

Sibawayh proposed the concept of *ṣāmīl / ṣawāmīl* 'operator/s', that is, variation was motivated, not random. For example, *Hāḍa zaydun* 'this is Zayd'; *Raʿaytu zaydan* 'I saw Zayd'; *Marartu bi-zaydin* 'I passed by Zayd'. The variation [-un, -an, -in] in Zayd indicates its desinence due to syntactic factors/operations. It is estimated that more than 9000 sentences, 1000 lines of poetry, and 400 verses from the Qurʾān, and countless morphological structures are discussed and analyzed in the book. Sībawayh and Al-Khalīl are responsible for the multitude of technical terms and the intellectual structure of the discipline of Arabic linguistics.

See also: Al-Khalīl (8th Century A.D.); Arabic; Panini; Phonetic Classification.

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**Sidaama** See: Highland East Cushitic Languages.

## Sierra Leone: Language Situation

C N Fyle

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Sierra Leone has a population of some 4 million people over a land area of 71 740 square kilometers, giving a density of some 55 persons per square kilometer on the average. There are 18 languages, distributed as shown in **Table 1**. (The percentages in **Table 1** are derived from the 1963 census figures. It is unlikely the picture has changed significantly.)

Eight of the languages: Susu, Yalunka, Mandingo (Maninka, Kankan), Kono, Vai, Loko, Mende, and Kuranko, belong to the Mande language group, which stretches from Senegal to Sudan. Seven others are Niger–Congo languages within the African fragmentation belt, namely: Temne (Themne), Kisi, Krim, and Gola belonging to the Mel group, as well as Fula (Pulaar), Kru (Klao), and Limba. Sherbro and Galinas also may belong here but their affinities are unknown. Krio is an English-related creole language that has strong affinities with Aku, Fernandino (Bubu), and Weskos in the Gambia, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon respectively.

Krio is the lingua franca of Sierra Leone but this language has only recently received recognition as a language in its own right. Two other nonindigenous languages exist. Arabic is a language of religion but also of some business at grassroots level (*see Arabic*). English is the official and international language of government, business and administration, broadcasting and journalism, and education.

The population density figure, as well as a century-old tradition of social mobility, indicate that there is a fair amount of language contact, resulting in widespread bilingualism/multilingualism. The order is that

**Table 1** Percentage of speakers by language

Language	% of population using language	Language	% of population using language
Mende	29.9	Mandingo	2.3
Temne	24.4	Kisi	2.2
Limba	8.1	Krio	1.9
Kono	4.6	Yalunka	0.7
Kuranko	3.6	Krim	0.4
Sherbro	3.3	Vai	0.2
Susu	3.0	Gola	0.2
Fula	3.0	Kru	0.2
Loko	2.9	Galinas	0.1

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of English (for the educated), Krio, Mende or Temne (the largest languages), then the mother tongue if different. Incidentally, this pattern also represents the hierarchy of language status.

Even so, and perhaps because of a much older tradition of group consciousness, dialectal differences tend to be marked especially for the larger languages. Thus Mende has at least six distinct dialects (Ko, Sewama, Komboya, Kpa, Sherbro, and Wanjama Mende), Temne has three (Konkay, Yoni, and Gbembeli Temne), and Limba has four (Safroko, Wara-wara, Tonko, and Biriwa Limba). The comparatively large number of the languages themselves, as well as the tendency towards dialectal preservation, have been factors in hindering language development in Sierra Leone. Another factor has been the status of English as an elitist language.

Linguistic studies began early in the 20th century with Koelle's *Polyglotta Africana* (see **Koelle, Sigismund Wilhelm (1823–1902)**) but slowed drastically, so that over the years language development work has depended upon the isolated and unsystematic efforts of only some foreign scholars – the small linguistics department of the university is of very recent creation. Consequently most of the languages have not been properly described. Thus, for example, attempts since the mid to late 1970s to use Mende, Temne, Krio, and Limba as instructional media in primary education, through the government's Sierra Leone Indigenous Languages Project, have so far not succeeded, very largely because of a lack of the necessary linguistic backup materials – for example, a dictionary and a grammar of Limba – are not even available. However, recommended orthographies are available for nine of the languages, and

these are used in literacy materials production and programs.

Illiteracy remains widespread, despite efforts since the early 1960s to eradicate it. The rates are 69.3% men, 88.7% women, and overall 79.3%. Little printed literature is available in the languages; and the Bunumbu Press, the sole rural press that used to publish literacy and postliteracy materials as well as a rural newspaper in eight languages, has been dormant, though there are plans for its revival during the 1990s. The government is beginning to place much emphasis on universal literacy and the use of national languages in education.

The teaching of French (and French only), as a second language in addition to English, continues to be encouraged at the national university and in all secondary schools.

*See also:* Arabic; Koelle, Sigismund Wilhelm (1823–1902); Language Education Policies in Africa; Niger-Congo Languages.

*Language Maps (Appendix 1):* Map 38.

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## Sievers, Eduard (1850–1932)

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Together with Hermann Paul and Wilhelm Braune, Eduard Sievers was one of the Germanists who, in connection with some Indo-Europeanists, can be seen as the central group of the so-called Neogrammarians. In comparison with Paul and Braune he certainly was the most outstanding character. Even though he was much more interested in the natural sciences, out of economic reasons he decided to study philologies and managed to get his final degree when

he was only 19 years old. One year later he was already a professor in Jena. Due to his reputation and probably also due to the fact that he could speak English fluently (which was quite unusual at that time) he was offered a chair at Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1881. Sievers declined the offer due to personal reasons and taught in Tübingen and Halle for several years instead, until finally he was offered a chair at the University of Leipzig and so returned to the place where he started his career. There he died in 1932.

Looking at his numerous publications there is no doubt that his book *Grundzüge der Lautphysiologie* (1876) was of great influence on the development of

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