

Contact, Clause Structure, and Verb Series: A view into feature recombination and syntactic change

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In this talk, I reflect on the emergence of grammar out of contact, which allows acquisition in all contexts whether monolingual or multilingual. Under this view, contact between speaker/signer-learners creates a unique situation in which syntactic properties underlying clause structure emerge, as a result of feature recombination. The latter is an innate human cognitive capacity which allows speaker/signer-learners to select specific linguistic features from the inputs they are exposed to and recombine them into new syntactic variants. This process, I show, leads to hybrid grammars which drive language change. This demonstration is based on the analysis of verb series in Gungbe and Haitian Creole.