



# **Bastard Tongues: A Trailblazing Linguist Finds Clues to Our Common Humanity in the World's Lowliest Languages**

*Derek Bickerton*

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## Why Do Isolated Creole Languages Tend to Have Similar Grammatical Structures?

*Bastard Tongues* is an exciting, firsthand story of scientific discovery in an area of research close to the heart of what it means to be human—what language is, how it works, and how it passes from generation to generation, even where historical accidents have made normal transmission almost impossible. The story focuses on languages so low in the pecking order that many people don't regard them as languages at all—Creole languages spoken by descendants of slaves and indentured laborers in plantation colonies all over the world. The story is told by Derek Bickerton, who has spent more than thirty years researching these languages on four continents and developing a controversial theory that explains why they are so similar to one another. A published novelist, Bickerton (once described as "part scholar, part swashbuckling man of action") does not present his findings in the usual dry academic manner. Instead, you become a companion on his journey of discovery. You learn things as he learned them, share his disappointments and triumphs, explore the exotic locales where he worked, and meet the colorful characters he encountered along the way. The result is a unique blend of memoir, travelogue, history, and linguistics primer, appealing to anyone who has ever wondered how languages grow or what it's like to search the world for new knowledge.

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