

AFRICAN STUDIES



Academic year
2025/26

We work for
tomorrow

treffpunktsprachen.uni-graz.at





MODULE

1

An Introduction to the Languages of Africa

Lee Pratchett

Fri | 10, 17, 24 October 2025

2

African Languages in Context: Plurilingualism and Language Contact

Daniela Waldburger

Fri | 7, 14, 21 November 2025

3

Africa Discourse: Introduction to Postcolonial Theories

Katharina Oke & Gabriele Slezak

Fri | 28 November | 5, 12 December 2025

4

Practical Module: Cooperation with Associations and Institutions

Angelika Heiling & Jennifer Brunner

Fri | 9, 16, 23 January 2026

5

The Languages of Africa: Sociolinguistic Perspectives and Approaches

Felix Ameka

Tue | 3 March | Thur | 5 March | Fri | 6 March 2026

6

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

Angelika Heiling & Rémi Tchokothe

Fri | 17 April | Sat | 18 April | Fri | 24 April 2026

7

Africa Discourse: Decolonial Practices and Colonial Continuities

Sabine Flach

Fri | 8, 22, 29 May 2026

8

Practical Module: Africa in Austria

Angelika Heiling & Jennifer Brunner

Fri | 12, 19 or 26 June 2026

Introduction to African Studies:

A Module Series of the African Science Hub Graz (ASH Graz)

The module series "Introduction to African Studies" offered by the African Science Hub Graz (ASH Graz) fills a gap at the University of Graz, where "African Studies" are not institutionalized on the one hand, and, on the other hand, where the interest and the necessity to deal with Africa in a new way in our globalized world is absolutely evident.

The cooperation of researchers from various institutions at the University of Graz with international experts — especially also from Africa — as well as with art and cultural institutions and diaspora associations in Graz and Vienna provides diverse perspectives on topics relevant to African studies. Of immense importance to us are anti-racist, decolonial approaches, which we teach students of all disciplines theoretically, practically, and as a tool for actual implementation in their field of interest. As part of the module series "Introduction to African Studies" of the African Science Hub Graz (ASH Graz), we focus particularly on linguistic issues, but also on ways of dealing with data and materials from colonial contexts, as well as on literary, art, and cultural studies.

The module series is open to students and external participants of all disciplines who are interested in Africa.

The courses of continuous assessment can be completed, free of charge and without prerequisites, either individually or as a complete series with the possibility of obtaining a certificate. Each course can be credited with 3 ECTS as optional subject.





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 | 10, 17, 24 Oct 2025

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 | 7, 14, 21 Nov 2025

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 and theoretical concept that can be traced back to early thinkers from the former colonies and the context of independence movements. It has, however, only gained prominence in Western academia since the 1980s. Postcolonial theory is widely used to describe and categorize knowledge produced in formerly colonial contexts. The discussion of postcolonialism or postcolonial theories encompasses a variety of discourses. The contemporary understanding of “postcolonial theory” refers primarily to the discourses, ideologies and intellectual formations that have emerged as responses to colonial discourses and representations. Leading pioneers of 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 of postcolonial theories has given rise to certain criticisms. Nevertheless, the influence of postcolonialism in contemporary 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 neo-colonialism. Furthermore, they have helped to highlight and challenge Eurocentrisms.

Fri | 28 Nov | 5, 12 Dec 2025

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 | 9, 16, 23 Jan 2026

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **German**





MODULE **5**

The Languages of Africa:

Sociolinguistic Perspectives and Approaches

This seminar critically examines foundational biases in sociolinguistic theory—monolingual, Western, and Anglo-centric perspectives—by centering the lived multilingual practices and communicative realities of African communities. Participants will interrogate how mainstream sociolinguistics has often marginalized African multilingual and communicative strategies, and will be encouraged to reimagine theoretical frameworks grounded in African contexts, where multilingualism is not the exception but the norm.

Through explorations of cases we seek to (i) understand the diversity and complexity of African multilingual practices in both rural and urban settings; (ii) evaluate the implications of African multilingualism for theories of language socialization, identity, and social interaction; (iii) critically assess language policies and their impact on language in use in education, health, governance, and community life and (iv) develop research skills through ethnographic observation and linguistic landscape analysis.

Tue | 3 | Thur | 5 | Fri | 6 Mar 2026

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.11

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 looks 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). By examining the politics of /in languages used by selected agents of constant border crossing, we will explore notions such as ‘poetics of relation’, ‘globelectics’, ‘pluriversality’, ‘literary identity theft’, and ‘the theory of fermentation’.

The second 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.

Fri | 17 | Sa | 18 | Fri | 24 Apr 2026

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12 & SR 29.11

Languages of instruction: **English**





MODULE 7

Africa Discourse:

Decolonial Practices and Colonial Continuities

Decolonization of art, language, and culture requires a different definition of contemporaneity. This definition should simultaneously emancipate art, language, and culture from the notions of a European and North American-influenced modernity and its canon of art. In this unit, we will examine global contemporary art and cultural history and its theories (e.g., Okwui Enwezor, Kobena Mercer, and others) and artist-subjects beyond modern, Western-influenced binary models of time and space, as well as the agency of global artists as active participants in contemporary art and cultural historiography. The focus it will be on West and South Africa.

Fri | 8, 22, 29 May 2026

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Room: SR 29.12

Languages of instruction: **English**

MODULE 8

Practical Module:

Africa in Austria

The aim of the practical modules within the series is to get to know and 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.

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 | 12 Jun

8.15 am – 12.15 pm

Fri | 19 or 26 Jun 2026

8.15 am – 16.15 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; co-operation 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, 22 September (11 am) to Monday, 29 September 2025 (12 pm)

SS: Monday, 16 February (11 am) to Monday, 23 February 2026 (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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