

What can we learn from Unserdeutsch? Insights for Germanic linguistics and linguistic theory

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Unserdeutsch (Rabaul Creole German) is a critically endangered and virtually unknown non-canonical contact language from Papua New Guinea (cf. Maitz/Volker 2017). Since 2015, an international research team (now) based in Bern has been working on the documentation and systematic description of the language (cf. Götze et al. 2017). Being the only documented case for a German-based creole, Unserdeutsch is of special interest for the study of extraterritorial varieties of German as well as for linguistic historiography (cf. e.g. Maitz/Lindenfelser 2018). In addition, Unserdeutsch for many reasons proves to be a promising laboratory for the study of language contact, linguistic typology and of course, pidgin and creole languages (cf. e.g. Lindenfelser/Maitz 2017). In our paper, we will show that the study of very small vernacular languages such as Unserdeutsch can contribute far more to certain aspects of linguistic theory than the study of big, standardized languages, challenging several claims, hypotheses and theories on language genesis, language contact and (contact-induced) language change.

References

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