

AFRICAN STUDIES



Academic year
2024/25

We work for
tomorrow

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**UNI
GRAZ**



MODULE

1

An Introduction to the Languages of Africa

Lee Pratchett

Fri | 11, 18, 25 October 2024

2

African Languages in Context: Plurilingualism and Language Contact

Daniela Waldburger

Fri | 8, 15, 22 November 2024

3

Africa Discourse: Introduction to Postcolonial Theories

Angelika Heiling & Gabriele Slezak

Fri | 29 November | 6, 13 December 2024

4

Practical Module: Cooperation with Associations and Institutions

Angelika Heiling

Fri | 10, 17, 24 January 2025

5

The Languages of Africa: Sociolinguistic Theories and Models

Friederike Lüpke

Tue | 4 March | Wed | 5 March | Fri | 7 March 2025

6

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

Angelika Heiling & Rémi Tchokothe

Fri | 28 March | 4, 11 April 2025

7

Africa Discourse: Decolonial Practices and Colonial Continuities

Jennifer Brunner & Gabriele Slezak

Fri | 9, 16, 23 May 2025

8

Practical Module: Working with Data and Artifacts from Colonial Contexts & Africa in Austria

Angelika Heiling & Jennifer Brunner

Fri | 6, 13 or 27 June 2025



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 explore 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 Africa Rain-forest, 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 | 11, 18, 25 Oct 2024

10.00 am – 1.45 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 | 8, 15, 22 Nov 2024

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**





MODULE **3**

Africa Discourse:

Introduction to Postcolonial Theories

Postcolonialism, an influential movement with roots in the works of earlier anticolonial intellectuals from former colonies after their independence struggles, which only gained prominence within Western academia in the 1980s, continues to function as a powerful theoretical concept. It is widely applied to describe and categorize knowledge produced in formerly colonial contexts. When discussing postcolonialism or postcolonial theories, it is crucial to recognize that the term encompasses a range of discourses rather than a singular narrative.

The contemporary understanding of "postcolonial theory" primarily refers to the discourses, ideologies, and intellectual formations that have emerged as responses to colonial discourses and representations. Leading pioneers in postcolonial criticism include Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Achille Mbembe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and Stuart Hall.

The diversity within postcolonial theories has invited certain points of criticism. Despite that, the impact of postcolonialism in current discourses on global inequality cannot be denied. The concepts have played a crucial role in efforts to understand the extent and consequences of colonialism and neocolonialism. Furthermore, they have contributed to the continued challenge and contestation of a Eurocentric focus on national boundaries.

Fri | 29 Nov | 6, 13 Dec 2024

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**

MODULE **4**

Practical Module:

Cooperation with Associations and Institutions

The aim of the practical modules within the series is to understand reality in addition to theoretical and primarily scientific discussion. This means not only talking "about Africa", but also dealing more concretely with "Africa in Austria", people of African origin, i. e. with the diaspora.

After an introduction, we will visit institutions in Graz that focus on Africa in their work. Through discussions and exchange, we will learn how diverse and rich Africa in Graz and Austria is, how Africa is represented — for example in art and culture — and what challenges associations face.

We will address the — up to today still problematic — relationship between Europe and Africa. We will hear African perspectives that invite vital discussions.

Fri | 10, 17, 24 Jan 2025

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **German**





MODULE 5

The Languages of Africa:

Sociolinguistic Theories and Models

Most African languages are spoken by communities as one of several languages on a daily basis. The persistence of multilingualism and the linguistic creativity manifest in the playful use of different languages are striking, especially against the backdrop of language death and expanding monolingualism elsewhere in the world. However, the effortless mastery of several languages is disturbing for those who take essentialist perspectives that see it as a problem rather than a resource, and for conflictual models of multilingualism. Multilingualism is particularly turned into a problem in formal education systems based on selecting one language per area.

We will focus on African minority languages in the context of changing patterns of multilingualism, and assess how African languages fit into existing influential vitality scales. An important aspect of multilingual praxis is the speakers' agency in making choices, their repertoires of registers, and the multiplicity of language ideologies associated with different ways of speaking. Particular attention will be paid to the division of labour of spoken and written codes in multilingual repertoires, and to the relationships between ideologies and language use in multilingual contexts. We will also develop broad comparative perspectives leading to a better understanding of small-scale multilingual settings across the globe.

Tue | 4 | Wed | 5 | Fri | 7 Mar 2025

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.11 & SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**

MODULE 6

African Languages in Context:

Local and Translocal Voices in Literature and Film

The course consists of two parts. One part explores the relationship between language and identity in Southern Africa, specifically focusing on the linguistic repertoires and voices in Zambian literary texts and films. Plurality and hybridity are often seen as inherent aspects of linguistic and cultural practices in the region.

A key aspect is the agency of multilingual creators and performers in constructing identities through language. The fluid and dynamic nature of language practices is highlighted, emphasizing the concept of the linguistic repertoire: the range of linguistic resources used in a work and their purpose in constructing, negotiating, and potentially negating identities.

The second part looks at how the languages of primary socialization, 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), Djaili 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 | 28 Mar | 4, 11 Apr 2025

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**





MODULE 7

Africa Discourse:

Decolonial Practices and Colonial Continuities

Decolonization is understood as a self-reflective, painful process aimed at confronting the historically entrenched social consolidation of global injustices resulting from colonialism. In our context, this particularly involves examining privileges in the production of scientific knowledge. A central aspect is that all types of knowledge are influenced by colonial legacies. Therefore, tracing these legacies is an interdisciplinary endeavor requiring all disciplines to undergo critical examination. The central point is that every type of knowledge is affected by colonial traces. Therefore, searching traces is interdisciplinary and all disciplines are under critical examination.

We will examine various academic spaces within differing academic contexts, such as the crucial role of libraries, archives, and collections. We are committed to critically analyzing knowledge production within the context of epistemic violence. This includes mechanisms of exclusion and the reinforcement of colonial practices at an institutional level, such as the methods by which knowledge is selected, stored, communicated, and protected, as well as the accessibility of knowledge bases, standardization processes, and staffing policies at a structural level.

Fri | 9, 16, 23 May 2025

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English/German**

MODULE **8**

Practical Module:

Working with Data and Artifacts from Colonial Contexts & Africa in Austria

The practical module in summer semester takes us — after an initial introductory and orientation unit — to Vienna. We will have the opportunity to visit the Weltmuseum Wien. As a former “Museum für Völkerkunde”, the ethnological museum has a large number of cultural objects from Sub-Saharan Africa in its collection (around 38,000 inventory numbers according to Haumberger), the origin of which has not yet been clarified. In the course of this practical module, we will address the nature of provenance research, its promotion at the Weltmuseum, and the role of restitution for Austria as a state.

Fri | 6, 13 or 27 Jun 2025

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Vienna excursion

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **German**



“
(...) 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)

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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, 23 September (11 am) to Monday, 30 September 2024 (12 pm)

SS: Monday, 17 February (11 am) to Monday, 24 February 2025 (12 pm)

- Students: via UNIGRAZonline
- Staff of the University of Graz and external participants: via email (ernedina.muminovic@uni-graz.at)

Information and contact:

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