The Creole prototype and the problem of complexity

Speaker

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In recent years, the notion of complexity has caught the attention of linguists who have attempted to use it to gain insights on linguistic structure and language evolution. In the area of Creole studies, scholars have asked themselves whether languages can be compared in terms of complexity, and, if so, whether this may reveal something about the way in which a language evolved. In this talk I argue that the attempts we have seen to date demonstrate that (a) languages as systems cannot be compared in terms of complexity, and that (b) any claim that a language - or a subset of its grammar - is more or less complex than another, is methodologically and factually false. I conclude by considering what novel approaches we might take to investigate languages as complex systems.

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