

**The Languages of Limited Diffusion Work Group**, part of the Home for Trainers project of the STC has been working on finding resources and ways to share those resources. To view the database go to <http://www.ncihc.org/languages-of-limited-diffusion>. The LLD Work Group will also present a review of one resource through the ListServ about once every three months. We know that not all of the ListServ readers will be interested in every resource, so please don't respond; just, delete the information that doesn't interest you.

If you have resources you would like to add to the database, and/or if you would like review a resource, please contact us at [lld@ncihc.org](mailto:lld@ncihc.org).

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<b><u>Title:</u></b>	African Languages An Introduction, Edited by Bernd Heine and Derek Nurse Cambridge University Press 2000
<b><u>Type of Resource:</u></b>	book
<b><u>Last accessed:</u></b>	August 2015
<b><u>Reviewer:</u></b>	Catherine Anderson
<b><u>Language:</u></b>	English

As an introduction to the linguistics of African languages, this academic textbook is of benefit to the generalist working closely with speakers of African languages because it is one of the few resources that offers a systematic way of understanding the variety of languages from that continent. Although the deeper articles on phonology, morphology, syntax and typology would interest the seasoned linguist, the instructor in interpreting would gain the most from the essays that focus on one of the four major language groups and/or the chapters on language and society, language and history, and comparative linguistics.

In our refugee resettlement agency, we work with new refugee interpreters who have expertise in languages from Eastern, Western and Central Africa. It was extremely helpful to learn of the four major language groups described in this textbook: Niger-Congo, Nilo-Saharan, Afroasiatic and Khoisan so that we could begin to place some of the languages interpreters were describing into a geographical and historical context. We are witnessing an unprecedented time in resettlement history when the sheer range of languages challenges our capacity to identify, train and guide new interpreters who can provide the services needed. This year, out of 483 refugees resettled by our agency, we counted 37 different languages. Much of this diversity comes from the continent of Africa. Many of us will need to create curricula, jerry-rig language proficiency screens, and supervise interpreters even though the languages we know and have studied are very far apart from the languages spoken by groups now resettled. Diversity in language and cultures is what makes our work so fascinating; our

capacity to assist new interpreters is enhanced by our own awareness of how languages and cultures influence each other.

A basic understanding of some of the main concepts of sociolinguistics is an especially good beginning for the generalist, and the very last chapter of *African Languages An Introduction* provides that. Authored by University Professor Emeritus H. Ekkehard Wolff of the Institute of African Studies, University of Leipzig, the chapter provides a comprehensive overview of some basic sociolinguistic concepts (with examples that relate specifically to African languages), such as how languages change in time and in space, multilingualism, code-mixing, diglossia, pidgins and creoles, as well as language planning and policy. These distinctions are especially helpful as we assist interpreters in developing glossaries for terms and expressions that do not have a direct equivalent to English. An instructor who understands a bit of the dynamics of multilingualism, code-mixing, diglossia, as well as how pidgins and creoles may function, is made more aware of the importance of guiding the interpreter to strive to find the most precise way of rendering a word or term, depending on the understanding of the patient. For example, an interpreter who speaks Swahili, French and English can be encouraged to think of the influence of French or English on Swahili and the need for accuracy in rendering a term based on a patient's pattern of code-mixing (incorporating certain terms or expressions from another language following a set of discourse rules and community patterns of usage). Every bit of knowledge helps in this vast field and *African Languages An Introduction* provides a useful introduction to the richness and range of African languages as well as some basic concepts of sociolinguistics.