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Linguistic Comparison and Comparability in Creolistics: Implications for Genesis

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Creolists who are interested in creole genesis have been engaged in language comparison for several decades, as they compare linguistic features in creoles to similar features in the lexifiers and putative substrate languages. However, very few of these researchers would see themselves as being engaged in contrastive linguistics although comparing and contrasting linguistic features across specific languages are crucial to their work. This paper aims to cast the familiar task(s) of the creolist concerned with genesis in the framework of contrastive linguistics.

Given that the search for the contributing languages/structures/features is basically a work of micro-typology, the paper takes up Haspelmath's (2007, 2010, 2012) suggestion that typology is best served by using COMPARATIVE CONCEPTS (which become the *tertia comparationis*) instead of assuming that features/categories behave the same in all languages. Focussing on *property concepts* (known traditionally as *adjectives*), the paper will identify some of the pitfalls encountered in the current literature, and then go on to compare the behaviour of property concepts in Jamaican (Creole) with their behaviour in English, Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Efik, and Kikongo. The latter will be done by comparing the morphological and syntactic behaviour of property concepts in these languages instead of setting out to look for and compare adjectives (itself a problematic concept (cf. Dixon 1982).

References

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