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A Preliminary Scoping Exercise of the Dynamics, Resources and Access to Data in the South African Language Economy

Submitted to: Department of Sports, Arts and Culture | **Submitted by:** Nelson Mandela University





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Abbreviations

AAUSC	American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators and Directors of Foreign Languages Programs
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ASEP	Australian Standards for Editing Practice
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CASE	Council of Australian Societies of Editors
CBE	Council for the Built Environment
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
CPD	Continuing professional development
CRL	Cultural, Religious and Linguistic
CSA	Cultural Satellite Account
DPWI	Department of Public Works and Infrastructure
DSAC	Department of Sport, Arts and Culture
EAC	Editors' Association of Canada
ECML	European Centre for Modern Language
ECSA	Engineering Council of South Africa
ELO	Early Learning Organisation
ELT	English Language Teaching
EOL	Economics of Language
ETHCOM	Ethics Committee
EU	European Union
FIPLV	International Federation of Language Teacher Associations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
IB	International Business
ICT	Information, and Communications Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IO	Input-Output
IPEd	Institute of Professional Editors
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
KWF	Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino
LACS	Language Associations and Collaborative Support
LL	Linguistic Landscape
LMDSA	Labour Market Dynamics of South Africa
LPC	Legal Practice Council
LPFF	Legal Practitioners Fidelity Fund

LPP	Language Policy and Planning
LSSA	Law Society of South Africa
LTA	Language Teaching Associations
MNC	Multinational Corporation
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIDS	National Income Dynamics Study
NLP	Natural Language Processing
OQLF	Office québécois de la langue Française
PA	Professional Association
PanSALB	Pan South African Language Board
PDF	Portable Document Format
PRODCO	Professional Development Committee
QLFS	Quarterly Labour Force Survey
RAF	Road Accident Fund
REGCO	Registration Committee
SA	South Africa
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SACO	South African Cultural Observatory
SADiLaR	South African Centre for Digital Language Resources
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
SALPC	South African Language Practitioners' Council
SAM	Social Accounting Matrix
SAOU	Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie
SASL	South African Sign Language
SATI	South African Translators' Institute
SIC	Standard Industrial Classification
SNA	System of National Accounts
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America

Executive summary

This report is the first of four linked reports. It should be seen as pilot report and lays the groundwork for the three subsequent reports. These four reports also represent an extension of the original Economics of Language report (SACO/Haines & Gouws 2022).

The four reports will provide the collective research, applied research and policy recommendations to point the way for an operating agency for the South African Language Practitioner's Council (SALPC) which can implement and run the Council in a productive and cost-effective manner.

The SALPC was legislated for in the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act (Act No. 8 of 2014) which aims to establish a Council for the protection and promotion of language practice; regulate the training of language practitioners and conceptualize and controls the accreditation and registration of language practitioners. The SALPC is also intended to facilitate the implementation of multilingualism as outlined in the South Africa Constitution. The nominated body to run the SALPC is PanSALB, one of original agencies of the current national Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC) which were established in the late 1990s.

The main objectives of this first interim scoping report are as follows:

- Provide a compact overview of the South African language economy, identifying and outlining key stakeholders, resources and industry trends.
- Delineate the relevant value chains and/or ecosystems for DSAC and PanSALB.
- Identify the forces and factors shaping the language economy, including socio-economic, political, technological and cultural factors.
- Provide an interim audit of existing resources such as language practitioners, institutional frameworks, and language tools.
- Assess the availability and accessible of strategic data.
- Establish a working baseline for future research and policy development.

Language in South Africa is more than a cultural asset; it is an under-valued resource in economic and social development. The linguistic diversity of South Africa which has currently has 12 official languages co-existing alongside various indigenous and foreign languages. The language economy is facilitator of inclusion and a sector with a largely untapped economic potential. The report takes note of this and looks to provide a more coherent and beneficial way of profiling the sector, and by articulating the processes and possibilities of the professionalization and regulation of the relevant fields.

Chapter1: Introduction

The opening chapter lays the scene and explains the rationale and objectives of the study. It sees the language economy as building on earlier pioneering research and including the work of an array of language practitioners. These include translators, interpreters, lexicographers, terminologists, educators and editors. The institutionalization of the SALPC is depicted as an overdue and necessary intervention aimed at providing more coherence and structure to the field, and to enhance professional activities and standards. The report also underlines the impact of increased national and international pressure on public funding, and the

corresponding need to explore innovative and inter-agency funding models, new kinds of public-private partnerships, and entrepreneurial approaches. The need for the implementing agency to function in an agile and reflexive manner is also raised.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review considers select international developments and debates, and comparative examples that inform the conceptualization of the SALPC and the wider language economy in which the Council would be situated. The importance of broadening of economic analyses of the language sectors international and especially locally is emphasized. A further key thread is that of language professionalism and institutional implications. Themes also include the effects of digitization of the global on language and language economy including artificial intelligence (AI) applications and the dynamics of regulation in multilingual settings. There are also ‘snapshots’ of the South African language sector with select aspects of policy, economic and professionalism noted. It is also pointed out that in there is a continuation of certain aspects of the overall literature review in the subsequent policy and economic analysis chapters.

Chapter 3: Context and Background

This chapter considers South Africa’s language sector in its historical and socio-economic context. It reviews international and national policies and practices in support of multilingualism, language rights and cultural inclusivity. The chapter considers the case for an Economics of Language (EOL) unit that could serve PanSALB and DSAC and add competition to conventional language policy and underfunding across language groups. The advantages of more coordinated planning at national and sub-national levels and inter-agency collaboration are emphasized.

Chapter 4: Policy, Regulation and Governance

Chapter 4 outlines the policy and legislative terrain conditioning language governance in South Africa. Constitutional aspects, HE language frameworks, and public service language measures are discussed. International best and good practice examples are examined to benchmark the South African experience and approach. The tension between South Africa’s policy enunciation and the uneven and under-coordinated process of implementation is stressed. The possibility of the envisaged SALPC providing a reference point in efforts at helping to unify and beneficiate the sector is also raised.

Chapter 5: Methodology and Research Methods

The report is predicated on an inter-disciplinary and mixed-method approach. It comprises desktop research including a literature and document-based inquiry, strategic stakeholder interviews, a compact online survey and ecosystem mapping. This methodology provided useful quantitative data and insightful qualitative material. It also provided a useful means of triangulation. The chapter also outlines the logic model shaping the data collection and subsequent interpretation of results. The collective findings helped shape policy recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 6: Economic and Market Analysis

This chapter looks to model and estimate the nature, size and scope of the South African language economy. In so doing it extends an earlier modelling exercise of this sector (Haines et al 2022). Utilizing available statistical data, it is found that the sector contributes around R10.3 billion in gross value added to the country's economy. Approximately 66, 000 jobs are linked to this sector, and R713 million in public revenue. A further key finding is that the language economy is fractured and is largely invisible in current version of national statistics. The chapter also identifies areas for subsequent research. These include occupational classifications, demand-side procurement assessment, and the question of the integration of digital platforms.

Chapter 7: Ecosystem Mapping

In chapter 7, the institutional and professional aspects of the language economy and the associated value chains are mapped. The socio-economic, political, cultural, legal and technological drivers of the economy are considered. A high-level economic and market analysis of the country's language economy is thus provided. Six functional domains are delineated. The operations of the sector are highlighted through a profiling of (i) the main actors and institutions; (ii) the depiction of the network of relationships and flows between these actors; and (iii) scrutinizing the systemic dynamics that influence behaviour and constitute constraints and opportunities within the sector. Overall, the study depicts the nature and dynamics of the linkages between state agencies, relevant academic institutions, professional associations and private sector agencies and actors.

This ecosystem mapping exercise shows a dynamic but fragmented system with some duplication of function and mandate, and gaps and omissions. The initial framework laid out in this chapter can be deployed in more systemic and integrated planning interventions.

Chapter 8: Governance Models

The establishment of the South African Language Practitioners' Council provides a strategic opportunity to reconfigure the ways and means in which the language professions are regulated, supported and integrated into differing development and policy agendas. For the SALPC to work effectively, it should be embedded with a clearly defined and sustainable model that reflects both the dynamics of the language economy and the institutional infrastructure and realities of the country's public sector. The chapter considers the governance relationships of language-related institutions in the country. These include PanSALB, the National Language Services, SADiLAR, as well as relevant sub-national agencies.

The analysis suggests that strengthening and streamlining governance will require specific institutional reform as well as inter-agency collaboration, coherent and coordinated professionalization interventions, and robust frameworks for monitoring and evaluation. The chapter outlines feasible governance principles and institutional restructuring options for the SALPC.

Chapter 9: Online Survey Review

In this chapter the responses from the online survey, distributed via the South African Cultural Observatory database and social media platforms, are processed and analysed. The main aim was to collect and assess the opinions of professionals, stakeholders and the public about the

dynamics of the South African language economy and available resources including the availability of data. The survey involved 88 respondents, of which 71% were language practitioners.

The survey results show that the sector is strongly supportive of South Africa multilingual heritage development. Multiple themes are identified inducing lack of dependable data and access thereto; fragmented coordination; and limited professional development opportunities. A further significant theme is the continuing lack of resources for indigenous language and technology. The respondents were generally positive regarding the future, emphasizing new technological possibilities and partnership models, and developing the national understanding of the value of cultural and linguistic diversity.

The results also indicate that the sector has the potential to deliver substantial economic empowerment alongside educational benefits, improved public service delivery and cultural preservation. Overall, the South African language economy requires strategic investment, partnerships, along with policy implementation and inclusive stakeholder engagement to achieve its full potential.

Chapter 10: Strategic Interview Findings

This chapter explores insights provided by thirteen interviews with sector experts. The semi-structured interview approach allowed a measure of consistency in the questions answered but allowed participants to provide detailed responses expressing their views and concerns. Themes include the definition and classification/s of language practitioners; the socio-economic impact of the sector; funding and investment challenges; the awareness of PanSALB; the likely role of the SALPC; the willingness of practitioners to contribute to professional structures; and possible challenges. The respondents differed on the role/s and rationale for the SALPC. Some saw it assisting in the unification and coordination of the sector while others were concerned about possible bureaucratic and gatekeeping behaviour. Among the challenges noted was the experience of being undervalued; the continued dominance of English; and limited funding and support available. There was also a desire for improved support for mother-tongue instruction.

This section showed the need to balance improved language proficiency while retaining language diversity.

Chapter 11: Synthesis and Recommendations

Chapter 11 comprises a synthesis of the findings and puts forward a series of preliminary recommendations. It identifies structural gaps, systemic weaknesses as well as emerging opportunities within the country's language economy. It draws on the findings of the literature review, international benchmarking, and institutional analysis. Furthermore, a gap analysis has been informed by the insights from stakeholder interviews conducted with various language practitioners, educators, policymakers as well as sectoral specialists.

The section reveals the central challenges namely a fragmented institutional framework within the sector; limited coordination; relatively poor data infrastructure; and inadequately recognized efforts regarding indigenous language work. The chapter also underlines opportunities for reform, most particular through the establishment of the SALPC; the establishment of an EOL research and policy presence; investment in bespoke digital

platforms; as well as the formation of a language economy satellite account within national statistics. Such interventions would allow the sector to contribute more directly to development efforts.

Conclusion

The concluding chapter underlines the importance of a well-structured, strategic and inclusive approach to the re-imagining and construction of a more coherent and productive South African language economy. The gaps and shortcomings revealed in the foregoing discussion is a call for action central to which is the operationalization of the SALPC in more comprehensive but agile form. Multilingualism should be treated as an opportunity and meshed with a drive for enhanced proficiency in all languages including foreign and trading languages. The EOL component should be institutionalized in this process to help chart and develop appropriate and cost-effective policy responses. The SALPC can be a touchstone for transformation, justice, cultural enhancement and economic empowerment.

This initial report of the four-part report series lays the foundations for the understanding of the nature, scope and dynamics of the language economy in South Africa. It will help in the process of implementing the SALPC and in preparing an accompanying National Language Masterplan. It requires collaboration across the sector, new kinds of partnerships and funding, and a recognition of language work as a fundamental complement of social and economic development.

1. Chapter 1: Introduction

Language plays a critical role in social cohesion, economic activity, and access to information in South Africa. The country's linguistic diversity, recognised through its 12 official languages and numerous Indigenous languages, necessitates a structured approach to the development and regulation of language services.

The South African language economy encompasses the work of language practitioners, institutions, and resources that contribute to language development, preservation, and monetisation in various domains, including government, education, business, and technology. The South African Language Practitioners' Council Act, 2014 (Act No. 8 of 2014) defines language practitioners as professionals engaged in various language-related fields, including translation, interpretation, language planning, terminology development, lexicography, and text editing.

The Act established the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) to regulate training, accreditation, and registration within the profession, ensuring high standards and effective governance. The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) has been assigned the task to implement the provisions of the South Africa Language Practitioners' Council Act of 2014, and to formally establish and operate the organization in question, the need for a scoping of the needs, organizational form, logistics, costs, and externalities of such an undertaking. Act 08 of 2014 establishes the South African Language Practitioners' Council, aiming to regulate the training, accreditation, and control of language practitioners and setting standards for quality in translation and interpretation.

However, with increased national and international pressure on state funding, the question of attracting additional funding and creating and financing new posts and/or filling vacant posts requires a rethinking and restructuring of the organization to become a more agile, entrepreneurial, and reflexive agency.

New kinds of funding, resources, and partnerships may need to be considered out of necessity as the main source of funding for PanSALB is derived from the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC) which is itself under some pressure to accommodate an increased number of initiatives and portfolio activities. Moreover, there would seem to be a need to move beyond a reliance on linguistic, socio-linguistic, and language-centred disciplines and related disciplinary approaches.

Given the commitment of the Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture and national government more generally, to the development of the creative and cultural economy and indeed the expansion of this sector, it is necessary to establish a substantive but relatively inexpensive Economics of Language component or unit. One of the outcomes of a series of four reports (this is the first) will be to recommend where the unit should be housed, or if it should be stand-alone.

The Council will need to be operationalized and run on a cost-effective basis. This entails a roadmap to a functional business plan and associated rationale and documentation. Revenue streams will need to be identified and delineated.

1.1 Purpose and scope of the report

The purpose of this product description is to define and operationalise the development of a Commissioned Research Report. This exploratory research report should be seen as a pilot report laying the groundwork for the three subsequent reports. The four reports will collectively provide a business case the implementation, financing and operationalising of the South African Language Practitioners Council and clarify the involvement of PanSALB in the implementation of the SAPC Act.

1.2 Objectives of the study

This largely desktop report seeks to realise the following objectives:

- Provide an overview of the South African language economy, identifying and outlining key stakeholders, resources, and industry trends.
- Identify the relevant value chains and/or ecosystems for PanSALB and its stakeholders.
- Identify the dynamics shaping the language economy, including socio-economic, political, technological, and cultural factors.
- Map existing resources, including language practitioners, institutional frameworks (e.g., PanSALB, university language units), language tools (e.g., dictionaries, translation software), and funding mechanisms.
- Assess the availability and accessibility of data, including information on language usage, demand for language services, industry growth trends, and the socio-economic value of multilingualism.
- Establish a baseline for future research and policy development, supporting evidence-based decision-making in language planning and economic policy.

1.3 Structure of the report

The structure of the report is informed by the purpose and scope and objectives.

The first chapter is an extensive theory and literature review which is used to guide the desktop research, interviews and questionnaire that was distributed as part of the exercise.

The next chapter provides context and background. The study has been commissioned following the establishment of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) by the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act, 2014 (Act No. 8 of 2014) to regulate training, accreditation, and registration within the profession, ensuring high standards and effective governance.

The chapter places the South African language economy within a global context. Language policies, such as official language choices and bilingualism, affect welfare and economic efficiency. Research combining economics, sociolinguistics, and political science examines these policies' impacts on national economies and social cohesion.

The chapter also reviews the institutional and policy landscape, as well as the current challenges and opportunities.

Chapter 4 deals with policy, regulation and governance. The three go together as policy informs regulation, which impacts on governance. Language policies can enhance economic growth by strategically supporting and managing language use to improve communication, foster innovation, facilitate trade, and develop human capital.

The policy landscape includes the Constitution (Section 6(3)(a)); Section 27(2) of the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997; the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020); Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No. 12 of 2012); Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000) Language of Access; and Language in Education Policy (LIEP) of 1997. The report highlights the continued marginalisation of Khoesan languages of the first peoples of the country.

The study found that most language regulators around the world have primarily advisory roles without strong enforcement powers. The ones that stand out for their authoritative ability to enforce language rules, sometimes with legal backing include the Académie Française, Quebec's OQLF, Real Academia Española (RAE) and Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española, Academia Brasileira de Letras (Brazil) and Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (Portugal), Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung (Council for German Orthography), Academy of Persian Language and Literature, Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa (Tanzania) and Chama cha Kiswahili cha Taifa (Kenya), Academy of the Arabic Language, National Language Authority (Pakistan) and National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (India), and the Board for Standardization of the Serbian Language.

A notable absence is a regulatory body for English.

Existing statutory bodies in South Africa were studied to provide potential models for governance of the new entity. The study looks at sustainability through income generation and fee structure, as well as governance and financial oversight.

Chapter 5 deals with the methodology and research methods. A mixed-methods approach offered a comprehensive framework for studying South Africa's design sector. The headings are literature review and policy analysis; stakeholder mapping and interviews; sectoral data collection and analysis; ecosystem mapping; economic and market analysis; identifying strategic interventions; and comparative analysis.

Chapter 6 provides a high-level economic and market analysis of the South African language economy. It examines the socio-economic, political, legal, technological and cultural drivers of the language economy. It provides an estimate of the size of the language economy. Due to paucity of data, several areas for further research are identified.

Chapter 7 maps the ecosystem. It aims to provide both a conceptual and practical overview of how the sector operates by (i) profiling the key actors and institutions involved, (ii) illustrating the network of relationships and flows between these actors, and (iii) discussing the systemic dynamics that influence behaviour, constraints, and opportunities within the sector.

Chapter 8 details the supporting instruments and training programmes and certification bodies supporting the language economy.

Chapter 9 analyses the results of an online survey sent to a selection of language practitioners.

Chapter 10 analyses the qualitative interviews conducted for this phase of the research.

Chapter 11 identifies the gaps in the knowledge base, makes recommendations and informs the next study in the series of 4.

Chapter 12 is the conclusion.

2. Chapter 2: Theory and Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This literature review considers select international developments and debates that relate to the question of professionalizing the language sector and economy and aspects thereof. Expanded and more economic notions of language need to be incorporated into the thinking about the future spheres of influence and activities of the SALPC. And it should also be borne in mind, that in the subsequent policy and economic analysis chapters, there is a further consideration of certain literature-related elements.

2.2. Professions and Professionalization

The broad question of professionalization and the professions is raised in the first sub-section of the review, to orientate the reader as well as to provide one of a number of touchstones for the discussion here and the overall report.

Julia Evetts (2018) takes a sociological approach to considering the changing role of professions. She notes the conditioning role of the nation state in thinking about professions, including differentiating between Anglo-America and European systems of professions. The role of the nation state has traditionally been paramount as states have accorded legitimacy to practices such as licencing professional activities, establishing relevant standards of regulation and practice, and underpinning professional education. However, the internationalization of markets has obliged a rethinking of traditional professional jurisdictions (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the enhanced mobility of professional practitioners between nation-states has meant recognizing the varying licencing, education and training requirements of other nation states. The increased convergence of professional system and regulatory regimes (including at regional levels as in the EU) has necessitated the revisioning of developments and the disciplinary fields of professional occupational groups (*ibid.*).

Overall, Evetts finds that professionalism is changing with service professionals increasingly being employed in large-scale organizational workplaces and at times in international professional work forms. She stresses that redefinition of professionalism and its links with management constitute opportunities and benefits for professional work and workers as well substantive challenges. Understanding the continuities as well as these current challenges and opportunities is one of the most crucial set of tasks for both professional institutions (current and newly conceived) and governments for the immediate future (*ibid.*).

Since the 19th century argue Serrano & Kreber (2014), the debate on the professionalization of higher education has polarized opinion. For one school, the professionalization process carries the risk of 'instrumentalizing knowledge' and obliging the university to conform to the interests of the market or state. For other theorists, a distinct opportunity is opened for the university to respond to the real needs of societies and for helping and repositioning hitherto theoretical and fractured disciplines into a coherent pursuit of the resolution of challenging and concrete issues. The authors' objectives are three-fold: Firstly, they show that the overall debate is illuminated not only by consideration of ideas of what a university is, but also by ideas of a profession and by association professional training.

Secondly, the writers demonstrate that an informed understanding of a profession can mitigate the risk of seeing knowledge primarily as scientific expertise and thus employing a reductive view of training as the acquisition of technical skills. Their position of professions in this article is predicated on the analyses of Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre whose writings are informative in conceptualizing professions as ‘rational practical activities’ that are embedded in social contexts ‘with their own internal goods’ (Serrano & Kreber 2014:1). The authors’ third objective is thus to argue with MacIntyre that the presence of professions within the university provides the means and opportunity to rescue and revive forms of rationality that are action oriented and by implication promote spaces and modes of training that are resistant to solely corporate or state interests and criteria of ‘mere effectiveness’ (ibid.).

2.3. The Professionalization of Language: Global Imperatives

The above section leads into a series of snapshots of strategic aspects of the professionalization of language professions internationally. There is a surprisingly modest body of literature overall on this topic and new research and insights are keenly needed by the language industry and sector both nationally and globally.

Helmersen et al (2008) argue foreign language programmes have resulted traditionally in an emphasis on philology degrees or language and literature degrees. By and large, existing non-philology degree programmes have fed into qualifications as translators and/or interpreters, often at higher education institutions outside the traditional research universities. Shifts in professional ecosystems, and changing demand for competencies and skills, are not adequately accommodated in such programmes. Universities are under pressure to re-evaluate their programme offerings and include contract to cater more directly to needs of the labour markets. Crucially, this reassessment and restructuring must be implemented in close cooperation within the world of work (ibid.).

Sara Eaton notes that since the 2000s, literature and language organizations internationally have been confronted by new kinds of challenges and models for language education. Assessment has had to accommodate frameworks, benchmarks and various asset-based approaches. In addition, more bespoke and reflexive learner-centred methodologies have come to the fore. And there has been more emphasis on proving the value of language learning through stories and speech (Eaton 2010: 5). The accelerating trend of invoking technology in language learning was also noted. Learners are experiencing the world via technology in ways their parents and teachers generally never did.

Also important was the direct linking of language learning to leadership skills. ‘In short, the focus in language education in the twenty-first century is no longer on grammar, memorization and learning from rote, but rather using language and cultural knowledge as a means to communicate and connect to others around the globe.’ (Easton 2010: 5). Language learning thus is being reconceptualized as a more collaborative, learner-centred and technology-intensive field with interaction across the globe (Eaton 2010: 18)

A 1999 University of California, Berkeley survey (Van Deusen-Scholl et al 1998) notes how the narrow identification of lecturers with teaching institutionally sanctions the common divide between language teaching and literature and theory on the other. Furthermore, it tends to diminish the project of second language acquisition and the teaching of foreign languages by withholding ‘the rigorous scholarly expectations, standards, and respect which characterizes

all other aspects of departments of modern languages and literature'. It suggests that whether or not the lecturers in question will convert their research and professionalization desires into actual projects, the important thing is to construct the necessary framework to allow this to occur.

Lamb (2012) examines the LACS project (Language Associations and Collaborative Support) which was established in 2008 under the auspices of European Centre for Modern Language's (ECML)'s second medium-term programme, Empowering Language Professionals (2008-2011). It constituted the first large-scale cooperation between the ECML and the Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes/International Federation of Language Teacher Associations (FIPLV). The cooperation made sense as the organizations had certain common features – both are committed to multilingualism and both are membership organizations duly bound to support members to justify the membership fees. The LACS project examined issues affecting language teacher associations, encouraging them to share ideas on how membership organisations can support their members more effectively. The project entailed research into the respective functions, challenges and relevant strategies adopted by the two entities.

One of the striking aspects of the research was the strong consensus about the challenges facing the LTAs (Language Teaching Associations). The most common of these challenges was that of falling membership experienced by such associations around the world. Given that membership fees are regarded universally as the main challenges facing such associations, this constitutes a real challenge to the viability of the association in question. In some cases, staff are laid off, and moves made to smaller premises, and this can lead to less support for volunteers and members. Such exercises can be self-defeating: with fewer members, fewer services and lowered organizational visibility are often the result. This in turn usually results in even fewer members. A range of LTAs reported challenges which arose from the declining status of language learning (other than English. And in some countries, political devolution to states, provinces and other sub-national structures makes campaigning and lobbying more difficult (2012: 16).

Along with societal changes and struggles to recruit and retain members, there is also a perceive need to reconsider both internally and externally oriented functions of the LTA which are substantially inter-related. An internally robust organization it is argued, has members 'whose immediate individual professional development needs are being met, but whose personal situation, which can be affected by changes in policy, are also being defended' (2012: 25). In terms of the external dimension, the ability to impact on curriculum development and policy is conditioned by strength of the LTA's claim to represent the profession, in terms of membership numbers as well as diversity of views. Organizational development and sustainability require innovation in providing a forum for new kinds of continuing professional development, but also in providing a site for debate.

However, there is also evidence that LTAs are responding to this challenge by streamlining and under-emphasizing their identity as professional institutions, while showcasing their identity as professional networks. This links with certain research on other professional associations which has described networks metaphorically as spaces rather than conduits, seeing them as sites of social constructed communicative action rather than a means of presenting information (ibid...). Such social theoretic considerations hark back to the work of sociologist

Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory* (1979) and the underemphasis on the multi-dimensionality and ubiquity of 'space' in social theory (Haines & Buijs 1985).

The conceptualization of LTAs as 'spaces' is strategic, as they need to serve a variety of functions, be agile and adaptive, cope with ongoing change, and be inclusive regarding emerging interest groups. LTAs as 'spaces' must also provide physical and virtual opportunities for interaction and articulation of local, national and international levels and sites and, and have a capacity for mediating internally and externally to represent and communicate members' voices and interests. There is a shift from shared normative values to a situation where differing individuals (and groups) are accommodated in a variety of spatial contexts from the local and direct to virtual and internationalized settings (Lamb 2012).

Béatrice Dupuy and Muriel Grosbois (2020) argue that contemporary institutions of higher education are facing deep-seated challenges in coping with global shifts at the intersection of science and society, which shape new modes of knowing and learning to know with a view to develop professionals able to problem-solve such kinds of problems. To meet these socio-economic imperatives, HEIs are increasingly required to respond to the demand of enhanced soft skills, which are becoming as valued as hard skills in the workplace. Consequently, developing an array of competencies such as intercultural understanding, problem-solving abilities, critical thinking and importantly an ability to speak in multiple Foreign Languages and to participate in networked communication techniques, has become a crucial focus in efforts to develop internationally competitive workforces. There is a growing demand for able intercultural multilingual speakers to facilitate and negotiate with the varied global value chains. However, a disjunction remains between present needs and outcomes. This problematizes the accepted ways in which FLs are taught and learned as well as the content of FL programmes. Moreover, such developments highlight the need for the paradigm shift from education to lifelong learning to be more coherently acknowledged. Lifelong learning has evolved and tends to be viewed as a response to social trends and how humans acquire knowledge and skills. More flexible programmes and learning paths, and modes of assessment, recognition of prior learning, within a reflexive learner-centred approach is necessary. Although there are learning opportunities for professionals across academic and for people at various stages of their career paths, the broader question is whether HEIs can look beyond the completion of a degree and see the degree as a milestone that brings together the learner, the learning community and the institutions involved on a lifelong learning path/s (Dupuy & Grosbois 2020).

In respect of those programmes of universities and HEIs more generally, there are several key questions (ibid.). Firstly, can higher education structures expand Foreign Language (FL) teaching and learning products and services and help ensure that their graduates continue to evolve and flourish in changing work environments. Secondly, what kinds of programmes should HEIs develop to better serve continuing FL learning in professional sectors and spaces? Thirdly, what processes and structures are most helpful in facilitating such learning?

Although dealing the relationship between professionalization of language teaching and the advancement of English teaching internationally, a book chapter by Goyak et al (2024) offers interesting insights into the professionalization of language teaching.

The study considers the professionalization of English teacher internationally with reference to India. It provides an historical context. The authors note continuing advances in professionalism with roots in recent centuries. A significant development was the

establishment in many parts of the world of a public education system to ensure that citizens could read and write. Previously, parents would teach their children at home, but with growing industrialization, teachers increasingly filled this role. Traditionally, new teachers would learn their craft from experienced teachers in a form of apprenticeship. In the main towns this tradition was supplemented by teacher training courses. With variances in time and place, professional bodies were formed to institute courses and testing to formally accredit teachers. Such bodies have evolved and are now supporting teachers to attend and present at conferences on a more systematic basis. Furthermore, there is a growing body of professional journals to help teachers disseminate their research (ibid.).

The study outlines strategic recommendations for professionalizing English Teaching internationally (Goyak et al 2024). Such measures include the establishment of teaching unions and educational associations. The authors point out further that global professional associations have collaborated to undertake two kinds of related by different collective action. The first of these objectives is the enhancement of the financial and work conditions of their members. The second and potentially the main objective is to enhance the overall socio-economic impact of the organization's members. These two objectives are best considered separately as it there may be structural contradictions. Commencing in the latter half of the 18000s educators from elementary and secondary schools set up associations to provide teaching organizations for various subject areas and differing kinds of schools. Germany and France were among the trailblazers here and had up to five kinds of teachers' associations aligned with a tiered educational system. These associations operated mostly independently. By the mid-20th century these structures in Europe coalesced into powerful national organizations (ibid.).

The study proceeds to the establishment of professional associations organized by university teachers to enhance their scholarship and educational qualifications and expertise. These bodies generally assume that society will support them materially and morally, if they excel in research, intellectual writing and teaching. Members may include academics who work in various academic disciplines but are not formally employed as university lecturers. All countries have learned societies that inter alia produce journals, host regular conferences and seek to advance research within specific areas. In addition, there are inter-disciplinary institutions such as the Social Science Research Council in the US, and the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in Britain. Furthermore, there are selective prestigious associations that honour prominent individuals that promote the interests of profession (Goyak et al 2024).

Language and the Workings of the Global Economy

The interrelationships between languages and the global economy are often invoked but more focussed and critical aspects are not sufficiently applied to efforts at national language professionalization.

Ahmad Aljarelah (2024) considers the diversifying importance of language in international communication. He argues that language is central in contemporary global society in facilitating cross-cultural communication. The study considers the strategic value of language in international relations, most particular in its effects on commerce, cultural exchange and diplomacy. It examines how the learning of a new language could improve processes of communication between nations, which in turn would lower tensions and encourage cooperation. Furthermore, the study considers the question of being bilingual in global settings

and the obstacles and challenges of language diversity (ibid.). In addition, case studies and theoretical perspectives are closely considered to show how language enables international communication. The piece also underlines the necessity for well-designed language policies and language education to enhance global engagement

In an editorial for a book on language and international business Brannen, Pietkkari & Tietze (2014) argue that while language is at the centre of international business (IB) activities, as an discourse in the field of IB needs to be more articulated and theorized. Language manifests itself in various forms and accompanying hierarchies such as national, corporate, electronic or technical factets, and empowers and assists in integration and in features such as gender marking and the use of mixed syntax. Increasingly the need to understand the extensive interplay between manifold aspects and how they impact on operations is essential for global business effectiveness (ibid.). The authors advocate the formation of a specialized domain in IB scholarship concentrating on language (ibid.).

An important piece by Keith Chen (2013) of Yale University tests the hypothesis that languages that associate grammatically the future and the present, foster future-oriented behaviour. Such a prediction is arrived at naturally when extensively documented effects of language structure are integrated with ‘models of intertemporal choice’ (ibid.). He finds that speakers of such languages save more, smoke less, practice safer sex, are less obese and retire with more wealth. Such findings hold across countries as well as within countries when demographically similar native households are compared. The evidence does not support the most well known and obvious forms of common causation. The implications for theories of intertemporal choice are also discussed.

2.4. Digital Technologies and the Language Economy

Britta Schneider (2022) explores the impact of commercial language technologies on the regimentation of language globally and argues that such applications reinforce the power interests of commercial and international capital. She shows that language technologies predicated on the mining of large data sets ranging from machine translation and automatic text generation through to digital voice assistants – comprise a specific form of human-made sign practice in which there is an interplay between traditional language norms, the economies of digital devices and the capitalist interests of the designers. These socio-technological practices and discourses build in effect language hierarchies within the domain of commercially oriented language technology. These practices can shape both hegemonic discourses about language within society, and epistemologies of language in linguistics fields (ibid. 362). The article homes in on the interrelationships between digital language technology and ‘metasemiotic’ notions of language that relate to multilingualism, language variation and the question of the prestige of certain languages. Schnieder approaches languages ‘discursive constructs’ and underlines the role of media technology in creating language ideology (ibid. 363). In doing so she shows that writing and print have a major impact on modern language concepts.

She points out further that as they are currently made for an array of languages, language technologies can be seen to be supporting multilingualism. This attribute, however, is inhibited by the data utilized and the ‘capitalist logics’ in play if multilingualism is only promoted when there is an economic benefit (Schneider 2022: 368). Also, there is likelihood that the voices conforming to hegemonic positions are more likely to prevail. The emancipatory potential of

language and the degree of linguistic diversification and particularity will likely be dependent on the aims of those who design and finance the development of tools (ibid.).

The implication for current and evolving national professional agencies will need to factor such inclinations into their work for their members and constituencies.

Karakoulas, D & Theologou, K (2023) The Crucial Impact of Technology on Language and Culture. *American Journal of Sciences and Engineering Research*, 6, (6), 1-10. Accessed Jun 16 2025.

In a recent work Karakoulas & Theologou (2023) highlight the ‘catalytic influence of technology on language’ which as they see it, constitutes a central component of culture. New information and communication technologies and their global dissemination have wrought fundamental changes with respect to human society on various levels. Key features of new globalization can be interpreted because of such innovations most specifically the spread of the internet. Language is a primary factor in the expressing of new sets of innovation most particular via the local language or languages. The authors argue that at their core, technological revolutions can in fact be seen as cultural revolutions. Technology is thus not the machine or vehicle of such transformations, but total set of relations that development between people, technological objects, and related domains of knowledge (ibid.). It is also important not to underestimate the impact of technological determinism in the shaping of national languages within technological parameters. A key question is whether the new situation has overall a positive or negative effect and whether it has inhibited the existing cultural, social and linguistic background of the country in question. In other words the authors raise the question of whether the influence of local identity in its various expressions was considered a priori in efforts to incorporate new technologies (Karakoulas & Theologou 2023).

Orlando, Marc, Kruger, Jan Louis, & Liao, S (2024) *Translation and Interpreting technologies and their impact on the industry February 2024 A report prepared for the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) by Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Medicine, Health, and Human Sciences, Macquarie University.* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383089072_Translation_and_Interpreting_technologies_and_their_impact_on_the_industry. Accessed 16 June 2025.

Orlando, Kruger & Liao (2024) are among the academic writers noting a surge in the adoption of digital technologies in the early 2020s T&I practices and the language industry more generally. They note that the incorporation of technology is more advanced in the sphere of translation than interpreting. They also point out that signs of improvement are contingent on factors such as the availability of language resources, the specific text genre (e.g poetry vs repetitive and formulaic material such as technical manuals).

The authors argue that notwithstanding the advancement of digital technologies within T&I practices, human interventions remain crucial especially in high-stakes and complex activities and applications. The prospect of the replacement of human translators and interpreters in all areas of practice remains in the distance. In addition, although technology has a profound impact on the performance of translation services, the constraints of such technologies has become more apparent. Thus in the European Masters’ Translation Competence Framework of 2022, human skills will play a central role in the provision of high-quality translations, and the widening of the spectrum of language services provided by translators and translation

companies. Crucially, the training of T&I practitioners must consciously acknowledge human skills as strategic differentiators in a technology-oriented job market, and consequently provide translators and interpreters with a versatile and sophisticated skill set for an evolving discipline (Orlando, Kruger & Liaio 2024).

Worne, John (2025) The Impact of AI on the Language Industry: Opportunities and Challenges. Presentation to the Association of Interpreters and Translators, United Kingdom. <https://www.ciol.org.uk/impact-ai-language-industry-opportunities-and-challenges>. Accessed 16 June 2025.

A recent presentation by CEO John Worne (2025) of the Association of Interpreters and Translators, highlighted the inroads made by artificial intelligence (AI) in transforming the language profession and industry. While language professionals have already experienced a range of technological revolutions, especially in translation, the emergence of generative AI in 2023, introduced new levels of unpredictability and likely disruption to the field. The current surge in generative AI tool such as ChatGPT, Claude and Microsoft's Copilot, has shown the capabilities of such tools, but also demonstrated the very real risks and limitations. He notes the varying quality of machine translation across different language pointing out that while MT works fairly well for core Romance languages and German, its efficacy declines for languages such as Chinese and Japanese. Furthermore, it is 'nearly useless' for those languages which are less commonly included in AI training data in English-speaking countries, with the various African languages being a particular example. Generative AI, which invokes complex pattern recognition to predictively generate text based on prompts, offers both real opportunities and challenges for linguists. Although these tools are speedy and quite workable, they pose risks such as hallucinations (the generation of believable but false information), data leakage and potentially 'false errors' with dire consequences in translation (ibid.).

In interpreting, recent University of Surrey research suggests that AI tools can enhance the performance of highly capable interpreters but may inhibit less experienced ones because of the higher cognitive load in play. (Worne 2025). And there are challenges of using AI in real-time interpreting, where language structure and cadence are key factors (ibid.). For translators the advent of Generative AI has contributed to mixed user experiences with some practitioners reporting increased efficiency and output, while others have noted negative influences on rates and fees. New joint human-AI endeavours need to be developed and monitored.

There are concerns about the inappropriate use of AI translation tools in public service, especially in healthcare and local government settings, where fiscal calculations could compromise the quality and availability of languages support (ibid.)

Worne emphasises the need for national-level accountability and commitments to standards, particularly in public sector contexts. The author speculated that in the future translation technologies would continue to diverge with more specialized tools for professional linguists being made available and developed separately from mainstream and more consumer-oriented AI translation and interpreting apps and browser tools. He stresses further that human linguists will remain in demand because of their ability to understand context, nuance, and cultural significance in communication, and to monitor such work (ibid.).

2.5. The Global Positioning and Deployment of English

Language policy planning and association building need to take into account more explicitly into account the debates and economic development implications of the integration and use of English and the enhancement of English proficiency within national, regional and international language economies. Such thinking needs in turn to be informed by the undervalued Economics of Language (EOL) approach (Haines & Gouws et al 2023).

Vidak & Golemac (2021) note there are surprisingly few empirical studies on the link between English language and economy in the present-day world. While certain comparative survey indicates the nations with higher levels of English language proficiency have more prosperous and stronger economies and higher per capital incomes and thus an improved quality of life. With an increasing emphasis on digital communication in the post-C19 era, there is less direct interaction with gestures or body language, and thus more language precision is needed in the context of globalization and the heightened role of the internet. This in turn has meant that not only is English proficiency an economic advantage but also a basic but essential skill for the entire workforce (ibid.).

Salikolo Mufwene (2005), in a Chicago University research report, outlines and examines his misgivings about a range of linguistics publications on language endangerment and the impact globally of the English language. He argues that a range of scholars writing about these linked subjects, have tended to oversimplify reality, reducing globalization to a process that renders the world 'more and more uniform by the world-wide diffusion of intellectual, linguistic, military, technological, and other cultural products' associated with Western countries such as the USA and the United Kingdom (2005: 1). Globalization is equated with the westernization of the world and write about indigenous languages, 'as if indigeneity were no longer a relative notion and such languages were to be found only in the Americas, Asia and Australia' (ibid.).

In addition, there a 'special metalanguage' has come to the fore, in which languages are represented as agents, and the speakers of endangered or dead languages as no more than victims. Part of the discourse has been about 'language wars' as well as the depiction of English as a 'killer language'. Similar 'false concerns' have arisen about English endangering continental European languages, as the former had become the lingua France of the European Union by the early 2000s. However, as Mufwene (2005) points out the distinction between vernacular and lingua franca functions of languages has been neglected in matters of language competition, although it is crucial in determining whether a language is endangered. The author also points out that the discourse has usually focussed on the rights of languages to survive than on the rights of speakers. Moreover, while the literature has generally emphasized the cultural impoverishment of the relevant sections of the population there is little formal evaluation of the losses and gains among the populations in question who have adapted to 'changing socio-economic ecologies' (Mufwene 2005: 2). He argues further that the contact of languages facilitated by colonization is a decidedly complex process. It is also pointed out that Europeans relinquished their heritage languages due to the imperatives of a 'dominant national socio-economic system that functions in only one language' (2005: 25).

Mufwene (2005) contends that language competition is more locally grounded than linguists have portrayed it, and the fact that English in comparative settings does not function as a vernacular has sidelined it from those spaces contested by indigenous vernaculars. This in turn

underpins his general thesis that European colonial languages are generally no threat to the indigenous languages of Africa and Asia. And in the 21st century the large transnational corporations that inform regional and world-wide globalization of an economic kind 'do not make themselves missionaries of the world languages, because they believe in using the most profitable strategies for the most benefits' (Mufwene 2005: 25). Often this approach means using the language of the local workforce and market, except in the high managerial positions.

The author underlines the need to distinguish between language use in professional domains and vernacular language practice. He notes that multilingual societies have produced many, such as the white-collar elites in Africa and Asia, who use languages that are not their vernaculars in their professional lives but continue to speak ancestral languages in vernacular situation. The prestige of their use of professional languages has not inhibited them in ensuring their indigenous languages (ethnic or urban vernacular) are passed as mother tongues to their children (ibid.). In fact, most English and French users are non-native speakers, who are the prime movers in the spread of these languages (Mufwene 2005: 44).

Ahmed Alsheri (2024) examines the role of language in the construction of professional identity among non-native English speakers in global workplaces. A central concern is to determine the importance of language knowledge and proficiency in English speaking in helping construct the organization position of an individual coming from a non-native background in the language. Based on a quantitative survey of non-native professionals in formal global workplaces where English is used. He finds that the speaking style of non-native English speakers is not the decisive factor in job advancement and achievement, but rather the respondents' interest in communication with others which helps effectively enhance their skills and knowledge, and thus the construction of their professional identity. Language efficiency and usage of proper phrases are improved with the help of the English language. Non-native speakers, it is thus argued, should focus on improving their grammatical knowledge and expertise in the English language. Participation in differing seminars and other means of structured communication benefits from language efficiency (ibid.).

2.6. South African Snapshots

There is relatively little written about the professionalization of language practitioners in South Africa. There is, however, more coverage of the various policy issues regarding language policy and its implementation in South Africa, and debates about the matters such as the role of English. The bulk of the work is from linguistics, sociolinguistics, language practitioners and planners, and specialists within these paradigms. While there is some strategic input from academics and researchers in the literary criticism and theory fields, there is a need for detailed scrutiny of the professional and economic underpinnings of their work. Most of the strategic work on professionalism and professional associations in South Africa, appears to have been carried out from business management and human resource management perspective. Such enquiry has not given much consideration of professionalization of language practitioners to date but rather focussed on more on traditional public and private sector thematic subject matter. The still modest by economists on the workings and effects of the language economy in South Africa.

2.6.1. Select Language Policy and Planning Aspects

Writing ten years after the advent of democracy, Anna-Marie Beukes (2004) in an outline of language policy to date and the related question of implementation, noted with concern that the country was still awaiting the authorization of the South African Languages Bill into an Act of Parliament and 'still grappling with the paralysing tension between the legitimisation and crucial institutionalisation of language policy' (2004:2). She also contended that the promotion of multilingualism and the nurturing of linguistic diversity, as well as the role of language policy in underpinning economic growth and development had not been duly integrated into the national planning (Beukes 2004: 16). On a related matter, she was, also concerned that English was not fully attainable for most South Africans and there was danger in the language become part of the 'cultural capital' of the emerging elite (Beukes 2004: 17). Furthermore, to strengthen social transformation and nurture South Africa's rich linguistic diversity, it was important that the speakers of indigenous languages can accrue 'linguistic capital'. Apart from serving as a means of cultural heritage development, such languages should also become 'vehicles of opportunities' and status-bearing (ibid.).

Julia de Kadt (2005) compares two different interventions to develop indigenous South African languages for use in government, higher education and business. Firstly, she considers the case of the development of Afrikaans during the inter-war years. She finds this generally a success, but with the provision that the development was not as rapid as was originally anticipated. Secondly, she evaluates the prospects for success of the current case, namely the contemporary effort to develop nine indigenous African languages and find the prospects for success to be 'far more limited'. Contextual differences between the cases help explain part of the variation in the success of the language development projects. However, the key explanatory variable she argues, is 'the political salience of a linguistically defined ethnic identity' (de Kadt 2005:1). She contends that language development is not likely to be achieved unless it becomes the survival of the government is dependent on it. She notes too that the Apartheid regime's use of African ethnic identities to entrench segregation and discrimination has in fact de-legitimized the use of such identities as a political vehicle in post-apartheid South Africa. While this has been useful in achieving a degree of political stability and diluting inter-ethnic tension in modern South Africa, it has also reduced the prospects of the development of any indigenous African language in South Africa. For large-scale language development interventions to be a success in the country, new strategies must be instituted to take due account of the political realities and contradictions (De Kadt 2005).

The case of Afrikaans shows not only the necessity for a committed state, but also the central of cultural bodies and universities in language development. In short, in the South Africa of today, ethnicity and language while important in respect of personal identity, are for the largely irrelevant to political identity. The tangled history of the country has resulted in matters of race and socio-economic status shaping political behaviour. Thus, while the politico-historic setting of policy making has made the official equality of all eleven national languages [now twelve] non-negotiable, there has been insufficient political incentive to develop substantially any of the nine new languages.

In the more immediate future, the federal structure of the country offers one potential approach with much of the responsibility of language development being devolved to provincial structures, although with formal mechanism of accountability in place (De Kadt 2005).

A book chapter by Molefe & Marais (2013) discusses the role and effects of language practices in public services in South Africa via a case study of the rural town of Philippolis in the Free State province. The authors point out that in apartheid South Africa public services were not provided on an equal basis to South African citizens, with select race and cultural/language groups favoured over others. Citizens who were members of the two dominant language groups (English and Afrikaans) were more privileged regarding the delivery of public services. In the post-apartheid era service delivery has a distinct focus on redress. Nevertheless, there are still problems with service delivery particularly in the rural areas where most poorer people are speakers of indigenous Bantu languages, and their command of the languages of the public service is poor at best. With the high illiteracy rate in the country, previously disadvantaged people can fully exercise their human rights as they cannot communicate in English, while government officials are not always able to speak the official languages in which members of the public are familiar. Despite constitutional rights and relevant policy measures, access to public services is still dependent on the command of English. Indeed, with the partial decline in the use of Afrikaans there is in effect more recourse to English.

The authors show that language constitutes a larger problem in the case of Philippolis than one would expect. While most residents do not experience many difficulties in face-to-face oral conversations as they are largely multilingual. However, language problems mostly occur in written communication. Problems tend to occur when an officer must take down a written statement in another language. The authors suggest that moving towards oral communication and oral recording could be of assistance in such settings. At the time of writing about the select case, community interpreters and translators were mostly bilingual or multilingual staff members and family members who were used as ad hoc interpreters at public-service institutions. With community members finding the ways of resolving their own oral language problems, professional interpreters/translators were/are seldom used (Molefe & Marais 2013).

2.6.2. Professional Associations and the Professionalization of Language Practice in South Africa

Goldman, LM, Arnolds, CA & Eksteen, B (2016) Increasing the Organisational Effectiveness of Professional Associations in South Africa. *Journal of Contemporary Management*, 12 (5), 246-270.

Goldman, Arnolds & Eksteen (2016) adopt a business management approach to the question of how to improve the organizational effectiveness of professional associations in South Africa. They make the point that professionals such as accountants and lawyers, along with their professional associations (PAs) serve a variety of organizations such as private sector companies, educational institutions and courts of law. Without professional associations, they argue, these organizations and the economy would not be able to operate with efficiency. PAs are frequently presented with swift, unpredictable and complex changes to which they must adapt timeously to provide the requisite services to their members. Globalization obligates professionals to display more ingenuity in providing goods and services for domestic and international markets. Consequently, if PAs do not grow and develop, and are not well run and effective, then business, society and the economy will be adversely affected. Based on a sampling of senior officials of 25 South African PAs, this study reveals how membership growth can be attained and how the organizational effectiveness of PAs can be enhanced. The empirical findings underline that (i)

operating as an effective learning organization (ELO); and (ii) membership growth are important measures of a PA's organization efficacy. The results also showed that access to funding constituted a positive correlation with a PA being an ELO. In addition, membership growth is positively impacted by (i) the competitive characteristics of a PA; (ii) being an ELO; and (iii) being seen as the first mover in its industry (Goldman, Arnolds & Eksteen 2016).

2.6.2.1. Professionalising Language work in South Africa

The professionalisation of language work in South Africa continues to face notable challenges, particularly due to the lack of formal regulation and clearly defined industry standards. In their study on the formalisation of the language sector, Law and Kruger (2008) highlight the limited progress made toward establishing a recognised framework for editors and translators. Although the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) has introduced voluntary accreditation in an effort to enhance professional standards, such initiatives remain partial, covering only certain aspects of language practice such as translation, while excluding others like content editing or project coordination (Law & Kruger, 2008). Furthermore, while the proposed Language Practitioners' Council Bill—introduced under the National Language Policy Framework—was intended to regulate the field more comprehensively, it has yet to be enacted, stalling the broader project of professionalisation in the South African language industry (Law & Kruger, 2008).

International efforts to professionalise the editing industry provide valuable comparative insights, particularly the models established in Australia and Canada. Australia's journey toward the professionalisation of the editing industry began in earnest in 2001 with the establishment of the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP) by the Council of Australian Societies of Editors (CASE). These standards provided a comprehensive framework for editorial practice, covering aspects such as the publishing process, legal and ethical concerns, and language use. In 2005, the Institute of Professional Editors (IPEd) was launched to further these efforts, focusing on national initiatives like accreditation schemes, training, and mentoring programs. IPEd's accreditation process includes a nationwide examination assessing core editing skills, reflecting a commitment to maintaining high professional standards within the industry.

Similarly, Canada has made significant strides in standardising its editing profession through the Editors' Association of Canada (EAC), established in 1990. The EAC developed the Professional Editorial Standards, first published in 1991 and revised in 1999, outlining competencies in structural and stylistic editing, copyediting, proofreading, and understanding the publishing process. While certification through the EAC is voluntary and not legally mandated, it serves as a benchmark for editorial excellence and provides editors with the opportunity to demonstrate their expertise through a series of examinations.

Together, the Australian and Canadian cases illustrate that the development of a professional editing community need not rely on legal regulation alone. Rather, the collaborative formulation of standards, the creation of robust accreditation systems, and the ongoing support of professional bodies can serve to legitimise and elevate editorial work. Australia's structured, legally inclined approach complements Canada's more flexible, skills-based model, offering valuable templates for regions looking to initiate or expand professionalisation efforts in the editing sector.

2.6.3. The Economic of Language (EOL) Dimension in South African Language Policy

Currently the bulk of scholarly literature on South Africa and its setting, comes from a language policy and planning perspective which is predominantly informed by linguists, socio-linguists and the broader field of language policy and planning practitioners. There is a need for more systematic and applied research to be carried out in South Africa, deploying an EOL (Economics of Language) approach. Furthermore, existing LPP initiatives can benefit from an insertion of a more explicit economic contribution to the policy research and design aspects (SACO 2022).

Theo van der Merwe (2014) sets out to examine the relationship between economics and multilingualism in South Africa and explicitly aligns his study with the EOL field. He argues almost programmatically that multilingualism and the associated development of a viable and cost-effective language policy is an integral part of any process of establishing a prosperous and secure country. He finds the current language policy of 11 official languages is both costly and unviable, with English being the major beneficiary of what has become, in effect, a monolingual regime. He argues that the cost implications of multilingualism are inflated, and its benefits are underappreciated. Multilingualism can be seen as a positive externality requiring focused state intervention (van der Merwe 2014).

Given the fiscal pressures on the government, an affordable form of multilingualism was required, which would be based on a more practical and affordable language policy. The number of first-language speakers, as identified in the 2011 Census, would be used to select those languages which could be used at the national level. Following a line of thinking derived from Neville Alexander (1989: 2002), it is mooted that the Nguni and Sotho languages be grouped together. Along with Afrikaans, and they would be used at the national level. A similar process would be followed at the provincial level. However, this would entail the use of four official languages to make provision for English as the *lingua franca*.

Although not a formal economic piece, Laurence Wright's (2002) study 'Language as a 'Resource' in South Africa: The Economic Life of Language in a Globalising Society' is worth considering. His observations still have relevance some twenty years later. He noted:

...how little the South African discussion has been informed by reference to ordinary economic viewpoints...The assumption seems to be that language and culture somehow belong to a different order of things – that while there may be direct and indirect economic benefits from language viewed as an industry, language itself is fundamentally a matter of social identity, political redress and cultural reconstruction, issues to be pursued without reference to what might be called the economic life of language (p3).

For Wright (2002), the 'long-term question' is whether one should look to reduce the dominance and influence of English in the national economy as it constitutes a national resource of international economic value for all South Africans. It provides them with a competitive advantage vis-à-vis other countries which do not possess the same kinds of opportunities for learning and deploying English (ibid. 14). He argues further that we have to take the concept of value (and its different interpretations and applications) more seriously especially in regard to the fact of South African multilingualism. African languages have strong regional underpinnings, which requires businesses operating at local and regional levels to ensure linguistic

competence in the relevant languages to compete effectively. Businesses that expand to interact with the central economy will also have to add English competency to maintain linguistic diversity and expertise (Ibid. 16).

Levinsohn (2007) considers the relationship between the forces of globalisation and the dynamics of English in South Africa in the early post-apartheid years. Using Labour Force Survey Income and Expenditure Survey data, he finds some evidence of a link between globalisation and an upturn in the use of English. The most robust finding is that the return to speaking English increased for the period during which South Africa was reintegrating with the world economy. There is also increased use of English when the Indian population group is included, but not as substantive. For Black South Africans, there is a modest rise in the speaking of English. This, Levinsohn suggests, can be explained partly by the advent of affirmative action, which saw the premium for English decrease as more Black South Africans were promoted to higher-paying jobs. It was no longer the case of just a few English-speaking Blacks earning relatively higher wages. Concerning White South Africans, the penalty for speaking Afrikaans rose, with the language significantly less useful than English in international commerce. Whites whose first language was English benefited conditional on the levels of education and experience and gender (ibid.). One anomaly for Levinsohn was regarding Coloured South Africans; the return to speaking English fell.

At the time, the author considered the research as possibly 'a novel way to revisit the wages and globalisation issue' and that the approach was 'especially well-suited to developing countries, many of which have a rich variety of languages spoken, as they integrate with the global economy' (Levinsohn (2007, p.643). He also felt that by isolating language, the differential impacts of globalisation on different sections of a population could be demonstrated, as seemed to be the case in South Africa (ibid.).

John Casale and Dorrit Posel (2011) take a not-dissimilar tack to Levinsohn. Using data from the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) panel survey of 2008, they investigated the relationship between English proficiency in South Africa. They point out that the bulk of the relevant EOL literature at the time of writing dealt with the effects of acquiring the host country's language by minority groups of immigrants in developing countries. By contrast, their study explored the returns to language skills in a developing country environment – in this case, where the primary language for business, government and education is that of the former colony.

They found that while a small fraction of the African majority population group spoke English as a home language, their findings indicated that those Africans who read and wrote English well, especially if they possessed a tertiary level qualification, demonstrated large returns – in the regions of an additional 97% in earnings (ibid.). This finding differs from that of Levinsohn (2007) and illustrates the importance of fostering debates on EOL matters among interested economists regarding the South African case.

Mohohlwane (2020) provides a socio-economic assessment of the policy dilemma of opting for mother-tongue instruction or 'straight-for-English' education. She notes a number of studies dealing with the question of the benefits of mother-tongue education in primary schooling in South Africa and stresses the pedagogical value of such an approach. However, current efforts to provide and extend mother-tongue instruction are undermined, she contends, by implementation and capacity issues (ibid.). She acknowledges scholarship that indicates that being literate in English would seem to be more important for most South Africans than a

mastery of a home language and studies that show a relationship between English proficiency and a return on earnings. Given that '[t]he economic value is indisputable' the challenge facing South Africa today is 'how to make multilingualism "profitable", such that the value is not only based on ideology and identity but that there is material value' (ibid. 45). She discusses certain with her recommended one as follows:

The implementation scenario could be providing mother tongue education for the first six years within the existing language in education policies, serving as a way to recognise the success of the proven language policy while extending it. Secondly, implementing the full version of the Incremental Introduction of African Languages policy, by making English compulsory as a First Additional Language while also specifically introducing an African First Additional Language. This would be a recognition of the role and significance of English while also affirming the increasing multilingualism of African learners and ensuring that all learners in South Africa learn an African language at the First Additional Language level (ibid. 48-9).

Taylor & Fintel (2016) look to estimate the impact of language instruction in South African primary schools. For many children around the world, especially in developing and middle-income economies, access to the labour market and higher education entails fluency in a second language. In South Africa, most children do not speak English as their first language but are obliged to write their school-leaving examinations in English (ibid.). Many schools offer mother-tongue instruction in the first three grades of school and thereafter transition in the fourth grade to English as the language of instruction. Some schools, especially the model C institutions, offer English as the language of instruction from first grade. In the 2010s several schools changed their policy, creating cross-grade variation in the language of instruction in the formative grades. Using national longitudinal data from the population of South African primary schools, the authors find that mother tongue instruction in the early grades shows a distinct improvement in English acquisition, as measured in grades 4, 5 and 6.

Most schools offer mother-tongue instruction in the first three grades of school and then transition to English as the language of instruction in the fourth grade. Some schools use English as the language of instruction from the first grade. In recent years several schools have changed their policy, thus creating within-school, cross-grade variation in the language of instruction received in the early grades. Using longitudinal data from the population of South African primary schools and a fixed-effects approach, they find that mother tongue instruction in the early grades significantly improves English acquisition, as measured in grades 4, 5 and 6 (2016).

2.7. Conclusion

The foregoing discussion provides through select texts a sense of the issues confronting the thinking and design of bespoke and comprehensive language practitioners' council in a country such as South Africa. Somewhat surprisingly there is relatively modest base of literature both internationally and nationally on language practitioners' council both specific and more comprehensive. Further perspectives on are provided in subsequent chapters on matters and issues with a more policy and economic angles, and more composite understanding should emerge.

What is evident that such a language practitioners' council cannot be primarily a conventional and overly bureaucratic institutions. It needs to be dynamic and a broad church that is both problem finder and problem solver in a complex and contradictory multilingual setting, in which

the optimization of economic and development efficiency is a necessary but still poorly understood capability.

3. Chapter 3: Context and Background

3.1. Introduction

South Africa's rich linguistic diversity, which includes 12 official languages and numerous indigenous languages, necessitates a structured approach to the development and regulation of language services. To develop and manage the language economy, the need has been identified for the establishment of a sustainable Economics of Language component or unit (SACO 2022).

3.2. Report background

Act 08 of 2014 establishes the South African Language Practitioners' Council to regulate the training, accreditation, and control of language practitioners and set standards for quality in translation and interpretation. PanSALB is supporting the establishment of the Council through a memorandum of understanding. This study scopes the needs and makes recommendations on the organization's form, logistical costs, and other factors. It is understood that establishing the Council has placed a burden on the operations and capacity of PanSALB.

The Council will need to be operationalized and run on a cost-effective basis. This involves creating a functional business plan with the necessary rationale and rollout plan. Revenue streams will need to be identified and delineated. Recommendations will also be made regarding how the Council should integrate into the relevant value chains or ecosystem supported by PanSALB.

3.3. Historical SA context

The South African language economy encompasses the work of language practitioners, institutions, and resources that contribute to language development, preservation, and monetisation in various domains, including government, education, business, and technology.

The South African Language Practitioners' Council Act, 2014 (Act No. 8 of 2014) established the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) to regulate training, accreditation, and registration within the profession, ensuring high standards and effective governance.

It defines language practitioners as professionals engaged in various language-related fields, including translation, interpretation, language planning, terminology development, lexicography, and text editing. However, language educators are not included in this definition. Although they are represented by organisations such as the South African Council for Educators (SACE), it can be argued that individuals who studied languages and are working as language teachers should be included.

Despite this formal recognition, the language economy in South Africa remains an under-researched area, with limited systematic analysis of the sector's dynamics, resources, and data accessibility. While previous research has explored aspects of the Economics of Language, there is a need to refine and update our understanding of the impact of the South African language economy.

3.4. International context

Sociologists recognized the value of economics and policy analysis for language policy studies in the 1970s, but economics played a minor role for about 20 years. This changed in the 1990s when social scientists increasingly engaged in research on language in society and applied linguists sought contributions from social sciences. (Gazzola & Wickström, 2016)

Language policies, like official language selection and bilingualism, impact welfare and economic efficiency. Interdisciplinary research merges economics with sociolinguistics and political science to assess the influence of these policies on national economies and social cohesion.

Research promotes stronger integration between linguistics and economics to grasp how economic factors affect language maintenance or loss, speaker choice, and language's role in economic development and technology diffusion.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, interest grew in Europe and North America in using economics to evaluate language policies. The focus shifted to assessing the costs and benefits of these policies, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of different language policy models.

During the 1990s, the scope of research expanded primarily through new empirical studies and case analyses, along with refinements to existing methodologies. Although there were no significant paradigm shifts, developments in other social science disciplines contributed incrementally to the interest in the field of the Economics of Language (EOL). These advancements, which incorporated insights from sociolinguistics, political science, and interdisciplinary policy studies, will be explored further in the subsequent discussion.

New initiatives at macro-regional and international levels influenced the future of EOL studies. The EU's expansion required broader LPP approaches among participating and aspiring member states. Language rights and promotion received increased attention from the United Nations (UN) and its agencies, like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Economic globalisation highlighted the importance of identifying languages that facilitate and promote trade. (Haines & Gouws, The Economics of Language, 2022)

Language policy is being used to guide other policy areas. Examples include education policies impacting linguistic skills in labour markets and worker mobility; university language policies affect student access to knowledge; official language status impact on democratic control capabilities; state-level planning influences ethnic minority rights; while translation requirements for patents or trademarks can create business cost inequalities and bias competition. (Gazzola & Wickström, 2016)

3.5. Institutional / policy landscape

Despite widespread agreement on the need to support multilingualism and promote indigenous languages in South Africa, various cultural, political, economic, and emotional challenges persist. Existing structures might not adequately address these concerns, which require further research.

Before the 1994 democratic transition, it was agreed to recognize nine African languages and retain English and Afrikaans. However, unlike the support Afrikaans received before 1994, there has been minimal government effort to promote these indigenous languages. Without a clear policy on language development, perceptions of the economic insignificance of African languages may grow, reducing demand for education in them. (Haines & Gouws, 2022)

3.6. Current challenges and opportunities

PanSALB is undertaking a structured research process to support the establishment of a SALPC that will register and regulate all language practitioners in South Africa, either through association with existing organisation or individually.

The process addresses the challenge of the lack of a centralised body to regulate and coordinate language practitioners.

As a result, information about language practitioners is scattered across various organisations, including academic institutions, government departments, and industry associations. This fragmented landscape has led to inconsistencies in professional standards, accreditation, and employment opportunities.

3.7. Conclusion

The Preliminary Scoping Exercise is the first step in addressing this challenge. It aims to examine the dynamics, resources, and existing data on language practitioners within the South African language economy. This will provide an evidence-based understanding of the sector, highlighting gaps, opportunities, and key areas requiring regulatory intervention.

The study will explore the role of translators, interpreters, language planners, terminologists, lexicographers, and editors, as well as the broader economic contributions of language services.

The findings will inform subsequent phases of research and ultimately support the development of a business plan and operational strategy for the proposed SALPC.

4. Chapter 4: Policy, Regulation and Governance

4.1. Introduction

Multilingual language policies have historically been influenced by colonial legacies and nation-building programmes that often marginalise minorities. More recently countries have adopted inclusive policies to protect linguistic diversity through legal frameworks and education reforms. Despite formal recognition of minority and indigenous languages, effective policy implementation proves to be hampered by limited political will and therefore the allocation of resources.

Language policies can facilitate economic growth by strategically supporting and managing language use to improve communication, innovation, trade, and human capital development. This occurs through several key methods:

4.1.1. Enhancing Human Capital and Learning Outcomes

Research shows that countries that nurture their native languages experience sustainable economic performance and higher GDP per capita growth. Investing in local indigenous language development improves education quality and school enrolment, which strengthens human capital. When individuals learn and operate in their native language, comprehension and cognitive skills improve, leading to better educational outcomes that fuel innovation and economic productivity. (Okrah, 2022)

4.1.2. Fostering Multilingualism to Expand Markets and Trade

Multilingualism helps countries and businesses reach more export markets and build stronger trade ties. For example, German companies with multilingual staff expanded their export markets by 10 countries. Switzerland credits up to 10% of its GDP to its multilingual heritage, which fosters innovation through cross-cultural collaboration and knowledge exchange. (Hardach, 2018), (Sanako Blog, 2020)

4.1.3. Improving Workforce Productivity and Innovation

Language skills improve communication, problem-solving, and collaboration within diverse teams, which can increase innovation capacity. Multilingual employees may contribute to productivity and business performance, potentially influencing economic growth. Studies show a correlation between language proficiency and innovation outputs in various countries. (Okrah, 2022), (Kuri, 2024)

4.1.4. Increasing Salaries and Economic Inclusion

Individuals with strong language skills often earn 5–30% more and have better job prospects, boosting consumer spending and economic dynamism. Bilingual or multilingual education policies also promote social inclusion by enabling marginalized groups to participate more fully in the economy. (Kuri, 2024; Nigmatullaevna, 2025)

4.1.5. Facilitating International Investment and Business Expansion

Language competence helps countries attract foreign investment by easing communication and negotiations with global partners. It also enables local businesses to internationalize, contributing to GDP growth. Effective language policies thus create an enabling environment for economic integration and expansion. (Nigmatullaevna, 2025), (Vicoz Academy, 2023)

Table 1: Summary Table: How Language Policies Boost Innovation and GDP Growth

Mechanism	Description	Economic Impact
Native Language Development	Improves education and human capital	Higher innovation, sustainable GDP growth
Multilingualism	Expands export markets and trade relations	Increased exports, market diversification
Workforce Productivity	Enhances communication and collaboration	Greater innovation and business performance
Higher Salaries & Inclusion	Raises wages and employment opportunities	Economic inclusion and consumer spending
International Investment	Facilitates foreign investment and business expansion	Increased capital inflows and economic activity

4.2. SA Policy landscape

South Africa's language policy landscape is shaped by its complex multilingual context and the legacy of apartheid, which privileged Afrikaans and English while marginalizing indigenous African languages. The post-apartheid era has seen a number of significant legislative and policy efforts aimed at promoting multilingualism, linguistic equality, and redress for historical injustices.

Nevertheless, language policy and linguistic landscapes (LL) continue to be contentious in South Africa, particularly in education. The 1996 Constitution, the South African Schools Act, and the 2012 Use of Official Languages Act shape school language policy. Despite having 12 official languages, English predominates the LL, and African languages are underrepresented publicly. (Kretzer & Kaschula, 2019)

4.3. Regulatory and Policy Environment

The language policy of South Africa is marked by its constitutional commitments to multilingualism and equality. However, in practice, there are significant challenges to implementation due to the dominance of English, inadequate institutional support, and unclear policy directives regarding language visibility. No explicit provisions are made in the South African Constitution regarding language visibility, although the principles clearly require redress for the indigenous languages, including those which remain marginalised.

These factors contribute to ongoing efforts for linguistic justice and the meaningful promotion of indigenous languages. The pursuit of a transformed and equitable linguistic landscape remains a key issue in South Africa's broader agenda of social and cultural redress. (Du Plessis, 2006)

The Constitution recognizes 12 official languages: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu and South African Sign Language. The state is mandated by the Constitution to take "practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use" of indigenous languages, ensuring "parity of esteem" and equitable treatment for all official languages.

Provincial governments can select official languages based on regional usage and preferences, while municipalities are required to consider the language preferences of their residents. National and provincial governments are required to use at least two official languages. Municipalities must take into account the language usage and the preference of their residents (Mpendukana, 2009)

4.3.1. PanSALB

Established by national legislation, PanSALB is tasked with promoting multilingualism, developing marginalized languages, and protecting language rights. It also monitors the implementation of language policy and addresses complaints related to language visibility and rights.

4.3.1.1. PanSALB Act 59 of 1995, Amended Act 10 of 1999

Section 6 of the Constitution of South Africa, to develop and promote the equitable use of all the South African official languages, and to create a conducive environment for the use of any other language used in South Africa for various reasons.

Successful multilingualism is offered through sufficient resources by both the state and the private sector. PanSALB is mandated to promote, protect, and support all official languages of the Republic.

4.3.1.2. Policy provisions

Section 6.13 of the Pan South African Language Board of Languages Policy (1999) (PanSALB, 2024) encourages PanSALB and advises all government departments and their entities, municipalities, and the private sector to develop and implement their own multilingual language policies in accordance with PanSALB (1999) policy guidelines. This policy is to be revised every five years.

4.3.2. Education sector

The education system has historically excluded languages and remains a key area for language policy. Despite support for African languages, universities predominantly use English. Many universities have African language departments but lack dedicated units to implement policies, hindering the promotion of indigenous languages in higher education. (Rakgogo, 2024)

Maseko points out that the issues of access and success are central to the provisions of the Constitution. The Constitution states that language, race and other markers that have been used in the past to discriminate against certain groups of people should not hamper their access and success in education. (Maseko, 2014)

Section 27(2) of the *Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997* (Department of Higher Education and Training 1997) and the *Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions* (Department of Higher Education and Training 2020), which is considered a review of the 2002 *Language Policy for Higher Education*, support the view that universities are not effectively translating this constitutional mandate into actionable practice.

In addition to the *Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997*, the *Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions* (2020) articulates the following:

Drawing from the principles and values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), as well as the relationship between language and cognition in the learning process, the revised *Language Policy Framework for Higher Education* seeks to promote multilingualism as a strategy to facilitate meaningful access and participation by university communities (students and staff) in various university activities, including cognitive and intellectual development. The policy framework aims to promote and strengthen the use of all official languages across all functional domains of public higher education, including scholarship; teaching and learning; as well as wider communication in line with Section 29(2) of the South African Constitution.

Following the promulgation of the *Language Policy for Higher Education*, several initiatives were introduced by the Ministry of Education (later, Higher Education and Training) to assess the status of indigenous languages at public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and map out the interventions required to strengthen the development and use of these languages. According to Rakgogo, the issue of the practical implementation of the policy to practice needs to be taken into consideration. He observes that, while a number of pieces of legislation have been formulated and gazetted, but it remains impractical for the universities to put these pieces of legislation into practice. (Rakgogo, 2024)

4.3.3. Linguistic landscape and public signage

Language visibility in public spaces like signs and billboards indicates policy implementation. Some regional policies address this, but there is no national guideline on linguistic landscape, leading to an English preference that undermines multilingualism. Official publications, such as the *Natis SA Learner Driver Manual*, are published in English and do not promote bi- or multilingual signage, highlighting broader policy issues. (Du Plessis, 2006)

4.3.4. Social attitudes

The language policy emphasizes civil rights and historical redress. However, a societal shift toward English, particularly among the black elite, threatens indigenous languages. Limited public interest in language rights and the perception of English as a means to socioeconomic mobility further marginalise African languages. (Mpendukana, 2009)

4.4. Legislative and institutional frameworks

The following legal frameworks apply:

4.4.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996)

Section 6(3)(a) sets out the various factors that government departments must take into account when determining which official languages to use for their purposes. The following are some of the factors to be taken into account:

- a) Usage
 - b) Practicality
 - c) Expense
 - d) Regional circumstances, and
 - e) The balance of the needs and preferences of the population as a whole or in the province concerned.
- Section 6(4) obliges the national and provincial government departments to regulate and monitor the use of official languages by legislative and other measures.
 - Section 9(3) and (4) prohibit amongst others, discrimination on the basis of language, ethnicity, race and culture.
 - Section 30 gives individuals the right to use a language of their choice
 - Section 31 protects the rights of linguistic communities to use their language.

4.4.2. Use of Official Languages Act, 2012 (Act No. 12 of 2012)

The Act contains various regulatory mechanisms, which include:

- a) Section 4, the obligation to adopt language policies
- b) Section 7 the requirement that every national department, national public entity and national public enterprise must establish language units

4.4.3. Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000) Language of Access

Section 31 of this Act provides that a requester whose request for access to a record of a public body has been granted must, if the record:

- a) Exists in the language that the requester prefers, be given access in that language; or,
- b) Does not exist in the language so preferred or the requester has no preference or has not indicated a preference, be given access in any language in which the record exists. (Government Gazette, 2017)

4.4.4. Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997

A key development was the Language in Education Policy (LiEP) of 1997, which recommended equal treatment of all official languages and promoted additive multilingualism. The policy encouraged learners to use their mother tongue in early education and to add a second official language from grade 3 onwards.

Building upon the principles established by the 1997 Language in Education Policy, the Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) policy was subsequently developed to guide the phased integration of African languages into the school curriculum, further promoting multilingualism and addressing historical language inequalities.

The Language in Education Policy document states:

Recognising that diversity is a valuable asset, which the state is required to respect, the aim of these norms and standards is the promotion, fulfilment and development of the state's overarching language goals in school education in compliance with the Constitution, namely:

1. the protection, promotion, fulfilment and extension of the individual's language rights and means of communication in education; and
2. the facilitation of national and international communication through promotion of bi- or multilingualism through cost-efficient and effective mechanisms,
3. to redress the neglect of the historically disadvantaged languages in school education. (National Department of Basic Education, 1977)

Using indigenous African languages as the main languages of teaching and learning (LoTLs) in schools helps raise their value and status in society. Language policies in education play a key role in this process by creating opportunities for these languages to grow and compete with former colonial languages like English or Afrikaans. When schools actively support African languages, it allows them to become more respected and widely used, helping to preserve culture and promote equality (Kamwangamalu, 2016).

4.4.4.1. The Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) policy

The Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) policy, launched by South Africa's Department of Basic Education (DBE) in 2013 and implemented from Grade 1 in 2015, aims to promote proficiency in African languages across the education system, with full implementation expected by 2026 (DBE, 2013). The policy seeks to improve proficiency in previously marginalized African languages, increase parental confidence in choosing African languages for their children, and expand access to languages beyond English and Afrikaans by requiring all non-African home language speakers to learn an African language (DBE, 2013). This initiative is grounded in the recognition that poor learning outcomes in South Africa are largely due to inadequate language proficiency, as confirmed by assessments such as ANA, PIRLS, TIMSS, SAQMEC, and the NSC (DBE, 2013).

The IIAL policy aligns with South Africa's constitutional and legislative framework, including the Constitution (1996), the National Education Policy Act (1996), and the South African Schools Act (1996), which collectively emphasize language rights and policy in education (DBE, 2013).

It also reflects the National Development Plan's call for non-African language speakers to develop conversational competency in African languages to foster social cohesion (DBE, 2013). Despite these strong foundations, the implementation of IIAL faces challenges such as a shortage of schools willing to participate, insufficiently trained teachers, and persistent negative attitudes towards African languages, which are often viewed as inferior to English or Afrikaans (DBE, 2017).

Teacher training is a critical factor for the success of IIAL, with UNESCO (2021) recommending that educators be prepared to manage multilingualism and cultural diversity through appropriate teaching methods and materials. Scholars like Lebeloabe (2017) argue that the dominance of Western European cultural norms in education, which prioritize English, must be reversed by 'recolonizing' the curriculum to promote equality and social justice. In addition,

teacher education programs need to equip teachers with effective multilingual pedagogies rather than relying solely on their language skills (Richard & Rodgers, 2014; Lenyai, 2014).

Although the Funza Lushaka Bursary program aims to address teacher shortages by providing financial assistance to students pursuing teaching qualifications, particularly in priority areas such as African languages, its impact is limited by the overall capacity of teacher training institutions and the need for ongoing professional development to support effective multilingual teaching practices. The Funza Lushaka Bursary specifically funds South African Indigenous Languages, excluding English and Afrikaans due to an oversupply of teachers in those subjects (Funza Lushaka Bursary Application Notes, 2025: 2)

Higher education institutions have also taken steps to support African language learning; for example, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) introduced a compulsory isiZulu module for all undergraduate students who are non-mother tongue speakers of isiZulu starting in 2014, in response to a call by the Minister of Higher Education to promote multilingualism (Nzimande, 2011; DBE, 2013). Furthermore, research by Naidoo, Gokool, and Ndebele (2018) found that students primarily focused on passing the module rather than achieving language proficiency or recognizing its social and economic benefits.

Moreover, PanSALB has emphasized the importance of investing in African languages to foster a language economy. It has also advocated for the creation of a South African Language Council to regulate this economy. This is crucial, as the lack of trained teachers undermines the potential for effective language instruction and, consequently, the broader goals of promoting multilingualism and linguistic diversity.

Overall, the IIAL policy represents a significant effort to institutionalize multilingualism in South African education and to address historical inequalities in language use. While progress has been made, especially in policy formulation and initial implementation phases, ongoing challenges related to teacher capacity, resource availability, and societal attitudes must be addressed to fully realize the policy's goals of social cohesion, cultural preservation, and improved educational outcomes (eukes, 2009; DBE, 2017).

Beyond enhancing language skills, the policy supports the professionalization of African languages by encouraging teacher training and developing language-related careers, which can contribute to a growing language economy (UNESCO, 2021; PanSALB, 2018). This professionalisation not only fosters cultural preservation and social cohesion but also offers economic benefits by creating employment opportunities in education.

4.5. Policy instruments affecting the language economy

The policy landscape is still evolving, with ongoing debates about how best to reflect the country's linguistic diversity and address the inequalities of the past. Research and advocacy continue to highlight the need for more prescriptive, community-responsive policies. (Du Plessis, 2006), (Mpendukana, 2009).

The lack of clear guidelines for language visibility and multilingual use in public domains causes inconsistent implementation, often favouring English. Without dedicated language units, policy execution is slow, further hampered by cost concerns and administrative reluctance. (Rakgogo, 2024)

Table 2: Policy instruments and their impact

Policy Instrument	Main Economic Effects
Constitution (Section 6)	Mandates language equity; aims to broaden economic access
South African Languages Bill	Promotes multilingualism in public sector; economic empowerment through language diversity
PanSALB	Supports language development and linguistic capital
Provincial/Local Language Plans	Enables economic participation at local levels
Language Development Initiatives	Builds human capital, increases job and service access

4.6. The Constitutional Recognition of Khoi, Nama, and San Languages in South Africa

Before the adoption of the 1996 Constitution, the Khoi and San languages were legally unrecognised in South Africa. Even after the promulgation of the Constitution, multiple speakers of the languages remain classified under broad and often reductionist categories such as "coloured" or "mixed race" in state demographic accounting (Mesthrie, 2008).

While there are increasing studies on language endangerment and revitalisation, African linguistic diversity is still underrepresented in major global scholarship. Kandybowicz and Torrence observe that, compared to other world regions, little is known about endangered languages in Africa (Kandybowicz & Torrence, 2017). Within Southern Africa, Khoisan languages are very much marginalised, and attitudinal changes towards these languages in society are seen as pivotal steps in their revitalisation (Sands, 2018).

South Africa's 1996 Constitution made a landmark attempt to undo injustices and foster linguistic equity. The Founding Provisions section 6 (5)(a)ii provides that the Pan South African Language Board shall be tasked with the promotion and creation of conditions for the development and use of the Khoi, Nama, and San languages along with all official languages. (SA Government, 1997)

Granting this kind of recognition is laudable, but it places further difficulties on implementation. The reference to "Khoi, Nama, and San languages" remains overly general, as it conflates subsistence-based cultural identities (e.g., the Khoi as pastoralists, the San as hunter-gatherers) and a specific ethnic group (Nama) rather than naming the actual languages concerned. This ambiguity hinders targeted language development efforts.

For effective policy implementation and language revitalisation, it is imperative that these languages be identified explicitly. Some of the extant or endangered languages that fall under the broader Khoisan classification include N|uu, Tum'!i, !Xun, Nama, Khwe, and Xri. In addition, a number of languages such as !Xam, !'Auni, !Haasi, ǀUngkue, ǁXegwi, Cape Khoekhoe, Eini, and Korana are either extinct or considered moribund. Recognising and naming these

languages individually is essential for ensuring their inclusion in state-supported revitalisation initiatives and for affirming the linguistic rights of the communities who speak or identify with them.

4.6.1. Linguistic Classification of the “Khoi, Nama, and San Languages”

In the 1996 Constitution of South Africa, the phrase “Khoi, Nama and San languages” is used as part of efforts to promote linguistic recognition and revitalisation. Historically, these languages were grouped under the term “Khoesan” (also spelled “Khoisan”), a linguistic classification introduced by Joseph Greenberg in 1955. This grouping was based primarily on the presence of click consonants across various languages, which set them apart from other African language families (Güldemann, 2008).

However, subsequent linguistic research has demonstrated that this classification lacks scientific rigor. The so-called “Khoesan” group does not align with the Comparative Method, a fundamental approach in historical linguistics that involves comparing cognate vocabulary across languages to determine genealogical relationships (Campbell L., 2013).

When this method was applied to languages previously labelled as “Khoesan,” it revealed substantial linguistic diversity. Aside from the shared use of click consonants, these languages differ significantly in structure and lexicon, undermining the notion of a single, unified language family (Köhler, 1981), (Westphal, 1971), (Winter, 1981), (Sands, 1998).

Moreover, sociopolitical considerations have influenced shifts in terminology. In two important gatherings held in **Namibia (1996)** and **Cape Town (1997)**, representatives from San communities formally rejected the umbrella term “Khoesan/Khoisan.” They advocated instead for the recognition of “**Khoe**” and “**San**” as distinct terms representing historically and culturally different groups (Hitchcock, Ikeya, & Biesele, 2006).

In line with contemporary linguistic consensus, it is now accepted that there are at least **three distinct language families** once grouped under the outdated “Khoisan” label:

1. **Khoe** (also referred to as *Khoe-Kwadi*)
2. **Kx’a** (also known as *Ju-ǀHoan*)
3. **Tuu** (also referred to as *!Ui-Taa*)

In addition to these, two language isolates—Hadza and Sandawe, spoken in Tanzania—have occasionally been associated with “Khoesan” languages due to their click systems, though no genetic relationship has been established.

The Kx’a family includes two branches: the better-known Ju branch, which comprises languages like !Xun and Jul’hoan (previously referred to as “Northern Khoisan”), and the lesser-known ǀHoan branch. The Tuu family (formerly “Southern Khoisan”) and the Khoe family (formerly “Central Khoisan”) complete the trio of currently recognised, independent linguistic lineages.

This nuanced understanding is crucial for any policy or academic effort aimed at preserving and revitalising these languages. The use of precise linguistic terminology that reflects current knowledge ensures both scientific accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

4.7. Language regulation

In December 2013, then Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Paul Mashatile said the government would begin regulating the language practitioner's profession in early 2014 through the South African Language Practitioners' Council Bill.

The subsequent Act regulates the language profession, including the training, accreditation, and registration of language practitioners. It establishes the South African Language Practitioners' Council to advise the Minister of Arts and Culture on language issues. The Council also sets rules for professional conduct and oversees compliance and enforcement.

4.7.1.1. Global practice

Official language regulators worldwide are mostly national or regional academies tasked with standardizing and promoting their languages. Their authority ranges from advisory (e.g., Académie Française) to regulatory and enforcement powers (e.g., Quebec's OQLF). Many languages spoken in multiple countries have collaborative regulatory bodies, such as Spanish and German. English remains unique in lacking a formal regulator.

Among language regulators worldwide, most have primarily advisory roles without strong enforcement powers, but a few stand out for their authoritative ability to enforce language rules, sometimes with legal backing.

Official language regulators — often called language academies — are institutions recognized as authorities on standardizing, promoting, and sometimes regulating the use of their respective languages. According to the available information, here are some of the main recognized official language regulators worldwide:

Table 3: Summary of Registration and Certification Requirements for Language Practitioners

Type of Organization	Role and Requirements	Examples / Notes
Professional Regulatory Bodies	Registration required to legally practice; may require language proof	HCPC (UK), AHPRA (Australia), national translator associations
Language Proficiency Certifiers	Provide recognized language tests and certificates	Goethe Institute, IELTS, TOEFL, DELF, DELE
Professional Associations & Registers	Maintain registers of qualified practitioners, set standards, CPD	CIOL Chartered Linguist Register (UK), ATA (USA)
International Language Training	Offer language courses and certification for international bodies	UN Language and Communications Training Unit

- Professional registers like CIOL's Chartered Linguist Register signal competence and ethical practice but may not be legally mandatory.

- International organizations provide specialized language training and certification for their staff or affiliates.

4.7.2. Influential global official language regulators

- **Académie Française (France)**
The most famous language regulator, responsible for standardizing French language usage, spelling, and grammar in France. It publishes official dictionaries and grammar guides but mainly serves an advisory role.
- **Office Québécois de la Langue Française (OQLF) (Quebec, Canada)**
Holds significant regulatory authority over French language use in Quebec, including enforcement powers such as levying fines on businesses not complying with French language laws.
- **Real Academia Española (RAE) and Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española**
The RAE regulates Spanish language norms globally, working in coordination with 22 national Spanish language academies through the Asociación. They publish dictionaries and grammar rules to unify Spanish usage across countries.
- **Academia Brasileira de Letras (Brazil) and Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (Portugal)**
These bodies regulate Portuguese language standards in Brazil and Portugal, respectively.
- **Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung (Council for German Orthography)**
A collaborative body regulating German spelling and orthography across Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.
- **Academy of Persian Language and Literature**
Coordinates Persian language regulation across Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan.
- **Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa (Tanzania) and Chama cha Kiswahili cha Taifa (Kenya)**
Jointly regulate the Swahili language in East Africa.
- **Academy of the Arabic Language**
A pan-Arab institution with representatives from many Arab countries, regulating Arabic language standards.
- **National Language Authority (Pakistan) and National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (India)**
Separate official bodies regulating Urdu language in Pakistan and India, respectively.
- **Board for Standardization of the Serbian Language**
A collaborative regulator for Serbian used in Serbia, Montenegro, and Republika Srpska.

4.7.3. Notable Absence

- **English Language**
English has no official regulatory body. Instead, it is governed informally by influential dictionaries (e.g., Oxford English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster) and style guides (e.g., AP Stylebook, Chicago Manual of Style). Its evolution is driven by widespread usage rather than formal regulation.

Table 4: Summary of language regulators around the world

Language	Official Regulator(s)	Description
French	Académie Française (France), OQLF (Quebec)	France (advisory), Quebec (regulatory/enforcement)
Spanish	Real Academia Española, Asociación de Academias de la Lengua Española	Global Spanish-speaking countries
Portuguese	Academia Brasileira de Letras (Brazil), Academia das Ciências de Lisboa (Portugal)	Brazil and Portugal
German	Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung	Germany, Austria, Switzerland
Persian	Academy of Persian Language and Literature	Iran, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan
Swahili	Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa (Tanzania), Chama cha Kiswahili cha Taifa (Kenya)	East Africa
Arabic	Academy of the Arabic Language	Pan-Arab countries
Urdu	National Language Authority (Pakistan), National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language (India)	Pakistan and India
Serbian	Board for Standardization of the Serbian Language	Serbia, Montenegro, Republika Srpska
English	None (informal regulation by dictionaries and style guides)	No official regulator

4.8. Governance Models

4.8.1. Introduction

The establishment of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) presents a critical opportunity to reconfigure how the language professions are regulated, supported, and integrated into broader developmental agendas. Yet for the SALPC to function effectively, it must be embedded within a clear, coherent, and sustainable governance model that reflects both the specific dynamics of the language economy and the institutional realities of the South African public sector.

This section examines the governance arrangements of relevant bodies within the language sector — including statutory councils, regulatory authorities, advisory boards, and professional associations — with the aim of identifying practical lessons and structural options for the SALPC. It considers how functions such as accreditation, oversight, stakeholder representation, standard-setting, and operational delivery are currently distributed across

institutions like PanSALB, the Cultural, Religious and Linguistic (CRL) Rights Commission, the National Language Services, which falls under the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), and the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR), among others.

4.8.2. Existing South African statutory councils

This chapter explores how professional regulatory bodies are structured and governed in South Africa, with the aim of informing the proposed institutional design of a National Language Council. The focus is on professions that, like the language sector, are governed through statutory councils established by an Act of Parliament. These bodies carry legal mandates to regulate qualifications, uphold professional standards, enforce codes of conduct, and often manage accreditation and continuing professional development. Five sectors have been selected as benchmarks: Law, Health Professions, Engineering, Education, and the Built Environment Professions.

- **Law** – Regulated by the Legal Practice Council (LPC)
- **Health Professions** – Regulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)
- **Engineering** – Regulated by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)
- **Education** – Regulated by the South African Council for Educators (SACE)
- **Built Environment Professions** – Coordinated by the Council for the Built Environment (CBE)

These industries were chosen not only because they operate under enabling legislation, but also because they exhibit a range of governance models—from single councils to umbrella bodies—that may offer useful precedents for a language-focused institution.

This chapter provides a high-level overview of each body’s legal foundation, institutional scope, and core functions. It is intended as a starting point for comparative analysis and will be expanded upon in future reports through deeper stakeholder engagement, institutional interviews, and regulatory performance assessments. The goal is to build a cumulative evidence base to support the development of a fit-for-purpose governance model for South Africa’s language sector.

4.8.2.1. Law – Regulated by the Legal Practice Council (LPC)

The Legal Practice Council is the national statutory body that regulates the legal profession in South Africa, encompassing both attorneys and advocates. It was established under the *Legal Practice Act, No. 28 of 2014*, which came into full effect in 2018, replacing previous provincial law societies and the Bar councils with a single, unified regulator. The LPC is tasked with ensuring high standards of legal practice, promoting access to justice, and advancing the transformation of the legal sector. It plays a dual role in protecting public interest while supporting the professional development of legal practitioners.

Benchmarking financial and governance design

The Legal Practice Council (LPC), established under the Legal Practice Act of 2014, regulates attorneys and advocates in South Africa. As a statutory body, it holds the dual responsibility of upholding professional standards while ensuring public accountability in the legal profession. Its financial model offers a useful point of comparison for the proposed South African Language Practitioners’ Council (SALPC), particularly in how a national regulatory body can sustain its

operations through a mix of mandatory practitioner levies, service fees, and external appropriations.

Income generation

The LPC derives the majority of its income from the annual fees paid by registered legal practitioners, along with a range of service-related charges. These include:

- Enrolment fees for newly admitted attorneys and advocates;
- Conversion fees for practitioners changing legal category (e.g., from attorney to advocate);
- Examination and application fees related to admission processes;
- Fidelity Fund Certificate fees, which are compulsory for all legal practitioners managing trust accounts;
- Training programme fees, particularly those associated with practical legal training;
- Appropriations from the Legal Practitioners Fidelity Fund (LPFF), which contributes to the Council's activities and subsidises access to legal practice.

The Council's financial statements (2021) confirm that practitioner contributions represent the single largest income stream, reflecting a strong principle of self-funding by the profession.

Fee Structure

Annual fees are standardised nationally and differ according to the practitioner's level of experience:

- Legal practitioners with less than two years' experience pay a lower annual levy;
- Those with more than two years of practice are subject to a higher annual fee;
- Additional fees apply for certification, late renewal, and registration amendments.

The Council's fee schedule is reviewed periodically and published in accordance with the Legal Practice Act and LPC Rules. These rules also allow for differentiated treatment of categories (e.g. attorneys, advocates, candidate attorneys), although all are subject to registration and contribution requirements.

Governance and financial accountability

The LPC is governed by a National Council, which includes elected legal practitioners from each province, as well as appointed laypersons and representatives from legal education institutions. This body is responsible for setting fees, approving budgets, and overseeing financial integrity.

Importantly, while the LPC has significant revenue-raising powers, its governance model includes transparency and accountability safeguards. It must submit audited financial statements to the Minister of Justice and Parliament annually. This ensures that even as it self-finances through practitioner levies, it remains aligned to public interest principles.

4.8.2.2. Health Professions – Regulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)

The HPCSA is the primary regulatory authority for health professionals in South Africa, including medical practitioners, psychologists, physiotherapists, and speech-language therapists. It was

established by the *Health Professions Act, No. 56 of 1974*, succeeding earlier medical councils that date back to the early 20th century. The Council is responsible for registering professionals, accrediting educational institutions, setting professional standards, and ensuring ethical conduct in the healthcare sector. It operates through a system of 12 professional boards, each with domain-specific mandates.

Benchmarking financial and governance design

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) is a statutory body established under the Health Professions Act No. 56 of 1974, tasked with regulating health professions in the public interest. The HPCSA oversees numerous professional categories, including medical practitioners, psychologists, radiographers, and others, through a central council and a system of twelve autonomous professional boards. Its financial model is based primarily on practitioner contributions and serves as a robust example of sector-funded professional regulation within a multi-professional regulatory framework.

Income generation

The Council's income is predominantly generated through:

- Annual registration and renewal fees paid by individual practitioners across all regulated categories;
- Once-off application, restoration, examination, and evaluation fees, which vary by profession and are recognised on delivery of the respective services;
- Reinstatement fees for professionals returning to practice after removal from the register;
- Collaborative revenues, such as from projects with the Road Accident Fund (RAF);
- Rental and tribunal income, for example from training or disciplinary venues;
- Investment income from surplus funds managed by the Council.

Fee structure

The HPCSA uses a profession-specific fee structure, recognising the distinct requirements of its various boards. These fees are reviewed annually, with updated schedules published online. Non-payment of fees results in suspension from the register, thereby linking compliance with the right to practise—a strong incentive for timely contribution.

Governance and financial oversight

The HPCSA is governed by a central Council, which includes representatives from each of the twelve Professional Boards, along with academic and public interest nominees. Each board operates with relative autonomy, particularly in matters relating to education standards, registration criteria, and ethics, while financial administration and shared services are centralised under the Council Secretariat.

The Council's governance structure reflects a federated model, balancing central financial accountability with profession-specific regulatory flexibility. It operates a finance committee and external audit arrangements and is required to submit its financials to the Auditor-General of South Africa. This ensures compliance with public finance principles, despite its self-funding model.

The HPCSA's structure demonstrates how a large, complex professional council can maintain professional legitimacy, fiscal sustainability, and regulatory authority through a diversified fee base and distributed governance.

4.8.2.3. Engineering – Regulated by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA).

ECSA is the statutory body that regulates the engineering profession across various disciplines in South Africa. It was established through the *Engineering Profession Act, No. 46 of 2000*, replacing earlier iterations of engineering oversight with a more inclusive and modern regulatory framework. ECSA's functions include accrediting engineering programmes, registering practitioners, maintaining professional standards, and promoting the transformation and development of the profession. It also aligns with international engineering standards, allowing for global recognition of South African engineers.

Benchmarking Financial and Governance Design

The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) is the statutory body responsible for regulating the engineering profession in accordance with the Engineering Profession Act No. 46 of 2000. It oversees registration, education standards, continuing professional development (CPD), and disciplinary procedures for professional engineers, technologists, technicians, and candidates. ECSA plays a central role in safeguarding public safety and infrastructure quality through professional regulation, while operating under the policy oversight of the Council for the Built Environment (CBE).

Income generation

ECSA funds its operations primarily through:

- Annual registration fees, which are mandatory for all categories of registered professionals and candidates.
- Application and assessment fees, including those linked to the peer-reviewed professional registration process;
- Reinstatement and late payment penalties, designed to maintain database integrity and discourage non-compliance;
- Interest and investment income on surplus funds held by the Council.

Unlike some other regulatory bodies, ECSA does not receive direct government grants. It is a fully self-funded body, and its financial sustainability is tied to the active engagement of engineering professionals and candidates across the country.

In the 2023/24 financial year, ECSA's annual report confirmed that registration-related income accounted for over 80% of total revenue. Efforts to recover fees from lapsed registrations and streamline CPD audits have further improved financial performance.

Fee Structure

ECSA maintains a detailed, category-based fee structure:

- Annual fees vary by designation (e.g. Professional Engineer, Candidate Technician), with higher fees for fully registered professionals.

- Applicants pay assessment fees during the registration process.
- Reinstatement fees apply to professionals who let their registration lapse, with additional administrative charges for re-entry.
- CPD requirements are linked to renewal eligibility but do not attract direct fees unless non-compliance triggers disciplinary or reinstatement processes.

These fees are published annually and updated in line with inflation, administrative cost reviews, and broader sector affordability trends.

Governance and the Role of the CBE

ECSA is governed by a **Council** composed of elected professionals, academic representatives, and nominees from government and industry. The Council is responsible for strategy, finance, ethics, and regulatory oversight. It delegates operational matters to professional committees and a permanent secretariat, with structured processes for appeals, peer review, and disciplinary enforcement.

ECSA is one of six statutory professional councils that fall under the umbrella of the Council for the Built Environment (CBE). The CBE, established by the Council for the Built Environment Act No. 43 of 2000, serves as a coordinating and policy body for the built environment professions—namely architecture, quantity surveying, landscape architecture, construction project management, property valuation, and engineering. This relationship is structured as follows:

- ECSA retains operational and regulatory independence, particularly in professional registration, standard setting, and discipline.
- The CBE provides cross-sector coordination, harmonisation of regulatory approaches, and policy alignment with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.
- ECSA submits strategic plans, performance data, and compliance reports to the CBE as part of its public accountability obligations.
- The CBE also adjudicates certain appeals and plays a role in dispute resolution between councils and the state.

This governance model balances autonomy with oversight, allowing ECSA to act as a peer-led professional regulator, while ensuring that national infrastructure and economic development goals are not undermined by fragmentation within the built environment sector.

4.8.2.4. Education – Regulated by the South African Council for Educators (SACE)

SACE is the statutory council responsible for regulating the teaching profession in South Africa. Established under the *South African Council for Educators Act, No. 31 of 2000*, it emerged from earlier, fragmented teacher registration systems and was designed to professionalise teaching through compulsory registration, disciplinary oversight, and continuous professional development. SACE serves both as a regulatory body and a developmental agency, aiming to enhance the status and quality of teaching across public and private education systems.

Benchmarking Professional Regulation in the Education Sector

The South African Council for Educators (SACE) is a statutory professional body established under the South African Council for Educators Act No. 31 of 2000, tasked with overseeing the registration, professional conduct, and development of educators. While its regulatory scope

is narrower than that of multi-professional councils like the HPCSA or ECSA, SACE provides a useful precedent for a profession-specific council that is deeply embedded in public service delivery, education policy, and sector transformation.

Purpose and Functional Role

SACE is responsible for:

- Maintaining a national register of educators across public and independent schools.
- Administering a code of professional ethics and disciplinary procedures.
- Overseeing and endorsing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities.
- Accrediting providers of professional development programmes.
- Promoting the professionalisation and status of educators in South Africa.

Unlike PanSALB or the future SALPC, SACE operates within a highly standardised state-regulated environment, where most practitioners are public employees governed by Department of Basic Education policies.

Income Generation

SACE operates on a blended funding model, combining:

- Mandatory annual membership fees, charged to all registered educators and deducted automatically for those in public service;
- Registration and reinstatement fees, including for newly qualified graduates, returning professionals, and those requiring certificate reprints;
- Government transfer funding, typically allocated for administrative overheads and statutory obligations;
- Additional income from interest, fines, and rental recoveries.

According to the 2023/24 Annual Report, SACE's primary revenue source remains its annual educator fees, which totalled over R120 million, with government grants contributing approximately R15.5 million. This allows the Council to maintain independence while remaining aligned with state mandates.

Fee Structure

Fees are:

- Automatically deducted from public sector educators' salaries via the Persal system.
- Payable directly by educators in private or independent schools;
- Supplemented by additional once-off fees for registration, reinstatement, and administrative services.

This affordability and consistency—especially in the context of a large, unionised workforce—provides a viable model for a low-barrier fee structure that could be replicated by SALPC in its early operational phase.

Governance Structure

SACE is governed by a Council of 30 members, appointed by the Minister of Basic Education. The Council includes:

- Teacher unions, which hold significant representation: South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie (SAOU)
- Representatives from provincial education departments, higher education institutions, and school governing bodies;
- Public and community nominees.

The Council operates through standing committees, including:

- Registration Committee (REGCO)
- Professional Development Committee (PRODCO)
- Ethics Committee (ETHCOM)

This committee-based structure allows for functional specialisation while maintaining strategic coherence across the organisation. SACE submits annual performance plans and reports to Parliament and is subject to oversight by the Auditor-General of South Africa.

4.8.2.5. Built environment professions – Coordinated by the Council for the Built Environment (CBE)

The Council for the Built Environment is a statutory coordination body overseeing six built environment professional councils, including those for architecture, quantity surveying, landscape architecture, engineering, and construction project management. It was established by the *Council for the Built Environment Act, No. 43 of 2000*, in response to the need for integrated and standardised governance across the built environment sector. The CBE promotes transformation, education and training, and alignment of regulatory practices among its constituent professional councils.

Benchmarking oversight and coordination in a multi-council framework

The Council for the Built Environment (CBE) was established under the Council for the Built Environment Act No. 43 of 2000 as an umbrella oversight body for six statutory professional councils operating in South Africa's built environment. These include the councils for engineering, architecture, quantity surveying, landscape architecture, construction project management, and property valuation. While the CBE does not directly register professionals or set individual disciplinary standards, it plays a vital role in coordinating governance, policy alignment, and transformation objectives across the sector.

Purpose and strategic role

The CBE's legislative mandate is to ensure:

- Uniform governance standards across professional councils;
- Alignment of professional education and training with national human settlement and infrastructure needs;
- Promotion of inter-council collaboration, data harmonisation, and dispute resolution;
- Monitoring of transformation and equity targets, particularly in historically exclusive professions.

Its role is best described as that of a meta-regulator—it does not perform core regulatory functions (registration, accreditation, discipline), but enables system-wide coherence and responsiveness to national development priorities.

Income Generation and Fee Structure

Unlike its constituent councils, the CBE does not collect registration fees from professionals directly. Its funding is derived from:

- An annual transfer from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI);
- Levies paid by the professional councils under its jurisdiction, calculated in proportion to their membership bases;
- Secondary income from interest and occasional partnerships or consultancy work.

This funding structure reinforces the CBE’s non-duplicative role. It avoids creating additional financial burdens for practitioners, while ensuring that coordination, standardisation, and transformation remain system-wide priorities.

Governance model

The CBE is governed by a Council appointed by the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure. The council includes:

- Nominees from each of the six professional councils;
- Representatives from government departments, academia, and the public;
- Members selected through an open nomination process.

Council members serve four-year terms, and are supported by a professional secretariat, technical committees, and an internal audit and governance framework. Oversight is provided by the Auditor-General, and all performance and budget plans are submitted to Parliament via the DPWI.

4.9. Mechanisms for Professional Recognition and Standards

The proposed South African Language Practitioners’ Council (SALPC) is a statutory body established to regulate, professionalise, and support the language services sector—with a focus on translation, interpreting, editing, terminology development, and related linguistic work. As outlined in the South African Language Practitioners’ Council Act (2014), the Council is expected to carry out functions such as setting national standards, accrediting practitioners and training providers, maintaining a register, and enforcing ethical codes of conduct. If implemented as intended, it will serve both as a professional regulator and as a public-interest institution ensuring the quality and accountability of language service provision in all sectors.

4.9.1. International Comparisons and Benchmarking

However, as in many multilingual countries, the design of such a body cannot be based on a single international template. The structure, mandate, and institutional relationships of language councils globally vary widely—shaped by each country’s legal framework, colonial and postcolonial dynamics, linguistic demography, and public policy orientation. While some countries establish language authorities to protect a national language under threat, others

focus on promoting multilingual service delivery or reviving marginalised indigenous languages. Still others limit their engagement to terminology development or symbolic cultural affirmation.

In South Africa, the approach is notably comprehensive. The SALPC is intended to form part of a wider governance ecosystem that includes:

- **PanSALB**, responsible for language rights, recognition, and development;
- **SADiLaR**, the national centre for digital language resources and linguistic data infrastructure;
- And voluntary associations like **SATI**, which provide peer networks and informal standards for practitioners.

This kind of institutional triangulation—linking language rights, digital infrastructure, and professional accreditation—is rare. Even among high-income countries, few have dedicated regulatory bodies for language practitioners. For example, in Quebec, the Office québécois de la langue Française (OQLF) is a powerful regulatory agency established under the Charter of the French Language (1977). It has the legal authority to enforce the use of French in business, government, and education, and to penalise non-compliance. However, it does not regulate language practitioners per se, nor does it serve multilingual inclusion—it operates in a defensive, monolingual framework, seeking to protect French in an Anglophone continent.

In Ireland, the An Coimisinéir Teanga (Language Commissioner) monitors state compliance with Irish-language service obligations under the Official Languages Act (2003). While it plays a vital rights-based role, it has no oversight of professional standards or the private language services market, and operates more as an ombud than a regulator.

Similarly, in the Philippines, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) promotes the national language (Filipino) and the preservation of indigenous languages. It undertakes research, policy advocacy, and cultural promotion, but lacks any regulatory mandate over the language services sector. It is more akin to a cross between PanSALB and a national terminology board.

In Wales, the Welsh Language Commissioner plays a dual role of advocacy and enforcement, with powers to ensure that public services comply with statutory Welsh Language Standards. Yet again, while strong in rights protection, the office has no link to practitioner training, registration, or professional accountability.

4.10. Conclusion

These examples show that while language policy infrastructure is widespread, the combination of statutory professional regulation, digital language resource development, and constitutional language rights protection—coordinated across multiple bodies—is exceptional in South Africa. Most countries fragment these functions or prioritise one over the others.

The SALPC, if properly implemented, stands to fill a critical regulatory gap that few countries have attempted to address; ensuring that the growing and increasingly essential field of language services is professionally managed, ethically grounded, and nationally standardised. This is especially important in a country where access to justice, education, healthcare, and public services is directly mediated through language, and where linguistic exclusion compounds broader patterns of marginalisation.

In sum, the SALPC will not simply act as a technical oversight body. It is intended as part of a national strategy to elevate language as a developmental resource, professionalise linguistic service work, and ensure equitable access across South Africa's multilingual landscape. The international landscape confirms that while elements of this model exist elsewhere, the holistic South African approach is both ambitious and pioneering.

5. Chapter 5: Methodology and Research Methods

5.1. Introduction

The chapter outlines the methodology and research methods used by researchers in this preliminary scoping study. A mixed-methods research design was adopted to enable both quantitative and rich qualitative data collection. The research combined literature review methods with stakeholder engagement and sectoral analysis to develop a rich understanding about South African language sector dynamics and obstacles along with potential development paths.

5.2. Research Design

This study was a preliminary scoping exercise which combined desk-based data collection with some limited field-based research to attain a multi-dimensional analysis. The research consisted of multiple interconnected components:

5.2.1. Literature Review and Policy Analysis

The researchers used a wide range of academic publications together with government documents and industry reports to contextualise the South African language economy framework. Both national and international policy documents were examined with a focus on the following elements:

- Regulatory structures governing the language sector;
- Language councils in multilingual nations with similar roles and responsibilities;
- The roles and responsibilities of South African institutions which support language development.

The examination helped to reveal coordination problems and policy execution gaps that existed in the sector.

5.2.2. Stakeholder Mapping and Interviews

The researchers included a comprehensive stakeholder mapping process to understand the real-world experiences within the sector. This included:

- DSAC, the Department of Higher Education and Training along with other national and provincial government departments.
- Universities and language-focused research institutions;
- Professional associations and translation agencies; and
- Independent language practitioners.

The research team used semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data about practitioners' everyday experiences and their challenges with regulations as well as their training requirements and institutional responsibilities. Through these interactions researchers gained specific insights about the existing gaps between established policies and actual operational practices.

5.2.3. Sectoral Data Collection and Analysis

Sectoral data was collected through both primary and secondary sources which included:

- Practitioner surveys;
- Registry data from professional bodies;
- Academic and industry partners databases.

The quantitative data analysis evaluated practitioner roles as well as language usage patterns, service demand, training participation and income stability levels. The research documented data gaps concerning informal and freelance work because these areas needed future monitoring and policy intervention.

5.2.4. Ecosystem Mapping

The Ecosystem Mapping component of this report sought to develop a structured understanding of the institutions, networks, and actors that make up South Africa's language economy. This process began with the compilation of an initial stakeholder list through desktop research and institutional knowledge from the project team. It was further refined through direct engagement with practitioners across the sector, including academic experts, government officials, professional associations, and private service providers.

Each stakeholder was then analysed in relation to its functional role (e.g. policy development, language rights advocacy, commercial services, education and training, or cultural production), governance model, institutional mandate, and relationships to other entities. This enabled us to group entities into six core domains of activity, capturing the broad architecture of the language ecosystem.

The identification of these six domains was not arbitrary. It was informed by existing institutional and policy reviews, particularly the 2014 Expenditure and Performance Review conducted by the Public Affairs Research Institute for National Treasury. That review examined the functioning of entities such as the Department of Arts and Culture's National Language Service, PanSALB, and the CRL Rights Commission, and helped to substantiate the conceptual boundaries of key thematic areas within the language system.

To reflect the realities of practice, we also introduced a set of cross-cutting thematic areas to account for the many organisations whose activities span multiple domains. These include areas such as Deaf and SASL services, language technology, indigenous knowledge preservation, and multilingual education. This dual classification approach—core domains and cross-cutting themes—enables both a structural and functional view of the ecosystem.

The mapping process paid attention not only to institutional formality but also to operational realities. For example, we considered whether entities were active, dormant, or emerging; whether they operated independently or were embedded in larger structures (e.g. university departments, research hubs, or statutory councils); and whether their work was primarily regulatory, service-oriented, advocacy-driven, or research-based.

While every effort was made to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the map at the time of writing, we recognise it as a living document. The language sector is evolving, and new entities, collaborations, and policy developments may alter its contours over time. As such, the ecosystem map should be seen as a starting point for ongoing reflection and refinement,

including the potential to extend mapping to sub-units and smaller programmes within larger institutions.

5.2.4.1. Limitations of the Ecosystem Mapping Approach

While the ecosystem mapping exercise has provided a structured overview of the main actors and domains within South Africa's language economy, it is necessarily limited by the availability and granularity of public data. Several areas warrant deeper investigation but fall outside the scope of this preliminary scoping exercise.

In particular, the operational relationships between entities—such as collaboration frameworks, funding flows, and project-level partnerships—are not consistently documented or publicly accessible. As a result, the map reflects structural positions and stated mandates, rather than the full texture of functional interdependencies.

Similarly, employment patterns across the language sector remain under-researched. Many organisations do not disaggregate language-related roles in their staffing data, making it difficult to estimate the number, type, or geographic distribution of language practitioners in a reliable way.

Another critical gap is the extent and nature of data sharing across the language economy. While some entities maintain internal databases or language corpora, there is no clear picture of how these resources are shared, standardised, or used to support sector-wide planning and development.

Due to these limitations, the current map should be viewed as a foundational framework rather than a definitive or exhaustive account. A dedicated national study—possibly led by a consortium of academic, public, and professional bodies—would be required to build a more granular, dynamic, and operationally informed ecosystem model.

5.2.5. Economic and Market Analysis

The value and contribution of the language sector was evaluated, including:

- The function of language in sectors such as education, media, business and public service operations.
- The economic value of translation services, editing work, interpretation services and digital content development services.
- The value of Human Language Technologies (HLT) and AI-driven applications which represent emerging market opportunities.

5.2.6. Identifying Strategic Interventions

Pinpointing potential areas for strengthening the language economy through policy adjustments, funding mechanisms, and institutional collaboration were identified. And these were used to provide recommendations on how PanSALB and the proposed Language Council can fit into and enhance the existing ecosystem.

5.2.7. Comparative Analysis

Consideration was given to how other professional industries in South Africa (e.g., law, healthcare, engineering) structure their regulatory bodies and professional accreditation systems.

An international benchmarking of language councils and industry standards in other multilingual contexts, such as Canada, India, and Switzerland was conducted

5.3. Data Collection Methods

A combination of primary and secondary data collection methods was used:

- An online survey aimed at both language experts and general public participants generated quantitative information along with qualitative feedback.
- Researchers employed semi-structured interviews to gather detailed information from stakeholders.
- Primary and secondary literature was reviewed to obtain baseline data.

5.4. Analytical Approach

Quantitative findings were summarised and thematic analysis was applied to both open-ended survey responses and interview transcripts. The analysis incorporated both numerical trends and nuanced perspectives through this dual analytical approach.

5.5. Conclusion

The mixed-methods approach allowed researchers to thoroughly consider elements affecting South Africa's language economy. Through combining policy analysis with stakeholder engagement, data analysis and comparative insights, the study highlights both systemic challenges and practical opportunities.

6. Chapter 6: Economic and Market Analysis

6.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a high-level economic and market analysis of the South African language economy. It examines the structure and scale of activity across key domains—language services, education, publishing, technology, and policy—using a functional framework that highlights how language-related work is produced, transmitted, and commercialised.

Building on insights from Haines and Gouws (2022), the chapter outlines key trends in demand, labour dynamics, institutional participation, and the role of digital platforms. While data limitations remain a challenge, this analysis serves as a foundation for identifying areas of economic value, market fragmentation, and future growth potential within the language sector.

6.2. Socio-Economic, Political, Technological and Cultural Drivers

The development of South Africa’s language economy cannot be understood in isolation from the broader structural forces that shape it. From education and labour market dynamics to legislative mandates and emerging technologies, multiple interlinked drivers are shaping the supply, demand, and strategic value of language in the country’s economic landscape. This section outlines the socio-economic, political, technological and cultural currents that justify urgent institutional investment—most notably the establishment of a national Language Council—to coordinate, promote, and grow the language sector as a productive contributor to national development.

6.2.1. Socio-Economic Drivers

South Africa’s multilingual demography and persistent inequality make language a key determinant of opportunity, access, and economic participation. The socio-economic pressures shaping the language sector include:

6.2.1.1. Labour Market Stratification by Language Proficiency

As noted by Posel and Casale (2011), English language proficiency continues to confer significant labour market advantage in South Africa. Individuals fluent in English are more likely to be employed, to earn higher wages, and to access skilled professions. Conversely, mother-tongue speakers of African languages—particularly those with limited exposure to English—remain disproportionately represented in informal or low-income employment.

This stratification reinforces a cycle in which:

- Language determines access to economic opportunity.
- Economic inequality inhibits access to language learning.
- Linguistic exclusion entrenches socio-economic marginalisation.

6.2.1.2. Education, Literacy and the Language of Learning

The language of instruction (LoLT) in early childhood and basic education remains a structural fault line in South Africa's education system. Schlebusch (2002) and Alexander (2004) both argue that children taught in unfamiliar languages during formative years show lower literacy levels and reduced cognitive performance. This contributes directly to drop-out rates, underperformance in mathematics and science, and long-term limitations in employability and earnings.

The shortage of high-quality educational materials in African languages—such as glossaries, technical dictionaries, and bilingual readers—also hampers the rollout of multilingual education policies and weakens the language services sector's ability to serve this market.

6.2.1.3. Informality and the Hidden Language Economy

Language commodification is occurring in unexpected ways in township and rural economies. Banda and Mokwena (2019) show how signage, informal advertisements, and even linguistic styles in markets serve economic functions. Setswana, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans appear in micro-enterprise branding and local media, creating new but poorly documented language-based value chains. These informal uses are economically meaningful but rarely captured in official statistics, and the workers who service these functions (writers, designers, translators, narrators) remain under-recognised and unsupported.

6.2.2. Political and Legal Drivers

Language is not merely a policy topic—it is a constitutional imperative. However, the translation of legal commitments into institutional practice remains uneven.

6.2.2.1. Constitutional Language Rights and Their Enforcement

Section 6 of the South African Constitution mandates the state to take “practical and positive measures to elevate the status and advance the use” of indigenous languages. Yet, enforcement mechanisms remain weak, and many public institutions fail to meet even minimum multilingual communication standards.

6.2.2.2. Fragmented Institutional Responsibilities

The National Language Policy Framework (2003) and sector-specific mandates (e.g. the 2020 Language Policy for Public Higher Education Institutions) require implementation by departments, municipalities, and universities. However, these efforts are dispersed across numerous actors with no central coordinating authority. PanSALB's mandate has often been limited to advocacy rather than enforcement, leading to:

- Redundancies in policy development
- A lack of shared benchmarks and data
- Poor accountability and monitoring systems

6.2.2.3. Decentralisation Without Capacity

Local governments are increasingly expected to provide public services in more than one language. Yet, few municipalities have access to professional translation services, language

professionals, or standardised linguistic resources. A national coordinating body could support local governments by:

- Creating language implementation toolkits
- Maintaining a centralised resource library
- Providing training and professional support to local staff

6.2.3. Technological Drivers

Technology offers both a challenge and a transformative opportunity for South Africa's language economy. While some innovations threaten to displace human translators, others offer pathways to scale language access and innovation.

6.2.3.1. Machine Translation and AI

Recent developments in AI-driven translation and speech-to-text services (such as Google Translate or Whisper) are rapidly reshaping the language services industry. While these tools increase access and reduce costs, they often lack support for indigenous African languages—or perform poorly when they do. This creates two risks:

- Exclusion of African languages from global digital ecosystems
- Job displacement for human translators and editors

6.2.3.2. National Infrastructure for Language Technology

SADiLaR (the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources) plays a crucial role in enabling digital support for all 11 official languages. Its work includes building text and speech corpora, developing spellcheckers, and supporting natural language processing (NLP) pipelines. However, SADiLaR's 2023 audit noted that:

- There are large disparities in digital readiness across institutions
- Resources are fragmented and not always shared
- Long-term maintenance and accessibility of language tools remain underfunded

6.2.3.3. The Digital Divide and Linguistic Access

Efforts to digitise public services must grapple with unequal access to broadband, digital literacy, and interface design. Multilingual platforms are often translated only partially or not at all, and users who prefer African languages are typically underserved—especially in rural areas.

6.2.4. 4. Cultural and Ideological Drivers

Language policy and practice are also shaped by deep-rooted cultural and ideological currents.

6.2.4.1. Language Prestige Hierarchies

English remains the dominant language in media, academia, and professional discourse. This prestige hierarchy perpetuates a system where African languages are often viewed as supplementary or symbolic, rather than as legitimate mediums for high-status functions. As Alexander (2004) warned, this undermines both social equity and linguistic development, feeding a cycle of underinvestment and marginalisation.

6.2.4.2. Youth Identity and Multilingual Innovation

Paradoxically, many South African youth are asserting linguistic identity through code-switching, digital content creation, and localisation in platforms like TikTok and WhatsApp. This "translanguaging" reflects a dynamic multilingual reality and suggests potential for:

- Market segmentation in youth branding
- Educational innovations that blend formal and informal linguistic registers

6.2.4.3. Globalisation and Linguistic Resistance

While English dominates global business and digital communication, there is increasing cultural resistance to linguistic homogenisation. The rise of pan-African language movements (e.g. Kiswahili promotion across SADC) and campaigns for African-language content on streaming platforms reflects growing demand for linguistic justice and representation.

6.3. How the Language Sector Contributes to the Economy

The language sector, while often viewed as peripheral or auxiliary, is in fact deeply embedded in both the internal mechanics of a functioning economy and its capacity to engage with the global market. Its economic contributions extend well beyond employment or service provision in education and media. The sector plays a dual role: as a foundational input into the domestic economy and as a strategic enabler of external trade and economic integration. These contributions can be examined across two domains: internal (domestic economic functions) and external (cross-border and trade-related functions).

6.3.1. Internal Effects: Language as a Foundational Input in the Domestic Economy

Internally, language underpins virtually every domain of economic activity. At the most basic level, it facilitates communication in workplaces, public services, commerce, and education. Without a shared language—or effective translation and interpretation services—these systems would falter. But beyond basic communication, the economic value of language lies in its capacity to increase efficiency, reduce transaction costs, and enhance human capital formation.

One of the most direct internal effects of the language sector is its role in education. As Schlebusch (2002) and Lo Bianco (1988) argue, the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) directly affects educational attainment, cognitive development, and long-term productivity. Empirical evidence from bilingual education systems suggests that learners who acquire literacy in their home language, alongside a lingua franca, often outperform monolingual peers in both abstract reasoning and academic performance (see also Kessler and Quinn in Lo Bianco, 1988). These cognitive dividends, in turn, feed into labour market productivity and innovation.

Moreover, the availability of language services—translators, editors, localisers, lexicographers—improves the quality of information dissemination across sectors. In health, legal services, banking, and public administration, the ability to communicate clearly in multiple languages leads to better service delivery, more inclusive participation, and reduced

administrative errors. The 2022 *Economics of Language* report (Haines & Gouws) estimates that the sector employs approximately 70,000 workers across a mix of high-skilled, skilled, and informal occupations, many of whom support these functions at the microeconomic level (Haines & Gouws, 2022).

The language sector also contributes to what economists term **social capital**—the networks and trust relationships that facilitate cooperation and reduce transaction costs. In multilingual societies like South Africa, the recognition and use of multiple languages in public discourse and service delivery fosters social cohesion, civic engagement, and a sense of belonging. These "soft" economic benefits translate into more stable governance, improved compliance with laws and regulations, and a more equitable distribution of opportunity—all essential for inclusive economic growth.

6.3.2. External Effects: Language as a Facilitator of Trade and Economic Integration

Beyond its internal effects, language plays a critical role in enabling international trade and economic diplomacy. The 2022 Haines and Gouws report includes an econometric gravity model that confirms what international research has long suggested: **language proximity—whether through shared languages or linguistic similarity—significantly increases bilateral trade volumes** (Haines & Gouws, 2022). By lowering informational and cultural barriers, shared languages facilitate faster negotiations, more accurate contracts, and smoother logistical coordination.

This is particularly salient in Africa, where cross-border trade is expected to rise under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). South Africa's position as a continental economic hub necessitates not only English proficiency, but also greater command of African languages such as Kiswahili, isiZulu, French, and Portuguese. As Gazzola and Wickström (2016) argue, multilingualism in trade policy is not a cultural nicety—it is a strategic economic advantage. Countries that invest in the language capacity of their diplomatic corps, trade negotiators, and export-facing industries tend to outperform others in terms of market penetration and contract retention.

In a globalised economy, language also intersects with **services trade**, especially in sectors such as tourism, education, media production, and software localisation. For example, the growing demand for African language dubbing in global streaming content, or for multilingual customer support in business process outsourcing (BPO), represents an untapped economic frontier. These services generate foreign exchange earnings and create opportunities for scalable job creation in linguistically skilled occupations.

Moreover, international academic collaboration and knowledge exchange—both of which underpin innovation and technology transfer—are contingent upon language access. Without adequate translation, interpretation, and multilingual publishing services, South African research institutions risk isolation from global research networks.

6.4. Size and Contribution of the Language Economy

In South Africa, the invisibility of language within the conventional System of National Accounts (SNA) has meant that its economic footprint has long gone under-recognised. Recent efforts,

such as those documented in the 2022 report by Haines and Gouws, represent a critical step in quantifying the contribution of language to the national economy and offering a foundation for more systematic policy engagement. Accurately determining the size and contribution of South Africa's language economy remains a challenge.

The most substantial effort to date is the *Economics of Language* report, which sought to estimate the sector's contribution using a social accounting matrix (SAM) framework. However, as Haines and Gouws (2022) note:

“Until recently, there was no Cultural Satellite Account (CSA) for South Africa that Stats SA had compiled. The initial CSA was prepared by a firm of economists appointed by the SACO. Thereafter, in 2021, Rhodes University assembled a team to develop an in-house CSA. Developing a CSA for South Africa and incorporating this into a SAM or IO macroeconomic impact assessment model is an internationally well-established concept. Unfortunately, although data for the six UNESCO domains were estimated, language was not disaggregated or researched.” (Haines & Gouws, 2022)

As such, while the report provides a valuable starting point for economic analysis, it also highlights the structural invisibility of language within existing national accounting systems.

Using a Social Accounting Matrix (SAM) methodology—aligned with internationally accepted Input-Output (IO) modelling techniques—Haines and Gouws (2022) estimated that the direct contribution of the language sector to South Africa's gross value added (GVA) in 2019 was R10.3 billion, or approximately 0.17% of national GVA (Haines & Gouws, 2022). This estimate includes disaggregated value-added figures such as R6.07 billion from high-skilled labour and R2.3 billion from capital inputs, reflecting the sector's dual reliance on human and intellectual capital.

While 0.17% may appear modest in macroeconomic terms, this figure must be contextualised. Firstly, language permeates virtually every sector of the economy—from publishing and education to justice, tourism, and media—rendering its total contribution far greater than what can be captured by direct modelling alone. Language is, as the authors put it, a *sine qua non* for economic activity (Haines & Gouws, 2022). Secondly, the sector is markedly labour-intensive, which enhances its potential as a vehicle for job creation. The analysis estimated that just under 70,000 people are directly employed in language-related professions, accounting for 0.44% of total employment in the country (Haines & Gouws, 2022). This employment estimate draws on pooled data from the Labour Market Dynamics of South Africa (LMDSA) dataset, mapped to Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes and filtered to include occupations such as translation, interpretation, language education, and writing/editing—many of which remain underrepresented in traditional classifications. It is worth noting that the methodology includes both formal and informal workers, as well as paraprofessionals, acknowledging the fluid nature of many language-based roles.

From a fiscal perspective, the language sector is a net contributor to the public purse. The 2022 report estimates that it pays approximately R713 million in taxes annually, against only R25 million in government subsidies. This tax-contribution-to-subsidy ratio underscores the sector's economic sustainability and argues for greater public investment, especially in capacity-building and infrastructure (Haines & Gouws, 2022).

The international context also supports this position. Tang (2018) found that China’s language industry was estimated at ¥192 billion in 2010, or 0.47% of GDP, while an EU study from 2009 valued the European language industry at €8.4 billion, expected to double by 2015 (Haines & Gouws, 2022). These benchmarks suggest that South Africa’s 0.17% may, in fact, represent a conservative lower-bound estimate—limited by data access and definitional constraints rather than actual market potential.

Moreover, the sector plays an increasingly strategic role in international trade. A gravity model included in the same report empirically demonstrates that shared or proximate languages significantly boost bilateral trade flows. This finding affirms earlier international research by Ginsburgh, Melitz, and others, who have shown that linguistic commonality reduces transaction costs and facilitates market integration

6.5. Employment Patterns and Labour Market Characteristics

Accurately estimating employment within the South African language economy presents significant challenges, primarily due to the absence of a dedicated national statistical category or disaggregated labour market code for language professionals. Unlike formal sectors such as agriculture or mining, the language sector is diffuse and embedded within a range of other occupations and industries—many of which do not exclusively or primarily involve language work. As a result, standard statistical datasets such as the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) do not provide a direct measure of employment within the language economy.

To address this, an occupational mapping exercise was undertaken, using data from QLFS Quarter 4, 2024. The analysis began by identifying a long list of occupational categories from the survey that could plausibly contain language-related work. These included both core occupations—such as translators, editors, writers, and interpreters—and broader, allied professions such as educators, broadcasters, and communications officers. In total, the long list yielded a headline employment figure of **551,349 individuals** working in potentially language-relevant occupations.

However, most of these occupational categories also include workers whose roles are not primarily language-based. For example, the category “university lecturer” may include academics in the fields of engineering or economics, with no formal engagement in language work. Similarly, the category “journalist” may include individuals working in monolingual digital media production with limited linguistic diversity responsibilities. To address this, a weighting system was applied—building on the methodology first developed in *Economics of Language* (Haines & Gouws, 2022)—to assign proportional estimates of how much of each occupation’s employment base can be reasonably attributed to language-specific work.

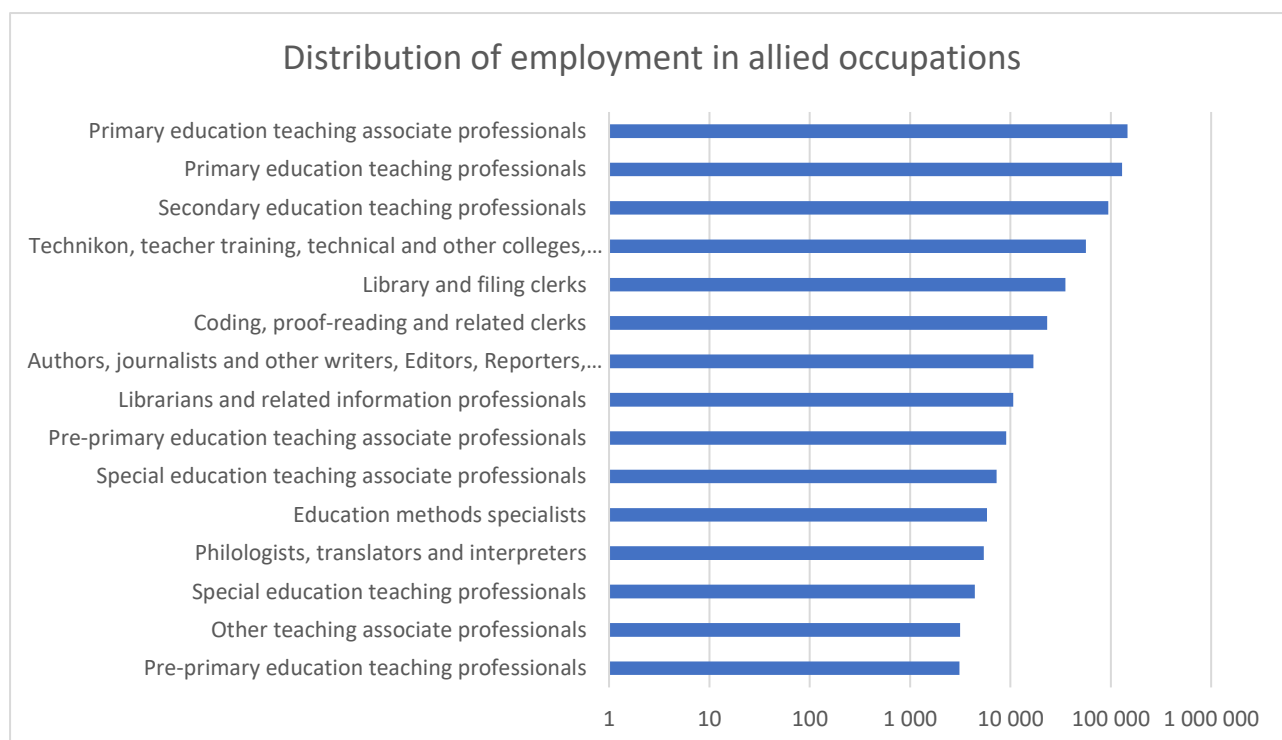
This weighting approach significantly narrows the scope of the analysis, resulting in a more defensible estimate of the core labour base of the language economy. After applying these weights, the total estimated employment within the core language economy is reduced to **62,572 individuals**, or **approximately 11.3%** of the original long list. This figure is broadly consistent with the estimates presented in Haines and Gouws (2022), who arrived at a similar total of between 66,000 and 70,000 language professionals using an earlier version of the same methodology.

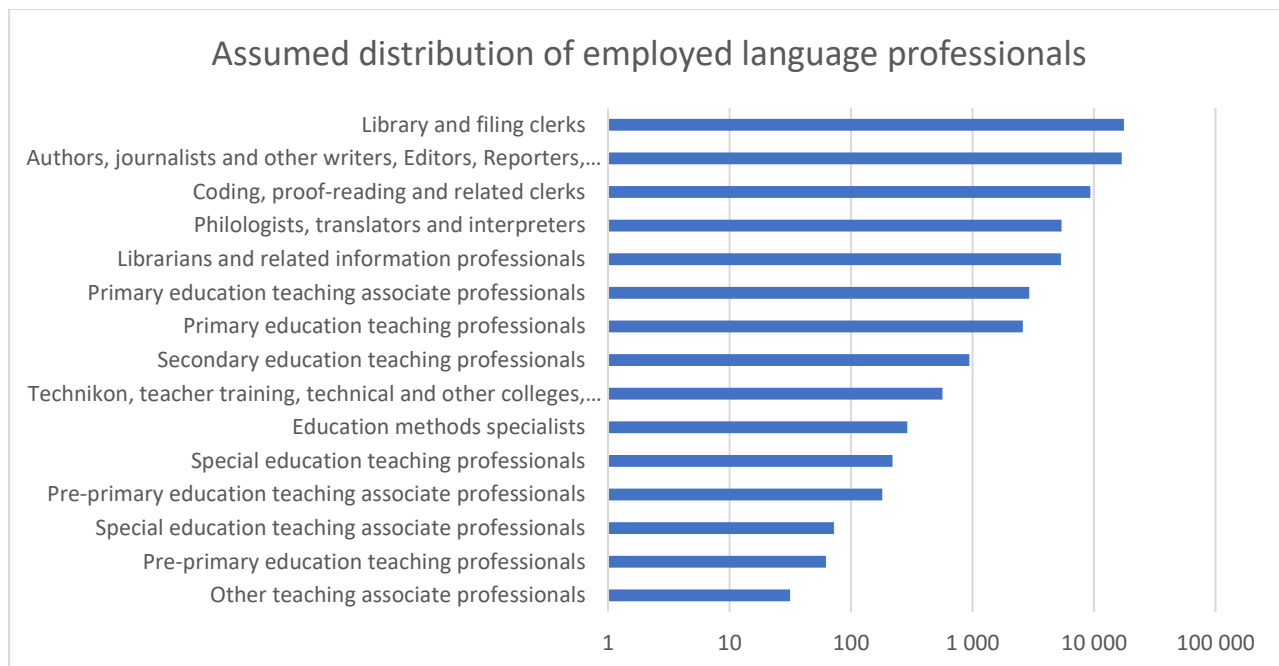
Chart XXX presents a comparison between the unweighted and weighted estimates, disaggregated by occupational grouping. Chart YYY illustrates the weighting factors applied to each category, showing the assumed share of language-related work within broader occupations.

Although this refined estimate provides a more realistic picture of the sector’s employment footprint, it still likely undercounts a significant portion of the labour force. Many freelance, part-time, or informally employed language practitioners are not captured in the QLFS data. This includes community interpreters, early-career translators, SASL professionals operating outside formal institutions, and many content creators or educators working in non-standard employment arrangements. The growing use of language services in digital platforms, community radio, and public sector outreach programmes also suggests that the true number of people engaged in language-based work may exceed formal estimates.

Moreover, the sector is characterised by a high degree of occupational hybridity. Language work often forms one component of a broader professional role—such as in education, legal services, advertising, and development communications—making it difficult to isolate within existing labour market classifications. This hybridity reflects the reality that language is not a discrete sector but rather a transversal input across many domains.

Given these limitations, future efforts to map employment patterns in the language economy would benefit from improved occupational coding, targeted survey modules, and the development of a dedicated classification system for language work. Complementary qualitative methods—such as practitioner registries, case studies, and organisational mapping—could also help to uncover the ‘hidden’ workforce that underpins much of South Africa’s multilingual infrastructure.





6.6. Conclusion and Areas for Further Research

This chapter has provided an initial economic and market analysis of South Africa's language economy, structured around its key functional domains and informed by the best available data. While the analysis remains constrained by the lack of disaggregated national statistics, it nonetheless highlights the sector's measurable contribution to gross value added (GVA), employment, and public revenue—estimated at **R10.3 billion, over 66,000 jobs, and R713 million in tax receipts**, respectively (Haines & Gouws, 2022). These findings, though partial, establish that language-related work constitutes a small but significant component of South Africa's broader services economy.

The evidence also points to a sector that is both labour-intensive and structurally fragmented. Language-based work is distributed across multiple industries—education, publishing, government, ICT, and culture—and is often embedded within occupations not formally recognised as part of the language economy. This fragmentation, combined with data invisibility, undermines the sector's ability to attract targeted investment, develop coherent policy interventions, or mobilise as a unified professional field.

To strengthen the evidence base and support the strategic development of the language economy, several areas for further research are identified:

- **Occupational Mapping and Classification:** Development of a refined occupational taxonomy that recognises language-based roles within existing ISCO and SIC codes, including informal, freelance, and hybrid roles.

- **Sectoral Value Chain Analysis:** More granular mapping of how value is created, transferred, and captured within the six functional domains—especially in publishing, localisation, and education.
- **Demand-Side Analysis:** Investigation into public and private sector procurement of language services, including translation, interpreting, editing, and content creation, to better understand market dynamics and barriers to entry.
- **Digital and Platform Economy Integration:** Research into emerging forms of language work in the platform economy (e.g. subtitling, voiceover, AI localisation), and the policy and labour implications of digitalisation.
- **Data Infrastructure and Satellite Accounts:** Exploration of how a dedicated cultural or language satellite account could be developed and integrated into Stats SA’s national accounts.
- **Skills Supply and Workforce Development:** Assessment of current training pathways, accreditation gaps, and employment transitions in the language sector, especially for youth, freelancers, and SASL practitioners.
- **Primary Employment Data Collection:** Ongoing monitoring of who participates in the language economy—by gender, language, region, and disability status—and how language access intersects with social inclusion and economic opportunity.

Together, these areas of inquiry will be critical for unlocking the full social and economic potential of South Africa’s multilingual landscape. Without a stronger empirical foundation, the language economy risks remaining undervalued—despite its central role in communication, education, cultural life, and rights-based service delivery.

7. Chapter 7: Ecosystem Mapping

7.1. Introduction

Understanding the structure and functioning of the language economy in South Africa requires more than simply identifying the range of actors involved. It demands a careful examination of the roles, relationships, and interdependencies that shape the sector as a whole — from individual practitioners and service providers to national policy institutions and technological platforms.

This chapter presents an ecosystem-based mapping of the South African language economy. It aims to provide both a conceptual and practical overview of how the sector operates by (i) profiling the key actors and institutions involved, (ii) illustrating the network of relationships and flows between these actors, and (iii) discussing the systemic dynamics that influence behaviour, constraints, and opportunities within the sector.

The ecosystem perspective presented here recognises the diversity and complexity of language-based work in South Africa. It spans both formal and informal economies, public and private spheres, and includes regulatory, academic, technological, and practitioner roles — many of which operate concurrently rather than sequentially.

While this mapping does not constitute a full economic model, it lays the groundwork for a more integrated understanding of the sector's internal structure. This can in turn support better-targeted policy, more efficient coordination between institutions, and improved support for practitioners and language-related enterprises.

7.2. Value Chain vs. Ecosystem: A Conceptual Framing

Traditional value chain analysis has often been used to understand how goods and services are produced — particularly in sectors such as agriculture, mining, or manufacturing. In such contexts, value is typically added in a linear or hierarchical fashion: raw materials are processed, refined, assembled, and finally brought to market, with each stage building directly on the last.

However, in the case of the language economy, this approach has significant limitations. Language-related work is rarely linear and does not follow a fixed sequence of value-adding activities. The sector includes a wide variety of interrelated actors — including translators, editors, lexicographers, language planners, policy developers, and technologists — many of whom do not operate within a single production chain. Their work often overlaps, converges, or feeds into multiple outputs simultaneously.

For instance, it is not self-evident how the activities of a lexicographer or policy analyst might “add value” in a direct production sense to the output of an interpreter or editor. Rather, these actors influence one another through a complex network of interdependencies — via terminology standards, educational curricula, software platforms, institutional mandates, and language norms.

An ecosystem approach is therefore better suited to the South African language economy. It allows us to capture the dynamic and non-linear relationships between actors, highlight the

enabling infrastructure (e.g., funding, regulation, technology), and understand how value is co-created across different domains. It also enables a view of how feedback loops — such as community uptake, technological shifts, or policy changes — reshape roles and reconfigure the landscape over time.

7.3. Language Stakeholders

South Africa’s language ecosystem is supported by a diverse network of stakeholders that span statutory bodies, professional associations, academic institutions, and non-profit organisations. These entities collectively contribute to the development, regulation, preservation, and promotion of the country’s multilingual landscape. They play specialised roles across domains such as language rights advocacy, linguistic research, translation and editing services, publishing, language technology, and the promotion of sign language and indigenous languages.

The table below provides a summary of the key stakeholders identified. It highlights each organisation’s type, core focus, and primary target group—whether professionals, the general public, educational institutions, or specific linguistic communities. This mapping is intended to support a more coordinated understanding of the institutional architecture of South Africa’s language sector and to identify areas of overlap, collaboration, and potential gaps in service or representation.

Organisation	Type	Focus / Description	Target Group
African Association for Lexicography (AFRILEX)	Professional Associations	Promotes research and collaboration in lexicography and dictionary development.	Lexicographers, language researchers
African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA)	Professional Associations	Supports scholarship, teaching, and promotion of African languages.	Language academics, linguists
Afrikaanse Taalraad	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Umbrella organisation advocating for the Afrikaans language in all its forms and varieties.	Afrikaans-speaking public, cultural institutions
Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL)	Statutory Bodies	Protects and promotes the rights of South Africa's cultural, religious, and linguistic communities.	General public, minority groups
Convo Communications South Africa (Convo)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Provides services and advocacy for South African Sign Language users, including interpreting.	Deaf community, SASL users
CSIR Voice Computing Research Group: Speech Node (CSIR)	Statutory Bodies	Conducts research in speech recognition, synthesis, and human language technologies.	Language tech developers, researchers
CTexT (Centre for Text Technology) – North-West University	Academic & Research Networks	Develops language technology for South Africa's indigenous languages.	Researchers, tech developers, public sector
Deaf Federation of South Africa (DEAFSA)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Advocates for the rights and inclusion of Deaf persons in society.	Deaf community, advocacy organisations
Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Promotes Afrikaans language, science, and the arts.	Afrikaans-speaking scholars, artists
Early Childhood Development Entities	Government Departments	Provides language and literacy support for early childhood education.	Children, educators, parents
ETDP SETA	Statutory Bodies	Sector Education and Training Authority for Education, Training and Development Practices.	Education professionals, training providers

FingerTALK – SASL Dictionary App	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Mobile app providing a visual dictionary for South African Sign Language.	SASL learners, educators, Deaf users
Foreign Language Institutes	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Promote language and cultural exchange (e.g. Alliance Française, Goethe-Institut).	Foreign language learners, general public
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)	Statutory Bodies	Conducts social science and humanities research, including language policy and literacy.	Policy makers, academic researchers
Indigenous Languages Action Forum (ILAF)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Advocates for the recognition and development of indigenous South African languages.	Language activists, community groups
Inter-institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment (ICELDA)	Academic & Research Networks	Collaborative university network focused on language assessment and development tools.	Academic institutions, language testers
National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Advocates for disability rights, including communication access.	Persons with disabilities, service providers
National Institute for the Deaf (NID)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Provides education, training, and advocacy for Deaf individuals.	Deaf learners, educators, employers
National Language Services (DSAC)	Government Departments	Government body supporting translation, terminology, and language policy implementation.	Government departments, language practitioners
Network of Expertise in Language Assessment (NExLA)	Academic & Research Networks	A national network to promote research and best practices in language assessment.	Language testers, universities, policy makers
Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB)	Statutory Bodies	Statutory body promoting multilingualism and language rights.	General public, language communities
PRAESA	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Promotes early literacy and multilingual education in African languages.	Children, educators, literacy NGOs

Professional Editors Guild (PEG)	Professional Associations	Supports and accredits professional editors and proofreaders.	Editors, proofreaders, language professionals
Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA)	Professional Associations	Represents the interests of South Africa's publishing industry.	Publishers, authors, education sector
REaSASL	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Research and development initiative focused on South African Sign Language teaching and learning.	SASL educators, learners
SADiLaR (Department of Science, Technology and Innovation)	Academic & Research Networks	Develops and shares digital language resources for research and development.	Researchers, language technologists
SALPC	Statutory Bodies	Regulatory body for language practitioners, responsible for accreditation and standards.	Language practitioners
Sign Language Education and Development (SLED)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Produces educational resources and promotes SASL education.	Deaf learners, teachers, education departments
SociGO	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Develops tools to improve communication access and social inclusion.	Disability sector, civic tech users
South African Association for Language Teaching (SAALT)	Professional Associations	Promotes research and practice in language teaching across educational contexts.	Language educators, academics
South African Council for Educators (SACE)	Statutory Bodies	Regulates and supports professional educators in South Africa.	Teachers, schools, training institutions
South African Council for English Education (SACEE)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Promotes English language education and literacy in schools.	Teachers, learners, literacy NGOs
South African Cultural Observatory (SACO)	Academic & Research Networks	Monitors and analyses the cultural and creative economy, including language use.	Policy makers, researchers
South African Freelancers Association (SAFREA)	Professional Associations	Supports freelance professionals in media, communications, and language services.	Freelancers, editors, translators

South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)	Statutory Bodies	Monitors and protects human rights, including language rights.	Public, minority groups
South African National Deaf Association (SANDA)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Advocates for the rights and welfare of Deaf people in South Africa.	Deaf community, public institutions
South African National Lexicography Units (SANLU)	Statutory Bodies	Produce monolingual dictionaries in indigenous languages.	Lexicographers, schools, public users
South African Translator's Institute (SATI)	Professional Associations	Professional body for translators and interpreters.	Translators, interpreters, editors
Southern African Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Society (SALALS)	Professional Associations	Supports and disseminates research in linguistics and applied linguistics.	Linguists, researchers, postgraduate students
Tertiary Education / Universities (Education)	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Train language professionals and conduct research in language and linguistics.	Students, academics, training institutions
University Language Departments & Related Units	Academic & Research Networks	Offer qualifications and conduct research in language, linguistics, and communication.	Students, researchers, educators
Wycliffe South Africa	Non-Profit / Independent Bodies	Supports Bible translation and literacy projects in indigenous languages.	Faith-based communities, translators

7.4. Mapping Language Domains & Thematic Areas

Understanding South Africa's language economy requires not only conceptual models or policy frameworks, but a detailed appreciation of the institutions, organisations, and stakeholder groups that actively shape the sector. These actors — including public entities, statutory councils, professional associations, training providers, NGOs, academic units, and private enterprises — occupy different spaces within the ecosystem, often with overlapping mandates or complementary functions.

To navigate this complexity, the language ecosystem is presented using **two interconnected mapping tools**:

1. A **functional domain matrix**, which situates organisations according to their primary areas of activity — such as policy development, education, publishing, technology, or rights advocacy — across six core domains:
 - Policy, Standards & Coordination
 - Language Transmission & Education
 - Publishing, Broadcasting & Cultural Production
 - Commercialisation & Platform Development
 - Defending Language Rights
 - Language Services & Intermediation
2. A **thematic cluster map**, which identifies shared communities of focus or practice — such as Deaf and SASL stakeholders, academic researchers, or multilingual education advocates. These themes offer a second lens for understanding who institutions serve, support, or align with.

Each organisation is shown as a **colour-coded block**, indicating its **institutional type**:

- Government Departments
- Statutory Bodies
- Academic & Research Networks
- Professional Associations
- Non-Profit / Independent Bodies

Red lines on the map illustrate **reporting or accountability relationships** to government departments or oversight authorities, such as DSAC or DSI. A **blue line** indicates that all language professionals, regardless of domain, will ultimately fall under the regulatory scope of the **South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC)** — once it becomes operational — reinforcing its central role in the long-term professionalisation of the sector.

Because many organisations span multiple functions, **primary and secondary roles** are distinguished. In the domain matrix, a **dark blue marker** indicates an organisation's primary area of focus; a **lighter blue** marker is used for secondary contributions. These markers also determine where an entity is placed within the visual ecosystem map. It is important to emphasise that secondary designation does not imply marginal involvement — rather, it reflects the organisation's core positioning within the functional framework.

The thematic map further allows for **cross-cutting analysis**. The categories used include:

- Deaf & SASL
- Language Professions
- Language Technology
- Language Rights & Policy
- Education & Teacher Training
- Publishing & Cultural
- Research & Knowledge
- Multilingualism & Promotion
- Lexicography

These themes help to show how institutions cluster around specific language communities, tools, or issues. For example, organisations like DEAFSA, SLED, and RealSASL all support the Deaf community, while entities such as SADiLaR, CSIR, and CText focus on digital language technologies.

In total, **43 key organisations and groupings** are mapped. To simplify the presentation, South African universities are represented under two broad headings:

- **Tertiary Education / Universities**, reflecting their role in knowledge transfer and professional training
- **University Language Departments**, capturing specialist units focused on linguistics, language education, or translation studies

A full list of universities, departments, and language-specific programmes is provided in the annexure.

This dual-layered mapping provides a **comprehensive and navigable overview** of the institutional landscape. It helps identify duplication, fragmentation, and potential synergies — offering a foundation for better coordination and governance design. As the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) becomes operational, this map can also assist in defining its scope, identifying strategic partners, and aligning sectoral development efforts.

It should be noted that this is not a static picture. **New stakeholders will continue to emerge**, and future iterations of this map can be expanded to include sub-units, projects, and smaller-scale initiatives within existing institutions. The framework may also be used to identify gaps — highlighting where **new entities, partnerships, or programmes** may be needed to support underserved professions, communities, or domains within the language economy.

Mapping Language Organisations by Language Domain

Host Organisation	Language Transmission & Education	Language Services & Intermediation	Publishing, Broadcasting & Cultural Production	Commercialisation & Platform Development	Policy, Standards & Coordination	Defending Language Rights
African Association for Lexicography (AFRILEX)						
African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA)						
Afrikaanse Taalraad						
Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL)						
Convo Communications South Africa (Convo)						
CSIR Voice Computing Research Group: Speech Node (CSIR)						
CTexT (Centre for Text Technology) – North-West University						
Deaf Federation of South Africa (DEAFSA)						
Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns						
Early Childhood Development Entities						
ETDP SETA						
FingerTALK – SASL Dictionary App						
Foreign Language Institutes						
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)						

Indigenous Languages Action Forum (ILAF)						
Inter-institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment (ICELDA)						
National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)						
National Institute for the Deaf (NID)						
National Language Services (DSAC)						
Network of Expertise in Language Assessment (NExLA)						
Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB)						
PRAESA						
Professional Editors Guild (PEG)						
Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA)						
REaLSASL						
SADiLaR (Department of Science, Technology and Innovation)						
SALPC						
Sign Language Education and Development (SLED)						
SociGO						
South African Association for Language Teaching (SAALT)						
South African Council for Educators (SACE)						

South African Council for English Education (SACEE)						
South African Cultural Observatory (SACO)						
South African Freelancers Association (SAFREA)						
South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)						
South African National Deaf Association (SANDA)						
South African National Lexicography Units (SANLU)						
South African Translator's Institute (SATI)						
Southern African Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Society (SALALS)						
Wycliffe South Africa						
South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC)						
Tertiary Education						
University Language Departments						

While the first matrix focuses on *what organisations do* within the language economy, the thematic mapping highlights *who they serve, what language communities they engage with, and the specific ecosystems of practice they contribute to*. These clusters cut across functional domains and provide a richer view of shared goals, professional linkages, and advocacy spaces.

Table 5: Mapping Language Organisations by Thematic Area

Entity	Deaf & SASL	Language Professions	Language Tech	Language Rights & Policy	Education & Teacher Training	Publishing & Cultural	Research & Knowledge	Multilingualism	Lexicography
African Association for Lexicography (AFRILEX)									
African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA)									
Afrikaanse Taalraad									
Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL)									
Convo Communications South Africa (Convo)									
CSIR Voice Computing Research Group: Speech Node (CSIR)									
CTexT (Centre for Text Technology) – North-West University									
Deaf Federation of South Africa (DEAFSA)									
Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns									
Early Childhood Development Entities									
ETDP SETA									
FingerTALK – SASL Dictionary App									

Entity	Deaf & SASL	Language Professions	Language Tech	Language Rights & Policy	Education & Teacher Training	Publishing & Cultural	Research & Knowledge	Multilingualism	Lexicography
Foreign Language Institutes									
Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC)									
Indigenous Languages Action Forum (ILAF)									
Inter-institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment (ICELDA)									
National Council of and for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)									
National Institute for the Deaf (NID)									
National Language Services (DSAC)									
Network of Expertise in Language Assessment (NExLA)									
Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB)									
PRAESA									
Professional Editors Guild (PEG)									
Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA)									
REaLSASL									
SADiLaR (Department of Science, Technology and Innovation)									
SALPC									
Sign Language Education and Development (SLED)									

Entity	Deaf & SASL	Language Professions	Language Tech	Language Rights & Policy	Education & Teacher Training	Publishing & Cultural	Research & Knowledge	Multilingualism	Lexicography
SociGO									
South African Association for Language Teaching (SAALT)									
South African Council for Educators (SACE)									
South African Council for English Education (SACEE)									
South African Cultural Observatory (SACO)									
South African Freelancers Association (SAFREA)									
South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)									
South African National Deaf Association (SANDA)									
South African National Lexicography Units (SANLU)									
South African Translator's Institute (SATI)									
Southern African Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Society (SALALS)									
Tertiary Education / Universities (Education)									
University Language Departments & Related Units									
Wycliffe South Africa									

7.5. Mapping of the Language Ecosystem

To make sense of the complex landscape of institutions, organisations, and professional networks that shape South Africa's language sector, we have structured the ecosystem into six functional domains:

1. Policy, Standards & Coordination
2. Language Transmission & Education
3. Publishing, Broadcasting & Cultural Production
4. Commercialisation & Platform Development
5. Defending Language Rights
6. Language Services & Intermediation

These domains reflect the primary functions that language-related entities perform in the economy and society. Some organisations are clearly situated within a single domain, while others operate across multiple domains, reflecting the interconnected nature of language policy, practice, and innovation.

In the visual map accompanying this section, reporting lines to government departments or oversight authorities are shown using red lines, indicating formal accountability structures (e.g. to the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture or the Department of Science and Innovation). A blue line has been used to indicate that, once operational, the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) — which is situated within the Policy, Standards & Coordination domain — will serve as the ultimate accrediting and regulatory authority for language professionals across all domains.

Each organisation is represented as a colour-coded block based on its institutional type. These types include:

- Government Departments
- Statutory Bodies
- Academic & Research Networks
- Professional Associations
- Non-Profit / Independent Bodies

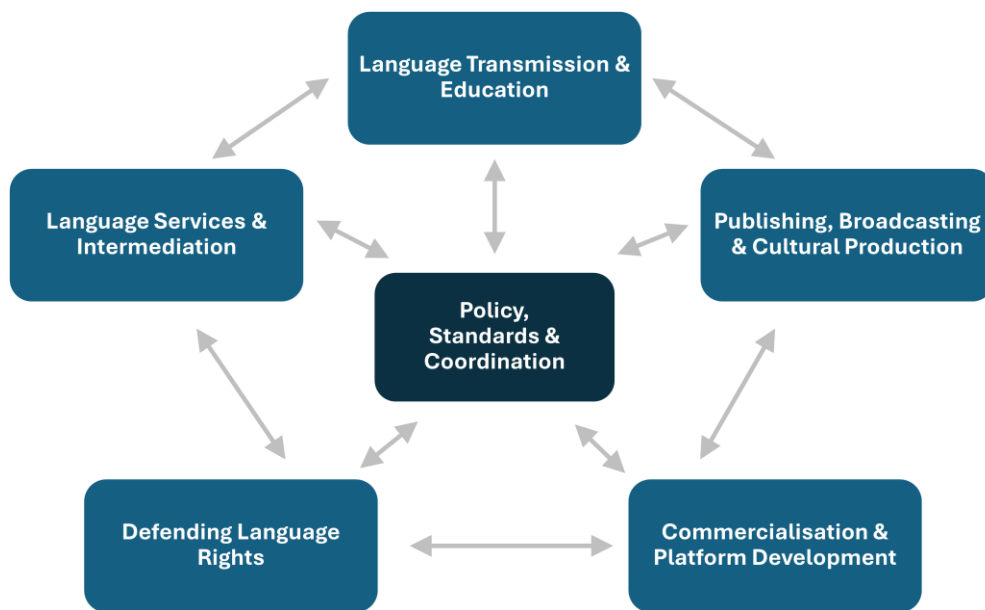


Figure 1: Policy, Standards & Coordination

The six domains of the language ecosystem are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, with no fixed hierarchy or linear sequence. Unlike a traditional value chain, which progresses in stages, the language economy operates through overlapping functions, feedback loops, and shared infrastructure. The Policy, Standards & Coordination domain sits at the centre of the ecosystem — not as a top-down authority, but as a foundational layer that enables, connects, and supports all other domains through regulation, standard-setting, and oversight.

Because many organisations serve more than one thematic area, additional colour-coded markers have been used to indicate specific areas of activity, such as Deaf and SASL-related services, language technology, lexicography, advocacy, or language education. These thematic overlays provide a more granular view of the functional reach of each institution, particularly where mandates overlap or partnerships are key to delivery.

The result is a layered, multi-dimensional view of the ecosystem — one that highlights both structural relationships and practical areas of focus, and which allows for the identification of gaps, synergies, and strategic opportunities within South Africa’s evolving language economy.

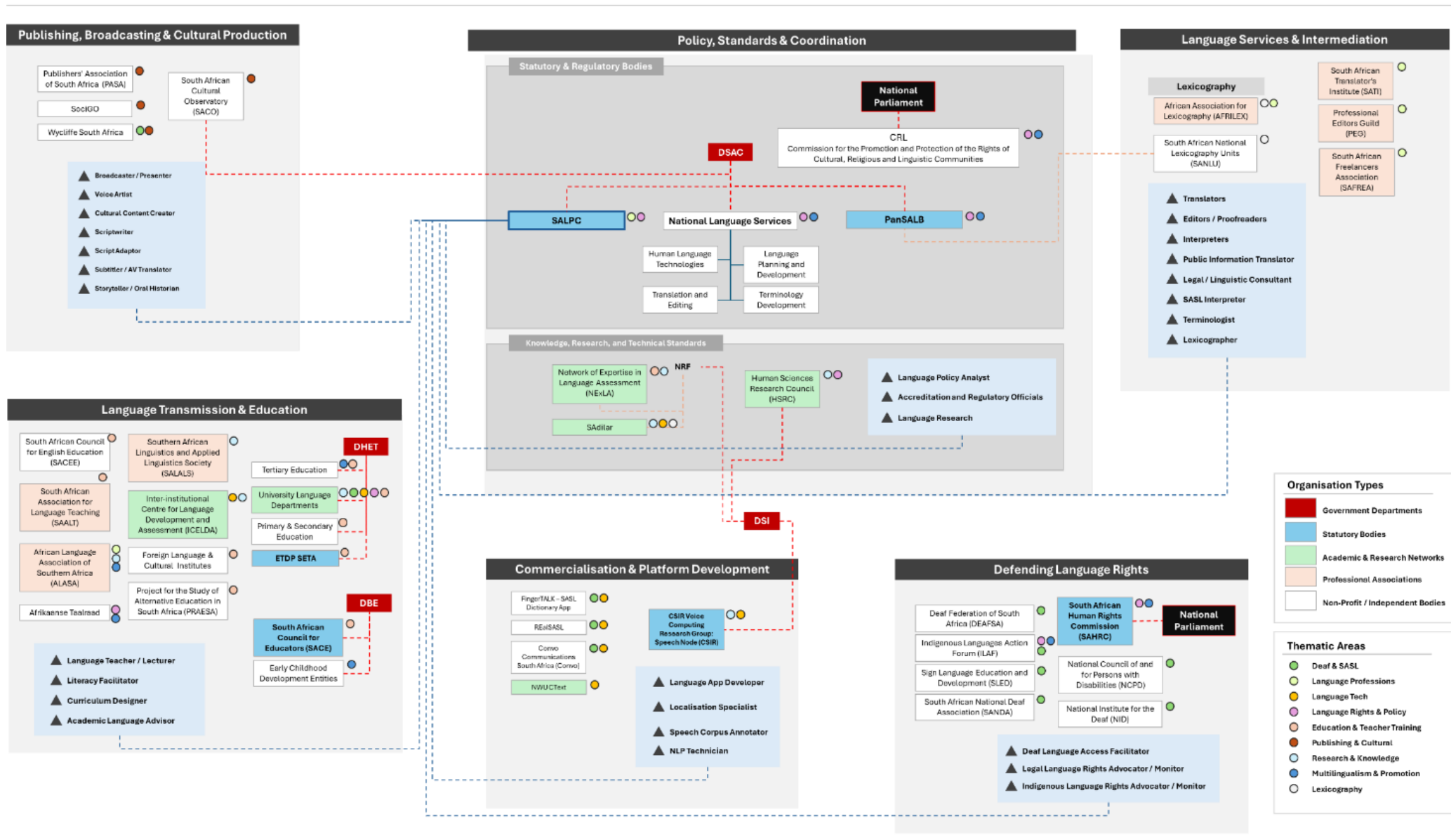


Figure 2: Ecosystem Map of the Language Economy

7.5.1. Policy, Standards & Coordination

The Policy, Standards & Coordination domain forms the institutional foundation of South Africa's language ecosystem. It encompasses those bodies responsible for language policy development, professional regulation, terminology and orthographic standardisation, and the enforcement of linguistic rights. These institutions define and maintain the rules, norms, and infrastructure that make it possible for a multilingual society to function in law, in government, and increasingly, in digital and commercial spaces.

At the centre of this domain are three principal entities that operate under the auspices of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC). The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), established by Act 59 of 1995, plays a constitutional oversight and advocacy role — monitoring the promotion of multilingualism and the protection of linguistic rights, including those of historically marginalised language communities. PanSALB oversees a network of national language boards and lexicography units, and it engages with both government and civil society to promote compliance with language legislation, such as the Use of Official Languages Act.

The South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC), legislated by Act 8 of 2014 but not yet operationalised, is intended to act as the statutory regulator of the language profession. Once established, it will accredit training providers, maintain a national register of practitioners, and enforce professional standards for translators, interpreters, editors, and terminologists. While PanSALB is primarily focused on rights and compliance, SALPC's role is to professionalise the sector — offering credibility, legal protection, and formal recognition for those working in language services.

Within DSAC itself, the National Language Services (NLS) functions as the department's in-house language service provider, responsible for government translation, terminology development, editing, and interpreting. NLS plays a dual role: delivering practical services to other departments and contributing to policy implementation and technical language planning. Together, PanSALB, SALPC, and NLS form the core institutional architecture of South Africa's language governance.

Alongside these DSAC-linked actors, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) plays a complementary and constitutionally protected role. As a Chapter 9 institution, the CRL Commission reports directly to Parliament, and not to a ministerial department. Its independence enables it to act as an external oversight body, with the authority to investigate complaints, conduct hearings, and promote systemic change in relation to cultural and linguistic rights.

While these four institutions form the governance core of the policy domain, their work is supported by a broader knowledge and technical infrastructure. This includes entities such as the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR), National Experts in Language Assessment (NexLA), and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). These institutions do not exercise regulatory authority, but their contributions — through research, data production, assessment design, and digital tool development — are essential to the functionality and credibility of the system as a whole.

SADiLaR, hosted at North-West University, is a national research infrastructure funded by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). It maintains digital corpora, develops language technologies, and supports computational linguistics across South Africa's official languages. NexLA, a specialist platform housed at the University of the Free State, works on academic literacy, multilingual assessment frameworks, and higher education language access. Both SADiLaR and NexLA are institutionally located within universities but receive their mandate and funding via the National Research Foundation (NRF), which reports to DSI.

The HSRC, also under DSI, contributes long-standing expertise in multilingualism, education policy, and social cohesion. Its research provides critical evidence for advocacy, legislation, and programme design — particularly in areas where language intersects with inequality, marginalisation, and access to public services.

Together, these entities define the regulatory environment, provide the tools and standards on which language professionals rely, and create the infrastructure necessary for a functioning language economy. Their work is not always visible to the broader public, but it is foundational to the operation of language in government, education, technology, and public life.

Common Language Professions in This Domain

- Language policy analysts and advisors
- Terminologists and lexicographers
- Computational linguists and language technologists
- Academic literacy specialists and assessment researchers
- Applied linguists and sociolinguists
- Translators, editors, and interpreters engaged in standard-setting or public-sector service delivery

7.5.2. Language Services & Intermediation

The Language Services & Intermediation domain represents the institutional layer that supports, organises, and connects language professionals with the markets, platforms, and clients they serve. It includes professional associations, sector networks, and coordinating bodies that promote professional standards, build communities of practice, and give voice to the collective interests of practitioners across the fields of translation, interpretation, editing, terminology, and lexicography.

In contrast to other domains, this space is primarily composed of professional associations — independently governed, member-based organisations that do not report to government departments but frequently collaborate with public institutions and funders. While they do not have formal regulatory authority, these bodies play a critical role in setting informal norms, fostering professional identity, and offering practical support to practitioners.

Once operational, the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) — situated within the Policy, Standards & Coordination domain — will become the statutory regulator for language practitioners across all domains. The ecosystem map reflects this with a blue line linking SALPC to each professional cluster, indicating the expected reach of its accreditation and oversight functions.

Composition and Functions

Key associations in this space include the South African Translators' Institute (SATI), the Professional Editors' Guild (PEG), and the Southern African Freelancers' Association (SAFREA) — each serving a distinct but overlapping constituency of language professionals. These bodies offer accreditation, professional development, and networking opportunities, while also advocating for better working conditions and quality standards.

This domain also includes two notable entities in the lexicography field: the South African National Lexicography Units (SANLU), which are publicly funded and report via PanSALB, and Afrilex, a scholarly association that promotes research and collaboration in dictionary-making. While Afrilex is an independent body, it maintains a formal reporting relationship with PanSALB, reflecting its embeddedness within the statutory language development system.

7.5.2.1. Contribution to the Language Sector

This domain plays a central role in structuring the language profession, building capacity, and ensuring professional visibility. In the absence of active statutory regulation, these associations provide crucial support — from ethics and accreditation to market access and advocacy. They also act as intermediaries between individual practitioners and the broader public, academic, and commercial sectors they serve.

Common Language Professions in This Domain

- Translators and interpreters
- Editors and proofreaders
- Terminologists
- Lexicographers
- Subtitlers and localisers
- Technical writers and freelance consultants

Language professionals in this domain often work across sectors — from education to media to government — and under diverse conditions ranging from full-time employment to freelance and project-based work. The strength and cohesion of this domain are therefore essential to the health of the wider language economy.

7.5.3. Defending Language Rights

The Defending Language Rights domain includes institutions and advocacy bodies that work to ensure individuals and communities can access services, education, and participation in public life in the languages they know best. While language rights are legally recognised in South Africa's Constitution, the practical realisation of those rights — particularly for marginalised language communities — often depends on the work of institutions in this domain.

Organisations here focus on monitoring and challenging exclusion, campaigning for equitable language policies, and supporting the development of under-resourced languages. Their work spans education, health, justice, and public communication — areas where language barriers can have serious consequences for inclusion, dignity, and opportunity.

This is a domain where civil society plays a leading role. Most entities operating in this space are independent non-profit organisations that do not report to government, although they frequently engage with public sector institutions on matters of policy, enforcement, and reform.

The exception is the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), a Chapter 9 institution that reports directly to Parliament, and holds constitutional powers to investigate language discrimination and uphold linguistic rights in law.

7.5.3.1. Composition and Functions

At the statutory level, the SAHRC acts as South Africa's primary rights enforcement body, with the authority to investigate complaints, conduct inquiries, and initiate legal action where individuals or communities are denied their language rights. The Commission has been active in cases involving language access in education, justice, and public service delivery.

In the civil society space, organisations such as the Deaf Federation of South Africa (DeafSA), SANDA (South African National Deaf Association), and SLED (Sign Language Education and Development) focus on advocacy, access, and education for Deaf communities and SASL users. These organisations work to ensure that South African Sign Language is formally recognised, that Deaf learners have access to education in their first language, and that SASL interpretation is available in public services and media.

Alongside these, bodies like the Indigenous Languages Action Forum (ILAF) focus on advocacy and mobilisation for African language communities, working to raise awareness of the marginalisation of indigenous languages and to influence curriculum reform, service delivery, and policy frameworks that affect linguistic equity.

Although these organisations vary in structure and scope, they are united by a shared commitment to the principle that language access is fundamental to democratic participation, human dignity, and socio-economic justice.

7.5.3.2. Contribution to the Language Sector

This domain serves a vital protective function within the language ecosystem. While other domains focus on development, service provision, or innovation, the Defending Language Rights cluster plays a watchdog role — identifying where rights are not being met and pushing for institutional accountability.

Its contributions are also developmental: many of these organisations engage directly in training, resource development, and capacity-building, particularly for SASL interpreters, Deaf educators, and community-based language advocates. In doing so, they strengthen the broader ecosystem's responsiveness to linguistic diversity and social justice imperatives.

7.5.3.3. Common Language Professions in This Domain

- SASL interpreters
- Deaf education specialists
- Language rights advocates and legal researchers
- Community-based language facilitators
- Policy and access advisors
- Indigenous language activists and curriculum reformers

Professionals in this domain often work at the intersection of language, law, education, and disability rights. Their work is typically community-facing and driven by equity concerns, and

they play a critical role in ensuring that South Africa’s language policy commitments translate into meaningful access on the ground.

7.5.4. Commercialisation & Platform Development

The Commercialisation & Platform Development domain captures the emerging interface between language, technology, and service delivery. It includes research institutions, social enterprises, and tech-based service providers that are using digital platforms and AI tools to develop scalable solutions for language accessibility, multilingual communication, and automated translation.

While relatively small compared to other domains, this is one of the most dynamic and fast-evolving areas of the language economy — particularly as new technologies in speech recognition, machine translation, and natural language processing (NLP) become more accessible and locally adaptable. It is here that the potential of South Africa’s language resources can be harnessed for innovation: enabling new modes of communication, creating jobs in language technology, and expanding access to public and commercial services in all official languages.

7.5.4.1. Composition and Functions

At the centre of this domain is the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), a public research institution under the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI). CSIR’s Voice Computing Research Group plays a key role in applied speech technology — developing automatic speech recognition, text-to-speech systems, and multilingual voice interfaces that are increasingly being adopted in both public and private sector platforms. The group also acts as the speech technology node for SADiLaR, ensuring alignment between commercial applications and national language infrastructure.

Closely linked is CText (Centre for Text Technology) at North-West University, which specialises in text processing, corpus development, and the creation of tools for African languages — including spellcheckers, predictive text engines, and translation support systems. CText combines academic research with practical tool development, and its outputs feed directly into both the educational and commercial spheres.

Other notable contributors to this domain include Convo South Africa, FingerTalk, and RealSASL — all of which focus on digital platforms for South African Sign Language (SASL) communication and interpretation. These organisations offer real-time video relay services, mobile learning apps, and workplace accessibility solutions, targeting a growing market for on-demand, inclusive communication services. While some of these entities are donor-funded or incubated within academia, they increasingly operate in commercial environments and offer services to public institutions, companies, and individual users.

7.5.4.2. Contribution to the Language Sector

This domain plays a key enabling role in scaling access to language services. It moves beyond traditional, one-to-one models of service delivery by building platforms that can reach thousands of users in real time — whether through automated transcription, speech-enabled customer support, or mobile-based SASL interpretation. It also supports localisation and

multilingual compliance across government services and commercial markets, helping institutions reach diverse language communities more effectively.

As AI tools and large language models become more integrated into digital systems, the demand for localised language data, ethical NLP frameworks, and culturally relevant voice technologies is expected to grow. This places South African language resources — and the professionals who help develop and refine them — at the heart of future innovation.

7.5.4.3. Common Language Professions in This Domain

- Computational linguists and language technologists
- Speech scientists and NLP engineers
- SASL interpreters and platform moderators
- UX designers and content localisers
- Terminologists and corpus developers
- App developers and multilingual platform architects

Professionals in this domain work at the intersection of language, technology, and service design. Many come from technical backgrounds in linguistics, computer science, or engineering, but increasingly collaborate with translators, educators, and Deaf community stakeholders to ensure inclusive and linguistically appropriate service models.

7.5.5. Language Transmission & Education

The Language Transmission & Education domain includes the institutions, networks, and professional bodies involved in the teaching, learning, and scholarly development of language in South Africa. This domain spans the entire educational pipeline — from early childhood development through to tertiary education — and plays a central role in shaping how languages are acquired, standardised, and sustained over time.

It is one of the most active and densely populated domains in the language ecosystem. Institutions in this space range from teacher training colleges and university departments to professional associations and curriculum development bodies. Collectively, they help determine which languages are taught, how they are taught, who is qualified to teach them, and how linguistic competence is measured in educational settings.

7.5.5.1. Composition and Functions

Organisations in this domain include a mix of statutory and independent entities, many of which are aligned with either the Department of Basic Education (DBE) or the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Public universities — especially their language departments, education faculties, and academic literacy centres — play a leading role in language education and applied research. They are supported by collaborative structures such as ICELDA (Inter-institutional Centre for Language Development and Assessment), which develops standardised academic language assessments used across the tertiary sector.

In addition to formal institutions, the domain includes several independent bodies that provide support, advocacy, or coordination for language educators. These include:

- The South African Council for English Education (SACEE), a long-standing association promoting the teaching of English and literacy in schools;
- The African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA), which brings together scholars and educators working to advance the status and use of African languages in higher education;
- The South African Association for Language Teaching (SAALT), a professional body supporting research and practice in both first and additional language pedagogy.

Foreign language and cultural institutes such as the Alliance Française, Goethe-Institut, and SASNEV also play a role in this domain, providing tuition, cultural programming, and resources that support multilingualism and global language exchange.

These entities collectively contribute to curriculum development, teacher training, assessment design, research dissemination, and language policy implementation — particularly in the schooling and post-schooling sectors. While many operate independently, several work in partnership with DBE, DHET, or research funders like the NRF.

7.5.5.2. Contribution to the Language Sector

This domain is essential to the long-term vitality and legitimacy of South Africa’s multilingual framework. It shapes not only who becomes literate in which languages, but also how linguistic knowledge is transferred between generations and how different languages are positioned in society. Education institutions play a powerful role in either reinforcing or challenging language hierarchies — through curriculum choices, language of learning and teaching (LOLT) policies, and the availability of teaching materials in indigenous languages.

The domain also supports a pipeline of skilled professionals — from language teachers and academic researchers to curriculum designers and assessment specialists — whose work underpins all other areas of the ecosystem.

7.5.5.3. Common Language Professions in This Domain

- Language teachers and lecturers
- Curriculum designers and textbook authors
- Academic literacy specialists and assessors
- Applied linguists and education researchers
- Teacher trainers and education policy consultants
- Language app developers and instructional designers

Professionals in this domain are often embedded in schools, universities, NGOs, or educational publishing. Their work not only sustains formal language education, but also informs language access strategies, equity initiatives, and broader questions of cultural transmission and social inclusion.

7.5.6. Publishing, Broadcasting & Cultural Production

The Publishing, Broadcasting & Cultural Production domain brings together the institutions, associations, and platforms that shape the presence of language in the public imagination. It includes those who produce and disseminate linguistic content — whether through books, media, performance, or digital storytelling — and plays a pivotal role in ensuring that South Africa’s languages are visible, vibrant, and culturally meaningful.

This domain reflects the creative and expressive dimensions of the language ecosystem. It is concerned not with technical standards or classroom instruction, but with how languages are used in everyday communication, in public discourse, and in cultural production. Its impact extends beyond economics into questions of identity, inclusion, and narrative power.

7.5.6.1. Composition and Functions

The majority of entities in this domain are independent non-profit organisations or member-based associations, operating outside of direct government oversight. They include:

- The Publishers' Association of South Africa (PASA), which represents academic, trade, and educational publishers and advocates for multilingual publishing policies, copyright reform, and transformation in the publishing sector.
- Various cultural organisations and language-focused content producers, including community broadcasters, literary festivals, and media collectives working across languages and genres.

A notable exception is the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) — a public research body funded by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC). SACO tracks the performance and contribution of the cultural and creative industries, including the role of language in publishing, broadcasting, and cultural expression. Its economic research informs policy, investment, and strategic planning within the broader creative economy.

7.5.6.2. Contribution to the Language Sector

This domain plays a critical role in giving languages public presence and cultural legitimacy. It determines which languages are heard on radio, seen in print, or included in national narratives. By creating demand for translation, editing, subtitling, and localisation services, it directly supports language professionals — while also shaping public attitudes toward linguistic diversity.

In addition, it fosters access to cultural content in home languages, particularly through educational publishing and vernacular literature. Its outputs influence how children learn to read, how identities are represented in media, and how stories circulate within and across communities.

7.5.6.3. Common Language Professions in This Domain

- Editors, proofreaders, and copywriters
- Translators and subtitlers
- Cultural content creators and scriptwriters
- Publishers and literary translators
- Broadcasters and voice artists
- Language consultants in media and advertising

Professionals in this domain often move between the creative and commercial sectors — working on commissioned media, educational materials, or independent cultural projects. Their work bridges language, storytelling, and representation, making this one of the most publicly visible parts of the language economy.

7.5.7. Language Profession Support

To complement our domain-based mapping of the South African language ecosystem, we have compiled a cross-referenced overview that links specific language professions to the organisations or entities that provide them with institutional support, representation, or professional infrastructure.

This table does not suggest rigid or exclusive alignments. In practice, many language professionals work across multiple domains and engage with several institutions throughout their careers. Rather than prescribing fixed relationships, the table highlights which organisations currently offer relevant services, platforms, resources, or professional representation — whether through accreditation, training, advocacy, networking, research collaboration, or employment opportunities.

Some professions, such as translators, editors, interpreters, and terminologists, have clearly defined institutional homes with formal pathways for accreditation and professional development. Others, including script adaptors, oral historians, and language app developers, operate in more fluid or emerging areas where institutional support may be informal, cross-disciplinary, or project-based.

This table should be viewed as a starting point for further inquiry into the support structures available to language professionals. As the language economy continues to grow and diversify, these relationships will need to be revisited and expanded to ensure that all professionals have access to the networks, resources, and recognition they need to thrive.

Table 6: Language Professions and Supporting Organisations

Profession	Related Organisation(s)
Broadcaster / Presenter	• SAFREA (freelance representation, networking, and professional support), • SociGO (platform for SASL digital content creators)
Voice Artist	• SAFREA (freelance representation, networking, and professional support), • SociGO (platform for SASL digital content creators)
Cultural Content Creator	• SociGO (platform for SASL digital content creators)
Scriptwriter	• SAFREA (freelance representation, networking, and professional support)
Script Adaptor	• SAFREA (freelance representation, networking, and professional support)
Subtitled / AV Translator	• SATI (professional registration, accreditation, and practice guidelines), • SAFREA (freelance representation, networking, and professional support)
Storyteller / Oral Historian	• PRAESA (multilingual literacy materials and narrative support), • ILAF (indigenous language promotion and oral history advocacy)

Language Teacher / Lecturer	• SAALT (professional association for language teaching and applied linguistics), • SACEE (English language education and literacy advancement), • University Language Departments & Related Units (teaching posts, academic development, and curriculum input)
Literacy Facilitator	• SACEE (English language education and literacy advancement), • PRAESA (multilingual literacy materials and narrative support)
Academic Language Advisor	• ICELDA (academic literacy tools and language testing research), • NExLA (language assessment frameworks and technical collaboration)
Language App Developer	• RealSASL (SASL app and video dictionaries), • CSIR (speech technology development and language processing), • SADiLaR (digital language resource creation and corpus tools)
Localisation Specialist	• SATI (professional registration, accreditation, and practice guidelines), • CTexT (NWU) (language tech research and localisation tools)
Speech Corpus Annotator	• SADiLaR (digital language resource creation and corpus tools), • CTexT (NWU) (language tech research and localisation tools)
NLP Technician	• CSIR (speech technology development and language processing),
Language Policy Analyst	• PanSALB (support), • HSRC (social science research including language policy studies)
Language Researchers	• ALASA (association for African language research and scholarship), • SALALS (professional research network for linguistics and applied linguistics), • HSRC (social science research including language policy studies), • SACO (support)
Translators	• SATI (professional registration, accreditation, and practice guidelines), • SAFREA (freelance representation, networking, and professional support)
Editors / Proofreaders	• PEG (professional support for editors and proofreaders), • SAFREA (freelance representation, networking, and professional support)
Interpreters	• SATI (professional registration, accreditation, and practice guidelines), • SAFREA (freelance representation, networking, and professional support)

Public Information Translator	• SATI (professional registration, accreditation, and practice guidelines)
Legal / Linguistic Consultant	• SATI (professional registration, accreditation, and practice guidelines)
SASL Interpreter	• DEAFSA (advocacy and interpreter support for Deaf communities), • RealSASL (SASL app and video dictionaries), • Convo (remote interpreting services and SASL access)
Terminologist	• AFRILEX (lexicography research and knowledge sharing), • SANLU (national dictionary and terminology development)
Lexicographer	• AFRILEX (lexicography research and knowledge sharing), • SANLU (national dictionary and terminology development)
Deaf Language Access Facilitator	• DEAFSA (advocacy and interpreter support for Deaf communities), • SLED (educational materials and interpreter training in SASL), • NCPD (disability inclusion advocacy and support services)

7.6. Conclusion

This mapping exercise has aimed to bring clarity to the complex and often fragmented institutional landscape that underpins the South African language economy. By organising key stakeholders into six functional domains and identifying the relationships between institutions and professional roles, we have laid the groundwork for a more integrated understanding of how language policy, practice, and service delivery intersect across the public, private, and civil society sectors.

What emerges is a system that is diverse, active, and evolving — but also marked by uneven support structures, overlapping mandates, and important gaps in coordination. Some domains, such as language education and professional services, benefit from well-established institutions and professional networks. Others, particularly in the digital and commercial language space, are still in the early stages of institutional development.

The mapping of language professions to supporting entities further illustrates the varied levels of institutional infrastructure that exist across roles. It highlights not only the organisations currently serving language professionals, but also areas where further investment, policy attention, or professional development may be warranted.

This is not a static picture. New stakeholders will continue to emerge, and future iterations of this map can be expanded to include sub-units, programmes, and initiatives within university language departments and other key institutions. The framework is also flexible enough to accommodate the inclusion of local, regional, or sector-specific projects that may not yet be formally institutionalised but play an important role in the language ecosystem.

Importantly, this map may also serve as a strategic tool — one that can help identify underrepresented areas within the sector, spark ideas for new language-focused initiatives, and even guide the establishment of new entities to meet unmet needs.

Taken together, this work provides a valuable reference for policymakers, institutions, funders, and practitioners seeking to strengthen the language sector as a whole. It supports more informed planning, greater collaboration, and a shared commitment to building an inclusive, multilingual future for South Africa.

8. Chapter 8: Governance Models

8.1. Introduction

The establishment of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) presents a critical opportunity to reconfigure how the language professions are regulated, supported, and integrated into broader developmental agendas. Yet for the SALPC to function effectively, it must be embedded within a clear, coherent, and sustainable governance model that reflects both the specific dynamics of the language economy and the institutional realities of the South African public sector.

This chapter examines the governance arrangements of relevant bodies within the language sector—including statutory councils, regulatory authorities, advisory boards, and professional associations—with the aim of identifying practical lessons and structural options for the SALPC. It considers how functions such as accreditation, oversight, stakeholder representation, standard-setting, and operational delivery are currently distributed across institutions like PanSALB, the CRL Rights Commission, the National Language Services (DSAC), and SADiLaR, among others.

8.2. Other South African Statutory Councils

This chapter explores how professional regulatory bodies are structured and governed in South Africa, with the aim of informing the proposed institutional design of a National Language Council. The focus is on professions that, like the language sector, are governed through statutory councils established by an Act of Parliament. These bodies carry legal mandates to regulate qualifications, uphold professional standards, enforce codes of conduct, and often manage accreditation and continuing professional development. Five sectors have been selected as benchmarks: Law, Health Professions, Engineering, Education, and the Built Environment Professions.

- **Law** – Regulated by the Legal Practice Council (LPC)
- **Health Professions** – Regulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)
- **Engineering** – Regulated by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)
- **Education** – Regulated by the South African Council for Educators (SACE)
- **Built Environment Professions** – Coordinated by the Council for the Built Environment (CBE)

These industries were chosen not only because they operate under enabling legislation, but also because they exhibit a range of governance models—from single councils to umbrella bodies—that may offer useful precedents for a language-focused institution.

This chapter provides a high-level overview of each body's legal foundation, institutional scope, and core functions. It is intended as a starting point for comparative analysis and will be expanded upon in future reports through deeper stakeholder engagement, institutional interviews, and regulatory performance assessments. The goal is to build a cumulative evidence base to support the development of a fit-for-purpose governance model for South Africa's language sector.

8.2.1. Law – Regulated by the Legal Practice Council (LPC)

The Legal Practice Council is the national statutory body that regulates the legal profession in South Africa, encompassing both attorneys and advocates. It was established under the *Legal Practice Act, No. 28 of 2014*, which came into full effect in 2018, replacing previous provincial law societies and the Bar councils with a single, unified regulator. The LPC is tasked with ensuring high standards of legal practice, promoting access to justice, and advancing the transformation of the legal sector. It plays a dual role in protecting public interest while supporting the professional development of legal practitioners.

8.2.1.1. Benchmarking Financial and Governance Design

The Legal Practice Council (LPC), established under the Legal Practice Act of 2014, regulates attorneys and advocates in South Africa. As a statutory body, it holds the dual responsibility of upholding professional standards while ensuring public accountability in the legal profession. Its financial model offers a useful point of comparison for the proposed South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC), particularly in how a national regulatory body can sustain its operations through a mix of mandatory practitioner levies, service fees, and external appropriations.

8.2.1.2. Income Generation

The LPC derives the majority of its income from the annual fees paid by registered legal practitioners, along with a range of service-related charges. These include:

- Enrolment fees for newly admitted attorneys and advocates;
- Conversion fees for practitioners changing legal category (e.g., from attorney to advocate);
- Examination and application fees related to admission processes;
- Fidelity Fund Certificate fees, which are compulsory for all legal practitioners managing trust accounts;
- Training programme fees, particularly those associated with practical legal training;
- Appropriations from the Legal Practitioners Fidelity Fund (LPFF), which contributes to the Council's activities and subsidises access to legal practice.

The Council's financial statements (2021) confirm that practitioner contributions represent the single largest income stream, reflecting a strong principle of self-funding by the profession.

8.2.1.3. Fee Structure

Annual fees are standardised nationally and differ according to the practitioner's level of experience:

- Legal practitioners with less than two years' experience pay a lower annual levy;
- Those with more than two years of practice are subject to a higher annual fee;
- Additional fees apply for certification, late renewal, and registration amendments.

The Council's fee schedule is reviewed periodically and published in accordance with the Legal Practice Act and LPC Rules. These rules also allow for differentiated treatment of categories

(e.g. attorneys, advocates, candidate attorneys), although all are subject to registration and contribution requirements.

8.2.1.4. Governance and Financial Accountability

The LPC is governed by a National Council, which includes elected legal practitioners from each province, as well as appointed laypersons and representatives from legal education institutions. This body is responsible for setting fees, approving budgets, and overseeing financial integrity.

Importantly, while the LPC has significant revenue-raising powers, its governance model includes transparency and accountability safeguards. It must submit audited financial statements to the Minister of Justice and Parliament annually. This ensures that even as it self-finances through practitioner levies, it remains aligned to public interest principles.

8.2.2. Health Professions – Regulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)

The HPCSA is the primary regulatory authority for health professionals in South Africa, including medical practitioners, psychologists, physiotherapists, and speech-language therapists. It was established by the *Health Professions Act, No. 56 of 1974*, succeeding earlier medical councils that date back to the early 20th century. The Council is responsible for registering professionals, accrediting educational institutions, setting professional standards, and ensuring ethical conduct in the healthcare sector. It operates through a system of 12 professional boards, each with domain-specific mandates.

8.2.2.1. Benchmarking Financial and Governance Design

The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) is a statutory body established under the Health Professions Act No. 56 of 1974, tasked with regulating health professions in the public interest. The HPCSA oversees numerous professional categories, including medical practitioners, psychologists, radiographers, and others, through a central council and a system of twelve autonomous professional boards. Its financial model is based primarily on practitioner contributions and serves as a robust example of sector-funded professional regulation within a multi-professional regulatory framework.

8.2.2.2. Income Generation

The Council's income is predominantly generated through:

- Annual registration and renewal fees paid by individual practitioners across all regulated categories;
- Once-off application, restoration, examination, and evaluation fees, which vary by profession and are recognised on delivery of the respective services;
- Reinstatement fees for professionals returning to practice after removal from the register;
- Collaborative revenues, such as from projects with the Road Accident Fund (RAF);
- Rental and tribunal income, for example from training or disciplinary venues;
- Investment income from surplus funds managed by the Council.

8.2.2.3. Fee Structure

The HPCSA uses a profession-specific fee structure, recognising the distinct requirements of its various boards. These fees are reviewed annually, with updated schedules published online. Non-payment of fees results in suspension from the register, thereby linking compliance with the right to practise—a strong incentive for timely contribution.

8.2.2.4. Governance and Financial Oversight

The HPCSA is governed by a central Council, which includes representatives from each of the twelve Professional Boards, along with academic and public interest nominees. Each board operates with relative autonomy, particularly in matters relating to education standards, registration criteria, and ethics, while financial administration and shared services are centralised under the Council Secretariat.

The Council's governance structure reflects a federated model, balancing central financial accountability with profession-specific regulatory flexibility. It operates a finance committee and external audit arrangements and is required to submit its financials to the Auditor-General of South Africa. This ensures compliance with public finance principles, despite its self-funding model.

The HPCSA's structure demonstrates how a large, complex professional council can maintain professional legitimacy, fiscal sustainability, and regulatory authority through a diversified fee base and distributed governance.

8.2.3. Engineering – Regulated by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)

ECSA is the statutory body that regulates the engineering profession across various disciplines in South Africa. It was established through the *Engineering Profession Act, No. 46 of 2000*, replacing earlier iterations of engineering oversight with a more inclusive and modern regulatory framework. ECSA's functions include accrediting engineering programmes, registering practitioners, maintaining professional standards, and promoting the transformation and development of the profession. It also aligns with international engineering standards, allowing for global recognition of South African engineers.

8.2.3.1. Benchmarking Financial and Governance Design

The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) is the statutory body responsible for regulating the engineering profession in accordance with the Engineering Profession Act No. 46 of 2000. It oversees registration, education standards, continuing professional development (CPD), and disciplinary procedures for professional engineers, technologists, technicians, and candidates. ECSA plays a central role in safeguarding public safety and infrastructure quality through professional regulation, while operating under the policy oversight of the Council for the Built Environment (CBE).

8.2.3.2. Income Generation

ECSA funds its operations primarily through:

- Annual registration fees, which are mandatory for all categories of registered professionals and candidates.
- Application and assessment fees, including those linked to the peer-reviewed professional registration process;
- Reinstatement and late payment penalties, designed to maintain database integrity and discourage non-compliance;
- Interest and investment income on surplus funds held by the Council.

Unlike some other regulatory bodies, ECSA does not receive direct government grants. It is a fully self-funded body, and its financial sustainability is tied to the active engagement of engineering professionals and candidates across the country.

In the 2023/24 financial year, ECSA's annual report confirmed that registration-related income accounted for over 80% of total revenue. Efforts to recover fees from lapsed registrations and streamline CPD audits have further improved financial performance.

8.2.3.3. Fee Structure

ECSA maintains a detailed, category-based fee structure:

- Annual fees vary by designation (e.g. Professional Engineer, Candidate Technician), with higher fees for fully registered professionals.
- Applicants pay assessment fees during the registration process.
- Reinstatement fees apply to professionals who let their registration lapse, with additional administrative charges for re-entry.
- CPD requirements are linked to renewal eligibility but do not attract direct fees unless non-compliance triggers disciplinary or reinstatement processes.

These fees are published annually and updated in line with inflation, administrative cost reviews, and broader sector affordability trends.

8.2.3.4. Governance and the Role of the CBE

ECSA is governed by a **Council** composed of elected professionals, academic representatives, and nominees from government and industry. The Council is responsible for strategy, finance, ethics, and regulatory oversight. It delegates operational matters to professional committees and a permanent secretariat, with structured processes for appeals, peer review, and disciplinary enforcement.

ECSA is one of six statutory professional councils that fall under the umbrella of the Council for the Built Environment (CBE). The CBE, established by the Council for the Built Environment Act No. 43 of 2000, serves as a coordinating and policy body for the built environment professions—namely architecture, quantity surveying, landscape architecture, construction project management, property valuation, and engineering. This relationship is structured as follows:

- ECSA retains operational and regulatory independence, particularly in professional registration, standard setting, and discipline.

- The CBE provides cross-sector coordination, harmonisation of regulatory approaches, and policy alignment with the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.
- ECSA submits strategic plans, performance data, and compliance reports to the CBE as part of its public accountability obligations.
- The CBE also adjudicates certain appeals and plays a role in dispute resolution between councils and the state.

This governance model balances autonomy with oversight, allowing ECSA to act as a peer-led professional regulator, while ensuring that national infrastructure and economic development goals are not undermined by fragmentation within the built environment sector.

8.2.4. Education – Regulated by the South African Council for Educators (SACE)

SACE is the statutory council responsible for regulating the teaching profession in South Africa. Established under the *South African Council for Educators Act, No. 31 of 2000*, it emerged from earlier, fragmented teacher registration systems and was designed to professionalise teaching through compulsory registration, disciplinary oversight, and continuous professional development. SACE serves both as a regulatory body and a developmental agency, aiming to enhance the status and quality of teaching across public and private education systems.

8.2.4.1. Benchmarking Professional Regulation in the Education Sector

The South African Council for Educators (SACE) is a statutory professional body established under the South African Council for Educators Act No. 31 of 2000, tasked with overseeing the registration, professional conduct, and development of educators. While its regulatory scope is narrower than that of multi-professional councils like the HPCSA or ECSA, SACE provides a useful precedent for a profession-specific council that is deeply embedded in public service delivery, education policy, and sector transformation.

8.2.4.2. Purpose and Functional Role

SACE is responsible for:

- Maintaining a national register of educators across public and independent schools.
- Administering a code of professional ethics and disciplinary procedures.
- Overseeing and endorsing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities.
- Accrediting providers of professional development programmes.
- Promoting the professionalisation and status of educators in South Africa.

Unlike PanSALB or the future SALPC, SACE operates within a highly standardised state-regulated environment, where most practitioners are public employees governed by Department of Basic Education policies.

8.2.4.3. Income Generation

SACE operates on a blended funding model, combining:

- Mandatory annual membership fees, charged to all registered educators and deducted automatically for those in public service;
- Registration and reinstatement fees, including for newly qualified graduates, returning professionals, and those requiring certificate reprints;
- Government transfer funding, typically allocated for administrative overheads and statutory obligations;
- Additional income from interest, fines, and rental recoveries.

According to the 2023/24 Annual Report, SACE's primary revenue source remains its annual educator fees, which totalled over R120 million, with government grants contributing approximately R15.5 million. This allows the Council to maintain independence while remaining aligned with state mandates.

8.2.4.4. Fee Structure

Fees are:

- Automatically deducted from public sector educators' salaries via the Persal system.
- Payable directly by educators in private or independent schools;
- Supplemented by additional once-off fees for registration, reinstatement, and administrative services.

This affordability and consistency—especially in the context of a large, unionised workforce—provides a viable model for a low-barrier fee structure that could be replicated by SALPC in its early operational phase.

8.2.4.5. Governance Structure

SACE is governed by a Council of 30 members, appointed by the Minister of Basic Education. The Council includes:

- Teacher unions, which hold significant representation (e.g. SADTU, NAPTOSA, SAOU);
- Representatives from provincial education departments, higher education institutions, and school governing bodies;
- Public and community nominees.

The Council operates through standing committees, including:

- Registration Committee (REGCO)
- Professional Development Committee (PRODCO)
- Ethics Committee (ETHCOM)

This committee-based structure allows for functional specialisation while maintaining strategic coherence across the organisation. SACE submits annual performance plans and reports to Parliament and is subject to oversight by the Auditor-General of South Africa.

8.2.5. Built Environment Professions – Coordinated by the Council for the Built Environment (CBE)

The Council for the Built Environment is a statutory coordination body overseeing six built environment professional councils, including those for architecture, quantity surveying, landscape architecture, engineering, and construction project management. It was established by the *Council for the Built Environment Act, No. 43 of 2000*, in response to the need for integrated and standardised governance across the built environment sector. The CBE promotes transformation, education and training, and alignment of regulatory practices among its constituent professional councils.

8.2.5.1. Benchmarking Oversight and Coordination in a Multi-Council Framework

The Council for the Built Environment (CBE) was established under the Council for the Built Environment Act No. 43 of 2000 as an umbrella oversight body for six statutory professional councils operating in South Africa's built environment. These include the councils for engineering, architecture, quantity surveying, landscape architecture, construction project management, and property valuation. While the CBE does not directly register professionals or set individual disciplinary standards, it plays a vital role in coordinating governance, policy alignment, and transformation objectives across the sector.

8.2.5.2. Purpose and Strategic Role

The CBE's legislative mandate is to ensure:

- Uniform governance standards across professional councils;
- Alignment of professional education and training with national human settlement and infrastructure needs;
- Promotion of inter-council collaboration, data harmonisation, and dispute resolution;
- Monitoring of transformation and equity targets, particularly in historically exclusive professions.

Its role is best described as that of a meta-regulator—it does not perform core regulatory functions (registration, accreditation, discipline), but enables system-wide coherence and responsiveness to national development priorities.

8.2.5.3. Income Generation and Fee Structure

Unlike its constituent councils, the CBE does not collect registration fees from professionals directly. Its funding is derived from:

- An annual transfer from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (DPWI);
- Levies paid by the professional councils under its jurisdiction, calculated in proportion to their membership bases;
- Secondary income from interest and occasional partnerships or consultancy work.

This funding structure reinforces the CBE’s non-duplicative role. It avoids creating additional financial burdens for practitioners, while ensuring that coordination, standardisation, and transformation remain system-wide priorities.

8.2.5.4. Governance Model

The CBE is governed by a Council appointed by the Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure. The council includes:

- Nominees from each of the six professional councils;
- Representatives from government departments, academia, and the public;
- Members selected through an open nomination process.

Council members serve four-year terms, and are supported by a professional secretariat, technical committees, and an internal audit and governance framework. Oversight is provided by the Auditor-General, and all performance and budget plans are submitted to Parliament via the DPWI.

8.3. Mechanisms for Professional Recognition and Standards

At present, the South African language sector lacks a coherent, unified framework for the recognition of language practitioners or the enforcement of professional standards. Various sub-sectors—such as translation, interpreting, editing, academic literacy, and language teaching—operate with their own sets of informal norms, voluntary associations, or institutional practices. While some professional bodies, such as SATI (South African Translators Institute), provide accreditation services, these are not nationally mandated or universally recognised.

This fragmentation has significant implications for practitioner mobility, wage parity, and the ability to enforce ethical or quality standards across the sector. Interviews conducted for this study confirm that many language practitioners feel undervalued, underpaid, or unrecognised—despite often working in highly skilled and socially critical roles.

Furthermore, the absence of a central regulatory or accreditation mechanism makes it difficult to establish baseline expectations for professional conduct, continuing development, or practitioner certification. It also weakens the sector’s ability to advocate for improved working conditions, training investment, or public procurement reform.

The proposed South African Language Practitioners’ Council (SALPC) stands to address many of these gaps. Once operationalised, it could offer a national register of practitioners, set and enforce minimum professional standards, oversee the accreditation of training providers, and support ethical compliance. However, realising this vision will require legislative clarity, institutional support, and sector-wide buy-in.

In the interim, coordinated research and dialogue are needed to align recognition mechanisms, map practitioner competencies across subfields, and design transitional models that can feed into the SALPC’s eventual regulatory framework.

8.4. International Comparisons and Benchmarking

The proposed South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) is a statutory body established to regulate, professionalise, and support the language services sector—with a focus on translation, interpreting, editing, terminology development, and related linguistic work. As outlined in the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act (2014), the Council is expected to carry out functions such as setting national standards, accrediting practitioners and training providers, maintaining a register, and enforcing ethical codes of conduct. If implemented as intended, it will serve both as a professional regulator and as a public-interest institution ensuring the quality and accountability of language service provision in all sectors.

However, as in many multilingual countries, the design of such a body cannot be based on a single international template. The structure, mandate, and institutional relationships of language councils globally vary widely—shaped by each country's legal framework, colonial and postcolonial dynamics, linguistic demography, and public policy orientation. While some countries establish language authorities to protect a national language under threat, others focus on promoting multilingual service delivery or reviving marginalised indigenous languages. Still others limit their engagement to terminology development or symbolic cultural affirmation.

In South Africa, the approach is notably comprehensive. The SALPC is intended to form part of a wider governance ecosystem that includes:

- **PanSALB**, responsible for language rights, recognition, and development;
- **SADiLaR**, the national centre for digital language resources and linguistic data infrastructure;
- And voluntary associations like **SATI**, which provide peer networks and informal standards for practitioners.

This kind of institutional triangulation—linking language rights, digital infrastructure, and professional accreditation—is rare. Even among high-income countries, few have dedicated regulatory bodies for language practitioners. For example, in Quebec, the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF) is a powerful regulatory agency established under the Charter of the French Language (1977). It has the legal authority to enforce the use of French in business, government, and education, and to penalise non-compliance. However, it does not regulate language practitioners per se, nor does it serve multilingual inclusion—it operates in a defensive, monolingual framework, seeking to protect French in an Anglophone continent.

In Ireland, the An Coimisinéir Teanga (Language Commissioner) monitors state compliance with Irish-language service obligations under the Official Languages Act (2003). While it plays a vital rights-based role, it has no oversight of professional standards or the private language services market, and operates more as an ombud than a regulator.

Similarly, in the Philippines, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) promotes the national language (Filipino) and the preservation of indigenous languages. It undertakes research, policy advocacy, and cultural promotion, but lacks any regulatory mandate over the language services sector. It is more akin to a cross between PanSALB and a national terminology board.

In Wales, the Welsh Language Commissioner plays a dual role of advocacy and enforcement, with powers to ensure that public services comply with statutory Welsh Language Standards. Yet again, while strong in rights protection, the office has no link to practitioner training, registration, or professional accountability.

These examples show that while language policy infrastructure is widespread, the combination of statutory professional regulation, digital language resource development, and constitutional language rights protection—coordinated across multiple bodies—is exceptional in South Africa. Most countries fragment these functions or prioritise one over the others.

The SALPC, if properly implemented, stands to fill a critical regulatory gap that few countries have attempted to address; ensuring that the growing and increasingly essential field of language services is professionally managed, ethically grounded, and nationally standardised. This is especially important in a country where access to justice, education, healthcare, and public services is directly mediated through language, and where linguistic exclusion compounds broader patterns of marginalisation.

In sum, the SALPC will not simply act as a technical oversight body. It is intended as part of a national strategy to elevate language as a developmental resource, professionalise linguistic service work, and ensure equitable access across South Africa’s multilingual landscape. The international landscape confirms that while elements of this model exist elsewhere, the holistic South African approach is both ambitious and pioneering.

8.5. Conclusion

The governance landscape of the South African language economy is marked by institutional complexity, fragmented mandates, and uneven implementation. While various entities—statutory, academic, and professional—play critical roles in language development, the absence of a unifying governance framework has hindered systemic coherence, resource alignment, and long-term planning.

The chapter has outlined the roles of key institutions and flagged challenges around coordination, standard-setting, and accountability. It has also emphasised the urgent need for stronger mechanisms to recognise and regulate language practitioners, with the proposed South African Language Practitioners’ Council (SALPC) offering a critical opportunity to fill this gap.

Moving forward, strengthening governance will require not only institutional reform, but also improved inter-agency collaboration, professionalisation efforts, and robust frameworks for monitoring and enforcement. As subsequent chapters explore practitioner experiences and stakeholder feedback, these governance insights will serve as a lens through which to assess the feasibility and priorities of future interventions.

9. Chapter 9: Online Survey Review

9.1. Introduction

This chapter evaluates responses from an online survey which aimed to gather opinions from professionals and the public about the South African language economy dynamics, available resources and data accessibility. The survey was distributed via the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) database and social platforms.

Potential respondents were informed about the survey aims and that their participation will help build a better understanding of the South African language economy.

The survey collected data through subjects relevant to the aims of the report, including (i) sectoral participation, (ii) language utilisation, (iii) opinions on value chains, (iv) data shortages, (v) professional validation, and (vi) the influence of technology. These areas were explored to provide a comprehensive understanding of the South African language economy and its various dimensions.

The collected responses present a multi-layered picture of how South Africans engage with the language economy – whether as practitioners, educators, policy makers or the general public. In this chapter, the survey data is analysed quantitatively and qualitatively to reveal general trends and personal viewpoints.

9.2. Overview of All Respondents

Figure 3 shows that a total of 89 respondents completed the survey at the time of this analysis. The majority of respondents – almost 53,41% - were female and some 46,59% were male.

Table 7 below presents the racial composition of survey respondents, with the majority being African (71.08%), followed by White (24.10%), Coloured (3.62%), and Indian (1.20%) participants.

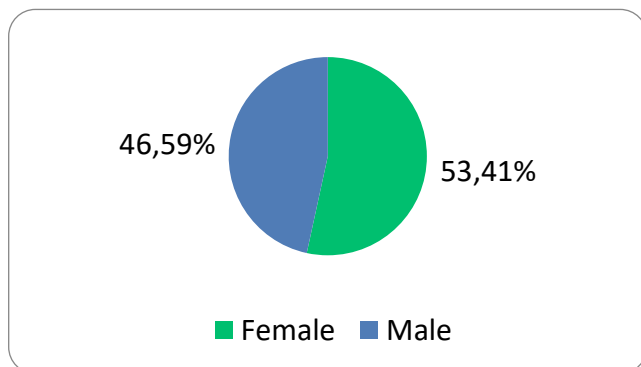


Figure 3: Respondents by Gender

Table 7: Respondents by Race

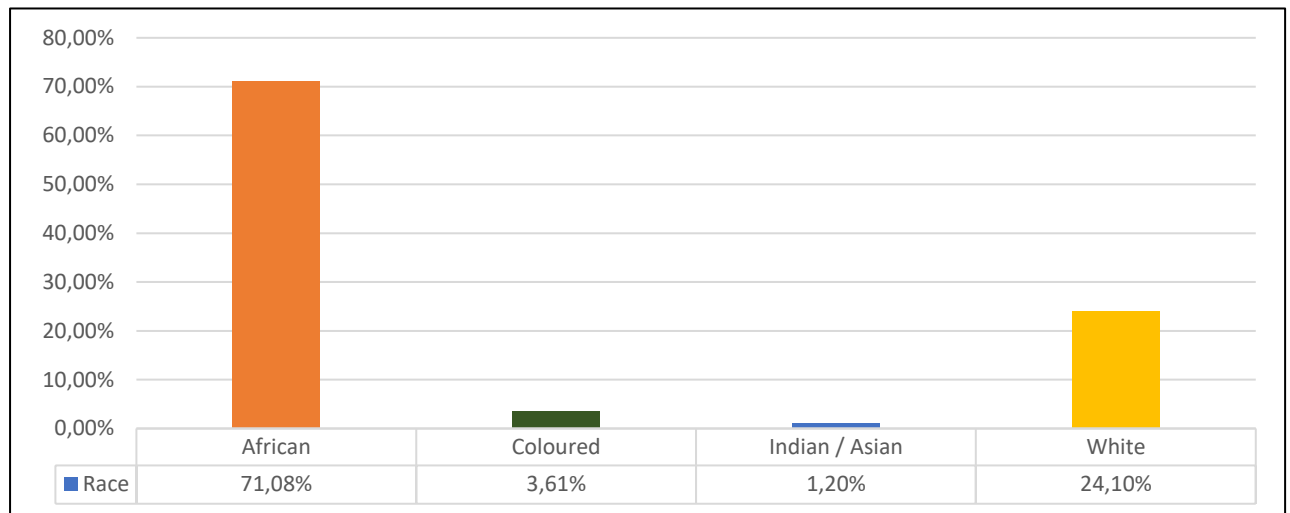
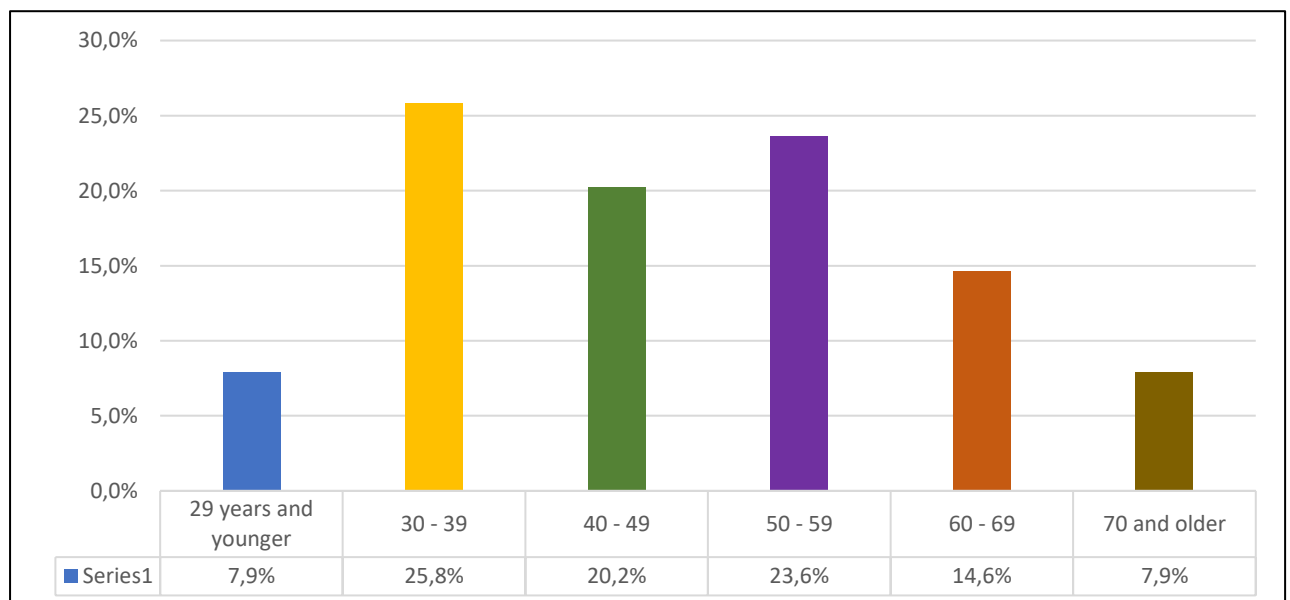


Table 8 below presents the distribution of respondents across various age groups, with the highest proportion falling within the 30–39 age range (25,83%), followed by 50-59 years (23.6%), 40–49 years (20,20%) and 60-69 years (14.6%).

Table 8: Respondents by Age Group



Responses were received from all nine provinces.

The majority of responses were received from Gauteng and the Eastern Cape (23%).

Figure 4: Respondents by Provinces

This was followed by:

- Western Cape (17%)
- Mpumalanga (10%)
- North-West (7%)
- Northern Cape (7%)
- Limpopo (6%)
- KwaZulu-Natal (4%)
- Free State (3%)

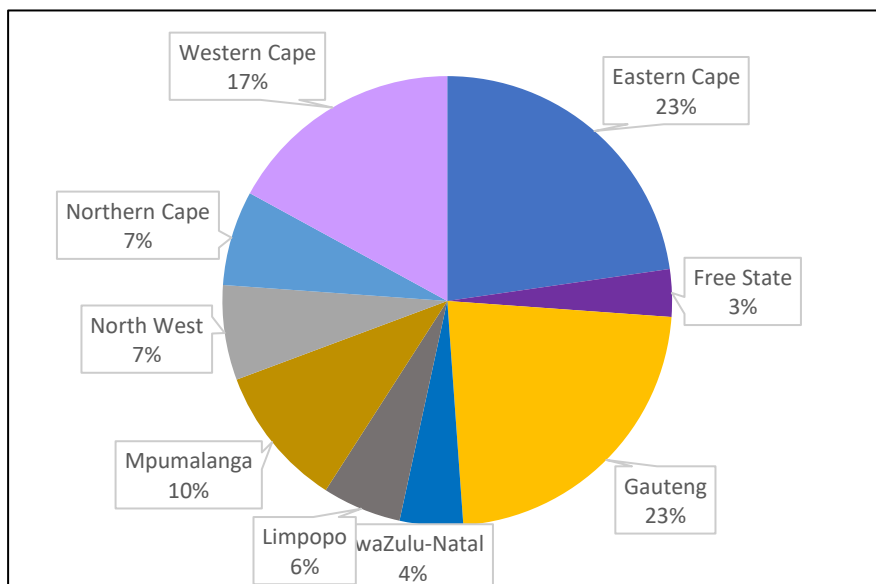
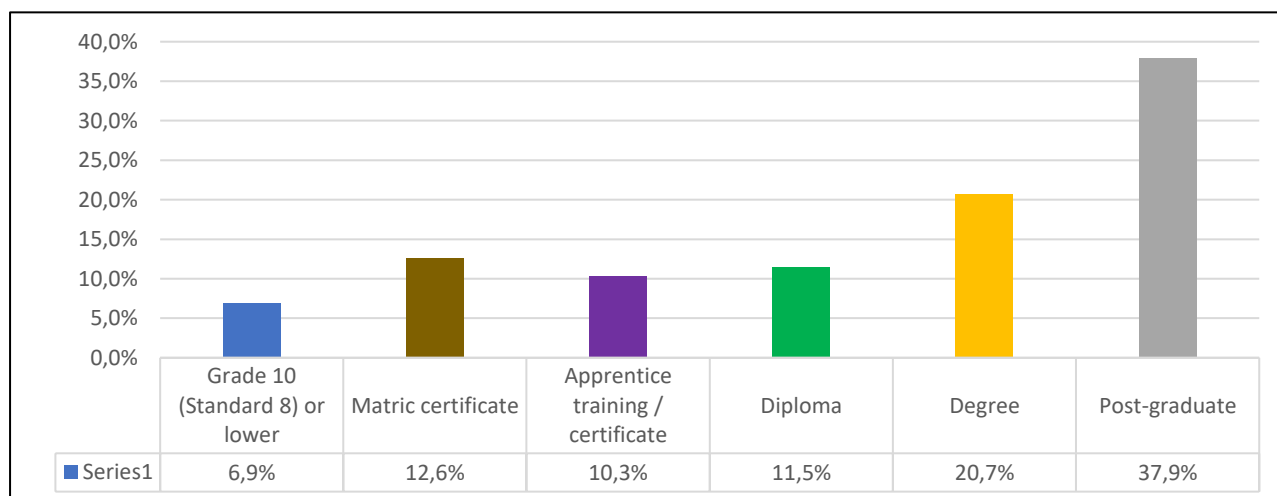


Table 9 below presents the percentage of respondents by qualification type. 37.97% of respondents hold postgraduate qualifications, while 20.7% have degrees and 11.5% have diplomas. There is a significant representation of respondents with matric certificates (12.6%), apprenticeship/post-matric certificates (10.3%) and Grade 10 qualifications (6.59%), highlighting that people across a broad spectrum of educational backgrounds are concerned about and want to be actively involved in the considering the dynamics, resources and access to data in the South African language economy.

Table 9: Respondents by Qualification



The respondents are engaged in various economic sectors. The largest proportion work in the education sector (26,1%), the CCI sector (21,6%) and the business sector (17,1%). Many are involved in social development (10,2%) and public administration (8%) followed by healthcare and engineering/science/technology. Other sectors listed include sports and recreation, education and language services, firefighting and local government. The Cultural and Creative Industries sector showed a strong presence among these responses. The sector includes arts and culture alongside creative writing and media and entertainment and film and music and localisation. The variety of respondents reflects the impact of the language economy multiple sectors.

Table 10: Respondents by Sector in which they Work

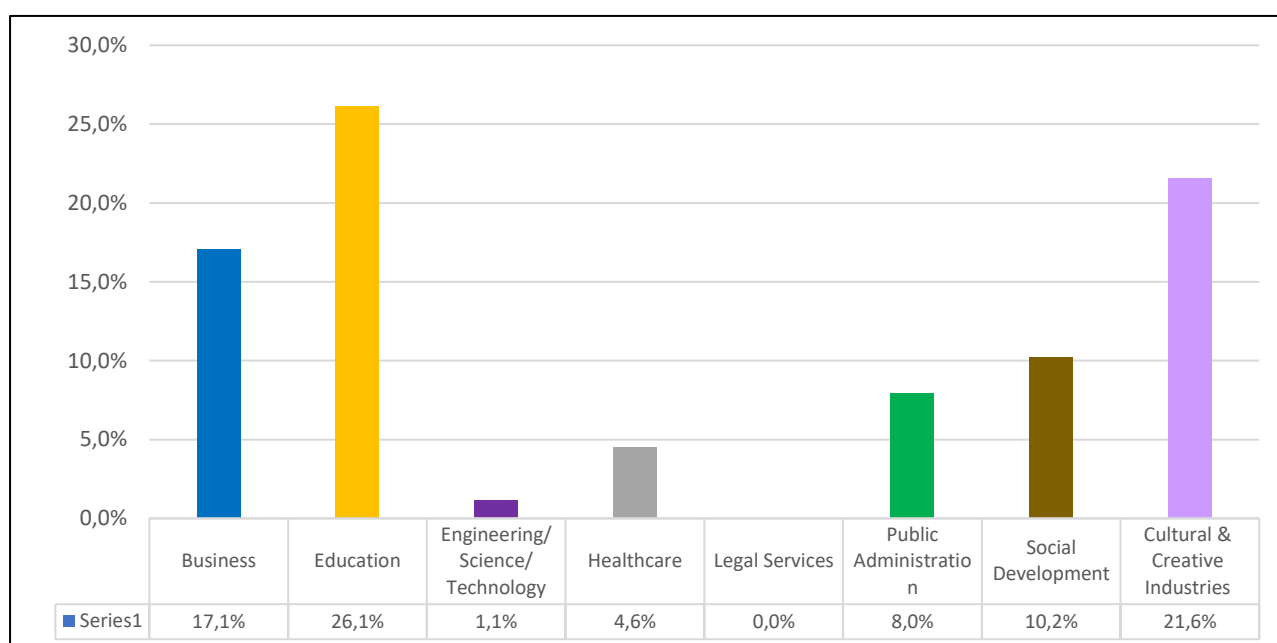
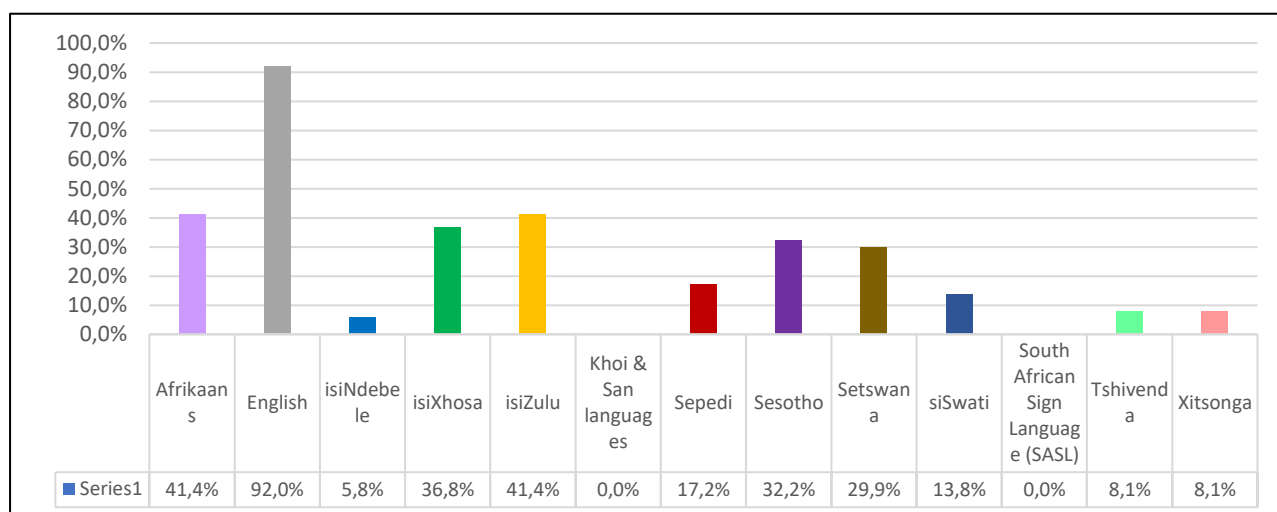


Table 11 below presents the languages that respondents use to communicate, reflecting South Africa's multilingual landscape. The survey results showed English (92%) as the primary language of communication with Afrikaans and isiZulu tied for second place with 41.4% each. isiXhosa (36,8%) is also a popular language while Sesotho and Setswana maintained significant representation at 32.2% and 29.9% respectively. The remaining languages included Sepedi at 17.2%, siSwati at 13.8%, Tshivenda at 8.1%, Xitsonga at 8.1% and isiNdebele at 5.8%. It is important to note that no respondents selected Khoi and San languages or South African Sign Language (SASL) indicating that these languages remain marginalised in official and professional contexts.

The survey results demonstrate that English dominates the South African language economy while highlighting the multilingualism of respondents.

Table 11: Respondents by Languages they Communicate in



The initial survey questions (above) focussed on developing a demographic overview of respondents. The next set of questions aimed to develop an understanding how respondents perceive the language economy dynamics and data resources and accessibility. The survey questions evaluated respondents' comprehension of the language economy concept as well as the sectors that gain most from language services and the obstacles which restrict the field's growth and development. Respondents were asked to evaluate the significance of value chain identification and their opinions about the current status of the language economy as an independent sector and which data types would enhance policy and practice decisions.

The collected responses provide essential information about how people view the language economy's visibility and structure and resource requirements which establishes evidence-based recommendations to enhance language services and planning in South Africa.

9.3. Understanding Perceptions and Priorities in the South African Language Economy

The section that follows analyses responses to questions 10-17 in the survey, and in so doing explores respondents' views on the visibility, challenges, value chains, and strategic importance of the language economy in South Africa.

Table 12 below shows that respondents believe that South Africans do not understand the language economy. The combined responses of 58.6% of respondents indicated that the language economy is either *not understood at all* (24.1%) or *understood it poorly* (34.5%). This suggests that the concept of a structured, economically significant language sector remains relatively unknown to most.

Some 27,59% of respondents indicated that the language economy is *moderately understood* while 5.75% and 8.05% believed it is *well understood* and *very well understood* respectively. These low figures highlight a critical gap in awareness and recognition, even among individuals likely engaged in language-related work.

Table 12: In Your View, how well understood is the “Language Economy” in South Africa?

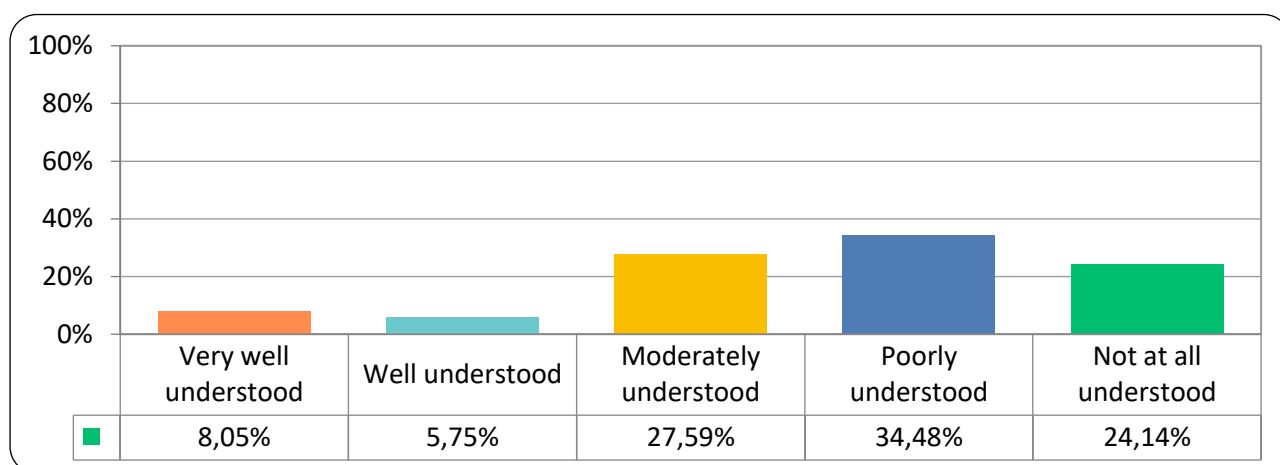


Table 13 below illustrates responses to question 11 *What sectors do you believe most benefit from language-related services?* The Education Media and Publishing sector received the highest selection (77.91%) while Cultural Heritage received the second highest selection (76.74%). This is because of their understanding that language plays a fundamental role in protecting and advancing identity, history and indigenous knowledge systems.

The Government and Public Service sector received strong representation (69.77%) as participants acknowledged their need for effective language services to communicate and deliver services and implement policies. The Legal and Judiciary sector together with Healthcare received 56.98% selections because language access remains essential for delivering justice and achieving health equity.

Business and Commerce (58.1%) and Technology and AI (41.9%) were also recognised as important beneficiaries. While these two sectors were less frequently selected, their inclusion highlights their increasing importance in digital innovation and artificial intelligence and economic competitiveness.

Table 13: What Sectors do you believe most benefit from Language-Related Services?

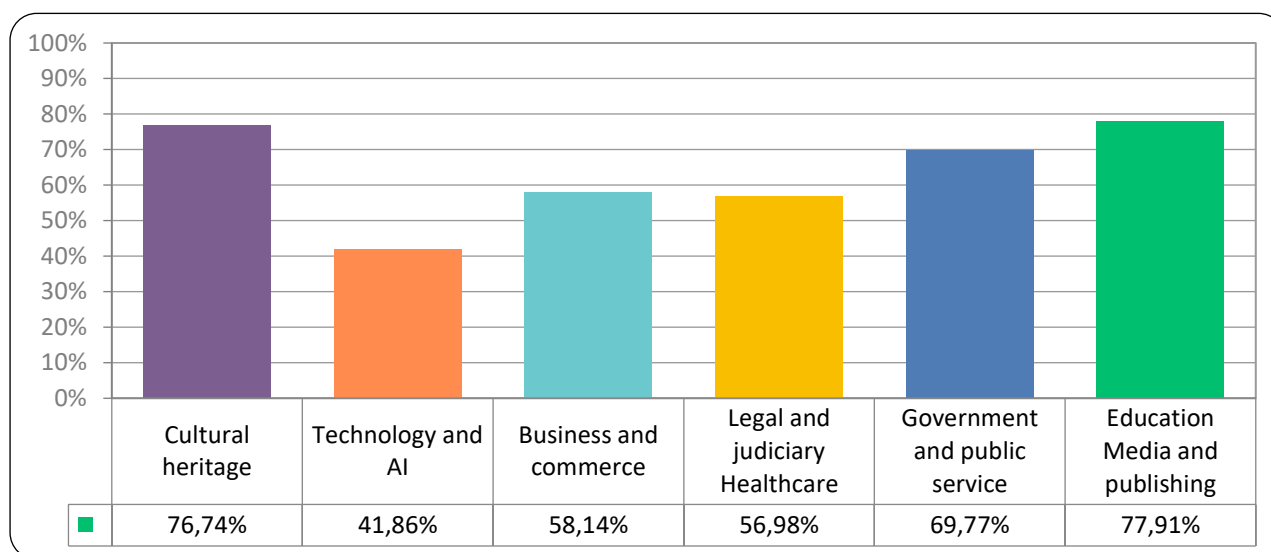


Table 14 below highlights multiple obstacles which respondents believe block the development of the South African language economy. 64.37% of respondents stated that public and government recognition of the sector remains absent. This pressing concern was followed by limited professional training and development opportunities (59.77%), low demand or awareness of services (57.47%) and inadequate funding and investment (54.02%).

Other barriers identified include fragmentation of stakeholders, insufficient accreditation, limited integration of Human Languages Technologies (HLT), and insufficient data to inform policy and research.

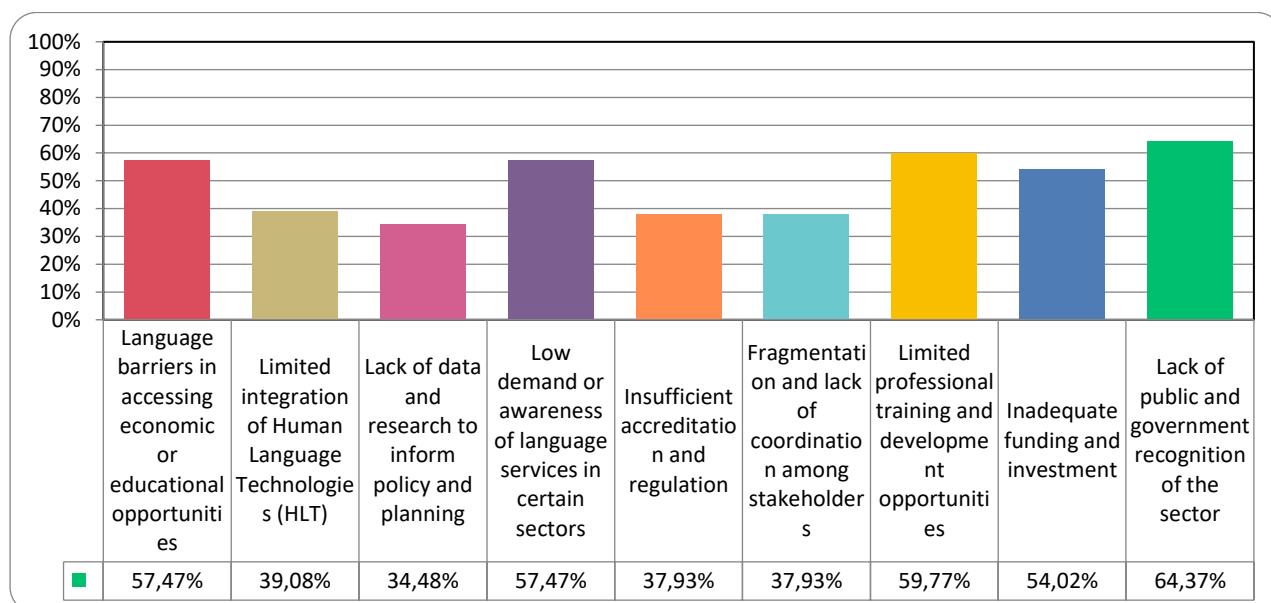
One respondent, reflecting on a wide-ranging career, noted:

“While I work as an academic editor, I believe language services are useful in all fields. I have worked in a library, as a tour guide, a civil servant, a farm manager and a reporter and sub-editor – this last for 45 years.”

Another respondent emphasised the immediate requirement for public institutions to improve their operations.

“Some people working in the Government and public service, DESPERATELY NEED IT... because their communication lacks skills.”

Table 14: In your experience, what challenges hinder the growth of the South African Language Economy?



As can be seen in Table 15 below, most respondents believe that identifying and developing value chains in the South African language economy is an essential priority. The majority of respondents (90.91%) ranked this priority as either “very important” (46.59%) or “critically important” (44.32%) indicating broad agreement about developing organised systems throughout the sector including training and accreditation and service delivery and professional support. A small proportion (5.68%) considered this matter to be moderately important while less than 4% of participants rated it as slightly or not important at all.

However, despite the strong consensus about the importance of the language economy, this concept is still not widely understood. One respondent noted:

“This is the first time that I have heard of Language Economy.”

Another respondent expressed their disappointment about the insufficient leadership and political backing required to advance the sector. The respondent stated:

“What is lacking is the passion of the powers that be to push South Africans forward.”

Table 15: How important do you think it is to identify and strengthen value chains within the South African language economy?

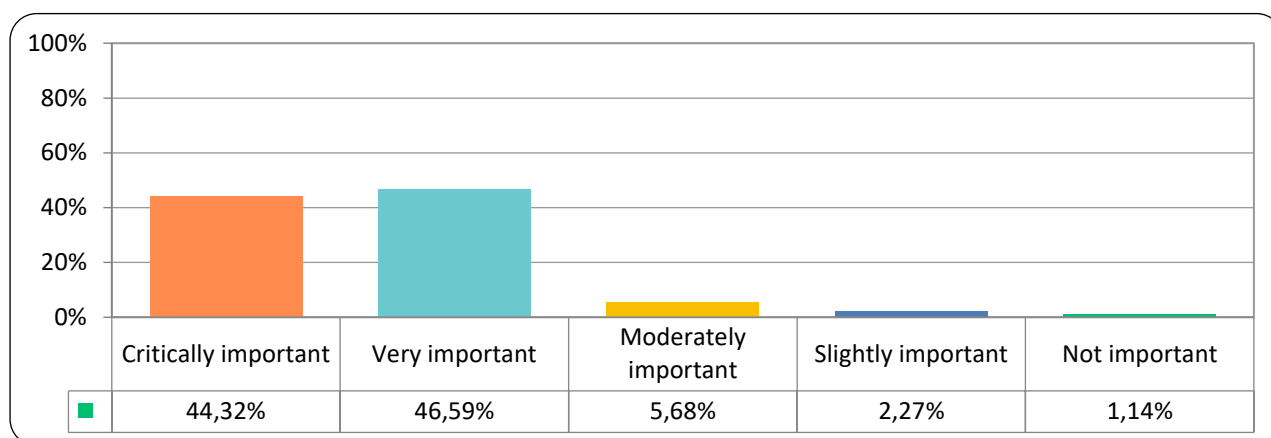


Table 16 below shows that respondents identified *training and skills development* as the most critical need in the South African language economy (77.01%). Other high priority areas included *job placement and employment support* (54.02%), *networking and professional collaboration* at 50.57%.and *accreditation and certification processes* (44,83%)

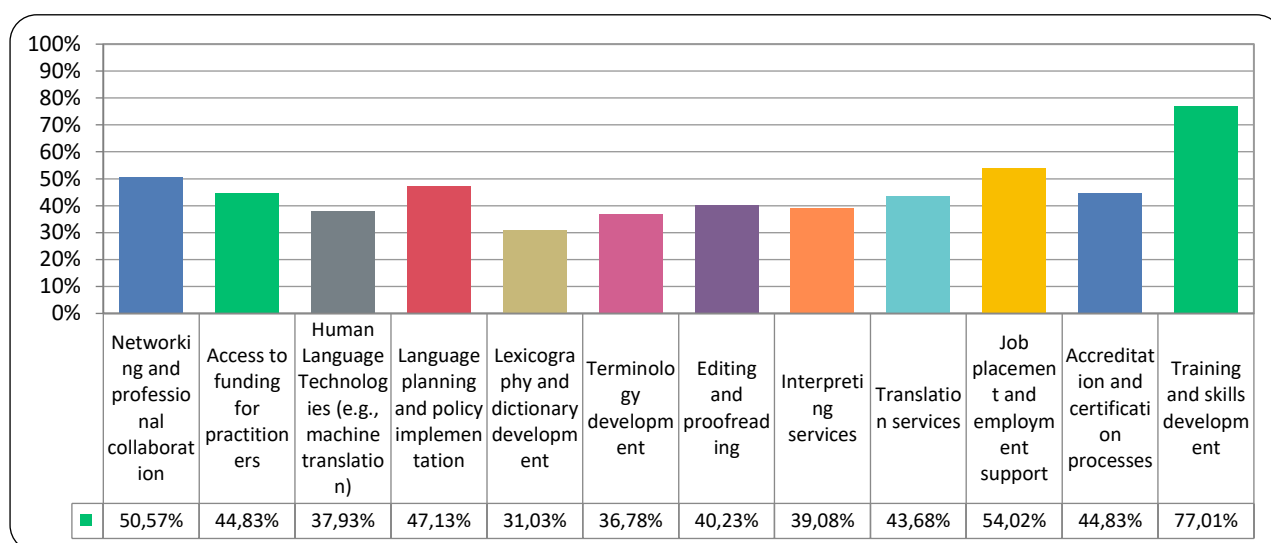
The survey results show that respondents believe that the areas of *language planning and policy implementation* (47.1%) together with *translation services* (43.7%) and *editing and proofreading* (40.2%) need improvement as core service areas. A respondent emphasised:

The survey results show that *terminology development* (36.8%), *lexicography and dictionary development* (31.0%) and *Human Language Technologies* (37.9%) are important despite receiving lower percentages because of initiatives to document South African indigenous languages. Two respondents emphasised this point:

“Especially for Khoikhoi, as a language that still bears the brunt of 372 years of continued oppression.”

“Lexicography is an important resource, while translation and interpretation are often done poorly.”

Table 16: Which specific value chains or language service areas do you believe require the most urgent attention?



Respondents showed a widespread backing for mapping the South African language economy to enable evidence-based policy development and planning. Table 17 below shows that the combined percentage of respondents who supported the statement reached 73.56% with 40.23% showing strong agreement and 33.33% showing agreement. This overwhelming majority reflects an understanding that an evidence-based understanding of the sector's stakeholders, activities and value chains is essential for effective decision-making and resource allocation.

Some 16.09% of respondents showed neutral positions regarding the concept while 6.90% strongly disagreed and 3.45% disagreed with the statement.

Table 17: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: 'Mapping the South African language economy is essential for effective policy and planning.'

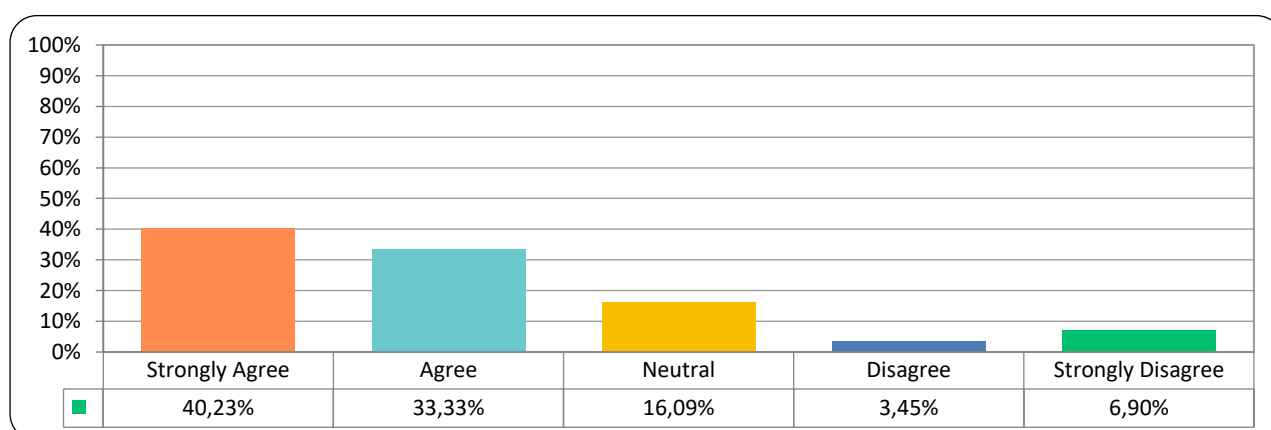
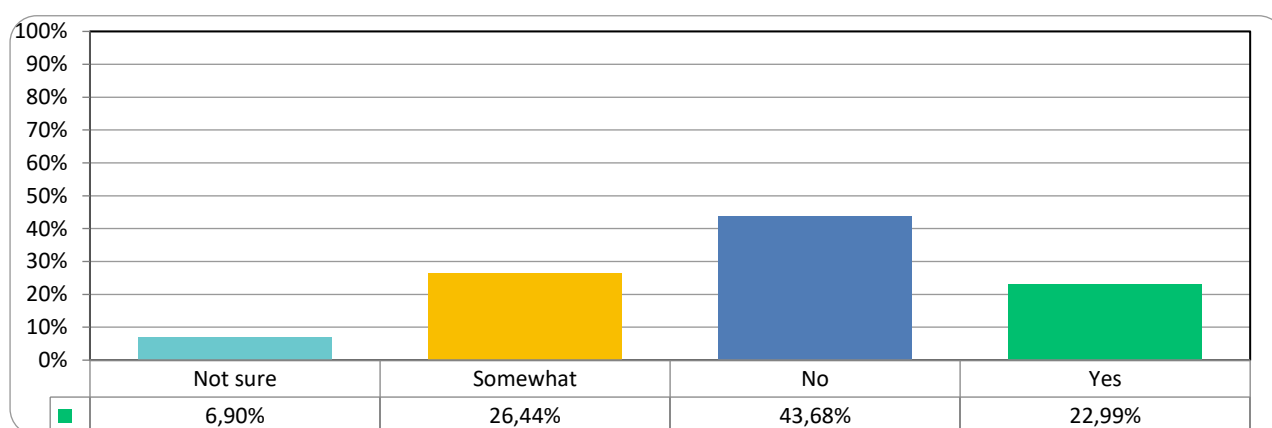


Table 18 below illustrates that most respondents do not think that the language economy is recognised as an distinct sector in South Africa's cultural and economic development framework. The majority of participants (43.68%) chose "No" as their response while 26.44% selected "Somewhat" indicating they felt the language economy lacked clear recognition or institutional backing.

The survey results showed that 22.99% of participants felt that the language economy is recognised as a distinct sector while 6.90% remained uncertain. These figures suggest that, despite its essential role in various domains including CCI, education and governance, the sector is under-defined and under-prioritised in national policy and planning

Table 18: Do you think the language economy is recognised as a distinct sector in South Africa's cultural and economic development landscape?



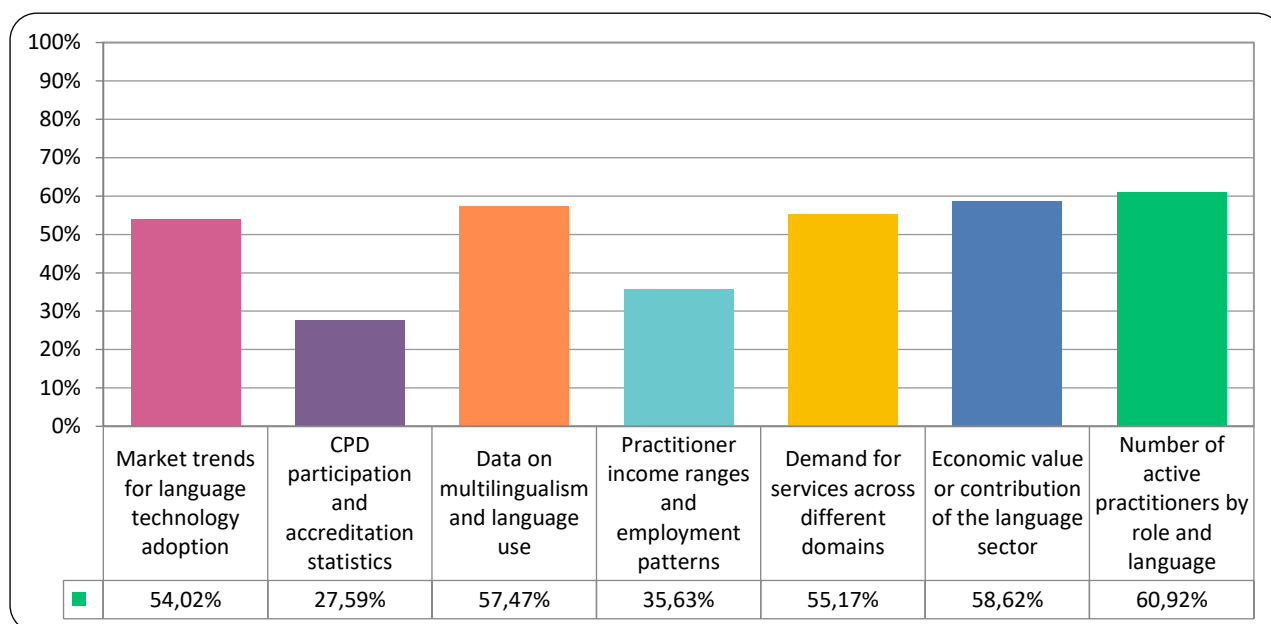
The survey respondents identified a number of data sources which they think will improve the understanding of the South African language economy, and, hopefully, lead to better policy development, planning and advocacy efforts. Table 19 below shows that 60.92% of participants identified the need for information about the *number of active practitioner* as their top priority. This highlights the importance about having detailed information about its workforce composition together with their functional responsibilities.

Respondents also supported data collection about the *economic value of the language sector* alongside data about *multilingualism and language use*. These figures indicate that people want to understand how language work affects South Africa's various linguistic communities.

The survey respondents demonstrated awareness about the changing nature of the sector through their selection of *demand for services across different domains* at 55.17% and *market trends in language technology adoption* at 54.02%. The sector's digital transformation has led to increased awareness about its evolving nature.

Although selected by fewer respondents, data on *practitioner income ranges and employment patterns* (35.63%) and *CPD participation and accreditation statistics* (27.59%) remain important for understanding workforce sustainability and professional development.

Table 19: Which types of data or statistics would help you better understand the language economy's impact?
(Select all that apply.)



9.4. Practitioner Realities: Roles, Resources, and Professional Needs in the Language Sector

The section that follows provides an analysis of responses to questions 18–38 in the survey. This section was answered by respondents who identified as language practitioners and examines their experiences, working conditions, and support needs, including their access to training, employment, tools, and stakeholder networks.

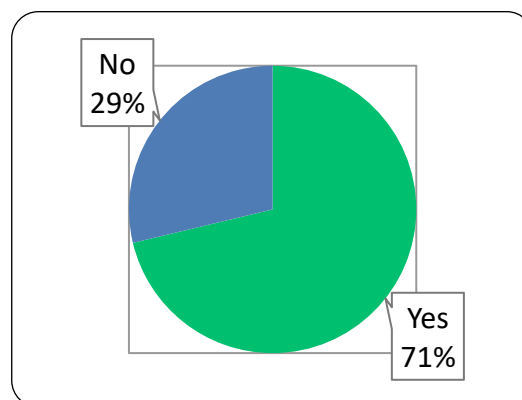
In this section, respondents were asked to describe their work activities, language usage and share their experiences regarding training, accreditation, employment opportunities and resource accessibility. The data obtained here provides insight into how language services professionals maintain financial stability and how they build professional connections and work together within their industry network.

Figure 5 shows that 71% of participants identified as language practitioners while 29% did not. The strong representation of practitioners answering questions 18-38, reinforces the relevance of the data obtained.

Table 20 below illustrates the responses to the question: Which of the following roles have you performed in the South African language economy? (You may select more than one).

The responses suggest that practitioners perform a wide variety of roles, indicating the breadth and complexity of the language economy.

Figure 5: Do you consider yourself a language practitioner?



9.4.1.1. Core Language Services (Translation, Editing, Proofreading, Interpreting)

The fundamental roles in the language economy showed the highest current level of activity: proofreading at 58%, editing at 53%, and translation at 37%. Interpreting showed that 25% are currently active while 22% were previously active, and 25% are interested in pursuing this line of work. The survey results verify the essential position of these roles in the day-to-day operations in the language sector. The next section examines how many respondents reported engaging in each of them.

9.4.1.2. Language Development and Research (Terminology, Lexicography, Policy, Research)

Terminology development (28%) lexicography (17%) and language research (36%) showed moderate to low current involvement. However, the interest in these areas was high at 45% and above indicating a willingness to work in these field. The Government Language Policy Specialist position and Language Planner position attracted substantial interest but only had a few active practitioners. The data indicates that policy and research-oriented work has unexploited potential and that institutions should support development in these specialised fields.

9.4.1.3. Education and Training (Lecturers, Teachers, Trainers, Curriculum Developers)

The education sector showed a variety of levels of participation. Among active practitioners are the language lecturer (31%) followed by school-based teacher (27%) and language trainer/facilitator participation (34%). Roles such as curriculum development (29%) and language materials development (39%) shows how language professionals contribute to educational resources and teaching methods.

9.4.1.4. Creative, Cultural and Media Roles

The survey shows that scriptwriters and copywriters and content creators reported a 46% level of current work together with cultural mediators/language artists at 37% and broadcasters/podcast hosts at 21%. The high interest in subtitling (34%) voice artistry (29%)

and literary translation (33%) shows that these hybrid language-arts domains are gaining more opportunities and practitioner interest.

9.4.1.5. Technology and Innovation

While few respondents indicated that they were currently involved in technology role, the interest in becoming involved is high. The increasing awareness of the importance of Human Language Technologies (HLT) is evident through the interest in AI language model training/annotation (45%), speech-to-text development (38%) and language technology/digital media (43%). The research data indicates that the language industry requires training programs and infrastructure development for digital language innovation.

9.4.1.6. Public Sector and Legal Services

Government roles such as court interpreter (14%), legal translator (19%) along with language rights advocate (24%) and municipal language services officer (10%) received low current participation from respondents. But a significant number of respondents expressed interest in these roles especially language access auditing (48%), government language policy (56%) and planning (53%). This indicates possibilities for public sector capacity development because language serves as an essential element for justice delivery and service delivery and governance.

9.4.1.7. Strategic, Managerial and Entrepreneurial Roles

Language services entrepreneur (38%) and language project manager (33%) along with multilingual communications strategist (17%) highlight the increasing recognition of language as a profession demanding strategic planning and business acumen. This is key to the sustainability and expansion of the sector.

Table 20: Which of the following roles have you performed in the South African language economy? (You may select more than one)

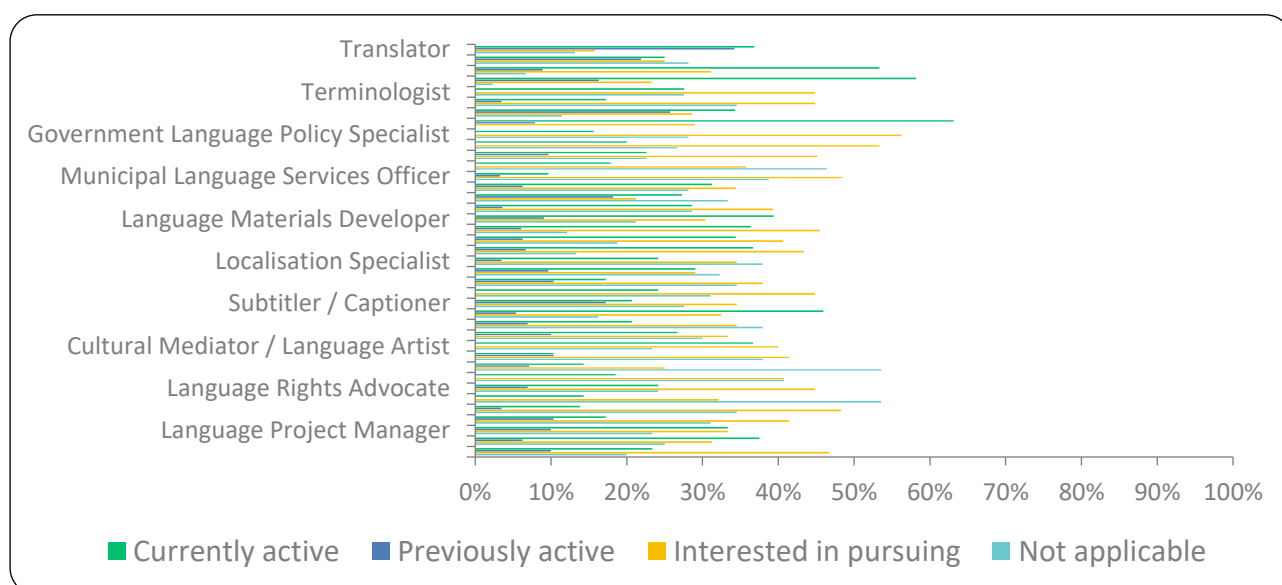
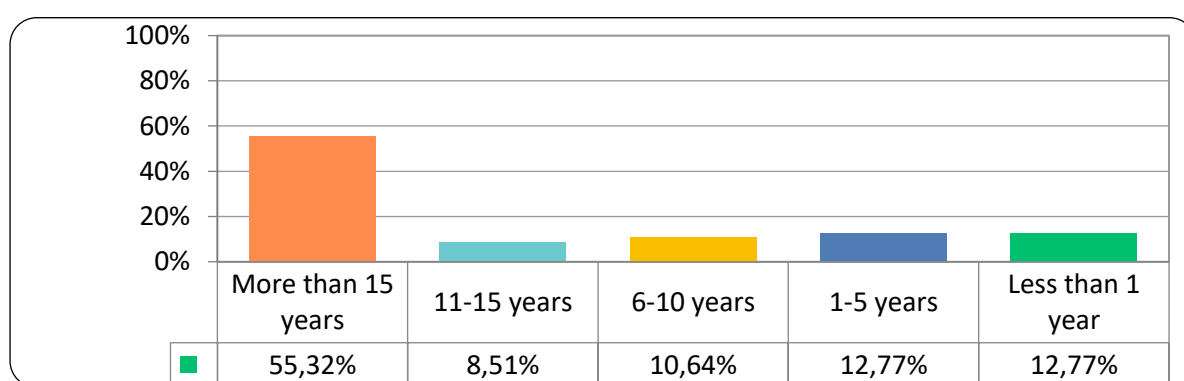


Table 21 below indicate the responses to the question: How long have you worked in the language sector? The survey results show that most respondents have extensive experience in the language sector with 55.32% working in the field for more than 15 years. The high percentage indicates that the language practitioner workforce consists mainly of experienced professionals who bring both deep institutional understanding and extensive professional expertise.

The workforce distribution shows 10.64% of professionals working in the sector between 6–10 years and 8.51% working between 11–15 years while 12.77% have 1–5 years of experience. The 12.77% of respondents who have less than one year of experience entered the profession recently through academic training or career transitions or freelance work.

Table 21: How long have you worked in the language sector?



The responses to the question, “Which South African languages do you work with? Please select all that apply.” indicate that English is the primary working language for most participants with 77.78% of them using it in their work. The results confirm English's broad usage in South African professional settings as well as academic institutions and institutional environments.

The survey results show isiZulu (37.8%) and isiXhosa (31.1%) as the most frequently chosen indigenous languages followed by Afrikaans (26.7%), Sesotho (20.0%), Sepedi (17.8%) and Setswana (17.8%). The survey results demonstrate average language engagement across multiple African languages but most practitioners work with only a few major languages.

The languages isiNdebele (15.6%), siSwati (13.3%), Tshivenda (11.1%) and Xitsonga (11.1%) show lower practitioner engagement because of reduced demand or scarce resources or limited geographic distribution of speakers. The survey results show that only 2.2% of participants work with Khoi and San languages and no respondents indicated experience with South African Sign Language (SASL). The data reveals an immediate requirement for focused support and resource development and inclusion initiatives to benefit historically marginalized language communities.

Table 22: Which South African languages do you work with? Please select all that apply.

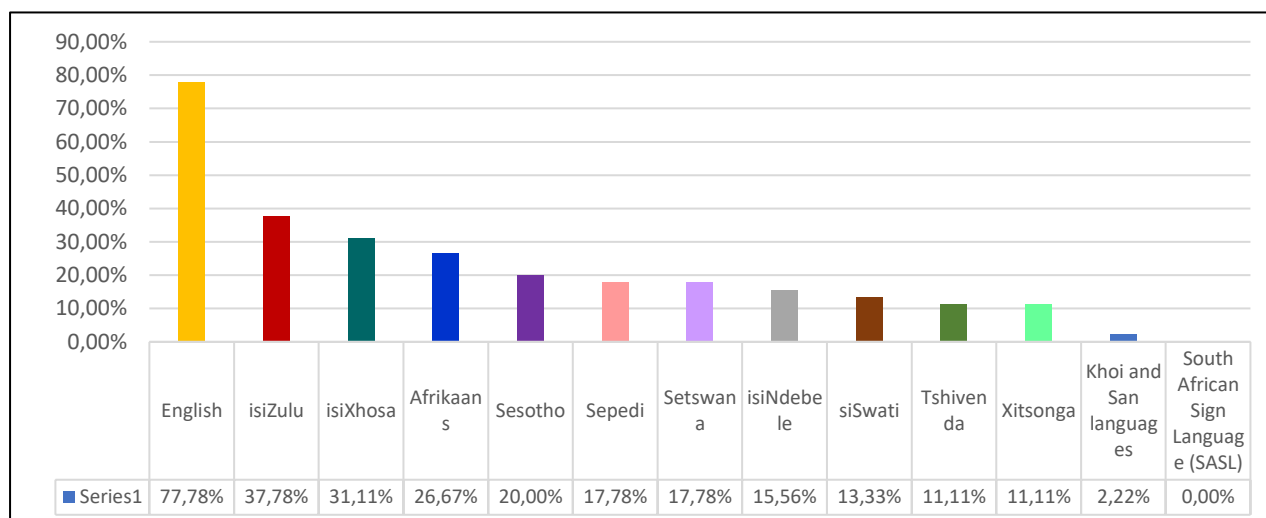


Table 23 below illustrates the complex facets of language policy implementation, language innovation and economic language functions in South Africa. A significant majority (73.91%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that *Language policy in South Africa is effectively implemented*, while agreement levels reached 26.1%. This shows that many people feel that despite official language policies, South Africa faces poor and unsteady policy implementation particularly when it comes to real support and enforcement.

Most participants (47.73%) and an additional (43.18%) strongly agreed that the *economic value of language services is undervalued*. The minority which disagreed stood at 9.1%. The survey results confirm other findings which demonstrate inadequate funding and structural backing for language professionals who provide essential services in various business areas.

Different respondents expressed varying perspectives regarding how *technological innovation disrupts traditional language work*. Sixty percent of respondents accepted that technological changes disrupt classic language occupations yet a considerable 40% rejected this view. One respondent commented as follows:

“Technological innovation is ‘disrupting’ but in a good way. It’s making language more accessible.”

This remark indicates that technological transformation of the field enables better access to language resources for diverse and distant groups of people.

Most respondents (84.78%) strongly agreed that *cultural and linguistic diversity should be more explicitly linked to economic development*. The respondents share the conviction that language and culture function as economic resources which should be part of national development plans.

Table 23: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

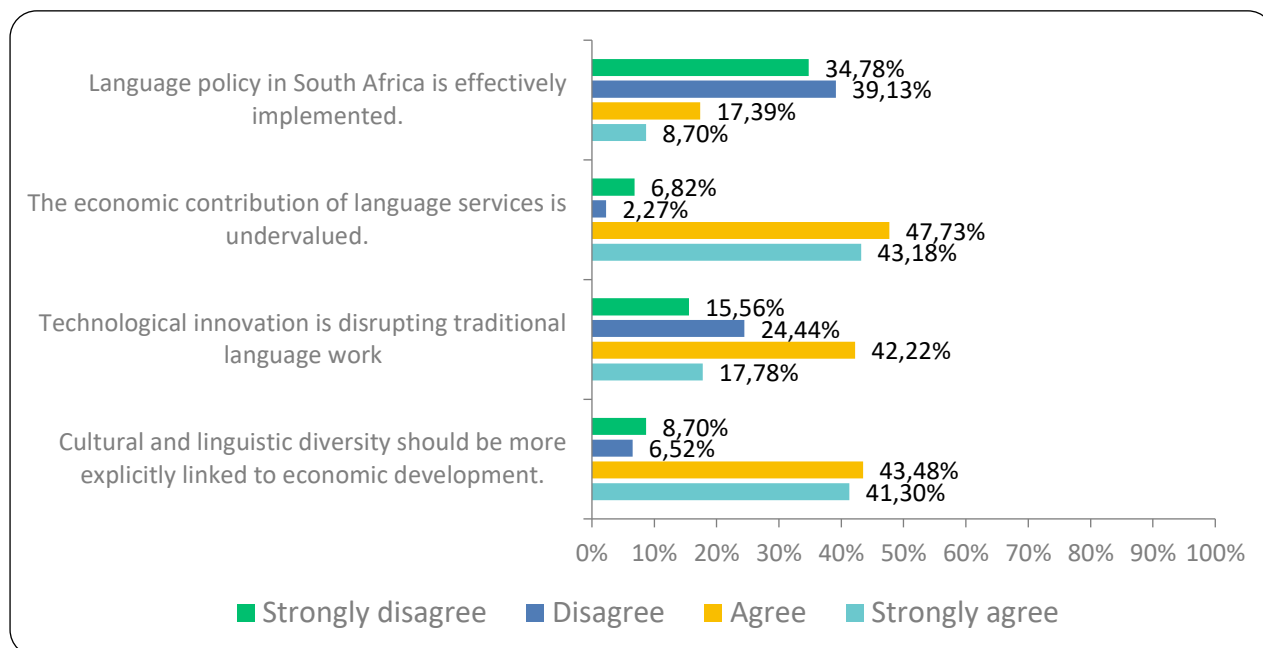


Table 24 illustrates the response to the question: ‘Which of the following trends do you think will have the biggest impact on the language industry in the next 5 years?’. Respondents identified *technological innovation* alongside *indigenous language development* as the most powerful drivers which will mould the future of South Africa's language industry. These responses reflect the recognition of the increasing influence of digital technologies in language work – both in terms of opportunities and challenges. A respondent stated:

“Artificial intelligence (AI) stands as a major threat to proper language use.”

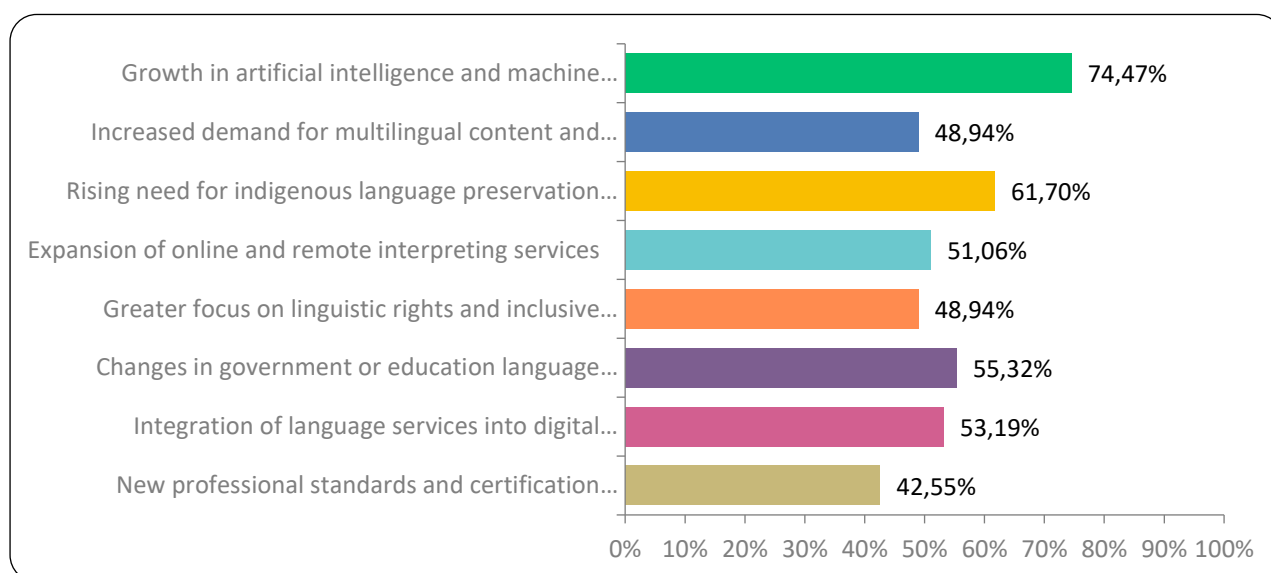
The survey revealed that 61.7% of participants emphasised the necessity of *indigenous language preservation and promotion* suggesting an awareness of both the dangers of language loss and the cultural significance of preserving mother tongue abilities. One participant expressed concern that the national language policy fails to recognise the distinct language dominance patterns between the Eastern Cape's isiXhosa and KwaZulu-Natal's isiZulu and the diverse linguistic makeup of Gauteng. This respondent stated:

“Each region should focus on its own regional language(s).”

Respondents identified the growth of other key trends such as the use of *expansion of online remote interpreting services* (51.06%), the *integration of language services into digital platforms and apps* (53.19%) and *changes in government or education language policies* (55.32%). The data demonstrates how digital transformation affects language service delivery methods and that organisations will need to adapt their language planning approach to meet specific contexts.

The data indicates a strong support for *linguistics rights and inclusive language policy* at 48.94% while 42.55% backed the implementation of *new professional standards and certification requirements* which signal a shift toward formalized accountable structures.

Table 24: Which of the following trends do you think will have the biggest impact on the language industry in the next 5 years? Select all that apply



When asked to identify their primary clients or employers, respondents showcased a wide range of institutional and individual clients. The majority of respondents (52.17%) indicated freelance or individual clients as their main client base. Media or publishing houses and universities (47.83%) and research institutions (47.83%) were selected by respondents as their second most common client type. This reflects the continuous demand for services including editing and translation and terminology development in academic and content-driven environments.

Non-governmental and community-based organisations were selected by 43.48% of respondents as their work environment, demonstrating the language practitioners' importance in civil society and grassroots development and advocacy activities.

The government departments were selected as clients by 41.30% of respondents which shows public institutions have significant engagement although this engagement varies across different language roles. The private company sector (30.43%) and international clients/platforms (26.09%) maintained a smaller yet important presence because global interest in multilingual and localisation services continues to increase.

The survey results show that 15.2% of respondents work with courts and legal services, indicating a underutilisation or restricted access to formal language support in the justice sector.

Table 25: Who are your primary clients or employers? Select all that apply

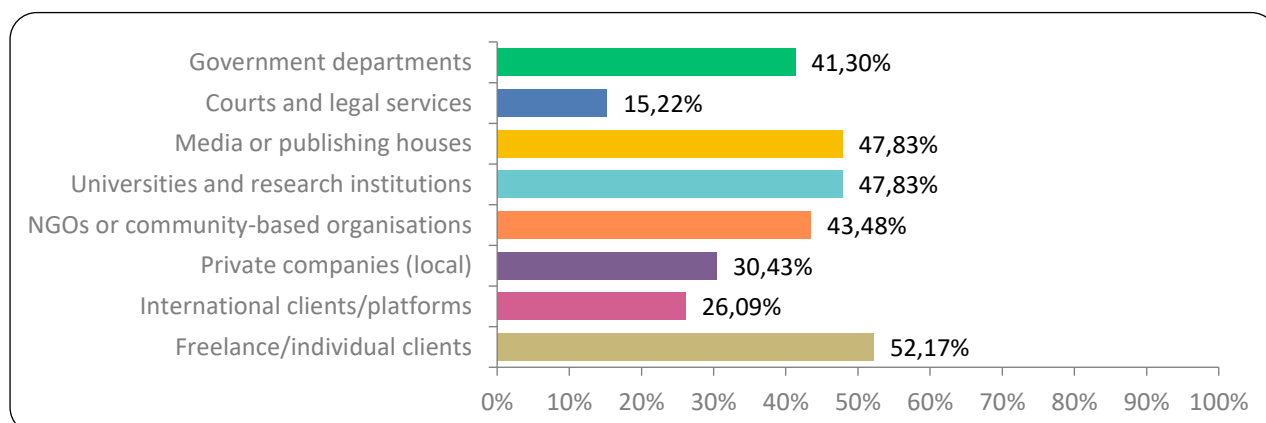
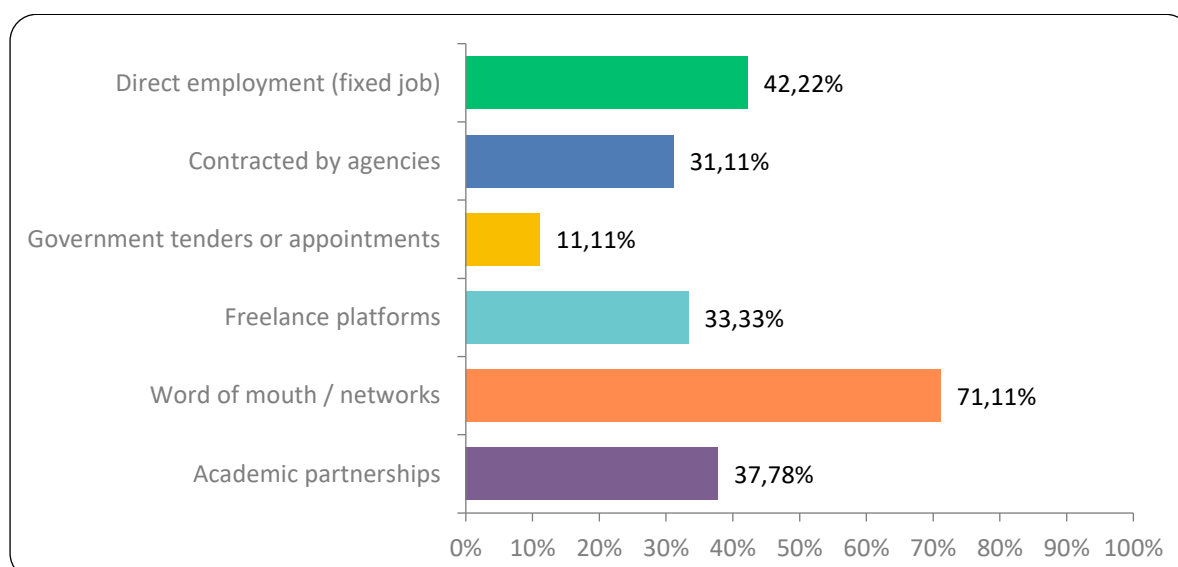


Table 26 below highlights that most South African language practitioners find language-related work through informal and relationship-based communication channels. The majority of respondents (71.11%) obtained their work through word of mouth or professional networks. This reflects that work in this sector depends heavily on personal reputation and established relationships and referrals.

While 42.22% respondents work directly in this sector, others depend on flexible project-based arrangements. These respondents indicated that they find work through freelance platforms (33.33%), contracting through agencies (31.11%) and academic partnerships (37.78%). Only some 11.11% of respondents obtained work through government tenders or appointments indicating that public sector procurement processes either exclude language practitioners or remain inaccessible and unclear.

Table 26: How do you most commonly get your language-related work? Select all that apply



As can be seen in Figure 6 below, respondents expressed conflicting opinions about the economic stability of language work in South Africa. Language work brings stable financial resources to 61% of respondents but 39% disagree that it does. The financial stability of language work depends on employment status as well as institutional access and type of language work performed because the sector remains fragmented and uneven.

Those who have permanent employment positions experience financial stability from their work as language practitioners. They appear to be able to maintain stable employment through public and private sector work for approximately forty years according to one respondent.

“I know of language practitioners who have been employed in both public and private sector for almost 40 years.”

Another echoed this sentiment:

“For people who are permanently employed, it is.”

However, many participants highlighted the unstable nature of freelance and project-based employment. The respondents explained that they experienced financial challenges because they depended on sporadic contracts and seasonal university needs and low-paying assignments. These are three comments shared by respondents:

“I work freelance and income is related to student/university research budgets and the academic year cycle.”

“As a freelance editor/proofreader who relies on word of mouth, my income is not reliable.”

“I need to supplement my income with non-language related work such as sales.”

New entrants face significant challenges entering the profession because of restricted access to opportunities and challenging barriers to entry. One respondent shared:

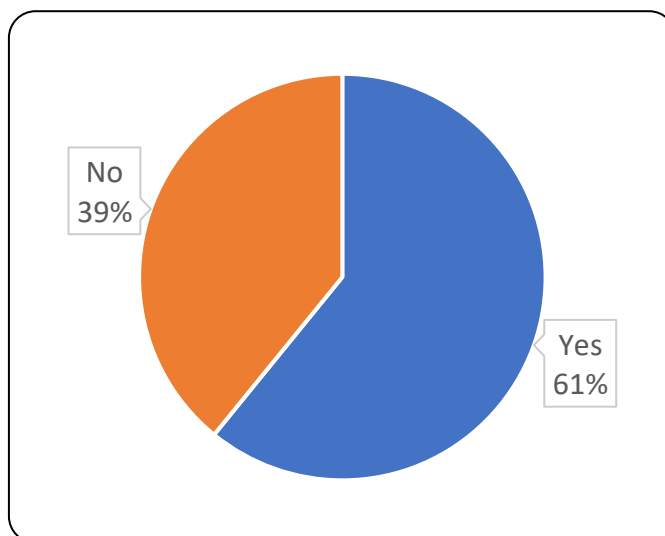
“Getting into government and private sectors is extremely tricky. As a recent student I hardly get called back for posts... my income is not set and reliable.”

Some of the respondents explained that language access represents both a professional concern and a matter of fundamental rights and representation in society. Two respondents shared these comments:

“Language is the key to information and direction,”

“It is a basic human right to give people information in the language of their choice.”

Figure 6: In your experience, is language work a reliable source of income?



Multiple respondents analysed the structural issues which include writer value diminution and the impact of AI technology effects.

“The value of a writer is highly undervalued. People squeeze writers down to a low rate, believe AI can do the job.”

Written responses also noted that language work provides retirees and part-timers with additional income but it does not secure their complete financial stability.

“To some extent. My earnings help pay the bills, which is useful for my wife and me as pensioners.”

Table 27 below illustrates the responses to the question: Are you aware of any formal networks or ecosystems that support language professionals? The survey responses indicate that South African language professionals have a moderate understanding of formal networks which support their work. Some 59.57% practitioners confirmed their knowledge of institutional or organisational support structures including professional associations and academic networks and language councils.

The survey results show that 23.40% of respondents lack knowledge about these networks while 17.0% remain uncertain about their existence. The combined results indicate that a substantial number of practitioners operate independently from wider support networks.

The data shows that existing formal structures remain invisible to many practitioners particularly those who work as freelancers or new professionals or reside outside major cities. This confirms the necessity to enhance communication efforts while expanding outreach programs and improving coordination between existing networks to provide more language practitioners with collaborative opportunities and professional development and resource sharing.

Table 27: Are you aware of any formal networks or ecosystems that support language professionals?

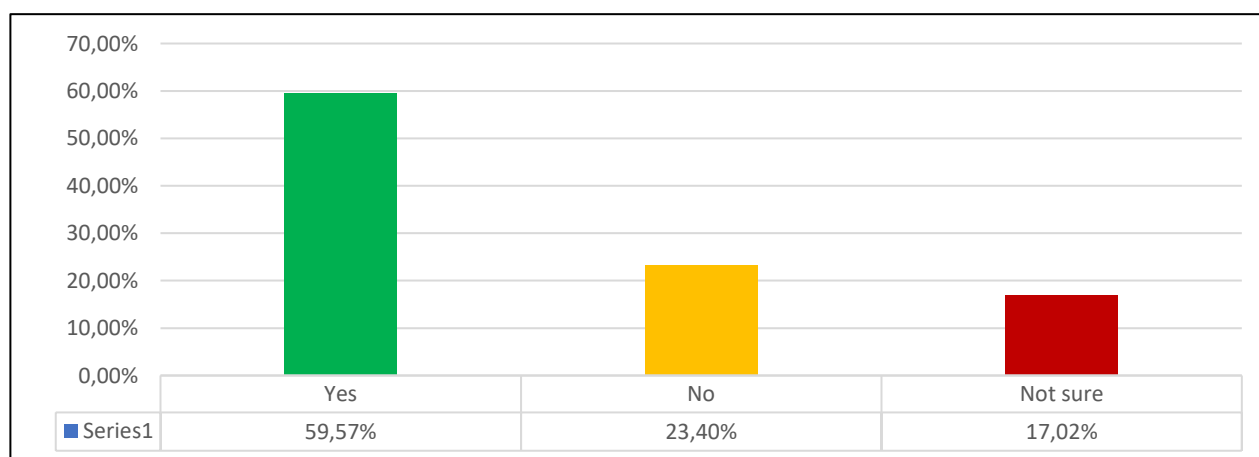


Table 28 below shows that engagement with stakeholders in the language sector is uneven, with some institutions being more commonly accessed than others. The most frequently cited interactions were with DSAC and universities or language departments, both selected by

43.48% of respondents. This reflects the central role of government and academic institutions in supporting language-related work—particularly through policy, research, and training initiatives.

PanSALB, the statutory body tasked with promoting multilingualism and language rights, was cited by 30.43% of respondents. While this shows a fair degree of engagement, it also suggests that PanSALB’s reach could be significantly strengthened, especially given its mandate in the sector.

Interaction with private language agencies (26.09%) and professional associations (23.91%) was somewhat limited, pointing to either a lack of visibility or restricted access to professional networks, especially for freelancers or those outside urban and institutional hubs. The South African Language Practitioners’ Council (SALPC), which plays a critical role in registration and professional regulation, was selected by only 13.04% of respondents—indicating a low level of interaction with the formal regulatory body, and potentially a gap in outreach, relevance, or operational capacity.

Notably, 10.87% of respondents reported no interaction with any of the listed stakeholders. This signals that some practitioners operate entirely outside formal structures, raising concerns about isolation, lack of support, and missed opportunities for collaboration and professional development.

Table 28: With which of the following stakeholders have you interacted with in your professional role? Select all that apply

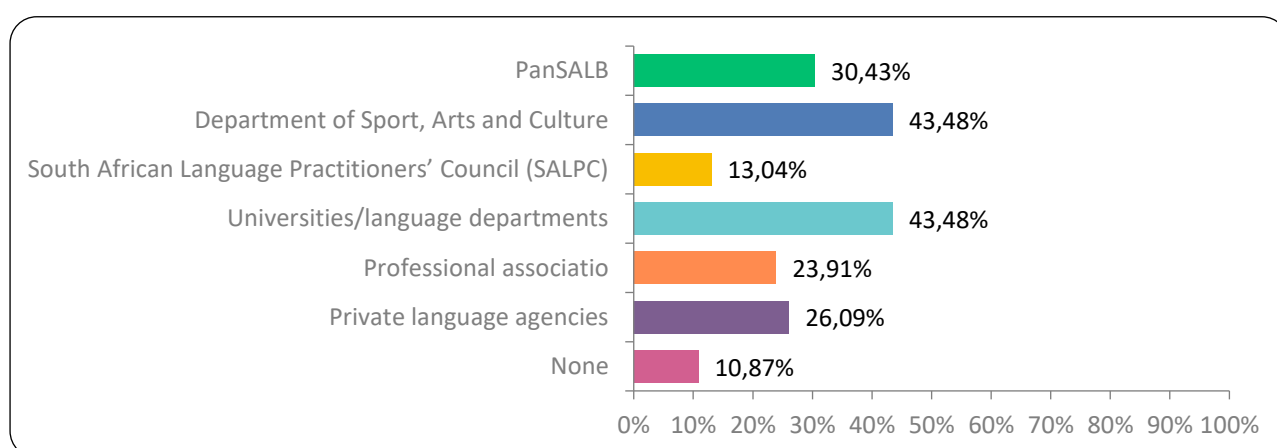
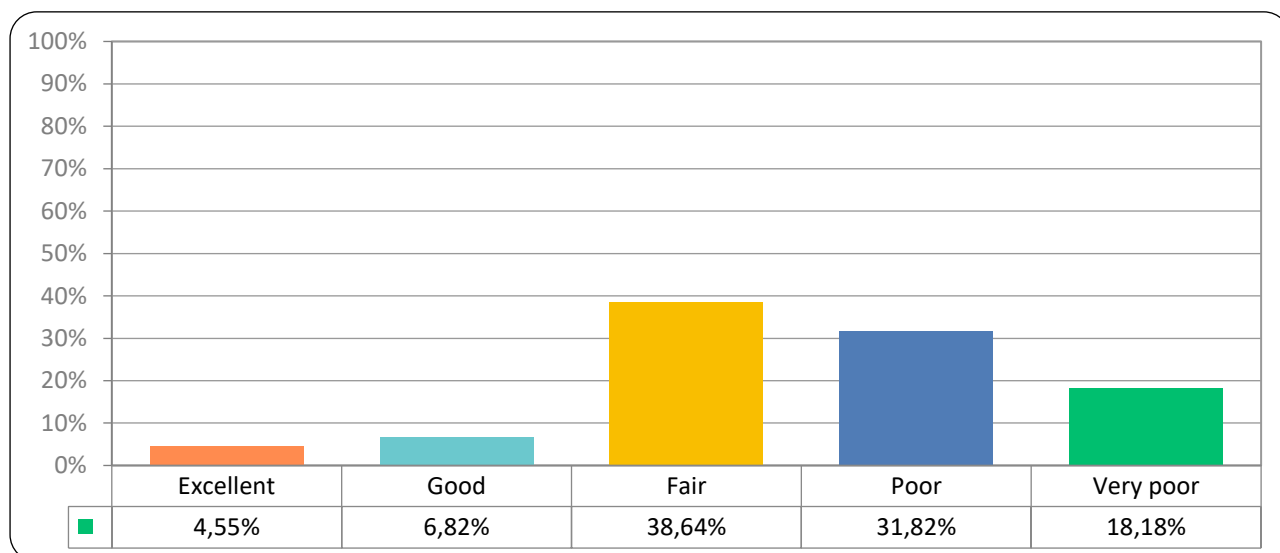


Table 29 below indicates that most respondents believe South African language services lack proper coordination between their different sectors. The combined responses of 50% of participants indicated poor coordination through their ratings of “poor” (31.82%) and “very poor” (18.18%) which demonstrates broad concerns about institutional and service provider misalignment.

A further 38.64% of respondents evaluated coordination as fair which indicates some interaction or collaboration does occur. Only a small minority of respondents held positive

views about coordination with 6.82% choosing “good” and 4.55% selecting “excellent.”

Table 29: How would you rate coordination between stakeholders in the language services sector?



This confirms previous findings showing that practitioners do not engage much with each other, professional networks remain underused, and interactions with regulatory bodies are minimal. The data indicates that the language economy requires immediate development of stronger communication systems together with clear mandates and better coordinated public-private-academic efforts.

Table 30 below points to a broad consensus amongst respondents that public and private sector partnerships should be used to improve the language services system in South Africa. The majority of respondents (78.26%) endorsed university-industry collaboration for training programme development recognising the need to match academic qualifications with practical skills required in the language sector.

The survey results showed that 69.57% of respondents supported partnerships between government and professional language bodies (e.g., SATI, ALASA) to establish better institutional cooperation, standardisation and recognition of language work.

There was strong support for the inclusion of language professionals in public service delivery through their participation in key domains including courts and healthcare and education (63.04%). Other proposed collaborations included:

- Multi-sector working groups to develop policy and implementation strategies (58.70%),
- Integration of language services into the BPO and tech industries (56.52%),
- NGO support for language rights and community translation (54.35%),
- Private sector investment in Human Language Technologies (HLT) and joint funding for CPD and accreditation (both 50%).

While respondents demonstrated both strategic and constructive ideas in their responses, some expressed frustration about public sector barriers. One respondent emphatically stated:

“GET RID OF CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT”

Table 30: What public and private sector collaborations and partnerships would strengthen the language services ecosystem in South Africa? Select all that apply

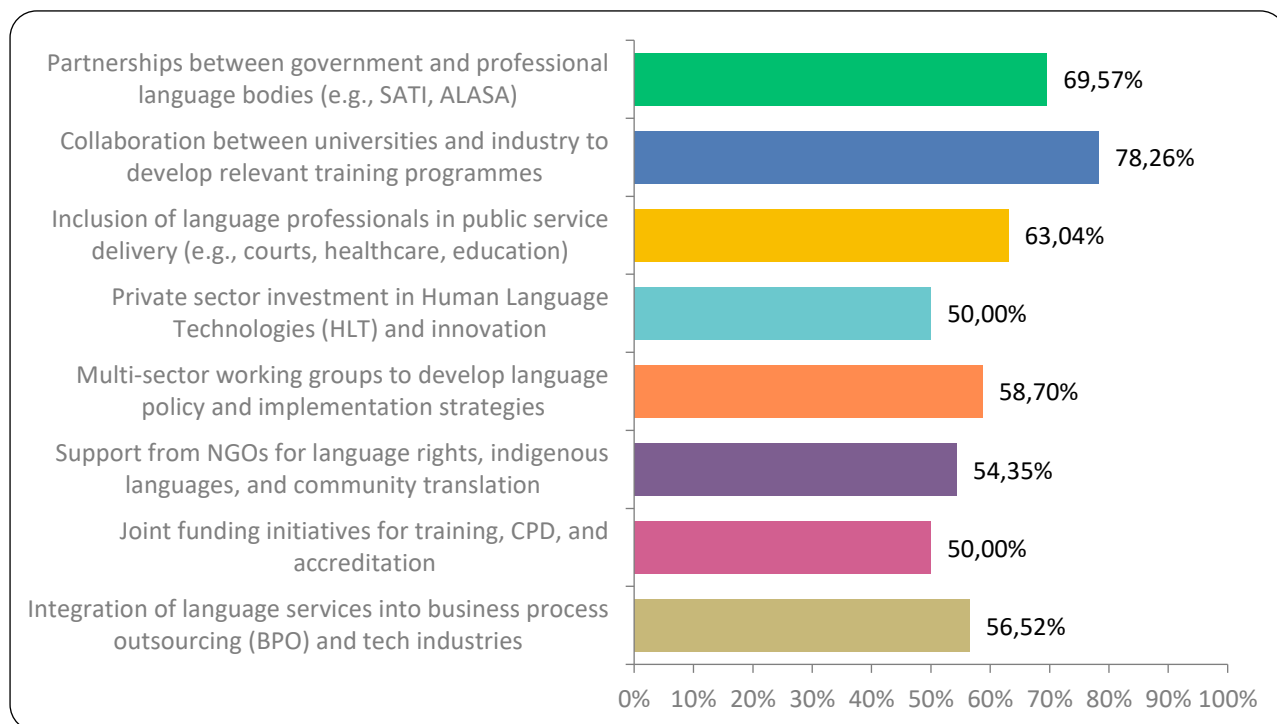


Figure 7 alongside indicates that South African language practitioners believe there is insufficient professional training opportunities and development opportunities. The majority of participants chose either "No" (43%) or "Not sure" (21%) indicating their uncertainty or dissatisfaction with existing training options.

The survey results show that 36% of respondents believe training and development opportunities are sufficient which indicates these programmes primarily benefit members of universities and large institutions and urban-based networks.

This confirms other survey findings about professional network inequality and training underfunding and the requirement for university-government-industry partnerships to create useful learning opportunities.

Figure 7: Do you feel there are adequate professional training and development opportunities for language practitioners?

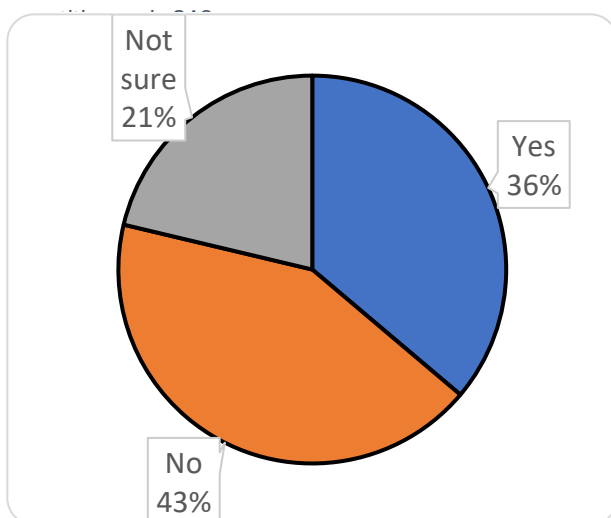


Table 31 below indicates that there is a robust demand for comprehensive support systems to enhance the work of language practitioners operating in South Africa. Financial assistance emerged as the top requested form of support since 74.47% of respondents sought grants or stipends or other funding options. The economic instability faced by many practitioners particularly affects freelancers and new professionals in their careers thus requiring better funding systems which provide sustainable support for language work.

The survey results show that 70.21% of respondents want better institutional support through national system integration, formal recognition and accreditation. The data indicates that professionals want established career routes together with strong regulatory systems and enhanced visibility in both public and private sector organizations.

The survey results show that 59.57% of respondents requested professional support, including mentorship programmes and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities. The sector's rapid transformation due to technological and policy changes has led to an increased understanding of the need for continuous learning and peer assistance.

The survey results show that 55.32% of respondents identified the need for technical assistance, such as access to software programmes and digital tools together with technological infrastructure. The findings align with previous research about Human Language Technologies expansion and digital language work evolution because many practitioners feel they lack necessary capabilities to fully engage in the digital language economy.

Table 31: What type of support would most improve your practice? Select all that apply

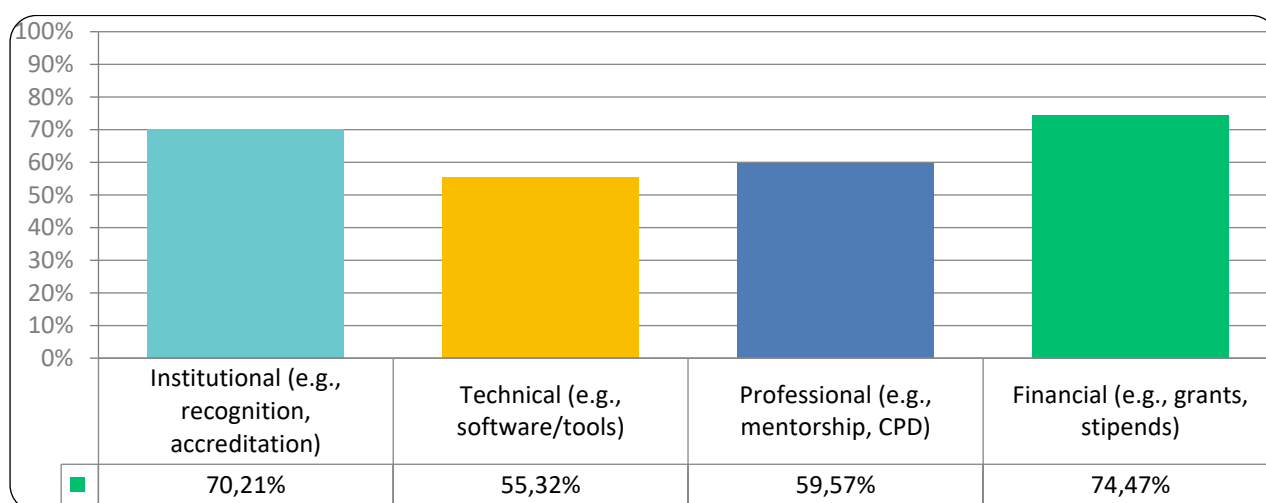


Table 32 below shows that language practitioners throughout South Africa employ multiple resources when they carry out their work, combining both formal resources and informal professional networks to handle their diverse and dynamic professional requirements.

The most frequently used resource was style and terminology guides, selected by 62.22% of respondents. The field of language work requires this resource because it helps maintain both consistency and accuracy especially in editing tasks and academic and technical writing assignments. One respondent explained:

“Dictionaries are the most useful tools. Since I work with academic documents in fields not known to me through my education, I rely largely on my experience as an editor in working with terminology in economics.”

The regular use of translation and terminology software is regularly used by 48.89% among practitioners. The findings show growing professional interest in digital tools together with language technology among practitioners who work between languages and handle extensive specialised text.

Linguistic databases are employed by 42.22% of respondents although this number indicates a moderate dependence on structured language data repositories. The databases remain inaccessible to some professionals who work independently or outside major institutions.

The survey revealed that only 35.56% of respondents use accredited training programs which might reflect either restricted access to formal training opportunities or an emphasis on self-taught learning and experience-based development. The practitioners use various informal resources alongside technology-based tools to help them complete their work. These include:

- Google and dictionaries for on-the-fly clarification and terminology checks,
- The WhatsApp group consultations show how peer networks and collaborative problem-solving take place through this platform.
- AI tools such as Claude, Otter and ChatGPT to draft and summarize text and enhance their language tasks.

Other practitioners described their work as involving live translation between speakers along with language stakeholder collaboration and multilingual context navigation that requires flexibility and cultural sensitivity.

Table 32: Which of the following resources do you regularly use in your work? Select all that apply

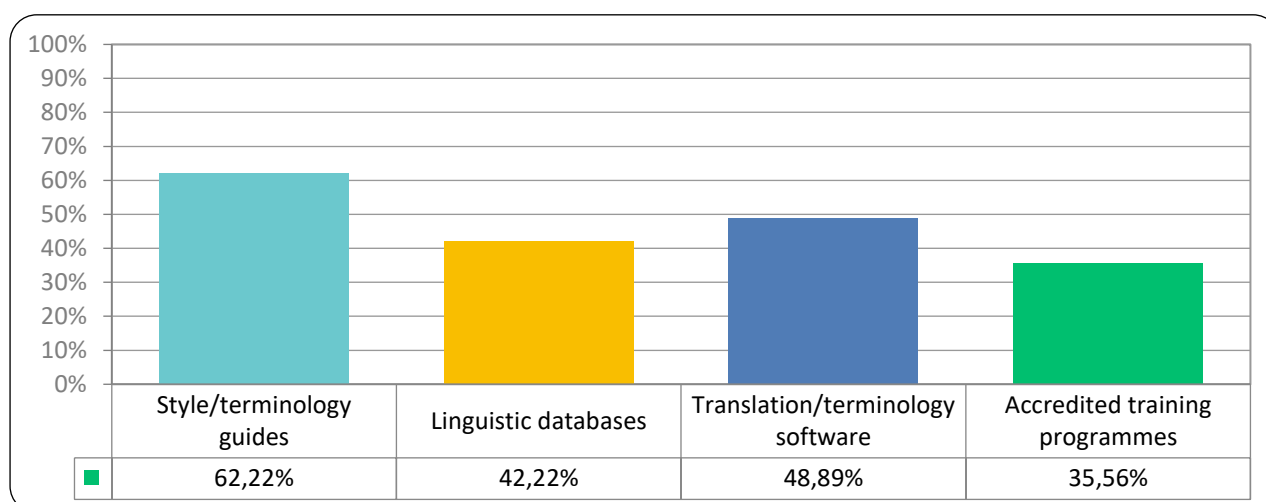


Table 33 below reveals that digital tools are widely used by South African language practitioners in both their daily communications and specialised language technology tasks. The majority of respondents (93.18%) used communication platforms including Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp regularly. The survey shows that remote collaboration as well as client

communication and networking form the core of modern language work especially for freelance practitioners who work independently.

Language practitioners depend heavily on online dictionaries and thesauruses with 63.64% of respondents reporting them as their second most frequently used resource. The use of Grammarly along with other editing and grammar-checking tools is used by 54.55% of respondents, showing that these tools have become standard writing and reviewing tools for everyday practice.

The survey shows that Google Translate and DeepL machine translation tools (45.45%) and the generative AI tools ChatGPT and Gemini (43.18%) are widely used by respondents. AI technology adoption speeds up through language services that use these tools for drafting assistance and terminology suggestions and translation support. The tools have transformed how practitioners work according to survey results despite other respondents expressing concerns about quality and overreliance.

The respondents used specialised tools like terminology databases or glossaries (36.36%) and language corpora/linguistic databases (27.27%) although the number of users is small, these tools remain vital for practitioners working in technical and academic or high-precision fields. The usage of project management platforms like Trello or Asana reached 25% of respondents indicating a gradual adoption of structured workflow tools.

The survey results show that learning platforms (e.g., Coursera, Udemy) and speech recognition software were used by 20.45% of respondents who demonstrate interest in ongoing learning and transcription accessibility. The usage of translation memory software (e.g., Trados, MemoQ) was low at 11.36% because of high costs and insufficient knowledge about these tools within the language services sector.

Table 33: Which digital tools, platforms, or resources do you make regular use of to support your work? Select all that apply

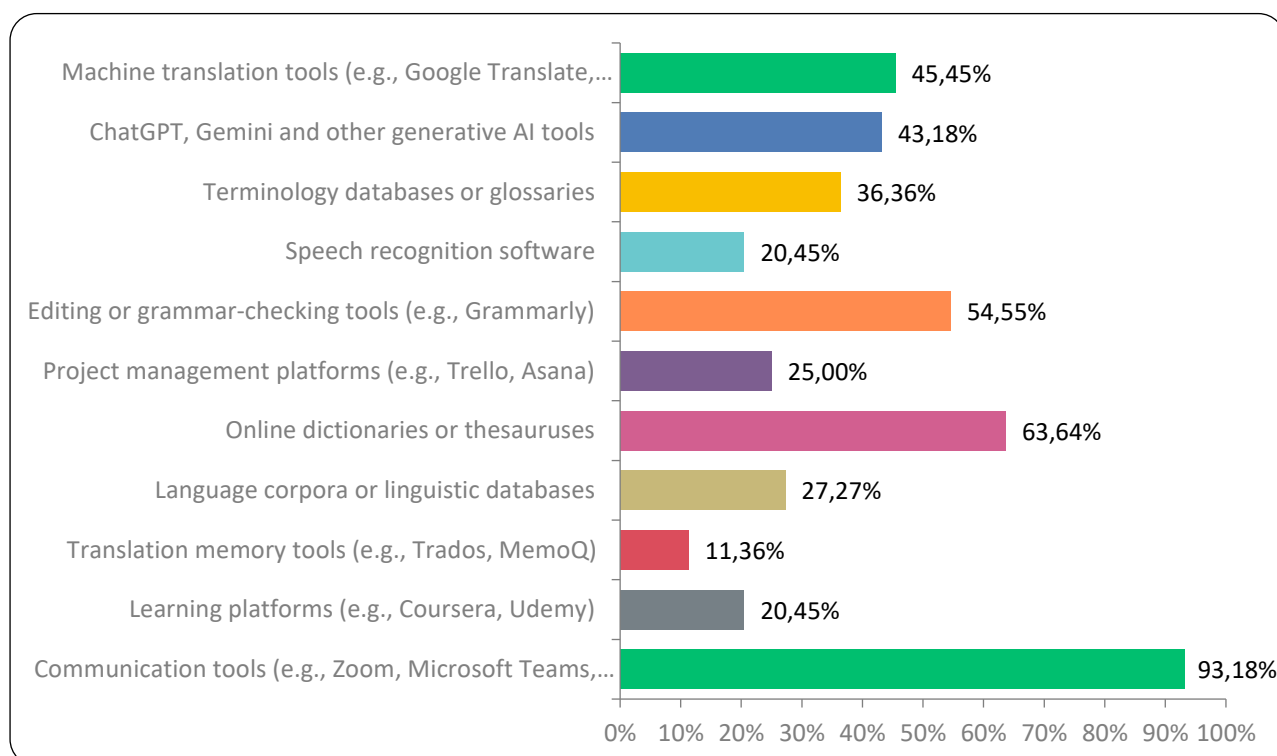


Table 34 below highlights South African language practitioners demands for better digital infrastructure and support tools to meet their specific needs. The majority of participants (73.33%) chose a *national job board for language-related work* as the resource they wanted most. This majority request signals the need for clear access to job opportunities through systems which suits the informal and freelance-dominated nature of this profession.

A substantial number of practitioners (62.22%) expressed their requirement for cost-effective or subsidised access to professional software solutions that include CAT tools and editing platforms. This demonstrates that while financial challenges can limit practitioners, they understand the critical role professional tools play in maintaining quality standards and competitive market positions.

Strong interest emerged in digital resources that focus on particular languages. Online glossaries with African language terminology databases gained support from 55.56% of respondents and AI tools trained on South African language data received backing from 51.11% of respondents. The data shows that the country needs tools which both support local languages and represent the linguistic diversity of South Africa.

Other digital innovations gained extensive backing from the participants.

- A national database of accredited language practitioners with mobile-friendly field or community-based tools received 53.33% support demonstrating the need for remote and grassroots accessibility alongside visibility.

- Multilingual spellcheckers and grammar tool received 40.0%, while 44.44% selected sector-specific translation memory databases.
- The demand for an online CPD (Continuing Professional Development) platform emerged as the fourth most popular request at 35.56% because practitioners need flexible professional learning opportunities available across all locations and institutions.

Table 34: Are there digital tools, platforms, or resources you wish were available to support your work? Select all that apply

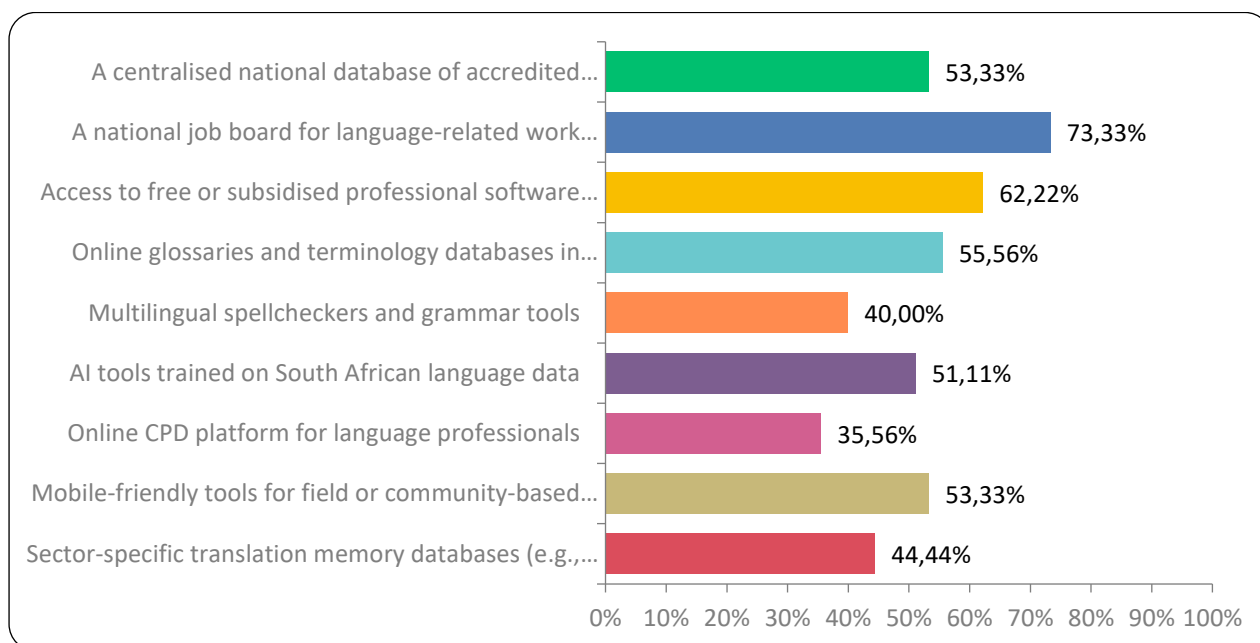


Table 35 below reveals that most language practitioners depend on casual and informal channels to obtain information about sector developments. Word of mouth and peer networks proved to be the most popular information (62.22%). This suggests that the language economy depends on professional relationships and informal exchanges as its primary channels for knowledge sharing.

Social media emerged as the second most popular information source (53.33%) because it enables practitioners to connect with each other while sharing updates and promoting opportunities, especially for those who lack formal ties to institutions or professional bodies.

The survey data shows that people use research-based sources less often than informal sources. Academic journals and PanSALB/Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) websites were each selected by 37.78% of respondents. The moderate level of engagement with structured or official sources could be attributed to paywalls or lack of awareness or difficulties accessing timely updates.

The survey results show that 33.33% of respondents use industry associations as their regular information source. This relatively low percentage might indicate that these associations maintain limited visibility or lack active participation or it could demonstrate a general separation between practitioners and formal industry bodies.

The survey revealed that 17.78% of participants lack access to dependable data about language usage and service delivery. The findings demonstrate that information does not reach all stakeholders effectively because public data remains unavailable to those outside academic or urban-based networks.

Table 35: Which sources do you use to get information about current trends in the language sector? Select all that apply

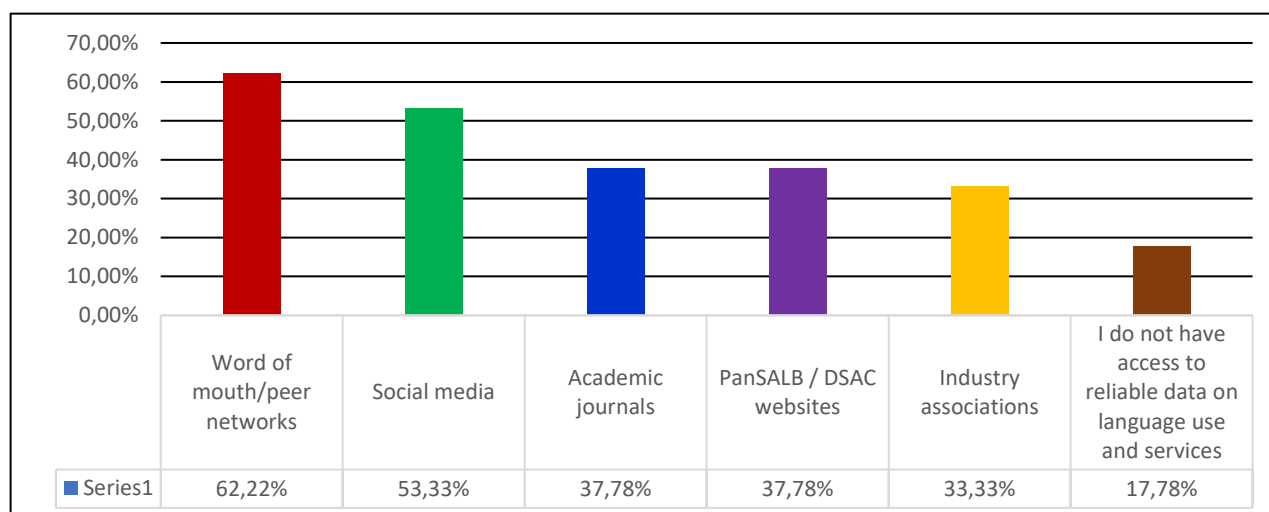


Table 36 below points to respondents' frustration about the South African language sector's inadequate standardised data collection methods and inaccessible information. The main barriers were identified by 45.7% of respondents which included:

- Lack of up-to-date statistics on language use and services,
- Limited access to data on qualified or accredited practitioners,
- Inconsistent terminology or classification across the sector,
- Data fragmentation across institutions and provinces, and
- Difficulty accessing language policy information.

These responses show that practitioners operate in a confusing environment which hampers them from making effective plans and collaborations or sector-wide advocacy. Some 43.48% of respondents noted that they lacked access to a central platform for industry research reports while 41.3% encountered challenges in locating training or CPD opportunities. The evidence shows a requirement for enhanced resource coordination alongside better visibility which affects professionals who operate outside institutions and freelancers.

Table 36: In your experience, what data gaps or barriers have you encountered in your work? Select all that apply

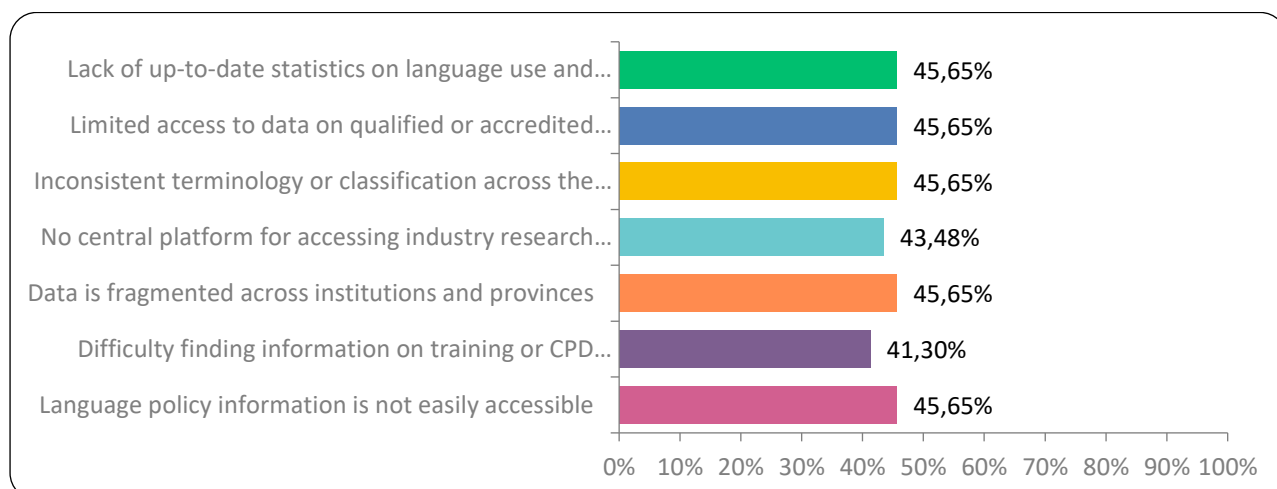


Table 37 below show a complex reaction to the question of the impact of technological advancements on the work on language practitioners. While some 51.06% of respondents reported positive experiences, 19.15% reported negative impacts while 17.02% stated no change and 12.77% found it not applicable.

Respondents who responded positively noted that technology brings efficiency improvements and information access benefits to their work. Comments were made such as

"It makes it easy to access information and exchange ideas,"

And

"I have achieved more than I can imagine... technology played a vital part in terms of organisational growth and reaching many people,"

However, several respondents identified both advantages and disadvantages from AI and automation implementation. The following comments were made:

"Positively and negatively. It has replaced some of my work, but it has also helped make some of my work more efficient."

Others expressed concern that AI is displacing human expertise:

"I am seeing a decline in work opportunities as clients opt to DIY,"

And

"Clients may think there is no need to pay a language specialist if they can use AI."

The ongoing debate between efficiency improvements and the erosion of professional value represented a key issue. A respondent commented:

"AI can get some of the 'grunt' work done faster, but it also creates the impression that professional input is no longer necessary."

Several respondents doubted the ability and dependability of AI tools based on their observations.

“I’ve not found an AI module that is accurate enough to trust,”

And

“I have no faith at all in AI... translation tools would be of little use.”

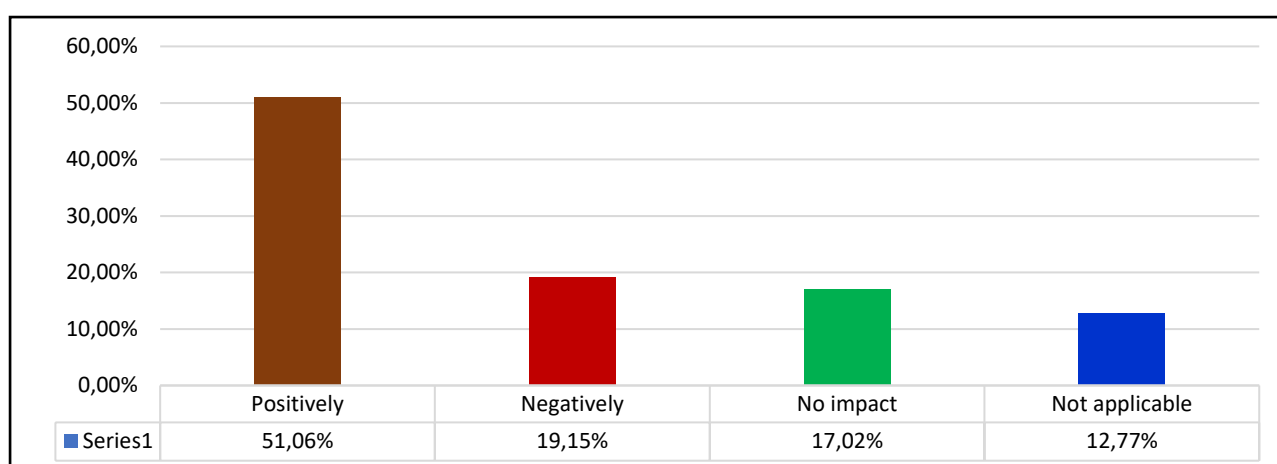
The respondents who reported no impact or selected not applicable worked outside mainstream translation/editing tasks or remained inactive with these tools.

“There has been no impact on my end.”

One respondent expressed the wider ambiguity existing within the sector through their statement.

“People are still new in the AI field... so they’re throwing anything at it rather than having a way of influencing it.”

Table 37: How have technological advancements (e.g., AI, translation tools) influenced your work?



9.5. Narrative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses: Strengthening South Africa’s Language Services Sector

The survey concluded by asking respondents to provide their individual perspectives about how to enhance the language services sector in South Africa. The diverse range of responses from practical advice to personal thoughts shed light on the core values and challenges and future goals of people involved in the language economy. The open-ended responses provide valuable qualitative insights that point to the need for systemic changes and innovative solutions and collaborative efforts.

9.5.1. What is your biggest hope or recommendation for the future of language use and the language sector in South Africa?

The majority of participants expressed their desire for South Africa to adopt genuine multilingual practices rather than just having linguistic policies in place. The recognition of African languages to receive equal treatment throughout all institutional sectors including education and healthcare and government and business operations was the central focus of this initiative. Respondents requested to elevate indigenous languages to equal status with English and Afrikaans for both official interactions and everyday life. One respondent summarised this ambition succinctly:

"To see all 11 official languages on the same level, used in schools, hospitals, and public documents—not just in name but in practice."

The recommendations focused on translating technological manuals and increasing signs in multiple languages while incorporating mother-tongue education in early schooling programs.

The survey participants strongly emphasized that language equity needed both political commitment and joint work between public and private sectors. Participants emphasized the need to support underrepresented languages such as Khoikhoi while opposing the practice of combining different language groups under broad labels like "Khoisan."

"My biggest hope is for all Khoi and San languages to be revived and protected, and for our children to learn them at school as a point of pride."

People suggested that language policies should be thoroughly integrated into national identity development while establishing the language sector as an essential strategic resource instead of a challenge. Respondents urged for increased funding and political will to drive implementation:

"Language policy is meaningless without real commitment. We need action, not just promises on paper."

9.5.2. What are the most critical terminology, training, or resource gaps that need urgent attention in your language are

Specialised terminology and training programs were identified as essential gaps primarily in medical fields as well as scientific and technological domains along with legal and business sectors. The respondents strongly emphasised the immediate necessity to develop modern accessible African language terminology that includes specialized glossaries for medicine and healthcare and other professional fields. Many participants recommended creating digital tools such as apps and games and educational platforms to support the learning of African languages. One respondent stated:

"We need more terminology development in our indigenous languages—especially in healthcare and education. Patients and learners are disadvantaged daily."

Multiple respondents pointed out that ECD and school levels suffered from insufficient trained educators as well as inadequate practice platforms and African language publications.

"There are no accessible training opportunities for African language editors or translators. If you don't live in a big city, you're excluded." (survey respondent)

The participants emphasised that ongoing professional development and consistent access to online tools along with training programs that meet real-world requirements should be established. A respondent pointed to the absence of materials for learners and professionals alike:

"Terminology gaps are huge. Our dictionaries are outdated, and there's little collaboration to fix this. We need apps, audio tools, and open access glossaries in African languages."

9.5.3. What best practices or successful models from other countries, sectors, or language fields could help strengthen South Africa's language economy?

Several respondents expressed uncertainty about international models despite acknowledging Belgium and Canada as examples of multilingualism through formal policy frameworks.

"Belgium handles multilingualism structurally; maybe we can learn how they fund and train language professionals across their three official languages." (survey respondent)

Bilingual education programs were suggested along with social media language promotion and national planning through strategic multilingualism implementation. A creative proposal was made for technology use:

"Let's use social media, music and mobile apps to make African languages popular with the youth."

South Africa should create its own best practices because the nation requires unique linguistic solutions that address its diverse language landscape.

"We don't need to look abroad—we can develop our own models rooted in our linguistic diversity and community experience." (survey respondent)

This demonstrates practical awareness that models from countries with less language diversity or homogeneous linguistic profiles may not suit South Africa effectively.

9.5.4. How can professional bodies, government agencies, and practitioners collaborate more effectively to support language development, access, and professionalisation?

The majority of participants agreed that better coordination between government entities and professional bodies and practitioners was required.

"We need a national strategy, not isolated efforts by DSAC or universities. Collaboration is key." (survey respondent)

The respondents suggested creating cross-sector committees and organizing regular seminars and roadshows and building knowledge exchange platforms.

"Language practitioners, academics, and government must sit at the same table. Policies are being written without us." (survey respondent)

Schools along with NGOs and community organisations needed support to engage youth while developing curricula and including all South African languages including sign language.

Several experts supported the professionalisation of language services through regular language policy enforcement combined with anti-corruption practices and official recognition of language practitioners' work. One respondent directly warned government agencies to eliminate corruption because of their frustration about inefficient operations and political inaction.

9.5.5. Do you have any additional comments or recommendations for improving the language services ecosystem in South Africa?

The final comments duplicated earlier points about the need to translate policies into action while improving education and launching public awareness initiatives. Respondents recommended that language development should merge with arts and cultural production while also supporting multilingual digital platforms and stronger mother-tongue education and regular assessments to track language use in different sectors.

"We need a Language Month—like Heritage Month—that truly celebrates multilingualism with funding and public campaigns." (survey respondent)

The participants voiced their concerns about anglicisation and underfunded libraries and weak governance yet maintained their strong support for language policies which promote equality and inclusivity.

"We are being anglicised. Even African parents prefer English for their children. That has to change." (survey respondent)

The participants reflected on the symbolic power of language in shaping identity and national growth.

"Language is not just communication—it's dignity, identity, and access. Strengthening our languages will strengthen our country." (survey respondent)

9.6. Conclusion

This chapter is an analysis of 88 online survey responses, incorporating respondents' demographics and professional affiliations. The responses were sourced from all nine provinces. A majority of respondents are under the age of 50, with over 50% holding a degree or post-graduate degree. Of the respondents, 71% identified as language practitioners while the remaining respondents (29%) were of the general populace.

The survey results demonstrate that the sector strongly supports South African multilingual heritage development while facing numerous obstacles that slow its advancement. The survey shows that many respondents actively work in translation and editing and interpretation and language teaching across multiple domains yet they agree that the language economy lacks proper recognition and sufficient resources in national planning and policy.

The survey results reveal significant themes highlighting obstacles such as poor data accessibility, fragmented coordination and restricted professional development opportunities.

A further theme is the persistent lack of resources for indigenous language and terminology. The respondents showed positive attitudes toward the future, emphasising technological expansion possibilities alongside innovative partnership models and increasing national understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity value.

The survey findings highlight the sector's ability to contribute to economic empowerment, while also enhancing education, public service delivery, cultural preservation, and societal well-being. The South African language economy needs strategic investment together with policy implementation and inclusive stakeholder engagement to achieve its full potential.

Responses to the survey questions indicate that the language services ecosystem development stands as both a linguistic and cultural necessity and an essential economic and developmental priority. The collected insights serve as essential guidance for developing policies and directing research and establishing a unified professional language sector which promotes equity.

10. Chapter 10: Strategic Interviews Findings

10.1. Introduction

This chapter presents insights gathered from 13 semi-structured interviews – seven of which were oral interviews conducted through Zoom and six of which were written responses to the same questions. The questions were designed to explore the respondents' roles within the language sector and to gain insights about the broader dynamics of the South African language economy. The semi-structured interview approach allowed a measure of consistency in the questions asked but enabled participants to provide detailed responses according to their needs.

The discussions then explored the following themes:

Theme 1: Definition of Language Practitioner

The respondents explored criteria needed to define a language practitioner. They described their roles as well as their daily responsibilities with language. The discussion about professional recognition evolved to include both the requirement for clear definitions and the need for established career paths for indigenous language workers.

Theme 2: Contribution by the Language Economy

The South African economy receives many benefits from the language sector according to the interview respondents. They discussed how the language economy generates employment opportunities while safeguarding traditional knowledge systems and improving both service and information accessibility. Several interviewees emphasised that multilingualism serves to advance both inclusion and dignity in society. The interview participants observed that indigenous African languages receive minimal recognition for their contributions to society.

Theme 3: Investment in the Sector

All respondents highlighted their disappointment about the insufficient investments into the language sector and considered the need for improved national recognition of the language sector. The respondents identified their personal difficulties in securing funding for language-based projects especially those dealing with indigenous languages and oral traditions. Various respondents mentioned their challenges with short-term grant and restrictive institutional budgets.

Theme 4: Awareness of PanSALB

The level of PanSALB awareness among respondents ranged from basic understanding to a thorough understanding of its multilingualism activities. Some respondents supported its constitutional objectives and acknowledged its work on terminology development. Respondents also stated that PanSALB requires better promotion and stronger institutional support because most people remain unaware of its activities.

Theme 5: Role of a Practitioner's Council

The establishment of a South African Language Practitioners' Council was considered by interviewees. A number supported this idea arguing that it would establish professional

standards and provide career development opportunities for practitioners. Other interviewees expressed doubt about the council because they feared it could establish entry barriers and create bureaucratic challenges.

Theme 6: Funding of the Council

Respondents considered the financial sustainability aspects of the proposed Language Practitioners Council – and even of PanSALB. The interviewees evaluated the current funding of public institutions and discussed alternative funding sources that could include private partnerships and membership fees. The discussions repeatedly connected back to fundamental issues about equity as well as accessibility and political commitment toward meaningful language work investment.

Theme 7: Willingness to Pay an Annual Fee

When asked about registration fee payments respondents provided different reactions. People showed readiness to pay registration fees when the funds would support indigenous language development and provide professional accreditation. The theme led participants to consider both fairness principles and what proper support for language professionals should entail.

Theme 8: Biggest Challenges

Respondents noted multiple structural barriers that challenge their work performance. Language professionals discussed their experiences of being undervalued, the continued dominance of the English languages and the limited funding and support available. Multiple interviewees pointed out how the education system fails to support mother-tongue language development.

Theme 9: Additional Research

The respondents provided important insight into potential research and actions required to develop the sector. They highlighted the dangers of professional body gatekeeping and the immediate need to focus on indigenous languages as well as the upcoming challenges from AI and digital automation. Participants considered broad future-oriented approaches for designing structures like the practitioners' council that is able to adapt to local contexts while promoting equality and addressing future obstacles.

The purpose of conducting interviews in this study, was to gather information about the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of participants.

Each of the 13 respondents signed a consent form before participating in the interview to indicate that they understood the nature of the study and that they agreed to participate voluntarily in the interview. The consent form provided information about the study, its purpose and the procedures involved, as well as the respondent's rights, including the right to terminate the interview at any stage. The anonymity of the respondent was discussed and assured.

The oral interviews were generally between 30 and 120 minutes and were recorded. Transcripts were produced and archived. Summaries of all interviews have also been produced and archived. The schedule for the interviews can be found in Appendix 4 of this report. The respondents constituted a diverse, informed group with a rich set of relevant experience and

provided the researchers with a wealth of information, insight, and enhanced understanding of the complexities of work in the language sector.

Respondents Roles and Experience in the Language Sector

The respondents interviewed hold various positions throughout South Africa's language economy. They include academics, researchers, government officials, civil society and youth advocates, and representatives from the media and creative industries. This rich diversity of roles means that collectively, respondents bring deep expertise, lived experience, and strategic insight into the South African language sector.

Table 38: Summary of Respondents' Roles in the Language Economy Sector

Role Category	Description of Role
Academics and Researchers	University-based scholars involved in teaching, curriculum design, linguistic research, and academic literacy.
Government and Statutory Officials	Professionals involved in policy development, language planning, and public sector leadership.
Language Practitioners	Individuals directly involved in language services such as terminology, translation, and multilingual content.
Media and Creative Professionals	Freelance writers, editors, and journalists working in the creative and commercial use of language.
Youth and Civil Society Advocates	Emerging professionals or activists with experience in youth leadership, advocacy, and public dialogue.
Institutional Leadership	Individuals in executive roles responsible for national coordination of language policy and implementation.

10.2. Analysis of Themes Identified by Respondents

This section contains an analysis of key themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews (oral and written). The purpose of this thematic overview is to synthesise respondents' insights regarding the South African language sector. This includes discussing possible definitions of language practitioners, the contribution of language to the South African economy, what investment is needed in this sector, and how institutions, technology, and policy can support language development.

As Respondent 5 observed, the task of advancing language equity cannot be left to individual efforts alone:

“There is no one institution that is solely responsible... We all need to come together to elevate ... languages. Collaboration is not optional—it’s the only way forward.”

This statement reflects the broader objective of this report: to map the landscape of the language economy, identify existing gaps, and highlight possibilities of greater alignment between policy, practice and lived experience. The themes below reflect the collective insights of practitioners, academics, government officials, and civil society stakeholders who participated in this study.

10.2.1. Theme 1: Definition of Language Practitioner

The interviewees presented multiple definitions of role of a language practitioner within South Africa. Some interviewees explored a more limited technical definition – referring to of translators, editors and terminology developers while others considered a wider interpretation reflecting various professional language uses.

Respondent 13 provides an example of a wide-angle view:

“I regard myself as a language practitioner, but only in the widest sense of the word – in the sense that I ply my trade through the medium of language – especially the accurate use of language, in a social scientific context.”

According to Respondent 13’s definition – language is an essential medium through which he conducts his work, but it is not the object of his work.

Respondent 2 echoes this view:

“I work with language daily... though not in traditional roles like editing or translating.”

Thus, Respondent 2, recognises the connection between academic development and language work although it is not formally designated as such.

The designation of language practitioner finds full support from Respondent 8 who gave a simple “Yes” when asked if he was a language practitioner. Respondents 10 and 9 provide a more detailed description of a language practitioner in the academic sphere:

“I am a language practitioner. I specialise in the development of language resources, thus contributing to language development.” (Respondent 10)

“I am a language teacher by training. My disciplinary background is applied linguistics, a disciplined focusing on designing language-related problems in society.” (Respondent 9)

Writers along with journalists such as Respondent 12 argue that language is central to their professional work.

“Absolutely essential in my line of work as a writer and editor, and it helps to position you as a language expert.”

Many respondents expressed concern that the efforts of language professionals are not sufficiently recognised, especially those working with indigenous languages. Respondent 7 and 9 describes this:

“Very few people in our society see the value of language... They still think that if you speak two languages... you can do the work of a language practitioner. That’s a misconception.”

(Respondent 7)

“The general challenge is the poor attitude towards languages other than English. This is the case even among speakers of the languages affected by this negative attitude.” (Respondent 9)

Interviewees agreed that better definitions of the concept of “language practitioner” are needed together with professional recognition are necessary. A number suggested that there should be a national accreditation system and a regulatory organisation to set professional standards and define career paths. However, some respondents advised caution, as noted by Respondent 13:

“Today’s accreditor is tomorrow’s gatekeeper.”

The term “language practitioner” exists in a state of ambiguity but serves as the foundation for understanding the need to establish recognition and professional standards for language work across South Africa’s cultural and economic domains.

10.2.2. Theme 2: Contribution of the Language Economy

A central theme of the interviews is the paradoxical state of the South African language economy – while it is a vital driver of development, it receives little recognition, as Respondent 4 explains:

“I think we underestimate the link between language... or no, we don’t fully understand perhaps, the relation between language of instruction and economic outcomes.”

Respondent 4 gives a blunt overview of the contribution of language:

“Proficiency in language is directly related to economic opportunity. If you’re not confident in what you’re speaking, there’s no chance you’re going to be able to read a job interview, prepare a CV and try and get a job.”

Various respondents noted that indigenous African languages possess untapped potential in the language economy. Respondents 5 and 8 describe this well:

“Language drives communication, cultural tourism, translation services, media, publishing, education and even software development. So it sustains jobs in teaching, in interpreting, in transcription and translation and lots of language services.” (Respondent 5)

“The language economy creates employment in sectors such as professional translation, education, mass media and multilingual content production, while also cementing market accessibility through the localisation of services into indigenous languages such as isiXhosa.” (Respondent 8)

Respondent 10 states that the language economy holds vast potential during this digital period.

“With 12 official languages (and more beyond that), there’s huge potential for language services in education, business, tourism, media, and even AI.”

Respondent 10 also highlights the important social impact of the language sector:

“Socially, the impact is just as important. Language access means better service delivery, especially in health, law, and education. It also helps build trust between communities and

institutions. When people can engage in their own languages, they feel seen, respected, and empowered. That's critical in a country with such a complex history."

This sentiment is echoed by Respondent 5:

"Socially, I'll say it fosters cohesion, Heritage Preservation and inclusivity. So a strong language economy can reduce marginalization and give people access to services and opportunities in their mother tongue."

The respondents point out that Indigenous Knowledge Systems hold unexplored value as a resource. This is described by Respondent 4:

"Inherent in [indigenous languages] is indigenous knowledge systems... so that duplication of herbs and plants and practices in those languages has great economic value... They are able to preserve those knowledges in the ways that have been handed down through generations."

But Respondent 9 indicates that much has still to be done to improve the value of indigenous languages:

I haven't seen much of this contribution especially with regard to indigenous African languages.

According to Respondent 8:

"[The] language economy is still extremely weak in our country despite the reality of its contributions."

Respondent 1 argues presents a unique perspective on this matter, noting that:

"We've got such strong storytelling traditions... that's language, and that's the beautiful use of language."

Respondent 1 believes that professional language work contains latent cultural and economic power.

Most interviewees agreed that the language economy plays a vital role in job creation and market accessibility and cultural preservation and social inclusion although it remains underrepresented in funding and policy structures.

10.2.3. Theme 3: Investment in the Sector

All respondents showed deep concern about South Africa's under-investment in the language sector, particularly indigenous languages. The participants consistently discussed insufficient long-term funding as the main obstacle to achieve meaningful progress, innovation and long-term progress.

Respondent 13 acknowledges that there is some funding for language-related work:

"Language as [a] medium of research is funded through the agency of research institutions, tertiary education institutions and the like. Various arts councils, and radio stations fund projects involving the use of language in drama, etc. which are remunerated, or which compete for prizes..."

However, this is generally insufficient. Respondent 2 highlighted the impact of inadequate investment in academics settings, explaining that this directly impacts on the quality of language work:

“We have resource challenges... we have space challenges... we have large classes and all of those have implications on us really being able to do our work as well as we could do if we didn't have these challenges.”

Respondent 8 explicitly described the fundamental and persistent nature of this issue by stating: “There is not enough funding for the development of South African languages.” The Respondent emphasised that funding language work should never be treated as an unimportant

“There is a clear lack of sustained investment, particularly in the development and promotion of indigenous languages. This is the most sad part that concerns indigenous languages.”

The language sector lacks proper support as Respondent 10 points out: “There is insufficient investment in the sector... especially when it comes to marginalised languages.” Respondent 10 goes on to explain:

“If we want meaningful progress in multilingualism and digital equality, we need to treat language work as a strategic investment, not just a cultural project. We have seen how language resources can result in profit for big companies”

Multiple respondents noticed that the official policy declarations fail to align with the financial backing that actually supports the language sector. Respondent 5 observes that most funding programs disregard essential components like oral literature together with traditional knowledge systems

“So most funding comes through institutions with limited budgets, which affects the scale and the impact of language projects. So governance support is insufficient and not equitable, distributed across languages. So a national language fund, independent and well managed, could support a long-term impact or impactful work.”

However, as Respondent 4 indicates that the issue of funding language needs to be considered within the broader context of South Africa's economic situation. The Respondent states:

“I don't know if South Africa is really... the needs in South Africa are so profound and complex... So to argue for substantial funding and support for something like Nama is a difficult argument to make.”

From his institutional perspective Respondent 7 pointed out how government funding remains the primary source of support but that this approach lacks sustainability:

“It's like we are all dependent on government to create opportunities for language practitioners. And if we continue in this vein, I don't see us winning this battle in the next few years.”

Respondent 7 goes on to say: “We are trying to level the playing ground, but it's taking a lot out of us, because we need to put a lot of resources, which are unfortunately not available at the moment.”

When considering the funding in the language sector, Respondent 9 said:

“I don’t think the investment is enough. Language development is not cheap. Lack of enough resources by the funders might be the reason. Attitudes towards language development by those who hold the purse strings could be another factor.”

The respondents criticised how funding for African languages appears as short-term grants that do not support long-term sector-wide infrastructure. Most funding sources distribute through small-scale project grants with strict deliverable requirements which leave limited room for innovation and sector-wide infrastructure development. Respondent 13 also pointed out the increasing cost of digital content

“which in a South African context, where costs are set in US dollars and are extremely prohibitive to a country whose currency is in a downward spiral. This hits language, but also other forms of data extremely hard, ensuring the marginalising of all kinds of creative output.”

All interview participants agree that the language economy needs to be considered as a fundamental infrastructure rather than a cultural accessory to thrive and drive national development. Respondent 3 concisely explained that “Language is not an add-on—it’s how we access rights, services, and opportunities.”

10.2.4. Theme 4: Awareness of PanSALB

The interviews and written responses revealed that while some respondents have a fair understanding of PanSALB and the role it plays in South African language development, other respondents have very little knowledge of this institution.

PanSALB has a constitutional mandate to promote and safeguards multilingualism throughout South Africa. Respondent 10 explains the role of PanSALB in detail:

The mandate of PanSALB is clear in the constitution ... [and] we live in a time where digital communication dominates, and without strong institutional backing, many South African languages risk being left out of digital and technological advancements. PanSALB should be the bridge between communities, language practitioners, and policy-makers, making sure that language rights are not just protected in theory, but activated in practice.”

Respondent 7 concurs with the above:

“It’s a body that has been established by an act of parliament... one of its responsibilities... is to make sure that it takes care of all development of languages, not necessarily in terms of official languages, yes, but all languages that are spoken within the borders of South Africa.”

Respondent 8 explained that PanSALB remains important because it fulfils the same essential duties it had when it first started which includes supporting language development and standardisation.

However, understanding of PanSALB operations and effects differs among the respondents. While Respondent 3 and 13 stated they were familiar with the institution, they admitted to having little knowledge about its operations. Respondent 3 indicated: “I do know that it exists, but I don’t know where it is, on a head office basis and in a provincial basis”. Respondent 3 goes on to state that he knows “very little, ... on its operations, as to what it entails to do as a board of languages in South Africa”. This lack of understanding highlights how little visibility there is of PanSALB’s official responsibilities in public awareness.

Some interviewees acknowledged the potential of the Board yet felt that it did not accomplish its intended goals. Respondent 9 explains:

“I think PanSALB can continue to play a crucial role in verifying and authenticating the current effort to develop indigenous African languages. This work remains a necessity to the current effort to build a multilingual South African society. It is possible, however, (and I could be wrong) that whatever resources PanSALB has had have not been channelled into the areas that could bring about real change. It could also be the case that the resources have not been enough.”

Respondent 5 points out the failure of PanSALB to maintain connections with government departments leads to poor results especially for local language communities. The Respondent state that there is a “disconnect between PanSALB and government departments,” and notes that “they make conclusions without consulting other indigenous institutions” and this can lead to flawed outcomes, particularly for indigenous language communities.

All respondents recognised PanSALB's fundamental importance to the country despite their negative comments about it. Many participants acknowledged the role of PanSALB's in efforts to develop terminology while supporting language rights. Respondent 2 believes that PanSALB's activities remain crucial in the present day because of rising demands for multilingualism and linguistic equality, while Respondent 8 depends on PanSALB for support during his work especially when he needs to address terminology matters, noting that:

“I rely on the support of PanSALB and the company I work for. I am aware that these structures have collaborations.”

The interviewees recognised PanSALB as essential to South Africa's multilingual framework yet they emphasised that the institution needs to improve its visibility, funding allocation and enforcement powers. The institution is very relevant but its ability to fulfil its constitutional duties depends on comprehensive backing from stakeholders together with institutional changes and better relations with language users and practitioners.

10.2.5. Theme 5: Role of Practitioner's Council

The respondents had conflicting opinions regarding the establishment of a Language Practitioners' Council. While several supported the need for a centralised body to govern language practitioners, others expressed concerns about the potential barriers to entry and the risk of creating an elitist system that would exclude those who lack official qualifications.

A number of respondents acknowledged the necessity of a council to establish language work as an official profession alongside its protection and enhancement of practitioners who work in translation and editing as well as literacy and indigenous language development. Respondent 10 highlighted key priorities for such a council:

“Advocating for marginalised voices. It is unfair for all disciplines to be formalised and people without formal language to be excluded from the discussions and earnings from the professionalisation of the fields.”

Respondent 8 also supported the concept of a council which should serve both regulatory and strategic purposes. The Respondent argued such an institution needs to possess both strength and immunity from political interference:

“It should play a central regulatory, developmental and advocacy role in the language sector. It should be responsible for setting professional standards, accrediting practitioners and ensuring ethical conduct across fields such as translation, interpretation, terminology development and language teaching. It should be robust, resolute and decisive in its stance. It should avoid the wave of language politicisation.”

Respondent 9 believes that a formal council would serve academic literacy practitioners by establishing clear professional standards for this field. He stressed that substantial financial backing was essential to activate the council. He warned that without enough funding the council would become another symbolic institution without any actual power to impact or spread its influence.

“Such a council would play a similar role to that played by PanSALB currently. In order for it to do better, however, a lot more funding might need to be availed. If inadequate funding is not an issue, the current funding model might need to be reviewed for better outcomes.”

Respondent 2 highlighted the limitations of professional associations and expressed guarded support for a formal structure:

“Two years ago, we started up an association called East African association for academic literacy practitioners. But it is just an association, and an association is limited in the sense of how we can regulate or professionalise the field. So something that might happen under the umbrella of PanSALB might really... give us the gravitas that we might need.”

Respondent 5 gave a useful overview of what the key priorities of the council could be:

“I think the council should regulate and accredit language practitioners... they must set ethical and professional standards, advocate for better working conditions, offer continuous development. And the top priorities can be formal recognition of language careers, the training pathways and public awareness of the sector’s value.

“Protecting languages” was Respondent 2’s succinct response when asked what the key priorities should be a such a council.

Several respondents showed opposition to the proposed council concept. Respondent 11 stated directly that “I don’t think an additional council is needed”. According to this Respondent the existing structures including PanSALB and university departments need to be strengthened instead of establishing new councils. Respondent 12 concurred:

“Do not think there is a need for a formal body. Also, there would be a massive spread of opinions on what is considered professional or amateur, so it would be very hard to have a standard, or to regulate or adjudicate on complaints or queries.”

Respondent 3 argued: “I think even the conversation concerning a council is not ready. I think we need to talk about the functionality, roles and responsibilities of the board before even a council.”

Respondent 1 expressed strong concern that such a council would restrict the creative freedom of language professionals - “being a free spirit, I think that freedom is primary.” He explained that:

"I'm not one for bodies and official things, although I do see the value of them so but I think there is a place for it and but I don't think it should become so controlling, and, you know, it's going to get tangled up in its own administration."

Respondent 1 also shared his scepticism about any rigid formalisation of the language sector:

"That thing of trying to institutionalize it, I think that's quite a challenge... writing or communication, they are so ubiquitous... that to standardize some sort of body might be a bit like trying to, you know, reel in the universe - that might be a bit ambitious."

Despite these reservations, there was consensus on the need for strong support structure for language practitioners. However, such a council needs to work equitably, resisting political control and serving the complete range of South African linguistic practitioners.

10.2.6. Theme 6: Funding of the Language Practitioners' Council

A consistent issue across the interviews and written submissions was the need to establish new funding systems for both PanSALB and the proposed South African Language Practitioners' Council. Respondents spoke of their concerns about funding constraints and short-term project funding risks while highlighting that the language sector needs strategic investment instead of being treated as an afterthought in cultural development.

Reflecting on the broader challenges of funding language-based work, Respondent 1 observed: "Art, without art, society would implode. And yet, our society gives its bare minimum to supporting art."

"A national language fund, independent and well managed, could support long-term impactful work" was a proposal made by Respondent 5 about how to secure sustainable funding. Other respondents also suggested the development of a National Language Fund as an extensive solution to the funding problem. This proposed fund could provide long-term financial support for high-impact language projects that currently lack sufficient resources. Respondent 2 stressed that language work requires strategic funding instead of cultural favours.

Information obtained from the interviews show that respondents believe any future council will need a robust funding mechanism to function properly. Respondents argued that achievement of sustainability depends on financial backing at multiple levels together with the reconceptualising language as critical for inclusive socio-economic development.

10.2.7. Theme 7: Willingness to pay Annual Fee

Interviewees expressed a variety of opinions when asked about their willingness to pay an annual fee to be listed as a professional practitioner. Some were enthusiastic, as expressed by Respondent 8:

"Of course! I guess it would have to be more support for indigenous language development and all the packs that are required to intellectualise these languages."

A number of other interviewees also showed a readiness to pay professional fees when such payments came with specific advantages and official validation. For example, Respondent 13 stated, "I would be prepared to pay a small fee to be registered." However, he attached a critical

condition: “as long as the registering body did not try to become an ‘insider club’, or restrict access, based on linguistic, cultural, racial lines, etc.”

Similarly, Respondent 2 indicated support for paying a fee in exchange for professional standing and benefits. “Yes, I would be willing to pay a fee for recognition as a professional with a respected body like PanSALB,” she stated, provided that it offered “support, research, workshops, and networking opportunities.”

Respondent 4 and 5 both declared a willingness to pay an annual fee in return for effective services:

“Oh, yeah, I would pay a member. I would pay a fee. And for that, I would like to have access to a database, maybe, of translators... this one I want to translate into all official languages, as well as a few at risk.” (Respondent 4)

“I will pay so in return, I would expect professional accreditation, okay, access to training, legal protection and advocacy, network, networking and career opportunities and the visibility in the national directory.” (Respondent 5)

Providing a more institutional perspective, Respondent 7 Mnisi stressed that professional affiliation would deliver value to practitioners.

“Unfortunately, at this point in time anybody can claim to be a language practitioner, ... I see it's very important that language practice is professionalized, so that people can start taking us seriously ... it will sort of encourage even those who are unemployed to register, because once they are registered in the database ... it will be easier even for employers who are looking for candidates for language practitioners to go through that database.”

Other respondents, such as Respondent 10, were resistant to this idea:

“I do not think so. Like I keep coming to this point, I believe that professional bodies only benefits people who receive tenders. It also leads to commissions and people being taken advantage of. It never benefits the person working hard and ensuring that there is delivery.”

Respondent 12 also expressed reservations about the establishment of a language practitioners council; “[I] do not think there is a need for a formal body.” This Respondent maintains that there is “a massive spread of opinions on what is considered professional or amateur, so it would be very hard to have a standard, or to regulate or adjudicate on complaints or queries.”

“I think we need to really foster a passion for it and just help people on their path of making it work for themselves”. This view was shared by Respondent 1, who cautioned against “overly controlling bodies” because of the fear that attempts to formalise language practice would harm the core value and uniqueness of the practice.

Highlighting the difficulties in defining “language practitioner”, Respondent 9 presented a reserved position when he said: “I was trained as a language teacher but not as a language practitioner in the translator or interpreter sense.” He noted, “I am not sure if this question applies to me particularly.” These statements demonstrate how definitional and role-based ambiguities might create obstacles for fee-based system adoption among practitioners.

Most Respondents tied their willingness to pay an annual registration fees with how well the proposed body functions. Supporters of the council expect substantial advantages, including training opportunities, advocacy services and practical tools to improve indigenous language projects. A proposed council must strike an appropriate balance between professionalisation, participation and creativity to be effective and equitable.

10.2.8. Theme 8: Biggest Challenges

Respondents noted a wide range of challenges in their discussions about the “Dynamics, Resources and Access to Data in the South African Language Economy”. They stressed that this sector faces multiple challenges which stem from underpaying professionals along with policy breakdowns, insufficient funding, digital disparities and educational deficits. These challenges are discussed below.

10.2.8.1. Undervaluation and Lack of Recognition for Language Professionals

The lack of recognition of language practitioners as professionals was a frustration highlighted by a number of respondents. Respondent 2 argues that the public fails to understand that language work requires specific expertise so they do not recognise its value:

“There tends to be the assumption that anybody can teach academic literacy. That is not the case. I think you have to be immersed in the discipline. You need to be you need to research in the discipline, you need to write in the discipline for you to really be an effective academic literacy practitioner.”

Respondent 7 explains that because people view language practitioners as volunteers who do the work because it is something they are passionate about:

“If I happen to speak two languages, let’s say English and Afrikaans, or English and Swati... they think that I can still perform duties of a language practitioner. Which to me, I think is a misconception.”

Illustrating the profound impact of language work, despite its undervaluation, Respondent 4 shared a story about an audience member at a book launch”

“You were at the book launch. What does this book mean? And she said, for the first time, my father is able to speak to me and his grandchildren in this language, and we can see it for the first time.”

10.2.8.2. Dominance of English and Marginalisation of Indigenous Languages

Many participants were concerned that English dominance leads to the marginalisation of indigenous languages. Respondent 8 stated

“The persistent oppression of indigenous languages (isiXhosa in my case) is the main challenge in what I currently do. Based on my observations, this is rooted in colonial and apartheid legacies and then solidified by contemporary socio-political factors. The main culprits include limited policy implementation that actually works, inadequate funding and a lack of institutional desire to prioritise language development far beyond English and Afrikaans.”

Respondent highlighted the deep-rotted impact of historical legacies on language use:

“A lot of the younger people do not speak the language because it was literally, you know, it was literally beaten and burnt and out of them, you know, in nama speakers, if their children went to school, they would be ostracized if they spoke it. They only had to speak, you know, certain and so forth. So there was a, there was a stigma attached to the language.”

Emphasising the importance of language in creating an inclusive society, ensuring that indigenous languages are not marginalised Respondent 9 stated:

“Language access means better service delivery, especially in health, law, and education. It also helps build trust between communities and institutions. When people can engage in their own languages, they feel seen, respected, and empowered. That’s critical in a country with such a complex history.”

Respondent 13 spoke about the perceived marginalisation of Afrikaans by government officials:

“It does bother me that there seems to be a determination on the part of government to undermine the use of the Afrikaans language in specific contexts. In some countries, the undermining of particular languages is seen as an element of ethnic cleansing.”

10.2.8.3. Lack of Adequate Funding and Resources

Respondents described funding deficits as persistent barriers that severely impair operations. Respondent 7 noted:

“Currently, it's even difficult to employ two language practitioners per language. Why is that due to due to budgetary constraints? Okay, you find other languages operating with one. Others have been sort of without a practitioner for a couple of years. But the work in terms of those languages will still be coming to us, and the expectation will be like they expect us to come on board and assist,”

Respondent 5 points out that a lack of funding is a major obstacle in the language sector:

“So, language work is often underfunded, yes, or funded as. An afterthought.”

And Respondent 8 bluntly states: “There is not enough funding for the development of South African languages.”

10.2.8.4. Challenges with Data, Digital Tools, and Technology

Various respondents expressed their frustration about the limited availability of digital resources that support language practitioners. One crucial issue is that digital platforms do not readily accommodate indigenous languages: “...our computers... are not designed for these languages... so things got lost between translation from a word processing package into a PDF package, into a design package...”

This frustration is also felt by Respondent 5: “Tools like translation software and voice-to-text only exclude the indigenous languages or perform poorly.”

The rapid advancement of digital platforms, especially large language models present both opportunity and challenges (particularly to the livelihood of some language practitioners) as noted by Respondent 13:

“Most of us lose sight of the fact that the most well-known forms of AI with which we interact are LLM’s, or to spell it out, large language models. They are in direct competition, therefore with many, if not most language practitioners. Here are opportunities and threats that are already upon us, and they will have a dire impact, especially to the unprepared. They teach language, they translate, they write novels, they do research, design courses, write reports, and they do it well, and they are constantly improving. They are quick, and they are flexible, and they are often free of charge, or extremely inexpensive.”

10.2.8.5. Policy Implementation and Institutional Support

The gap between policy and practice raised by various respondents. Respondent 5 complained that indigenous institutions are often not involved during the development of policy: “They make conclusions on that. They make conclusions without consulting other indigenous institutions”.

Respondent 7 gives an example of the gap between policy and practice: “The Use of Official Languages Act... was proclaimed in 2012... but if you do some background check... it’s only a handful [of departments] who have established language units or adopted language policies.” Many provinces together with municipalities lack operational language units even though their mandates require them to establish these units.

10.2.8.6. Educational System Failures

Respondents generally labelled the current schooling system especially at the basic level as an absolute failure. Respondent 12 describes this as follows:

“Dysfunctional state schooling for the majority of the kids in this country, with lack of mother-tongue primary school education for Black South Africans in particular. Poorly prepared teachers cannot impart the necessary language skills to their pupils, and this will disadvantage children for years to come.”

Respondent 2 highlighted the important role of reading in shaping students long-term academic futures, and the struggle to develop reading skills in primary schools:

“The fact that students have to study read, write in a second, third, fourth, language does have applications. I also do believe that we have challenges with, you know, with actual reading, interest in reading. And I think that that, for me, is a major challenge, that if we could just get our students to read from as early on as primary school, high school, they might then be equipped with, you know, deep reading, and then, of course, the ability to think and read and write more critically.”

Respondent 1 offers a critique of the whole South African education system: “I think that the education system has quite deliberately dumbed everyone down. Yes, because if people are awake and self, empowered and skilled, they start to make their own decisions”

10.2.8.7. Other Challenges

Respondents indicated other challenges within the language sector. These include:

- Older practitioners resist both automation and digital transformation efforts.
- The development of indigenous languages faces interference from political forces.
- The translation of Nama and other minority languages into written form faces challenges because of social discrimination and logistical obstacles.
- The market for journalism and academic jobs for language specialists continues to shrink.
- The risk of "insider clubs" or gatekeeping emerges which could block people who do genuine work yet lack university degrees and financial means.

10.3. Conclusion

The 13 semi-structured interview responses through both spoken and written formats reveal a nuanced understanding of South African language economy status and its potential trajectory. All interviewees agree that language needs recognition and investment because it serves as a strategic asset supporting identity development, education delivery, service provision and equitable development. The historical and systemic factors which continue to marginalise indigenous languages were identified by respondents.

The interviewees shared a goal to create a language sector that is both inclusive and well-equipped. They generally supported the creation of a professional council yet cautioned about possible exclusion, bureaucratic control and creating systems that favour a select few over the majority. The respondents emphasised the need to enhance education by encouraging mother-tongue instruction, developing indigenous language resources and maintaining a national focus on language equity and technological readiness.

The interviews reveal the personal effects of language work through stories about connection and loss and recovery and resilience which prove that the language economy extends beyond technical and administrative aspects into deeply personal and social realms. Future policy and institutional design must focus on ethical inclusion and sustainability together with practitioner support at all levels to ensure language functions as an essential public good that empowers the public.

11. Chapter 11: Synthesis and Recommendations

11.1. Introduction

This chapter identifies key structural gaps, systemic weaknesses, and emerging opportunities within South Africa's language economy. It draws on the findings of our literature review, international benchmarking, ecosystem mapping, and institutional analysis. In addition, a gap analysis has been informed by preliminary insights from stakeholder interviews conducted with language practitioners, educators, policymakers, and sectoral specialists. While a comprehensive synthesis of these interviews appears later in this report, they have shaped the framing of this chapter and helped to validate or nuance observed trends.

11.2. Systemic Weaknesses in the Ecosystem

The institutional architecture of the language economy is characterised by fragmentation and under-capacitation. Key systemic weaknesses include:

Absence of strategic coordination: There is no central entity tasked with aligning the work of policy institutions, regulatory bodies, training providers, and language service organisations. Overlapping mandates and dispersed authority result in inefficiencies and policy drift.

Underfunded and unevenly supported language functions: Many language-related activities—particularly those focused on indigenous languages, SASL, or rural communities—are under-resourced. Support is often dependent on donor funding or individual champions, rather than built into institutional budgets.

Limited professionalisation and weak career pipelines: Across the ecosystem, there is an absence of structured career paths, accreditation standards, or recognised training routes for language practitioners. This results in undervaluation of the profession, which several stakeholders highlighted as a key constraint to sector growth.

Digital marginalisation of local languages: The language technology space is advancing globally, but South Africa's language ecosystem has limited tools, corpora, and infrastructure for African languages—raising concerns about long-term digital inclusion and linguistic equity.

11.3. Misalignments of services / resources

Even where language-focused entities are active, misalignments persist between their activities and the needs of practitioners and language users:

Implementation lags behind policy intent: National language policies often make strong commitments to multilingualism and linguistic justice, but these commitments are weakly enforced or operationalised. Stakeholder feedback confirms that translation, signage, and content localisation obligations are inconsistently applied across departments and institutions.

Support structures are not user-centred: Many institutions were not designed with the everyday realities of language practitioners in mind. For example, stakeholders described a lack

of funding for basic tools (dictionaries, style guides, digital platforms), inconsistent access to training, and minimal support for emerging roles such as digital content localisation or community translation.

Academic and practical silos persist: Research, policy, and frontline practice are often disconnected. Practitioners working in schools, clinics, courts, or cultural spaces may be unaware of available tools or frameworks, while researchers and policymakers may have limited visibility into ground-level challenges.

11.4. Opportunities in Policy or Market Support

Despite these constraints, several promising opportunities exist to strengthen the language economy:

Establishment of the South African Language Practitioners' Council: A dedicated statutory body for registration, regulation, and support would offer professional recognition, raise standards, and build a stronger community of practice across the sector.

Shift from compliance to investment framing: Positioning language not merely as a constitutional obligation but as a strategic economic and cultural resource could unlock new sources of funding, market development, and cross-sector collaboration.

Digital transformation and localisation: Investment in AI, language technology, and digital infrastructure—tailored for South African linguistic realities—could significantly improve access, reach, and efficiency across public and private sectors.

Cross-sector partnerships and innovation: There is untapped potential for collaboration between the language sector and adjacent domains such as creative industries, education, ICT, heritage, and tourism. Multilingualism can be leveraged to create new content, services, and jobs.

11.5. Areas for Future Research

In the course of this scoping exercise, it became clear that the knowledge base underpinning the South African language economy remains fragmented and uneven. Addressing these information gaps is essential not only for academic understanding, but also for supporting sector development, professionalisation, and policy coherence.

The following areas represent high-potential avenues for future research:

Continuation and deepening of macroeconomic studies of the language economy: Building on the foundational work by Haines and Gouws, there is a need for updated, more granular research into the contribution of the language economy to employment, gross value added, trade, and innovation.

Quantifying employment and occupational dynamics within the language economy: Many sub-sectors (e.g., translation, AV services, language technology) lack reliable labour force data. Dedicated studies could map occupational categories, pathways, skills gaps, and emerging roles.

Standardisation and harmonisation of practices across the sector: Research into opportunities for interoperability—between data systems, accreditation models, training curricula, and professional standards—could support greater alignment and reduce duplication.

Foreign language institutions in South Africa: Little is known about the number, types, affiliations, and activities of foreign cultural and language institutes (e.g., Alliance Française, Instituto Cervantes). A focused study could inform trade, diplomacy, and cultural cooperation strategies.

Equity and distribution of language-related services across language groups: Research into how language services and support are distributed across South Africa's linguistic communities—especially historically marginalised or minoritised groups—could inform rights-based and developmental policy interventions.

- **Technology benchmarking in the language economy:** A sector-wide inventory and analysis of the digital tools and systems in use (e.g., CAT tools, voice computing, AI platforms) could highlight best practices, training needs, and areas for collaboration.

Mapping data availability and gaps: A critical research need is a meta-assessment of existing data sources and gaps related to language use, language services provision, training outputs, practitioner registration, and sector performance indicators.

Readiness assessment for SALPC operationalisation: Research could help assess the technical, financial, and institutional readiness for launching and sustaining the South African Language Practitioners' Council. This might include feasibility studies, modelling of funding mechanisms, and consultations with professional bodies.

Monitoring and evaluation frameworks for language policy implementation: There's a need for frameworks that can track progress toward multilingualism goals across government departments, educational institutions, and media platforms.

Role of language in early childhood development and education outcomes: Continued research into the relationship between home language learning and long-term educational performance would support policy advocacy and curriculum reform.

Economic and innovation potential of African language technology development: Detailed techno-economic studies could explore how investment in localised language tech (speech recognition, translation systems, voice interfaces) could drive inclusive digital transformation.

Indigenous knowledge systems and language preservation economics: Investigating the economic value and preservation models of indigenous language-based knowledge systems—especially in the context of cultural tourism, biodiversity, and traditional medicine.

11.6. Policy Recommendations

Countries around the world are multilingual due to historical events such as migration and annexation. Migration, whether voluntary or forced, and annexation, through war or other methods, have resulted in populations within countries that speak multiple languages. (World Congress on Language Policies plenary declaration., 2002)

Language policy significantly influences education, social inclusion, and national identity. Best practices balance promoting official languages and preserving linguistic diversity, tailored to local contexts. Policies should ensure equitable opportunities for all language speakers, preventing discrimination in both public and private spheres.

Language helps define a nation, structuring it socially and politically. The languages within a country must relate to each other on these grounds. Multilingualism varies by the social and political relationships between the languages in each country. These relationships are reflected in the functional use of the languages. (World Congress on Language Policies plenary declaration., 2002)

The universality of many languages in countries means that the language policy in any country must relate to multilingualism, more specifically to multilingual networking. The network is built on the functional relation between languages. Language policy, then, is not about a language but is necessarily about languages, about the functional (or ecological) relationship between languages. The policy may range from attaining and maintaining dominance for one language (or a few languages) against others to balancing the power of languages by containing the dominance of one language (or a few languages) exercised at the cost of others. The balancing of power may be restricted to granting the right for survival alone or be extended to sharing the power.

11.6.1. A. Governance and Regulation

11.6.1.1. 1. Operationalise the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC)

In alignment with the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act (Act No. 8 of 2014) Finalise institutional and operational arrangements to establish SALPC as a statutory body with responsibility for professional regulation, registration, and support of language practitioners.

11.6.1.2. 2. Strengthen PanSALB's mandate for coordination

In alignment with the Pan South African Language Board Act (Act No. 59 of 1995) and the Use of Official Languages Act (Act No. 12 of 2012)

Clarify PanSALB's role in inter-institutional coordination, data gathering, and oversight of language policy implementation, enabling it to serve as a strategic hub for the national language ecosystem.

11.6.2. B. Professionalisation and Standards

11.6.2.1. 3. Develop a national framework for language practitioner accreditation

In support of the National Development Plan (NDP) goals for professionalisation and quality assurance across sectors

Design and implement a unified accreditation model in consultation with existing bodies such as SATI, ALASA, and PENSAALT, ensuring recognition of diverse practitioner pathways and multilingual competence.

11.6.2.2. 4. Introduce public procurement requirements for accredited practitioners

In alignment with the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act and skills development strategies

Require that public sector language services be delivered by accredited or registered professionals, with transitional support to assist unregistered practitioners in formalising their credentials.

11.6.3. C. Educational language policy

Effective language-of-instruction (LoI) policies are essential for learning outcomes. Best practices include:

- Assessing the local linguistic landscape before policy development.
- Using mother tongue or familiar languages in early education to improve comprehension and retention.
- Gradually introducing additional languages, often with English as a global lingua franca, while maintaining support for local languages (Enver, 2020), (Crawford, et al., 2021), (Kohler, 2017).

11.6.3.1. 5. Stakeholder Involvement and Flexibility

Involving teachers, communities, and local authorities in policy adaptation ensures that language policies meet learners' needs and reflect local realities. Teachers, in particular, play a critical role as interpreters and implementers of policy. (Enver, 2020)

11.6.3.2. 6. Accountability, Transparency, and Social Justice

There is a growing expectation for transparent policy-making, regular monitoring, and accountability in language policy, with an emphasis on social justice and equal access to opportunities. (Enver, 2020)

11.6.4. .D. Institutional Capacity and Service Delivery

11.6.4.1. 7. Mandate multilingual service delivery plans in frontline departments

In fulfilment of the Use of Official Languages Act (2012) and Section 6 of the Constitution.

Ensure all national and provincial departments adopt and adequately fund multilingual communication strategies to improve access to public services across South Africa's 11 official languages.

11.6.4.2. 8. Establish regional language hubs

In alignment with the District Development Model and cultural development frameworks.

Support province-level resource centres to coordinate translation services, practitioner training, and community language projects, particularly in under-served or rural areas.

11.6.5. E. Research, Data and Evidence

11.6.5.1. 9. Commission a national employment and economic contribution study

In line with the National Research and Development Strategy and previous work by DSAC and the South African Cultural Observatory.

Update and expand economic research in the field to produce sector-wide employment and value-added estimates for the language economy.

11.6.5.2. 10. Create a national data-sharing and interoperability strategy

Justified by the need for coordinated planning, efficient resource use, and sector-wide visibility.

Develop open standards and protocols for language data, including terminology banks, corpora, and resource inventories, to be shared across institutions and platforms.

11.6.6. F. Technology and Innovation

11.6.6.1. 11. Fund language technology infrastructure for African languages

In alignment with the White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation (2019) and DSI/NWU language technology strategies

Invest in the development of speech recognition, automatic translation, and localised language tools to support inclusivity, education, and public sector communication.

11.6.6.2. 12. Support AI and localisation training for language professionals

Justified by labour market shifts and skills development imperatives outlined in the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy

Introduce short courses, certification programs, and academic modules to prepare language professionals for emerging opportunities in AI, localisation, and digital content production.

11.6.7. G. Equity and Rights

11.6.7.1. 13. Audit the distribution of language services across language groups

In support of constitutional language rights and PanSALB's mandate to monitor equitable language development

Conduct a baseline audit of which linguistic groups benefit from public investment in language services, and identify gaps that hinder equitable access and representation.

11.6.7.2. 14. Integrate language access into national development strategies

Justified by the role of language in achieving inclusive growth, education equity, and service delivery

Ensure that language access is factored into major development strategies (e.g. National Health Insurance, Basic Education reform, public employment programs) as a lever for equity and impact.

11.6.8. H. Implementation and Challenges

11.6.8.1. 15. Balancing Power and Diversity

Avoiding dominance by a single language, while ensuring minority languages are not marginalized, is a persistent challenge. (World Congress on Language Policies plenary declaration., 2002)

11.6.8.2. 16. Adaptation and Change

Policies must be adaptable to demographic, political, and cultural shifts, with mechanisms for regular review and stakeholder feedback. (Enver, 2020) (World Congress on Language Policies plenary declaration., 2002)

11.7. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined key weaknesses, misalignments, and opportunities within South Africa's language economy, drawing on literature, ecosystem mapping, and stakeholder insights. Despite a vibrant array of institutions and initiatives, the sector remains constrained by fragmentation, under-recognition, and uneven resourcing—particularly for indigenous language work and emergent professions.

Encouragingly, there is both a policy window and stakeholder appetite for systemic reform. Initiatives such as the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC), along with targeted investments in technology, skills development, and research, offer pathways to a more coherent and impactful language economy.

The identification of these gaps is not an end, but a foundation for action. The next chapters deepen this foundation through the voices and experiences of language professionals and institutional actors. Their responses to surveys and structured engagements provide direct insight into the realities of working in this space and offer valuable guidance for the design of future interventions, policies, and support systems.

12. Chapter 12: Conclusion

The first of four reports dedicated to developing a business case for South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) establishment and operation begins with this Preliminary Scoping Exercise. The analysis across previous chapters delivers a complete understanding of the South African language economy's operational dynamics together with its limitations and potential growth factors. This last chapter unifies vital information from all twelve chapters of the report to demonstrate its relevance for future policy development and institutional investment and design.

Chapter 1 explained the purpose behind the research because South Africa needs support for multilingualism according to its constitution and has diverse languages. The paper established the necessity for an organized system to govern and advance the language services industry through the establishment of the SALPC as its central organizational solution.

The second chapter established the fundamental theory by placing the language economy within the context of economic and policy debates. The research showed that language functions as a fundamental right and valuable resource. Language holds dual significance as it enables South Africa to expand accessibility and inclusion while boosting socio-economic engagement throughout the nation.

The third chapter established the sector's context by examining the South African language economy through a global and historical framework. The sector continues to operate under the influence of English dominance together with colonial legacy effects and institutional fragmentation despite multilingualism policy support. The report demonstrated increasing national interest in using language services for economic growth and social unity initiatives.

The research investigates the governance systems and regulatory structures in Chapter 4. Multiple overlapping statutes and institutional mandates exist within South Africa's language policy environment according to the research findings. International assessments showed that South Africa's effort to create a professional language council through legislation stands apart from other countries because it aims to establish both regulatory oversight and development and advocacy functions in multilingual environments.

The research method for this study was presented in Chapter 5 through a description of mixed-methods approaches that used both desk research and interviews together with ecosystem mapping and survey analysis. The research design combined extensive coverage with in-depth information acquisition to allow the study of practitioners' perspectives and institutional gaps as well as untapped sector potential.

Chapter 6 conducted a market and economic analysis to determine that the language economy generates more than R10 billion annually. The fragmented data showed that the sector operates with a large workforce while creating public value and showing potential growth through proper recognition and support.

The language economy ecosystem received analysis in Chapter 7 where six functional domains were identified and the institutional structure and relationships between entities and roles were mapped. The analysis showed that the sector demonstrates both vitality and organizational disjointedness. The sector faces two major challenges: digital localisation and indigenous

language development receive insufficient support and essential actors lack proper coordination.

The evaluation of governance models showed that an institution requires a unified structure with representative membership and agile decision-making ability. The proposed SALPC needs to establish stronger professional oversight and clearer accreditation pathways as well as enhanced inter-agency collaboration according to the analysis.

The research gathered 88 online survey responses which formed the basis of Chapter 9. The survey results showed widespread backing for multilingualism and simultaneous dissatisfaction with insufficient recognition and funding for language practitioners especially for indigenous languages. The respondents advocated for enhanced data accessibility together with training possibilities and institutional realignment.

The research team conducted semi-structured interviews with essential stakeholders to obtain valuable information which formed the basis of Chapter 10. Language practitioners voiced their firsthand experiences which revealed their concerns about underpayment and funding shortages and policy implementation problems and English language dominance. The participants voiced optimism regarding upcoming changes if institutions including the SALPC demonstrate both inclusive practices and transparent operations alongside professional competence.

The research presented its main discoveries in Chapter 11 followed by initial recommendation proposals. The report emphasises the requirement to enhance evidence collection and to build digital infrastructure and create career paths and governance systems that represent the sector's diversity. The chapter highlighted that professionalisation and regulation must support authentic grassroots language work especially for historically marginalised communities.

These chapters establish that the language economy of South Africa represents a crucial underdeveloped resource which supports education and justice systems and healthcare delivery and cultural development alongside economic growth. Systemic reform combined with better data and specific investment is needed to overcome the limitations which stem from fragmentation and under-recognition and structural inequality.

This report presents a comprehensive argument about the SALPC based on conceptual principles and institutional and economic factors. The following three reports in the series will construct upon this base by presenting detailed proposals regarding the Council structure and funding model and strategic positioning and implementation plan. The SALPC will need to demonstrate its ability to advance beyond certification processes for inclusive economic growth and linguistic equality and national development.

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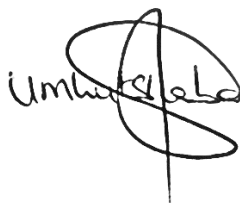
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APPROVALS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY – A Preliminary Scoping Exercise of the Dynamics, Resources and Access to Data in the South African Language Economy report

	NAME	TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE
Submitted and approved on behalf of the South African Cultural Observatory:	Unathi Lutshaba	SACO Executive Director		30 June 2025
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15. Annexure 1: The role of translation and interpretation in mediating between language and culture

In the early 1800s, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1988) suggested that language is more than just a way to communicate; it also reflects how people think and see the world. His ideas influenced later linguists like Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf. Sapir (1949) and Whorf (1956) developed what is now known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which argues that language and culture are closely connected. They believed that the way a language is structured affects how its speakers perceive, think and behave. Whorf (1956) famously said that people who speak very different languages notice and interpret things differently because their languages guide their attention and understanding in unique ways. Simply put, the language we speak shapes how we see and make sense of the world around us.

culture is understood in a way similar to Žegarac's (2008, p. 52) definition, which views culture as a complex system of shared meanings and patterns within a group. It includes how people see life and their beliefs, the values and principles they follow, and their ideas about social roles and the rights and duties that come with them. Culture also involves the usual ways people communicate and behave, as well as the formal and informal institutions that shape their social life.

This perspective is especially important in the fields of translation and interpreting, where practitioners are responsible not only for transferring words but also for conveying culturally embedded meanings and worldviews. Hassan (2013) defines a translator as a cultural mediator who moves between the source and target cultures, selecting elements as needed to fulfill the purpose of the translation.

The concept of cultural mediation is further explained by Stephen Bochner (1981, p.3), cited in Archibald and Garzone (2014, pp. 8–9), who describes the mediator as a person linking two or more cultures and social systems. The core role of this mediator is to facilitate exchanges between societies in a way that benefits all parties, respecting their respective value systems. One main reason for translating from one language into another is to enrich the target language both linguistically and culturally. In this process, the translator aims to preserve as much of the source culture as possible by transferring not only the content but also the style of the original text. Over time, these foreign elements become integrated into the target language and culture, becoming part of the new environment (Hassan, 2013). Historically, Arab scholars, through translation, absorbed the knowledge of the Greeks, Persians, and Indians, incorporating these new ideas into their own culture (Zakeri, 2022). Thus, translation is much more than a technical task; it is a form of cultural mediation that demands deep linguistic and intercultural skills. The same applies to interpreters, with the main difference being that interpreters work with spoken language and listeners, rather than written texts and readers (Wang, 2017).

Tribe and Lane (2009) conducted research to emphasise the crucial role of interpreters in mental health clinics. They highlighted the necessity for interpreters to collaborate closely with mental health professionals. According to their study, mental health workers must be skilled in working with interpreters to support quality clinical care, ensure equal access to services, and comply with European legal standards. This collaboration also allows practitioners to deepen their understanding of different ways people express distress, cultural beliefs, and health

explanations (Tribe & Lane, 2009). Furthermore, it has been argued that using qualified interpreters during early mental health treatment not only improves clinical outcomes but may also save costs, since poor diagnosis and referrals can be more expensive than hiring trained interpreters (Bischoff, Bovier, Isah, Francoise, Ariel & Louis, 2003). Therefore, it is essential that healthcare providers have access to interpreters and employ staff trained to work effectively alongside them.

There is clear evidence that the entire healthcare process can be compromised when language barriers are not addressed. For example, communication difficulties have been linked to errors such as ordering incorrect diagnostic tests (Hampers et al., 1999) and patients not following their treatment plans properly (David & Rhee, 1998; Karter et al., 2000). Additionally, these barriers often lead to fewer follow-up visits being scheduled or attended, poor referral practices, and incomplete medical examinations (Sarver & Baker, 2000). Physicians also tend to provide fewer preventive care measures in these situations (Hu & Covell, 1986; Solis et al., 1990; Woloshin et al., 1997). Such difficulties during consultations increase the chances of misdiagnosis, which may cause patients to receive wrong or insufficient treatment (Vasquez & Javier, 1991) or even unnecessary hospital stays (Hampers & McNulty, 2002). Both patients (Carrasquillo et al., 1999; Morales et al., 1999) and healthcare workers (Raval & Smith, 2003) often feel dissatisfied when communication problems occur.

Furthermore, Lee (2009) highlights the crucial role of court interpreters in bridging communication gaps between the court and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. Interpreters serve to eliminate language barriers, ensuring that non-English speakers can participate on an equal footing with English speakers in legal proceedings (2009).

In his study, Lee (2009) found that cultural differences play a significant role in court interpreting and that interpreters often face challenges in conveying these cultural nuances during legal proceedings. He observed that many interpreters tend to avoid intervening with cultural explanations, partly due to uncertainty about their role and a lack of training in cultural mediation. This reluctance can lead to incomplete or inaccurate interpretations, especially when linguistic features such as ellipsis in Korean require contextual understanding to be properly rendered in English. Lee's research highlights the importance of interpreters not only translating words but also clarifying cultural and linguistic differences to ensure accurate communication in court. However, he also noted that interpreters in Australia generally engage less in cultural intervention compared to their counterparts in other countries, reflecting differing expectations and professional norms regarding the interpreter's role as a cultural mediator.

Building on the discussion above, translation and interpretation play a crucial role in preserving culture and bridging communication gaps. These services are mainly seen as tools that improve communication between service providers and their clients. Given the complexity and importance of translation and interpretation, there is a strong argument for making these professions more formal and recognised. Professional translators and interpreters are essential in today's connected world: they support international business, provide access to education and healthcare, and encourage cross-cultural understanding. Their work also contributes to economic growth by helping companies enter new markets, increasing efficiency, and minimising legal and regulatory challenges.

However, many scholars, including Gerrish et al. (2004), have noted that insufficient training for interpreters negatively affects the quality of communication during interpreted interactions. This highlights the need for proper training of both interpreters and translators to ensure effective service delivery. Although the financial impact of interpretation on consultation times has not been extensively studied, research in the United States found that physician consultation times increased from 20 to 38 minutes when an interpreter was involved (Kravitz et al., 2000). This means providing clear guidelines and appropriate training for both interpreters and translators can improve the quality-of-care services and boost the confidence and skills of everyone involved (Tribe, 1998; Williams, 2005). Therefore, by supporting training, certification, and ethical standards, we can ensure that translators and interpreters are well-prepared to meet the needs of a globalised society and contribute positively to social and economic development.

16. Annexure 2: Language departments and contacts at South African universities

University of South Africa (UNISA)

- **Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages**
 - Disciplines: Applied Linguistics, French, General Linguistics, Mandarin, Portuguese, Translation Studies
 - Chair: Dr. Napjadi Letsoalo
- **Department of African Languages**
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Tel: 012 429 4140
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 - Administrator: Ms. A Celliers
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 - Xitsonga: Dr. C Nkwinika
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University of the Free State (UFS)

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University of the Western Cape (UWC)

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University of Johannesburg (UJ)

Department of African Languages

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 - Mr. Maropeng Z Maponya (Lecturer) – Tel: 015 962 8184
 - Dr. Avhatakali Jonathan Makhado (Lecturer, Tshivenda Section)
- The department specializes in translation, linguistics, literature, and indigenous knowledge systems.

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The School of Languages and Literatures at Rhodes University offers a broad range of language and literary studies, including African languages, European languages, and classical studies.

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Idowu Adetomokun	Lecturer	Systemic Functional Linguistics, discourse analysis	-
Tracy Bowles	Lecturer	Psycholinguistics, literacy	-

Mbali Jiyane	Lecturer	Psycholinguistics, morphosyntax, Critical Discourse Analysis	-
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NMU University

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Madelé du Plessis	Lecturer and Blended Learning Coordinator	
Erica George	Lecturer and Coordinator	
Faika Haroun	Lecturer and Coordinator	
Fiona Stanford	Lecturer and Coordinator	
Helga Sykstus	Lecturer and Coordinator	
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University of Cape Town (UCT) Language Departments and Staff Contacts

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UCT's School of Languages and Literatures includes departments covering African Languages, Afrikaans, Chinese, Arabic, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Portuguese, Classics, and Spanish.

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Dr Stephanie Rembold	Lecturer	(email not listed)	(not listed)	Humanities 22-22
Dr Carina Steenkamp	Lecturer	(email not listed)	(not listed)	Humanities 22-9
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17. Annexure 3: Organisations Involved in Language in South Africa

1. African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA)

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 - Dr Hleze Kunju, Rhodes University, Email: h.kunju@ru.ac.za
 - Dr Rethabile Possa-Mogoera, University of Cape Town, Email: rethabile.possa-mogoera@uct.ac.za
 - Dr Thulani Mkhize, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Tel: 033 260 5713, Email: mkhizet11@ukzn.ac.za
 - Prof Gibson Ncube, University of Zimbabwe, Email: ncubegibson@yahoo.fr
 - Prof Mantoa Motinyane, University of the Western Cape
 - Prof Nobuhle Hlongwa, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Tel: +27 833390937, Email: hlongwan1@ukzn.ac.za
 - Dr Dumisani Spofana, University of Fort Hare, Email: dspofana@ufh.ac.za
 - Dr Phindile Dlamini, University of KwaZulu Natal, Email: Dlaminip6@ukzn.ac.za
- Focus: Promotion of African languages, research, and language policy.

2. Autshumato Machine Translation Web Service funded by the Department of Arts and Culture

- CText
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3. Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns

- Chief executive officer
Dr Annelise de Vries
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4. South African Translators' Institute (SATI)

- Website: <https://www.translators.org.za>
Focus: Professional association for translators, interpreters, editors, proofreaders, terminologists, and other language professionals in South Africa.

Established: 1956

Membership: Over 800 members across all 12 South African languages and several world languages.

5. Professional Editors Guild (PEG)

<https://editors.org.za/contact-us/>

6. South African Association for Language Teaching (SAALT)

- Website: <https://saalt.org.za>
- Focus: Language teaching research and practice, supporting language teachers and researchers with resources and networking.
- Established: 1964

7. Southern African Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Society (SALALS)

- Website: <https://salals.org.za>
- Focus: Promoting linguistics, applied linguistics, and language practice research and development in Southern Africa. Formed from amalgamation of LSSA/LVSA and SAALA.

8. South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR)

- Website: <https://sadilar.org/en/>
- Focus: Supporting research and development of language technologies and digital resources for all official South African languages.
- Initiatives include multilingual linguistics termbank and academic writing tools.

9. South African Council for English Education (SACEE)

- Website: <https://sacee.org.za>
- Focus: Promotion and improvement of English language education in South Africa.
- Founded: 1955
- Activities: Competitions, outreach, creative writing, spelling, debating.

10. University of Johannesburg – Linguistic Organisations

- Website: <https://www.uj.ac.za/faculties/humanities/school-of-languages/languages-cultural-studies-and-applied-linguistics-lancsal/departments-of-linguistics/linguistics/english/linguistic-organisations/>
- Provides a list and links to various linguistic organisations active in South Africa.

11. Cultural, religious and linguistic communities (CRL) Rights Commission

The CRL Rights Commission is a constitutional body established in terms of the South African Constitution of 1996. Its constitutional mandate is to strengthen our constitutional democracy. The Commission was established in order to protect and promote the cultural, religious, and linguistic community rights. Its mandate is achievable through both proactive and reactive approaches.

- Chairperson: Prof David Luka Mosoma,
Phone : 011 358 9138
Email: nwittaker@crlcommission.org.za
- Chief Executive Officer: Mr Edward Mafadza

- Office Manager: Obed Semono, Mr
 - Email: obed@crlcommission.org.za

12. The South African Human Rights Commission

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18. Annexure 4: Schedule of Semi-Structured Interviews

Date	Type	Venue	Designation	Title
2025/06/03	Semi-structured interview	Zoom	Respondent 1	Management Consulting • Marketing Consulting • Leadership Development • Executive Coaching • Public Speaking • Writing
2025/06/05	Semi-structured interview	Zoom	Respondent 2	Lecturer in the Unit for Academic Literacy
2025/06/11	Semi-structured interview	Zoom	Respondent 3	African Union - European Union YCG
2025/06/11	Semi-structured interview	Zoom	Respondent 4	Higher Education Research
2025/06/11	Semi-structured interview	Zoom	Respondent 5	Lecturer, Isixhosa Language Expert
2025/06/11	Semi-structured interview	Zoom	Respondent 6	Chief Executive Officer
2025/06/12	Semi-structured interview	Zoom	Respondent 7	Language Practitioner
2025/06/11	Semi-structured interview	Written	Respondent 8	Department of African Languages
2025/06/12	Semi-structured interview	Written	Respondent 9	Head: Unit for Language and Academic Literacies

2025/06/12	Semi-structured interview	Written	Respondent 10	Lecturer in the Department of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics.
2025/06/12	Semi-structured interview	Written	Respondent 11	Professor Emerita: English
2025/06/13	Semi-structured interview	Written	Respondent 12	Freelance writer, editor, communication consultant
2025/06/14	Semi-structured interview	Written	Respondent 13	Political Studies

