

## AFRICAN LINGUISTICS AT IU\*

The study of African linguistics at IU began more than 45 years ago in conjunction with the establishment of the university's African Studies Program, which, under the auspices of Title VI, fostered a strong areal and language-centered program. Over this period of time, IU has been one of the major centers for the study of African languages and linguistics in the U.S.

The first Africanist faculty member at IU was Carleton Hodge, hired in 1964 to join the newly established Department of Linguistics. Although Hodge was brought in initially to oversee a large Air Force language program, with the termination of the program, he turned his focus to Hausa and Ancient Egyptian, his areas of expertise. With this background, his research focused especially on the reconstruction of the Afroasiatic phylum. Hodge was followed soon thereafter by Colin Painter, a phonetician who worked on Ghanaian languages, and Charles Bird, a syntactician and expert in Bambara and the Mande languages, who was hired to Chair the department in 1969. Subsequently, Erhard Voeltz, a Bantuist, and Tim Shopen, whose African interest focused on Songhay, joined the department.

Following the departures of Painter, Shopen, and Voeltz in the mid-1970s, the Department moved to reinvigorate its Africanist focus with the hiring in 1976 of Robert Port, a phonetician and Swahili expert, and John Goldsmith, a phonologist who worked extensively with tone in African languages. Paul Newman brought his expertise in Hausa and Chadic languages in 1983, later (1992-1998) serving as Chair of the department. He created the West African Languages Institute to promote the study—and interaction among scholars—of West African languages. Following Goldsmith's move to the University of Chicago, Robert Botne, a Bantuist, joined the faculty in 1985. From 1992-2002, he served as Editor of *Studies in African Linguistics*. Samuel Obeng, a Ghanaian and the first African professor of linguistics at IU, joined the program in 1994, following the early retirement of Charles Bird. He currently directs the African Studies Program.

Complementing faculty research and language teaching, the department has continuously offered a year-long course in field methods, training both graduates and undergraduates in how to gather, organize, and analyze data in field situations. Each year a different African language is researched, as students work with a native speaker of the language, both in class and in individual sessions. The program has been successful not only in teaching students how to do fieldwork, but has led some, such as then undergraduate Michael Marlo (now at CASL, University of Maryland), to pursue a PhD in African linguistics. It has also led to the publication of original work on these languages in the form of grammars, dictionaries, and a variety of articles, both by faculty and students.

In the 46 years since the Department of Linguistics was established at IU, there have been 45 PhD theses completed in the field of African linguistics, the first one in 1969. The program has attracted many students from Africa; twenty-two of the theses were written by African students. Recognizing the interest in and focus on African linguistics, in 1996, the Department developed a special PhD track with a concentration in African Linguistics. Graduates from IU's linguistics program have, in many instances, gone on to respected careers in African languages and linguistics. Among these are Larry Hutchinson (University

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\* We wish to thank Albert Valdman and Patrick O'Meara for some of the background information on the early years of African linguistics at IU.

of Minnesota), Linda (Driesel) Hunter (University of Wisconsin), Eyamba Bokamba (University of Illinois), John Hutchison (Boston University), David Massamba (University of Dar-es-Salaam), Katherine Demuth (Brown University), Barbara Hoffman and Marshall Lewis (Cleveland State University), Ettien Koffi (St. Cloud State University). Recent graduates include Tiffany Kershner (Kansas State University), Seth Ofori (University of Wisconsin), and Tristan Purvis (CASL, University of Maryland).

From its beginnings, African linguistics has been closely associated with African language instruction, which has from its inception fallen under the auspices of the Department of Linguistics. Instruction in the teaching of African languages has progressed from untrained native speakers in the early years to a cadre of trained professionals today. As the program expanded to include more languages, and undergraduates as well as graduates, Judy Leidy was appointed in the early 1980s to oversee the language program as Language Coordinator. Following Leidy, in 1986, Robert Botne took over, on a part-time basis, as Language Coordinator and developed a yearly training program and series of workshops for language instructors. The language program continued to become more professionalized as Nhlanhla Thwala, a linguist and Zulu specialist, was hired in 1996 as Zulu instructor and language coordinator. Ani Hawkinson was hired as the first full-time coordinator in 1998. Currently, Alwiya Omar, Associate Clinical Professor of Linguistics, teaches Swahili, coordinates the language program, and teaches courses on African linguistics. In addition to graduate student Associate Instructors, the program now has three full-time lecturers, all native speakers of the languages they teach, and all with backgrounds in language instruction. At the present time, IU offers instruction in five languages (Akan-Twi, Bambara, Kiswahili, Wolof, and Zulu) through the advanced level.

The IU Linguistics Club (IULC) has also played an important role in African linguistics. Since its first publication in 1972 of "The syntax and semantics of possession in Bambara" by Charles Bird, the club has continued to publish a variety of African language grammars, dictionaries, and language instruction materials, with a total of 33 publications to date.

Currently, the department has three faculty members whose primary research interests are in African linguistics: Botne (Bantu languages), Obeng (Ghanaian languages), and Omar (Swahili and African language instruction). Both Newman and Port have retired, though both continue to carry on their research interests.

- Compiled by Robert Botne