

## **English is not normal: A case for English as a semi-creole Germanic**

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It is traditionally assumed that arguments that English is a creole language (Bailey & Maroldt 1977) have been soundly dismissed. Subsequent work has proposed that English's relatively light inflectional apparatus in comparison to that of other Germanic languages is due to extensive second-language acquisition by Scandinavians (McWhorter 2002, Miller 2012), of a degree much lesser than that typical in creole languages.

In this presentation I will propose a taxonomic approach to language contact that places languages on a grid according to 1) their degree of structural simplification from source languages and 2) the extent of their hybridization with other languages. Under this kind of taxonomy, Afrikaans has long been considered a semi-creole language analogously to Reunionnais French Creole and Singaporean English.

I will argue that according to this metric, English too qualifies as a semi-creole. It has lost more of the Proto-Germanic inheritance than Afrikaans, and proposals that Celtic languages deeply influenced English grammar reveal that English is a more hybridized language than Afrikaans. This approach will complement increasingly influential arguments that linguists beware of designating languages as "creoles" and "contact languages" for *sociological* rather than scientific reasons. However, the presentation will also address claims (Mufwene 2001, DeGraff 2001) that creoles themselves do not constitute an identifiable kind of language, with the goal of justifying the situation of English as a semi-creole but not a creole *per se*.