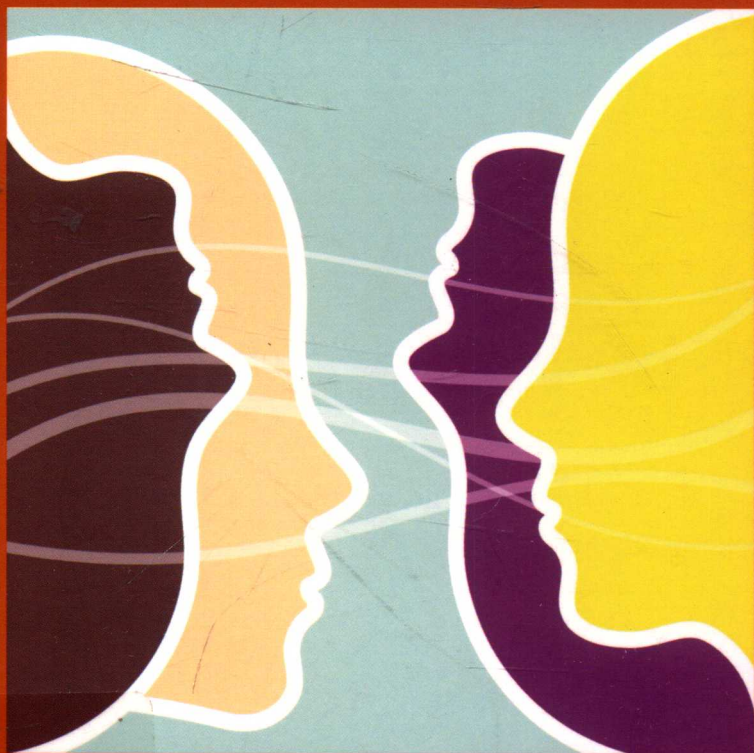


《語言暨語言學》專刊系列之五十二  
LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS MONOGRAPH SERIES 52

# 語言的興衰

## The Rise and Fall of Languages

R.M.W. Dixon 原著  
郭必之 翻譯



中央研究院 語言學研究所  
Institute of Linguistics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan  
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THE RISE AND FALL OF LANGUAGES by ROBERT M. W. DIXON

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by R.M.W. Dixon

translated by Bit-Chee Kwok

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# 語言的興衰

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—— 郭必之 翻譯

出版：中央研究院語言學研究所

發行：中央研究院語言學研究所

115 台北市 南港區 研究院路 2 段 128 號

<http://www.ling.sinica.edu.tw>

版權所有 翻印必究

印刷：曦望美工設計社

初版：中華民國一〇三年一月[January 2014]

定價：新台幣500元／US\$30

ISBN: 978-986-04-0229-2 (平裝)

GPN: 1010300403

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**Preface for translation of  
*The Rise and Fall of Languages*  
in traditional Chinese characters**

R.M.W. Dixon

*Language and Culture Research Centre  
James Cook University Australia*

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this Chinese translation of my long essay *The rise and fall of languages* in traditional Chinese characters.

*The rise and fall of languages* was published in England by Cambridge University Press in December 1997. It was received with acclaim across the linguistic world. Following are extracts from some of the reviews.

**—Review by Martin Haspelmath in *Linguistics* 36.1001-6, 1998**

In this short book, Dixon pursues two separate goals. First, the book can serve as an excellent introduction to the general principles and some current issues concerning genetic and areal relationships between languages ... The second goal is the more interesting one for comparative linguists ... Dixon challenges the widely-held belief that the family-tree model ... should be applied in the same way everywhere in the world .... I want to emphasise that I regard this aspect of Dixon's work as very successful.

**—Review by Colin Renfrew in *Cambridge Archaeology*, Vol 8 No 2, October 1998**

It is certainly the most refreshing and stimulating work in the field of historical linguistics which I (as an admitted outsider to the discipline) have had the pleasure of reading.

**—Review article by Robert Orr, in *Diachronica* 16.123-57, 1999**

Dixon's new book is ground-breaking work in the true sense of the term ... In sum *The rise and fall of languages* is an extremely valuable work, which

will probably be extensively read and debated over the next few years (it might even be suggested that a conference should be devoted to it).

—**Book notice by Alan S. Kaye in *Language* 75:400-1, 1999**

This book contains many new and provocative ideas ... This is a stimulating work—thought-provoking and likely to stir up emotions and provoke debate ... I recommend this publication be read by all linguists no matter what their fields of interest or specialisation are. D's style is witty and to the point, but more relevantly, his previous achievements qualify him to serve as the ideal spokesman on these most significant and sensitive issues, as linguistics enters the new millennium.

—**Review by Robert L. Miller, *International Journal of American Linguistics* 65:373-5, 1999**

In this short book, touching on every major principle of historical linguistics and with examples drawn from every continent and islands in the Pacific, Dixon has written a highly readable and persuasive account of how the punctuated equilibrium model may be applied to the study of historical linguistics. It would be a splendid choice as a supplementary text for a course devoted to that subject as well as for the general reader interested in language.

The English edition of *The rise and fall of languages* has been reprinted many times. A translation into Japanese, by Midori Osumi, *Gengo no kobo*, was published by Iwanami Shoten in Tokyo in 2001 and is now being reprinted. A translation into Arabic is in progress.

Essentially, this book does three things:

- (1) It provides an introduction to the proper methodology of comparative-historical linguistics.
- (2) It puts forward an innovative idea, the 'punctuated equilibrium' model for the development of language during the past 100,000 years or more.
- (3) It emphasises the major task facing linguists today. Of the 4,000 or so languages currently in use across the world, most are spoken by only a

few thousand or only a few hundred speakers. All are being affected by globalisation. Because of this, the great majority will cease to be spoken within the next hundred years. It is of the utmost importance that trained linguists should undertake extensive immersion field-work and provide comprehensive descriptions of these languages before it is too late to do so. These descriptions should be in terms of what has come to be called 'basic linguistic theory', the model which has been used for almost all good grammatical descriptions over the past few decades.

The main thrust of the book is the idea of 'punctuated equilibrium'. We can only reconstruct past stages of languages back to about 6,000 or 8,000 years ago, yet human-kind must have used language for at least 100,000 years. I suggest that for long periods—lasting for perhaps tens of thousands of years—the languages in a given geographical area would have been in a state of equilibrium. Linguistic traits would have diffused from language to language across all or part of this equilibrium area. The state of equilibrium may be 'punctuated' (by any one of a number of factors, discussed in Chapter 6), and languages will then split and spread out. It is during a period of punctuation (which may only last for a few hundred years) that a 'family tree' model of genetic relationship between languages will be appropriate. Once the period of punctuation is completed, a new era of equilibrium will come into being, with the original family-tree-type relationships gradually being obscured.

This idea of 'punctuated equilibrium' emerged from thirty years of trying to understand the linguistic scene concerning the Aboriginal languages of Australia. I spent time investigating a 'family tree' model of relationship but it does not stand up to intensive scrutiny. (The 'Pama-Nyungan' family tree idea has been talked about a lot, but no detailed scientific justification has been provided for it.) It was from study of this problem that the 'punctuated equilibrium' idea came. *The rise and fall of languages* was essentially a prolegomenon for a long monograph which was the culmination of many decades of work, *Australian languages, their nature and development*, published in England by Cambridge University Press in 2002, and then reissued in paperback in 2007. This provides detailed exemplification for many of the ideas put forward in *The rise and fall of languages*, with many maps showing the diffusion of linguistic features



across the 250 indigenous languages of Australia (each feature having a slightly different region of occurrence).

The ‘punctuated equilibrium’ model is meant to apply to long-term language development. Some people have tried to apply it to what has happened in their area of language study over a period of just a few decades. This is not where it would be applicable.

At the end of Chapter 7, I mention the relationship between Tibeto-Burman (a well-established language family) and Sinitic (another well-established family). Evidence has been provided that Tibeto-Burman and Sinitic do have a genetic relationship, but it seems to be of a rather special nature. Perhaps the ideas in my book could assist scholars to clarify the nature of this relationship, and also to further explain the genetic and areal developments of Sinitic languages.

Since 1994 I have been working in close collaboration with Professor Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald on the main tasks of modern linguistics—providing comprehensive descriptions of previously undescribed languages, and pursuing typological enquiry (on an inductive basis) into the nature of human languages. We have, between us, published the following grammars:

- 1972. R.M.W. Dixon. *The Dyirbal language of North Queensland*. Cambridge University Press. xiv, 420 pp. Paperback edition 1976.
- 1977. R.M.W. Dixon. *A grammar of Yidjñ*. Cambridge University Press. xxiii, 563 pp.
- 1988. R.M.W. Dixon. *A grammar of Boumaa Fijian*. University of Chicago Press. xix, 375 pp.
- 2003. Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald. *A grammar of Tariana, from northwest Amazonia*. Cambridge University Press. xxiv, 705 pp. Paperback edition 2006.
- 2004. R.M.W. Dixon. *The Jarawara language of southern Amazonia*. Oxford University Press. xxi, 636 pp.
- 2008. Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald. *The Manambu language of East Sepik, Papua New Guinea*. Oxford University Press. xxvi, 702 pp.



Our students have also published grammars of several dozen languages. And there have been dictionaries and text collections.

In addition, I have published two edition of a grammar of my native language:

- 1991. *A new approach to English grammar, on semantic principles*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. xvi, 398 pp. Reprinted six times. Korean translation published in 1995.
- 2005. *A semantic approach to English grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. xvii, 543 pp. [Revised and enlarged from 1991 edition, with three chapters added.]

Professor Aikhenvald and I have published the following monographs on typological topics.

- 1994. R.M.W. Dixon. *Ergativity*. Cambridge University Press. xxii, 271 pp. Reprinted many times.
- 2000. Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald. *Classifiers: a typology of noun classification devices*. Oxford University Press. xxvi, 535 pp. Paperback edition 2003.
- 2004. Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald. *Evidentiality*. Oxford University Press. xxvii, 452 pp. Paperback edition 2006.
- 2010. Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald. *Imperatives and commands*. Oxford University Press. xx, 500 pp. Paperback edition 2012.

We have organised nine International Workshops on important linguistic topics. Each volume includes an introductory chapter which provides a typological overview and then a dozen or so chapters each dealing with how the topic is expressed in a language on which the chapter author has done in-depth field-work and published a grammar.

— Edited by R.M.W. Dixon and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald

- 2000. *Changing valency: case studies in transitivity*. Cambridge University Press. xvi, 413 pp.

- 2002. *Word: a cross-linguistic typology*. Cambridge University Press. xiii, 290 pp. Paperback edition 2007.
- 2004. *Adjective classes: a cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford University Press. xxii, 370 pp. Paperback edition 2006.
- 2006. *Complementation: a cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford University Press. xvi, 288 pp. Paperback edition 2008.
- Due in mid 2009. *The semantics of clause linking: a cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford University Press.

— Edited by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald and R.M.W. Dixon

- 2001. *Areal diffusion and genetic inheritance: problems in comparative linguistics*. Oxford University Press. xvi, 453 pp. Paperback edition 2006.
- 2003. *Studies in evidentiality*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. xiv, 347 pp.
- 2006. *Serial verb constructions: a cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford University Press. xxxiv, 369 pp. Paperback edition 2007.
- 2006. *Grammars in contact: a cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford University Press. xx, 355 pp. Paperback edition 2008.
- 2012. *Possession and ownership: a cross-linguistic typology*. Oxford University Press, xxii, 319 pp.

For the past twelve years, I have been writing a three-volume work on basic linguistic theory, now published by Oxford University Press:

- 2010. *Basic linguistic theory*, Volume 1, *Methodology*. Consists of nine chapters—1 Basics; 2 Principles to follow; 3 Grammar overview; 4 Analysis, argumentation and explanation; 5 Terminology; 6 Doing typology; 7 Phonology; 8 Lexicon; 9 Field linguistics. xvi, 381 pp.
- 2010. *Basic linguistic theory*, Volume 2, *Grammatical topics*. Also consists of 9 chapters—10 Grammatical word and phonological word; 11 Distinguishing noun and verb; 12 The adjective class; 13 Transitivity; 14 Copula clauses and verbless clauses; 15 Pronouns and demonstratives; 16 Possession; 17 Relative clause constructions; 18 Complement clauses and complementation strategies. xvii, 489 pp.

- 2012. *Basic linguistic theory*, Volume 3, *Further grammatical topics*, Consists of ten chapters—19 Non-spatial setting (tense, aspect, modality, etc.); 20 Number systems; 21 Negation; 22 Reflexive and reciprocal constructions; 23 Pivots, passives, and antipassives; 24 Causatives; 25 Applicatives; 26 Comparative constructions; 27 Questions; 28 Language and the world: explanation now and needed. xx, 547 pp.

Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald is writing a book called *The art of grammar*, which is a guide to how to write grammars. It will complement my *Basic linguistic theory* volumes.

My academic autobiography, called *I am a linguist*, was published by Brill in 2011.

Finally, I should draw attention to an evil which has reared its head during the time since *The rise and fall of languages* was first published. This is excessive use of electronic devices. Some people say that one does not have to write books anymore but instead put ‘interactive materials’ (audio recordings and videos) on the internet. This is misguided. There is no substitute for the traditional means of providing a comprehensive analytical description of a language—a grammar, a volume of texts, and a dictionary/thesaurus, all produced as long-lasting books.

My monograph *The Jarawara language of southern Amazonia* won the Linguistic Society of America’s Leonard Bloomfield Award (2006) for the best book published worldwide across all fields of linguistics during a two-year period. In the speech accepting this award I said:

A word addressed to junior colleagues who think that it will improve their work to immerse it in the latest electronic technology. Don’t. Because it won’t. I worked on the Jarawara grammar as I did on previous grammars of Dyirbal, of Yidj, of Boumaa Fijian (and of English). I used pencil, pen and spiral-bound notebooks, plus a couple of good-quality tape recorders. No video camera (to have employed one would have compromised my role in the community). No lap-top. No shoebox or anything

of that nature. And also no grammatical elicitation from the *lingua franca*.

Work centered on the recording and analysis of texts, and on studying language use in an immersion fieldwork situation. Every ounce of my time and energy and brain-power went into writing down, and copying out, and learning, and analysing the language, within the long-established framework of basic linguistic theory (in terms of which almost all grammars have been written).

Chinese is the most important language in the world today. It is a great honour that my book should be translated into traditional characters. I offer my best wishes in the expectation that future work of Chinese-speaking linguists in Taiwan (and also in mainland China) should be thoughtful, fruitful and rewarding.

## 《語言的興衰》繁體中文版序

羅伯特·迪克森

詹姆士庫克大學 語言及文化研究中心

我很高興為我的長文《語言的興衰》繁體中譯版作介紹。

《語言的興衰》1997年12月在英國由劍橋大學出版社印行。它受到語言學界的讚許。以下是其中一些評論的摘要：

—Martin Haspelmath 在 *Linguistics* 36 (1998):1001-6 中的評論：

迪克森在這本小書中追尋兩個目標。第一，這本書可以作一個出色的導論，介紹語言之間的發生學關係和區域關係中的普遍原則及一些當前問題……第二個目標，對於比較語言學家來說會更感興趣……迪克森挑戰一個得到廣泛支持的想法，即：譜系樹模式……應該以相同的方式應用到世界上所有地方去……需要強調：我認為迪克森在這方面做得十分成功。

—Colin Renfrew 在 *Cambridge Archaeology* Vol. 8 No. 2 (1998年10月) 的評論：

在歷史語言學的領域中，這肯定是最能使人耳目一新及興奮的作品。我作為這個學科的門外漢也覺得趣味盎然。

—Robert Orr 在 *Diachronica* 16 (1999):123-57 上的評論：

確確實實地，迪克森的新書是個開創性的作品……簡言之，《語言的興衰》是一本非常珍貴的作品，它可能會在之後數年被廣泛閱讀和討論（甚至可以專門為它成立一個研討會）。

—Alan S. Kaye 在 *Language* 75 (1999): 400-1 中的書訊：

這本書有不少新鮮刺激的觀點……這是一本使人興奮的作品——令人

深思、可能會激發情緒和爭論。我建議不論是從事哪個專業的語言學家都讀讀這本書。迪克森此書的風格充滿機智，而更有關係的是，他以前的成就，使他有足夠的資格，在語言學走進新紀元時成為這些最重要、也最敏感課題理想的發言人。

—Robert L. Miller 在 *International Journal of American Linguistics* 65 (1999):373-5 上的評論：

迪克森寫了本可讀性高、說服力強的小書，討論疾變平衡模式如何應用到歷史語言學的研究上，書中談及歷史語言學中所有主要的原則，例子則來自各大洲和太平洋島嶼。無論是修習歷史語言學課程的人、抑或是對語言感興趣的讀者，此書都是極佳的補充讀物。

《語言的興衰》的英文版曾經多次重印。大角翠的日譯本《言語の興亡》2001年由岩波書店出版，現正重印。阿拉伯語的翻譯本正在進行中。

本書實質上有三件工作：

(1) 介紹比較歷史語言學正當的方法學。

(2) 提出「疾變平衡」模式這個創新的意念，用以解釋語言在過去十萬年甚至更長一段時間的發展。

(3) 強調現今語言學家所面臨的主要任務。在目前世界約四千種的語言中，大部分只有數萬、甚至只有數百名使用者。它們全都受到全球化的影響。正因如此，絕大多數的語言會在未來數百年間消失。現在最重要的事情，是受過訓練的語言學家必須對那些語言進行大規模沈浸式的田野調查，並提供綜合描述，以免太遲根本做不了。那些描述應該在「基本語言學理論」的框架內進行，這是過去數十年幾乎所有上佳語法描述採用的框架。

這本書的要點是「疾變平衡」這個想法。我們只能為語言的過去擬構六千年到八千年的歷史，但人類肯定至少在十萬年前就已經懂得

使用語言。我認為在一段長時間裡（可能長達數萬年）某個地理區域的語言會處於平衡狀態。在整個平衡區域或區域的局部之內，語言特徵會由一種語言擴散到另一種語言去。平衡狀態可能會遭受「疾變」（可由眾多因素的其中一個引發，見第六章的討論），那時候語言會分裂並會散開。語言發生學關係的「譜系樹」模式，只有在疾變期才適用，而疾變期可能只會維持數百年。當疾變期結束，新一次的平衡期便會來臨，原來的譜系樹關係也會慢慢變得模糊不清。

「疾變平衡」這個想法，源於我用了三十年嘗試理解澳洲原住民的語言情況。我花了不少時間研究那些語言之間的「譜系樹」關係，但在嚴格的檢驗下都站不住腳（「帕馬-恩永甘」的譜系樹已經進行過很多討論，但從沒有提供詳細的科學論證）。「疾變平衡」的想法正是由這個問題的研究而來的。《語言的興衰》實質上是《澳洲語言的性質和發展》(*Australian Languages, Their Nature and Development*) 這部大書的緒論。此書累積了數十年功夫，2002 年在英國由劍橋大學出版社印行，2007 年發行平裝本。它為《語言的興衰》裡許多意見提供了詳細的例證，並且用地圖顯示不同的語言特徵在澳洲二百五十種原住民語言中的擴散（每種特徵出現的區域都有些微不同）。

「疾變平衡」模式可以說是適用於語言長期的發展。有人嘗試把它應用到自己所研究的語言幾十年間的變化。那些個案「疾變平衡」模式並不合用。

在第七章完結的部分，我提到藏緬語（一個已為大家接受的語族）和漢語（另一個被大家接受的語族）的關係。有證據支持藏緬語和漢語具有發生學關係，但性質看來有點特殊。也許這本書的意見會幫助學者釐清這種關係的性質，以及進一步解釋漢語在發生學和區域上的發展。

自 1994 年起我和 Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald 教授在現代語言學的主要工作上有着緊密的合作關係——為先前沒有記錄的語言提供綜合性的描述、以及為人類語言的性質進行類型學調查（以歸納作為準則）。我們出版了以下語法書：



- Dixon, R.M.W. 1972. 《昆士蘭北部的 Dyirbal 語》(*The Dyirbal Language of North Queensland*)。劍橋大學出版社。xiv, 420 頁。平裝本, 1976。
- Dixon, R.M.W. 1977. 《Yidj 語語法》(*A Grammar of Yidj*)。劍橋大學出版社。xxiii, 563 頁。
- Dixon, R.M.W. 1988. 《Boumaa 斐濟語語法》(*A Grammar of Boumaa Fijian*)。芝加哥大學出版社。xix, 375 頁。
- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2003. 《西北亞馬遜地區 Tariana 語語法》(*A Grammar of Tariana, from Northwest Amazonia*)。劍橋大學出版社。xxiv, 705 頁。平裝本, 2006。
- Dixon, R.M.W. 2004. 《南亞馬遜地區 Jarawara 語語法》(*The Jarawara Language of Southern Amazonia*)。牛津大學出版社。xxi, 636 頁。
- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2008. 《巴布亞新幾內亞東塞皮克省的 Manambu 語》(*The Manambu Language of East Sepik, Papua New Guinea*)。牛津大學出版社。xxvi, 702 頁。

我們的學生也曾經出版過許多語言的語法書，還有詞典和語料彙編。

此外，我出版了自己母語語法研究的兩個版本：

- Dixon, R.M.W. 1991. 《以語義學原則為基礎的英語語法新探》(*A New Approach to English Grammar, on Semantic Principles*)。Clarendon 出版社。xvi, 398 頁。六次重印，韓語的翻譯本在 1995 年出版。
- Dixon, R.M.W. 2005. 《以語義學為導向的英語語法》(*A Semantic Approach to English Grammar*)。牛津大學出版社。xvii, 543 頁。  
(由 1991 年版修訂和擴充而來，增加了三章。)

Aikhenvald 教授和我出版了以下和類型學課題相關的專書：

- Dixon, R.M.W. 1994. 《作格》(*Ergative*)。劍橋大學出版社。xxii, 271 頁。多次重印。
- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2000. 《量詞：名詞分類手法的類型學》(*Classifiers: A Typology of Noun Classification Devices*)。牛津大學出版社。xxvi, 535 頁。平裝本, 2003。
- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2004. 《示證》(*Evidentiality*)。牛津大學出版社。xxvii, 452 頁。平裝本, 2006。
- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2010. 《祈使和命令》(*Imperatives and Command*)。牛津大學出版社。xx, 500 頁。平裝本, 2012。

我們就語言學上一些重大的課題組織過九次國際性的工作坊，並且出版了專書。每一本都有一篇提供類型學概覽的介紹性章節，之後有十數章討論相關課題在某些語言中的表現。那些語言，作者都進行過深入的田野調查，並且出版過語法書。

- Dixon, R.M.W. and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds.) 2000. 《變動中的配價：及物性的個案研究》(*Changing Valency: Case Studies in Transitivity*)。劍橋大學出版社。xvi, 413 頁。
- Dixon, R.M.W. and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds.) 2002. 《詞：跨語言的類型學》(*Word: A Cross-Linguistic Typology*)。劍橋大學出版社。xiii, 290 頁。平裝本, 2007。
- Dixon, R.M.W. and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds.) 2004. 《形容詞詞類：跨語言的類型學》(*Adjective Classes: A Cross-Linguistic Typology*)。牛津大學出版社。xxii, 370 頁。平裝本, 2006。
- Dixon, R.M.W. and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds.) 2006. 《補足：跨語言的類型學》(*Complementation: A Cross-Linguistic Typology*)。牛津大學出版社。xvi, 288 頁。平裝本, 2008。
- Dixon, R.M.W. and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds.) 2009. 《子句聯繫的