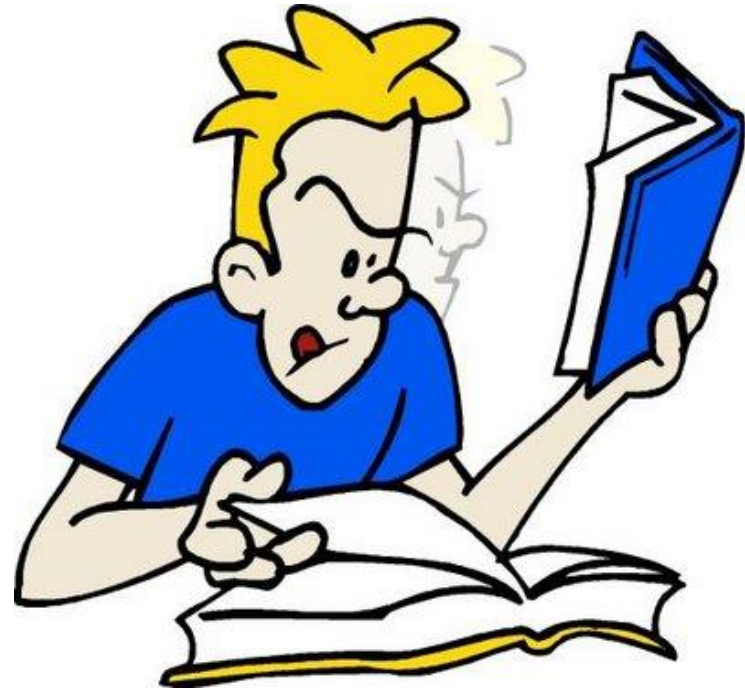
Something unmarked or less marked may be considered as the default form of the feature (Van Patten & Benati, 2010).

Markedness can be used to make crosslinguistic comparisons (what happens around the world with languages) or what happens within a single language

Markedness

Tom is the man who studies SLA.

Relative clause

Markedness

❖ **Subject relative clause:** Tom is the man who studied SLA

❖ **Object relative clause:** SLA is the subject that Tom studied

❖ **Indirect object relative clause:** Tom is the guy who I gave the SLA book to

❖ **Object of preposition clause:** Tom is the guy who I studied SLA with

❖ **Genitive clause:** Tom is the guy whose SLA book I borrowed

❖ **Object of comparison clause:** Tom is the guy who I am taller than

More marked

Markedness

- Markedness has been shown to be relevant to both L1 and L2 acquisition.

The Accessibility Hierarchy

- Keenan and Comrie (1977)

- An example of chain of implicational universals:

  if a language can relativize on position n, then necessarily it can also relativize on position n-1

McLaughlin, 1989

The Accessibility Hierarchy

1. If a language can relativize on a given preposition on the Accessibility Hierarchy, then it must be able to relativize on all positions higher on the hierarchy, because a position lower on the hierarchy cannot be more accessible then one higher.

2. For each position on the Accessibility Hierarchy, there is some possible human language that can relativize on that position but on no lower position, because each position on the hierarchy is thought to define a potential cut-off point.

McLaughlin, 1989

The Accessibility Hierarchy

- The Accessibility Hierarchy attempts to characterize the various types of relative clause construction among different languages.

- Researchers have argued that the construction of a noun phrase for relativization depends on its grammatical role.

Van Patten & Benati, 2010

The Accessibility Hierarchy

Subject (Ex: The player who played at the match . . .)

Direct object (Ex: The player who we saw . . .)

Indirect object (Ex: The player whom I spoke to . . .)

Object of preposition (Ex: The player who we talked about . . .)

Genitive (Ex: The player whose son played . . .)

Object of comparison (Ex: The player who I am taller than . . .)

Van Patten & Benati, 2010

TYPES OF TYPOLOGICAL UNIVERSALS

Word order typology	Transivity typology	Syntactic typology
Word classes	Voice typology	Morphological typology
Case-marking typology	Grammatical relations typology	Semantic typology
Person marking	Typology of tense, aspect and modality systems	Typology of phonological systems

Song, 2013

In languages with prepositions, the genitive almost always follows the governing noun, while in languages with postpositions it almost always precedes noun (Greenberg, 1963)

French

(7-1) le   chien de mon ami
      the dog   of my   friend

Russian

(7-2) sobaka moego   druga
      dog   my GEN friend GEN

Italian

(7-3) il   cane di mia madre
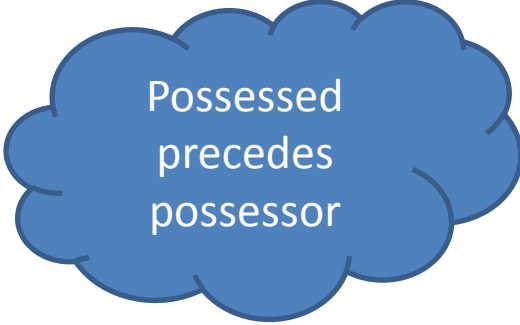   the dog of my mother

Turkish

(7-4) (From Jannedy, Poletto, and Weldon, 1994, p. 153)

   a   deniz = an ocean

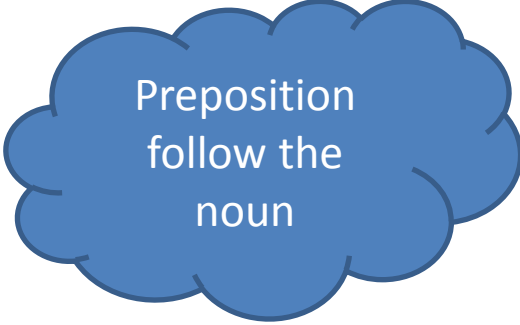   b   denize = to an ocean

   c   denizin = of an ocean

Word order typology

- The leg of the table
- My friend's dog

Possessed precedes possessor

Preposition follow the noun

IMPLICATIONAL TENDENCY

Word order typology

- Languages with dominant verb-subject-object (VSO) order are always prepositional (Greenberg, 1963)

lladdwyd   y   dyn gan y   ddraig.

killed-passivethe man by the dragon

"The man was killed by the dragon."

Implicational absolute universal

- World Atlas of Language Structures

  http://wals.info/

- The Language Index

  https://languageindex.online.uni-marburg.de/

CRITIQUE

- Wide range of languages
- Representative sample of human languages -> how is one to know that the sample is sufficiently large and varied to include examples of all the kinds of structures found in human languages?

- Even if the sample could be shown to be representative, there remains the problem of demonstrating the empirical validity of putative linguistic universals

- The Notion of tendency

- It is undeniable that typology has been able to produce theoretical tools in the form of implicational generalizations, which provide hypotheses for the description of learner languages (Ramat, 2009)