

# AFRICAN STUDIES



*We work for*  
**tomorrow**

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**UNI  
GRAZ**



## MODULE

1

### **An Introduction to the Languages of Africa**

Lee Pratchett

Fri | 9 October | Sat | 10 October | Fri | 23 October 2026

2

### **African Languages in Context: Plurilingualism and Language Contact**

Daniela Waldburger

Fri | 6, 13, 20 November 2026

3

### **Africa Discourse: Introduction to Postcolonial Theories**

Katharina Oke

Fri | 27 November | 4, 11 December 2026

4

### **Practical Module: Cooperation with Associations and Institutions**

Angelika Heiling & Jennifer Brunner

Fri | 8, 15, 22 January 2027

5

### **The Languages of Africa: Sociolinguistic Perspectives and Approaches**

Anne Storch

Tue | 9 March | Thur | 11 March | Fri | 12 March 2027

6

### **African Languages in Context: Local and Translocal Voices in Literature and Film**

Angelika Heiling & Rémi Tchokothe

Fri | 16, 23 April | Sat | 24 April 2027

7

### **Africa Discourse: Decolonial Practices and Colonial Continuities**

Rowland Chukwuemeka Amaefula

Fri | 14, 21 May | 4 June 2027

8

### **Practical Module: Africa in Austria**

Angelika Heiling & Jennifer Brunner

Fri | 11, 18 or 25 June 2027





## MODULE **1**

# An Introduction to the Languages of Africa

Did you know that roughly one third of all oral human languages are spoken in Africa? Some are spoken by millions of people, and others by just a handful, and they all belong to various different, unrelated language families — exactly how many families is still a hotly debated topic, and one steeped in colonial ideology and western epistemology. From the complex word structure of Arabic and Hebrew, to the rich gender system of Swahili and Fula, to the huge inventory click sounds of Ju!'hoan and !Xoon, this seminar offers a window into the diversity of African languages in both a historical and modern context. We will see how language structure narrates African deep history, such as the historical migration of the Bantu “from Cameroon to Cape Town”, one of the most important migrations in human history.

A language is nothing without its speaker community. Whether in megacities of Cairo, Kinshasa and Lagos, the Central African Rainforest, or the Kalahari desert, the African linguistic landscape is highly dynamic, characterized by people interacting in multiple codes on a daily basis. Africa is a hotspot for emerging youth and contact languages. Nigerian Pidgin is spoken by over 75 million, making it the most widely spoken language in Africa. What does the future hold for such rapidly expanding languages, in Africa and beyond, including in Graz? And what of the smaller endangered languages and the many culturally significant styles and registers?

**Fri | 9 Oct | Sat | 10 Oct | Fri | 23 Oct 2026**

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**

## MODULE **2**

# African Languages in Context:

### Plurilingualism and Language Contact

This course focuses on different communities of practice (CoP) in selected African countries. The reality of people's lives in a CoP is characterized by a) a diglossic situation in a state-regulated framework (= coexistence of different languages/varieties with different functions in a multilingual society), and b) a multilingual environment due to the linguistic diversity in a geographically small area and the associated language contact situations.

In this seminar, we will look at various case studies from a multilingual environment. We will use specific situations to develop the theoretical framework.

Among the issues that will be the focus of attention are: 1) language policy decisions and their effects in a plurilingual setting, 2) repertoire dynamics, 3) specific language settings (e. g., youth languages) in a plurilingual setting, 4) the power and powerlessness of CoP, and 5) language contact situations. Geographically, our focus is on the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Cameroon, the Comoros, including Mayotte, and Southern Africa; and, of course, we will be looking across national language boundaries.

**Fri | 6, 13, 20 Nov 2026**

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**



## MODULE **3**

# Africa Discourse:

## Introduction to Postcolonial Theories

Postcolonialism, or postcolonial theory, is an influential movement whose origins can be traced back to thinkers from the former colonies and the context of the independence movements. In Western academia, postcolonialism has been received and widely applied since the 1980s to critically analyze knowledge produced in (formerly) colonial contexts and which reproduces colonial perspectives.

The discussion of postcolonialism or postcolonial theories encompasses a wide range of discourses. The contemporary understanding of “postcolonial theory” refers primarily to the discourses, ideologies and intellectual formations that emerged as reactions to colonial discourses and representations. Leading pioneers in postcolonial criticism include, for example, Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Achille Mbembe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and Stuart Hall.

The diversity within postcolonial theories has given rise to certain points of criticism. Nevertheless, the influence of postcolonialism in contemporary discourses on global inequality cannot be denied or ignored. Postcolonial concepts have played a crucial role in efforts to understand the extent and consequences of colonialism and neocolonialism. Furthermore, they have helped to highlight and challenge ongoing Eurocentrism.

**Fri | 27 Nov | 4, 11 Dec 2026**

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**



## MODULE **4**

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# Practical Module:

## Cooperation with Associations and Institutions

In cooperation with Kamdem Mou Poh à Hom (Verein Chiala),  
Adjanie Kamucote

The aim of the practical modules is to complement the primarily theoretical and academic focus of our module series by stepping outside the ivory tower and engaging with real world contexts. This means not only talking “about Africa” but engaging concretely with “Africa in Austria”: with people of African origin, that is, with the African diaspora and their lived realities.

With this aim in mind, after an introductory session we visit institutions in Graz whose work places a particular focus on Africa. Through conversations and exchanges, we learn, for example, how diverse and rich this engagement is, how Africa is represented in art and culture, and what kinds of challenges associations and organizations are confronted with.

We address the — to this day often problematic — relationship between Europe and Africa and gain first-hand insights into African perspectives, which serve as a basis for further discussion.

**Fri | 8, 15, 22 Jan 2027**

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**





## MODULE **5**

# The Languages of Africa:

## Sociolinguistic Perspectives and Approaches

Even though contemporary sociolinguistic theory has now moved away from the approaches to language and context of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, which were interested in English-speaking, Western and middle-class societies, knowledges from Africa remain poorly known. Therefore, this seminar will first bring together at least two strands of discussion: firstly, on the sociology of sociolinguistics, where we will ask for the reasons for the absences of African sociolinguistic thought, and secondly, on the crucial contributions made by sociolinguists studying language in Africa. Departing from this newly established ground, we will ask about alternative ways not only of thinking about language but also of living with it and making sense of it, in plurilingual and open societies where Western ideas about language (as “mother tongue”, “national language”, “standard”, etc.) are radically challenged. Topics addressed in the seminar include the spiritual meanings of languages, the creative practices in which people “make” language, language and / as heritage, as well as secrecy and play, among other phenomena.

**Tue | 9 | Thur | 11 | Fri | 12 Mar 2027**

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**

## MODULE 6

# African Languages in Context:

### Local and Translocal Voices in Literature and Film

Writers and filmmakers from Africa are, with a few exceptions, clearly underrepresented in global debates. Texts from a limited number of recognised centres dominate the global stage, while literary production from other regions remains peripheral and frequently invisible. This seminar offers a platform for historically underrepresented and marginalized voices in “global” discourses (e.g. Zambian literatures). Module 6 examines the politics of language in African literatures: the problem of linguistic imperialism, the dominance of “the Western canon”, and the capacity of literatures to resist or undermine these power structures.

We will look at how the languages of primary socialisation, emotions, (neo)colonial education, thinking, and (decolonial) writing from the African “Continent” and the “Diaspora” are connected. This key question will be explored through the approaches of the language artists, activists, and archivists Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria/USA, English), Léonora Miano (Cameroon/France, French), Djaïli Amadou Amal (Cameroon, French/Pulaar), Boubacar Boris Diop (Senegal, Wolof/French), Ken Bugul (Senegal, Wolof), Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (Kenya/USA, Gĩkũyũ/English), Rachid Boudjedra (Algeria, Arabic/French), Nassur Attoumani (Mayotte, French/Shimaoré), and Precious Chiebonam Nnebedum (Nigeria/Austria, German, English, Nigerian Pidgin English).

**Fri | 16, 23 Apr | Sat | 24 Apr 2027**

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**





## MODULE 7

# Africa Discourse:

## Decolonial Practices and Colonial Continuities

Decolonizing African theatre requires the reclamation of theatrical performances that were previously suppressed. This involves liberating indigenous theatre from the Western canons that were imposed on the continent during the colonial era. In this module, we will analyze plays by selected African playwrights and explore how they attempt to subvert Eurocentric theatrical standards in favour of indigenous norms. We will examine recurrent critical issues in the plays from socio-cultural perspectives, particularly with regard to gender. Drawing on the works of playwrights such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Tess Onwueme, Esiaba Irobi, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Wole Soyinka, we will examine the strategies they employ to de-centre Western logic, while also acknowledging the enduring influence of colonial legacies on modern African drama.

**Fri | 14, 21 May | 4 June 2027**

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**

## MODULE 8

# Practical Module:

## Africa in Austria

In cooperation with Samson Ogiamien

The aim of the practical modules is to complement the primarily theoretical and academic focus of our module series by stepping outside the ivory tower and engaging with real world contexts. This means not only talking “about Africa” but engaging concretely with “Africa in Austria”: with people of African origin, that is, with the African diaspora and their lived realities.

The practical module in the summer semester will take us — after an initial session for introduction and orientation — to Vienna. There we will, for example, have the opportunity to visit the Weltmuseum Wien. As a former Museum of Ethnology, this ethnological museum holds a large number of cultural objects from sub-Saharan Africa in its collections (around 38,000 inventory numbers according to Haumberger), whose provenance has not yet been fully clarified. Questions we will address in this practical module include what provenance research actually is, how it is being promoted at the Weltmuseum, and what role restitution plays for the collections of the Republic of Austria.

**Fri | 11 Jun**

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

**Fri | 18 or 25 Jun 2027**

8.15 am – 16.15 pm

**Vienna excursion**

Room: SR 47.12 and SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**



“  
(...) it is not simply that a part of African history lies somewhere else, outside Africa. It is also that a history of the rest of the world (...) is present on the continent. Our way of belonging to the world (...) has always been marked by (...) the interweaving of worlds.  
”

**Achille Mbembe**  
(Mbembe 2007: 28)



**MODULE SERIES:** Developed by Angelika Heiling (treffpunkt sprachen – Centre for Language, Plurilingualism and Didactics), Jennifer Brunner (Department of Linguistics) & Katharina Oke (Department of History)

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**Target group:** Students of all fields of study (BA, MA, doctoral studies), interdepartmental and interdisciplinary teaching and external participants

**Focus:** Area studies perspectives; linguistics, literature and cultural studies; postcolonial theories and decolonial practices; cooperation with art and cultural institutions and diaspora associations in Austria (practical modules)

**ECTS credits:** **Per module: 15 units (1 hr) – 3 ECTS credits**  
The modules can be attended individually, free of charge and without content requirements. The acquisition of a certificate is possible if all eight courses of the module series “Introduction to African Studies” of the African Science Hub Graz (ASH Graz) are completed. The courses can be credited as free subjects.

**Assessment scheme:** 80% attendance, active participation and written elaboration of a topic

**Registration:**

**WS: Monday, 21 September (9 am) to Monday, 28 September 2026 (12 pm)**

**SS: Monday, 15 February (9 am) to Monday, 22 February 2027 (12 pm)**

- via our [online platform](#)

**Information and contact:**

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