

Peter Bakker, Aymeric Daval-Markussen, Mikael Parkvall & Ingo Plag

Creoles are typologically distinct from non-creoles: evidence from statistical and computational modeling

In creolist circles, there has been a long-standing debate whether creoles differ structurally from non-creole languages and thus would form a special class of languages with specific typological properties. This debate about the typological status of creole languages has severely suffered from a lack of systematic empirical study. This paper presents large-scale empirical investigations of the status of creole languages as a typological class on the basis of different and well-balanced samples of creole and non-creole languages. Using statistical modeling (multiple regression) and recently developed computational tools of quantitative typology (phylogenetic trees and networks), this paper provides robust evidence that creoles indeed form a structurally distinguishable subgroup within the world's languages. The findings thus seriously challenge approaches that hold that creole languages are structurally indistinguishable from non-creole languages.