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Ekaterina Bobyleva

The development of the nominal
domain in creole languages

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A comparative-typological approach

Since the early twentieth century, creole studies have been concerned with the question of how these new languages came into being, whether they form a separate class, and whether the study of these languages enhances our understanding of language change and its relation to human knowledge of language. The present study contributes to the discussion on the issue of creole genesis by investigating the development of the nominal domain in a variety of creole languages. It offers a thorough examination of the etymology, morpho-syntactic and discourse-semantic properties of creole nominal markers. Special emphasis is put on the distribution and interpretation of bare (unmarked) nominal expressions – a feature that is considered distinctive of creoles.

The properties of creole nominal expressions are considered from a comparative-typological perspective: the study is carried out on fifteen creoles contrasted to their European superstrates and their non-European substrates. In addition to superstrate and substrate influence, the study investigates the role of the universals of second language acquisition, grammaticalization, as well as the universal principles of reference marking and discourse organization in the development of the creole nominal domain. The findings of the study pose challenges for a number of contemporarily prominent views on creole genesis as well as for general theories of the structural organization and interpretation of nominal expressions such as the DP hypothesis.

This study is particularly relevant to linguists interested in language contact, creole studies, language change, language acquisition, and syntax, semantics, and typology of nominal expressions.

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