# Areal perspectives on Afro-European Creole languages

**Kofi Yakpo** (University of Hongkong & HU Berlin)
Digital colloquium on African linguistics and languages, 12 January 2021
kofi@hku.hk

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**Abstract**
Research on Afro-European Creole languages has been deeply invested in theorizing the ontological status of Creoles. Sensationalist claims that Creoles have the 'simplest grammars of the world' (McWhorter 2001), or represent 'universal grammar (Bickerton 1974 and thereafter) have occupied a disproportionate amount of discursive space. As a consequence, the study of the genealogical and areal differentiation of Creoles has been relegated to the margins, although it offers exciting insights. The Atlantic can be conceived of as the meeting ground of two large linguistic areas that we may conveniently call the 'Afrosphere' and the 'Eurosphere'. Evidence suggests that these two spheres converge on the 'Creolosphere' which constitutes an 'areal buffer zone' (Stilo 2005) between Afrosphere and Eurosphere. The stratal-areal contact model (Yakpo 2017) suggests that contact with African adstrates has reinforced and expanded Afrosphere features in the Afro-Caribbean English-lexifier Creoles (AECs) of West Africa. On the other hand, the absence of contact with African adstrates has led to a weakening of Afrosphere features in the American AECs. In the same vein, varying degrees of contact with the lexifier English, and other European superstrates like Dutch and Spanish has led to the expansion of Eurosphere features in the Creoles on both sides of the Atlantic. In this talk, I explore the concepts of Afrosphere, Eurosphere, and Creolosphere by turning to a number of understudied features including tone systems, modality, and copulas.

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