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A Needs Assessment of the Knowledge and Capacities of Language Practitioners as outlined in the post-1994 Language Legislative Framework

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, Artis 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 third in a series of four interconnected reports. Collectively, these four reports constitute a substantive extension of the original Economics of Language report commissioned by the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) (Haines & Gouws, 2022), advancing the work from its initial conceptual framing into applied, sector-specific and institutional analysis.

Introduction

South Africa's post-1994 constitutional and legislative framework positions language as a foundational pillar for democracy, social inclusion, access to justice, education, and economic participation.

Through the Constitution, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) Act, and the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) Act of 2014, the state has formally committed itself to the protection of linguistic rights, the promotion of multilingualism, and the professionalisation of language services. Despite this progressive policy environment, however, the language practitioner sector remains structurally fragmented, unevenly regulated, and insufficiently resourced.

This report, *A Needs Assessment of the Knowledge and Capacities of Language Practitioners as outlined in the post-1994 Language Legislative Framework*, responds directly to this gap by providing a national, evidence-based assessment of practitioner knowledge, skills, professional development needs, regulatory readiness, and economic participation. The assessment was conducted by the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) in partnership with the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), and is located within the broader Economics of Language (EOL) programme.

The study integrates an extensive literature review, qualitative interviews, focus groups and a national online survey of 142 respondents, with artificial intelligence (AI) used for aspects of data analysis. It is intended to inform the operationalisation of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC), as well as wider policy, skills development and economic planning processes

The SALPC Act establishes the statutory basis for regulating accreditation, training and professional standards across language fields including translation, interpreting, editing, language planning, terminology development and lexicography. Stakeholders consistently identify the operationalisation of the SALPC as the most critical intervention required to introduce professional rigour, economic legitimacy and long-term sustainability to the sector.

Purpose of the Report

The primary purpose of this report is to establish a national diagnostic baseline of the language practitioner profession in South Africa. It seeks to determine the extent to which practitioners are positioned to meet the constitutional, social and economic demands placed on language services, and to identify the structural, institutional and systemic obstacles that continue to constrain the professionalisation and sustainability of the sector.

Specifically, the study assesses practitioner proficiency across official and selected non-official languages; educational qualifications and training pathways; professional

competencies across key service areas such as translation, interpreting, editing, terminology development and language planning; and levels of awareness of national policy frameworks, legislative objectives and linguistic rights. It further examines participation in continuing professional development (CPD), readiness for Human Language Technologies (HLT), and patterns of income generation, sectoral demand and emerging entrepreneurial opportunities.

In doing so, the report directly supports future decisions regarding national accreditation and certification systems, CPD frameworks, HLT integration strategies, and the creation of a coherent professionalisation pathway under the SALPC. It also contributes to broader national objectives linked to multilingualism, equitable access to language services, digital transformation and the economic positioning of language work within South Africa's creative and cultural economy.

Key Findings of the Report

The findings confirm that while South Africa possesses a highly experienced and linguistically diverse base of language practitioners, the sector remains structurally fragmented and economically precarious. Most survey respondents hold advanced postgraduate qualifications and have between 11 and 30 years of professional experience.

However, the profession operates through multiple uncoordinated entities, with over a third of practitioners reporting no affiliation with any professional association. In the absence of a fully operational regulatory authority, professional standards remain inconsistent, the portability of qualifications is limited, and enforcement of ethical and quality norms is weak. Practitioners overwhelmingly support the formal establishment of the SALPC and anticipate that it will significantly improve professional recognition, income stability and sectoral status.

This fragmentation directly contributes to the systemic undervaluation and under-remuneration of language work. Practitioners report being grossly underpaid and undervalued, a perception reinforced by the widespread misconception that AI can replace human linguistic expertise.

Only a quarter of practitioners currently earn above R200 000 a year from language-related work. Despite South Africa's strong constitutional commitment to multilingualism, African languages and South African Sign Language continue to lack the density of professional pathways and institutional support afforded to English and Afrikaans. Only a small minority of practitioners feel that their work is fully recognised within current policy frameworks.

Although core linguistic competencies are generally strong, the assessment identifies serious capacity and training deficiencies. These include gaps in advanced specialised translation and interpreting, terminology development, language planning, project management, entrepreneurship, professional ethics, marketing, pricing, client relationship management, digital literacy and data-related competencies. University curricula are frequently criticised for weak alignment with industry realities, particularly in relation to practical workplace skills required by freelancers and small language service enterprises.

Participation in continuing professional development is constrained primarily by affordability, time pressures, geographic distance and the absence of a structured national CPD framework. Despite these constraints, there is strong sector-wide support for CPD to become a mandatory

regulatory requirement linked to professional registration and career progression, with online short courses identified as the most accessible training format.

With regard to digital transformation, adoption of Human Language Technologies remains uneven. While more than half of practitioners actively engage with machine translation and CAT tools, confidence in advanced HLT remains low, and for many, technological adoption has not yet translated into economic gain.

Practitioners identify an urgent need for digital literacy, computational linguistics exposure and training in verifying and correcting AI outputs. Those unable to adopt HLT are widely perceived to be at risk of economic displacement.

Economically, the sector reflects both expanding opportunity and persistent precarity. Demand for language services is growing across legal, education, government, media, health, heritage, AI and localisation sectors. At the same time, income instability, weak bargaining power and limited access to entrepreneurial finance remain dominant features of professional life for many practitioners. Notwithstanding these challenges, the findings point to substantial untapped potential for economic expansion through digital platforms, multilingual content production, localisation services, public sector procurement and cross-sector integration.

Key Recommendations

The report recommends the urgent operationalisation of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC), with immediate focus on professional regulation, accreditation and registration systems, ethical oversight, and a tiered practitioner classification framework (Paraprofessional, Professional and Expert). Accreditation criteria should prioritise practical experience and demonstrable competence alongside formal qualifications.

A mandatory national Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework should be introduced as a condition for ongoing professional registration. This framework must address critical gaps in business skills, professional ethics, digital readiness and HLT competence, while also recognising prior learning for experienced practitioners without formal academic credentials. CPD must be affordable, digitally enabled and accessible across all provinces.

Comprehensive reform of training and qualification pathways is required to ensure alignment between universities, TVET colleges, professional bodies and labour-market realities. This includes stronger emphasis on digital competencies, entrepreneurship, project management, applied research skills and data literacy.

The report further calls for the implementation of a national Human Language Technology (HLT) integration strategy, developed in partnership with institutions such as SADiLaR, to reposition practitioners as high-level verifiers, language data specialists and critical thinkers within AI-enabled environments. Particular priority must be given to the development of African languages within HLT ecosystems.

To address systemic undervaluation, the SALPC should play a regulatory role in pricing guidance and economic empowerment, preventing destructive price dumping and strengthening practitioner bargaining power. The Council should also function as a trusted national platform linking verified practitioners to government and private sector demand.

The report further recommends targeted interventions to strengthen the indigenous language economy, including public procurement reform, simplified multilingual government documentation, digital content localisation strategies, private sector multilingual incentives, and public–private funding partnerships to support township and rural language enterprises.

Conclusion

This Needs Assessment demonstrates that South Africa possesses a capable, diverse and economically relevant base of language practitioners, yet one that remains constrained by historical fragmentation, weak regulatory implementation, uneven access to training, persistent undervaluation and limited digital integration.

While the post-1994 legislative framework provides a strong constitutional and statutory foundation for a transformed language sector, its full benefits will only be realised through deliberate, coordinated and well-resourced institutional implementation.

Central to this transformation is the establishment of the SALPC, the rollout of a national CPD system, training reform aligned with market realities, wide-scale integration of Human Language Technologies, and the strategic development of the indigenous language economy. Positioned within the broader Economics of Language agenda, this report confirms that language is not merely a cultural or symbolic resource, but a strategic economic asset with direct implications for employment creation, productivity, social cohesion and national competitiveness.

The implementation of the recommendations contained in this report represents a decisive step toward building a coherent, regulated, digitally enabled and economically sustainable language profession, fully aligned with South Africa’s constitutional vision and long-term developmental future.

Section A

Overview and Report Context

Chapter 1 Theory Review

1.1. Introduction

This literature review considers the strategic issues shaping the language sector and economy on national and international levels, and the implications for the professionalization of the actors and agencies involved. Central to such developments is the continued and massive impact of digitalization on the global economy and its components. The transnational digital platforms and the entwined and burgeoning use of AI and machine learning is challenging conventional notions of and practices within the language sector. Along with this is the oft underestimated but highly impactful role of languages in international business, cross-cultural communication and collaborative knowledge production (e.g. Aljarelah 2024).

The expansion and diversification of the language economy and sectors have significant implications for the conceptualization and categorization of language practitioners and associated individuals and groups. New and emerging required competencies on the global stage, as well as national imperatives, need to be taken thoughtfully and systematically into account by state policy makers, the private and non-profit sector, and academia and educational and training institutions more generally. The

1.2. An Economics of Language of Language Approach

In recent decades, scholarship within and/or informed by the Economics of Language approach, has underlined how in the modern global economy, language skills constitute a vital form of human capital that shape economic outcomes for individuals, businesses and countries.

For instance, in a piece on the ‘Economic Value of Language Skills: A Human Capital Perspective’, Nicoleta Stăncescu (2023) explores the economic value of language proficiency by assessing its influence on labour market performance, migration integration, productivity and national economic competitiveness (Stăncescu 2023).

She points out, through an evidence-rich inquiry, that multilingual individuals usually experience higher wages, improved job prospects, and better career advancement opportunities. For businesses, language proficiency enhances communication, reduces transactional errors, and improves customer satisfaction. At a country level, multilingualism with an international orientation supports economic growth by attracting investment, promoting international trade, and facilitating diplomatic engagement (ibid.).

The author also underlines the importance of self-conscious policy measures in support of language education and training as vehicles for economic development and social inclusion, especially in multilingual and migrant-rich societies. Thus, in today’s digitalized and interconnected economy, language proficiency is significantly more than a means of communication

Grenier and Zhang (2021) tackle the question of the value of language skills. They point out that in the contemporary globalized world, people are becoming more mobile and often need to communicate across language barriers. The authors stress that learning a new dominant

language is in effect an investment in one's human capital. Furthermore, there are significant financial benefits to those members of linguistic minorities who learn the dominant language. A variety of economic studies demonstrate that language is important for economic success and improves economic performance. It is also advised that because of externalities in employing a common language, allowing individuals to follow their self-interest may not optimize outcomes. The authors maintain too, that the continued trend toward English as a common second languages provide certain advantages and is not likely to be reversed in the foreseeable future.

The key points of the paper are fourfold. Firstly, a dominant language enables people to communicate with others within a particular region or country. Secondly, having a common international language extends the ability to communicate beyond national borders. Thirdly the acquisition of a dominant common language represents a sensible investment in human capital. In the fourth place, people however also value their native language and are keen to maintain and preserve it. There is thus a trade-off between these two objectives. However, they can be jointly pursued if more people aspire to become bilingual or multilingual. Fifthly, in highly educated countries the relevant parts of the education curriculum should consciously encourage the learning of foreign languages and cultures (Grenier and Zhang 2021).

1.3. Competencies and Employability in a Globalizing Economy

A semi-systematic literature review on global employability skills in the 21st century, by Tushar & Sooraksa (2023), look to identify essential employability skills among recent graduates that are particularly sought for by employers. The study finds a significant mismatch between employers' expectations the actual skills possessed by graduates. The authors provide a list of employability skills that constitute a valuable means for addressing this disconnect (ibid).

The review findings show that communication, problem-solving and teamwork continue as the top employability skills required in the period/s under review. Computer and technology-related skills are more strongly value in recent literature because of AI and digital technologies (Tushar & Sooraksa 2023). Apart from time management, emotional intelligence, work ethics, judgement ability, entrepreneurial abilities, hardworking, respect for seniors, foreign language, and practical experienced are only reported in the 21st century studies. Some skills -- such as hardworking, a respect for seniors and entrepreneurial skills -- are reported only in South Asian literature. In addition, some skills such work ethics, judgement ability and emotional intelligence begin to be identified in 2010s literature (ibid.).

The review also reveals a shift in selected skills over time. While earlier studies emphasized basic literacy, numeracy, manual skills, and skill sets linked to financial management in the top end of employability skills, recent employability skill reports indicate a decline in demand for such assets (Tushar & Sooraksa 2023). Part of the reason is that the number of graduates has increased. Also, some employers are not sufficiently satisfied with graduates primarily possessing occupation-specific skills in the labour market. Some of the skills required by employers include capacities such as intelligence, critical thinking, leadership, adaptability, as well as creativity and innovation. There is as would be expected, variations in demand across countries, industries and roles/positions. Overall, the study highlights the need for employers,

educators and policymakers to collaborate to meet the demands of the contemporary workplace (ibid.).

De la Hoz-Ruiz et al (2025) examine the role contribution of digital competencies to the construction of social capital and professional recognition. It finds that a heightened emphasis on the communicative and network-based digital capabilities, most especially digital communication, information management and virtual collaboration – are now key assets in professional settings. Indeed, recognition may often take the form of largely non-material, visibility-explicit, and extrinsic forms. And with social media proficiency becoming a dominant factor in social recognition, this will tend to favour those persons who are able to develop and mobilize their networks in a strategic fashion. This factor suggests a reframing of signal theory in view of the pervasiveness of digital platforms and their ecosystems. Recognition is less tied up with a person's ability to render their capabilities and talent legible and visible within structure environments. Rather those who skilled at mastering the processes and codes of ensuring visibility and building reputations online, will be better placed to convert this recognition into social capital and professional opportunities.

As the authors emphasize, the more actors are involved in reciprocal recognition, the more will their capacity to access and mobilize social capital. The more actors engage in reciprocal recognition, the greater their capacity to access and mobilize social capital. This allows for 'relational embeddedness' and cognitive congruence. These factors in turn help ensure 'collective efficacy' and personal advancement (ibid. p.13). Thus, social media platforms perform the simultaneous functions as sites for growing professional networks and gaining recognition. These processes are in effect mutually reinforcing and beneficial. As actors widen their relational bonds, they increase the visibility and dissemination of their competences. Such recognition in turn develops their social capital and enhances their presence within the network (ibid. pp.13-14).

1.4. Languages and Global Competencies

A study by Helmersen, Lauridson & Norlyk (2008) notes the thoroughgoing changes required by the advent of new forms of globalization in the 2000s. A crucial set of requirements for citizens in national states and functional regional associations such as the EU, are competencies in foreign languages and cross-cultural communication 'to a much larger extent than it was the case just a decade ago'. If anything, the need for such competencies has grown in subsequent years.

The authors comment on the global implications of the 2005 European Commission's Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning – A European Reference Framework (EU Commission 2005). Key competences centre on those that underpin personal fulfilment, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment.

The first two competences in the framework are 'communication in the mother tongue' and 'communication in foreign languages. In addition, the list contains 'interpersonal, intercultural and social competences, civic competence and cultural expression. These main competences for lifelong learning are seen as essential not only for the (currently) modest group of language specialists, but for European Union citizens more generally.

As Helmersen et al (2008) point out, there is a strong message for the language industries and professions, in that the need to revisit their brief, 'just as the universities and other institutions of higher education need to address the question of which language and intercultural communication competences foreign language graduates, as well as non-language graduates, should have developed at the end of their courses of study' (ibid. p9). They also note that surveys of SMEs across the EU indicate that language and intercultural communication competences are vital, with a good deal of business being lost due to the inadequate language skills of key employees. And the preference for such companies is to recruit rather than train such employees.

Furthermore, the business community in general, including the international corporation, need such people to operate efficiently in the marketplace. Consequently, cooperation between the education sectors and the world of work is crucial in determining which language and intercultural competences are required and in which languages. (9-10).

During the 2000s, the authors note, there have been significant changes in European higher education. This has manifested in a shift from teaching to learning, and of focus from course input (what would we like to teach) to course output (what competences are needed in the world of work, and what have students learned). Furthermore, statistics indicate that employers and employees concur that the role of the language specialist has changed noticeably with the days of the conventional language specialist seemingly numbered (ibid.). New and additional skills and competences are needed for the changing world of work, with non-linguistic skills and tasks becoming more important within language professions. (11) The rapidity of these changes in the professional environment suggest that the job profile of the traditional language specialist is undergoing qualitative change (12). However, while there is an increasing call for skills of a cross-disciplinary and non-linguistic nature, this is not to say that core linguistic competences are no longer required or valued in the language professions (12).

A 2021 Study by a consortium of EU Universities, and co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme and EU Commission, looks to develop a new profile for 21st Century language practitioners, and provides a linked set of insights from industry, institutions and academia (Bernardini & Petrović 2021)

The study underlines the 'extraordinary achievements of artificial intelligence which is both impacting all sectors of society and flagging issues that relate directly to the emerging skills needed the world of work. Key issues included which emerging skills are required in the workplace, how expansion of the gender gap can be ameliorated, and whether disruption constitutes a vehicle for positive change. Such issues have a major effect on the language and linguistic sectors, and should be given full consideration by higher degree programmes in establishing their priorities which should emphasize employability, job retention and job satisfaction in the coming years (ibid.).

- Language industry surveys run in the previous decade have identified key competencies and roles which should be possessed by new graduates apart from the obvious ones (in fields such as languages, linguistics, translation and terminology). The most prominent of such competencies and roles related to
- Service provision including project management, quality control and client relations

- Marketing and copy-editing (such as local storytelling, and creative content creation and transcreation)
- Technology (ranging from translation memory tools, post-editing of machine translation to handling of mark-up languages, software and web localization, through to processing and analysis of multilingual content and written and spoken language analysis and creation)

Institutional reflection has underlined a global societal need for more transversal skills including the ability to access and process information in a critical manner, teamwork, digital data literacy, and understanding of the workings of AI, and an understanding of the essentials of entrepreneurship (Bernardini & Petrović 2021).

Such skills should be fostered in all graduates, to ensure that they are resilient and adaptable to rapid changes throughout their careers. Particularly in the case of language degrees, the authors recommend that the teaching staff should cultivate ‘cultural agility’ as well as substantive research skills among their students. This would enable them to access alternative career paths and thus increase their appeal for prospective students and employers. Translation degrees present somewhat less of a marketing problem, but academic programme managers also should rethink their priorities by targeting the growing array of language services, and ensure their students are suitably grounded in AI-powered machine translation and ongoing relevant developments (ibid.)

Select scholarly research has underlined the need for technology teaching in Higher Education settings to be embedded in professional workflows that require and enhanced creativity, research expertise and skills and data literacy. There is more emphasis on research-based curricula. This approach requires enquiry-based activities in which students work in teams towards a research goal, with due space provided for tailored and self-directed learning (ibid.).

Overall, utilizing a range of sources, the report stresses the substantial and indeed growing job opportunities for graduates with competencies in technology (particularly data analysis) and linguistics and/or languages. Several skill clusters are emerging as important for students of language and linguistics to enable their employability in the digital market section (Bernardini & Petrović 2021).

These include:

- (i) Disciplinary ‘core knowledge --- which includes competency and fluencies in the use of language(s), linguistic analysis skills, translation, terminology and semantics-related competencies.
- (ii) An understanding of inter-cultural communication and a comprehensive understanding of the local context and a related ability to localize and personalize content.
- (iii) Interpersonal and entrepreneurial skills such as communication skills, teamwork, marketing skills, assessing client and market expectations, planning skills, project management and quality control skills.
- (iv) Technical skills such as basic and generic IT skills, handling text in differing formats and operating specialized software such as CAT tools, and advance skills such as process automation, and familiarity with AI developments.
- (v) Data skills like the ability to identify and collect, manage, curate and ‘clean’ and analyze different forms of language data.

- (vi) An array of research skills and an ability to critically process information, show innovation and creative thinking, and to evaluate technologies.

Although there is scope for improvement the skills from the first two of the clusters, at least in the translation and modern language degrees. However, the technical cluster tends to concern language professionals the most.

The skills from the first two clusters are typically seen as already being at a satisfactory level, at least in translation and modern language degrees, with room for improvement for aspects such as terminology handling or the ability to transcreate.

The emphasis on entrepreneurial and interpersonal skills is partly because industry surveys mostly target the language service provision sector. However, many of the skills that fall under this cluster have more general relevance and are often cited as also being research-oriented (e.g. project management and teamwork).

The technical cluster is the one that mostly concern language professionals, as it is prone to the most rapid changes, and being perceived as the most removed from the traditional humanities perspective on language. However, this cluster has received a considerable attention with increasing interventions by stakeholders ((Bernardini & Petrović 2021)

The final two clusters, appear to have attracted less attention in the fields of language and linguistics degrees. This despite such required capacities and skills being the most important ones to address, as emphasized by employers, institutions and academics. From the wider perspective of evolving societies and economies, and unstable job markets, data skills and research skills appear to be the ones that can access most opportunities. These skill sets are thus viewed as central to the challenges posed to twenty-first century education, along with the closely related demand for research-oriented teaching and considered as the best approach to the inculcation of the necessary capacities and skill sets (Bernardini & Petrović 2021).

1.5. Language and Business

Tibrewal et al 2024 in considering the growing impact of language-related IB (International Business) research note that the focus has been predominantly on MNCs, overlooking the challenges that internationalizing SMEs confront in using their limited language resources. To address this gap and help SME's deal with their unique language challenges, the authors develop a scale of language operative capacity (LOC) which measures a firm's ability to deploy language resources optimally in throughout its global operations.

The study makes three distinctive contributions to language-related IB scholarship. Firstly, the authors develop a comprehensive and sturdy LOC instrument, embedding distinctions between potential and realizable capacity. Secondly, they provide an in-depth understanding of individual-level language skills and organizational-level capacities. Thirdly, the study extends the scope of language-related IB research on SMEs by establishing the LOC instrument within the setting of internationalizing SMEs.

Finally, the research provides SMEs with an implementable tool to assess their linguistic capacities, foster their language resources and look to optimize the application of these language resources in the international activities of the firms in question (Tibrewal et al 2024).

1.6. English as a Global Competency?

A recent study by Agustiana, Thamrin and Oktoma (2024) examines the role of English as a lingua franca in international business, focusing on its impact on business operations, economic communication, and cross-cultural interactions. Research respondents with more advanced English skills experienced more successful business outcomes, while those with lower proficiency encountered many communication barriers and subsequent complications. Cross cultural communication challenges were prevalent and were reinforced by language barriers.

Although misunderstanding due to cultural differences, varying communication styles were in play, with the actors deploying a differing strategy to mitigate issues. Those with enhanced English language skills were better able to navigate these obstacles. This included simplifying language, leveraging multilingual resources and adapting their communication styles to suit better the expectations of their counterparts. Participants also stressed the importance of continuous professional development (CPD) and organizational support in enhancing English language skills (ibid.).

The study's findings underline the crucial need for businesses to invest in language training as a strategic goal. In a global economy which is increasingly interconnected, the capacity for effective communication in English, is more than useful expertise, but rather a precondition for success:

Businesses that prioritize language training for their employees will not only enhance their operational efficiency but also strengthen their competitive advantage in international markets. Investing in language training offers a dual benefit, such as it empowers employees to engage confidently in global business environments, and it helps organizations to minimize the risks associated with cross-cultural miscommunication. By fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment businesses can ensure that their workforce is well-equipped to navigate the complexities of international trade and collaboration Agustiana, Thamrin and Oktoma (2024: 88)

Azam et al (2013) consider the question of the returns to English Language Skill in India. They argue that India's colonial legacy and linguistic diversity accord English a key role in its economy, and that this role has expanded in recent decades because of globalization. Using available individual-level data they seek to quantify the impact of English-language skills on wages. They find at the time that hourly wages on average 34% higher for men who speak fluent English, and 13% higher for men who speak a little English relative to those men who do not speak English.

Furthermore, the return to fluent English is as large as the return to the completion of secondary school and half as large as the return to completing a bachelor's degree. In addition, the authors find that the more experienced and more experienced workers gain higher returns to English. Significantly, the complementarity between English skills and education has seemingly grown stronger over time but with a difference: only the more educated young workers are the recipients for a premium for English-speaking ability, in contrast to older workers across all education groups receiving this.

A recent study by Strango, Mihai Mutascu & Hegerty 2025) considers the effects of English proficiency on international trade using panel data from 105 countries for the period 2011-2023. The findings show that proficiency in English enables long-term growth in trade volumes by lowering transaction costs and expanding global market access. However, its impact on trade balances is mixed; regions such as Latin American and Europe have experienced negative effects, while Asia and the Middle East have benefited from export-centred gains. By contrast, there are minimal long-term effects in Africa because of linguistic diversity and structural impediments and challenges.

The study reveals regional and contextual variations, underscoring the importance of tailoring policies to optimize trade benefits. The extended results which also include native English-speaking countries, reinforce the main findings and provide even stronger evidence showing that English proficiency has a substantive and positive effect on trade volume (Strango, Mihai Mutascu & Hegerty, 2025).

The authors provide the following policy conclusions: Firstly, governments should invest in English language education as part of their broader interventions in human capital development. This should focus on the integration of English into vocational, technical and higher education curricula.

Training and education programmes that enhance English proficiency in business, trade negotiation, and e-commerce can assist firms expanding into international markets. Secondly, policymakers most particularly in African countries, should balance the promotion of English proficiency with investments in the national language economy more generally ((Strango, Mihai Mutascu & Hegerty, 2025).

The other side of this coin is that while approximately one in five people can speak English, the other four cannot. In June 2022, RAND, a research and development agency, published a report indicating that if 10% of UK students become proficient in Mandarin, Arabic, French, and Spanish, the economic returns for the UK would be in the billions of pounds⁴ (Rand 2022). The report argued that the UK could not rely on English as a global language to continue its role in international trade. Young adults entering the job market need to be fluent in a second language.

The RAND team investigating the economic returns of languages developed a mathematical model of international trade flows. A major finding from this research was that “not speaking a common language acted as a kind of tax. It made doing business much more difficult and expensive”.⁵ The RAND team concludes that people speaking a second language will help business communication by removing a communication barrier. If someone wants to set up a business in China, they need to be able to speak Mandarin (ibid.).

Yallem & Dipitso (2023) examine the discourses on the internationalization and marketization of higher education, and language and employability, relate to one another in higher education research. The findings show that both graduates and employers tended to focus primarily on English. The study also suggests that programme should move from solely linguistic and qualification-related content areas to a broader field of English for communication purposes that cover both specialized disciplinary content and generic employability skills.

Given this finding, that recommend that higher education systems and institutions incorporate recent developments in English for occupational purposes in their curriculum. They also suggest that there be a shift from mainly English language-dominated discussions to more inclusive research that evaluates the impact of other dominant languages on employability-related concerns.

1.7. The Question of Language Deficit

Kathy Stein-Smith (2017) notes that in a world where all of us are tweeting, chatting and live-streaming, it is crucial that we understand each other. Indeed, foreign languages are the 'ultimate social media tool'. Foreign language skills in short, are 'the ultimate, overarching 21st century global competency, important in our careers and in our lives as local and global citizens' (ibid. 71). Despite this and growing scholarly research, the author notes at the time of writing, that fewer than 20% of K-12 public school students study are registered for a course in language other than English.

And only one in four Americans can hold a conversation in another language. This foreign language 'deficit' has in turn a negative effect on the US's economic and national security. Stein-Smith urges an immediate addressing of the 'longstanding deficit' in foreign language knowledge among Anglophone Americas, and to large extent Anglophone societies world. This outlook, she argues, can be attributed in part to the belief that English is the global lingua franca and that consequently, no additional languages are required.

Turner, Kathleen (2018) Australia's language deficit is a threat to its role in the global economy. Can Australia remain competitive and influential in an increasingly networked world, if we do not speak the languages of our neighbours? (ASA eds).

A book chapter by Kathleen Turner (2018) focuses on Australia's foreign language deficit. She argues that while millions of people around the globe are learning English, Australia has in effect fallen behinds by not devoting sufficient, resources, time and effort to the imperative of second language learning. While it is not disputed that Australia was lacking the necessary language skills for national economic growth because of the status of English as the language of international communications. However, as she stresses Australia's declining investment in foreign language skills and the promotion thereof, constitutes a 'language debt' that undercuts in competitiveness, influence and participation in the global economy, most especially as it aims to expand its role and influence in Southeast Asia.

This deficit impedes deeper engagement with major international markets, constraining Australia's capacity to partner and compete effectively in an increasingly interconnected world (Turner 2028). Language skills are in fact most strategic on the international stage, and help inculcate cultural competence, enable intercultural communication and help build stronger relationships between other nations. The policy implication is that there should be a conscious increase in investment in language programmes by both government and the business community (ibid.).

1.8. Professions and Professionalization

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).

Matt Loeb (2022) in a business brief explores how contemporary professional organizations can reinvent member value. In the past the demonstration of value to members was not the problem is has become today for professional associations and societies, and trade bodies. Conferences and events were the main means for professionals to connect and network with like-minded colleagues and those in adjacent fields. Furthermore, many organizations were the only places where members could address critical requirements for employments such as licensing, certification, and professional development. However, the digitalization of the global economy has changed the situation dramatically (ibid).

It is far easier for professionals today to locate each other and collaborate via social media and networking platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Teams, Zoom, and other relevant social media and networking platforms. Non-profit industry certification programmes, at one time crucial for employment, are under threat to competing institutional offerings from universities and even employers themselves. With their core value propositions under threat, professional societies and trade associations, are aware that members require much more than an annual conference, credentialling programmes and organization newsletter or magazine to continue paying their dues and maintaining their professional loyalties. Also, some members are questioning what their members want and how their current and predicted needs can be met (ibid.).

The leadership of such organizations need to pose the following questions. In the first place, are the organization's services providing members with things that they deem important and cannot access with less difficulty or less costs or with more value from elsewhere. Secondly, does the organization's mission have meaning for members and prospective members (Loeb 2022).

It is argued further that while the forms of convening are more commercialized, membership organizations are still empowered to convene, whether in situ or virtually. Rather than treating social media and collaboration tools as a problem, non-profit and state-linked associations

should look utilize these technologies to provide for inclusive, informative and engaging content and experiences that cater for the needs and expectations of their members (ibid).

In a study by Ionescu-Feleaș et al (2022) on the development and digitalization of the professional services in the accounting and finance fields helps delineate the relationship between professionalization and differing economic development trajectories in countries in differing EU countries. In addition, the study also identifies factors driving the development of the accounting and finance professions at international levels providing further comparative perspectives.

They find that the extent of the digitalization of the profession is a not only a prominent membership service but also a key characteristic of country competitiveness. Results show that high-income countries have significantly more professional associations compared to middle-income countries. In addition, high-income countries have a significantly larger number of professional associations and services than middle-income countries. Moreover, the accounting and finance professions in high-income countries provide a greater number of accounting, finance and membership services. The size of the population and competitiveness of national economy are the prime predictors of the extent of the digitalization and development of the respective accountancy and finance professions. The research has real world implications for professional associations and national regulators in reducing in-country disparities in accounting education and service quality. It also provides the relevant institutional actors with a holistic overview of the dynamics of accounting and finance professions at national and international levels. The research further suggests that substantive improvement in the digitalization of the finance and accounting professions, as well as with other professions, will enhance efforts to improve the competitiveness and development trajectory of the national economy in question. Digital competitiveness is built on three key factors: knowledge, technology and future readiness. A focussed response to increased demands for professional digital services is predicated on more complex, diverse and reflexive university curricula, and professional training programmes (ibid, p18).

1.9. Professionalization of Language

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, as well as the trend to invoking technology in language learning (Eaton 2010: 5).

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)

1.10. Challenges for the Universities

At HEI levels, universities have come in for criticism in recent decades for a not exploring more inclusive, incorporative means of providing dynamic learning programmes, and thinking more innovatively about the language economy.

A classic late 1990s 1999 UC 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 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.

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 intercultural understanding, problem-solving abilities, critical thinking and importantly an ability to speak in multiple Foreign Languages and to participated 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 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 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 (Dupay & Grosbois 2020).

A recent study (Montenegro et al 2023) by academics at a leading Mexican university languages centre raises the importance of professionalization including an increased proficiency in languages for academics. They stress that the teaching of English as a second language is vital for professionalization in Mexico and by implication other established and emerging economies. English, it is argued is closely entwined with the expectations of the international population, as well as educational demands, research and internationalization.

The most important task of every professor (academic) in Mexico the authors underline, is to surmount obstacles in the personal and professional field which 'prevent them from projecting

their improvement' (ibid.). Thus, learning a language and/or developing an existing expertise has a significant influence on those differing fields that enable the development and capitalization of skills and cumulative academic endeavours to transform the process of language acquisition into a 'professionalizing transforming axis' (ibid.). There are four key qualities that characterize the professional, namely speed, accuracy, precision and care in the preparation and delivery of each project.

Professionalization within academia should

- Enable the design of professional training processes
- Encourage practices that enhance quality
- Improve communication in differing areas
- Reinforce the interrelation of knowledge and disciplines in educational and training contexts
- Integrate the needs of institutions and individuals
- Give impetus to the creation of research
- Discern the kinds of information and mass media to provide it.

The authors point out that professionalization should be viewed as a process while professionalism is a competence or skill. In teaching the professionalization path includes the drive to acquire the characteristics of high-status occupations, including the certification and accreditation and the development and maintenance of professional associations. In a university institution setting, learning a language entails more than an educational experience, 'but it can very well be the solution for obtaining, managing, and using information, the link of knowledge, and update of the same, in addition to the investigation and dissemination of all professional activity' (ibid.).

Inamorato dos Santos, A., Chinkes, E., Carvalho, M.A.G. *et al.* (2023). The Digital Competence of Academics in Higher Education: Is the Glass Half Empty or Half Full? *International Journal of Education Technology Higher Education*, 20 (9). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00376-0>.

A paper by dos Santos, Chinkes, & Carvalho, M.A.G. *et al* (2023) assesses the digital competence of academics in select Latin American countries and Portugal, with a view to establish the strategic challenges and to provide specific policy recommendations. The study found that around 70% of the academics surveyed had an average intermediate level of competence. Interestingly, there was no significant difference between young and senior academics, as well as between women and men.

The study reveals that respective areas in which the educators involved see themselves as the most and least competent. The authors show how the degree of institutional support offered by the universities in question, impacts on the perceptions of the academics of their level of digital competence. The results and recommendations of the study are outlined for HEIs, with the overall aim of assisting academics. assist higher-education institutions and governments in implementing policies capable of improving digital competence.

The results underline the need for further support for academics, in respect of their own practices as well as in improving the digital expertise of their students. With enhanced digital competence, students would be more able to function in society as empowered and reflexive

citizens regarding the responsible use of technology. Furthermore, there seems to be scope for inter-institutional collaboration at regional, national and even international levels (ibid. p22).

1.11. Digital Technologies and Language

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. Moreover, while technology has a profound impact on the performance of translation services, the constraints of such technologies has become more apparent.

Consequently, 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 & Liao 2024).

1.12. Conclusion

This chapter has located the needs assessment of South African language practitioners within a broad international, economic, technological, and professionalization context. The literature demonstrates with remarkable consistency that language skills today constitute far more than a cultural or communicative asset: they are a form of strategic human capital that shapes employability, productivity, trade performance, innovation, and social inclusion. Across multiple regions and sectors, multilingualism, digital competence, intercultural communication, and data-related skills are now core drivers of participation in the global knowledge economy

Equally clear is that the contemporary language professions are undergoing structural transformation. The traditional boundaries between language specialists, educators, translators, editors, and communication practitioners are rapidly dissolving under the pressure of digitalization, artificial intelligence, platform-based work, and transnational communication networks.

While technological advances have expanded the scope and reach of language services, the literature strongly affirms that human linguistic judgement, ethical accountability, intercultural mediation, and quality assurance remain irreplaceable, particularly in high-stakes contexts of governance, justice, health, education, and public communication

The review further reveals a widening alignment gap between higher education, professional training, and labour-market realities. Employers across sectors increasingly demand not only advanced linguistic competence, but also transversal skills in project management, entrepreneurship, digital literacy, research, teamwork, and adaptability. Yet universities and training institutions continue to face systemic challenges in responding quickly and coherently to these rapidly shifting skill demands. This misalignment underscores the urgency of re-imagining language education as a lifelong professional development pathway, rather than a once-off qualification

Importantly, the international literature on professionalization highlights the renewed significance of professional bodies, regulatory councils, accreditation systems, and CPD frameworks. In a digital and platform-driven economy where informal certification and fragmented training proliferate, professional institutions are being compelled to redefine their value propositions, safeguard standards, and actively curate credible development pathways for practitioners. This directly foreshadows the central role envisioned in South Africa for the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) and related regulatory structures within the post-1994 legislative environment

Within the South African context, these global dynamics intersect powerfully with the country's constitutional commitment to multilingualism, linguistic rights, access to justice, education, and public participation. The post-1994 language policy and legislative framework establishes ambitious transformation goals, yet the international evidence reviewed here demonstrates that such goals cannot be achieved without a highly capacitated, professionally regulated, digitally literate, and economically integrated language practitioner corps.

The risks of language deficits—whether in foreign languages, digital competence, or sector-specific expertise—are shown internationally to translate directly into lost economic opportunity, diminished global participation, and weakened social cohesion

In this sense, the literature review does more than provide background context: it frames the central tension that drives the broader needs assessment. On the one hand, South Africa possesses one of the world's most progressive constitutional language regimes. On the other hand, the research warns that without sustained investment in professionalization, training reform, digital integration, CPD systems, and coherent regulation, the full economic, social, and democratic value of this framework will remain under-realised.

This chapter therefore establishes the analytical foundation for the empirical sections that follow. The survey-based needs assessment must be read against a global backdrop in which language is increasingly positioned as a strategic economic sector, language practitioners as knowledge professionals, and professional councils as key institutional anchors in managing skills development, regulation, recognition, and public trust. The findings that follow will test how far South Africa's current practitioner base is positioned to meet these emerging demands—and where the most critical knowledge, capacity, policy, and institutional gaps lie.

Chapter 2 Literature Review – The South African Language Sector

2.1 Introduction

Among the main issues regarding the language sector and its dynamics, are:

- (i) A lack of competencies among the South African corps of language practitioners.
- (ii) A structural tension between the programmes offered by universities and training institutions and the markets (both national and local).
- (iii) Insufficient articulation and standardization of training.
- (iv) Fragmented and inadequate professionalization.
- (v) A shortage in a number of areas of qualified professionals.
- (vi) The present absence of a formal regulatory body. In addition, the research on the institutional and economic aspects of the language sector and economy, and related policy implications, is modest and somewhat fragmented (SACO 2022; 2024).

There is a scarcity of scholarly work on the professionalization of language practitioners in South Africa. By contrast, 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 (SACO 2024). While there are some signs of the application of an Economics of Language approach in South Africa, the work to date has dealt largely with the question of the investment in/or impact of proficiency within the broader economy.

2.2 Capacities, Needs and Requirements: Select Observations

The question of improving language proficiency and fluency is of increasing importance internationally. Thus, it is not just about the expansion of the teaching of differing languages but of improving the quality of written and spoken versions. This issue is linked to aspects such as speech therapy and even elocution.

The importance of going beyond conventional efforts at the promoting multilingualism and reinforcing the use of indigenous language is central to the study of Kathard et al (2025). Focus on the ways and means speech language therapists and audiologists (SLTAs) have a central role to play in undergirding basic education in South Africa via the development of language and literacy.

The authors suggest that the professions of speech-language pathology and audiology should be social responsive and take cognizance of the broader spectrum of the population to ensure that meaningful contributions to development in the country. The authors outline potential roles of the SLTAs and recommend further actions for these professions to ensure ‘contextually relevant practice’ in fields where resource constraints are ever present (ibid.).

Given limited resource capacity, the contributions of SLPs will often include the assisting of teachers, other professionals and caregivers, who are designated as the primary deliverers of intervention. Thus 'indirect services' should be a key part of the package of service delivery options. In turn SLPs' roles in intervention may extend beyond direct work with students who struggle with literacy.

Given the broad spectrum of service delivery options, SLPs will still need to be judicious in their selection of interventions both direct and indirect. They need to optimize the use of the expertise otherwise they will be overwhelmed with the mass of work. A vital component in strategic deployment of human resources is collaboration among professionals to offset costs and resources and avoid duplication of effort (ibid.).

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Thus 'indirect services' should be a key part of the package of service delivery options. In turn SLPs' roles in intervention may extend beyond direct work with students who struggle with literacy. The authors suggest that there are sets of activities with which the SLPs could be involved. These entail:

- (i) Triaging students.
- (ii) Focussing on students individually.
- (iii) Helping decipher patterns of strengths and weaknesses in learning with a focus on language foundations.
- (iv) Helping discern who needs what kinds of services and from whom.
- (v) Guiding language-sensitive interventions from others, including learners with disabilities.
- (vi) Providing advice regarding direct intervention on educational matters with language underpinnings.
- (vii) Supply speech and language services to learners with communication disorders (kathard et al 2025).

Given the broad spectrum of service delivery options, SLPs will still need to be judicious in their selection of interventions both direct and indirect. They need to optimize the use of the expertise otherwise they will be overwhelmed with the mass of work.

A vital component in strategic deployment of human resources is collaboration among professionals to offset costs and resources and avoid duplication of effort (ibid.).

Mphaphuli et al (2024) highlight the undervaluation South African indigenous languages by home learners, via a case study of learners and teachers in Thembisa, Gauteng, with particular emphasis on the teaching of Tshivenda. The authors point out that these languages are often perceived as not that beneficial in terms of upward mobility in the workplace. They find that Tshivenda learners are not exposed to possible language careers that can be pursued through South African indigenous languages.

On the other hand, the findings reveal that teachers were aware of the possible careers in these languages. The study argues the need for producing more qualified language practitioners to promote previously marginalised South African indigenous languages and encourage learners to consider pursuing careers in these languages (ibid.).

2.3 Professionalization and Institution Building

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

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 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.

The empirical findings underline that:

- (i) Operating as an effective learning organization (ELO).
- (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:

The competitive characteristics of a PA:

- (i) Being an ELO.
- (ii) Being seen as the first mover in its industry (Goldman, Arnolds & Eksteen 2016).

The professionalization of language work across the sectors continues to face considerable challenges. This is due particularly to the insufficiency of formal regulation and clearly defined industry standards – a situation is compounded by the current crisis in the training SETAs in the country.

For example, a study by Law and Kruger (2008) notes at the time, the limited progress made toward establishing a recognized framework for editors and translators. Although the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) has introduced voluntary accreditation 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). The authors also argue that the delay in formalizing language practitioners' legislation has been detrimental to efforts for more comprehensive regulation and professionalization of the various sub-sectors of the South African language industry (ibid.).

2.4 Insufficient and Non-standardized Training:

Manyike, TV & Lemmer, EM (2014) Research in Language Education in South Africa: Problems & Prospects, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5 (8) 251-258.

Across the language sector many language practitioners, especially in fields such as early childhood education (ECCE) and healthcare interpreting, have received little or inadequate professional training. Many existing training programmes are often not accredited or standardised, leaving a workforce with varied skill levels and limited exposure to necessary pedagogical approaches (Manyike & Lemmer 2014; Deghaye & Wills 2014).

2.5 Economics of Language

Currently, the bulk of scholarly literature on the language sector and economy, emanates from a perspective informed by linguistics, sociolinguistics, education and the broader field of language policy and planning (LPP). 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).

While not from a formal economic position, Laurence Wright noted in 2002:

...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 (Wright 2002:14).

He also argues that as 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 (Wright: 16). Levinsohn (2007) considers the relationship between the forces of globalisation and the dynamics of English in South Africa in the early post-apartheid year. 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 (ibid.).

John Casale and Dorrit Posel (2011) explore 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. Their findings indicate at the time 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.).

Zien, Muller & Vermaak (2019) consider the impact of immigration on the labour market with specific reference to their ability to speak English. The study finds that immigrants are more

successful than local in South Africa with their success partially attributed to the advantage gained from speaking English as a second language. Whereas speaking English as a second language is less valued by the labour market for locals. Individuals who speak English are more active and more likely to find employment and earn higher wages than non-English speakers.

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).

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). Using longitudinal data from the population of South African primary schools and a fixed-effects approach, the authors find that mother tongue instruction in the early grades significantly improves English acquisition, as measured in grades 4, 5 and 6 (ibid).

2.6 The Question of the South African Language Deficit.

There is a paucity of work by South African academia dealing with the implications of global employability and competencies for language practitioners from linguistics, sociolinguistic and educational background, and the question of a language deficit.

The focus has been largely inward looking and concerned on the play of decoloniality and the structural position of English within economy and society and the need to promote the indigenous languages in public and economic life and the universities (e.g. Aisang 2025). Salikolo Mufwene (2005), in a Chicago University research report, notes his misgivings about a range of linguistics publications on language endangerment and the impact globally of the English language.

He argues that a 'special metalanguage' has come to the fore in which languages are represented as agents, and the speakers of engendered languages no more than victims. Part of the discourse has been about 'language wars' and the myth of English as a 'killer language'. He further contends that the distinction between vernacular and lingua franca functions of languages has been neglected in matters of language competition (ibid.).

And the evidence internationally on the importance of English proficiency as a valued global competency and a source of national competitiveness is compelling. A related emphasis on the importance of developing a multilingual competency in other major international languages makes sense for high, middle and low-income countries. A more inclusive and expansive approach would take due cognizance of the evident language deficit in the South African economy.

A deeper understanding of the dynamics and required of the South African language sector and economy, a more balanced developmental approach is possible. While there are some encouraging initiatives, such as efforts to move to more globally-aware forms of multilingual

programmes in some South African universities (Docrat, Ralarala and Kaschula 2019,) there is still much to be done.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review highlights a language sector characterised by uneven professionalisation, insufficiently standardised training, persistent skills shortages, and the continued absence of a unified regulatory authority. While important scholarship exists on language policy, multilingualism and the role of English in South Africa, there remains a notable gap in systematic research on the professional, institutional and economic dimensions of language work.

The reviewed studies further point to the undervaluation of indigenous languages in both education and the labour market, alongside the need for more structured training pathways and coordinated institution-building. Together, these findings confirm the relevance of an Economics of Language (EOL) approach as a necessary analytical lens through which to better understand the material conditions, returns, and developmental potential of language in South Africa.

This compact review of selected South African literature, indicates the need for more comparative research and a systematic invocation of an EOL approach.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Research Methods

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the research methodology and methods which were used in this Needs Assessment of the Knowledge and Capacities of Language Practitioners as outlined in the post-1994 Language Legislative Framework.

The chapter explains the mixed-method research approach and supporting methods which included a policy and literature review, stakeholder identification, semi-structured interviews, online surveys, sectoral and ecosystem studies and benchmarking analysis. This research provided the evidence base necessary to design a credible, inclusive, reliable database system which would support professional recognition and sectoral development.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Literature Review and Policy Analysis

The research began with an evaluation of existing literature and policy documents. Researchers analysed academic papers, government documents and industry reports to gain insight into the language economy. Special attention was paid to national and international policies that establish regulatory systems, multilingual governance approaches and institutional frameworks supporting language development.

The analysis revealed significant coordination challenges and deficiencies in policy execution within South Africa's language sector. This highlights the need for better alignment between policy intentions and practical implementation.

3.2.2 Strategic Stakeholder Interviews

The researchers conducted stakeholder interviews using semi-structured format. They gathered qualitative data on practitioners' daily challenges, regulatory issues, training needs, and institutional roles. These interactions revealed gaps between policies and actual practices. The research design combined desktop research with field data collection through a multi-layered methodology featuring key components outlined below.

3.2.3 Data Collection

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

- Primary and secondary literature was reviewed to obtain baseline data
- 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.

The research involved stakeholder mapping and engagement via a series of semi-structured interviews. This mapping process identified key players within government departments, higher

education institutions, professional associations, translation agencies and independent practitioners.

The semi-structured interviews provided delivered detailed qualitative data regarding practitioners' real-world experiences, highlighting their needs, regulatory challenges and organizational constraints. This analysis uncovered discrepancies between official policies and the actual work contexts of practitioners, demonstrating the necessity to address gaps in developing a sustainable professional language sector.

An online survey distributed through professional body registry data, and information from academic and industry databases complemented the qualitative interviews. By incorporating data from both primary and secondary sources, researchers aimed to bolster the qualitative findings.

3.2.4 Analytical Approach

Quantitative data was summarised through descriptive analysis while qualitative data (survey feedback and interview transcripts) was thematically analysed to identify recurring patterns, risks, and opportunities. This dual approach ensured both numerical trends and contextual nuances were reflected in the findings.

AI tools and methodologies were employed at various stages to assist with data mining, analysis, and the synthesis of complex datasets, thereby enhancing the depth and rigour of our findings. This integration of AI technology allowed the research team to process large volumes of secondary and primary information and derive meaningful insights that shaped the outcomes presented in this report.

3.2. Conclusion

This study used a mixed-methods approach to thoroughly examine South Africa's language economy and inform the creation of a practitioner database, as required by law. Combining literature and policy analysis, stakeholder input, economic mapping, benchmarking, and strategic planning, the research identified key challenges and opportunities.

The methodology grounds the database framework in solid evidence while addressing practitioner, institutional, and regulatory needs. This foundation supports a credible, sustainable database to enhance professional recognition, sector coordination, and long-term growth of South African language professions.

Chapter 4 Policy Context and Background

4.1 Introduction - Positioning Report 3 within the EOL Policy Trajectory

This chapter situates Report 3: A Needs Assessment of the Knowledge and Capacities of Language Practitioners as outlined in the post-1994 Language Legislative Framework within the evolving policy, regulatory and institutional landscape of South Africa's language economy, as developed through Reports 1 and 2 of the Economics of Language (EOL) series.

Report 1: (A Preliminary Scoping Exercise of the Dynamics, Resources and Access to Data in the South African Language Economy) established a comprehensive system-wide overview of the language economy, highlighting its economic contribution, institutional diversity, and the strategic importance of coordinated governance and data consolidation for long-term sector development.

Report 2: (Policy, Regulation and Governance) then advanced this foundation through a detailed examination of South Africa's constitutional language regime, national and sub-national policy instruments, education language policy, indigenous language recognition, and comparative international governance models.

Report 3 builds directly on this established policy architecture, by examining the extent to which the knowledge, skills, training pathways, professional practices and technological readiness of language practitioners are aligned with this enabling legislative and institutional environment.

4.2 Constitutional and Legislative Foundations of the Language Sector

As articulated in Reports 1 and 2, South Africa's language economy is anchored in a progressive multilingual constitutional framework that is internationally recognised for its commitment to linguistic equality and diversity. The 1996 Constitution affirms:

- Twelve official languages, including South African Sign Language
- The principle of “parity of esteem” for all official languages
- The obligation on the state to take “practical and positive measures” to advance indigenous languages
- Protection of both individual and collective language rights (Sections 30–31)
- The prohibition of discrimination on the basis of language (Section 9).

These constitutional guarantees are given practical effect through a well-established legislative framework, including:

- The Pan South African Language Board Act 59 of 1995, which mandates PanSALB to promote multilingualism, develop marginalised languages, and safeguard linguistic rights
- The Use of Official Languages Act 12 of 2012, which strengthens multilingual governance through the adoption of official language policies, establishment of language units, and systematic monitoring of language use in national government

- The Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA), which reinforces the right of individuals to access state information in their preferred language where reasonably possible
- The Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, which embeds language considerations into local governance and participatory processes.

Together, these instruments establish a coherent constitutional and statutory foundation for multilingual governance, access to information, and language-based inclusion across the state.

4.3 The South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) as a Strategic Policy Instrument

Within this policy framework, the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act 8 of 2014 represents a strategic institutional innovation, providing the statutory basis for the professional regulation of language practitioners. As detailed in Report 2, the Act tasks the SALPC with:

- Registering and accrediting language practitioners
- Establishing national professional standards
- Enforcing ethical codes of conduct
- Overseeing Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Advising the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture on matters affecting the language profession.

The 2015 Regulations further define practitioner categories, CPD requirements, and ethical compliance mechanisms. Collectively, these instruments position the SALPC as the central professional authority within the national language governance system.

As noted in Report 1, the establishment of the SALPC marks an important transition from a historically association-based profession to a formal statutory regulatory model, comparable to those governing law, health, engineering, education and the built environment. This transition introduces new opportunities for professional coherence, quality assurance, public trust and economic integration.

Report 3 contributes directly to this institutional maturation process by providing the empirical practitioner-level evidence required to inform the Council's future operational design, accreditation thresholds and CPD frameworks.

4.4 Education Policy and Language Skills Formation

As demonstrated in Report 2, education policy plays a foundational role in shaping the long-term sustainability of the language profession. Key policy instruments include:

- The Language in Education Policy (LIEP) of 1997, which promotes additive multilingualism and mother-tongue based learning
- The Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) Policy (2013–2026), which aims to systematically expand African language learning across the schooling system
- The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 and the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020), which guide the promotion of multilingualism in universities.

Collectively, these policies reflect a sustained national commitment to strengthening language skills across the education continuum.

Report 3 complements this policy foundation by examining how education and training pathways translate into professional practice, including how graduates enter the labour market, access professional development, and adapt to evolving language service demands.

4.5 Indigenous, Khoi, Nama and San Languages in the Policy Framework

Report 2 provided important insight into the constitutional recognition of the Khoi, Nama and San languages under Section 6(5) of the Constitution. This recognition affirms South Africa's commitment to linguistic redress and cultural restoration.

Ongoing scholarly refinement of linguistic classification continues to enhance the precision with which these languages can be supported through education, digital resource development, terminology work and professional pathways. The inclusion of these languages within the national policy frame creates growing opportunities for:

- Targeted revitalisation initiatives,
- Community-based education and literacy development,
- Digital language infrastructure expansion,
- And the emergence of new professional roles for speakers of these languages.

Report 3 explores how this constitutional recognition is anticipated within practitioner development and professional opportunity, particularly across training, accreditation and technological integration.

4.6 Global and Comparative Regulatory Context

As demonstrated in Report 2, countries across the world adopt diverse models of language governance. Some focus primarily on language regulation, others on language rights advocacy, and others on terminology development or cultural promotion. Few combine all these functions into a single integrated institutional system.

South Africa's approach—linking:

- Constitutional language rights
- Professional regulation (SALPC)
- Digital language infrastructure (SADiLaR)
- And language development (PanSALB).

This represents a comprehensive and forward-looking governance model. While still evolving, this integrated approach positions South Africa as a global innovator in the institutionalisation of language as a developmental and economic resource.

In parallel, Report 2 benchmarked governance models from established statutory councils, including the:

- Legal Practice Council (LPC)
- Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA)
- Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)
- South African Council for Educators (SACE)
- Council for the Built Environment (CBE).

These models provide valuable guidance for the ongoing institutional strengthening of the SALPC, particularly in relation to sustainable funding, accreditation systems, ethical governance and public accountability.

4.7 Policy Implications for the Needs and Capacity Assessment

The policy framework established across Reports 1 and 2 highlights three interrelated developmental opportunities that shape the context for this Needs Assessment:

- Aligning practitioner development with South Africa’s multilingual constitutional vision;
- Strengthening professional regulation through the phased operationalisation of SALPC;
- Supporting practitioners in adapting to digital transformation and Human Language Technologies (HLT).

Report 3 responds to these opportunities by providing the practitioner-level evidence needed to translate national policy into operational reality—supporting workforce planning, CPD system design, accreditation pathways, pricing ethics and digital readiness.

4.8 Conclusion: Policy Continuity Across the EOL Series

Taken together, the three EOL reports form a sequential and mutually reinforcing policy narrative:

- Report 1 mapped the structure, scale and stakeholder ecosystem of the language economy;
- Report 2 articulated the constitutional, legislative and governance frameworks that guide sector development;
- Report 3 now examines the human and professional capacity required to activate these frameworks in practice.

This chapter affirms that the Needs and Capacity Assessment forms a strategic bridge between policy design and professional implementation. By aligning practitioner knowledge, skills, ethics, CPD and technological readiness with the legislative environment already in place, the report supports the continued advancement of multilingualism, access, professionalisation and inclusive economic participation within South Africa’s language economy.

Chapter 5 Key Issues Identified in EOL Reports 1 and 2

5.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the main policy, institutional, economic and professional issues identified through the first two reports in the Economics of Language research series. *Report 1, A Preliminary Scoping Exercise of the Dynamics, Resources and Access to Data in the South African Language Economy*, provided an initial system-level overview of the South African language economy, including its structure, stakeholder environment and available data. Report 2 then built on this foundation by focusing on policy, regulation, governance and the design of a national database for language practitioners, with specific reference to the mandate of the South African Language Practitioners' Council.

Together, the two reports provide an integrated picture of the institutional setting within which the language economy currently operates, including the policy framework that guides it and the structural conditions that shape its functioning. This chapter therefore serves as a bridge between the macro-level analysis presented in Reports 1 and 2 and the practitioner-focused needs and capacity assessment undertaken in Report 3.

By summarising the key issues arising from the first two reports, this chapter clarifies the conceptual and policy trajectory of the EOL programme, moving from economy-level mapping and governance analysis to an examination of practitioner knowledge, skills and professional readiness.

5.2 Key Issues from EOL Report 1

In June 2025, SACO submitted a report, entitled: "A Preliminary Scoping Exercise of the Dynamics, Resources and Access to Data in the South African Language Economy" to DSAC.

This was the first of a series of four commissioned reports. The report provided a preliminary study of the South African language economy in order to lay the foundation for the subsequent reports. The four reports will collectively inform the establishment of a nationally integrated database of language practitioners. This initiative will draw from best practices in other regulated professions and language councils worldwide. The database will not only serve as a registry but also function as a resource for policymakers, businesses, and government entities seeking qualified language professionals.

The first report contained the following information:

- The South African language economy produces around R10,3 billion GVA while employing approximately 66 000 people and generating R713 million in public revenue.
- The South African government supports multilingualism through constitutional provisions and evaluates PanSALB functions and educational frameworks and other institutional bodies.
- An ecosystem map revealing multiple stakeholders with their value chains and institutional arrangements which shows a disorganized system with duplicated efforts and unmet requirements.

- An examination of current sector conditions and practitioner needs and future developments through survey data from 88 participants and expert interview insights from 13 professionals.
- An overview of international best practices for language work regulation and governance systems and professional development methods.

5.2.1 Key Issues Identified in the First Report

The following key issues were identified in the first report:

5.2.1.1 Fragmentation and Poor Coordination

The language industry operates through multiple separate entities leading to duplicated responsibilities and inadequate coordination between different groups. The lack of a unified professional organization has resulted in training and accreditation challenges and insufficient support for practitioners.

5.2.1.2 Data Gaps and Invisibility

The language sector lacks proper national statistical tracking because it does not have a dedicated "language economy satellite account." The absence of reliable employment statistics and market information hinders policymakers and practitioners from developing effective planning strategies.

5.2.1.3 Policy and Implementation Gaps

While South Africa has strong constitutional and policy frameworks for multilingualism, the implementation of these principles is inconsistent. Funding for indigenous languages remains inadequate allowing English to dominate over other languages.

5.2.1.4 Professionalisation and Standards

There is an urgent need for professional recognition programmes, accreditation systems and ongoing professional development opportunities within the sector. Many struggle to access affordable training or certification programmes, resulting in a lack of professional value and support for practitioners.

5.2.1.5 Technological Disruption

The sector is undergoing transformation due to AI, digital platforms and translation tools, which offer opportunities for productivity growth but also risk creating unequal due to insufficient support for African languages. Practitioners advocate for the preservation of human expertise alongside technological advancements.

5.2.1.6 Funding and Sustainability

SALPC faces sustainability challenges due to unclear funding sources, payment methods and fee structures. Practitioners call for innovative public-private collaborations and business models to replace traditional funding sources.

5.2.1.7 Equity and Inclusion

Khoi, Nama, San and other indigenous languages continue to face marginalization despite constitutional protections. The full potential of language diversity for social inclusion, as well as educational and economic development remains unrealized.

5.2.1.8 Opportunities for Reform

Establishing the SALPC as a single professional organization would promote sector unity, enhance quality standards and strengthen advocacy efforts.

Creating an Economics of Language research unit together and a language economy satellite account system would support evidence-based policy development.

Collaboration among the state, academia and the private sector collaboration would contribute to new innovations, digital systems and trade possibilities.

The first report highlights South Africa's untapped economic potential stemming from its multilingual capabilities. However, the country faces a number of challenges, including sector fragmentation, insufficient data, weak implementation and the undervaluation of indigenous languages. The establishment of SALPC, along with related reforms offer a chance to develop a coherent language sector which is professionalized and economically empowered.

5.3 Key Issues from EOL Report 2

The report identifies significant issues stemming from the fragmentation of the South African language sector and proposes a detailed framework for the establishment and operation of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) database to address these challenges.

The key issues identified in the report and the resulting recommendations are summarized below.

5.3.1 Issues Identified in the Report

The core problem underlying the need for a national database is the significant fragmentation and poor coordination within the South African language economy. This fragmentation undermines professional standards and limits economic potential.

5.3.1.1 Fragmentation and Lack of Coordination

The language industry operates through multiple separate entities, leading to duplicated efforts, inadequate coordination, and inconsistency in standards and support for practitioners. Many association and professional databases currently rely on rudimentary methods like paper-based records or spreadsheets.

5.3.1.2 Data Gaps and Invisibility

The sector suffers from a lack of reliable national statistical tracking and market information, hindering effective planning and policy development. This lack of a unified system translates directly into a lack of visibility or public recognition of practitioners' work.

5.3.1.3 Inconsistent Professional Standards

There is an urgent need for professional recognition programmes, accreditation systems, and ongoing professional development (CPD) opportunities. Clients often struggle to find qualified professionals, and there is a low appreciation for professional qualifications, which diminishes credibility.

5.3.1.4 Financial Sustainability and Affordability

The SALPC faces sustainability challenges due to unclear funding sources and fee structures. Practitioners voiced substantial concerns (91% of survey respondents) regarding the potential for high registration costs which might exclude grassroots or informal practitioners.

5.3.1.5 Data Security and Privacy Concerns

The misuse or unauthorised sharing of personal data was the foremost concern identified by practitioners (91%). The reliance of current organizations on manual systems increases accountability risks and highlights the lack of standardized POPIA-compliant protocols across the sector.

5.3.1.6 Policy and Implementation Deficiencies

Despite strong constitutional mandates for multilingualism, the implementation of these policies is inconsistent. Funding for indigenous languages remains inadequate, leading to their marginalization. Additionally, the perceived delay in the rollout of the SALPC (legislated in 2014) has impacted its credibility.

5.3.2 Resulting Recommendations

The report provides a detailed roadmap for creating a professionalized, coordinated, and secure language sector, anchored by the national database.

5.3.2.1 Professionalization and Governance Framework

- **Classification System:** Implement a standardized classification system that categorizes practitioners into three levels based on qualifications and experience: Paraprofessional (Level 1), Professional (Level 2), and Expert (Level 3)
- **Accreditation and Quality Assurance:** Accreditation will serve as the primary mechanism for quality assurance. The guiding principle is "alignment over duplication", recognizing existing, credible credentials from bodies like the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) wherever possible.
- **Conduct and Development:** All registered practitioners must adhere to a statutory Code of Conduct covering competency, integrity, and confidentiality. Professional and Expert practitioners are obliged to participate in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to maintain registration.

5.3.2.2 Financial Sustainability and Funding Model

- **Hybrid Funding Model:** A purely fees-based model is considered unsustainable in the initial years. The report recommends a hybrid model combining transitional public

funding (such as government grants or baseline appropriations) with a tiered, cost-reflective fee schedule for practitioners.

- **Revenue Streams:** Potential revenue streams include registration fees, accreditation charges, certificate fees, examination fees, and fines for non-compliance.
- **Strategic Opportunity:** The report suggests exploring the possibility of establishing a larger, continent-wide African Language Practitioners Council to access broader pan-African and international funding streams that could support the SALPC.

5.3.2.3 Database Design, Security, and User Experience

- **POPIA Compliance:** The system architecture must ensure strict compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), treating the SALPC as the "Responsible Party".
- **Security Safeguards:** Implement robust security measures, including role-based access control end-to-end encryption (in transit and at rest), secure backups, and tamper-evident audit trails. The public register should only display minimal, necessary verification data.
- **User-Centred Design:** The User Interface (UI) and User Experience (UX) must be intuitive, accessible, and fully multilingual to reflect South Africa's linguistic diversity and encourage adoption. Accessibility features like screen-reader compatibility and mobile optimization are crucial.

5.3.2.4 Implementation and Adoption Strategy

- **Phased Rollout:** Implementation should proceed via a phased rollout, prioritizing practitioner groups in high-risk fields (e.g., court and health interpreting) before expanding
- **Pathway Before Compulsion:** The guiding principle is "no compulsion without a pathway," meaning accessible routes to registration, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), must be established before registration becomes mandatory for any group
- **Incentives:** Incentives, such as increased visibility to potential clients and access to job opportunities and CPD resources, will be used to encourage early adoption and registration
- **Policy Integration:** Policy should incorporate the principles of the Economics of Language (EOL) to ensure a more economically informed and evidence-based planning framework that leverages multilingualism for economic competitiveness.

5.4 Conclusion

The findings from Reports 1 and 2 outline a language economy that operates within a well-developed constitutional and policy framework for multilingualism, while also reflecting a set of institutional and structural conditions that shape professional practice.

Report 1 showed that the language sector contributes to economic activity and employment across a range of domains, while also identifying ongoing challenges related to institutional coordination, the availability and consistency of data, and uneven levels of visibility across different language groupings. It also highlighted the role of emerging governance structures such as the SALPC and the value of improved economic and institutional monitoring.

Report 2 translated these structural observations into a set of governance, regulatory and systems design considerations. It confirmed the importance of a national practitioner database for regulation, quality assurance and coordination, and outlined practical issues related to professional classification, accreditation, CPD compliance, data protection and sustainable funding.

Taken together, the two reports establish the policy and institutional context within which Report 3 is located. The practitioner-focused needs and capacity assessment therefore builds directly on these earlier findings by examining how existing policy intentions and governance arrangements are reflected in the knowledge, skills, training pathways and professional conditions of language practitioners in practice.

Chapter 6 Language Professions and Occupations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter maps the main professions and occupations that make up South Africa's language economy and situates them within the post-1994 language and cultural policy framework. It moves beyond generic references to "language practitioners" by describing who is doing language work, in which institutional settings, along which educational and training pathways, and under what kinds of regulatory and professional conditions. In doing so, it draws on the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act definition of practitioners, but also recognises a wider ecosystem of language-intensive roles that fall outside the immediate scope of the Act yet remain critical for multilingual communication, language rights, and the broader cultural and creative economy.

The analysis that follows introduces the core language professions, sketches typical routes into these careers, and outlines the current mix of institutional support, regulatory arrangements and CPD practices. It also highlights uneven patterns of language visibility across professions and training systems, particularly for African languages and South African Sign Language. Together, these elements provide the conceptual and institutional frame for the needs assessment in the rest of the report: they clarify whose knowledge, capacities and professional development needs are being assessed, and where the most significant gaps and opportunities for intervention are likely to lie.

6.2 Core Language Professions

This section provides a concise overview of the main language-related professions in South Africa as defined in the Act. The aim is not to give an exhaustive occupational taxonomy, but to describe the core roles that make up the language economy and to clarify how they contribute to knowledge production, communication, and language rights. Subsequent sections discuss educational pathways, regulatory frameworks, CPD structures and the visibility of different languages within these professions in more detail.

6.2.1 Academic (Professor, Lecturer, Researcher, Educator)

Academic language professionals work primarily in universities, universities of technology, research institutes and teacher education colleges. Their core responsibilities combine teaching, research and supervision. In language-related fields this includes disciplines such as linguistics and applied linguistics, African language studies, English and Afrikaans literature, translation studies, language education, communication studies and rhetoric.

Academics design and deliver courses, supervise honours and postgraduate research, develop new curricula and produce scholarly work that shapes how language is understood in policy and practice. Many also engage in community outreach, translation of research into public-facing formats, and advisory work for government or professional bodies. They occupy a central position in the language ecosystem because they both generate new knowledge and train the next generation of practitioners, teachers and language workers.

6.2.2 Writers (Journalists, Authors, Scriptwriters, Copywriters, Social Media Content Providers)

Writers are professionals whose primary medium is written or scripted language. This group spans news journalists, feature writers, authors of fiction and non-fiction, scriptwriters for film, television, radio and podcasts, copywriters in advertising and marketing, technical writers, grant writers and an increasingly diverse group of digital content creators working on websites, blogs and social media.

Their work shapes public discourse, storytelling and information flows. In the language economy, writers create content in different South African languages, interpret events and ideas for broad audiences, and adapt messages to specific cultural and linguistic communities. Many work as freelancers or on short-term contracts, moving between organisations and platforms. A smaller number occupy more stable roles in newsrooms, publishing houses, communications departments and content agencies.

6.2.3 Translator (Literary, Legal, Medical, Technical, Audiovisual)

Translators render written or recorded content from one language into another, aiming to preserve meaning, tone and communicative intent while adapting appropriately to the target context. Within this broad category there are multiple specialisations. Literary translators work on novels, poetry and drama. Legal and sworn translators handle contracts, court papers and official documents. Medical and technical translators specialise in highly regulated or scientifically complex domains. Audiovisual translators deal with subtitles, dubbing scripts and other screen-based content.

In the South African context, translators are crucial for giving effect to language rights in courts, public administration, education and health services, as well as for enabling commerce across language barriers. They work in government language units, parastatals, universities, NGOs, translation agencies and corporate communication departments, as well as in freelance practice. The quality of their work depends on strong bilingual or multilingual competence, subject-matter familiarity and careful ethical judgement, especially when dealing with sensitive or high-stakes content.

6.2.4 Interpreter (Simultaneous, Consecutive, Liaison, Sign Language)

Interpreters perform a similar function to translators but in real time and usually in spoken (or signed) mode. Simultaneous interpreters work in conference settings, interpreting speech as it is delivered. Consecutive interpreters work with pauses, relaying speech after segments of the original talk. Liaison and community interpreters operate in more informal or small-group settings, including health consultations, legal aid, social services and business meetings. Sign language interpreters mediate between South African Sign Language and spoken languages in classrooms, courts, public events and broadcast media.

Interpreting is cognitively demanding and often performed in high-pressure environments. Interpreters are essential for multilingual participation in parliamentary debates, court proceedings, community hearings, international conferences and media events. In practice,

many interpreters combine this work with translation, language facilitation or other communication roles, moving between contract and institutional employment.

6.2.5 Language Teacher (Foreign Language, Home Language, Additional Language, ESL/EFL, Adult Education)

Language teachers work in schools, universities, language centres and adult education programmes. This profession includes teachers of home languages (e.g. isiXhosa Home Language in schools), first additional and second additional languages in the school curriculum, foreign language lecturers at universities (e.g. French, German, Portuguese, Mandarin), teachers of English as a second or foreign language, and facilitators of adult literacy and community language programmes.

They design and deliver language curricula, assess learners, and adapt teaching methods to diverse linguistic backgrounds and educational needs. In South Africa, language teachers are central to implementing language-in-education policy, promoting multilingualism and supporting literacy and academic development. Their work also has a direct bearing on the future supply of language practitioners, since learners' experiences of languages at school influence whether they continue with those languages into tertiary study and professional life.

6.2.6 Language Practitioner (Generalist Language Services Professional)

“Language practitioner” is an umbrella term used in South Africa for professionals who provide various language services: translation, editing, interpreting, copy-editing, proofreading, terminology work, plain-language rewriting and sometimes text design and language consultancy. Many public-sector posts and institutional language units use this generic title, even when roles are heavily skewed toward one function (for example, translation or editing).

Language practitioners can be employed in government departments, legislatures, courts, municipalities, universities, SOEs, NGOs, corporate communications and media houses, or they may practice as independent contractors. They are often expected to be flexible generalists who can work across multiple genres (policy documents, reports, promotional material, speeches, educational texts) and across multiple languages, within the constraints of limited staffing and budgets. This generalist pattern has implications for training and CPD, which are taken up later in the report.

6.2.7 Linguist (Theoretical, Applied, Computational)

Linguists study language as a system and as a social practice. Theoretical linguists analyse phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Applied linguists focus on language in use and on language-related problems, such as language learning, academic literacy, language policy, translation, multilingual education or forensic analysis of texts. Sociolinguists examine language variation, identity and power. Psycholinguists study language processing and acquisition. Computational linguists and natural language processing specialists combine linguistic insights with computer science to develop language technologies.

Linguists work in universities and research institutes, but also in curriculum development, assessment bodies, lexicography units, language boards, publishing, language technology companies and consultancy. Their work underpins informed language policy, evidence-based

teaching materials, corpus development, dictionaries, and the design of human language technologies.

6.2.8 Terminologist

Terminologists specialise in the collection, analysis and standardisation of technical vocabulary in specific subject fields. They research terms used in law, medicine, engineering, education, finance, ICT and other domains, determine equivalents across languages, and compile terminology lists, glossaries and term banks. In multilingual environments they play a pivotal role in ensuring that technical concepts can be expressed clearly and consistently in African languages and Afrikaans, not only in English.

Terminology work is often located in government language services, national and provincial departments, standard-setting bodies, lexicography units and large organisations with specialised communication needs. Terminologists frequently collaborate with translators, subject specialists and academic linguists, and their work is closely linked to language planning and to the development of language resources for human language technologies.

6.2.9 Lexicographer

Lexicographers compile and maintain dictionaries and related lexical resources. They select entries, define meanings, record usage examples, decide on spelling and orthographic conventions, and determine how variants and loanwords are presented. In South Africa, many lexicographers work within the National Lexicography Units (NLUs) for the official African languages, in dictionary publishers, or in language departments that host dictionary projects.

Lexicography is both a scholarly and a practical activity. It feeds into school dictionaries, bilingual dictionaries, specialised glossaries and online lexicographic platforms. In the African language context, lexicographers are central to standardisation, to documenting terminology, and to providing the lexical datasets that can later be used in spellcheckers, predictive text and other tools.

6.2.10 Text Editor / Proofreader

Editors and proofreaders work on texts that have already been drafted, improving clarity, correctness, coherence and consistency. At one end of the spectrum, structural or substantive editors may reorganise material, clarify logic and refine tone for specific audiences. At the other end, language editors and proofreaders focus on grammar, spelling, punctuation, formatting and adherence to house style. In many South African organisations, “language editor” is the label used for people who correct and standardise official documents, reports, policies, educational materials and academic texts.

Editors and proofreaders are typically employed in publishing houses, newspapers and magazines, universities, government communication services, research institutes and NGOs. Many also operate as freelancers. Their work is essential to the quality of public and academic communication, and they often act as informal gatekeepers for language norms in their institutions.

6.2.11 Language Planner

Language planners work at the interface of language, law and public policy. They contribute to the development and implementation of language policies, orthographic conventions, spelling rules, terminology guidelines and multilingual strategy documents. They may be employed by language boards, provincial and national departments, statutory bodies such as PanSALB and the future SALPC, universities, or by local government structures.

Their work can include drafting and revising language policies, facilitating consultation processes, advising on implementation plans, monitoring compliance, and liaising with communities, advocacy groups and language practitioners. In a multilingual democracy, language planners play a key role in translating constitutional language rights into workable institutional frameworks and operational guidelines.

6.2.12 Related Language and Communication Roles

There is a wide set of roles that are not always thought of as “language professions” but are, in practice, heavily language-dependent. These include corporate communication specialists, public relations officers, brand managers, advertising creatives, UX and content strategists, technical communicators and internal communications staff. While their job titles typically emphasise “communication”, “marketing” or “media”, much of their day-to-day work involves crafting, adapting and managing language across platforms and audiences.

These professionals often sit in marketing and communications departments rather than in dedicated language units. They may or may not have formal training in languages or linguistics, but their work has significant implications for how multilingual communication, cultural nuance and language inclusivity are handled within organisations.

6.2.13 Language Consultant

Language consultants advise organisations on language use, multilingual communication strategies, naming and branding, plain-language compliance, and the design of language services. Some work independently; others are associated with firms offering broader communication or organisational development services. Their assignments can range from reviewing the language of a single policy or contract to designing full language strategies for municipalities, universities or companies entering new linguistic markets.

In the South African context, language consultants often draw on experience as translators, editors, academics or language planners, and combine linguistic knowledge with organisational and legal awareness. They contribute to strategic decisions about which languages to use, how to handle translation and interpreting, and how to ensure that communication is accessible and rights-compliant.

6.2.14 Language Analyst (Advertising, Communication, Government, Intelligence)

Language analysts use linguistic tools and methods to interpret texts, discourse and communication patterns for specific institutional purposes. In advertising and branding, they may analyse language to fine-tune slogans, narratives and brand tone. In government or

parliamentary contexts, they may examine speeches, public submissions or media discourse. In security, legal or intelligence settings, they may work as forensic linguists, examining threatening letters, anonymous communications, social media patterns or testimonies for evidential or investigative purposes.

These roles require high levels of analytical skill and often involve collaboration with legal teams, investigators, social scientists, psychologists and communication strategists. While relatively small in number, they represent an important, specialised node in the language economy, especially where language intersects with law, security and public trust.

6.2.15 Speech-Language Pathologist (Speech Therapist)

Speech-language pathologists (or speech therapists) are health professionals who assess, diagnose and treat speech, language, communication and swallowing disorders. They work with children and adults who experience developmental language delays, stuttering, voice disorders, aphasia after stroke, communication difficulties associated with hearing loss, and a range of other conditions. In South Africa, they work in hospitals, clinics, schools, rehabilitation centres, private practices and community-based services.

Although their primary frame of reference is clinical and they are regulated through health councils rather than language bodies, they are central to the language ecosystem. Their work determines whether children can access curricula, whether adults can participate in work and social life, and whether people with disabilities can be effectively included in communication processes. They also often work multilingually and in resource-constrained settings, which has implications for language policy and service design.

6.2.16 Dialect Coach

Dialect coaches (or accent coaches) train actors, presenters, voice artists, political figures and other public speakers to use specific accents and dialects. This can involve helping an actor achieve a convincing regional South African accent, preparing performers to use a particular variety of English, or coaching presenters to speak more clearly for broadcast. They may work on film and television productions, theatre projects, advertising campaigns or political communication.

Dialect coaches draw on detailed phonetic and prosodic knowledge, but many come through performance backgrounds rather than formal linguistics. They occupy a niche but visible role in the creative industries and contribute to how languages and varieties are represented in popular culture.

6.2.17 Localisation Specialist

Localisation specialists adapt products, software, websites, games and digital content for specific linguistic and cultural markets. This work includes translating user interfaces and documentation, adjusting date, time and currency formats, adapting examples and visuals, and sometimes modifying functionality to comply with local norms and regulations. Localisation is closely linked to software development, project management and language technology.

In South Africa, localisation specialists may work for multinational firms, local tech companies, translation and localisation agencies, or as freelancers. Their work increasingly requires

familiarity with computer-assisted translation tools, content management systems, version control, and sometimes basic coding. As digital platforms proliferate, localisation becomes a growing area of demand for language practitioners with a strong technical orientation.

6.2.18 Subtitler / Captioner

Subtitlers and captioners create written renderings of speech for screen media. Subtitling typically refers to translating spoken dialogue into another language and displaying it on screen. Captioning, particularly closed captioning, often involves same-language transcription with additional information about sound effects and speaker identity for Deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers. In practice many professionals work across both.

These practitioners work for broadcasters, streaming platforms, film and television production companies, educational media producers and specialised audiovisual translation companies. Their work requires fast, accurate transcription and translation, sensitivity to timing and reading speed, and an awareness of technical standards for different platforms. With the growth of video content and online learning, subtitling and captioning have become an increasingly important part of the language services landscape.

6.2.19 Other Occupations Involving Language Skills

Beyond the roles described above, there is a wider ring of occupations that depend heavily on language skills but are not always recognised as part of the “language professions”. These include actors and performers working in multiple languages, sign language interpreters specialising in South African Sign Language and spoken-language combinations, language technology specialists developing natural language processing systems, voice-over artists for advertising and educational content, and multilingual customer-service or helpdesk staff who act as everyday mediators between organisations and clients in different languages.

Many people in these roles do not identify primarily as “language practitioners” and may have trained in drama, IT, business or general humanities. Nevertheless, they contribute directly to the visibility and usability of South African languages in media, technology, commerce and everyday life. For the purposes of a needs assessment, it is important to keep this wider set of language-intensive occupations in view, even if the focus of subsequent surveys and interviews falls more squarely on the core professions outlined above.

6.3 Educational and Training Pathways into the Language Professions

Because this report is concerned with the “knowledge base and professional development needs of language practitioners”, it is important to understand, at least in outline, how people currently enter the core language professions in South Africa. This section therefore sketches the main educational and training pathways into the roles described above. It remains a high-level overview: the intention is to provide enough context for the needs assessment that follows, while leaving a more detailed evaluation of specific programmes and institutions to Report 4, which will examine the adequacy of tertiary education and training for language practitioners and propose improvements.

Broadly speaking, four types of pathways can be distinguished: formal tertiary qualifications, professional and statutory registration, short courses and skills programmes, and experience-based or informal routes. Different professions draw on these elements in different proportions.

6.3.1 Tertiary qualifications as the primary gateway

For most language professions, a university degree or equivalent qualification is still the main formal gateway, even where it is not a strict legal requirement. The picture, however, is not uniform.

In the classical language professions – translators, interpreters, language practitioners, editors, lexicographers, terminologists and many linguists – the dominant pattern is an undergraduate degree in languages, linguistics or language practice, sometimes followed by honours or master's study in a more specialised area.

Dedicated Language Practice and Translation programmes at a cluster of universities and universities of technology play a particularly important role here: they combine language pair work (often English paired with one or more African languages, Afrikaans or a foreign language) with modules in translation theory, editing, terminology, text design and, increasingly, exposure to computer-assisted tools.

Graduates from these programmes are highly visible in government language units, parastatals, universities and translation agencies. At the same time, many people in these professions come from more general humanities degrees, majoring in, for example, English, African Languages or Linguistics, and then learning the practical dimensions of language work on the job.

In the teaching professions, the pathway is more tightly defined. School language teachers typically complete a four-year Bachelor of Education degree with a language specialisation, or a general bachelor's degree with a Postgraduate Certificate in Education. These degrees are governed by national teacher-education standards and are linked directly to registration with the South African Council for Educators.

Foreign-language lecturers and adult language educators are more varied: some hold education degrees, others come from language majors or applied linguistics and then specialise in TEFL, TESOL or adult education through shorter programmes.

In the health-related language profession of speech-language pathology, formal qualification is non-negotiable. Speech-language pathologists complete a professional four-year degree in speech-language pathology (often combined with audiology), followed by an internship or community-service year and registration with the Health Professions Council. Their training is anchored in the health sciences but includes substantial work on language development and language disorders, multilingual assessment and intervention, and communication in diverse communities.

For writers, journalists, content creators and related communication roles, tertiary pathways are more diffuse. Many writers and journalists come through degrees in Journalism, Media Studies, Communication, English or Creative Writing. Others enter the field with general humanities or social-science degrees and build their writing and editing skills in the workplace. In some creative industries – such as scriptwriting, advertising and digital content – portfolios and networks matter at least as much as formal qualifications. In this part of the language

economy, tertiary education provides useful foundations, but entry into the profession is much less tightly structured than in teaching or speech-language pathology.

Technology-oriented language roles, such as localisation specialists and language-technology developers, typically arise at the intersection of language and computing. Some practitioners come through language practice or applied linguistics programmes that have introduced computer-assisted translation, corpus tools and basic language technology. Others have degrees in computer science, information systems or data science and develop a stronger language specialisation over time. As human language technologies become more prominent, these hybrid profiles are likely to become more important, but at present they remain a fairly small, specialised segment of the broader language workforce.

Finally, academics in language-related fields follow the standard scholarly pathway: an honours degree, master's degree and doctorate in a relevant discipline, often combined with teaching experience and research output. Their professional development is shaped as much by research cultures and promotion criteria as by formal coursework.

6.3.2 Professional and statutory registration

Alongside degrees and diplomas, some professions are structured around statutory registration or formal professional certification. This layer is important for understanding why the training expectations for, say, a speech-language pathologist look very different from those of a freelance translator or copywriter.

In the language and communication fields, only a small subset of roles are currently regulated through statute. Speech-language pathologists must complete approved degrees, a period of community service, and register with the health professions council before practising. School teachers must hold recognised teaching qualifications and register with the national teachers' council. In both cases, registration is a legal requirement and misconduct can result in being struck off the roll.

Most other language professions operate in a much looser regulatory environment. Translators, interpreters and language practitioners may choose to sit accreditation exams offered by professional associations; successful candidates can then use an accreditation mark as a quality signal. Membership bodies for editors, terminologists, lexicographers and language therapists also exist, and some of them set voluntary standards, codes of ethics and recommended fee structures. However, these arrangements do not, in general, have the force of law. Employers may prefer accredited practitioners, but unaccredited practitioners are not formally barred from working.

This distinction between statutory registration, voluntary professional accreditation and complete absence of external oversight is one of the background conditions that this project has to take seriously. The contemplated role of the South African Language Practitioners' Council is precisely to bring a more coherent regulatory framework to parts of this landscape. For now, though, the pathways into many language professions are shaped more by institutional hiring practices and market conventions than by formally defined professional gates.

6.3.3 Short courses, skills programmes and non-degree training

Across almost all language professions, short courses, skills programmes and non-degree training play a crucial, but uneven, role. University language centres, continuing-education units, private training providers and professional associations offer short programmes in topics such as advanced editing, legal and court interpreting, conference interpreting, audiovisual translation and subtitling, terminology management, forensic linguistics, TEFL/TESOL, academic writing support, copywriting and digital content strategy.

For some practitioners, these programmes serve as entry routes. A person with a general BA may, for example, complete a six-month course in translation or interpreting and then begin working in that field. For others, they function as a form of upskilling or specialisation: experienced translators learn audiovisual subtitling, editors learn plain-language methods or accessibility principles, and language teachers add TEFL or academic-literacy skills to their repertoire. The quality and depth of these programmes vary, and they are not systematically recognised in all parts of the labour market, but they are a significant part of the lived training experience of many practitioners.

From a system perspective, these offerings sit in a grey zone between initial education and continuing professional development. They are rarely compulsory in a formal sense, but they can be decisive for employability and mobility. Later in this report, and in much more detail in Report 4, the team will need to consider how visible, accessible and coherent this layer of training is, particularly for practitioners working in African languages and South African Sign Language.

6.3.4 Experience-based and informal routes

A substantial proportion of language practitioners do not follow neatly defined formal pathways at all. Many translators, editors, writers and consultants arrive in their current role through a sequence of practical opportunities rather than a single clear educational track: helping a community organisation translate documents, volunteering as a student editor, working as a junior reporter, taking on ad-hoc interpreting for colleagues, or being “the language person” in an office where they were hired initially for something else.

In these trajectories, learning takes place through informal mentoring, trial and error, and exposure to the norms of particular organisations or industries. A junior translator may learn from revision feedback from a senior colleague; a writer may be shaped by newsroom culture; an interpreter may learn on the job in a court environment with little structured pedagogical support. In the creative industries and in some communication roles, portfolios, networks and reputation play a larger role in career progression than additional formal qualifications.

These experience-based routes are not necessarily inferior. In many cases they produce highly capable practitioners with strong practical judgement. However, they can also leave significant gaps—especially in areas like ethics, legal responsibilities, human language technologies and business skills—that are not consistently covered in workplace learning. For a needs assessment, it is important to recognise that practitioners’ educational histories will be heterogeneous and that many of the gaps they report may reflect what was never covered in their original training.

6.3.5 Linking pathways to the forthcoming needs assessment

This brief mapping of pathways is designed to do two things for the rest of the report. First, it highlights the diversity of routes into the language professions: from tightly regulated, degree-based careers such as speech-language pathology and school teaching, through structured but non-statutory pathways in translation, interpreting and language practice, to much looser, portfolio-driven entry in writing, content creation and consultancy. Second, it underscores the modularity of training: many practitioners combine an initial degree, one or two short courses, and extensive experiential learning, rather than following a single coherent curriculum from undergraduate level through to mastery.

6.4 Language Visibility in Education

The previous sections described the main language professions and the broad pathways through which people enter them. This section turns from *who* and *how* to *which languages* are actually visible in those pathways. The intention is to offer a high-level scan that helps to interpret the survey and interview evidence which follows; a more detailed institutional mapping and evaluation of programmes will be undertaken in Report 4, which will focus specifically on “the adequacy of current tertiary education and training offerings for language practitioners and recommend improvements.”

Across the public university system, all eleven official languages appear somewhere in the curriculum, but they do not all occupy similar institutional or professional positions. Some languages are deeply embedded: they are offered as majors, used as languages of instruction, and treated as core working languages in applied programmes such as language practice, translation, teacher education and (to a lesser extent) language technology. Others appear mainly as general BA or BEd subjects, with more limited visibility in the technically oriented parts of the language professions. South African Sign Language, despite its recent recognition as an official language, is only beginning to acquire a foothold in formal degree programmes.

6.4.1 English

English remains the most pervasive language in education. It is the primary language of teaching and learning in almost all language-related degrees and diplomas, from linguistics and literature to language practice, communication and journalism. It also appears as a specialist field of study in its own right, as “English Language”, “English Literature” or combined streams. Because English is the default working language of state administration, business and higher education, it almost always forms one side of the language pair in professional training: translators, interpreters and language practitioners are typically prepared to work between English and an African language, English and Afrikaans, or English and a foreign language. For many practitioners, English is both the medium through which they were taught and one of the central objects of their professional work.

6.4.2 Afrikaans

Afrikaans has a dual presence that is slightly different but similarly dense. It remains a robust academic subject, with departments or streams in “Afrikaans” or “Afrikaans and Dutch” at several universities, and it also serves as a core working language in applied programmes. In

language practice and translation curricula, Afrikaans typically appears as one of the principal languages alongside English, Sesotho, Setswana or European languages such as French and German, and it is a common teaching subject in education faculties. Afrikaans therefore spans both general humanities training and the more technical work of translation, editing and terminology, and continues to generate a significant pool of graduates with advanced Afrikaans language skills.

6.4.3 isiZulu and isiXhosa

Among the African languages, isiZulu and isiXhosa are the most strongly institutionalised. Both are offered as full majors in African Languages or related departments, particularly in universities whose catchment areas align with their main speech communities. IsiZulu is a flagship language at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and appears as a major in African Languages at institutions such as the University of the Free State and Unisa. Similarly, isiXhosa is central to African Language Studies at Western Cape and Fort Hare, and is offered in applied language and short-course formats at Nelson Mandela University.

In addition to these disciplinary majors, both isiZulu and isiXhosa feature prominently in teacher education. They are offered as school language-teaching subjects in BEd and PGCE programmes across several universities, feeding directly into the school system. Crucially from the point of view of language practitioners, isiZulu and isiXhosa also enter the more technical side of the field: at some universities of technology and comprehensive universities they are designated as “programme languages” in language practice and translation streams, forming explicit English–isiZulu or English–isiXhosa working pairs.

Here we begin to see the contours of a more developed professional pipeline: students do not only “study the language”, but they also use it as a working medium for translation, interpreting, editing and applied linguistic tasks.

6.4.4 Sotho-Tswana Languages

The Sotho-Tswana languages—Sesotho, Setswana and Sepedi/Sesotho sa Leboa—form a related cluster, especially in the central and northern regions. At the University of the Free State, for example, African Languages specialises in the “Sesotho language groups”, with Sesotho, Setswana and Sepedi covered at undergraduate level and supervised collectively at honours and postgraduate levels.

North-West University and the Central University of Technology include Sesotho and Setswana in their language and education streams, and Unisa offers Sesotho and Sepedi as majors in its African Languages qualifications. These languages are also used as teaching subjects in BEd and PGCE programmes at inland universities.

The evidence here is of reasonably strong pipelines into school teaching and into some forms of applied work—such as translation and language practice where African language modules intersect with language practice degrees—but the integration into specialised translation, interpreting or language technology programmes is less extensive than in the case of English and the two large Nguni languages.

6.4.5 Less Visible South African Languages

For some of the remaining official languages, the pattern is more modest but still important. Siswati and isiNdebele are clearly present as degree subjects in African Languages at institutions such as Unisa and the University of Venda, and as languages for teacher preparation and regional community engagement. The same can be said for Tshivenda and Xitsonga, though here the picture is complicated—and enriched—by the existence of National Lexicography Units based at the University of Venda.

These units are responsible for dictionary-making and corpus development in Tshivenda and Xitsonga, and they draw directly on language graduates and local expertise. In these cases, we can see specialist professional pathways in lexicography and resource development, but outside this niche and the education system, these languages appear less frequently as core working languages in high-volume translation, interpreting or language practice programmes. They are present in the academy, and they support important professional work, but the density of practitioner pipelines is lower and more geographically concentrated than for the larger languages.

6.4.6 South African Sign Language (SASL)

South African Sign Language stands somewhat apart as a language whose professional pathways are very clearly still emerging. It has begun to appear as a subject in language schools and humanities faculties—for example at North-West University and the University of Venda—and it is increasingly recognised in institutional language policies and access strategies, particularly after its recognition as an official language.

Nevertheless, when one looks specifically for structured degree routes into SASL interpreting, SASL language practice or specialised SASL teacher education, the landscape is relatively sparse. The main impression at this stage is of modules, short courses and access-focused initiatives rather than full-blown professional pipelines. Given the policy importance of SASL in securing language rights for Deaf communities, this is an area where later reports will need to ask pointed questions about capacity gaps.

6.4.7 Summary

What emerges from this high-level scan is not a hierarchy of linguistic importance, but a hierarchy of professional density. English and Afrikaans, and to a slightly lesser extent isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho and Setswana, are simultaneously academic majors, languages of teacher education, and core working languages in applied programmes such as language practice, translation and interpreting. Other official languages—Sepedi, Siswati, isiNdebele, Tshivenda and Xitsonga—are clearly present as university subjects and as teaching languages, and they play important roles in lexicography and educational materials, but they are less frequently positioned at the centre of specialised, technically oriented language-practice programmes. South African Sign Language is visible in curricula, but as yet lacks the kind of structured pathways that would reliably produce cohorts of SASL interpreters and SASL language practitioners.

For the purposes of this report, this overview serves two functions. First, it provides essential context for interpreting what practitioners tell us in the surveys and interviews: when they describe their training routes, the gaps in their preparation, or the absence of formal pathways in particular languages, those experiences are rooted in the institutional patterns sketched above. Second, it signals the questions that Report 4 will address in much greater depth. That report will not only catalogue programmes, but will explicitly evaluate the adequacy of current tertiary education and training offerings for language practitioners across all official languages, and will propose options for strengthening and diversifying those pipelines—particularly where languages are currently confined to general BA and BEd streams and have only a limited presence in applied, professional programmes.

6.5 Regulatory, Institutional and CPD Landscape

The preceding sections described the core language professions, the educational pathways into those roles and the uneven visibility of different South African languages in those pathways. A further piece of context is the institutional and regulatory environment in which practitioners work – in particular, the extent to which their professions are formally regulated and supported by continuing professional development (CPD) structures.

This section offers a high-level overview of that landscape. It is deliberately exploratory: the design and adequacy of CPD will be examined much more closely once the survey and interview evidence has been analysed, and will be taken up again in detail in Report 4 alongside a fuller review of education and training provision.

At one end of the spectrum are professions that are tightly embedded in statutory regulation. Speech-language pathologists are the clearest example. Their work is governed by health legislation; they must complete accredited qualifications, a period of supervised practice or community service, and register with the relevant health council. Ongoing CPD is not optional: it is a condition of retaining professional registration.

The same is true, in a different institutional setting, for school teachers. Teachers must hold recognised qualifications and register with the national teachers' council, which in turn operates a formal CPD points system linked to approved activities, with compliance monitored by education authorities. In these fields, CPD exists as a visible, structured regime: practitioners are required to earn credits, providers compete to offer accredited activities, and employers can rely on a shared vocabulary about “keeping registration current”.

Most language professions, however, operate in a far looser environment. Translators, interpreters, editors, lexicographers, terminologists, language practitioners, academic linguists and language consultants are not, at present, regulated by statute in the way that doctors, teachers or speech-language pathologists are. Their professional lives are shaped instead by a mix of employer expectations, voluntary professional associations and market conventions.

Translators and interpreters may choose to sit accreditation exams offered by professional bodies; editors and proofreaders may join editorial associations and subscribe to codes of practice; lexicographers and terminologists may participate in specialised networks or working groups. Some associations encourage or require members to engage in ongoing development, and a number run their own short courses, seminars and conferences. But these arrangements

are voluntary. A practitioner can, in most cases, work without ever joining a professional body, and membership is not a legal precondition for employment.

As a result, CPD in these fields tends to be highly uneven. Some practitioners – particularly those attached to universities, large translation agencies, major publishers or government language units – participate regularly in workshops, conferences, in-house training and collaborative projects that expose them to new tools, standards and debates. Others, especially freelancers and those in smaller institutions, may have very little access to structured CPD, relying instead on self-study and informal peer exchange. The introduction of machine translation, audiovisual translation workflows, language technology and new ethical challenges in digital media has therefore affected practitioners in very different ways. Some have had systematic opportunities to update their skills; others have been left to improvise.

In addition to association-based initiatives, there is a layer of employer-driven and project-based development that functions as a *de facto* CPD system, even if it is not labelled as such. Large organisations occasionally commission specialised courses in plain-language writing, legal drafting, court interpreting, terminology management, or accessibility and inclusive communication, and staff are required to attend. International donors or NGOs sometimes fund training for community interpreters, paralegal language workers or multilingual field researchers as part of specific projects.

Universities run internal programmes on academic writing, supervision and assessment in which language educators participate. These activities can be intensive and impactful, but they are typically *ad hoc*, tied to particular funding cycles or organisational changes, and rarely stitched together into a coherent lifelong learning pathway for language practitioners as a group.

It is also important to recognise that, for many practitioners, the main site of professional learning is still informal and experiential. Junior translators learn from revision marks and feedback on their work; editors refine their craft through repeated cycles of working with particular authors and house styles; interpreters build stamina and technique through day-to-day practice in courts, hospitals or conference booths; writers and content creators experiment with formats and audiences in response to editorial feedback, analytics and market response. In these settings, mentoring relationships, peer networks and workplace cultures often matter more than formal courses.

Yet this kind of learning can be fragile: it depends on the presence of experienced practitioners who are willing and able to teach, on institutional time and incentives for mentoring, and on a degree of stability in teams. Where these conditions are absent, knowledge does not circulate easily across generations of practitioners.

6.6 Accreditation

The specific chapters and sections regulating accreditation and registration in South African legislation, particularly related to language professions and similar regulated professions, are primarily found in the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act and related accreditation policies. These include:

- Section 18(1)(a), (b), and (c) of the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act (Act 8 of 2014), which covers the registration of professionals and candidates as well as the accreditation of educational programmes leading to registration
- The Act authorizes the Council to register persons and regulate categories of registration, including certification and professional regulation
- Accreditation procedures are linked with educational institutions and their programs, overseen in alignment with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as per the Higher Education Act (Act No. 101 of 1997) (DHET, 2016)
- Detailed registration certificate and procedural regulations are found in Chapter 5 of the Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions, especially section 21, which deals with registration name and conditions for registration (DHET, 2016)
- Accreditation and registration processes include criteria, certification, extension, and withdrawal of accreditation, as outlined in government gazettes specifying chapters on Education and Training Quality Assurance Bodies .

In summary, the regulation of accreditation and registration is formalized within:

Table 1: The regulation of accreditation and registration.

Legislation/Regulation	Chapter/Section	Content
South African Language Practitioners' Council Act (2014)	Section 18(1)(a), (b), and (c)	Registration of practitioners and accreditation
Regulations for the Registration of Private Higher Education Institutions	Chapter 5, Section 21	Registration certificates and related requirements
Government Gazette on Education and Training QA Bodies	Chapter 2	Accreditation criteria, certificates, and audits

These sections set out the legal framework for registering language practitioners and accrediting the institutions and programs that qualify them. The registration involves categories of practitioners, certification, and oversight responsibilities for ensuring standards are met (SAQA 1998).

6.7 Categories

So as to implement the provisions of sections 21(3), 21(4) and 33 of the Act and these regulations, the Council identifies the following categories, subcategories and levels of language practitioners —

- a) The categories of language practitioners are as defined in the Act, including but not limited to translators, interpreters, text editors, terminologists and lexicographers.
- b) The subcategories of translators are paraprofessional translators, professional translators and sworn translators.
- c) The subcategories of interpreters are paraprofessional interpreters, professional simultaneous interpreters and professional consecutive interpreters.
- d) The subcategories of text editors are paraprofessional editors and professional editors.

6.7.1 Levels within categories

The levels identified within each category are level one for paraprofessional language practitioners, level two for professional language practitioners and level three for expert language practitioners.

Level one — Paraprofessional language practitioners represent persons who have no formal qualifications and practise as language practitioners in informal situations within a community environment. These include but are not limited to persons who interpret in churches, assist members of their community by interpreting for them at hospitals and clinics, assist the Deaf and similar activities.

Level two — Professional language practitioners represents language practitioners whether working on a full-time or part-time basis, who are fully competent in the field of language practice concerned and are in possession of either a degree or postgraduate degree or approved prior learning and experience in lieu of such degree. This category includes but is not limited to formal-hearing interpreters and medical interpreters.

Level three — Expert language practitioners represents language practitioners who have been accredited at level two prior to applying for accreditation at level three and have the competency to handle complex, technical and sophisticated language practice work. The standard of an expert will be benchmarked according to international practice. The person must be in possession of either a degree or postgraduate degree or recognised prior learning and experience in lieu of such degree accompanied by a wealth of experience in the relevant field, which may include but is not limited to sworn translators with relevant legal knowledge and high-level conference interpreters.

Except for paraprofessionals, no person may practise at any of the levels contemplated in these regulations unless he or she has been accredited at that level within the quality assurance system. (Government Gazette 2015).

6.7.2 Authorised Titles

A person who is registered and accredited at any of the levels referred to in regulation 14(3)(e) may describe himself or herself as and use the following titles —

- a) If accredited at level one — Paraprofessional Language Practitioner.
- b) If accredited at level two — Professional Language Practitioner.
- c) If accredited at level three — Expert Language Practitioner.

It is recommended that these levels and titles be reviewed in the light of changes in the language sector since the drafting of the Act.

6.8 Cross-cutting Competencies in the Language Professions

Taken individually, the professions described in this chapter can look quite dissimilar: an interpreter in a court, a subtitler working for a streaming platform, a lexicographer in a national unit, a language teacher in a township school, a speech-language pathologist in a public hospital, a localisation specialist in a software firm.

Once their work is described in detail, clear patterns emerge. Regardless of job title, sector or employment status, language practitioners tend to draw on a common underlying set of competencies.

This section sketches those shared competency domains in broad terms. Its purpose is to provide a conceptual bridge between the descriptive mapping in the first half of the chapter and the empirical needs assessment that follows.

The survey and interview data speak in much more concrete terms about what practitioners feel they know, what they wish they had been taught, and where they see gaps. Here, we simply set out the main “buckets” into which those needs can be grouped.

6.8.1 Advanced language and textual competencies

At the core of almost every language profession is a cluster of what might be called advanced language and textual competencies. Practitioners must be able to read, analyse and produce texts at a high level in at least one language, and often in two or more.

This goes beyond everyday fluency. It involves sensitivity to register, tone and audience; the ability to shift between informal and formal discourses; and a capacity to work with different textual genres – from policy documents and contracts to news copy, educational materials, scripts and social-media content. For translators, editors, writers and language practitioners, this is the bedrock of their daily work.

For speech-language pathologists, it underpins assessment and intervention. For teachers, it shapes how they design tasks and evaluate learner writing. For linguists and language planners, it is central to their analytic and drafting work.

6.8.2 Mediation and meaning-making

Layered on top of this is a second cluster of competencies around mediation and meaning-making. Many language professionals act as bridges of one kind or another: between languages, between specialised and lay audiences, between institutions and communities, between written and spoken forms, or between technical jargon and plain language.

Translators and interpreters are the most obvious examples, but writers, communication specialists, teachers, academics and language consultants all engage in this kind of work. They must understand source material, identify what matters for the target audience, and make

decisions about what to preserve, what to adapt and what to explain. This requires not only linguistic skill, but also pragmatic judgement and intercultural awareness.

6.8.3 Subject-matter and contextual knowledge

A third domain concerns subject-matter and contextual knowledge. Few language practitioners can afford to be “just” language experts in the abstract.

Legal translators need at least a working understanding of legal systems and procedures; medical translators and health interpreters need familiarity with anatomy, diseases and treatment pathways; language planners and policy drafters need to navigate constitutional provisions, administrative law and institutional governance; speech-language pathologists require deep knowledge of communication disorders and clinical practice; academic editors must understand disciplinary conventions; localisation specialists need to know how software and digital products are structured.

In practice, practitioners often develop this knowledge piecemeal – through experience, reading, collaboration with domain experts and project-specific research. Nevertheless, it is a core part of their professional competence.

6.8.4 Digital and technological competencies

Increasingly, digital and technological competencies form a fourth shared domain. Even practitioners whose training predates contemporary human language technologies now work in an environment shaped by them. Translators are expected to be comfortable with computer-assisted translation tools, termbases (specialized databases) and sometimes machine-translation post-editing.

Subtitles and captioners work with specialised software and platform-specific technical standards. Localisation specialists move between content management systems, version control and basic coding conventions.

Writers and editors navigate content management systems, analytics dashboards and SEO constraints. Teachers and academics engage with learning-management systems, online assessment tools and digital resources in multiple languages. Even where formal training in these tools is limited, practitioners have to learn to operate in a digital ecosystem and, increasingly, to make informed choices about when and how to use machine-assisted workflows.

A fifth cross-cutting area is ethical, legal and professional judgement. Language practitioners routinely handle sensitive information, shape public narratives and affect access to rights and services. Court interpreters must understand the implications of omissions and inaccuracies for fair trial rights; translators working on contracts or legislation must be conscious of legal consequences; editors and writers must navigate issues of plagiarism, misrepresentation and bias; speech-language pathologists must respect confidentiality and consent; language planners must weigh competing claims about whose language varieties are recognised and resourced.

These are not questions that can be settled purely by grammar rules or style guides. They require familiarity with ethical frameworks, relevant legislation and professional codes, as well as the capacity to reason through grey areas.

6.8.5 Business and Relational Competencies

Finally, there is a set of organisational, business and relational competencies that cut across almost all roles but are often least explicitly addressed in formal training. Freelance translators, interpreters, writers and consultants must manage their own business affairs, pricing, contracts and marketing. Language practitioners in institutions have to work within bureaucratic systems, navigate procurement rules, justify budgets, negotiate timelines and collaborate with non-specialist colleagues.

Teachers, academics and speech-language pathologists operate in hierarchical organisations with particular reporting lines and performance expectations. Across the board, practitioners benefit from project-management skills, the ability to scope and cost assignments, and the interpersonal skills needed to negotiate expectations and explain language decisions to non-experts.

These domains are not exhaustive, and they do not map neatly onto individual job titles; different professions emphasise them in different proportions. Nor are they independent of language choice: as the previous section suggested, the opportunities to acquire and exercise these competences differ significantly between English and Afrikaans on the one hand, and many African languages and South African Sign Language on the other.

Taken together, they provide a useful conceptual frame for the needs assessment that follows. When practitioners speak about gaps in their preparation, frustration with existing training, or priorities for future CPD, their concerns will almost always touch one or more of these domains: advanced language and textual competence, mediation and meaning-making, subject-matter knowledge, digital and technological literacy, ethical and legal judgement, and organisational and business skills.

The surveys and interviews reported in the next chapters are designed to elicit precisely this kind of information. They ask not only which qualifications practitioners hold, but how confident they feel in different aspects of their work, which areas they have had to teach themselves, and what kinds of support or training they would value most. The competency map sketched here therefore serves as both a background framework and a set of lenses through which the empirical findings can be interpreted.

6.9 Conclusion: Implications for the Needs Assessment

This chapter has deliberately taken a system-level view of the language professions. It has described the main roles that make up the language economy, outlined the formal and informal pathways into those roles, sketched how different South African languages are embedded in education and training, and highlighted the fragmented character of current regulatory and CPD arrangements. It has also suggested a set of broad competency domains that recur across professions, even when their day-to-day work looks very different.

Two themes stand out from this overview.

- The first is that the language professions are structurally heterogeneous. There is no single pipeline into “being a language practitioner”. Some people arrive via dedicated language practice and translation degrees, others through general humanities or African language majors, still others through teaching, health, journalism, law, IT, community work or the creative industries. Some careers are tightly bound to formal qualifications and statutory registration; others are shaped mainly by informal learning, portfolios and networks. Many practitioners build their skill sets through a patchwork of degrees, short courses and on-the-job learning rather than through a single coherent curriculum.
- The second theme is that the landscape is uneven. English and Afrikaans, and to a lesser extent isiZulu and isiXhosa, enjoy relatively dense institutional support: they are offered as majors, used as languages of instruction, and embedded as working languages in applied programmes such as language practice, translation and teacher education. Other African languages are clearly present in curricula and teacher education, and in some cases in lexicography and resource development, but they are less consistently positioned at the centre of technically oriented language-practice programmes. South African Sign Language is recognised in policy and is beginning to appear in curricula, but structured degree-level pathways into SASL interpreting and SASL language practice remain thin.
- A similar unevenness is visible in CPD: regulated professions such as teaching and speech-language pathology sit alongside large parts of the language sector where ongoing development is voluntary, ad hoc and often self-funded.

Table 2: Status of CPD in language sector.

Profession / Role	Core Function (in brief)	Main Sectors / Settings	Key SA / Regional Bodies	Existing CPD Pattern (Current Reality)
Academic (Professor, Lecturer, Researcher, Educator)	Teach and research language-related disciplines; train future practitioners and teachers.	Universities, universities of technology, some TVETs, research institutes.	ALASA; AFRILEX (for some); universities; SACO as research partner; other academic societies.	Academic-norm driven: conferences, publishing, seminars, supervision training, teaching development. CPD is informal but deeply embedded in academic work, not regulated by a professional council.
Writer (Journalist, Author, Copywriter, Scriptwriter, Content Creator)	Produce written content for media, publishing, campaigns, and digital platforms.	Media, publishing, advertising/marketing, corporate comms, NGOs.	SANEF (journalists); PEN SA; marketing/advertising associations; various guilds/collectives.	Mostly informal: newsroom training, workshops, residencies, online courses, conferences. No formal, occupation-wide CPD regime.
Translator	Translate written/recorded content between languages for information access and	Government, justice, health, education, corporates, NGOs,	SATI; PanSALB; language units in departments; SALPC (as emerging regulator, not yet operational).	Patchy but profession-oriented: SATI workshops, short courses at universities, tool-training, employer in-house training.

Profession / Role	Core Function (in brief)	Main Sectors / Settings	Key SA / Regional Bodies	Existing CPD Pattern (Current Reality)
	legal/administrative purposes.	publishing, agencies.		Participation is voluntary and uneven; no single statutory CPD system in force.
Interpreter (incl. Sign Language, Community, Court, Conference)	Provide real-time oral/signed mediation between languages in high-stakes settings.	Courts, legislatures, government events, health, education, conferences, media.	SATI (interpreting division); PanSALB; Deaf organisations and SASL networks; court and legislature language units; SALPC (future).	Mixed: ad hoc training by courts / legislatures / health institutions; SATI and Deaf org workshops; some HE short courses. CPD is largely employer- or association-driven, not centrally regulated.
Language Teacher (School, ESL/EFL, Adult)	Teach home, additional and foreign languages; literacy and communication skills.	Schools, TVETs, universities, adult education centres, private language schools.	SACE (school teacher registration & CPD system); DBE & DHET; subject associations; ALASA (applied linguistics/ education).	Strong, sectoral CPD: SACE-mandated CPD for school teachers; departmental training on curricula; subject association workshops; TEFL / ESL short courses. CPD is tied to teaching role, not specifically “language practitioner” identity.
Language Practitioner (generalist in institutions)	Provide bundled language services (translation, editing, writing, policy support, etc.) in one post.	Government language units, legislatures, universities, public entities, some corporates.	SALPC (regulatory framework pending), PanSALB, SATI, institutional language units.	Institution- and association-driven: internal workshops, ad hoc university short courses, SATI/editor/translator training. No unified CPD obligation yet; engagement depends heavily on employer and individual initiative.
Linguist (Theoretical, Applied, Computational)	Study and apply knowledge about language structure, use and acquisition; inform policy, teaching, testing, HLT.	Universities, research councils, language bodies, HLT firms, testing bodies.	ALASA; AFRILEX; SADiLaR; NexLA; PanSALB; SACO; academic societies.	Academic and project-driven: conferences, research collaborations, specialised methods workshops (corpus, HLT, assessment). CPD is informal, embedded in research practice rather than regulated.
Terminologist	Develop, standardise	Terminology units, language	AFRILEX; national lexicography/termin	Project- and association-based:

Profession / Role	Core Function (in brief)	Main Sectors / Settings	Key SA / Regional Bodies	Existing CPD Pattern (Current Reality)
	and manage specialised terminology across languages.	boards, standards bodies, publishers, HLT/localisation projects.	ology units (SANLU & others, under PanSALB); SADiLaR/ NexLA; SALPC (future practitioners).	AFRILEX conferences, terminology workshops, on-the-job mentoring in units/standards committees. No formal, compulsory CPD regime; learning is largely embedded in project work.
Lexicographer	Compile dictionaries and lexical resources using corpus and language research.	National lexicography units, universities, publishers, HLT projects.	AFRILEX; SANLU & other NLU boards (PanSALB-linked); SADiLaR; academic networks.	Informal, community of practice: AFRILEX events, corpus / lexicography workshops, internal training in dictionary units. No formal CPD requirement. Expertise developed through long-term project involvement.
Text Editor / Proofreader	Edit and proofread texts for correctness, clarity, style and consistency.	Publishing, media, universities, government, corporate, NGOs, freelance.	SATI (editing stream); SALPC (future practitioner registration); PanSALB (ecosystem); publishing & press bodies.	Voluntary and market-driven: SATI / editor workshops, university short courses, in-house publisher training. CPD is important but optional and usually driven by client expectations, not a regulator.
Language Planner	Design and implement language policies and development strategies; promote multilingualism and language rights.	Government, statutory language bodies, education departments, research institutes, NGOs.	PanSALB; provincial language committees; ALASA (for policy / education overlap); departmental language units.	Sector-linked: training in public policy, planning, M&E, facilitation; often part of broader public-service or policy CPD. No distinct, regulated CPD path specifically for “language planners”.
Related Language & Communication Roles (Comms / PR / Brand / UX)	Use language strategically for organisational communication, branding and stakeholder engagement.	Corporate comms, government comms, NGOs, media/creative agencies, digital product teams.	PRISA and other PR / marketing bodies; sectoral networks; not usually under PanSALB/SALPC.	Marketing/communications CPD: PR/marketing courses, brand/UX workshops, platform-specific training. CPD is sectoral, with language as a tool rather than a regulated profession.

Profession / Role	Core Function (in brief)	Main Sectors / Settings	Key SA / Regional Bodies	Existing CPD Pattern (Current Reality)
Language Consultant	Advise on language policy, plain language, multilingual strategies and communication systems.	Government, corporates, legal/financial, NGOs, education, branding agencies.	Often SATI/SALPC-eligible; work with PanSALB, SACO, legal and financial sector bodies; plain-language and UX networks.	Highly varied, practice-led: plain-language workshops, legal drafting courses, UX/strategy training, facilitation courses. CPD follows the sectors they serve (law, finance, comms) rather than a single profession-wide system.
Language Analyst (Discourse, Media, Forensic, Intelligence)	Analyse language in texts/speech for insight, risk, evidence or strategy.	Security/intelligence, law enforcement, market research, media monitoring, academia, NGOs.	Academic associations; security/intelligence training institutions; forensic linguistics networks; research and polling bodies.	Methodological / sectoral CPD: training in analytic methods, security protocols, research methods, tools (corpus, social media analytics). CPD is driven by employer and sector, not a language-profession regulator.
Speech-Language Pathologist	Assess and treat communication and swallowing disorders in health/education contexts.	Public & private health, rehabilitation, schools, private practice, universities, NGOs.	HPCSA (registration and compulsory CPD); SASLHA; DOH/DOE structures.	Strongly regulated, profession-linked CPD: HPCSA requires CPD points for ongoing registration; CPD is clearly occupational and field-specific (clinical best practice).
Dialect Coach	Train actors/speakers in specific accents and speech patterns for performance or public roles.	Film/TV, theatre, advertising, drama schools, speaking coaching.	Theatre/performance guilds; drama schools; international voice/acting networks.	Informal and reputation-based: masterclasses, workshops, peer learning, self-study. No formal CPD requirement; learning is largely experiential.
Localisation Specialist	Adapt products, software, content and UX for specific languages/cultures; manage localisation workflows.	Tech companies, gaming, e-commerce, localisation agencies, multinationals.	SADiLaR / NexLA (ecosystem partners); global localisation associations; some overlap with SATI/SALPC via translators.	Tech-/product-sector CPD: agile, UX, project management, platform/tool training. CPD is tied to IT/product careers, not regulated as a language profession.
Subtitled / Captioner	Produce intralingual and interlingual subtitles/captions	Broadcasters, streaming platforms, production	SATI (audiovisual translation streams); broadcasters'	Project- and association-based: AV translation workshops,

Profession / Role	Core Function (in brief)	Main Sectors / Settings	Key SA / Regional Bodies	Existing CPD Pattern (Current Reality)
	ns for audiovisual content.	houses, education, corporate video, NGOs.	accessibility units; PanSALB (via language rights/access); SALPC in future.	accessibility training, in-house broadcaster standards. CPD is voluntary and employer/association-driven, not yet systematised nationally.
Other Language-Using Occupations (Actor, Sign Language Interpreter, Language Tech Specialist, Voice-over Artist, Language Support Specialist)	Use high-level language skills in performance, HLT/AI development, or front-line multilingual service.	Creative industries, HLT/AI, call centres, public services, Deaf services.	Actors: performance guilds; Sign Language Interpreters: Deaf orgs, interpreter networks; Language Tech: SADiLaR, NexLA, tech communities; Support: employer-based.	Highly mixed: actors/voice artists rely on informal workshops and coaching; language tech specialists on tech / AI CPD; sign language interpreters on Deaf-org and institutional training; call-centre staff on employer induction and customer-service courses. No unified, language-profession CPD regime.
Entry level language practitioner	From Richard	All sectors	Fall under the relevant regional body.	The primary professional bodies that offer CPD activities are the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) and the Professional Editors' Guild (PEG).

Section B

Needs Assessment and Recommendations

Chapter 7 Online Survey Review

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the online survey titled “A Needs Assessment of the Knowledge and Capacities of Language Practitioners.” The purpose of the survey was to gather informed perspectives from both language professionals and members of the general public in order to better understand the current skills base, existing qualifications, and future professional development needs of practitioners working in the language sector.

Participants were advised that their responses would contribute to research aimed at addressing the current fragmentation of practitioner data, as well as exploring opportunities for the standardisation of qualifications, the formal monitoring of professional development, and improved access to qualified language professionals.

The research was conducted in collaboration between PanSALB and the SACO. The survey reached participants through the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) database and social media platforms.

In total, the survey was completed by 142 respondents, with participants spending an average of 32 minutes on the questionnaire. The depth of engagement reflected in the completion time indicates a strong level of interest in the issues under investigation. The findings presented in this chapter therefore provide important insight into the needs, concerns, and expectations of stakeholders within the South African language sector, and provide valuable evidence base to inform future planning, policy development, and professionalisation initiatives.

7.2 Overview of All Respondents

Table 3 below shows that of the total of 142 respondents the majority 91 respondents (64,08%) were female and some 51 (35,92%) were male.

Table 3: Online Survey breakdown by Gender.

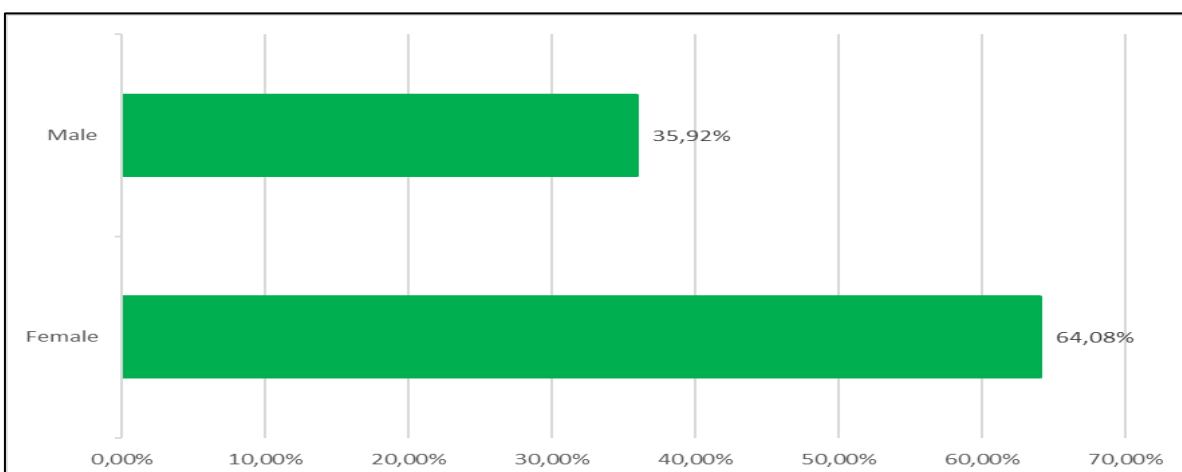


Table 4 below presents the racial composition of survey respondents, with the majority being White (52,24%), followed by African (44,03%) and Coloured (3,73%) participants.

Table 4: Respondents by Population Group

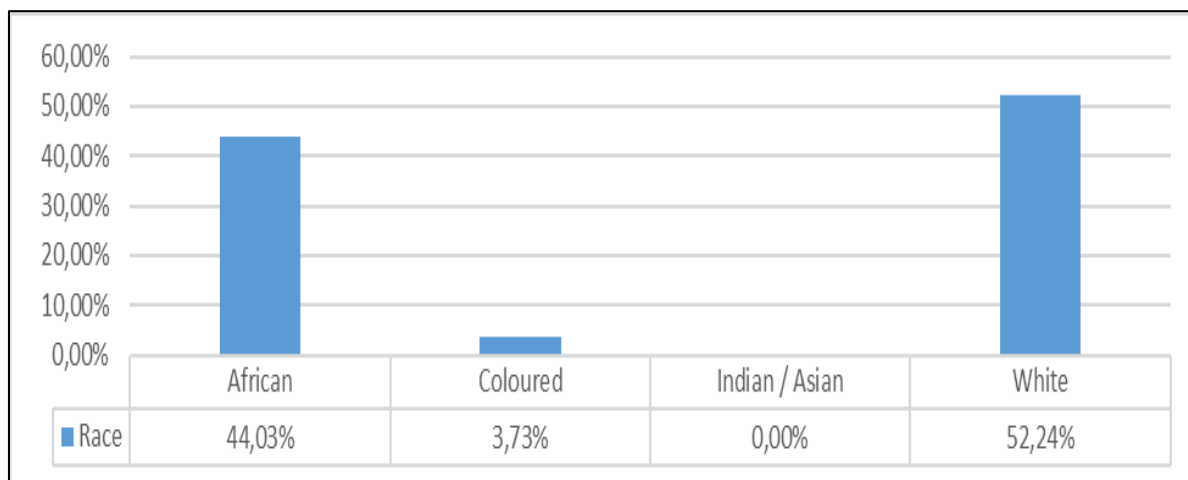
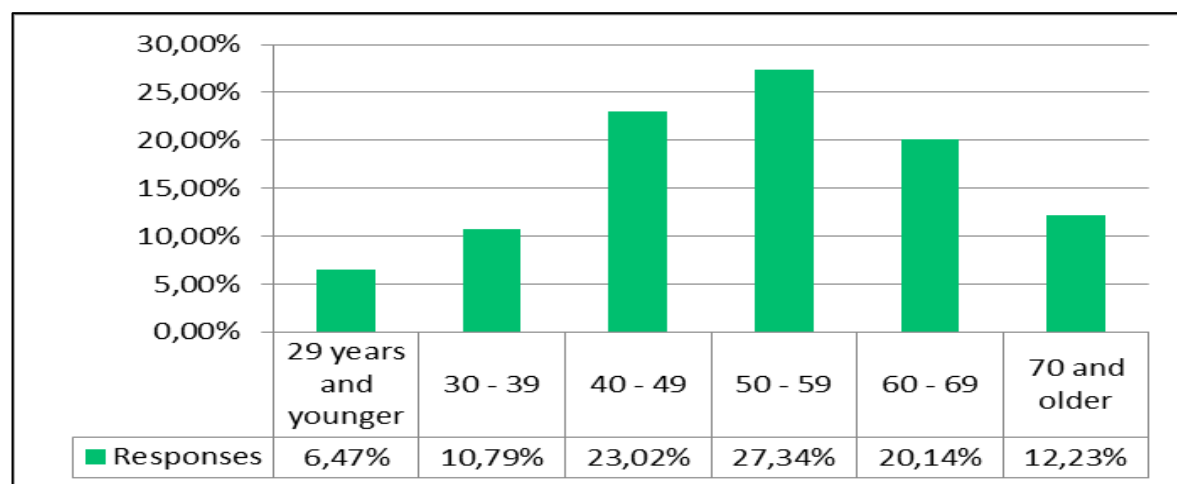


Table 5 below presents the distribution of respondents across various age groups, with the highest proportion falling within the 50-59 years (27,34%), followed by 40–49 years (23,02%), 60-69 years (20,14%), 30–39 age range (10,79%), 70 and older (12,23%) and 29 years and younger (6,47%).

Table 5: Respondents by Age Group.

younger (6,47%).



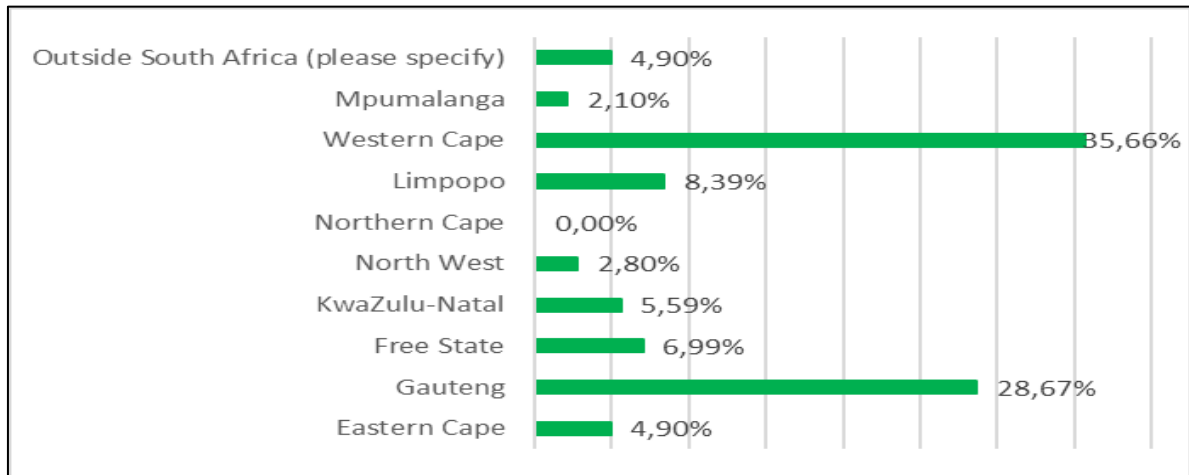
Responses were received from eight provinces and outside of South Africa. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows that the majority of responses were received from Gauteng (25,17%) This was followed by:

- Western Cape (35,66)
- Gauteng (28,67%)
- Limpopo (8,39%)
- Free State (6,99%)
- KwaZulu-Natal (5,59%)
- Eastern Cape (4,90%)
- North-West (2,80%)

- Mpumalanga (2,10%)
- Outside South Africa (4,90%)

The respondents from outside South Africa were from Lesotho, Namibia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Table 6: Respondents by province.



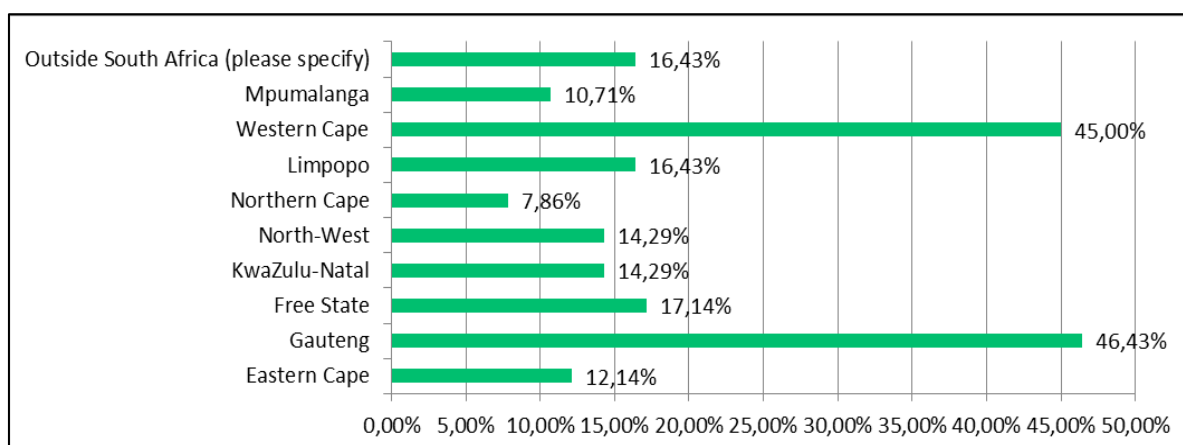
Error! Reference source not found. that follows indicates that Gauteng (46m43%; 65 r espondents) and Western Cape (45%; 63 respondents) are the primary hubs of language services in the country. Practitioners also well work in the Free State (17,14%; 24 respondents), Limpopo (16,43%; 23), KwaZulu-Natal (14,29%; 20 respondents) and the North West (14,29%; 20 respondents). Smaller but still significant numbers of respondents indicated that they work in the Eastern Cape (12,14%; 17 respondents),

Mpumalanga (10,71%; 15 respondents) and the Northern Cape (7,86%; 11 respondents). These results illustrate a strong national footprint, with practitioners operating across all nine provinces.

In addition to this national reach, a substantial portion of respondents (16,43%; 23 respondents) indicated that they work outside South Africa, reflecting the increasingly international and digitally driven nature of the sector.

International work locations reported include the United Kingdom, Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia, the Middle East, Asia, and parts of Africa and South America. A number of practitioners noted that they work through online platforms and international companies, enabling them to serve both South African clients and the South African diaspora abroad. Several respondents indicated that their work is sourced through professional bodies such as SATI, while a smaller number reported employment within South African public sector institutions, including the Road Accident Fund.

Table 7: Geographic Locations Where Respondents Work.

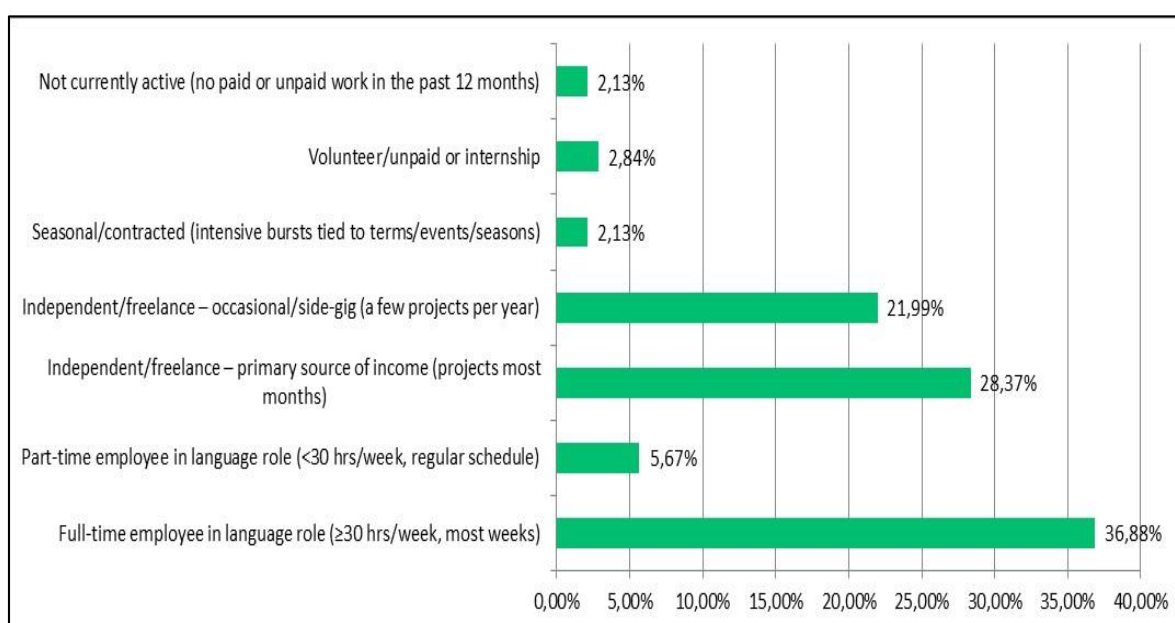


The survey results (see **Error! Reference source not found.**) indicate a diverse range of employment and engagement models within the language sector. Just over a third of respondents (36,88%; 52 respondents) are employed as full-time language practitioners, reflecting a core group with stable, regular employment. A further 28,37% (40 respondents) indicated that they work as independent or freelance practitioners as their primary source of income, highlighting the strong presence of self-employment within the sector.

In addition, 21,99% (31 respondents) reported working as independent or freelance practitioners on an occasional or part-time basis, suggesting that language work often forms part of a broader portfolio of income-generating activities.

A smaller proportion of respondents are engaged as part-time employees on a regular schedule (5,67%; 8 respondents). A small numbers of respondents reported working on a seasonal or contracted basis (2,13%; 3 respondents), as volunteers or interns (2,84%; 4), or being currently inactive in the sector (2,13%; 3 respondents).

Table 8: Current Engagement Patterns of Respondents in Language Work.

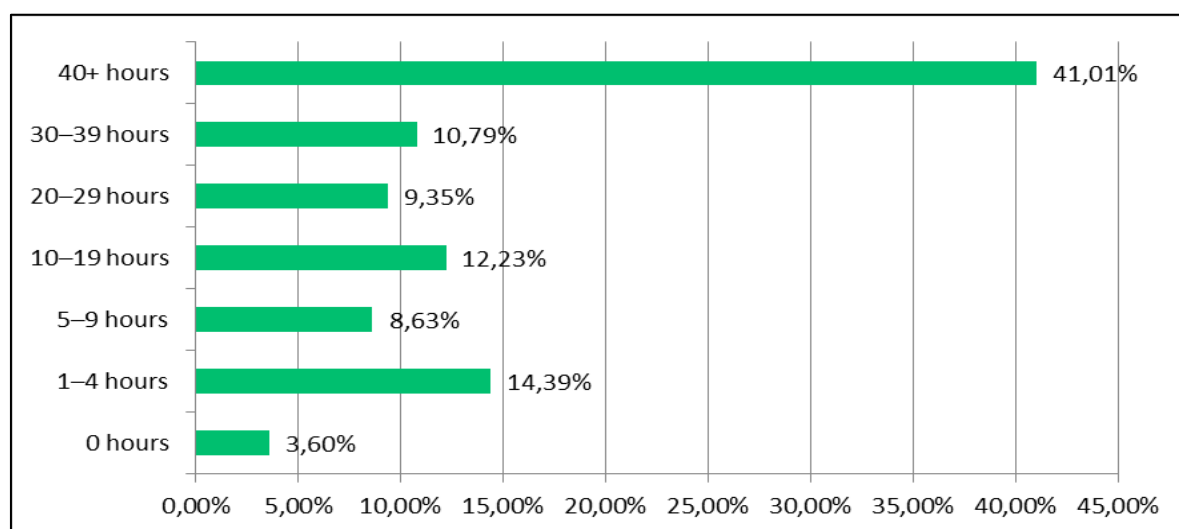


Error! Reference source not found. below illustrates a wide variation in the number of hours respondents typically dedicate to language-related work each week. The largest proportion of respondents (41,01%; 57 respondents) reported spending 40 hours or more per week,

indicating a substantial core of full-time language practitioners. A further 10,79% (15 respondents) reported working 30–39 hours per week, pointing to a significant level of near full-time engagement within the sector.

Moderate levels of weekly engagement were also reported, with 12,23% (17 respondents) spending 10–19 hours per week and 9,35% (13 respondents) spending 20–29 hours, suggesting meaningful part-time involvement. In contrast, 14,39% (20 respondents) indicated very limited weekly engagement of 1–4 hours, while 8,63% (12 respondents) reported spending 5–9 hours per week. A small proportion of respondents (3,60%; 5 respondents) indicated that they had spent no time on language-related work during the past three months.

Table 9: Typical Weekly Time Spent on Language-Related Work (Last Three Months).



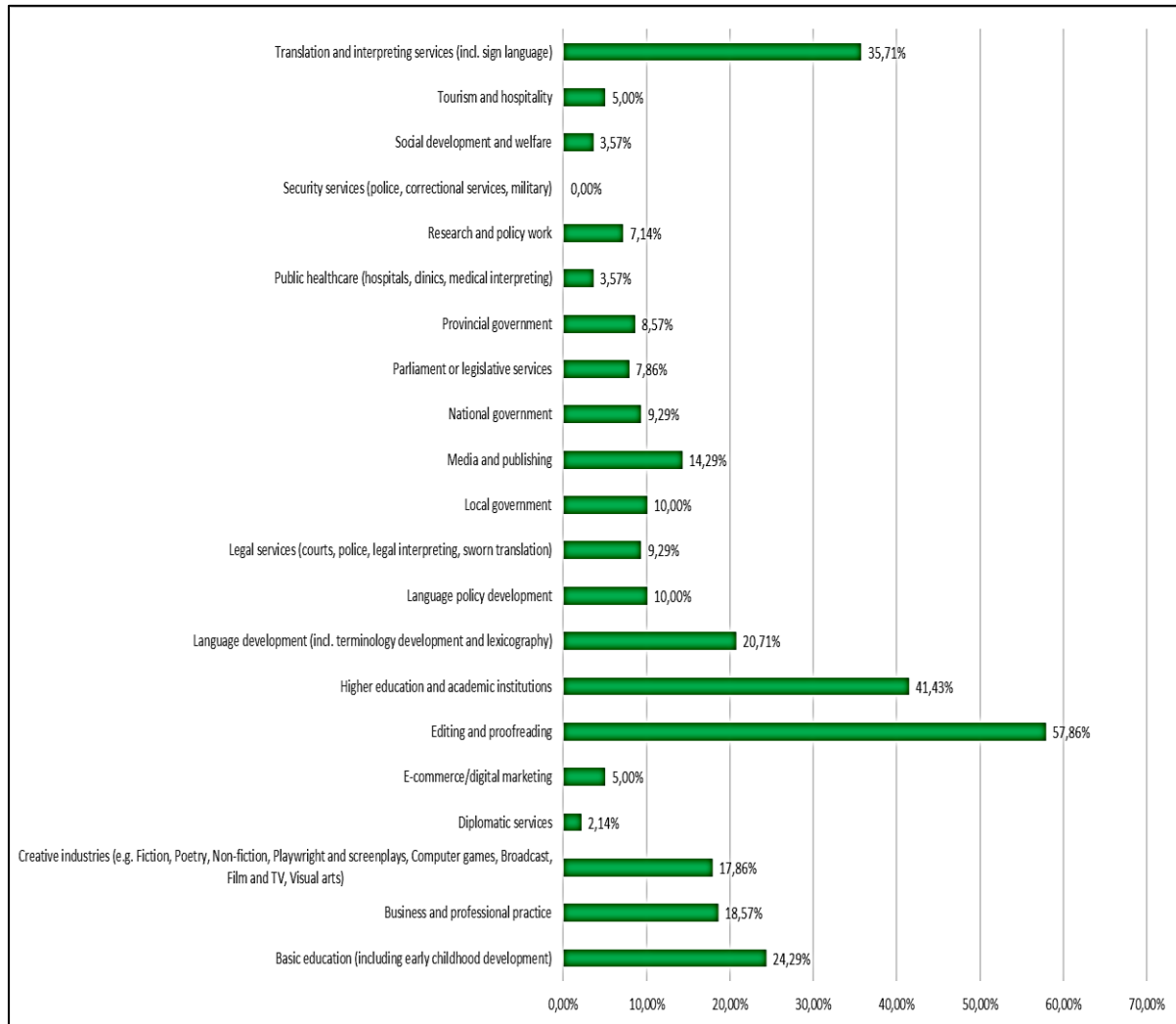
Respondents work across a wide range of sectors, often in more than one field. that follows shows the highest levels of participation reported are in editing and proofreading (57.86%), higher education and academic institutions (41.43%), and translation and interpreting services, including sign language (35,71%).

Substantial involvement was also recorded in basic education and early childhood development (24,29%), language development, including terminology development and lexicography (20,71%), business and professional practice (18,57%), and the creative industries (17,86%).

Engagement in public-sector and policy-related work was reflected in language policy development (10%), local government (10%), national government (9,29%), provincial government (8,57%), and parliamentary or legislative services (7,86%), while legal services accounted for 9,29%.

A significant proportion of respondents reported working in media and publishing (14,29%), research and policy work (7,14%), tourism and hospitality (5%), e-commerce and digital marketing (5%), public healthcare (3,57%), and social development and welfare (3,57%). No respondents indicated working in security services (0%). A small number selected the “Other” category (5,71%).

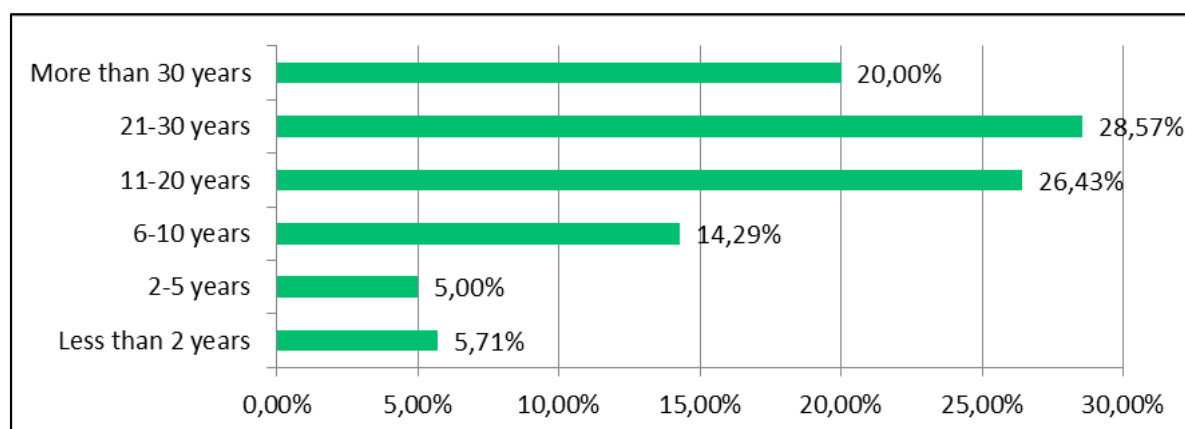
Table 10: Sectors in Which Respondents Work as Language Practitioners.



Survey respondents generally are highly experienced language practitioners. Table 11 highlights that the largest proportions of respondents reported having 21–30 years of experience (28,57%; 40 respondents) and 11–20 years of experience (26,43%; 37 respondents), demonstrating a strong concentration of mid- to late-career professionals within the sector.

A further 20% (28 respondents) indicated that they have more than 30 years of experience. In contrast, smaller proportions of respondents reported fewer years of experience, with 14,29% (20 respondents) indicating 6–10 years, 5,71% (8 respondents) reporting less than 2 years, and 5% (7 respondents) indicating 2–5 years of experience.

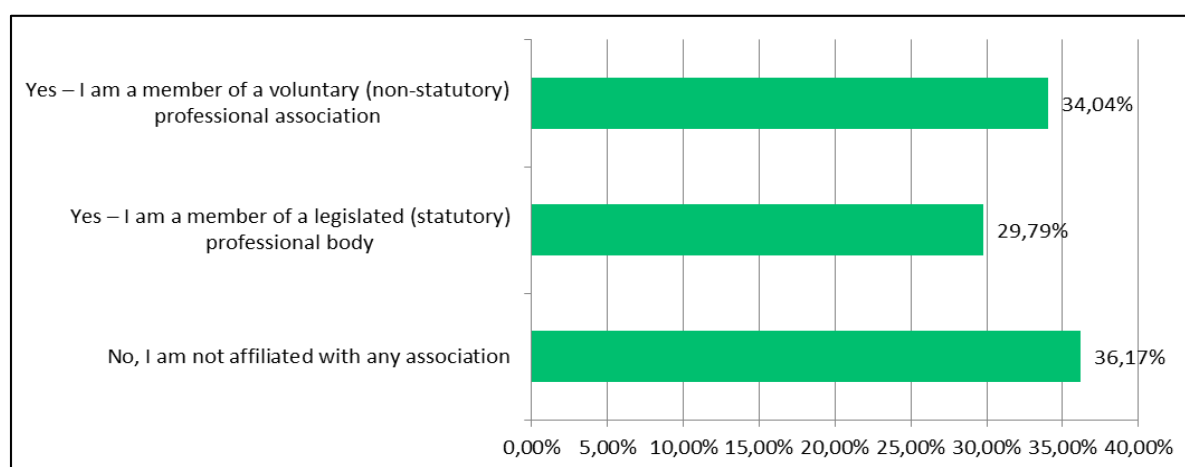
Table 11: Years of Experience of Respondents as Language Practitioners



The survey results show a mixed pattern of professional affiliation among respondents. Table 12 that follows shows that over a third of respondents (36,17%; 51 respondents) indicated that they are not currently affiliated with any professional association, pointing to a significant portion of practitioners operating outside formal professional structures.

At the same time, a substantial group reported affiliation with professional bodies. Nearly a third of respondents (29,79%; 42 respondents) indicated that they are members of a legislated (statutory) professional body, while a slightly larger proportion (34,04%; 48 respondents) reported membership in a voluntary (non-statutory) professional association.

Table 12: Professional Association Membership and Affiliation of Respondents.



Following the initial section of the survey, which established a demographic profile of respondents, the next set of questions shifts the focus to the professional realities, capacities, and development needs of language practitioners operating within the South African language sector. These sections move beyond who the respondents are, to explore what they do, how they are trained, what skills they possess, the challenges they face, and the systemic conditions within which they work.

- **Practitioner Language Knowledge** examines the range of languages in which respondents are professionally active, providing insight into the multilingual capacity of the sector and patterns of language demand.

- Education, Qualifications and Training explores respondents' formal education levels, professional qualifications, and access to training, highlighting both strengths and gaps in the current training landscape.
- Professional Skills and Capacities focuses on the practical competencies respondents apply in their work, shedding light on the core technical, digital, and professional skills that shape day-to-day practice.
- Professional Development Needs identifies priority areas for future learning and upskilling, offering a clear indication of where targeted CPD interventions are most urgently required.
- Policy, Accreditation and Professionalisation considers respondents' engagement with professional bodies, regulatory frameworks, and accreditation systems, and reflects perceptions of the current and future state of professional regulation in the sector.
- Finally, Industry Demand and Economics of Language Services explores the market conditions, income patterns, and economic sustainability of language work, offering insight into both opportunities and constraints facing practitioners in a rapidly evolving language economy.

7.3. Practitioner Language Knowledge

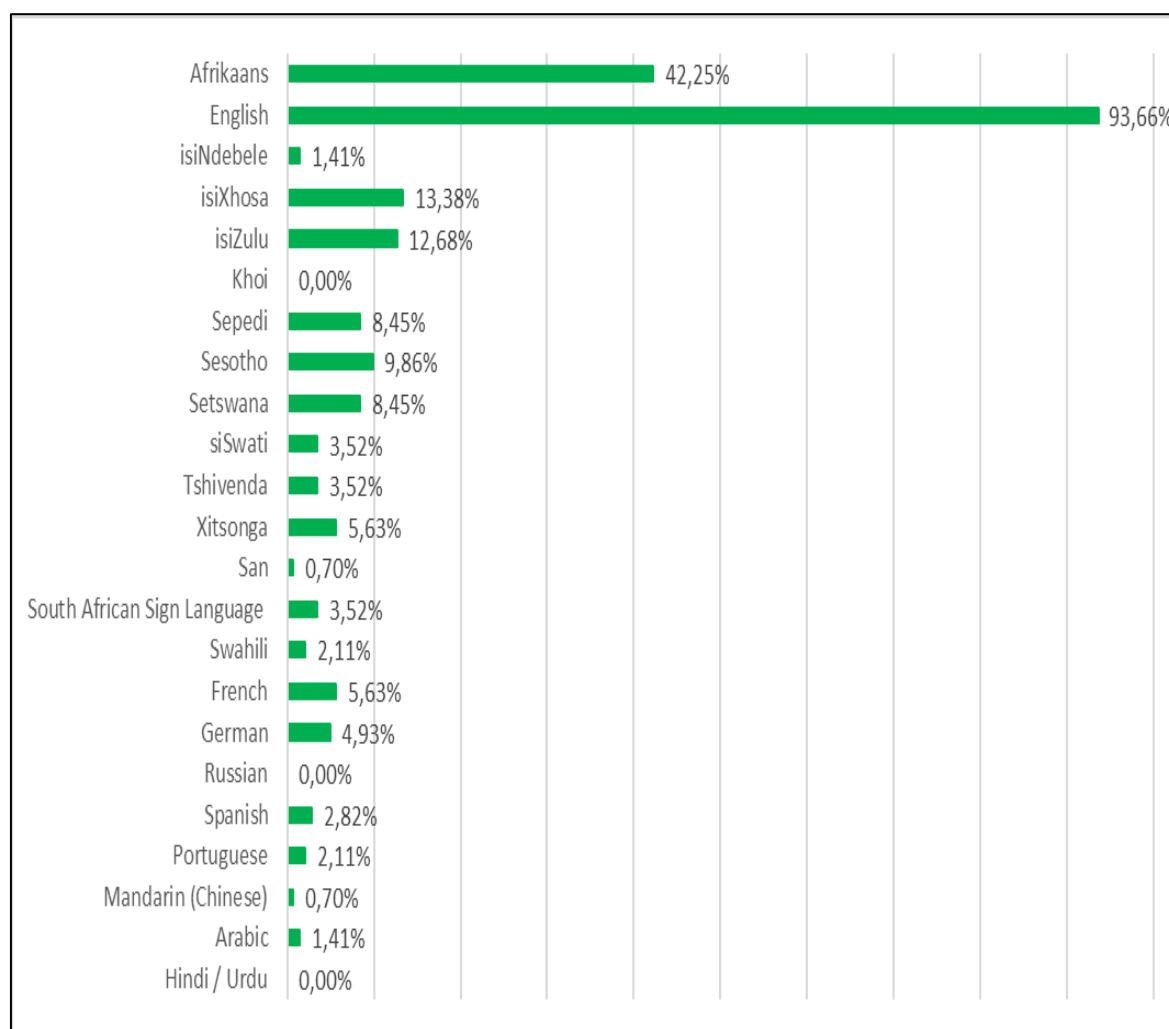
In this section of the survey, respondents were asked about the range of languages they use in their professional work, including South African, regional, and international languages. They were also asked to comment about any economic or commercial applications of these languages. Respondents were also asked to provide an assessment of their levels of proficiency across key language skills (understanding, speaking, reading, writing, and teaching) providing insight into the depth and distribution of multilingual competence in the sector.

indicates that respondents work across a wide range of South African and international languages, reflecting the multilingual nature of the language services sector. The majority of respondents reported working in English (93,66%; 133 respondents), followed by a substantial number who also work in Afrikaans (42,25%; 60 respondents). Engagement with the indigenous official languages varies, with the highest representation in isiXhosa (13,38%; 19 respondents) and isiZulu (12,68%; 18 respondents), followed by Sesotho (9,86%; 14), Sepedi (8,45%; 12), Setswana (8,45%; 12), Xitsonga (5,63%; 8), Tshivenda (3,52%; 5), siSwati (3,52%; 5), and isiNdebele (1,41%; 2).

Use of South African Sign Language was reported by 3,52% (5 respondents), while very small numbers indicated working with Khoi (0%), San languages (0,70%; 1 respondent), Swahili (2,11%; 3), Arabic (1,41%; 2), Spanish (2,82%; 4), Portuguese (2,11%; 3), and Mandarin (0,70%; 1). Several respondents also reported working with European languages, including French (5,63%; 8) and German (4,93%; 7).

Further languages were listed under "Other", including: Khoekhoegowab, Dutch (listed multiple times), Lesotho Sign Language, Romanian, and Moldovian, as well as an additional entries for Portuguese and Dutch.

Table 13: Languages Used by Respondents in Professional Practice.



The next question in the survey invited respondents to indicate if the language(s) they work in have economic or commercial applications (e.g., in trade with specific regions). A total of 100 respondents answered this question, while 42 respondents skipped it, indicating a level of uncertainty or ambiguity around the concept of economic and commercial language application. The responses highlighted in Table 14 indicate a mixed and uneven understanding of the economic value of language work.

Many respondents answered “Yes,” linking their language use to translation, international communication, educational content development, authorship, consulting, AI-related language work, and cross-border trade, particularly through English and selected African languages such as Setswana, isiZulu, Sesotho, Sepedi, and Afrikaans.

At the same time, a substantial number of respondents indicated “No,” “None,” or “Not applicable,” while others reported being uncertain or unclear about the question, suggesting limited conceptual clarity about the commercial role of language. A few respondents highlighted that languages other than English are often perceived as having lower economic value, pointing to structural inequalities in the language economy.

Table 14: Respondents' Views on the Economic and Commercial Value of Their Working Languages.

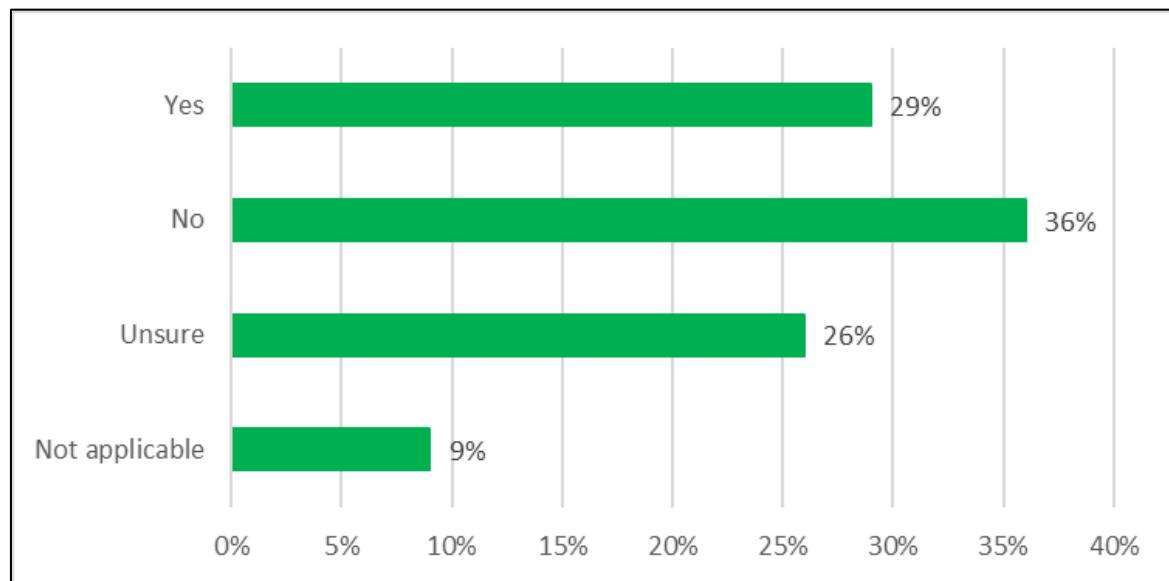


Table 15 below presents the wide range of respondents' proficiency levels across multiple South African and international languages, assessed across the skills of understanding, speaking, reading, writing, and teaching. As expected, English shows the highest overall proficiency, with the majority of respondents rating themselves at advanced (33,08%; 44 respondents) and expert level (59,40%; 79 respondents) out of a total of 133 respondents, confirming its role as the primary professional working language.

Afrikaans also shows strong high-level competence, with more than half of respondents (53.16%; 42 out of 79) rating themselves at expert level, alongside additional advanced and intermediate proficiency. For several indigenous African languages, proficiency is more evenly distributed across levels, reflecting both first-language speakers and additional-language users. For example, isiXhosa shows a spread from basic to expert, with 38,46% of respondents at expert level, while isiZulu shows strong intermediate and expert representation (36% at each level). Sesotho, Sepedi and Setswana similarly display solid clusters of advanced and expert users, alongside smaller basic groups.

Some languages reflect limited but highly specialised expertise. German, for instance, shows 66.67% expert users, despite a small respondent base. Spanish and Portuguese display mixed proficiency profiles across intermediate to expert levels. In contrast, languages such as Swahili, Russian, Mandarin, Hindi/Urdu, and San are represented only at basic or early-stage levels, suggesting limited but emerging engagement.

South African Sign Language (SASL) shows a mixed profile, with respondents spread across basic to advanced levels, and a small group at expert level, indicating a developing but still limited specialist skill base in this area.

Table 15: Self-Rated Proficiency Levels Across Languages Used by Respondents.

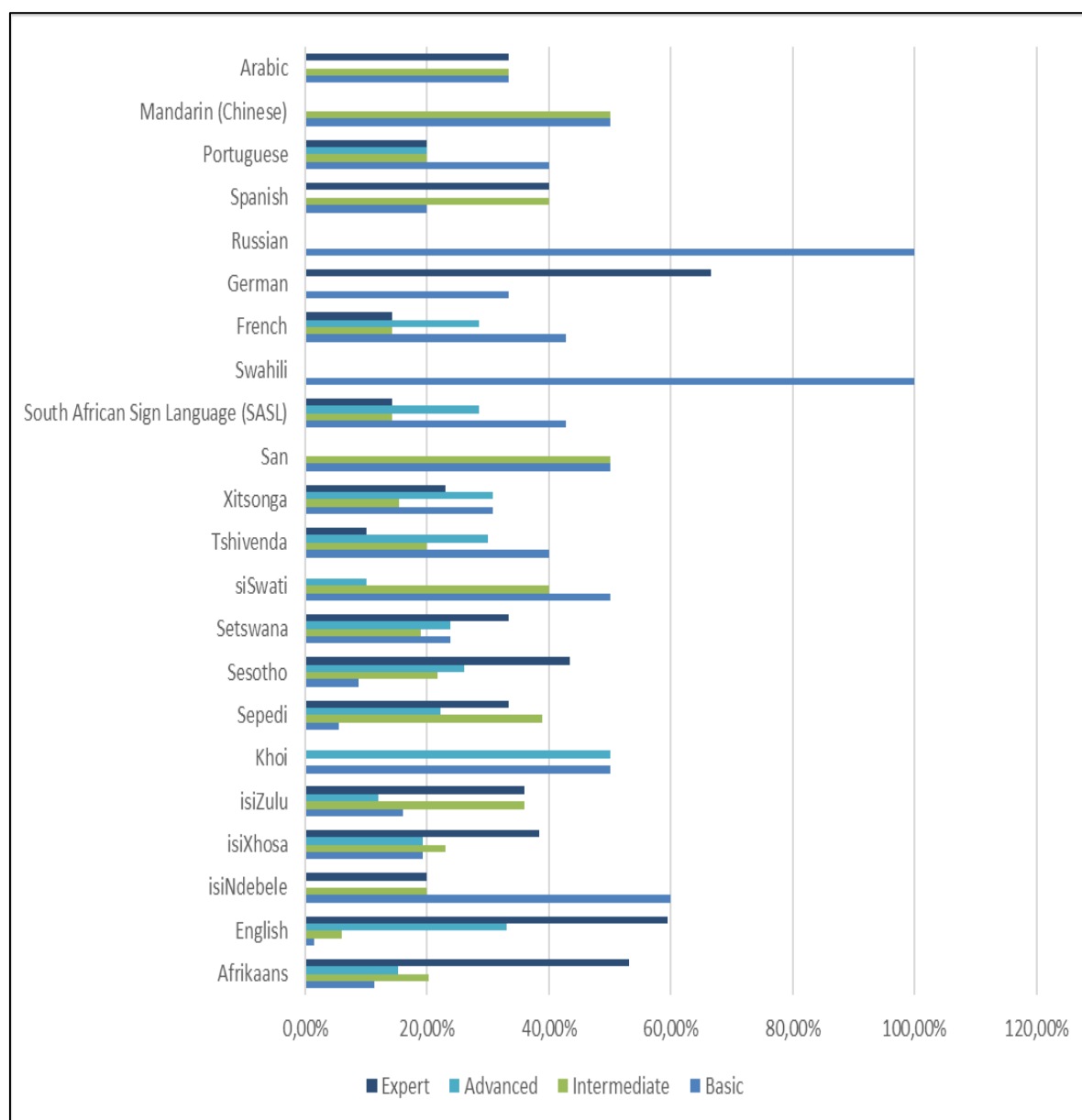
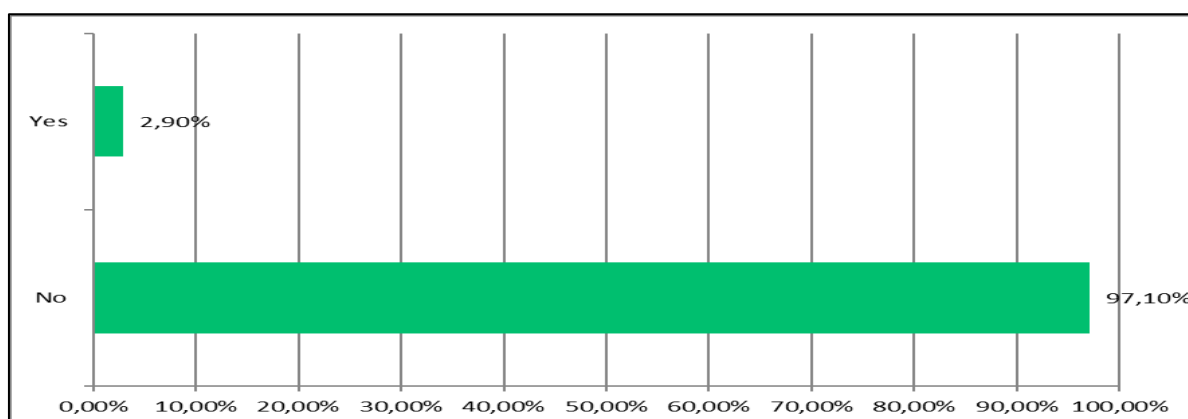


Table 16 shows that the majority of respondents do not work in indigenous languages that are not officially recognised in South Africa. A total of 97,10% (134 respondents) selected “No”, indicating that their professional work is confined to officially recognised languages. A small proportion of respondents (2,90%; 4 respondents) indicated “Yes,” confirming that they do work in non-official indigenous languages, such as Khoi or San languages.

All four of these respondents provided additional detail in the open-ended field, specifying the particular languages they work in.

Table 16: Engagement with Non-Official Indigenous Languages in Professional Practice.



7.4. Education, Qualifications and Training

In this section, respondents were asked to provide information about their educational background, professional qualification, and certification requirement, as well as their engagement with ongoing training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Responses provide insight into both the formal qualification pathways into the language profession and the barriers and affordability factors affecting continued skills development.

The first question in this section (question 16) asked respondents to list their current job title / primary role as a language practitioner. The results show that language practitioners occupy a wide range of professional roles, with the largest group working as translators, interpreters, editors, and proofreaders, often in freelance or combined roles. A significant number of respondents are also active in higher education and training as lecturers, senior lecturers, and professors. Others work in specialist language fields such as terminology development, lexicography, language policy, and legislative translation.

The data further reflects strong representation in management and leadership positions within government, NGOs, publishing, and language services, as well as participation in the media, creative, and publishing sectors as writers, journalists, authors, subtitlers, and content producers.

Collectively, these results highlight that the language sector is multi-disciplinary and economically embedded across education, government, creative industries, and professional services, underscoring the need for flexible and inclusive professional development and accreditation pathways.

Table 17 reflects that a majority of respondents (62,59%; 87 respondents) reported that their current job or primary role requires a specific qualification or certification. In contrast, 29,50% (41 respondents) indicated that their role does not require a formal qualification, while 7,91% (11 respondents) were unsure. A total of 77 respondents provided further detail on the specific qualifications or certification requirements.

The open-ended responses reveal that the most commonly required qualifications are tertiary degrees in language-related fields, including BA degrees, Honours degrees, Master's degrees,

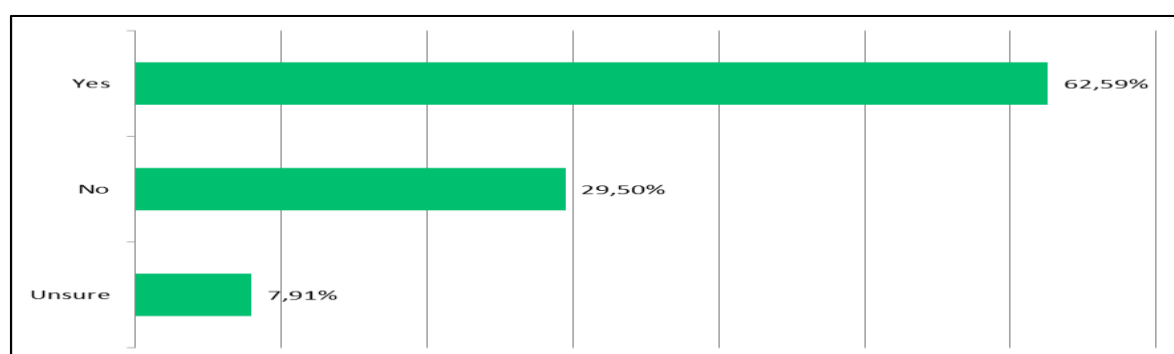
and PhDs in areas such as Language Practice, Linguistics, Translation, Editing, Lexicography, Terminology, and Human Language Technology.

Several respondents specifically referred to Postgraduate Diplomas in Translation (notably from Stellenbosch University), as well as PGCE and teaching qualifications for education-related roles. Advanced academic qualifications (Master's and PhD levels) were frequently cited for roles in editing, research, higher education, and specialist language practice, including SASL and Deaf Studies.

Professional accreditation and statutory certification also feature strongly in the responses. Many respondents referred to SATI accreditation, including Accredited Professional Translator and Sworn Translator status, with some also citing admission to the High Court of South Africa as a requirement for legal translation and interpreting. Other professional bodies mentioned include the Professional Editors' Guild.

A small number of respondents indicated alternative entry pathways, such as extensive professional experience, mother-tongue proficiency combined with vocational or tertiary education, or Grade 12 with post-school qualifications. A few respondents noted that their clients typically require certified copies of degrees and professional CVs when securing work.

Table 17: Respondents' Qualification and Certification for Current Roles.



The results for highest overall qualification (Table 18) show that respondents are generally highly educated, with the majority holding tertiary and postgraduate qualifications. More than half of respondents have completed an Honours degree (22,46%), Master's degree (26,81%), or PhD (15,22%), indicating a strong concentration of advanced academic achievement across the sample.

A further 16,67% hold a Bachelor's degree, while relatively small proportions reported Diplomas (8,70%), Apprentice certificates (3,62%), or Matric only (5,80%). Only 0,72% reported Grade 11 or lower. The "Other" category reflects a strong pattern of postgraduate diplomas, particularly in Translation, Education, Law, Journalism, and Monitoring and Evaluation, as well as specialised professional fields such as Engineering Management.

In contrast, the results for highest language or language-industry-specific qualification (Table 19) reveal a more varied and fragmented professional training landscape. While a substantial proportion of respondents hold formal language qualifications at Bachelor's (12,95%), Honours (15,11%), Master's (15,11%), and PhD (11,51%) levels, a notable 17,27% reported having no formal language-specific qualification. In addition, 11,51% hold short courses or certificates,

5.76% hold Diplomas or Advanced Certificates, and 10,79% rely primarily on professional certification rather than academic degrees.

The “Other” responses in Table 19 highlight the central role of professional accreditation in the language sector. These include repeated references to SATI accreditation (for translators and interpreters), Professional Editors’ Guild (PEG) accreditation, Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP) recognition, TEFL, and specialised postgraduate diplomas in translation. Several respondents also indicated language-specific Honours and Master’s degrees (e.g. MA Linguistics, French Honours, Translation Studies) and partial tertiary language studies.

Taken together, the two tables show a clear distinction between general educational attainment and language-specific professional qualification. While the respondent group is highly qualified in general, a significant proportion do not hold formal language-industry degrees, instead relying on professional accreditation, short courses, or experience-based pathways. This contrast strongly reinforces the need for:

- Clear articulation pathways between academic qualifications and professional certification,
- Stronger recognition of accredited professional bodies, and
- Structured Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanisms to bridge general education and language-specialist professionalisation.

Table 18: Highest Overall Qualification of Respondents (Any Field).

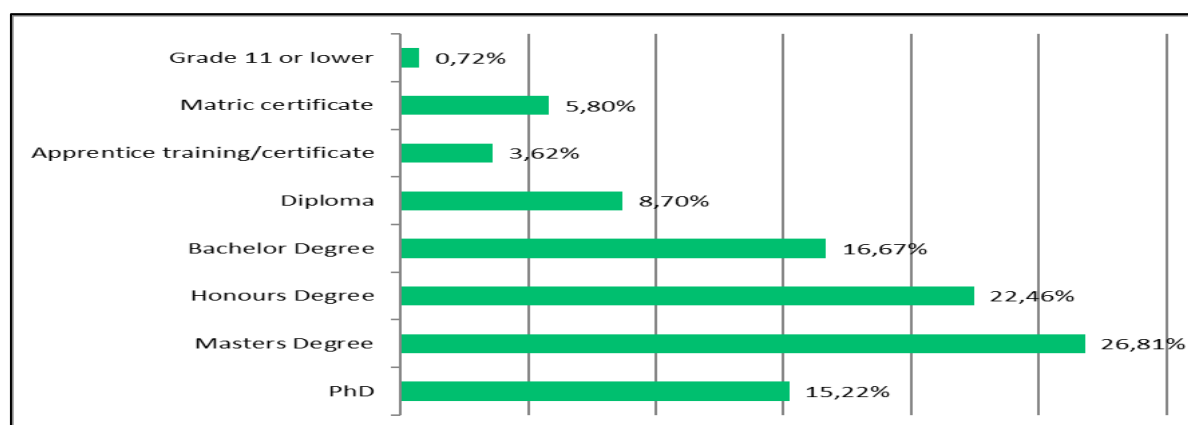
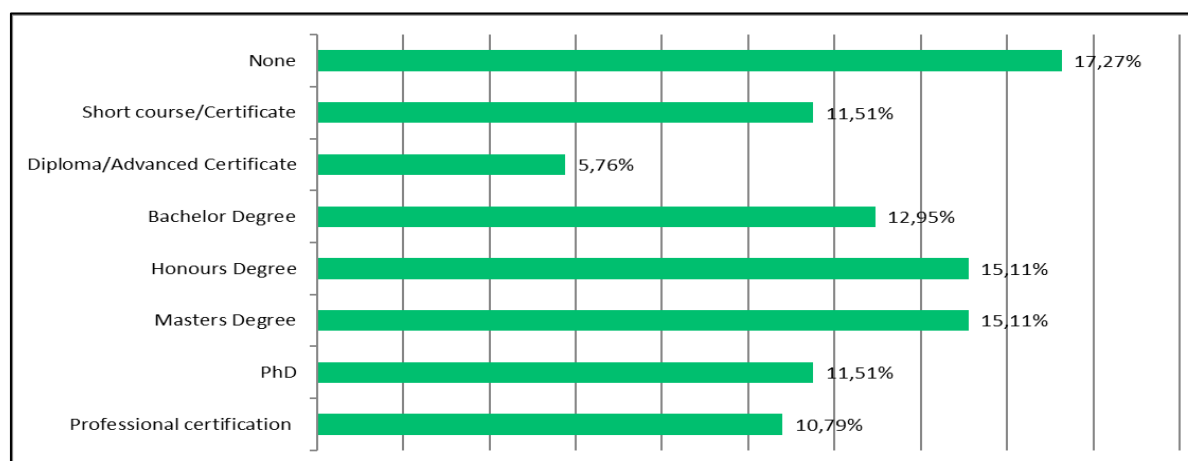
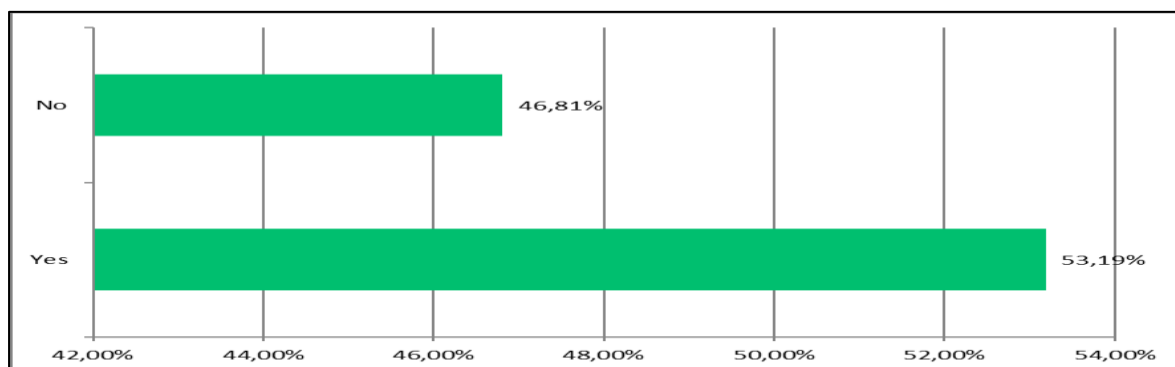


Table 19: Highest Language or Language-Industry-Specific Qualification.



The results from Table 20 below show a near-even split in CPD participation among respondents. Just over half (53,19%; 75 respondents) indicated that they have attended CPD training over the past three years, while a substantial proportion (46,81%; 66 respondents) reported that they have not participated in any CPD during this period. This highlights a

Table 20: Participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Over the Past Three Years.



significant participation gap in ongoing professional learning within the sector.

Table 21 provides insight into the main barriers to CPD participation among those who did not attend training. The most frequently cited constraints were “no opportunities” (23,44%; 15 respondents) and “no perceived economic benefit” (23,44%; 15 respondents), followed by time constraints (18,75%; 12) and cost (17,19%; 11).

Access-related barriers (10,94%; 7) and lack of recognition of training (6,25%; 4) were reported less frequently. The “Other” responses add important context, including retirement, lack of awareness of available programmes, employer resistance, job insecurity, and concerns that language work is undervalued in the workplace. In contrast, some respondents clarified that they do attend workshops regularly, particularly through SATI and PEG, but do not regard these as formal CPD for the purposes of this question.

Table 21: Barriers to Participation in CPD Training.

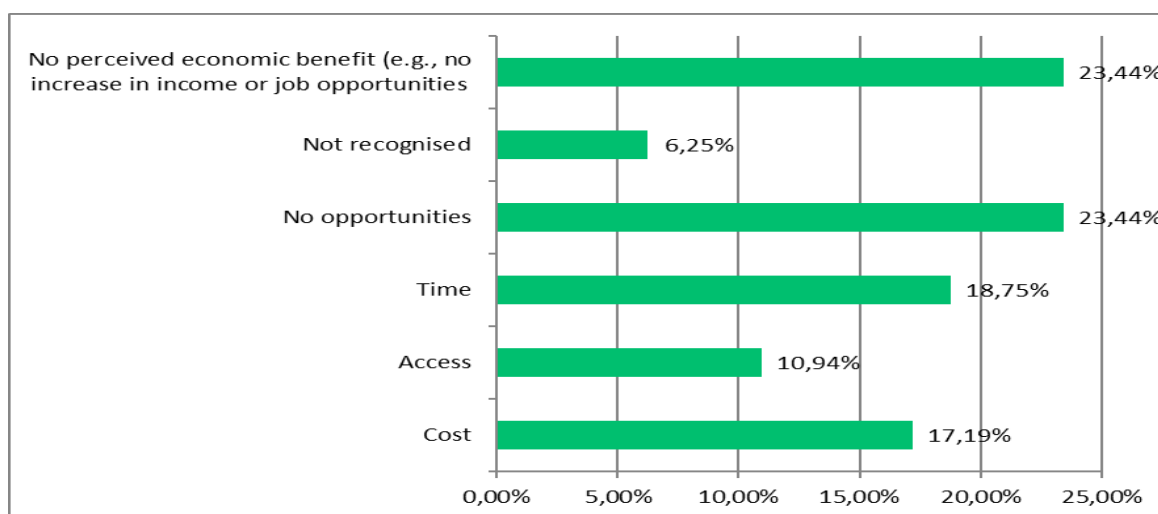
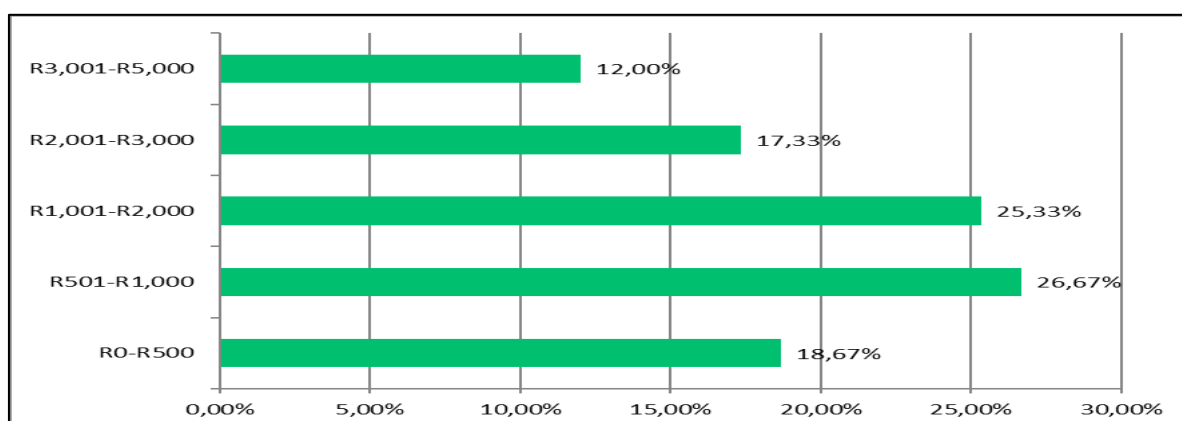


Table 22 sheds further light on CPD participation by illustrating what respondents can realistically afford to spend on training each year. The majority of respondents indicated a limited CPD budget, with R501–R1 000 (26,67%; 20 respondents) and R1 001–R2,000 (25,33%; 19 respondents) being the most common affordability ranges. A further 18,67% (14) could afford R0–R500, while smaller proportions indicated R2 001–R3 000 (17,33%; 13) and R3 001–R5 000 (12%; 9). The “Other” responses suggest that affordability varies depending on employment status, employer support, and personal financial circumstances.

Table 22: Affordability of CPD Training (Estimated Annual Budget).



Taken together, the three tables reveal a clear alignment between CPD participation, perceived value, and affordability. While over half of respondents are engaged in CPD, a large minority remain excluded, primarily due to a combination of limited opportunities, weak economic incentives, time pressures, and financial constraints. The affordability data further confirms that most practitioners operate within a narrow training budget, reinforcing the need for low-cost, subsidised, employer-supported, and professionally accredited CPD pathways. The findings also point to the importance of stronger recognition of CPD by employers and professional bodies to ensure that continuous learning translates into tangible career and income benefits.

7.5. Professional Skills and Capacities

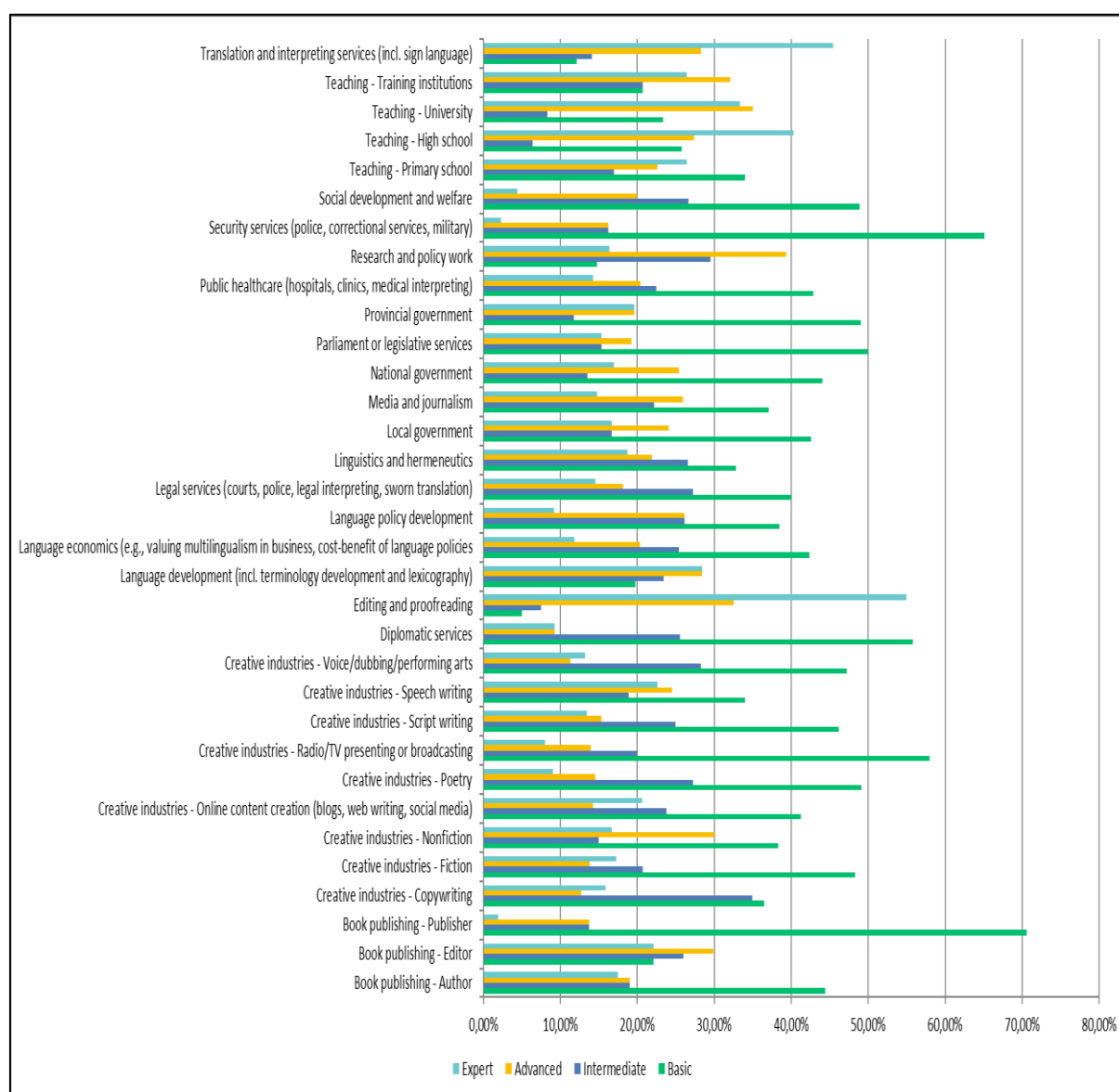
This section explores respondents’ professional skills, areas of practice, and levels of competence across a wide range of language, creative, government, education, and specialised service domains. It also examines the use and impact of Human Language Technologies (HLTs) on professional confidence, earning potential, and emerging areas of demand in the language sector.

Table 23 that follows shows respondents rating themselves as competent across a wide range of professional, creative, public-sector, and specialist language service areas, with particularly high levels of competence in book publishing (especially publishing at 70,59%), security services (65,12%), radio and broadcasting (58%), diplomatic services (55,81%), and parliamentary or legislative services (50%). High levels of competence were also reported in the creative industries, including poetry (49,09%), social development and welfare (48,89%), script writing (46,15%), and voice/dubbing and performing arts (47,17%), reflecting strong engagement in cultural and media-related work.

Moderate levels of competence were reported across key professional and governance-oriented domains such as language economics (42,37%), local government (42,59%), public healthcare (42,86%), national government (44,07%), legal services (40%), media and journalism (37,04%), and language policy development (38,46%), indicating broad cross-sectoral capability.

Lower levels of competence were reported in more specialist academic and professional areas, including research and policy work (14,75%), language development and lexicography (19,75%), and translation and interpreting services (12,12%), suggesting that while many respondents operate confidently in applied and creative domains, a smaller specialist cohort is active in highly technical language development and research functions.

Table 23: Self-Rated Competence Levels Across Professional Skills and Service Areas.



The results presented in **Error! Reference source not found.**Table 24, Table 25 and Table 26 offer an overview of respondents' views on Human Language Technologies (HLT) and their perception about the impact of these tools on their work."

Table 24, below, shows that the majority of respondents are engaging with Human Language Technologies, with machine translation tools (52,90%; 73 respondents) being the most widely used, followed by CAT tools (41,30%; 57) and large language models such as ChatGPT (36,96%; 51). A further 31,88% (44) reported using automated glossaries or terminology databases, while 21,01% (29) use speech-to-text tools.

Notably, 18,12% (25 respondents) indicated that they use none of the listed HLT tools, pointing to a persistent digital divide within the sector. "Other" responses referenced tools such as OmegaT, MemoQ, WordBee, Grammarly, online dictionaries, and Dragon speech recognition.

Table 24: Language Technologies (HLT) Tools Used by Respondents.

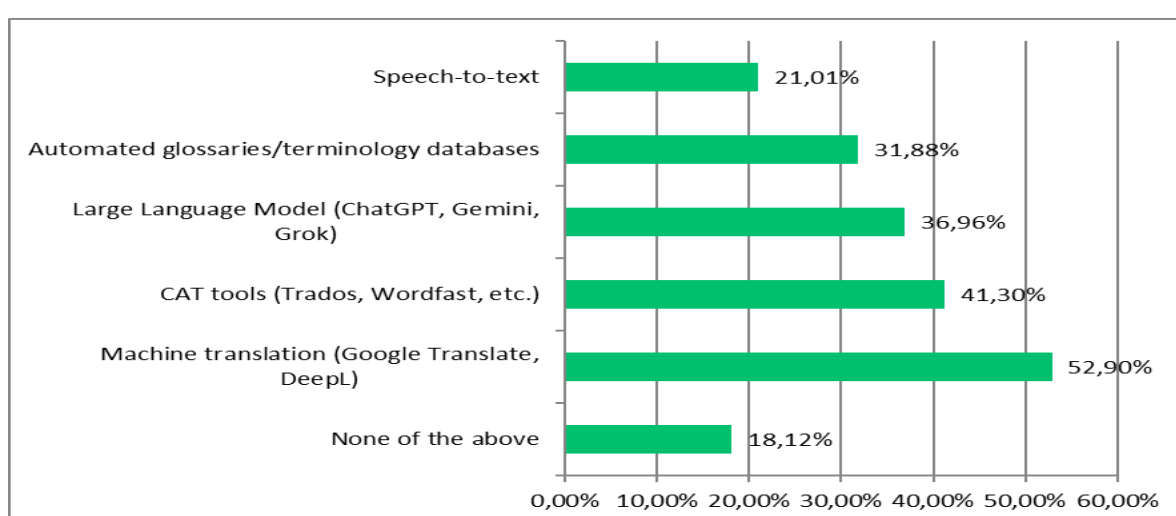
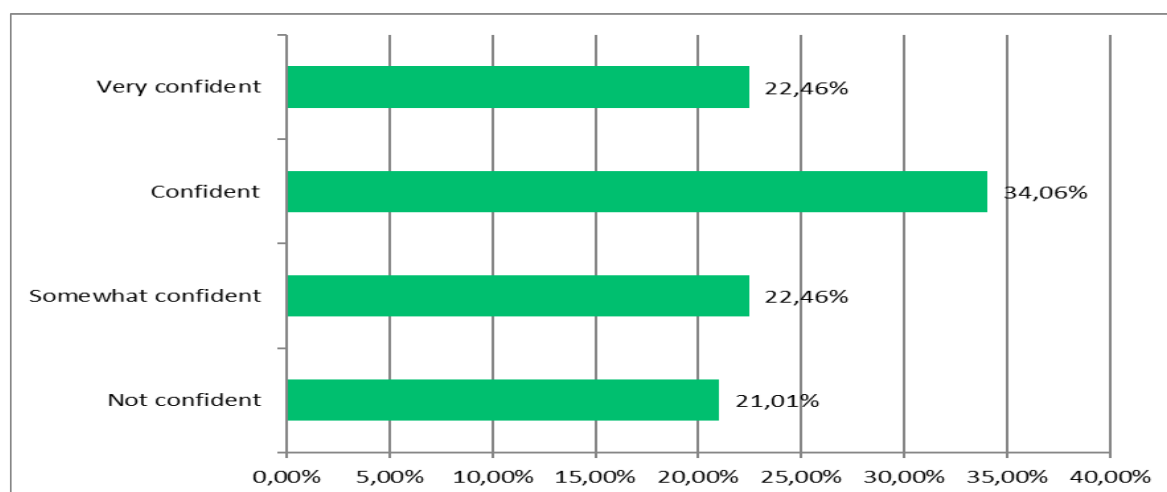


Table 25 reveals that respondents have a moderate to high level of confidence in applying HLT tools. Just over a third of respondents (34,06%; 47 respondents) reported feeling confident, while a further 22,46% (31) indicated they are very confident.

However, as to be expected from the data presented in Table 26, a significant minority remain at lower confidence levels, with 21,01% (29) reporting that they are not confident at all, and 22,46% (31) only somewhat confident. The qualitative comments reveal both cautious adoption

and concerns about the reliability and implications of HLT use, particularly in relation to professional quality and job security.

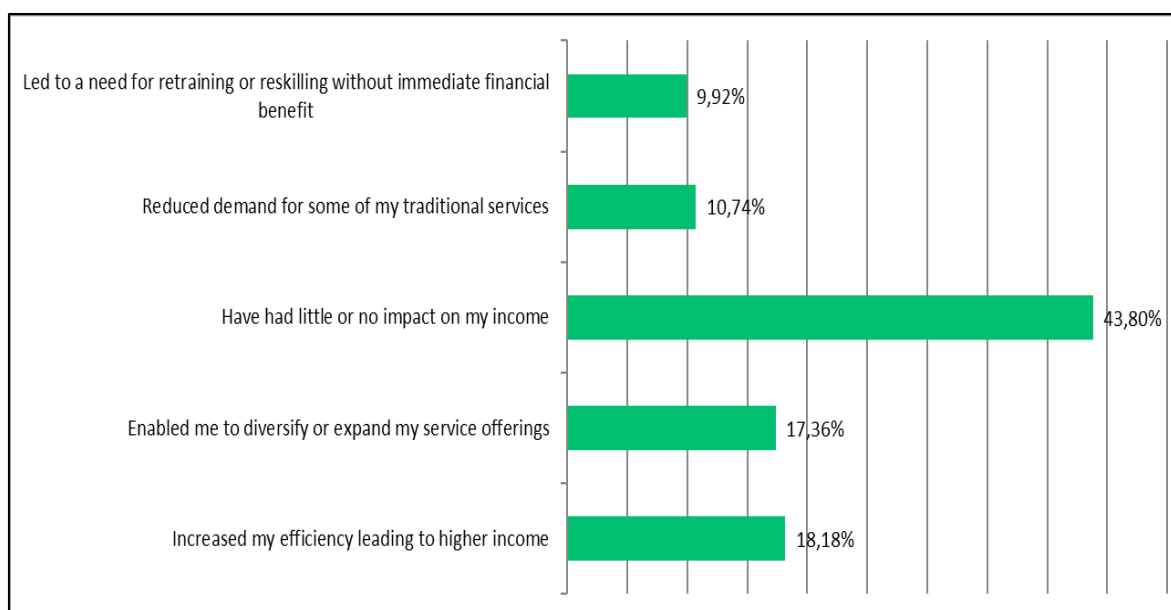
Table 25: Respondents' Confidence in Using Human Language Technologies (HLT).



The findings from Table 26, below, suggests that, despite relatively high levels of tool usage and growing confidence, the economic benefits of HLT adoption remain uneven. The largest single group of respondents (43,80%) indicated that HLT tools have had little or no impact on their income. At the same time, 18,18% reported increased efficiency leading to higher income, while 17,36% indicated that HLTs have enabled them to diversify or expand their service offerings. In contrast, 10,74% experienced a reduction in demand for traditional services, and 9,92% reported a need for retraining or reskilling without immediate financial benefit.

Several respondents noted that they do not yet use HLT tools, or that the impact has been efficiency-related rather than directly financial.

Table 26: Perceived Impact of Human Language Technologies (HLT) on Earning Potential.

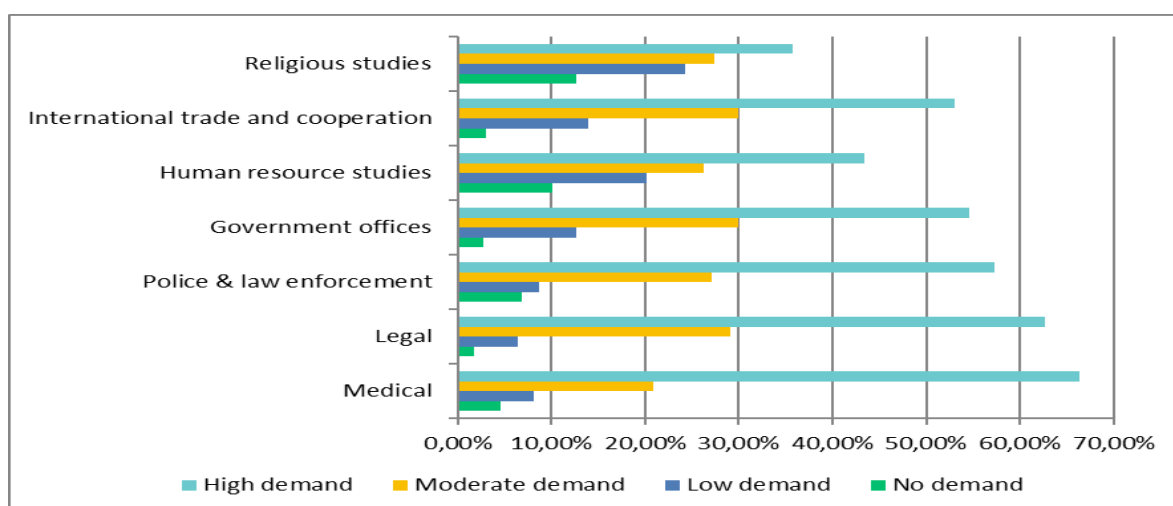


Taken together, the three tables reveal a clear progression but also a disconnect: while a majority of practitioners are using HLT tools and many feel confident in applying them, this has not yet translated into widespread financial gains. A substantial proportion of practitioners remain digitally excluded or economically unaffected, while a smaller group is already leveraging HLTs for efficiency gains and service diversification. This contrast highlights the need for targeted digital skills training, profession-specific HLT integration guidance, and clearer economic pathways to ensure that technological adoption results in tangible career and income benefits for language practitioners across the sector.

Table 27 summarises the perceptions of respondents that there is a strong and growing demand for language practitioners in several specialised sectors, particularly those linked to public services and international engagement. The medical (66,36%) and legal (62,73%) fields show the highest levels of high demand, followed closely by police and law enforcement (57,28%), government offices (54,55%), and international trade and cooperation (53%).

In contrast, human resource studies and religious studies display more moderate and varied demand profiles. While 43,43% still reported high demand in human resource studies, and 35,79% in religious studies, these areas also recorded higher levels of low or no demand compared to the core public-sector domains.

Table 27: Perceived Demand for Language Practitioners in Specialised Sectors.

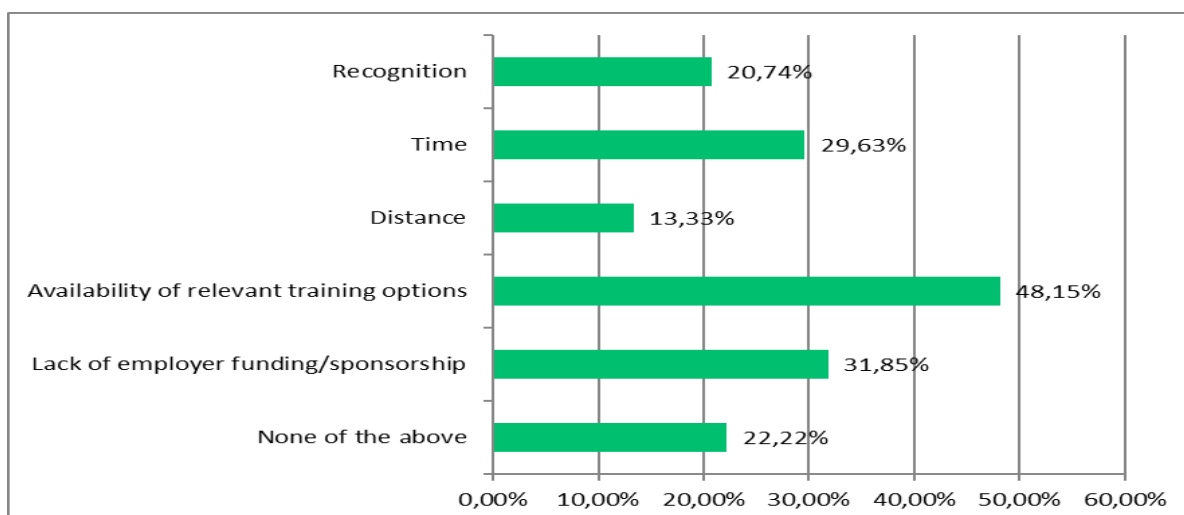


7.6. Professional Development Needs

In this section of the survey, respondents provided information about training barriers, priority areas for skills development, and their preferences for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). It also captures their views on mandatory CPD requirements and their ideas about suitable formats for future training provision.

Table 28 shows that the most significant barriers to accessing training are the availability of relevant training options (48,15%), lack of employer funding or sponsorship (31,85%), and time constraints (29,63%), followed by recognition issues (20,74%) and distance (13,33%). Notably, 22,22% reported no barriers, while open-ended responses highlight additional constraints such as retirement, lack of awareness of opportunities, and financial limitations. This indicates that access challenges are driven as much by systemic availability and funding as by individual circumstances.

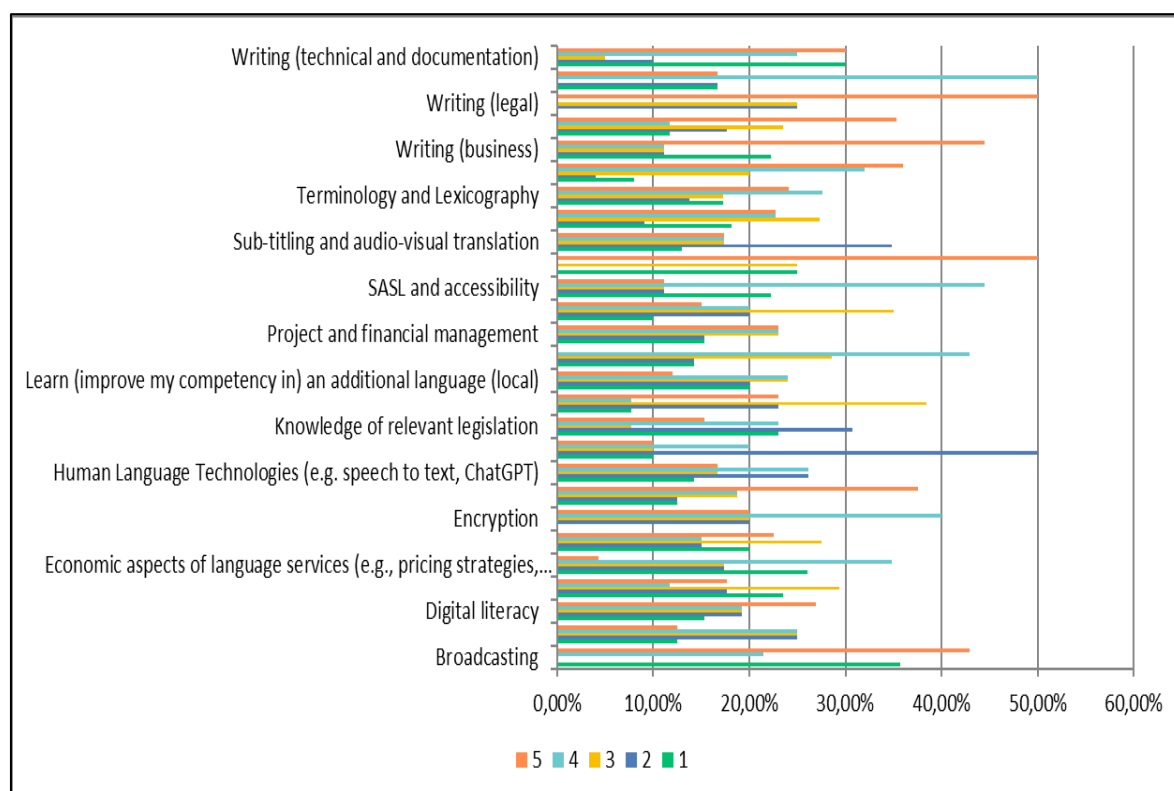
Table 28: Barriers to Accessing Training and Professional Development.



The survey results reveal that practitioners are motivated to upskill, particularly in digital, legal, economic, and accessibility-related domains, and that respondents support mandatory CPD frameworks. However, this motivation is tempered by structural barriers, notably limited training availability, funding, and time. Respondents' preference for low-cost, flexible, online-first training models points to the need for a national, accessible, and professionally recognised CPD system which

Table 29 reflects a strong demand for skills development that is both digital and practice oriented. The highest priority areas include broadcasting (35,71%), writing for technical and documentation purposes (30%), economic aspects of language services (26,09%), signing (25%), digital productivity and workflow automation (23,53%), knowledge of relevant legislation (23,08%), SASL and accessibility (22,22%), and business writing (22,22%). There is also consistent interest in editing, terminology and lexicography, teaching and assessment, project and financial management, and Human Language Technologies, indicating that practitioners are seeking to strengthen both their technical language skills and their business, digital, and regulatory competence.

Table 29: Priority Areas for Skills Development and Upskilling.



The findings in Table 30 show strong overall support for CPD as a formal regulatory requirement, with 76,09% of respondents answering “Yes”, only 2,90% saying “No,” and 21,01% indicating “Maybe.”

The small number of “Other” responses suggest that some respondents require greater clarity on how CPD would be structured and recognised, but the overall trend strongly favours mandatory, structured professional development.

Table 30: Support for CPD as a Regulatory Requirement.

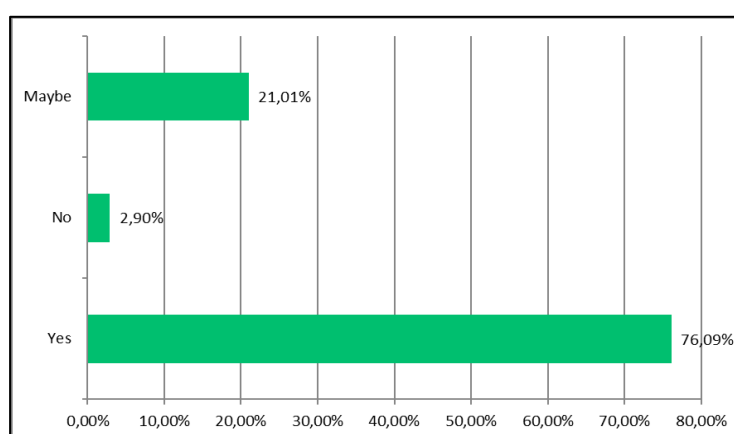
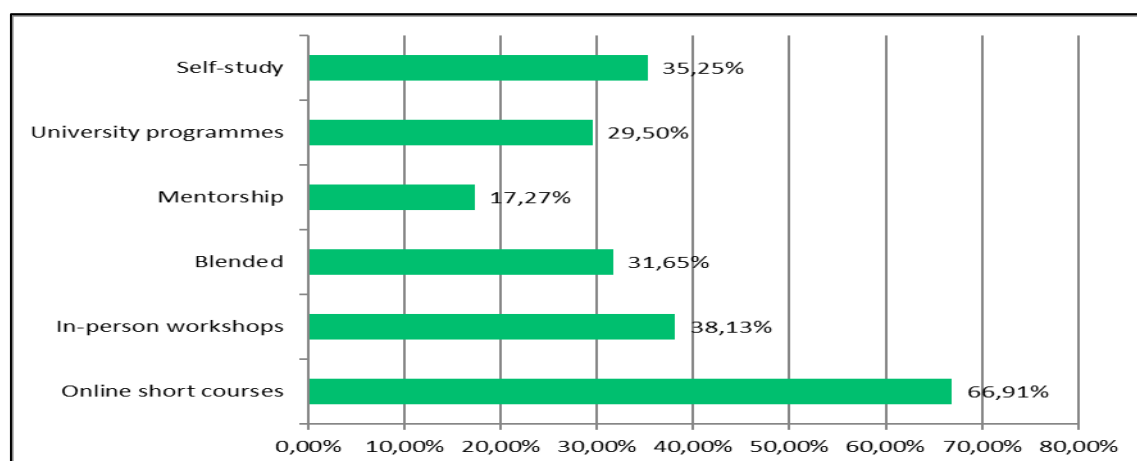


Table 31, below, shows a clear preference for flexible and accessible CPD formats. The most popular option is online short courses (66,91%), followed by self-study (35,25%), in-person workshops (38,13%), blended learning (31,65%), and university programmes (29,50%). Mentorship (17,27%) was selected less frequently but still represents a meaningful minority preference. This pattern aligns closely with the barriers identified in Table 30, particularly time, cost, and access constraints, and reinforces the demand for affordable, modular, and digitally delivered CPD offerings.

Table 31: Preferred Formats for CPD Training.

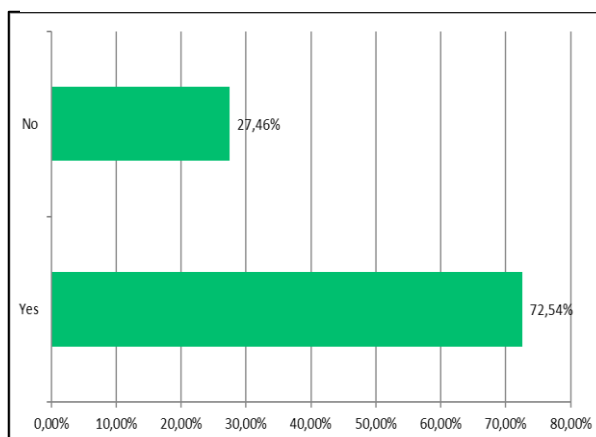


7.7. Policy, Accreditation and Professionalization

Table 32, Table 33, Table 34 and Table 35 reveal that while there is high awareness of the SALPC Act and strong support for structured accreditation and institutional support, most practitioners do not yet experience adequate recognition in practice. At the same time, respondents strongly favour skills- and experience-based accreditation, and place significant responsibility on PanSALB to drive visibility, standards, professional development, and systemic coordination. This contrast highlights a critical implementation gap between policy intent and practitioner experience, reinforcing the need for accelerated regulatory activation, clearer accreditation pathways, and stronger institutional leadership across the language sector.

Table 32 reflects that many respondents have a high level of awareness of the SALPC Act, with 72,54% (103 respondents) indicating that they are aware of the legislation, while 27,46% (39 respondents)

Table 32: Awareness of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) Act (2014).



are not. This suggests that although awareness is relatively strong, more than a quarter of practitioners remain outside formal knowledge of the regulatory framework, indicating a continued need for outreach and education.

In contrast, Table 33 reveals far more mixed and cautious views about policy recognition. Only 5,04% (7 respondents) feel their work is fully recognised, while 21,58% (30) feel it is mostly recognised. A larger proportion feel recognition is limited or absent, with 29,50% (41) indicating recognition only “to some extent”, and 24,46% (34) stating “not at all.”

A further 19,42% (27) were unsure, highlighting significant uncertainty and dissatisfaction regarding the visibility and status of the profession in policy frameworks.

Table 33: Perceived Recognition of Language Practitioners in Current Policy Frameworks.

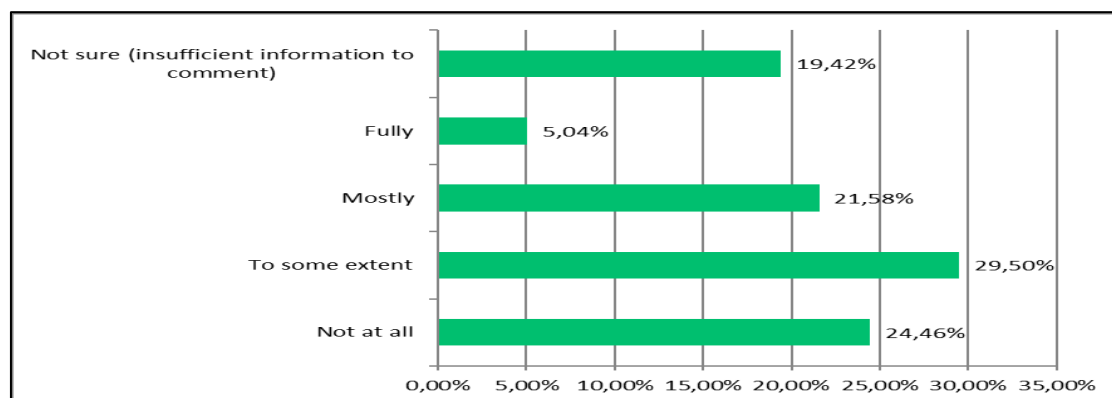


Table 34 shows strong consensus around what accreditation should prioritise. The most important elements identified were practical experience (79,14%; 110 respondents) and skills assessment (76,98%; 107), followed by formal qualifications (59,71%; 83) and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) (56,12%; 78). In contrast, economic viability (17,99%; 25) was seen as a far less central criterion. This points to a clear practitioner preference for competence-based, practice-oriented accreditation models over purely market-based measures.

Table 34: Key Criteria That Accreditation for Language Practitioners Should Prioritise

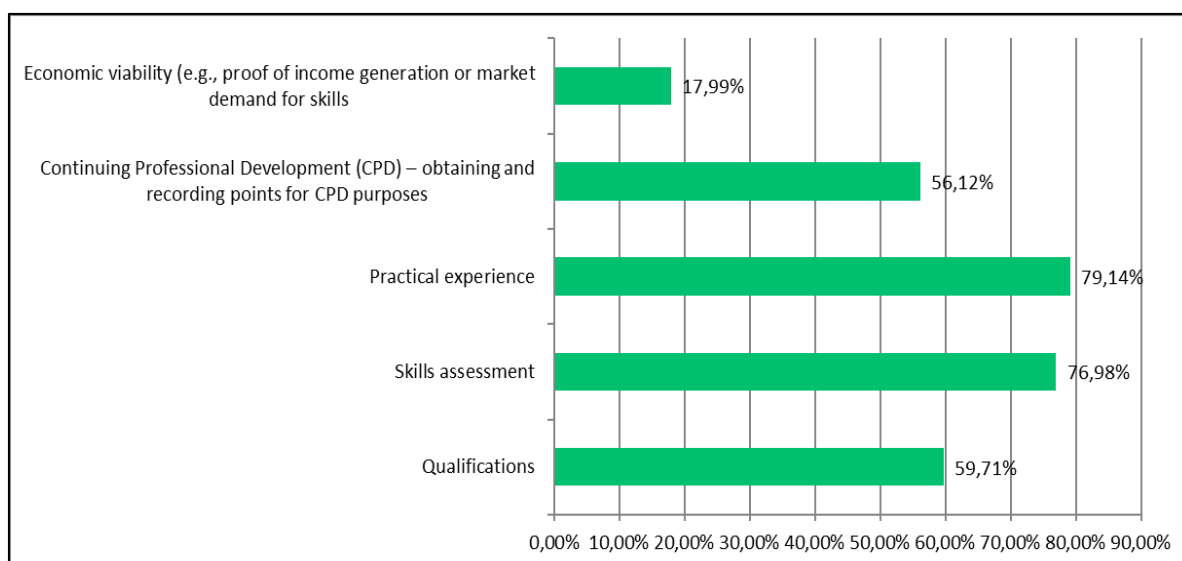
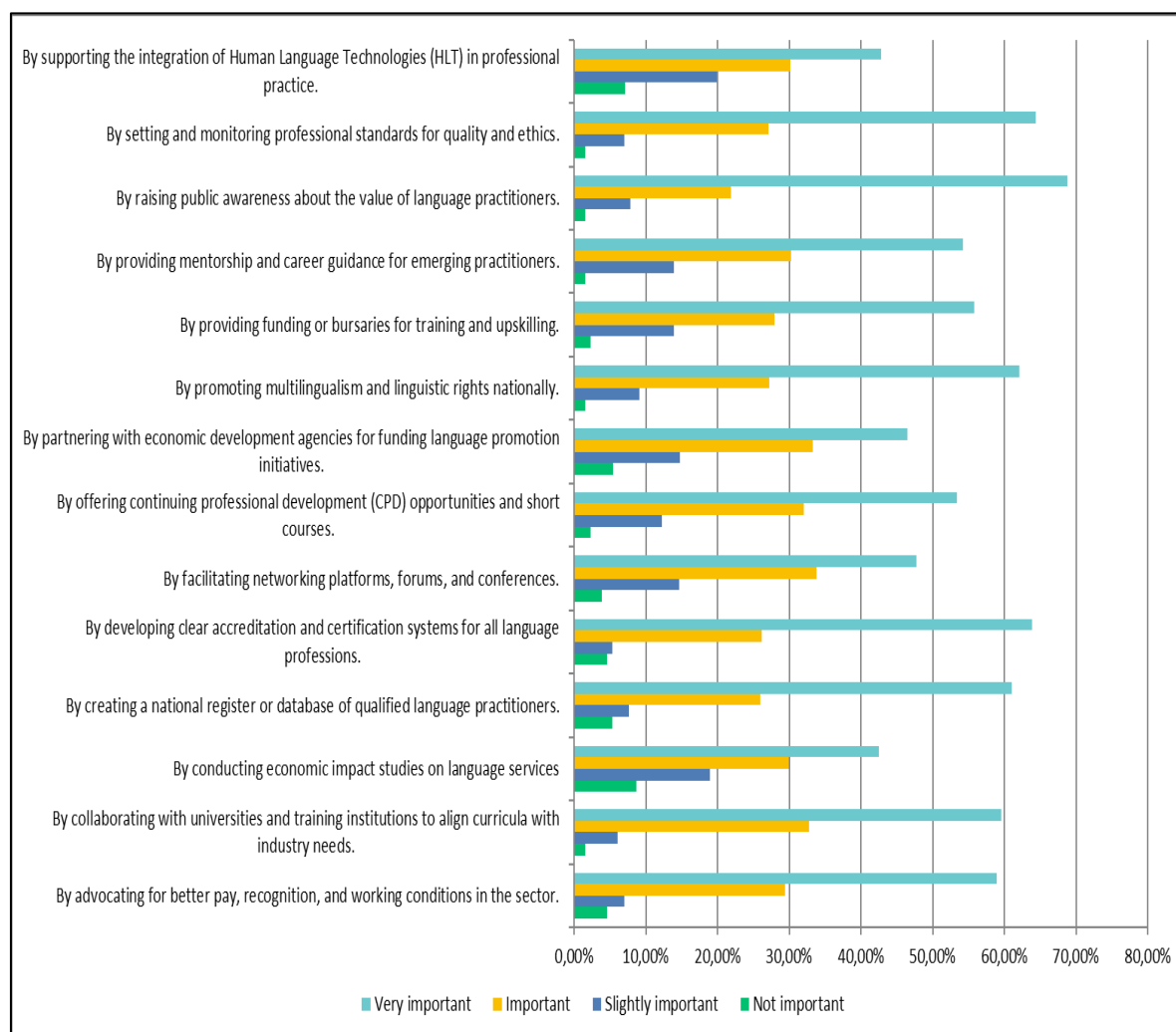


Table 35, below, reflects respondents' strong expectations of PanSALB's role in strengthening the sector. The highest levels of "very important" and "important" responses relate to raising public awareness of the value of language practitioners (68,75%), developing clear accreditation and certification systems (63,85%), setting and monitoring professional standards (64,34%), promoting multilingualism and linguistic rights (62,12%), and creating a national register of qualified practitioners (61,07%). Strong support was also shown for CPD provision, mentorship, funding for training, networking platforms, and integration of Human Language Technologies (HLTs).

Table 35: Perceived Importance of PanSALB Support Across Key Development Areas.



7.8. Industry Demand and Economics of Language Services

In this section of the survey respondents were asked to share their experiences about the economic dimensions of language practice in South Africa, including sectoral demand, income patterns, pricing models, and the economic constraints affecting language development. Respondents were asked about their views on multilingualism in the economy, funding support mechanisms, emerging opportunities, and the future impact of digital language technologies.

Table 36 reveals that education and government are the most consistent users of language services, with education most frequently ranked as the sector that uses services the most, followed by government, legal/media, and business, while technology and health are more often positioned in lower-to-moderate usage categories.

Despite this sustained sectoral demand, only 40,14% of respondents (Table 37) report that demand for their services have increased over the past five years, while 28,17% indicate it has stayed the same and 25,35% report a decline.

Table 36: Sectoral Demand for Language Services (Ranking by Usage).

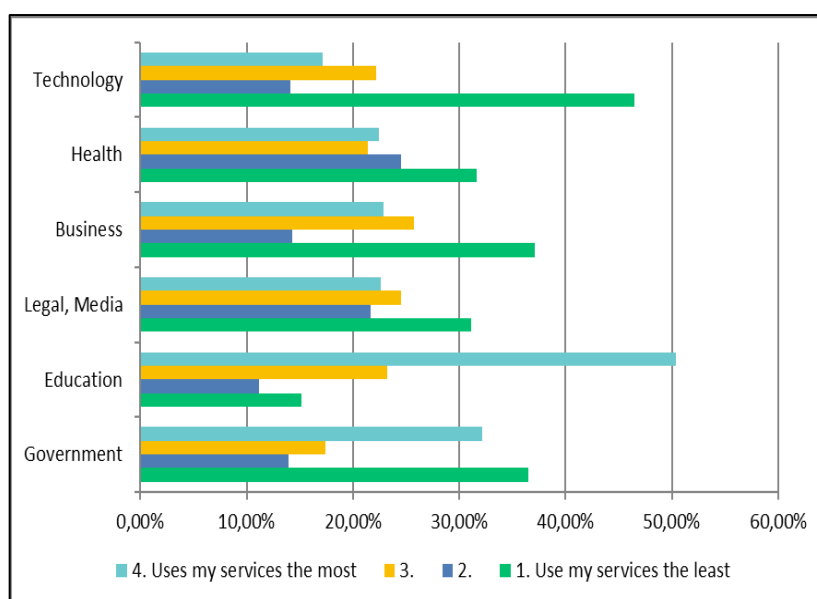
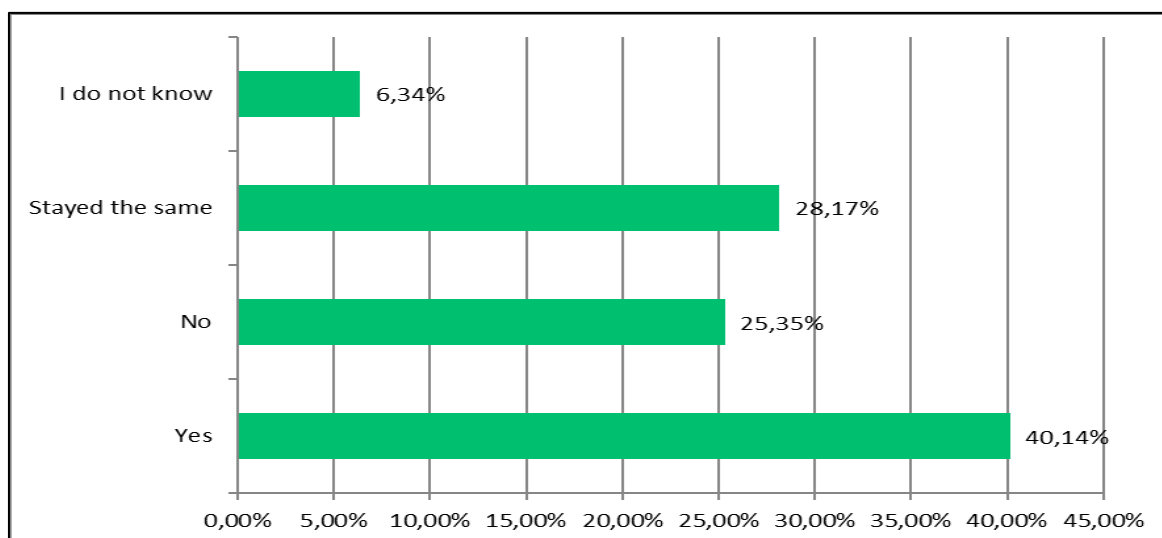
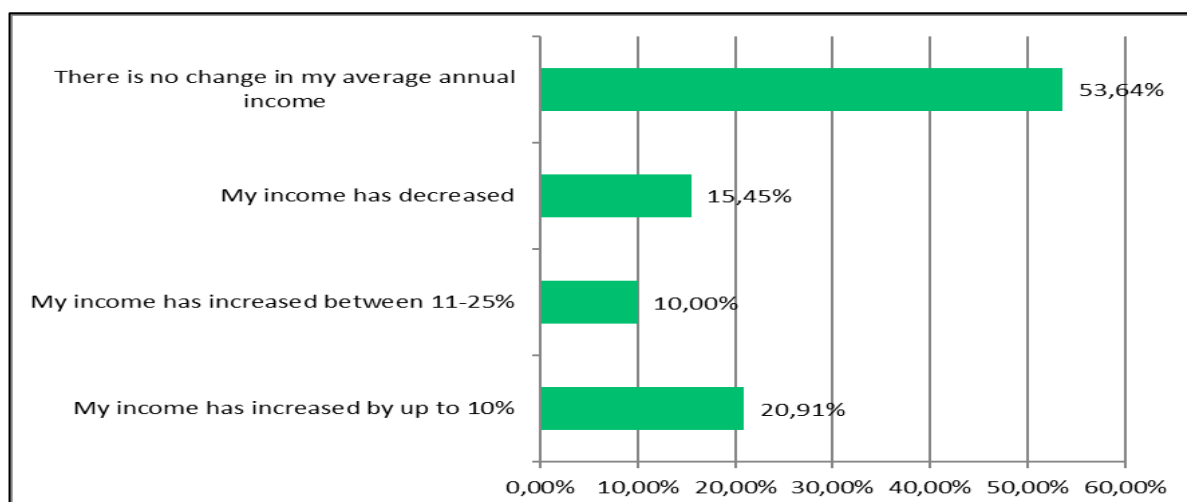


Table 37: Trends in Demand for Language Services Over the Past Five Years.



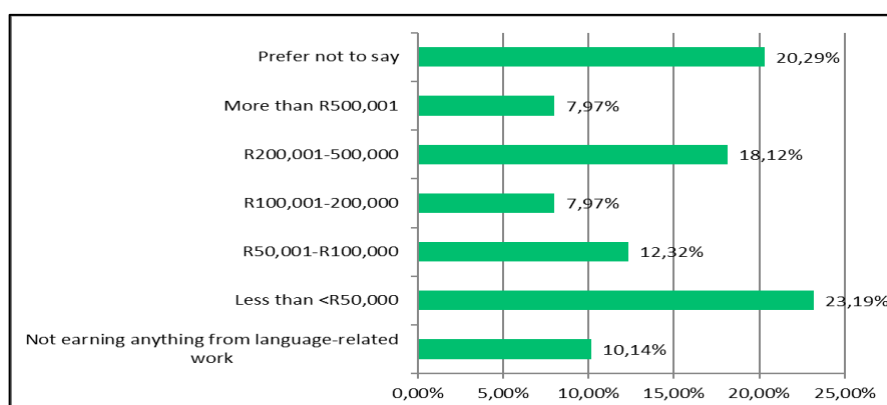
Importantly, Table 38, below, highlights that even where demand has increased, the financial benefit has been limited, with 53,64% reporting no change in income, and only 30,91% reporting any income growth, mostly at modest levels (up to 25%).

Table 38: Impact of Changing Demand on Average Annual Income.



Income patterns as, outlined in Table 39, reflect economic vulnerability in the sector. More than a third of respondents earn below R50 000 per year or nothing at all from language work, while only 26,09% earn above R200 000 per year.

Table 39: Estimated Annual Income from Language-Related Work.



At the same time, Table 40 shows that nearly half (49,63%) derive 76–100% of their total income from language services, indicating a group that is fully dependent on linguistically driven livelihoods.

Table 40: Proportion of Total Income Derived from Language Services.

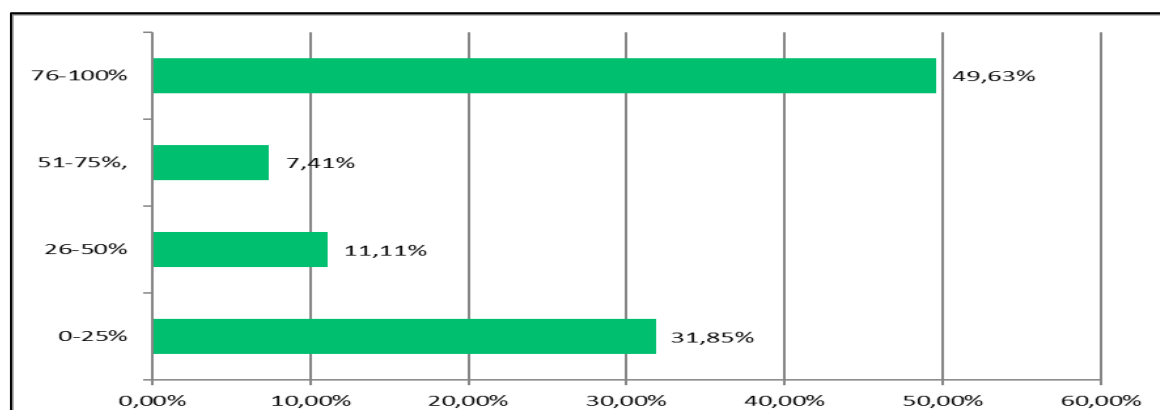


Table 41, that follows, reflects that pricing practices are highly fragmented, with most respondents using project-based pricing (33,08%), market-related rates (30%), or negotiated pricing (26,15%), while only 10,77% rely on fixed hourly rates.

Table 41: Pricing Models Used by Language Practitioners

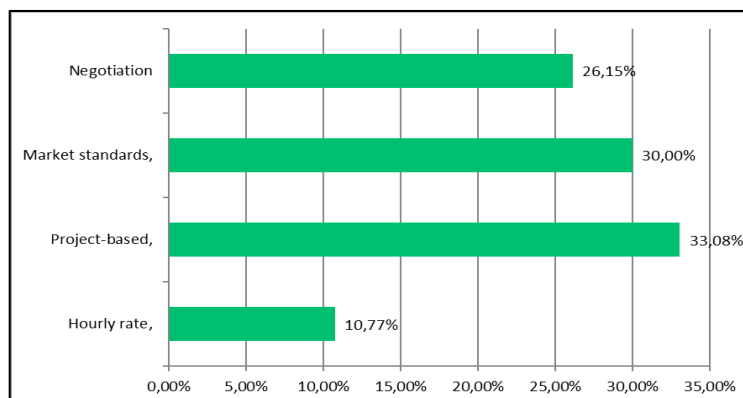


Table 42 below shows that hourly earnings are generally modest, with most falling between R201–R500, and only 3.31% earning above R1 000 per hour, while 38,02% report that rates vary widely by client.

Table 42: Typical Hourly Rates for Language Services

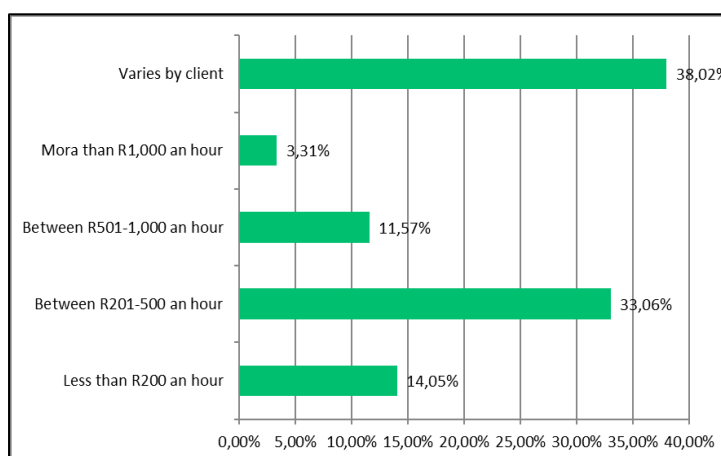
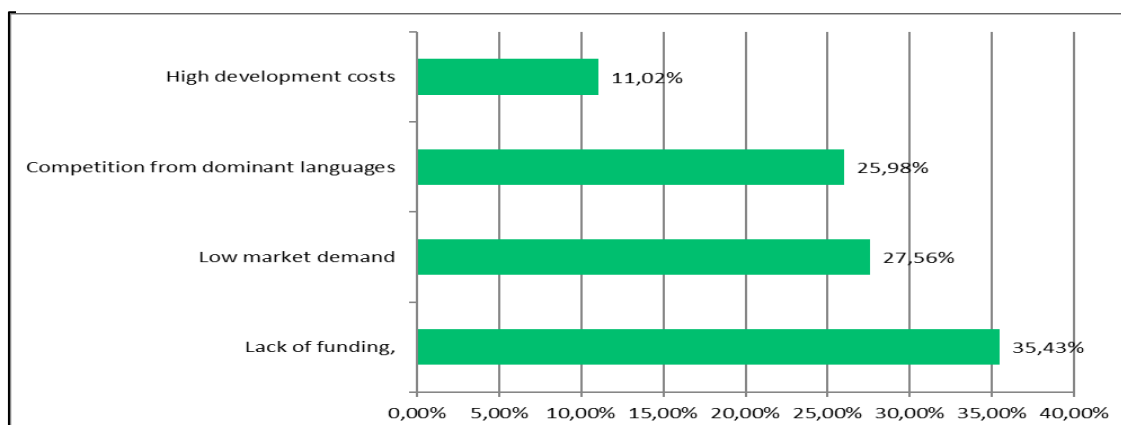


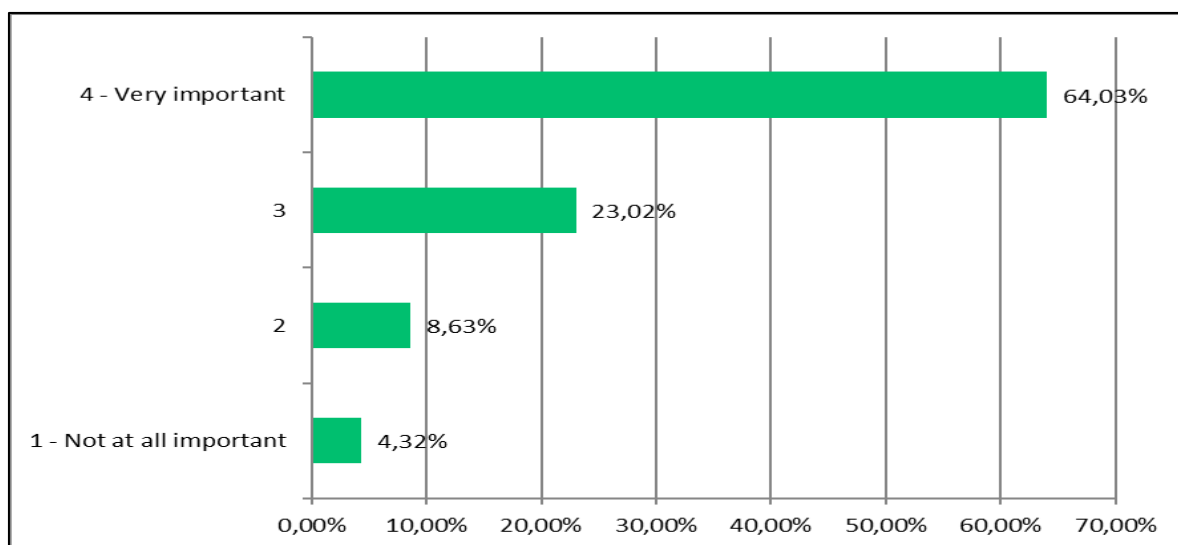
Table 43 that follows, summarises respondents' views that the structural barriers to language development are primarily as lack of funding (35,43%), low market demand (27,56%), and competition from dominant languages (25,98%), with high development costs (11,02%) also featuring.

Table 43: Economic Barriers to the Promotion of Indigenous and Underrepresented Languages



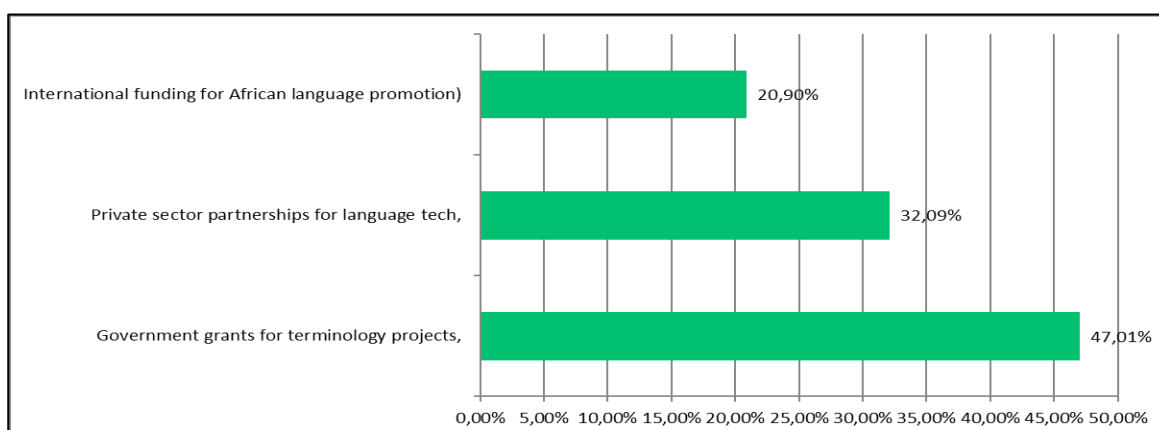
Against this backdrop, Table 44 highlights that there is a strong consensus amongst respondents that multilingualism is economically important, with 64.03% rating its importance at the highest level.

Table 44: Perceived Importance of Multilingualism to South Africa's Economy



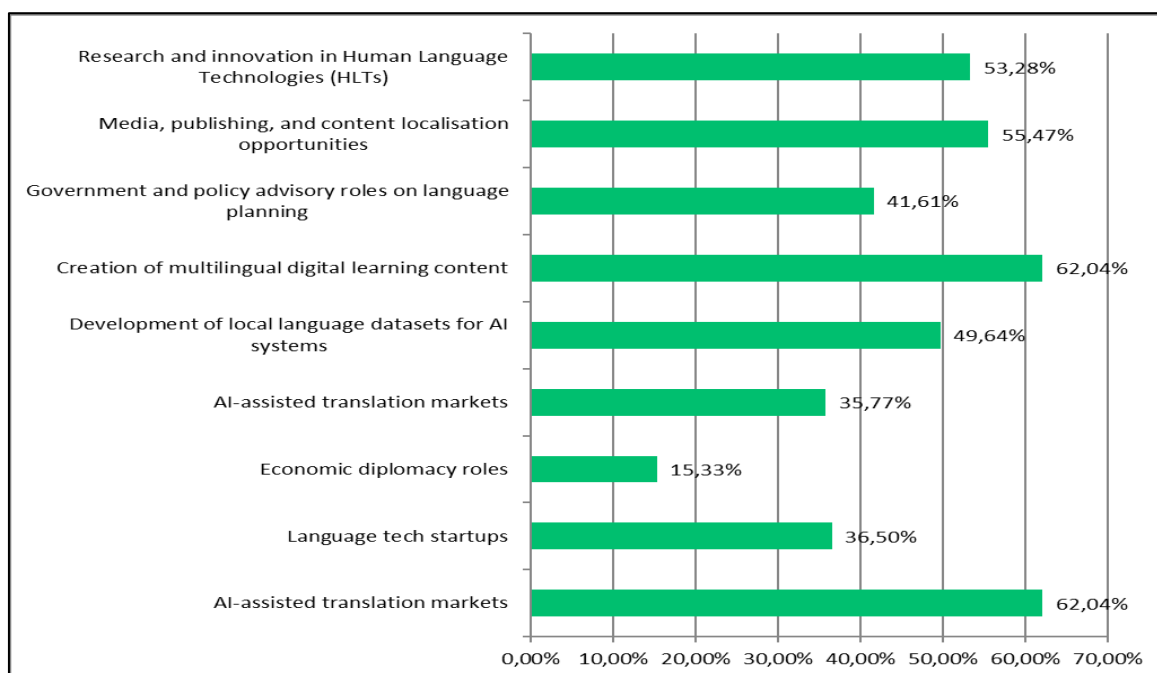
Correspondingly, Table 45 shows that respondents prioritise government grants for terminology development (47,01%), private-sector partnerships for language technology (32,09%), and international funding for African language promotion (20,90%) as the most important economic support mechanisms.

Table 45: Types of Economic Support Needed for Language Development



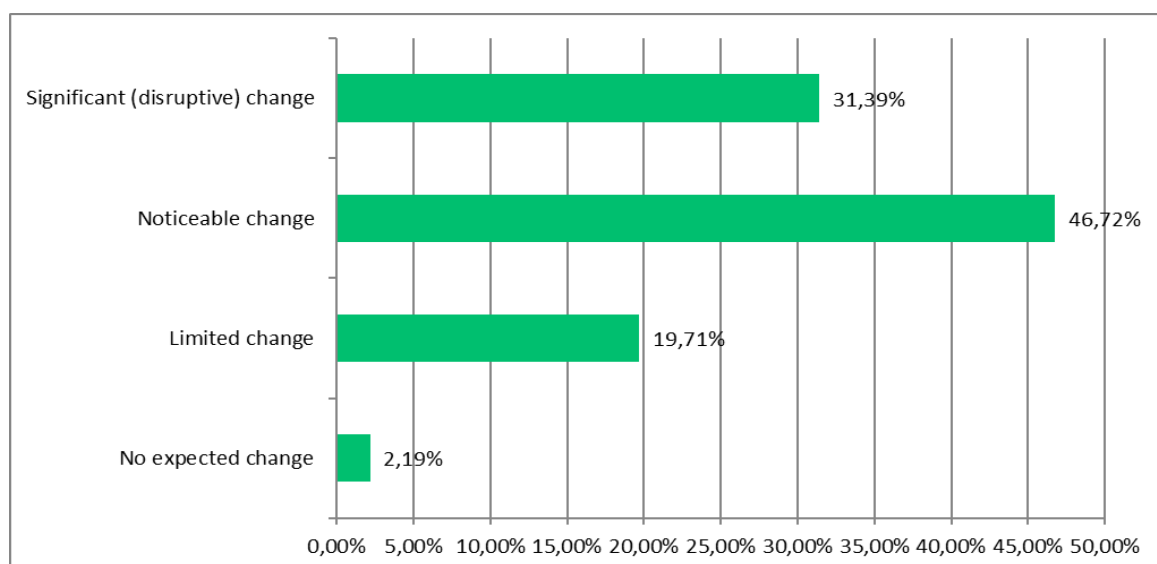
Looking to the future, Table 46 shows that respondents are highly optimistic about new digital and policy-linked opportunities. The strongest growth areas are seen as AI-assisted translation markets (62,04%), creation of multilingual digital learning content (62,04%), media and content localisation (55,47%), research and innovation in HLTs (53,28%), and development of African language datasets for AI (49,64%).

Table 46: Emerging and Future Economic Opportunities for Language Practitioners.



At the same time, Table 47, indicates that respondents expect significant technological disruption, with 78,11% anticipating noticeable or major changes to their work over the next five years. Qualitative responses reveal a tension between optimism about efficiency and innovation, and deep concern about job displacement, devaluation of human expertise, and reduced income security.

Table 47: Expected Impact of Digital Language Platforms on Future Work.



7.9. Knowledge of Policy and Rights

This section examines respondents' understanding of language legislation, perceptions of the protection of linguistic rights, and views on the economic impact of current language policies. Taken together, the responses to the three set questions reveal a critical policy–practice gap. While a minority of practitioners believe that linguistic rights are adequately protected, large proportions either dispute this or are uncertain, reflecting low confidence in rights-based outcomes. This is compounded by limited understanding of policy objectives and a strong perception that current language policies are not translating into tangible economic opportunities.

The results from Table 48 reveal a deeply divided view on whether language legislation adequately protects linguistic rights in South Africa. While 38,13% (53 respondents) believe that it does, a substantial 28,06% (39 respondents) believe that it does not, and an equally large group (33,81%; 47 respondents) indicated that they do not know. This highlights both contested confidence in the current policy framework and significant uncertainty among practitioners regarding rights protection.

Table 48: Perceptions of Whether Language Legislation Adequately Protects Linguistic Rights

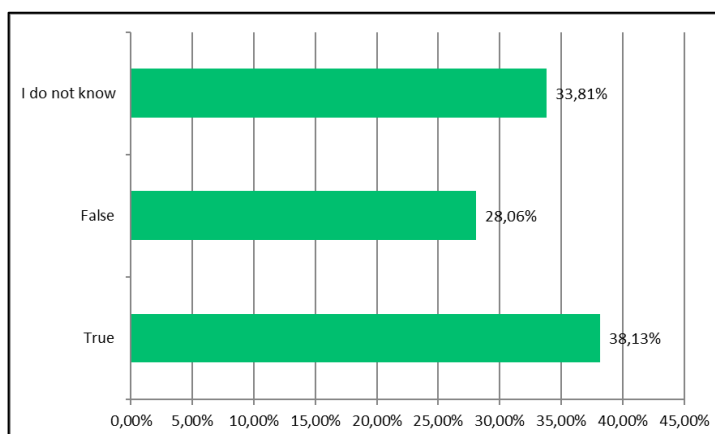
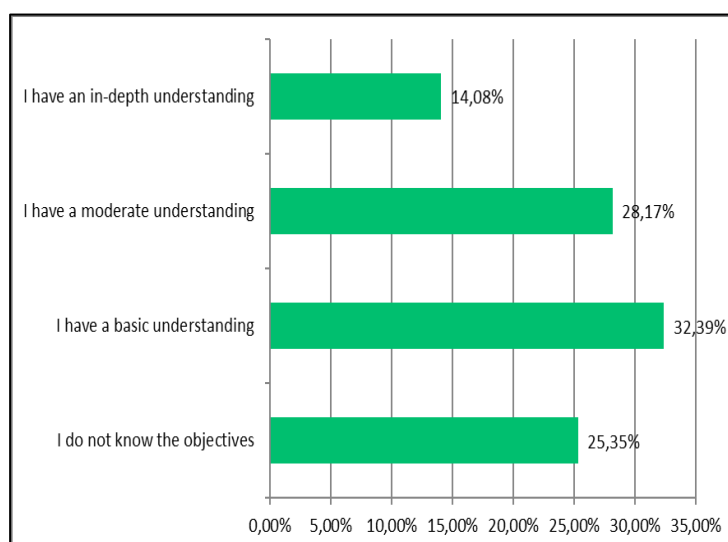


Table 49 provides further context to this uncertainty by showing limited depth of understanding of national language policy objectives. Only 14,08% (20 respondents) reported having an in-depth understanding, while 28,17% (40) indicated a moderate understanding.

A much larger proportion reported either only a basic understanding (32,39%; 46) or no understanding at all (25,35%; 36). This suggests that over half of respondents lack more than a superficial grasp of policy objectives, reinforcing the uncertainty observed in Table 50.

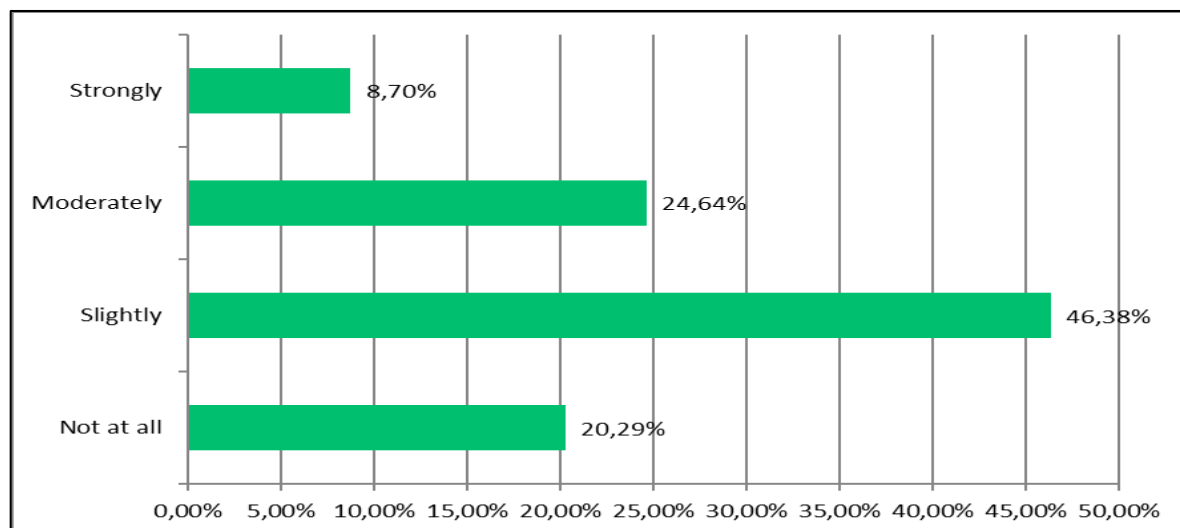
Table 49: Self-Assessed Understanding of the Objectives of National Language Legislation



The findings in Table 50 show even weaker confidence in the economic effectiveness of language policy. A majority of respondents believe that current language policies promote economic opportunities only slightly (46,38%; 64) or not at all (20,29%; 28).

Just under a quarter (24,64%; 34) believe that policy promotes economic opportunities moderately, while only a very small group (8,70%; 12) feel that it does so strongly. This indicates a widespread perception that language policy has yet to deliver meaningful economic benefits

Table 50: Perceived Extent to Which Language Policies Promote Economic Opportunities



in areas such as trade, tourism, and job creation.

7.10. General Comments

This section provides an overview of the qualitative insights into respondents' views on economic incentives for language development, policy and regulatory reform, the key challenges facing language practitioners, conditions needed to improve professional effectiveness, and perspectives on standardising qualifications and monitoring professional development.

Across all five questions, funding, recognition, and enforcement of existing policy emerge as the most consistent and interconnected concerns. In responses on economic incentives, practitioners strongly emphasised the need for tax breaks, government subsidies, bursaries, and direct funding for multilingual content, terminology development, and small language enterprises. One respondent commented: "Tax breaks and extra incentives would be a great boost for language development and promotion."

These financial mechanisms were repeatedly linked to improving income stability, lowering barriers to entry, and making language work economically viable, especially for freelancers and African-language specialists. This is made clear in this comment: "Incentives for businesses operating in provinces where certain languages dominate (e.g., Limpopo for Sepedi) could help preserve linguistic diversity and stimulate local economies."

However, a parallel thread of scepticism also emerged, with some respondents arguing that poor implementation, weak monitoring, and limited state capacity could undermine the impact of any incentive scheme. This is noted by these respondents:

"The current policies need to be strengthened and enforced, e.g. The Use of Official Languages Act."

“I think the legal requirements are sufficient, the problem is raising awareness of the value of language services and applying the legal principles.”

“Strengthening the language professions in South Africa requires a mix of policy reforms, regulatory adjustments, and resource allocation to make the sector sustainable and attractive.”

When reflecting on regulatory adjustments, respondents did not primarily call for new laws, but rather for the effective enforcement of existing legislation, including the long-awaited implementation of the South African Language Practitioners’ Council framework: “Bring the SA Language Practitioners Act into operation.”

Strong calls were made for accreditation, fair tariffs, mandatory language units in public institutions, protection of minority languages (including SASL), and strict penalties for non-compliance. These regulatory concerns link directly to the professional challenges identified in Question 55, where the dominant issues were low pay, lack of recognition, weak demand, undercutting by unqualified practitioners, and the disruptive impact of AI and automation. Many respondents expressed deep concern that language work is undervalued despite being highly specialised, and that the market increasingly favours speed and cost over quality. This is emphasised by the following respondents:

“Not being seen as highly skilled professionals. The false idea that anyone who can speak a language can be a professional translator or proofreader”

“People’s ignorance towards the industry and the difference language practitioners make.”

“Poor training standards at universities; weak economy resulting in employers not being willing to pay for quality language work.”

In Question 56, focusing on what would most improve practitioners’ ability to work effectively, respondents again emphasised recognition, better remuneration, reliable access to work, accreditation, access to tools and technology, policy enforcement, and CPD opportunities.

“Legal requirements for official communication to be reviewed by accredited language practitioners.”

“Getting work that is not AI-driven, where my own skill and creativity still matters. I realise that this is a dream, but I’m going to try.”

“Mandatory multilingual compliance across public and private sectors”

This reinforces a strong alignment between economic insecurity, weak institutional support, and limited professional mobility, as previously raised in the challenges section. Finally, responses on standardising qualifications and monitoring professional development revealed broad support for minimum entry standards, national certification frameworks, mentorship, and structured CPD, while also cautioning against over-regulation, exclusion of highly experienced practitioners without formal qualifications, and “one-size-fits-all” models. This reflects a desire for balanced professionalisation that safeguards quality without undermining diversity of pathways into the profession.

7.11. Conclusion

The findings from the online survey present a picture of a highly experienced, multilingual, and multi-sectoral language profession that operates across education, government, business, creative industries, and public services, with both a strong domestic base and an expanding international footprint. While English and Afrikaans remain dominant, the presence of a wide range of African and international languages reflects the sector's cultural richness and growing global orientation, alongside clear opportunities to strengthen advanced proficiency and capacity in underrepresented languages.

At the same time, the sector is marked by a mixed employment profile, combining full-time professionals with a large proportion of freelance, part-time, and project-based workers. This highlights persistent challenges related to income stability, professional protection, access to training, and uneven recognition, despite a strong foundation of formal qualifications, professional accreditation, and practical skills. The limited engagement with non-official indigenous languages and the uneven economic valuation of languages further point to important access and equity gaps within the language economy.

The findings reveal a significant policy–practice gap. While there is growing awareness of language legislation and strong support for accreditation, CPD, and professionalisation, many practitioners remain uncertain about the economic impact of language policy and the extent to which linguistic rights are practically realised. Taken together, the results highlight an urgent need for stronger institutional coordination, clearer policy communication, targeted skills development, and visible economic implementation of language policy to ensure that the language sector can contribute fully to South Africa's socio-economic and multilingual development.

Chapter 8 Insights From Qualitative Interviews

8.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a consolidated analysis of qualitative insights drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted across Economics of Language Reports 1, 2 and 3. Collectively, these interviews contribute a longitudinal, multi-perspective view of the South African language sector by bringing together the experiences, reflections and assessments of academics, practitioners, government officials, industry stakeholders and civil society actors.

Across the three reports, a total of 44 respondents participated in interviews conducted through a combination of online interviews, oral Zoom sessions, and written responses. The interviews were designed to complement the quantitative and policy-focused components of the Economics of Language research programme by capturing experiential knowledge of professional practice, policy alignment, institutional arrangements, training pathways, regulation, and economic participation within the language economy.

Each phase of interviewing had a distinct analytical purpose.

- Report 1 focused on defining the language practitioner, understanding the contribution of the language economy, identifying challenges in the sector, and testing the concept of a professional council.
- Report 2 explored the feasibility, design and governance of a national practitioner database as a foundational tool for professionalisation.
- Report 3 extends this work through a national needs and capacity assessment of language practitioners within the post-1994 legislative framework, with particular attention to skills, training, accreditation, policy awareness, digital readiness, and economic participation.

Together, the interviews provide a coherent qualitative evidence base that informs the professionalisation agenda, the establishment of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC), and the intersection between language, regulation, skills development and economic inclusion. All respondents participated voluntarily under conditions of informed consent and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

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.

8.2. Respondents' Roles and Experience in the Language Sector (All Three Reports)

The respondents interviewed across Reports 1, 2 and 3 represent a broad cross-section of South Africa's language economy, spanning policy, education, professional practice, research, publishing, media, civil society, and cultural production. This diversity enables the interviews to reflect both strategic and operational perspectives on the sector.

Table 51: Overview of Respondents' Roles and Experience (Reports 1–3)

Sector Category	Description of Roles Represented
Higher Education & Research	University-based academics involved in linguistics, applied language studies, academic literacy, curriculum development, translation studies, and postgraduate supervision.
Government & Statutory Bodies	Officials working in national departments, language policy development, terminology coordination, multilingualism promotion, and regulatory planning.
Professional Language Practice	Freelance and independent editors, translators, copy editors, and language service providers working across commercial, academic, legal and media environments.
Media, Publishing & Creative Industries	Journalists, editors, publishing professionals, content directors and creative writers involved in book publishing, news production and cultural content development.
Professional & Sectoral Bodies	Leaders and representatives from professional associations linked to translation, editing, linguistics and language advocacy.
Education (School Sector)	Teachers and school-based practitioners involved in literacy development, language teaching and learner support.
Civil Society, Arts & Cultural Organisations	Practitioners and managers working in theatre, heritage, community arts, advocacy and cultural development initiatives.
Foreign Missions & International Representation	Respondents involved in language and communication work within diplomatic and consular environments.
Business & Administrative Support Services	Independent providers of language-related administrative, documentation and secretarial services.

Collectively, these respondents bring institutional, practitioner-led, entrepreneurial and community-based experience into the research. Their combined perspectives provide insight into how language functions simultaneously as a professional discipline, a service economy, a policy domain and a social infrastructure.

8.3. Capacities and Skills of Interviewees

The interviewees, all of whom are involved in the language economy, provided detailed and valuable information and insights. The group interviewed is largely well qualified, and has extensive experience. The interviews highlighted significant gaps and challenges.

There is some consensus that there is often a disconnect between formal qualifications and expertise. As interviewee 42 put it:

"I think it's a misconception, because we need people that are highly qualified and have the knowledge and the expertise to perform such work."

Many of the interviewees believe that language practitioners are generally undervalued and under-remunerated, as compared to other professions.

Table 52: Perceived value and remuneration.

Area of Work	Value / Contribution	Challenges/Remuneration Perception
Academic / Teaching	Vital role in multilingual agenda at universities; essential for academic literacy/writing. Crucial for equalizing education and restoring indigenous knowledge dignity.	Academic literacy is undervalued; assumption that anybody can teach it. Grossly under-recognized.
Editing/Journalism/Media	Conveys knowledge; essential for corporate and news credibility/audience engagement. Helps clients communicate effectively.	Salaries and professional fees have been reduced due to cost-cutting. Media industry is in extreme distress. Quality of sub-editing has plunged. Practitioners are grossly underpaid / undervalued. Budget cuts prioritize marketing / analytics over editing. Freelance work requires expensive software subscriptions.
Translation (Indigenous)	Crucial for promoting cultural heritage, preservation, and inclusivity. Stimulates demand for employment.	Practitioners working with indigenous African languages are often not adequately remunerated. Translation costs are high (translating a novel is very time-consuming). Younger generations are not using indigenous languages as much, leading to a decline in translation work.
Professional Recognition and Fees	Professional bodies strengthen the profession. Verification and accreditation are key to legitimacy.	Fees for existing associations are often high, without commensurate benefits. Professionals frequently undersell their services. Estimates for annual registration fees for a future council range from R1 500 – R2 000 for professionals, with proposals for affordable student/unemployed rates (e.g., R100–R500) and higher corporate fees (R3 500 to 8 000 for senior

		professionals). Government is expected to pay registration fees for staff.
Economic Opportunities	Drives cultural tourism, publishing, software development, and sustains jobs. Proficiency directly relates to economic opportunity. High demand for content in local languages, especially in publishing and streaming. Opportunities exist in plain language principles advocacy.	Misguided belief that AI can replace language workers is a significant threat. Lack of market research hinders capitalizing on local language demand. SMMEs struggle to access language services due to lack of affordability and barriers in understanding complex forms.

The widespread perception of undervaluing language work means that while individuals hold high qualifications and rich experience, the system often fails to leverage their skills effectively, creating a disconnect. For many professionals, their true value is currently realized not through direct remuneration from traditional language services alone, but by supplementing income with other skills (like data analysis or bookkeeping) or focusing on emerging bespoke services to counteract the threat of AI and systemic underfunding. This situation suggests that the development of a regulated council is seen as critical to establishing professional standards and securing equitable compensation across the sector.

8.4. Establishment of the SALPC

The establishment of a South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) is seen as crucial for the professionalisation, regulation, and enhanced economic vitality of the language sector.

Mandated by the South African Language Practitioners Council Act of 2014, the SALPC is envisioned as a statutory body that addresses fragmentation, raises standards, and improves the value and opportunities for language practitioners across various fields.

One of the central value propositions is that the Council will operate a national, centralized database intended to serve as a national registry and a platform supporting training, networking, and job opportunities.

The perceived value of the SALPC ranges from professional standards to economic empowerment:

Table 53: The consensus on the value the SALPC will add.

Professionalisation and Legitimacy	Regulation and accreditation of practitioners is primary. It strengthens the profession and provides necessary gravitas. Sets ethical and professional standards. Combats the problem of unregulated individuals claiming to be practitioners. Provides legitimacy and assurance to clients regarding service quality.
Economic Opportunities and Job Creation	Functions as a central platform (a "LinkedIn for language practitioners") for job matching and career opportunities. Makes practitioners visible and easily accessible to employers. Crucial for tackling high unemployment among qualified linguists. Can lobby for funds outside of government and encourage private-sector involvement.

Standardisation and Fair Compensation	Helps regulate pricing to avoid "price dumping" and establishes guidelines for best practices. Provides practitioners with essential bargaining power and legitimacy. Ensures accountability, unlike practitioners who are currently accountable only to themselves.
Skills Development and Training (CPD)	Mandates and tracks Continuous Professional Development (CPD) records and certifications. Offers accredited training pathways and opportunities. Focuses on re-skilling practitioners, especially regarding digital skills and new technologies like AI and Human Language Technologies (HLT).
Stakeholder Coordination and Data Integrity	Provides a centralized national registry for verified practitioner information, covering various specializations (translation, editing, terminology, HLT, lexicography, etc.). Facilitates dialogue, collaboration, and networking among language practitioners. Contributes to developing a National Language Policy by mapping the entire language ecosystem and its role players.
Visibility and Public Awareness	Makes the sector and its value known to the broader public. Increases public awareness of the value language practitioners bring to national identity and communication. Provides academic literacy practitioners with needed professional recognition.

8.5. Top priorities for language council

The establishment of the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) is viewed as a critical opportunity to move the sector toward greater professionalism and economic relevance. The top priorities for the future Council revolve around regulation, economic empowerment, and ensuring that language services contribute effectively to social justice and national development.

The following table outlines the top priorities for the SALPC, derived directly from the perspectives of academics, government officials, practitioners, and industry stakeholders documented in the sources.

Table 54: Top priorities for the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC).

Priority Area	Specific Actions and Goals
Professional Regulation and Accreditation	Regulate and accredit language practitioners to instil legitimacy and professional standards.
	Set ethical and professional standards and establish a code of ethics or conduct, particularly for interpreters.
	Formal recognition of language careers, providing "gravitas" to specialized fields like academic literacy.
	Ensure quality control by verifying professional profiles, qualifications, and experience.
	Monitor compliance with language legislation.
Economic Value and Opportunity	Regulate pricing to avoid "price dumping" and provide advice or guidelines on professional pay rates.

	Advocate for better working conditions and equitable remuneration for practitioners.
	Function as a national registry and job matching platform (a "LinkedIn for language practitioners") to link professionals with institutions and private entities seeking services.
	Increase public awareness of the sector's value and contributions to national identity and communication.
Skills Development and Training (CPD)	Offer continuous professional development (CPD) and track professional development records.
	Develop and provide accredited training pathways.
	Re-skill practitioners to incorporate digital and AI technologies, addressing skills gaps (e.g., computational linguistics, digital humanities).
	Partner with universities (like NWU/SADiLaR) for curriculum development and to package CPD units.
Accessibility, Inclusivity, and Development	Prioritize societal transformation and social justice, ensuring the platform and policies are inclusive.
	Identify and protect at-risk indigenous languages and cultural heritage.
	Ensure the database includes voices from rural and historically disadvantaged communities and represents all indigenous languages.
	Support the use of indigenous languages in public life, especially concerning accessibility to government programs and funding for entrepreneurs.
Database Structure and Functionality	Establish a national, centralized database containing verified information, specializations (e.g., lexicography, HLT, language planning), and experience.
	Ensure the system has a multilingual interface, starting with English but phasing in all 12 official languages.
	Design the system for user-friendly searching and easy retrieval of specialized information and contacts.
	Enable interoperability and linkages with external language associations (like AfriLEX, SALALS, SATI) to retrieve comprehensive information quickly.
	Ensure the system is sustainable and continuously maintained, avoiding being a drain on resources.

8.5.1. The Role of Regulation in Enhancing Value

While highly qualified professionals exist (e.g., those with PhDs and decades of experience), their qualifications are often insufficiently translated into professional recognition or economic reward due to systemic undervaluation, institutional reluctance to create opportunities, and a

lack of unified professional regulation. The future value of language qualifications hinges heavily on successfully implementing the regulatory framework provided by the SALPC Act.

The establishment of a unified, statutory body like the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) is overwhelmingly seen as the crucial intervention needed to formalize the profession and raise the value of qualifications:

- **Strengthening the Profession:** Having a professional body that regulates practitioners strengthens the profession. Regulation and accreditation are the number one priority for the future Council.
- **Legitimacy and Pricing:** Registration with an accredited body provides legitimacy to practitioners when dealing with clients. The Council is expected to help regulate pricing and avoid price dumping, addressing the current issue where people undersell their services.
- **Addressing Gaps:** The absence of a professional body that regulates all aspects of language practice leads to unregulated individuals claiming to be practitioners, diluting the perceived value of qualifications.

8.5.2. Detailed Insights on Prioritization

Practitioners across the sector emphasize the need for the Council to move beyond mere compliance toward excellence.

1. **Addressing Undervaluation:** A recurring theme is that language practitioners, particularly those working with indigenous African languages, are not adequately recognized or remunerated. The Council must regulate pricing and working conditions to combat the pervasive issue of professionals underselling their services and the assumption that anyone can perform complex language tasks.
2. **Digital Skills and AI Response:** The rise of AI and automation poses both a threat and an opportunity. A top priority is re-skilling practitioners through CPD to ensure they possess the digital competencies necessary to verify AI outputs, engage with Human Language Technologies (HLT), and maintain the "human touch" that generative AI currently lacks. The Council should help practitioners use tools (such as translation memory systems) that automatically generate data to build better datasets for languages, especially indigenous ones.
3. **Inclusion and Access:** The Council is seen as vital for extending language services to grassroots levels, especially in the township and rural economies. This involves translating essential documentation (like grant applications) into indigenous languages to address the crisis of accessibility, where complex English forms marginalize small businesses. Practitioners also advise that the Council should actively seek out and include the voices of those in rural and historically disadvantaged communities, treating language as an issue tied to justice, identity, and opportunity.
4. **Database Functionality:** The proposed database must be rich and easy to use. Beyond simple listings, priorities include features like an "Uber for interpreters" mobile application, the ability for practitioners to update their profiles themselves, and ensuring accessibility both online and offline to cater to all stakeholders, irrespective of

resource constraints. The database should also track specific professional metrics, such as accreditation and CPD records, crucial for securing legitimacy with clients.

8.5.3. Key Features and Functionalities of a Database

The interviewees consistently address the imperative need to establish a comprehensive SALPC national database to regulate and professionalize the country's language sector. Discussions focus on the technical challenges of creating a centralized, accessible database while defining core functions like tracking Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and setting affordable registration fees for practitioners.

A key socioeconomic objective is using multilingualism to unlock economic potential in rural and township areas, requiring the translation of formal documents and policies that are currently inaccessible due to English language requirements.

Several contributors noted the decreasing standard of language quality in media and educational institutions and the growing complexity introduced by Artificial Intelligence (AI), which threatens traditional roles like editing and translation. Ultimately, the successful development, standardisation, and commercialisation of indigenous African languages are viewed as essential for future national success.

Practitioners expect the SALPC system to be more than just a list; it should be an interactive, comprehensive resource:

- **Verified Professional Profiles:** Profiles must be verified, tracking qualifications, accreditation status, and CPD records to ensure credibility and quality.
- **Accessibility:** The database should be easily accessible and functional online and, ideally, offer offline solutions to accommodate stakeholders from different backgrounds. It should be accessible via cell phones.
- **Multilingualism:** While English is a vital starting point for global accessibility, the system should accommodate all official languages, preferably in phases, to ensure inclusivity and promote multilingualism.
- **Job Matching and Networking:** It should include a job board or opportunity listings. The concept of a mobile application that allows clients to "order an interpreter, like an Uber" based on verified profiles has been proposed.
- **Legal and Ethical Support:** The platform should provide a section covering legal aspects, including a code of ethics or conduct, and assistance with appropriate pricing.
- **User Interface:** Must be designed for user-friendly searching so that users can easily find specific expertise, such as experience in a particular field (e.g., linguistic seminars).
- **Data Sharing:** The system should allow links to be established with other relevant language-related associations and organizations (like SALALS, SATI, AfriLEX) to enhance resource sharing and practitioner identification.

8.5.4. Skills Development and Digital Readiness

The interviewees indicate that while academic institutions and professional bodies offer various training and professional development opportunities, there are significant gaps in adequately equipping language practitioners with the language skills, business, marketing, and advanced digital economy competencies required by evolving industry demands.

Interviewee 4 remarked: “I often ask people when I'm interviewing them, how they would rate their proficiency, like from in written language, spoken language separately, because people can be very, very fluent conversationally and might be able to interpret orally, I mean, but then when it's time to write, they may not feel that proficiency in terms of having mastery of spelling and punctuation and the things that we need in the written language”.

Current training often focuses heavily on the technical and theoretical aspects of language, leading to reliance on external guilds or on-the-job learning for professional and digital skills.

Table 55: Evaluation of training competencies for evolving industry demands.

Competency Area	Current Training Provision (Gaps Identified)	Support/Accreditation Model
Digital Economy / AI	Significant Gaps Exist: There is a recognized lack of competencies in digital language technologies (DLT), computational linguistics, and managing AI tools. Current training often fails to re-skill practitioners to verify AI outputs or navigate the multilingual digital space.	Specialized Availability: The South African Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) offers Human Language Technology (HLT) training through its "Escalator" programme, aimed at equipping humanists with necessary data management skills. DSAC is open to offering free training on its terminology and translation software. Some universities are beginning to teach concepts like AI ethics.
Business and Marketing	Major Gaps: Courses done by practitioners often focus only on the technical aspects of language practice, neglecting the business aspect. Training often lacks focus on essential entrepreneurial skills, marketing, and client relationship management.	Guild/Association Support: The Professional Editors Guild (PEG) is noted for offering courses on the "business of editing". Other institutions, like Nelson Mandela University, are focusing on a general push towards entrepreneurship.
Foundational and Practical Skills	Gaps in Tertiary Education: Tertiary institutions are heavily criticized for failing to provide students with adequate practical proficiency, such as mechanical editing, punctuation, and coherence, leading to reliance on expensive and time-consuming on-the-job training. This failure often makes students feel their money was wasted.	Mandatory, but often bureaucratic: Teachers are required to adhere to a strict CPD framework (SACE). However, these mandatory training sessions can sometimes become mere "tick boxing exercises" rather than genuinely valuable development.

Respondents also identified skill sets within each discipline. Respondent 4 said “I often find people who are qualified writers, editors, translators, and with each of those things being, to me, very discreet skill sets, because translation is an art in itself, especially for literature, I think it's one thing if you're translating, it's different to be Translating advertising copy or, you know, anything is also different, exactly. So I think it would need to indicate which languages they're proficient in.”

8.5.5. Key Findings on Training Gaps and Relevance

Several gaps were identified which can serve as the topics for future CPD courses. The need for such training was emphasised by respondent 28, who stated that his department was moving away from manual to automated work. We rely on system software such as machine translations and other digital tools that are dedicated towards the work of languages. So I think there is a need that we continuously go for upskilling, so that we are not left behind in terms of new technologies out there, in terms of the kind of work that we perform on a daily basis”.

8.5.5.1. Lack of Practical and Specialized Skills

A critical finding is the gap between academic theory and industry practice. Language professionals and academics, noted that high-quality students often receive inadequate preparation from their tertiary institutions regarding practical skills like sub-editing and using correct punctuation, leading to excessive reliance on on-the-job training.

A professional who works in content creation, notes that experience is often considered everything in language-related jobs, and mentorship is the most powerful way to learn, rather than formal coursework alone.

8.5.5.2. Absence of Business and Marketing Acumen

For practitioners operating independently, such as copy editors and freelancers, training generally focuses exclusively on the technical linguistic aspects.

- **Missing Entrepreneurial Focus:** A recent graduate stated that courses he completed were "very specifically focused only on the technical aspects of language practice, but not the business aspect".
- **Need for "Soft Skills":** A copy editor highlighted that training often overlooks "soft skills" and non-judgmental professional conduct, which are vital for maintaining client relationships and countering the often-judgmental nature associated with the profession.
- **Industry Response:** The Professional Editors Guild (PEG) is one body that explicitly attempts to fill this gap by offering training on the "business of editing," demonstrating that these skills are recognized as essential outside of the traditional academic curriculum. Furthermore, organizations supporting emerging businesses, like TECSA focus on capacitating entrepreneurs in brand messaging and packaging their services effectively, skills that language practitioners could offer or acquire.

8.5.5.3. Challenges in Digital and AI Integration

The language sector is currently grappling with the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the digital shift.

- **Digital Skills Deficit:** The modernization of language policy, particularly concerning multilingualism, requires practitioners to acquire necessary digital skills. Many practitioners lack competencies in computational linguistics and HLT.
- **AI as a Threat and Tool:** Copy editors feel "quite under threat" from AI and ChatGPT. However, institutions like the University of Pretoria are using AI in teaching by having students analyze AI-generated content to foster critical thinking, demonstrating a move towards productive integration rather than outright rejection.

- **Specialized Training:** SADiLaR actively addresses this through its Escalator programme, aimed at digital upskilling, recognizing that humanists need data management skills to extract and utilize language data.

8.5.6. Summary

The general sentiment suggests that for the sector to thrive economically, the future South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) and educational partners must prioritize developing curricula and CPD resources that deliberately integrate business, marketing, and digital competencies, ensuring training is aimed at "excellence rather than compliance".

8.6. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Training Needs

The evaluation of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) participation in the language sector reveals a complex landscape characterized by mandatory compliance in formal settings, reliance on self-taught skills among freelancers, and significant gaps in digital and business training.

8.6.1. Evaluation of Participation in CPD Training

Participation in CPD is highly dependent on the practitioner's employment sector:

- **Mandatory Compliance (Education):** Teachers, such as those governed by the South African Council of Educators (SACE), are required to engage in professional development, collect a certain number of points annually, and adhere to a strict framework. However, professional development activities, like attending subject-based groups (clusters) for moderation, can sometimes become a mere "tick boxing exercise" rather than genuinely valuable development.
- **Voluntary Engagement (Freelancers/Academics):** Professionals outside mandated public roles, such as journalists or independent consultants, often rely on self-initiated learning or industry networking. Martin Welz, an eminent journalist, noted he attends encounters and meetings with colleagues, finding them "very valuable," rather than particular formal courses. An independent consultant highlighted that the Professional Editors Guild (PEG) organises in-person meetings and offers both skills courses and business training.
- **Networking and Support:** Academics often rely on language associations like the Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies (SALALS), which hosts conferences and workshops for networking and developing expertise. Networking with academic literacy practitioners at other universities is seen as a key source of support.

8.6.2. Support for Compulsory CPD Training

There is significant support for establishing a centralized, often compulsory, CPD system, particularly among those advocating for professionalization:

- **Professionalization and Regulation:** Practitioners recognize CPD and accreditation tracking as essential functions of the proposed South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC). Compulsory CPD is viewed as a key element in establishing professional standards and enhancing the gravitas of the sector, which currently risks being seen as work that "anybody can teach" or perform.

- **Addressing the "Hobbyist" Problem:** For unregulated fields like copy editing, professionals are "very pro regulation," asserting that CPD is "key to our profession" and necessary to sift out hobbyists who lack formal training or background.
- **Economic Incentive:** Compulsory registration and CPD are seen as measures to justify fees and create a sustainable professional body, giving practitioners bargaining power. However, some critics express concern that mandatory CPD can become "massive overhead for the sake of compliance" or a "drain on people's arm" instead of being genuinely aimed at excellence.

8.6.3. Training Gaps Identified in the Sector

Respondent 18 believes the “gap is that we don’t have enough people who are really proficient in different languages.

“We see it now at the University when we do translations, that there is such a limited capacity. And also there are dialects. , and you may translate, or you may, like I did the SATI course that was mostly a Gauteng version. When I travelled to other parts of the country, I was often corrected to say that this is our direct version of SATI, but there is another word that you should use. So I think the nuances in language is quite a big issue.

“Another is the book translation process is too slow for effective teaching of multilingualism.

“Thirdly, we often objectify a person through language. From a curriculum perspective, multilingualism will enhance the quality of education. “It will also obviously enhance student engagement. And even amongst educators, it will enhance quality of education if we can go into spaces of multilingualism”.

The available sources indicate that current training often fails to match the evolving demands of the job market, resulting in crucial skills gaps:

Table 56: Training gaps.

Gap Area	Description of Lack/Need
Digital Skills and AI Adaptation	Lack of competencies in digital language technologies (DLT), computational linguistics, and managing AI tools (like ChatGPT or machine translation). Practitioners need re-skilling to verify AI outputs and navigate the multilingual digital space.
Business and Entrepreneurial Skills	Training often focuses solely on technical aspects (e.g., editing rules) but neglects business acumen, marketing, and digital economy skills needed for self-employed practitioners.
Soft Skills and Client Relations	Need for training in soft skills, effective client relationship management, and non-judgemental professional conduct, particularly noted among editors.
Practical Proficiency	Tertiary institutions are often criticized for failing to provide students with adequate practical skills (e.g., editing, punctuation mechanics), leading to reliance on on-the-job training.
Specialized Expertise	Difficulty in finding practitioners with specialized linguistic knowledge, such as South African Sign Language interpreters for specific fields (e.g., linguistics seminars).

Plain Language Advocacy	A gap in practitioners actively pushing for and implementing Plain Language Principles in documents (a constitutional mandate) to improve accessibility.
Indigenous Language Depth	A deficiency in the number of people proficient in indigenous African languages, especially in emerging media, PR, and technical translation.

8.6.4. Availability of Professional Development Opportunities

While a centralized repository is missing, opportunities for professional development are available through various decentralized channels:

- **Academic Institutions (SADiLaR):** The South African Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) offers Human Language Technology (HLT) training through its "Escalator" programme, aimed at equipping humanists with data management and digital skills. These courses are typically non-accredited but provide certificates of participation and can be packaged as CPD units.
- **Professional Guilds:** The Professional Editors Guild offers structured courses, including how to edit, how to write, and "the business of editing," as well as important networking opportunities.
- **Government Services (DSAC):** The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) is willing to offer free training on the translation and terminology management tools and software it has developed through government initiatives.
- **Private and Bespoke Training:** Opportunities exist in the specialized area of bespoke writing services (such as ghost-writing and technical writing), which require unique human vision and experience to differentiate from generic AI output.
- **Centralised System (Future Goal):** The anticipated SALPC database is expected to incorporate a centralized system to disseminate information on key developments, track CPD, and link members to external training providers. The aim is to simplify access for practitioners who currently struggle to find resources due to the fragmented nature of the sector.

8.6.5. Summary

The challenge is not a complete lack of training, but rather the fragmentation and the misalignment between the training offered (often heavily technical or theoretical) and the practical, entrepreneurial, and digital skills demanded by the expanding language economy.

8.7. Policy Recognition, Accreditation, and Institutional Support

This evaluation of policy frameworks in South Africa reveals that while the existing policies are often well-intentioned and structurally sound, their understanding among practitioners is inconsistent, and their implementation falls short of adequately recognizing and supporting the language sector. Significant regulatory reform, curriculum enhancement, and the rapid introduction of accreditation systems are deemed necessary to professionalize the sector and unlock its full economic potential.

8.7.1. Understanding of Policy Frameworks by Language Practitioners

The level of awareness regarding formal language policy frameworks, such as the mandates of the Pan South African Languages Board (PanSALB) and the Use of Official Languages Act, varies significantly:

- **High Awareness Among Government and Academics:** Government officials, such as demonstrate expert knowledge of legislation, noting that the current Use of Official Languages Act is confined solely to national government departments. Academics in the language field exhibit a strong understanding of PanSALB's constitutional role in safeguarding multilingualism and ensuring indigenous languages are used in public life, education, and media. Some academics were aware of language policy content and discussions within the university environment.
- **Inconsistent or Low Awareness Among Others:** Experienced professionals outside of core language institutions demonstrate low or absent knowledge of formal policy. A journalist admitted she did not know there was a current policy framework around language. A B20 policy participant, knew "very little" about PanSALB and its operations, noting this lack of visibility is common, even in provinces like the Eastern Cape. A teacher knows high-level requirements (e.g., pass levels) but "doesn't actually know enough about the policy in those general terms".

8.7.2. Adequacy of Policies in Recognizing and Supporting the Sector

While the Constitution and curriculum documents are described as "beautiful" and "exceptionally well thought out", the sources unanimously conclude that the implementation of the policies is insufficient in practice and fail to adequately support the sector, primarily due to weak implementation and structural limitations:

- **Lack of Institutional Recognition and Remuneration:** Language professionals, especially those working with indigenous African languages, are grossly under-remunerated and undervalued. There is a widespread lack of institutional support for developing and digitizing African languages, poor access to updated teaching resources, and low funding for research in areas like oral literature.
- **Implementation Failure and Political Will:** A journalist states that policies are "great," but "it's implementation" that has always been the issue. A government official said there was a failure at the level of national departments to establish mandated language units, citing a lack of political will.
- **Exclusion of Corporate and Private Sectors:** The current Use of Official Languages Act is restricted to government and public entities, meaning language policy does not influence the corporate world (such as banks, insurance companies, retailers). This leaves the vast largely unregulated private sector with regard to language.
- **Marginalization of Disciplines:** Policies fail to sufficiently recognize specialized disciplines like academic literacy, which face the assumption that "anybody can teach" them, leading to a lack of professional status.

8.7.3. Need for Regulatory Reform, Curriculum Enhancement, and Accreditation

The interviewees identify a clear set of needs across regulation, professional development, and training to revitalize the language sector.

8.7.4. Regulatory and Institutional Reform Needs

Table 57: Regulatory and reform needs.

Need for Reform	Description
Establish SALPC	The most critical need is the full establishment and operationalization of the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) as a statutory body to monitor and regulate the profession.
Unified National Policy	There is an urgent need for a cohesive National Language Act or policy that "brings everything together," replacing the existing fragmented policies confined to silos and extending influence over the corporate sector.
Formalize Standards	The SALPC must set ethical and professional standards, provide a legal basis for practitioners' work, and introduce a system to regulate pricing to prevent "price dumping".
Increase Visibility	PanSALB needs to "get out there in the public eye a lot more" to raise public awareness of the value of language work.

8.7.5. Curriculum Enhancement Needs

Table 58: Curriculum enhancement needs.

Need	Description
Digital Competencies	Training must urgently equip practitioners with digital skills to work with Human Language Technology (HLT), DLT, and verify the outputs of AI tools (like ChatGPT).
Business and Marketing Skills	Training programs currently neglect the "business aspect" (marketing, entrepreneurial skills) necessary for successful freelance and independent practitioners.
Practical Language Mechanics	Tertiary curricula are criticized for focusing on set works and theory while failing to teach students practical skills such as mechanical editing, punctuation, and grammar mechanics.
Specialized Training	Need for specific short courses tailored for professional vocabulary (e.g., plumbing, engineering) that meet the professional situation of various trades.
Inclusivity	Curricula must embrace multilingualism in core areas and prioritize the translation and localization of materials into indigenous languages.

8.7.6. Accreditation and Professionalization System Needs

Table 59: The need for accreditation.

Need	Description
Accreditation System	A nationally recognized accreditation system is critical to legitimize the profession, ensure quality, and prevent unregulated individuals ("hobbyists") from performing language work.
Accreditation Tracking	The system must include tracking of CPD records and qualifications to provide legitimacy to practitioners when seeking clients. This is viewed as necessary to gain "gravitas".

Affordable Fees	Annual registration fees should be affordable, especially for freelancers and students, possibly starting under R1,000 and incrementally increasing, benchmarking against bodies like the Nursing or Pharmacy Councils.
High-Quality CPD	Any mandated CPD must be genuinely aimed at excellence rather than being a mere "tick boxing exercise" done for the sake of compliance. This includes collaboration with partners like SADiLaR to package HLT modules as CPD units.

8.7.7. Summary of Findings

Table 60: Summary of findings on policy.

Area of Inquiry	Summary of Findings and Challenges	Key Needs for Improvement
Policy Understanding	Inconsistent: High among government and core academics, low or non-existent among journalists, teachers, and external stakeholders.	Increased visibility and public engagement by PanSALB.
Policy Adequacy	Insufficient: Policies are structurally "great" (e.g., Constitution, curriculum), but implementation is critically flawed. The sector is grossly underfunded.	Need for funding and policy measures that are implemented consistently and equitably across all languages.
Regulatory Reform	The Use of Official Languages Act is too narrow, excluding the private sector and NGOs. There is political reluctance to establish mandated language units.	Establish a comprehensive National Language Act that creates a unified policy for all sectors. Fully establish the SALPC to professionalize the sector.
Curriculum Enhancement	Major Gaps: Training lacks digital skills (HLT/AI), business/marketing acumen, and fundamental practical language mechanics.	Introduce mandatory CPD focused on digital upskilling, and reform tertiary curricula to emphasize practical and entrepreneurial skills.
Accreditation Systems	Non-existent/Fragmented: Currently, there is no centralized body regulating all language practice, leading to confusion and professionals underselling their services.	Introduce a nationally recognized accreditation and registration system via the SALPC to verify credentials, set ethical standards, and regulate pricing.

8.8. Economic Contribution and Market Opportunities

The language sector is acknowledged in the sources as holding significant potential for economic growth and social development in South Africa, yet its economic value is frequently underestimated and under-recognised. While language work sustains numerous jobs and drives several industries, practitioners are often severely under-remunerated and undervalued.

8.8.1. Economic impact

The economic contributions of language work in South Africa, extend beyond traditional translation and editing roles. Language is recognized as a pivotal driver of communication,

trade, job creation, and cultural preservation. If properly formalized and invested in, language could significantly contribute to the national economy and social justice goals.

8.8.2. Direct Economic Activity and Job Creation

Language work generates income and sustains jobs across multiple specialized disciplines and emerging fields:

- **Sustaining Jobs:** Language drives communication, translation services, media, publishing, and education. It sustains jobs in teaching, interpreting, transcription, and various language services.
- **Specialized Professional Services:** The sector includes professionals such as editors, translators, copywriters, and lexicographers, all of whom contribute to economic activity. The ability to translate and edit documents is crucial for government, which requires specialized terminology development, particularly for African languages.
- **New Economic Pathways:** The shift toward digital platforms and AI creates demand for language practitioners specializing in digital language technologies (DLT), computational linguistics, and verification of AI outputs. These emerging areas, like bespoke writing services, offer higher economic value and are less susceptible to full AI replacement.
- **Freelance and Entrepreneurial Opportunities:** There are known opportunities for consultants providing services to large businesses on presentations. The proposed South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) is expected to function as a job-matching platform, linking professionals with private entities seeking services, thereby increasing revenue generation opportunities.

8.8.3. Economic Value in Communication and Trade

Language proficiency acts as a critical enabler for commerce, knowledge transfer, and economic growth both domestically and internationally:

- **Facilitating Trade:** Language is the basis of many commercial transactions. Multilingual competence, especially in international languages like English, is essential for small businesses engaging in international trade (importing and exporting) and dealing with businesses from countries such as Poland, Brazil, and China.
- **Conveying Knowledge:** Language work, such as journalism and editing, conveys knowledge, which is noted as having "great value" to the economy.
- **Market Competitiveness:** If businesses and media groups fail to ensure their published content is well-written and grammatically correct, it can lead to a financial impact as consumers turn away from products due to perceived and proven lack of quality. High-quality language work is fundamental to achieving credibility and maximizing audience engagement.
- **Digital Economy:** Language is crucial for the development and incorporation of big data sets into repositories, enabling accessibility to South African languages in the global space for technologies like text-to-speech and speech-to-text.

8.8.4. Support for Township and Rural Economies

Language services are vital for reducing economic marginalization and connecting emerging businesses to resources and markets:

- **Accessibility and Grants:** Language practitioners can address the "crisis in South Africa" where crucial government programs, funding, and grant applications are written in highly technical English. Translating these documents into indigenous languages makes them accessible to entrepreneurs, especially women and the uneducated, in the township and rural economies.
- **Business Packaging and Marketing:** Language services assist small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in communicating their business messaging effectively, packaging their brand, and understanding complex forms required for grants and loans.
- **Training and Confidence:** Training programs delivered by language practitioners can help SMME owners gain confidence to present their brands, deal with customers, and engage in business negotiations, improving their market presence.
- **Local Commerce:** Language is essential for small local businesses to communicate with suppliers and distributors when they step out of their immediate neighbourhood, for example, to procure supplies like shampoo or auto parts.

8.8.5. Cultural and Heritage Exports (The Language Economy)

The language sector provides the foundation for South Africa's cultural exports and identity:

- **Publishing and Content Creation:** The market for books in local languages is "enormous" and "underserved". People overwhelmingly desire books in their home languages, creating a vast untapped economic opportunity. Translating novels and creating indigenous material stimulates demand for writers, translators, editors, proofreaders, and designers.
- **Media and Entertainment:** Multilingualism is a "beautiful thing" that makes South Africans who they are. The high demand for content is evident in the video streaming sector, where international programs are increasingly being dubbed into South African languages.
- **Performance Arts and Cultural Services:** Language contributes to the cultural economy through performance arts, poetry, and storytelling traditions. In Uganda (as a comparative example), emceeing cultural functions has been formalized as a business, demonstrating an economic pathway for language in cultural services.
- **Indigenous Knowledge:** The preservation of indigenous languages secures traditional knowledge and systems (such as those concerning herbs, plants, and traditional medicines) which holds great economic value and can feed into local economies, particularly in remote areas like the Northern Cape.

Language practitioners can provide crucial support to township businesses and entrepreneurs primarily by addressing the accessibility and communication barriers that often prevent small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) from accessing economic opportunities, funding, and growth. This support translates into several key actions focused on training, marketing, policy compliance, and making government interventions relatable.

8.8.6. Key Ways Language Practitioners Can Support Township and Rural Businesses

The role of language practitioners in supporting township and emerging economies centres on overcoming linguistic exclusion and fostering communication confidence:

- Providing Accessibility to Funding and Programmes

- **Translating Complex Documentation:** A major crisis in South Africa is that government programs, fundings, grants, and application forms intended for SMMEs are often written in highly technical English. Language practitioners can translate these essential documents into indigenous languages, ensuring they are accessible and understandable to business owners who may be illiterate or uneducated, or whose home language is not English.
- **Plain Language Advocacy:** Practitioners can apply Plain Language Principles (which are constitutionally embedded) to simplify legal documents, contracts, and application forms. This ensures that people who may not have been exposed to the schooling system, such as a "mama who was never even exposed to the schooling system" but is now running a business, can understand the requirements and respond strategically.

8.8.7. Providing Specialized Training and Capacitation

- **Business Communication Training:** Practitioners should conduct trainings and workshops that go beyond mere language instruction, focusing on business language and business acumen. This includes teaching entrepreneurs how to effectively package their brand messaging and business concepts in the relevant language.
- **Confidence Building:** Training can help SMMEs, especially those operating locally, to present themselves and their brands effectively. This also applies to uneducated individuals, ensuring they can communicate with customers and the public confidently.
- **Skills Development:** Language practitioners can integrate language training into skills development programs aimed at the uneducated, teaching them presentation skills and how to deal with customers.

8.8.8. Relatability and Community Engagement

- **Cultural Relevance:** Practitioners need to be relevant and relatable to the grassroots economy. When engaging with a community (e.g., a Xhosa-speaking area), a Xhosa language practitioner should be the main representative, even if the primary delegation speaks English, as this is seen as a sign of respect.
- **Cultural Norms:** Communication extends beyond official words to include **cultural norms** and practices. Practitioners rooted in the local culture are necessary to avoid misunderstandings that could arise if an external person, unaware of the cultural context, attempts communication.
- **Hands-On Engagement:** Practitioners and institutional bodies (like the proposed SALPC) must move beyond operating solely from "boardrooms" and actively go to the people on the ground, getting their "hands dirty" to ensure their work is accessible and impactful in the township and rural economy.

8.8.9. Expanding Economic Opportunities

- **Multilingual Trade:** Language services can improve trade within and between communities. For example, language is critical for small businesses to communicate with suppliers or distributors outside their immediate area. Practitioners can facilitate this multilingual communication, opening up broader domestic markets.
- **Content Creation:** Language practitioners can engage in content creation, such as poems, stories, and social media content, to promote businesses, environmental sustainability, and cultural products (like the fig tree example).

- **Formalizing Language Careers:** By promoting indigenous languages, particularly in emerging media, performance arts, and technology, practitioners create economic pathways for themselves and others.

In essence, language practitioners must leverage their expertise to ensure that language acts as a vehicle for empowerment, expression, and opportunity for township businesses, rather than a system of marginalization.

8.8.10. Summary of Economic Contributions

Table 61: Economic contribution by language.

Contribution Area	Specific Economic Output
Direct Employment	Jobs in translation, editing, copywriting, subtitling, and teaching.
Digital Value	Development of data sets and HLT infrastructure (e.g., spelling checkers, machine translation) for all official languages.
Trade and Commerce	Enables local and international business transactions, corporate communication, and market credibility.
Poverty Reduction	Increases accessibility to government grants, loans, and formal economic programs for marginalized populations.
Cultural Economy	Production and consumption of multilingual books, media content, and preservation of intellectual property (IP) and licensing rights related to language assets.
Township and Rural Businesses	Practitioners can apply Plain Language Principles (which are constitutionally embedded) to simplify legal documents, contracts, and application forms. Help SMMEs to communicate more effectively with their customers.

8.9. Role and Impact of Human Language Technologies (HLTs)

The integration of Human Language Technology (HLT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly changing professional practice in the language sector, presenting both opportunities for efficiency and existential threats to certain job roles. The sources highlight the need for urgent adaptation, particularly in training curricula, to equip practitioners with the necessary digital competencies.

8.9.1. Current Use and Integration of HLT and AI in Professional Practice

Language practitioners and institutions currently use a variety of digital tools, ranging from basic software to specialized AI platforms:

- **Terminology and Translation Tools:** Government departments, such as the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), utilize technology extensively. The terminology coordination unit relies on a Terminology Management System (TMS) to store and manage developing terminology, which is described as very efficient and capable of accommodating all official languages. Translation and editing colleagues use systems that store translation memory. These open-source systems are highly helpful, as they enable users to save time by suggesting translations for previously

encountered phrases, and they can be downloaded and used free of charge by freelance translators.

- **Academic and Research Tools:** Researchers work with AI tools like ChatGPT to translate terms and then act as a verifier to ensure the accuracy of the translations, particularly for IsiXhosa and IsiZulu. Tools like the South African Language Identifier (SALI) are used to automatically categorize languages in texts, which helps eliminate significant manual effort, though verification remains necessary.
- **Digital Content Management:** Platforms like Grammarly are commonly used by professionals in media and communications for checking spelling and grammatical errors. However, these tools often require re-checking to convert US-based English to UK-based or South African English standards. Academic environments also use interactive platforms like Teams, Zoom, and Kahoot for teaching and communication.
- **Infrastructure Development:** Organizations like the South African Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) are focused on developing and making available core language technologies, including 11 spelling checkers for all official languages, machine translation systems (such as Aumato), and corpus resources for research.

8.9.2. Perceived Current and Future Impact of AI and Automation

The impact of AI is viewed as transformative, fundamentally altering the nature of language work:

Table 62: Impact of AI and automation.

Impact Area	Description of Change/Perception
Efficiency and Speed	AI can perform tasks like generating press releases or business news (BNs) in 20 seconds, vastly speeding up content creation and saving time.
Job Displacement and Threat	There is a widespread, "misguided belief by big business that AI can do it as well or better" than human practitioners, leading to cost-cutting and diminished roles. Robin Wheeler suggests that 80% of people's jobs could be "snapped up" by machines. Freelancers, writers, and copy editors feel "quite under threat".
Economic Value Shift	AI threatens generic editing/translation work, pushing professionals towards bespoke writing services that emphasize human vision, authenticity, and guaranteed privacy, differentiating them from the "AI mess".
Human Imperative	AI lacks the "human touch," authentic voice, and ability to connect emotionally. Humans are still necessary for verification due to the tools' inaccuracy (hallucinations) and inability to handle nuances, dialects, or culturally specific concepts, particularly in indigenous languages.
Digital Divide	Africa is lagging significantly behind in incorporating language within the Internet of Things, partly due to the silo mentality where institutions do not make data sets openly available, hindering the development of speech-to-text and text-to-speech technologies for local languages.

8.9.3. Integration in Professional Practice and Training Curricula

There is consensus that training curricula must adapt urgently to incorporate digital literacy and AI ethics, not just for new entrants but also for existing practitioners:

- **Training Gaps:** A major gap exists in equipping practitioners with digital skills to navigate the digital space and use HLT effectively, noted by experts from SADiLaR. Training often remains focused on technical aspects (e.g., editing rules) but neglects the necessary digital competencies.
- **Curriculum Adaptation:** Universities are starting to integrate AI into teaching. One lecturer notes that the conversation around AI in student writing is "very big". Another describes encouraging students to use AI (like Copilot) to generate essays and then having the students analyze, critique, and mark the output, thereby fostering critical thinking skills and teaching them how to use AI productively.
- **Need for Re-Skilling (CPD):** There is strong support for the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) to mandate and provide Continuous Professional Development (CPD) that focuses on re-skilling practitioners in digital and AI technologies. One respondent suggests that modules developed by SADiLaR, such as those focusing on HLT, could be packaged as accredited CPD units.
- **Ethical and Policy Challenges:** Universities currently struggle with the absence of set policies on AI use, making it a "very grey area" often left to individual lecturers to manage. There is a recognized need to develop a curriculum around AI ethics.
- **The Problem of Indigenous Languages:** Digital tools often exclude indigenous languages or perform poorly. A professor noted that standard computer systems (Word, PDF) are not designed for languages like Nama, causing formatting and translation issues. A top priority is training practitioners to train AI tools accurately for indigenous languages, provided they are reimbursed for their labour.

8.9.4. Summary

The integration of AI, while challenging, is viewed as an opportunity to focus on the inherently human elements of communication, such as empathy, critical thinking, authenticity, and the preservation of cultural nuance, which machines cannot replicate. This shift suggests a future where language practitioners act more as high-level editors, verifiers, and strategic communication consultants, leveraging AI for speed and focusing human attention on quality and cultural specificity.

The relationship between language practitioners and AI/HLT is like that of a master craftsman using advanced tools. AI handles routine tasks efficiently, but human expertise remains vital for creativity, quality control, and ethical decisions, ensuring outcomes are distinctive and not just mass-produced.

8.10. Funding, Investment, and Future Vision for the Sector

The development of a thriving, inclusive language economy in South Africa requires significant reform across funding, regulation, and skills development.

Currently, the sector is heavily reliant on limited state funding, but there is a clear vision, articulated by practitioners, for a robust system driven by professional fees, robust public-private partnerships (PPPs), and targeted economic incentives.

8.10.1. Perceived Economic Value of Language Services

The economic outlook for the language sector is contingent upon two shifts: firstly, institutional recognition of language work as a valuable profession requiring specialized skills and equitable remuneration, and secondly, leveraging innovation and entrepreneurship to address the massive, unmet demand for multilingual and digitally-supported content across public, private, and grassroots spheres.

The value of language-related services spans vital economic, social, and developmental contributions:

- **Foundation for Commerce and Development:** Language is described as the foundation of many commercial transactions. It is pivotal to economic and developmental sectors, driving communication, cultural tourism, translation services, media, publishing, education, and software development. A strong language economy contributes to job creation in fields like teaching, interpreting, transcription, and translation.
- **Social Cohesion and Access:** Language fosters cohesion, heritage preservation, and inclusivity. Critically, a robust language economy can reduce marginalisation and provide people with access to essential services and opportunities in their mother tongue.
- **Human Capital Investment:** Educating children and providing them with tools for academic success contributes indirectly to the broader economy by improving their financial status and employment prospects. Proficiency in language is considered directly related to economic opportunity.
- **Undervaluation and Misconceptions:** Despite these contributions, language practitioners are perceived as undervalued. The sector faces a significant challenge from the misguided belief held by big business that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can perform language tasks equally well or better, leading to diminished roles and cost-cutting measures.

8.10.2. Identified and Preferred Funding Models

The funding landscape for language work is generally characterized by reliance on institutional budgets and a scarcity of dedicated, long-term financing. The preferred model for the future South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) and the sector involves securing external funds and professional fees to ensure independence and sustainability.

Table 63: Potential funding sources for SALPC.

Funding Source	Current Status/Model	Preferred/Proposed Status
State Funding (DSAC/PanSALB)	Currently solely reliant on government budgets; funding is often limited and distributed as an "afterthought". The Use of Official Languages Act budget (DSAC) is approximate R5 million per annum over five years for SALPC establishment, covering ICT costs.	A National Language Fund, managed independently, is needed to support long-term, impactful work.
Membership/Registration Fees	Currently non-existent for the general sector, contributing to an unregulated environment.	Essential for sustainability and accountability. Fees should be affordable, especially for freelancers and students.
Proposed Fee Structure	The starting annual fee should be under R1,000, with incremental increases over time. Suggested ranges for professionals are R1,500 to R2,000, benchmarking against comparable councils like the Nursing Council.	Fees must accommodate practitioners who might spend months unemployed. Government is expected to pay the fees for its employees (which could be 80% of registrants).
Private/External Funding	Very rare; difficult to channel funds from government. Private organisations struggle, having to rely on favours or "selling body parts" to get research and publishing done.	The SALPC must be able to lobby for funds outside government. Private companies should be incentivized to support the database.

8.10.3. Opportunities for Public-Private Collaboration (PPP)

Respondents believe a public-private partnership (PPP) approach is needed to ensure the SALPC is sustainable and can generate value beyond basic compliance. The current Use of Official Languages Act is confined solely to national government departments and does not influence the corporate world (e.g., banks, private sector).

Table 64: Public-private collaboration opportunities.

Area of Collaboration	Opportunity and Benefit
Investment in Infrastructure	Private institutions can contribute to the extensive professionalizing of the sector, which will have a ripple effect on the economy. This includes supporting the core maintenance of the national database.
Corporate Engagement	Large entities like banks (Absa, Netbank) previously had language units, and their involvement is critical because they service almost all citizens. The SALPC should push for policy that includes the corporate sector.

Funding Mechanisms	Private funds can be channelled through implementing agencies (like the National Education Collaboration Trust, which receives funding from Old Mutual) to avoid the difficulty of providing funds directly to government departments.
Grassroots Support and Training	Organisations like TECSA, which work directly with township and rural entrepreneurs, are open to formal MOAs/MOUs with language practitioners for skills development and training.
Content and Technology	Publishers (Bridge Books) partner with organizations like Cadbury/Nali Bali for grant funding to produce and freely distribute books in indigenous languages, demonstrating effective PPP in content creation. PanSALB secured a funding proposal from the Rooibos Trust for indigenous language research.

8.10.4. Specific Areas of Entrepreneurship and Innovation

1. Digital Innovation and Platform Development Language practitioners have opportunities to innovate by designing digital systems that improve efficiency and access:

- **AI for Indigenous Languages:** There is a significant need for tools that support indigenous languages, as existing software (like translation or voice-to-text programs) often excludes them or performs poorly. Innovation lies in developing and training these tools accurately.
- **Centralised Service Platforms:** Innovation could include developing a mobile application or database that functions like an "Uber for interpreters" or translators, allowing clients to quickly find verified practitioners based on credentials, experience, and specialised fields.
- **Interoperability and Data Sharing:** Organisations like the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) and South African Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) are focused on creating infrastructure and repositories for language resources, suggesting opportunities for technical specialists in data management and systems integration.

2. Supporting Emerging and Informal Economies The sources highlight a massive demand for language services within township and rural economies, driven by issues of access and complexity:

- **Breaking Down Barriers:** Language practitioners can help address the crisis of accessibility where government programs, funds, grants, and application forms are often written in highly technical English, preventing small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and uneducated entrepreneurs from accessing them.
- **Training and Empowerment:** Opportunities exist for practitioners to provide specialised training on business communication, brand messaging, and packaging business concepts effectively in relevant indigenous languages. These services are vital for improving employability and enhancing business confidence.

3. Enhancing Professional Standards and Recognition Entrepreneurial activity is needed to formalise the sector, moving towards a vibrant economy defined by excellence rather than just compliance.

- **Establishing Benchmarks:** To counter the trend of practitioners underselling their services, there is an opportunity to establish guidelines for best practices and a recommended range of professional pay rates, similar to models used internationally.

This helps professionalise the sector and provides practitioners with essential bargaining power and legitimacy.

- **Continuous Professional Development (CPD):** There is a recognized need to provide targeted CPD, especially training that incorporates emerging digital and AI technologies, business skills, and multilingual proficiency, addressing gaps where existing training is often too focused on technical language aspects alone. Collaboration between technology hubs (like SADiLaR) and universities to package CPD units is seen as a viable model.
- **Cultural and Heritage Exports:** Languages, particularly indigenous ones, offer avenues for cultural export and tourism by preserving traditional knowledge, practices, and medicines. The performance arts sector, including poets, writers, and comedians who use local languages, can create economic pathways and thriving local markets.

7.11.1. Growth Areas and Opportunities

The interviewees identify several key areas where the language economy is poised for expansion, particularly through addressing existing gaps and leveraging new technologies.

Table 65: Table of growth areas and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Growth Area	Opportunities for Entrepreneurship and Innovation
Publishing and Content Market	Creating and publishing material in indigenous languages, filling the massive gap between high demand (up to 80% market interest) and minimal supply (less than 1% of commercial retail sales). Focus on heritage publishing and localizing content.
Digital Content and HLT	Providing dubbing and voice-over work for international streaming platforms, driven by high demand for local language content. Specialisation in computational linguistics and Human Language Technologies (HLT).
Professional and Bespoke Services	Offering bespoke writing services (ghost-writing, technical writing) that distinguish themselves from generic AI output by providing character, vision, and privacy assurances. Specialising in academic editing, press releases, and specialised institutional editing.
Policy Compliance and Accessibility	Implementing and consulting on Plain Language Principles (embedded in the Constitution) to simplify legal documents, contracts, application forms, and government interventions for broader accessibility.
Skills Development and Training	Developing and providing specialised training courses focusing on practical skills, business acumen, marketing, and digital competency for language practitioners and grassroots entrepreneurs.
Technology/AI Verification	Specialising in verifying and correcting terms translated by AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) to ensure accuracy in indigenous languages. Training AI tools, provided practitioners are reimbursed for their work.

8.10.5. Economic Incentives for the Language Economy

To stimulate growth and formalize the sector, incentives must be strategically applied, focusing on regulation, procurement, and skills investment.

1. **Regulating Pricing and Remuneration:** The most critical economic incentive is the ability of the SALPC to regulate pricing and prevent "price cutting". The Council should publish

clear guidelines for fair pay rates. This regulation provides practitioners with legitimacy when charging clients.

2. **Procurement Policy Reform:** Incentives should be created through procurement requirements, similar to those historically applied for HIV/AIDS policies. Companies seeking government supply chain contracts could be mandated to have a multilingual policy.
3. **Targeted Skills Funding:** The government should direct clear, targeted funding and empower the sector to access existing funds. Significant amounts of money are available through SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authorities) for skills development, which could be tapped into to finance language training and upskilling.
4. **Tax and CSR Benefits: Tax relief** for businesses that support worker training in languages could be explored. Additionally, corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) components of business could be dedicated to supporting the language space.
5. **Focus on Entrepreneurship:** Language practitioners should focus on areas like bespoke writing services (ghost-writing, technical writing) and unique content creation, as these skills inherently offer higher value and are more difficult for AI to replicate, creating opportunities for self-employment.

8.10.6. Practitioner Vision for a Thriving, Inclusive Language Economy

The vision for a thriving language economy is one rooted in social justice, professional excellence, and maximized access for all South Africans, driven by technology and strong institutional support.

Table 66: Practitioner dream for a thriving language economy.

Theme	Vision and Outcomes	Practitioner Quote/Insight
Societal Transformation and Inclusion	Business and government economy must reduce marginalization and ensure that people have access to services and opportunities in their mother tongue. Language must be recognized as a vehicle for social justice and restoring the dignity of indigenous knowledge.	"language is made to be one of your primary vehicles for empowerment, for expression..."
Professional Excellence and Value	The sector must move past poor quality, under-remuneration, and the threat of AI, prioritizing high-quality human services and setting standards for excellence. The perceived value of indigenous languages must increase to reduce parents' fear of economic disadvantage.	"...treat language not just as cultural issue, but. As a mental one tied to justice, to identity and opportunity."
Economic Opportunities	Creation of employment for qualified practitioners (especially unemployed linguists) by creating job opportunities in all three spheres of government. The focus should be on building a vibrant economy by formally recognizing the value already inherent in South African language cultures.	"if you look at all our language cultures, we already have a very vibrant language economy. We just need to build on it and recognize it."

Global and African Leadership	South Africa has the potential to be a global leader in language development, using its diverse media landscape to unite the continent and change the perception of African identity. The African Union should formalize languages and its use.	"South Africa is like a global leader in multiculturalism. We just have to do what's already just been done, which is emphasize language."
Institutional Accountability	Bodies like PanSALB must "get out there in the public eye a lot more" to raise public awareness of the work done in protecting and investing in languages. The new Council should champion accessibility and link practitioners to necessary resources.	"...to have the general goal of societal transformation and sort of social justice... I think if we do it right, we can sort of channel the right opportunities to the right people..."

8.11. General Perceived Value and Recognition

Language skills and qualifications are acknowledged as vital and central to core societal functions and economic activity, yet language professionals broadly consider themselves undervalued and under-remunerated – a recurrent theme.

- **Essential for Core Functions:** Writing and speaking are central to career, job, and impact. Communication is described as vital and a vehicle for wholesomeness and professional rigour. Language skills are key to communicating knowledge, fostering cohesion, and enabling access to services and opportunities in people's mother tongue. Proficiency in language is considered directly related to economic opportunity.
- **The Undervaluation Crisis:** Language practitioners, especially those working with indigenous African languages, believe they are not adequately recognized or remunerated. The perception exists that language practice is not taken seriously as a profession. People often mistakenly believe that simply speaking two languages qualifies them to perform the duties of a language practitioner.

8.11.1. Recognition by Sector

The value of qualifications varies depending on the specific language discipline and employment context:

Table 67: Recognition of language-related qualifications.

Sector	Value Assessment	Detail/Challenges
Academic Literacy	Grossly under-recognized: This field, despite its vital role in academic success and multilingual agenda, is not as recognized as it should be.	There is a prevalent assumption that anyone can teach academic literacy, which is strongly refuted by a leading academic and educator. It is not typically offered at the undergraduate level, meaning practitioners find their way through varied routes, necessitating specific professionalizing measures.

Traditional Language Practice (Editors / Translators)	Partial Recognition: These roles have a level of professional body affiliation (e.g., editors, translators, copywriters) that provides some professional standing and regulation.	Despite associations like SATI existing, they may not be comprehensive or actively maintained. Some academics noted letting their membership lapse. There is a strong need for more recognition and formal accreditation.
Government / Public Sector	Undervalued role, high need: Government offices (like DSAC) acknowledge the specialized nature of the work, but staff often face overwhelming workloads and resource constraints.	There is a lack of political will and resources to establish language units across departments, leading to a lack of job opportunities for qualified linguists and practitioners who, though highly qualified, find themselves unemployed.
Media and Journalism	Crucial for Credibility, Diminished Status: Language professionals (editors, sub-editors) are crucial for maintaining credibility and audience engagement.	Salaries have been diminished due to cost-cutting, and the quality of sub-editing has "plunged". Budget cuts often prioritize marketing and analytics over editing.
Indigenous Languages	Economically marginalized: professionals working with indigenous African languages are not adequately recognized or remunerated.	Parents fear that prioritizing their indigenous language will disadvantage their children in the economy. There is a lack of investment in reading material and education rooted in indigenous languages.

8.11.2. Summary

The establishment of a thriving language economy can be likened to upgrading a country's infrastructure from disjointed dirt tracks to a unified national highway system.

Currently, language funding and policy are like local roads – essential, but often poorly maintained (relying on limited state funds) and insufficient for changing needs.

The goal of the SALPC and PPPs is to build the national highway (the regulated professional body and database), which not only charges a fair toll (professional fees) to maintain itself, but also connects marginalized communities (township businesses) directly to major economic hubs (private sector, global trade), ensuring that travel (communication and opportunity) is faster, safer, and accessible to everyone, regardless of the vehicle they drive (language proficiency).

8.11.3. Conclusion

Language practitioners in South Africa are not consistently or adequately valued as professionals across the sector, despite the acknowledged necessity of their skills for economic activity, education, and social cohesion.

The general assessment across the sources points to a significant disparity between the vital contribution of language work and the institutional recognition and remuneration provided to practitioners.

8.12. The Inadequacy of Recognition and Remuneration

There is a widespread sentiment that language professionals, especially those working with indigenous African languages, are not adequately recognized or remunerated. Practitioners are often grossly underpaid and undervalued.

- **Societal Perception:** Very few people in society recognize the value of language work as a genuine profession. There is a misconception that if an individual speaks two languages, such as English and a local language, they are automatically qualified to perform the complex duties of a professional language practitioner, overlooking the necessary expertise and qualifications.
- **Economic Impact:** The perceived value of language editors is particularly low, leading to them being "grossly underpaid, undervalued". This undervaluation is so pervasive that language professionals often "undersell their services" because they do not know what their work is truly worth.
- **Corporate Policy:** Despite the acknowledgment that language is fundamental to commercial transactions, the Use of Official Languages Act is currently confined to national, provincial and local government departments and does not influence the private sector. This lack of legal framework means companies are not required to invest in language services, contributing to the perceived low value of these professionals.

8.12.1. Valuation Disparities Across Specific Fields

The degree of professional recognition varies significantly depending on the language discipline:

- **Academic and Educational Sector:** The field of academic literacy, despite being vital for academic success, is not as recognized as it should be. There is an assumption that "anybody can teach academic literacy," which specialists refute, arguing that this discipline lacks the professional status or "gravitas" it needs. Conversely, teachers employed by the South African Council of Educators (SACE) must adhere to a strict framework for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) hours, although this process sometimes feels like a mere "box ticking exercise".
- **Media and Editing:** The quality of sub-editing in the media industry has "plunged" due to cost-cutting, and often, budget allocations prioritize marketing and analytics over editing. Media professionals are particularly concerned that the advent of AI is contributing to the erosion of trust in human language practitioners and leading businesses to believe AI "can do it as well or better".
- **Indigenous Languages:** Language practitioners focusing on indigenous African languages are not adequately recognized or remunerated. Policy failings have led to a situation where parents fear that prioritizing their indigenous language may disadvantage their children in the economy. Similarly, initiatives to preserve at-risk languages, like Nama, struggle to secure substantial funding because the national needs are complex and profound, making the economic argument difficult.
- **Traditional Practitioners:** Certain specialized roles, such as translators, editors, and copywriters, possess "a level of professional body" affiliation (such as the Southern African Translators' Institute, SATI), which provides some strength and legitimacy to their profession. However, this framework is often insufficient or fragmented.

8.12.2. The Path to Enhanced Professional Value

Stakeholders consistently identify the lack of a statutory regulatory body as the primary barrier to improving professional valuation. The proposed establishment of the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) is viewed as the crucial intervention to mandate professionalism and elevate the sector's standing:

- **Regulation and Legitimacy:** The number one priority for the future Council is to regulate and accredit language practitioners. Accreditation is seen as vital for strengthening the profession and providing practitioners with legitimacy when dealing with clients.
- **Quality Control:** A centralized body is necessary to establish professional standards and verify professional profiles and qualifications, combating the issue of unregulated individuals ("hobbyists") who undercut professionals and dilute service quality.
- **Economic Empowerment:** The Council is expected to regulate pricing to avoid "price dumping" and to publish appropriate guidelines for pay rates. This provides practitioners with bargaining power and formal recognition of their worth.
- **Professional Identity:** Practitioners, especially those in under-recognized areas like academic literacy, are willing to pay an annual registration fee to be recognized as professionals by a "recognized respect body in the country".

8.13. Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together qualitative insights from interviews conducted across EOL Reports 1, 2 and 3, reorganised under seven cross-cutting themes that reflect the main structural, professional and policy-related dynamics shaping the South African language sector. Taken together, the interview material provides a layered account of how language practitioners, academics, institutional actors and industry stakeholders experience the current conditions of practice and the evolving regulatory environment. Across all three studies, professional recognition and regulation emerge as a persistent concern. The absence of a unified statutory authority continues to affect professional status, public trust, pricing practices and accountability. The proposed establishment and operationalisation of the SALPC is consistently identified as a central mechanism through which registration, accreditation, ethical governance and CPD could be consolidated.

The interviews also confirm that language work underpins a wide range of economic and social sectors, while remaining unevenly valued and inconsistently remunerated. Patterns of freelance work, income instability and the marginalisation of indigenous language labour recur across the three reports, reinforcing the need for clearer professional standards and more sustainable economic pathways.

Training and professional development feature as a further cross-cutting issue. While academic qualifications provide a strong theoretical foundation, the interviews point to gaps in practical, business and digital preparation. Structured, accessible and development-oriented CPD linked to professional registration is widely supported as a means of strengthening workplace readiness and long-term career progression.

The growing influence of HLTs and AI introduces both pressures and opportunities for the sector. Practitioners identify changing role profiles, new verification and data-related work, and the need for ongoing re-skilling, alongside concerns about job displacement, data ethics and uneven digital infrastructure, particularly in relation to African languages.

Policy awareness and implementation form an important backdrop to these professional dynamics. While the constitutional and legislative framework for multilingualism is broadly accepted in principle, the interviews highlight uneven operationalisation, variable institutional coordination and limited extension of language regulation beyond the public sector. Respondents consistently link improvements in implementation to stronger alignment between DSAC, PanSALB, SALPC, SADiLaR and higher education institutions.

The proposed national practitioner database emerges as a practical enabling instrument across several of the themes. As reflected most strongly in Report 2, a centralised, SALPC-linked database is widely seen as necessary for practitioner verification, CPD tracking, job matching and sector coordination, provided that affordability, accessibility and data protection are carefully managed. Finally, the interviews position language as a critical enabler of access and inclusion. Language mediates participation in education, public services, entrepreneurship and civic life, particularly in township and rural contexts. The application of Plain Language Principles, the strengthening of indigenous language resources, and the professional role of language practitioners in bridging institutional and community communication are consistently highlighted.

Taken together, the qualitative findings across EOL Reports 1–3 depict a sector characterised by strong social relevance, diverse professional roles and evolving technological conditions, alongside ongoing challenges of regulation, coordination, valuation and skills alignment. These insights provide an essential contextual foundation for the quantitative needs and capacity assessment presented in EOL Report 3, and for the broader programme of policy and institutional reform envisaged through the Economics of Language research series.

Chapter 9 Focus Group Insights

9.1. Introduction

The focus group session and workshop was hosted by the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture (DSAC) and associated institutions. It focused on the future and professionalization of the language practitioner sector.

This meeting served as a crucial input session for a multi-part research project, specifically targeting a forthcoming report that assesses the training and capacity needs of language professionals.

Key themes presented from the research highlighted a pressing need for change, noting that the profession is often systemically undervalued and fragmented, despite its cohort being highly educated.

The four primary focus areas that structured the discussion and workshop concerning the professionalization of the language practitioner sector were derived from breakout groups, which addressed the critical themes identified during the research process.

The four focus areas explored were:

1. Continuing professional development (CPD) and career path.
2. Qualifications, skills gaps, and alignment with industry needs.
3. Human language technologies and digital readiness.
4. Regulations, professionalization, and the future architecture of the language sector.

These themes align with the broader discussions detailed in the sources, including the importance of CPD, identifying critical skills gaps (such as business, digital, and practical skills), managing the impact of HLT and AI, and establishing the necessary regulatory and institutional requirements for quality and professional recognition.

9.2. SALPC role

The SALPC is expected to professionalize and standardize the currently fragmented language sector through several key mechanisms, based on the findings and recommendations gathered from language practitioners and stakeholders.

The sector is currently described as a highly qualified, fragmented, and unevenly recognized profession where human capital is spread across disconnected institutional niches. Crucially, no single institution currently regulates the profession. The development of a central register and accreditation system received strong support during the research.

9.2.1. Professionalization and Standardization Mechanisms

The proposed council is envisioned to address fragmentation and establish standards by performing the following core functions:

Setting Standards and Categories:

- It would establish clear categories and standards for different kinds of work within the language professions.

- It would define a recognized body that can set ethical codes and monitor compliance with language legislation.
- By providing a stamp of legitimacy when dealing with clients and employers, the body aims to combat the systemic undervaluation and under remuneration experienced by practitioners.
- The council would contribute to the professional recognition of language practitioners, which is seen as necessary to ensure quality.

Centralized Register and Verification:

- The council would develop a national register or database that verifies practitioners' qualifications, experience, and Continuous Professional Development (CPD).
- This register is intended to function as a dynamic, reflexive, and expansive notion of such a database, providing a blueprint for a national database.
- The register would essentially serve as a "LinkedIn for language practitioners".

Regulating Continuous Professional Development (CPD):

- The new body would manage a centralized but well-designed CPD system.
- This system would focus on quality and relevance rather than being a mere bureaucratic compliance exercise.
- While specialized training for specific subsectors might be left to individual professional bodies, the Council should focus its attention on broader issues. These broader areas include:
 - Professional ethics.
 - Business and entrepreneurial skills.
 - Technological skills, particularly concerning AI and human language technologies.
 - Broader language skills and training activities
- CPD and the recognition of experience will help to differentiate and make visible the level of experience a practitioner might have, allowing for stratification into tiers (e.g., junior, associate, or full professional).
- The council should ensure that the CPD framework recognizes different sub-sectors and remains affordable.

9.2.2. Qualification Alignment and Accreditation:

There is a need for the council to engage in the benchmarking for accreditation so that a standard regulation is achieved across all language industries.

The body could help assess competencies and is linked to ongoing research evaluating the relevance and quality of tertiary education programs and identifying gaps and strengths.

It will need to consider the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to provide some form of qualification for individuals who have extensive practical experience but lack formal academic credentials.

Overall, the establishment of this council is a core part of the regulatory and institutional requirements identified as necessary to ensure the quality and professional recognition of language practitioners, addressing the existing issues of inconsistent standards and uneven recognition.

9.2.3. Support for a Central Register

Support for a national register stems from what is seen as the fragmented and unevenly recognized nature of the language practitioner sector. There was overwhelming support of a statutory council that regulates and accredits practitioners.

The primary reasons for this strong demand are rooted in the structural challenges and economic precarity faced by language practitioners:

Combating Undervaluation and Precarity

The sector currently exhibits a systemic undervaluation and income precarity. Survey and interview data emphasize a strong mismatch between contribution and reward. Practitioners often describe themselves as constantly undervalued and under remunerated.

This problem is exacerbated by the assumption that anyone who speaks two languages can do professional work, which drives down salaries and fees through cost-cutting and price-dumping. The resulting labour market is considered structurally precarious.

The central register and regulatory body are seen as necessary to introduce standards that provide:

- A stamp of legitimacy when dealing with clients and employers.
- Clear categories and standards for different kinds of work.

9.2.4. Addressing Fragmentation and Lack of Oversight

The language profession is currently dispersed; human capital is spread across disconnected institutional niches. Some practitioners are embedded in government units or universities, while others rely on small professional associations whose membership often lapses due to perceived limited value or cost.

Crucially, no single institution currently regulates or holds the profession. The new regulatory framework, often referred to as the Language Professionals Council, is demanded to provide the regulatory and institutional requirements necessary to ensure the quality as well as professional recognition of practitioners.

9.2.5. Verification and Quality Assurance

Practitioners need a recognized mechanism to verify competency and experience. The demand for a central register includes the need for:

- A national register or database that verifies qualifications, experience and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)
- A resource that functions as a "LinkedIn for language practitioners"
- A recognized body that can set ethical codes and monitor compliance with language legislation.

9.2.6. Structuring Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

While there is support for CPD as a core pillar of professionalization, current practices are uneven and often ad hoc. Practitioners, including freelancers, rely on self-study and peer networks.

A centralized register is needed to track a well-designed CPD system that focuses on quality and relevance rather than becoming a purely bureaucratic compliance exercise. This structure would also help differentiate professionals based on experience (e.g., junior, associate, or full professional).

The following pages contain summaries of input from the four breakaway discussion groups.

9.3. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Career Pathways

The breakaway group focused on the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework for language practitioners in South Africa.

Key points raised include the need for a structured CPD system to address gaps and barriers such as cost, time, and digital access.

The discussion highlighted the importance of recognizing prior learning and career pathways, with suggestions for differentiated CPD requirements based on practitioner levels and contexts.

Practical challenges such as administrative burdens and the need for cost-effective solutions were also addressed. The group emphasized the importance of CPD in enhancing professional standards and career growth, while avoiding over-regulation and bureaucracy.

The Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework should be designed to support career pathways by formalizing progression, making experience visible, encouraging professional advancement, and integrating mentorship.

Ways in which CPD should support career pathways, as identified in the workshop.

9.3.1. Formalizing and Visualizing Career Progression

CPD should provide a coherent structure that makes a practitioner's commitment, experience, and growing competence visible and functional across the language economy.

Referring to the role of mentorship helping to bridge practical skills gaps, a delegate said "...you don't know what you don't know and you need somebody to lead you by the hand and teach you and show you how things are actually done..."

- **Visibility of Experience:** The CPD structure can help in stratifying the field to make the difference between a practitioner with one year of basic qualification and an experienced practitioner with 10 or 20 years of practice visible.
- **Creating Levels of CPD:** The system should implement levels of CPD (e.g., "CPD level one" or "CPD level 20") attached to a practitioner's identity or branding. This badge system communicates commitment and recognized expertise to potential employers or clients.
- **Building Towards Senior Roles:** Levels of CPD are essential to accommodate a broader range of people accessing the profession who can then build towards the so-called most senior role. This prevents exclusion while formalizing career trajectories.
- **Functional Registration:** CPD and registration levels need to be made visible and functional so that employers, clients, and institutions can read and value them when making decisions regarding tenders, hiring, or promotions. The Council has an important role in making the required nomenclature and qualification structure clear to

external businesses and institutions to address issues like the undermining of professionalization through the tender system.

9.3.2. Recognizing and Rewarding Continuous Learning

CPD must recognize and reward continuous learning, allowing practitioners to move beyond their initial qualifications and adapt to changing professional demands.

- **Accredited Recognition:** The hours practitioners spend on their personal development should culminate in some sort of recognition where they can be accredited towards further studies, such as diplomas or degrees, rather than merely ending with attendance certificates. Standards are important: “..if you pass the accreditation test or SATIS exams it should mean that you are really are good at what you do and clients can put trust in those qualifications...”
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** The framework should recognize people with longstanding practice but limited formal qualifications by integrating the recognition of prior work experience and learning.
- **Focus on Practical Skill Development:** Especially for practical skills like interpreting, CPD should incorporate practical evaluation (not just exams) and emphasize mentorship and closer cooperation with universities (e.g., through work-integrated learning or internships) to close the huge gap between theoretical training and practical requirements.
- **Adaptability:** The structure should allow practitioners to adapt, especially creatives, who may change careers and skills multiple times in their lifetimes. The framework should avoid being too rigid so that people can progress and adapt without being stuck in a single discipline.

9.3.3. Integrating Mentorship and Giving Back

CPD should support career progression by obligating senior practitioners to contribute to the growth and standardization of the sector, ensuring knowledge transfer.

- **Mandatory Mentorship:** Senior practitioners should be obliged to give back to the entry-level people as part of their CPD requirements.
- **Transfer of Knowledge:** Senior members can fulfil this obligation by acting as mentors or speaking at webinars, sharing their knowledge and experience with newcomers. This helps to maintain standards and development of the profession.
- **Benefits for Seniors:** For those on the professional tier, giving a talk or doing mentorship should count towards their CPD scoring points.

9.3.4. Supporting Professionalization and Business Skills

The framework should address gaps in professional skills that are crucial for career sustainability, particularly for freelancers.

- **Focus on Business Skills:** CPD training should cover training on broader business skills such as how to market yourself, how to position yourself, and how to price yourself. This is critical as many practitioners (especially freelancers) do not see themselves as businesses and need help positioning themselves properly. “I agree that the business side and those skills are often neglected and those are signs of a professional. To be able to do a good quote and to invoice appropriately that very much on the side communicates your level of professionalism to a client...”

- **Professionalization Focus:** The national council should ensure that CPD plays a role in professionalization and helping practitioners gain the necessary broader business skills and ethical knowledge.

Overall, CPD supports career pathways by giving visibility to competency through tiered registration and accreditation, ensuring professional knowledge is continually updated, and fostering a culture of mentorship and knowledge transfer within the sector.

9.3.5. Standardisation of CPD training

The standardization of a fragmented Continuing Professional Development (CPD) landscape by the SALPC, requires balancing the need for minimum standards with the diverse and specialized requirements of various professional groups within the language sector.

To achieve standardization without stifling diversity, the council should focus on regulation, setting broad frameworks, and accommodating the specific needs and existing structures of different professions.

9.3.6. Establishing Minimum Norms and Standards

The core responsibility of the Council should be to set minimum norms and standards and establish a clear baseline for practice.

- **Setting the Baseline:** The Council must first determine the minimum standard of training or experience from which continuing development commences. Since the profession is currently unregulated, resulting in CPD not being mandatory, defining this starting point is crucial.
- **Broad Categories and Compliance:** The SALPC should look at defining broad CPD categories that count towards registration or renewal, and oversee the monitoring of compliance.
- **Ethical Focus:** The Council could allocate a percentage of required CPD points to shared value bases that cross all language professionals, such as professional ethics, which might be awarded a higher recognition relative to field-specific training.

9.3.7. Accommodating Diverse Professional Needs

The Council should avoid over-regulating the profession, which risks creating a bureaucratic burden and excluding practitioners. Standardization should involve cooperation and recognition of existing specialized professional requirements.

- **Consultation and Delegation:** The Council is viewed as a very broad organization and should not intervene directly in highly specialized CPD for niche subfields, internal corporate training, or research-level specialization. Professional associations, such as the Professional Editors Guild (PEG), should be the ones to determine the specific requirements in terms of the work they do.
- **Recognizing Existing Structures:** As different organizations already have CPD structures in place (e.g., PEG) while others have nothing (e.g., sign language interpreting), the Council must take cognizance of what is already in place in these different organizations when building a national framework.
- **Market-Related Standards:** CPD points and standards should ultimately be market-related, determined by the kind of skills the marketplace actually wants at that level.

- **Flexibility for Practitioners:** The structure should be carefully crafted to avoid making the process too rigid, acknowledging that practitioners (especially creatives) may change careers and need to adapt.

9.3.8. Designing a Flexible CPD Framework

To cater to diverse practitioners (freelance vs. in-house, entry-level vs. senior), the framework must recognize various types of learning and offer different entry points and progression levels.

- **Tiered Registration and CPD Levels:** The Council should consider having levels of CPD to accommodate a broader range of people, allowing them to build toward the most senior roles. This could involve a "badge system" (e.g., CPD level one or level 20) attached to a practitioner's identity to communicate commitment and experience.
- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):** The baseline requirement could include the recognition of prior work experience and learning. This helps recognize people with long-standing practice but limited formal qualifications.
- **Diverse Activities and Weighting:** The framework should recognize both formal and informal forms of learning. Activities can include formal courses, short courses, mentoring, attendance at webinars, and informal discussion groups ("coffee conversations"). These activities should be weighted differently, using time-for-time for direct learning and potentially "notional hours" for less formal activities.
- **Practical Application:** Especially for practical skills like interpreting, the CPD system needs to have a practical side, where people prove they can actually do what they learned. This may require practical evaluation involving fellow interpreters in the working space, rather than solely formal accreditation exams.
- **Seniority and Mentorship:** Senior practitioners should be obliged to give back to the entry-level people as part of their CPD points, potentially through mentoring or giving talks.

9.3.9. Standardization without stifling the sector

The South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) faces the challenge of standardising the currently fragmented Continuing Professional Development (CPD) landscape while accommodating the diverse and often specialized needs of language practitioners.

To achieve this balance without over-regulating or stifling diverse professional needs, the sources suggest focusing on a regulatory role, promoting flexibility in framework design, and leveraging existing professional structures.

9.3.10. Defining the Council's Regulatory Role

The council should position itself primarily as a **regulatory body** rather than an educating body, focusing on setting overarching parameters.

1. **Set Minimum Standards:** The core responsibility of the council should be setting minimum norms and standards for the profession. This requires establishing a clear baseline standard of training or experience from which continuing development commences.
2. **Defining Broad Categories:** The SALPC could define broad CPD categories that count towards registration or renewal. It should also ensure that sufficient facilities are in place for language practitioners to access training and learning opportunities.

3. **Prioritizing Universal Values:** The council could decide which value base crosses all language professions—such as **professional ethics**—and allocate a higher percentage or recognition of CPD points to these aspects. Ethical practice is considered very important and should receive a high allocation of CPD recognition relative to formal training in the field.

9.3.11. Accommodating Diversity and Specific Needs

To avoid over-regulation, the council needs to recognise that it is a very broad organization and cannot specifically know the exact requirements of every professional body.

1. **Delegation and Parallel Operation:** It makes sense for professional associations, such as the Professional Editors Guild (PEG), to determine the specific requirements for the work they do. The council should allow various professional groups to interact or operate parallel to each other, provided their operations conform to the overarching norms and standards determined by the specific professional group.
2. **Market-Related Standards:** The market should be the determinant of what standards and training are required. CPD requirements should be market-related, ensuring practitioners have the skills the marketplace wants.
3. **Avoiding Rigidity:** The structure must not be too rigid, particularly because people (especially creatives) often change careers and skills multiple times in their lifetimes; rigidity may prevent progression and adaptation. The council must avoid becoming a huge bureaucratic, top-down institution that causes bureaucracy instead of adding professional value.

9.3.12. Designing a Flexible CPD Framework

The framework needs to be flexible enough to count diverse activities and recognise different levels of experience:

1. **Levels and Trajectories:** The council could establish levels of CPD to accommodate a broader range of people accessing the profession. This allows people to build towards a senior role without immediate exclusion. CPD could help formalize varied career pathways (from junior to senior specialist) by making levels visible and functional for hiring or promotion.
2. **Recognising Diverse Learning:** The framework should recognise both formal and informal forms of learning. This includes formal courses, short courses, attendance at webinars, and less formal activities like discussion groups and coffee conversations.
3. **Weighting Activities:** Activities can be weighted differently, for instance, time-for-time for formal opportunities, and using "notional hours" to allocate value to less formal activities.
4. **Practical Components and Mentorship:** For practical fields, such as interpreting, the CPD structure needs a practical side. This includes much more emphasis on mentorship and working with internships to bridge the substantial gap observed between theoretical training and practical requirements.

5. **Senior Obligation:** Senior professionals should be obliged to give back to entry-level practitioners, for example, by mentoring or speaking at webinars, and this service should count towards their CPD points.

9.3.13. Mitigating Obstacles and Burdens

Practical obstacles like cost, time, and digital access must be addressed for successful implementation.

1. **Flexible Access:** To minimize the administrative and reporting burdens, and to help freelancers who sell their time, the framework should promote online, self-regulated learning. This allows practitioners to complete CPD activities outside of traditional work hours.
2. **Reducing Cost Burden:** Cost is a significant obstacle, and implementing CPD badly risks excluding people, thus shrinking the profession. The council should find ways to implement compliance without high cost. This could involve accessing funding, bursaries, or offering free or low-cost activities for entry-level practitioners, with fees introduced proportionally as they progress up the career ladder.
3. **Recognising Experience:** The framework should incorporate recognition of prior learning (RPL) to acknowledge people with longstanding practice but limited formal qualifications.

By regulating core cross-cutting areas and quality standards, while delegating profession-specific CPD design and activity weighting to specialized bodies, the SALPC can standardize the landscape without interfering with the detailed professional requirements of diverse language practitioners.

9.3.14. Biggest obstacles

The biggest practical obstacles hindering the implementation of a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) framework in the fragmented language sector relate to financial constraints, time and accessibility issues, and the administrative burden required for effective enforcement.

These obstacles include:

Financial and Resource Constraints

Financial barriers are frequently cited as the biggest practical deterrent to CPD engagement and implementation:

- **Cost of CPD Activities:** Practitioners feel that the costs of CPD often prevents them from being able to engage in the necessary opportunities. Creative solutions are required to find compliance without the cost so that limited resources do not prevent practitioners from complying.
- **Cost of Presenters:** The human resources required are costly, as people who present CPD content generally want to be paid very well, and the necessary resources may not be available.
- **Loss of Earnings (Time Cost):** For freelancers, the time spent on training is time I'm not selling to somebody else. Practitioners prioritize deadlines and paid work over CPD points, as they get paid for the deadline.

Accessibility Issues

CPD implementation is challenged by practical limitations regarding when, where, and how training is delivered:

- **Time and Scheduling:** It is difficult to get practitioners together for training. Activities often occur after hours, requiring people to dedicate time outside of their standard workday. Freelancers, who make money when time is available, require online self-regulated learning (accessible, for example, "at two in the morning") because they cannot easily step away from paid work.
- **Geographic and Digital Access:** Gaps and barriers include time, geography, and digital access. Uneven digital access and infrastructure is an acknowledged challenge.
- **Availability of Content:** There are noted gaps in the availability of quality CPD sort of content in African languages and in smaller centres.

Administrative Burden and Risk of Exclusion

The necessary monitoring and enforcement mechanisms often create substantial administrative challenges:

- **Administrative and Reporting Burden:** The CPD process creates administrative and reporting burdens for practitioners, providers, and the council. The administration of these processes is often more difficult than rolling them out.
- **Monitoring Challenges:** Professional organizations often lack the necessary resources in place to monitor every member regarding their CPD claims.
- **Risk of Exclusion and Rigidity:** The biggest risk of poorly implemented CPD is that it will exclude people and thereby shrink the language profession rather than grow it. The framework must avoid becoming too rigid, which might prevent people (especially creatives) from progressing or adapting their careers. The council must avoid becoming a "huge bureaucratic, top-down institution".

9.3.15. Relevance and Perception of Value

If CPD is not perceived as adding genuine professional value, implementation is hampered by a lack of practitioner buy-in:

- **Questionable Value:** Even within established bodies, there are practicing copy editors who question the value of continuing professional development.
- **Lack of Tailored Content:** Current CPD activities practitioners undertake are not always specifically tailored to the language practitioners' sort of primary work activities.
- **The "Block-Sticking Exercise":** CPD must be realistic, rather than just a policy slogan or a block-sticking exercise. If it adds no value, practitioners may simply follow the requirements formally without genuine engagement.
- **Determining Needs:** A foundational obstacle is determining what training is needed and why is it needed.

9.3.16. Foundational Lack of Regulation

The unregulated nature of certain language practices poses a fundamental obstacle to implementation:

- **Non-Mandatory CPD:** Since fields like copy editing are unregulated, CPD is not mandatory. This contributes to a "big misunderstanding about its value".

- **No Clear Baseline:** The lack of regulation means there is no starting point or baseline of training or experience from which continuing professional development should commence, which is seen as "very problematic". This ambiguity makes it difficult to standardize the required hours and expertise levels.

9.3.17. Rollout of CPD system

Cross-discipline CPD training should be developed and rolled out by a national council by prioritizing regulatory functions over teaching provision, defining core competency areas that apply universally, and implementing flexible and accessible delivery mechanisms. This approach ensures standardization of foundational skills without interfering with specialized professional needs.

9.3.18. Development: Core Content and Structure

Cross-discipline CPD development focuses on defining shared, universal standards and skills that benefit practitioners across diverse language sectors.

- **Define Cross-Cutting Value Bases:** The national council would need to decide which value base crosses all language professionals. This forms the core of standardized training.
- **Prioritize Ethics:** Ethical practice is considered very important and should be a central component of cross-discipline CPD. It should receive the highest allocation of CPD recognition relative to formal training in the field. The council could prescribe that a percentage of annual CPD points must be allocated to professional ethics.
- **Include Digital and HLT Skills:** The framework should incorporate training in AI and digital technologies. Practitioners need to be taught how to use human language technology (HLT) properly and ethically.
- **Address Professionalization and Business Skills:** Cross-discipline CPD should play a role in professionalization by assisting practitioners to gain broader business skills. This includes training on how to market yourself, how to position yourself, and how to price yourself.
- **Define Broad Categories:** The council should define broad CPD categories that count towards registration or renewal, which sets the structure for required learning.

9.3.19. Summary

The rollout of standardized CPD must be flexible and non-bureaucratic to ensure wide accessibility across different practitioners (freelance, in-house, different regions).

9.4. Regulatory Oversight

- **Council as Regulator:** The national council should function as a regulatory body more so than an educating body. Its role is to set minimum standards and oversee practice, not necessarily to offer the training or development itself.
- **Use Weighted Activity Tracking:** To recognize diverse learning, the framework should track both formal and informal activities.
 - **Formal activities** (courses, short courses, attendance at webinars) can use time for time tracking.

- **Informal learning** (discussion groups, coffee conversations) can be recognized using **notional hours**, which are allocated a predetermined value.
- **Implement Multi-Year Cycles:** The framework should run across more than one year (e.g., a two-year period) to allow for people who have disruptions in their work cycles to carry across or accumulate points in advance.

9.4.1. Ensuring Accessibility and Mentorship

- **Flexible Online Learning:** Given that freelancers prioritize paid deadlines, the easiest answer to the time obstacle is online self-regulated learning that practitioners can click on at two in the morning. Utilizing AI, online systems, and the internet can help democratise training.
- **Mandate Senior Contribution:** Senior professionals should be obliged to give back to the entry-level people as part of their CPD requirement. This obligation ensures knowledge transfer through mentorship or giving talks/webinars, which counts toward the senior person's CPD scoring points.
- **Address Cost Barriers:** The council must find ways for compliance without the cost. This may involve accessing funding, support, or bursaries. It is suggested that entry-level practitioners or students could have a significantly reduced fee for compliance, with full fees being applied as they progress up the career ladder.
- **Minimize Bureaucracy:** The council must ensure the administrative processes are manageable, as the administration of these processes is often more difficult than rolling them out. The council should avoid becoming a huge bureaucratic, top-down institution that merely causes bureaucracy instead of adding professional value.

By adhering to these principles, the council can standardize essential professional knowledge (like ethics and HLT) across the sector while ensuring the structure supports flexible learning and mitigates practical barriers like cost and time.

9.5. Qualifications, Skills Gaps, and Alignment with Industry Needs

It was agreed that university curricula in language practice have remained largely unchanged for nearly 30 years, leaving students underprepared for the realities of the field. Current programmes do not adequately cover language legislation, and graduates often lack both practical industry skills and digital literacy.

There is a clear mismatch between what universities teach and the skills that the sector actually requires. Many new graduates do not engage with literature, research, or current affairs, and they are not proactive about developing their terminology or honing their skills to see where they fit best in the industry.

As one speaker put it: "What I've realized is that, or what I'm wondering is if language practitioners should be trained by universities, because it's a much more hands-on practical work. You're working actively with language..."

Participants pointed out that, In the past, many people entered language practice without formal qualifications, by learning on the job. Experience often outweighed qualifications, which were more useful for opening doors than for career advancement.

It was felt that the sector has become too general. Anyone with a language or linguistics degree can enter nearly any role without specialisation. There is also little recognition of prior learning or practical experience, and limited support through CPD courses to help existing practitioners meet minimum standards or maintain their jobs.

This issue is particularly evident in areas like deaf and sign language practice. There is a gap between theory and practice, including limited or inadequate internships. Students often have little exposure to the communities they serve, such as the deaf community, and curricula rarely cover South African Sign Language or deaf culture in depth. Questions remain about whether language practice should be taught primarily at universities, and what alternatives might better prepare students for professional work.

The sector also lacks clear regulation. There is no statutory body overseeing language practice; existing organisations, like SATI, serve only their subscribers, and there is no consistent accreditation framework. Prospective practitioners are unclear about accreditation requirements, and the sector would benefit from a national body to guide, accredit, and protect practitioners while supporting professional development.

Finally, students need more exposure to specialised areas and emerging technologies, including human language technologies, assisted machine translation, and AI-supported language tools, especially with the inclusion of African languages. Strengthening curricula, practical experience, accreditation, and technological literacy could help bridge the gap between what universities currently provide and what the language practice sector actually needs.

9.5.1. Tension between theory and practice

The sources identify a significant tension between deep theoretical linguistics and essential practical application skills in current language education, particularly within university settings. To effectively balance these components, language education curricula must undergo several reforms focusing on specialization, technology integration, practical experience, and updated academic pathways.

9.5.2. The Challenge of Balancing Theory and Practice

Curricula often have a strong academic foundation focused on theoretical components, which results in students who are academically strong but sometimes struggle with the practical component of language work.

Historically, university curricula emphasized "theoretical linguistics, language, linguistics and literacies". This emphasis can lead to a disconnect where practitioners coming from a strong linguistic background may battle in the field over practical interpretations, such as whether translation should equate technical meaning or simply "meaning for meaning".

A new challenge is that "students do not read anymore. They do not even know what's going on in South Africa in terms of basic news events and those kinds of things. So, I think one should really emphasize the importance of reading and knowing what's going on. And if you find a word that you haven't seen before, go look up what it means and then if there alternatives in the language in which you are practicing".

Learning should not be confined to the classroom: "to me, practice and terminology development don't depend on others to develop your terminology. And even if you're watching news on TV, get busy in your mind," said a participant.

9.5.3. Key Curricular Adjustments for Balance

To bridge the gap between theory and practice, the sources suggest focusing on the following areas:

Specialization and Focused Study

There was consensus that there is a need to move away from a broad, generalist approach and towards specialization.

- **Initial Broad Approach:** Curricula should begin with a broad, foundational approach. Students need "scaffolding" and the basic information required to understand the field.
- **Specialist Direction:** After this initial phase, students need to decide in which direction they want to go and then choose a specialist direction.
- **Deep Drilling:** Once a specialization is chosen (e.g., translation, editing, lexicography, terminology development), the curriculum must allow students to "really dig down into the nitty-gritty" and "drill down into the final details" of that specific field.
- **Defining Practitioners:** Specialization is needed to move past the impression that one person with a language degree can "thrive in all arenas where language is concerned". Specialization should define whether a person is an interpreter, a translator, or a lexicographer. This specialization should be clearly defined, perhaps by the third year of study.

Integrating Practical Application and Work Experience

Direct exposure to the workplace is crucial for application skills:

- **Internships and Work-Integrated Learning:** One way to link theory and practice is to start including an internship for students, allowing them the chance to practice their language skills. Work-integrated programming and internships are seen as providing a "very quick bridge between the theory and the practice".
- **Practical Skills:** The curriculum should focus on active language work rather than just knowing terminology. Practical skills include knowing the community itself, not just the terminology.
- **Continuous Terminology Development:** Lecturers should emphasize that practice and terminology development are ongoing responsibilities, requiring the practitioner to actively learn, even when watching the news or listening to the radio.

9.5.4. Incorporation of Technology and Digital Literacy

Curricula must evolve to meet the practical demands of modern language work, particularly regarding technology:

- **Human Language Technologies (HLTs) and AI:** Students need to have some kind of exposure to computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and machine translation. "...your artificial intelligence will never replace language practitioners, but language practitioners who use AI will replace those who don't," said a participant.

- **Proficiency Requirement:** Showing proficiency in HLTs is already becoming a requirement for job seekers in the industry. This includes the ability to translate and edit electronically.
- **Addressing the Digital Divide:** There is a need for upskilling and constant workshops on HLTs and AI, making access to training on tools like Autshumato (machine assisted translation) readily available.

9.5.5. Legislative and Subject Matter Context

To ensure practical readiness, curricula should include context beyond traditional linguistics:

- **Legislative Frameworks:** Curricula are currently "definitely lacking" in teaching students about the legislative frameworks language practitioners face, such as the Council Act and the Use of Official Languages Act.
- **General Knowledge:** Educators should emphasize the importance of reading and knowing what is going on in the country, as a lack of general knowledge and terminology is a recognized issue.
- **Postgraduate Entry for Subject Matter Experts:** Curricula should establish postgraduate diplomas or certificates to allow people coming from other fields (e.g., law, science, human anatomy) to enter the language practice space. This allows practitioners to enrich the field with expertise in certain subject matter needed for complex translation (e.g., legal or medical translation).

Effectively balancing theoretical depth with practical application requires treating language practice as a highly specialized and technically demanding field, moving away from a generalist academic focus. This shift allows the curriculum to provide the necessary theoretical framework before guiding students into the intricate, hands-on details of their chosen specializations.

9.5.6. Barriers to professionalisation of the language sector

The group identified several significant barriers hindering specialization and accreditation within the language practice sector. These include a lack of unified frameworks, a reliance on generalist approaches in training and employment, and challenges in recognizing practical experience and adapting to new technologies.

Absence of a Unified Framework and Statutory Body

The most prominent barrier is the lack of a unified framework or standard that guides training, accreditation, and career progression.

- **Non-existent Council:** While the South African Language Practitioners Council Act exists, the council itself is described as "existingly non-existent" as of the discussion, meaning it has not taken off as planned. The processes for accreditation and developing a code of conduct still need to be "hashed out," even though the Council Act came into effect in the latter part of the year.
- **No National Statutory Body:** There is currently no statutory body assigned to accredit language practitioners nationally. Some institutions might demand SATI accreditation, but SATI only accredits subscribing members and is not considered a national body assigned to this task.

- **Impact on Standards:** The lack of a national framework means that "Each institution or group does their own" according to what they feel fits their purpose.
- **Qualification Disunity:** There is no unified view on language practice qualifications. If a university offers a course in language practice, there is no standardized, minimum set of subjects or modules that a person walking out with that qualification is expected to have covered.

Generalist Approach and Lack of Specialization

The prevailing generalist mindset in training and employment significantly hinders specialization

- **University Curricula:** University curricula tend to follow a "broad, short approach," offering a "sprinkling of everything" related to language practice, such as a little bit of translation, editing theory, terminology development, and lexicography. This results in a lack of avenues for specialization. "We are struggling where you have students that are very strong in theoretical component, because it has an academic foundation. And then they struggle with a practical component," said a delegate.
- **Open Access to the Field:** The language space is often seen as "open for everyone," where people with a matriculation certificate or a basic language degree can enter, leading to a situation where "anyone can become a translator".
- **The "Generalist" Impression:** There is an impression that "one person with a language degree has this impression of being a linguist and they feel that they can thrive in all arenas where language is concerned" (e.g., terminology, translating, interpreting).
- **Employment Practices:** In sectors like the Department of Justice, interpreters are often hired if they are just bilingual with "at least a level of a metric," further bypassing the need for specialized accreditation.
- **Inadequate Subject Matter Expertise:** Individuals coming into technical language fields, such as terminography, might come from a literature background, raising questions about their suitability for technical spaces.

9.5.7. Barriers to Recognizing Experience and Prior Learning (RPL)

The current system struggles to incorporate practical experience into formal recognition:

- **Exclusion of Experienced Practitioners:** There are instances where experienced practitioners, who may have been working in the field for 15 years or more, are dismissed because they do not meet a later-imposed "minimum requirement" (like a matric qualification), despite their practical experience.
- **Impact on Expertise:** Some of the best language practitioners, such as sign language interpreters who grew up as children with deaf parents (making sign language their first language), may not have the formal qualifications needed if postgraduate regulations are implemented, thereby impacting the best practitioners in the field.
- **Need for RPL:** There is a need for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) so that people can be admitted or gain qualifications based on what they have acquired through experience and institutional knowledge.

9.5.8. Technological and Institutional Resource Barriers

Modernizing accreditation and training is hampered by technological and resource limitations:

- **Lack of Upskilling:** There is a critical lack of structured programs for upskilling practicing practitioners in Human Language Technologies (HLTs) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Existing workshops are often taken over by academics, leading to "academic exercises" instead of practical crash courses.
- **Accessibility and Training Gaps:** Essential tools such as Autshumato (machine-assisted translation) are not readily available or accompanied by easily accessible training resources, such as free tutorials. Autshumato is a project funded by the Department of Arts and Culture to develop, release and support open-source translation technologies to aid the translation process and ultimately provide more access to information for every South African.
- **Limited Capacity for Internships:** While work-integrated learning and internships are seen as a "very quick bridge between the theory and the practice," many language units, particularly in the government sector, are "severely under-resourced and under pressure," lacking the time or manpower to dedicate staff to mentor and upskill students.

9.5.9. Summary

In essence, the hurdles facing specialization and accreditation resemble a construction project that lacks a blueprint and professional oversight. Without a unified, mandated set of professional standards, the sector remains vulnerable to inconsistent training, generalist employment, and an inability to formally recognize the valuable expertise gained through years of practical experience.

9.6. Human Language Technologies (HLTs) and Digital Readiness

Delegated opted to discuss the impact of Human Language Technologies (HLT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the language sector in the other groups as their impact is being felt in all aspects of the language economy.

AI is described as introducing disruptive pressures alongside new opportunities in the field. While AI is viewed with some anxiety, it is also acknowledged as enabling massive efficiency gains.

However, delegates emphasized that AI does not eliminate the need for high-level human practitioners. Rather, it intensifies the need for these roles. High-level human roles are necessary for specific, critical functions related to AI and HLT output:

- **Verifying machine outputs:** Human practitioners are needed to ensure the quality and accuracy of content generated by AI and HLT tools
- **Training AI systems for indigenous languages:** Given the structural gap between the symbolic importance of indigenous languages and their material support, human expertise is vital for developing and training systems to handle these languages
- **Curating corpora:** Practitioners are essential for managing and curating the large language data sets (corpora) used to train and run AI systems
- **Ensuring ethical use:** High-level practitioners are required to govern the ethical implementation and use of AI in language work.

The delegates confirmed that many practitioners are already using human language technologies and expect significant digital disruption to their work within the next five years.

This recognition of technological shifts underscores why training in technological skills, particularly concerning AI and human language technologies, is identified as a focus area for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) managed by the SALPC.

Despite the opportunities, there is a recognized challenge: corporate belief that machines can replace human practitioners is fuelled by these technologies, leading to job losses.

There is an urgency to move quickly, as otherwise, the sector will be overtaken by international developments.

9.6.1. Impact on Required Skills and Training

Human language technologies necessitate a shift in the skills expected of practitioners, highlighting a gap often seen in traditional academic training:

- **Adaptive Skills:** There is a need for greater adaptability in the industry, requiring professionals to learn new skills beyond their core competencies
- **Digital Readiness:** Training is required in new skill sets, including digital readiness and the use of human language applications
- **Specific Tool Training:** Some professional development programmes now include training on CAT tools (computer-assisted translation) and the effect of AI in the profession.

9.6.2. Economic and Perceptual Impact

HLT, particularly AI, introduces uncertainty and affects the perceived value of human language services:

- **Undercutting Professional Value:** The rising capability of AI contributes to the perception that professional language skills are less necessary. People are increasingly thinking that AI can produce the same professional nuanced output that human practitioners do.
- **Uncertainty and Future Concern:** While one practitioner noted that their personal workload and rates were not immediately affected by AI, there is a widespread concern about what the future will hold
- **Altering Workload:** The nature of work is changing, with some current tasks being aimed at training AI systems, leading to uncertainty about the long-term consequences once those systems are fully trained
- **Ethical Considerations:** The rise of AI introduces new ethical considerations, such as the need for transparency with clients about whether you're going to use AI on a document.

The impact of HLT, therefore, requires practitioners to continuously update their technical skills while simultaneously fighting against the perception that AI can replace human expertise.

9.6.3. Adoption of HLTs

Practitioners must adopt Human Language Technologies (HLT) because these tools are rapidly transitioning from being optional aids to essential requirements for professional practice and employability in the language sector. The key reasons for adopting HLTs are:

Employability and Industry Standards

Proficiency in HLTs is now becoming a prerequisite for securing jobs, moving beyond "future proofing" to "present proofing" of students.

- **Requirement in Job Posts:** Job advertisements, even from government bodies like the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (specifically for their national language unit), are already listing the ability to translate and edit electronically and use computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools as requirements.
- **Replacement of Traditional Methods:** The ability to translate and edit electronically is becoming the standard, indicating that language professionals who utilize AI tools are expected to replace those who do not. As one participant stated, "your artificial intelligence will never replace language practitioners, but language practitioners who use AI will replace those who don't".

9.6.4. Bridging Practical and Theoretical Gaps

HLT is crucial for performing the hands-on aspects of language work efficiently:

- **Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) and Machine Translation:** Practitioners need exposure to tools and concepts like AutoShumato (machine-assisted translation)
- **Upskilling Practicing Practitioners:** There is a recognized need for upskilling and constant workshops on HLTs and AI for both students and practicing professionals, as many currently "don't use this technology". There is a desire for readily available resources, such as free tutorials on platforms like YouTube, to train people on these essential tools.

9.6.5. Advancing African Languages in the Digital Space

Adopting HLTs is critical for the broader goal of digital inclusion and innovation:

- **Inclusion in the Digital Platform:** There is a pressing need for a "big forum" to discuss the inclusion of African languages into the digital platform.
- **Rapid Pace of Technology:** Failure to adopt these technologies quickly means that African languages are losing ground in terms of digital activity, as the sector is described as chasing "a car that is running on 260 kilometres an hour".

The urgency of HLT adoption mandates reforms in education, which currently lack adequate coverage of the legislative frameworks and technologies language practitioners face. The sources stress that while academic institutions often theorize about these issues, practitioners require "practical crash course[s]" to integrate these essential skills.

9.6.6. Summary

Delegates believe that HLT and AI have a significant and dual impact on the language sector, affecting both the practical skills required of practitioners and the economic recognition of the profession.

The importance HLT teaching is highlighted primarily in the context of the need for CPD courses to address technological advancements and their ethical implications within the language sector.

The key points on the importance of HLT teaching raised in the discussions were:

- **Addressing Technological Change:** Delegates suggest that HLT (and related digital technologies, including AI) is an area that should be included in CPD training. Practitioners need to be trained on how to use technologies such as AI and HLT, how to use it properly, and ethically.
- **Preventing Obsolescence:** If CPD is to have value, it must address the question of "what training is needed and why is it needed". It is implied that ignoring HLT is not an option, as one speaker stated: "You can't ignore it [HLT]".
- **Opportunities for Democratization:** Utilizing AI, online systems, and the internet is seen as creating opportunities to democratise training, making new training models and opportunities more available to people.
- **Gaps in Current Training:** The inclusion of HLT suggests that, similar to professionalization and ethics, specific training in AI and digital technologies is a necessary area that the council should focus on structuring into the CPD system, alongside language-specific training areas.

9.7. Regulation, Professionalization, and the Future Architecture of the Language Sector

The workshop addressed critical issues across four pillars of the language sector, beginning with the need for better professional development beyond university qualifications, which often neglect practical skills, digital readiness, and basic business acumen.

A discussion on institutional coordination highlighted the failure of the Official Languages Act of 2012 to reach freelancers and small businesses, underscoring the necessity of a centralized Language Practitioners Council to improve articulation between state agencies and professional bodies like the Professional Editors' Group (PEG) and the South African Translators Institute (SATI).

Participants detailed how these existing organizations maintain high standards through rigorous, practice-based accreditation exams and enforce ethical practices via mandatory codes of conduct.

Economically, the industry faces severe challenges due to a pervasive lack of recognition for language professionals, which leads to issues with undercharging and late payments, although future growth avenues are seen in government compliance and commercial localization efforts.

9.7.1. Challenges

The professional language sector faces challenges stemming from academic shortcomings, economic barriers, and a need for improved institutional coordination.

Academic Training Deficiencies and the Role of Professional Bodies University qualifications often "leave something to be desired" concerning practical and formalised training, failing to stress the required adaptability and digital readiness needed in the industry.

Specifically, crucial business skills—such as providing a good quote, invoicing appropriately, and client communication—are frequently neglected in academic curricula.

9.7.2. Role of professional bodies

Professional bodies address this through two main mechanisms: mentorship and continuous professional development (CPD). Mentorship is highly valued because new practitioners "don't

know what they don't know" and need a mentor to "lead you by the hand and teach you and show you how things are actually done" in a one-on-one process.

CPD, offered via resources like webinars, formalises post-university learning, focusing heavily on the business side (marketing services, finding clients) and new adaptive skills, including the use of CAT tools and understanding the effect of AI.

Accreditation exams offered by bodies like the Professional Editors' Group (PEG) and the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) are strictly benchmarked with high pass marks. This rigorous process provides a "stamp of approval" that bolsters formal education, as a university qualification alone is often insufficient. These organizations also enforce ethical practices through Codes of Conduct, covering transparency with clients (e.g., about AI use) and professional behaviour.

9.7.3. Economic Barriers and Lack of Recognition

A primary obstacle is the lack of professional recognition, driven by a perception that language practitioners "don't have the same level of respect as other professions". Clients often fail to understand that language work is a profession or that specialised skills are required, leading them to undervalue the time spent on documents.

This results in unwillingness to pay professional fees and poor client behaviour. This issue is compounded by the increasing belief that Artificial Intelligence (AI) can produce the "same professional nuanced output" as humans.

9.7.4. Institutional Coordination and Growth

There is a need for improved institutional dialogue, communication, and collaboration between state bodies, academic institutions, and professional associations. For growth, the sector must clearly demonstrate the return on investment (ROI) of language services to the corporate world, particularly through localization.

Furthermore, robust implementation of language rights at the government level (in police stations or municipal offices) would normalize multilingual service provision, potentially leading to job creation and commercial follow-on effects.

Language practitioners lack professional recognition primarily due to a "public perception that undervalues their specialized skills" and a general lack of understanding regarding the professional nature of the work.

9.7.5. Public Misconceptions and Lack of Respect

The most significant factor cited is the "perception that language practitioners do not have the same level of respect as other established professions," such as accountants, lawyers, or dentists. This lack of respect stems from several common misconceptions:

Failure to Recognize Expertise: Clients and the public often fail to realize that language work is a "profession as such".

"I find that there's a perception maybe with the public or even with companies that they don't we don't have the same level of respect as other professions so because we don't have that same level of respect as a as or that even people realize that it's a profession as such so they

think that we shouldn't charge what we're charging or they're not willing to treat us and pay invoices on time or that type of behaviour," is the way a participant put it. .

Skill Underestimation: There is a perception that “anyone who is fairly competent in more than one language can be a translator” or editor, leading to the belief that specialized professional fees are unnecessary.

Undervaluation of Time and Effort: “This lack of recognition of skills means that clients often do not understand the value of the time spent working on documents or interpreting, and consequently, they do not understand the professional fees attached to the service”.

"People don't understand that it's that these are professional skills and professional services that people offer and that's why they don't see why they need to pay for it or they don't understand the time that is spent on working on a document or text or interpreting that kind of thing," delegate said.

9.7.6. Negative Impact on Business

When the profession is not respected, clients may be unwilling to pay the fees being charged or may fail to “treat practitioners and pay invoices on time”.

9.7.7. Influence of Technology

The increasing belief that artificial intelligence (AI) can perform the necessary tasks also contributes to the lack of recognition. People are increasingly thinking that “AI can produce the same professional nuanced output” that human practitioners do, further reducing the perceived value of human expertise.

9.8. Importance of Professional Standards and Accreditation

To counteract this lack of recognition, practitioners stress that skills recognition is crucial. It is noted that a “university qualification alone is sometimes not enough”. The professional sector works to instill trust and recognition through high standards:

Benchmarking and Trust: The accreditation exams offered by professional bodies (like PEG and SATI) are “strictly benchmarked” and have a very high pass mark. This high standard is necessary to ensure that those who pass "really are good at what you do, and clients can put trust in those qualifications".

Eroding Trust: Conversely, the sources note that if qualifications (including university degrees) are perceived as having a very low pass mark or being widely distributed, “public trust in those letters behind your name is not really there”.

Ultimately, the goal of increasing professionalization is so that the public will “respect language practitioners and be willing to see it as a necessary service” that should be remunerated appropriately.

Here are three quotes from the sources regarding the lack of professional recognition for language practitioners:

9.8.1. Mentorship as a Bridge for Practical Skills

"You don't know what you don't know and you need somebody to lead you by the hand and teach you and show you how things are actually done," said a participant.

Professional mentorship and continuous professional development (CPD) effectively bridge academic training shortcomings by providing crucial practical, business, and adaptive skills that are often overlooked in formal university curricula.

Mentorship is highlighted as extremely important because new practitioners "don't know what they don't know" and need someone to "lead you by the hand and teach you and show you how things are actually done". It serves to teach skills that may not have been covered in informal courses.

Key ways mentorship bridges the gap include:

- Individualized Guidance: Mentorship is generally a one-on-one process.
- Workplace Confidence: Structured mentorship programmes, such as those implemented by the Professional Editors' Group (PEG), are designed to help individuals reach a point where they feel confident enough to go through an accreditation process and enter the workplace.
- Client Relations and Business Acumen: Mentors guide individuals on practical matters, such as how they are working and dealing with clients. This guidance helps address the neglect of the "business side" of the profession, which is a sign of professionalism (e.g., providing a good quote and invoicing appropriately).

"Mentorship teaches you the skills that perhaps aren't covered in formal courses."

9.8.2. CPD and Professionalization

The literature suggests that university qualifications sometimes "leave something to be desired" in terms of practical training and the necessary adaptability required by the industry. CPD addresses these gaps by formalizing post-university learning.

Key components of CPD that address academic shortcomings include:

- Business Skills Training: Professional bodies run webinars that focus heavily on business skills, such as how to find clients, market services, invoice, and estimate for a job, alongside communication with clients. These are often the same skills neglected in higher education.
- Adaptive and Digital Skills: CPD addresses the need for greater adaptability in the industry. Training focuses on new skills, including digital readiness, the use of human language applications, CAT tools (computer-assisted translation), and understanding the effect of AI on the profession.
- Formalizing Informal Learning: There is a strong emphasis on continuous professional development and professionalisation, which involves formalising the informal training or work that practitioners do after graduating.
- Accreditation and Benchmarking: CPD and mentorship opportunities prepare members for accreditation exams. Passing these exams provides a stamp of approval that bolsters formal education and helps practitioners confirm their knowledge and proficiency, especially since a university qualification alone is often insufficient. Organizations like PEG and the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) maintain high

standards for their accreditation tests, ensuring that those who pass "really are good at what you do and clients can put trust in those qualifications".

- **Networking and Resources:** Professional bodies offer vital networking opportunities (like online forums and in-person meetings) which combat the isolation of working in a silo. They also provide members with resources such as newsletters, access to dictionaries, and templates for contracts.

9.8.3. Neglected by universities

University courses often neglect practical skills that are essential for professional practice, particularly in the business and adaptive aspects of the language sector.

"University qualifications and the approaches of universities leave something to be desired."

The key practical skills that are often neglected include:

- **Business Acumen:** The "business side" of the profession is frequently overlooked in academic training, even though these skills are considered signs of professionalism. "...I agree that the business side and those skills are often neglected."

Elements requiring more focus include:

- Providing a good quote.
- Invoicing appropriately.
- Estimating for a job.
- How to find clients.
- Marketing services.
- Communication with clients.
- **Adaptive and Digital Skills:** University approaches often "leave something to be desired" in terms of practical training and fail to stress the required adaptability. Neglected adaptive skills include:
 - Digital readiness.
 - Training in digital skills.
 - Use of human language applications.
- **Real-world Practice:** There is a perception that academic qualifications sometimes fall short in providing the practical or formalised training needed for language work. Mentorship programmes are necessary because graduates often "don't know what they don't know" and need to be taught and shown "how things are actually done" in the workplace.

Essentially, universities often focus on the core competencies of language work while failing to address the "nuts and bolts" of operating as a professional, such as managing client relationships and handling the logistical aspects of a business.

Here are three quotes and supporting statements from the sources and conversation history concerning the practical skills often neglected by university courses:

9.8.4. Services Provided by Professional Language Bodies (Text Format)

Professional language bodies offer a range of crucial services designed to formalise post-university learning, ensure high standards, and provide practical support, addressing the isolation often experienced by practitioners. These services encompass training, accreditation, networking, and ethical guidance.

Professional organisations like the Professional Editors' Group (PEG) and the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) are vital for the professional development and support of language practitioners,.

Accreditation and Benchmarking

Both PEG and SATI offer accreditation schemes, requiring members to sit rigorous exams to confirm proficiency,. These exams are strictly benchmarked and have very high pass marks (SATI's pass rate is noted as being close to 90% or 95%), ensuring that successful candidates "really really are good at what you do and clients can put trust in those qualifications",. SATI provides accreditation across translation, interpreting, and editing, covering all official languages as well as other major languages. PEG's exam is offered annually and is designed to mirror real-life practice, allowing candidates to use resources and complete the test within a window (e.g., 48 hours for PEG).

Training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

These bodies provide extensive training, largely through webinars, to address practical skill gaps. PEG runs webinars almost twice monthly, covering a balanced curriculum.

- **Business Skills:** A strong focus is placed on the "business side" of the profession, teaching members how to find clients, market services, invoice, and estimate for a job, along with communication with clients,.
- **Language Skills:** Training also covers the "nitty-gritty" of language usage, such as grammar, commas, and compound nouns.
- **Adaptive Skills:** Organizations are responding to industry changes by offering training on subjects like CAT tools (computer-assisted translation) and the effect of AI in the profession.

Mentorship and Individual Guidance

Mentorship programmes are offered to guide new practitioners through the practical realities of the industry. PEG runs a structured, one-on-one mentorship programme (available for an additional fee) that helps individuals reach a point where they feel confident enough to go through an accreditation process,. Mentors guide mentees on practicalities like how they are working and dealing with clients.

Networking and Resources

Professional bodies combat the isolation of freelancing by offering networking opportunities. PEG provides members with access to an online forum where they can ask questions, seek advice, and discuss issues related to language use or client approach. They also organise in-person meetings and workshops in regional centres. Resources provided include newsletters (PEG distributes one three times a year; SATI sends a weekly circular updating members on international conferences and happenings), and practical tools such as templates for contracts and access to online resources like the Oxford dictionary.

Ethical and Professional Conduct

Both PEG and SATI maintain Codes of Conduct or Ethics which members are expected to uphold,. These codes ensure professional behaviour and cover principles such as being

transparent in work with clients (e.g., about the use of AI or outsourcing), maintaining confidentiality, charging appropriately, and avoiding unethical practices like rude communication or bigotry,.

Table 68: Services Provided by Professional Language Bodies

Professional Body	Core Services Provided	Key Resources and Support
Professional Editors' Group (PEG)	Accreditation programme/exam,. Structured, one-on-one Mentorship programme (additional fee),. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) via twice-monthly webinars.	Training focuses on business skills (invoicing, marketing, finding clients) and detailed language skills (grammar, commas). Online forum for networking and advice,. Newsletter (three times per year). Access to resources like the Oxford dictionary and templates for contracts. Code of Conduct.
South African Translators' Institute (SATI)	Accreditation scheme for translation, interpreting, and editing,. Webinar programme.	Training includes CAT tools and addressing the effect of AI. Weekly circular/newsletter updating members on international professional happenings and conferences. Code of Conduct/Ethics for various membership categories (individuals, agencies, language officers).
South African Freelancers Association (SAFREA)	Program of webinars.	Regular newsletter.

9.9. Conclusion

The focus group session provided critical, practice-based validation of many of the structural challenges identified through the broader research process. Participants confirmed that the language practitioner sector remains highly skilled yet fragmented, economically precarious, and insufficiently regulated. Strong consensus emerged around the central importance of a well-designed, affordable and flexible CPD system linked to a future statutory SALPC, alongside the urgent need for improved alignment between qualifications, workplace skills, and industry realities. The discussions further highlighted the growing impact of HLTs on required skills, employability and professional identity, as well as the persistent undervaluation of language work in the broader economy. Taken together, the focus group findings reinforce the need for coordinated regulatory reform, structured professional development, and strengthened institutional collaboration as foundational pillars for the sustainable professionalisation of the language practitioner sector

Chapter 10 Towards a CPD Framework for Language Practitioners

10.1. Introduction

Continuous professional development (CPD) emerged across this study as one of the most important levers for strengthening the language professions. Practitioners repeatedly emphasised that a formal qualification, while necessary, is not sufficient to sustain a career in a rapidly changing environment shaped by new technologies, evolving client demands and shifting institutional arrangements. They identified ongoing learning, mentoring and peer networks as critical to maintaining quality, protecting livelihoods and opening new career pathways.

At the same time, the evidence shows that CPD in the South African language sector is currently fragmented, uneven and largely voluntary. A small number of institutions and professional associations offer structured short courses, workshops and conferences, but access is uneven across professions, languages and regions. Many practitioners, particularly freelancers and those working in African languages, SASL and Deaf services, experience CPD as sporadic, self-funded and difficult to document or have formally recognised.

The South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC) has a statutory mandate to promote and maintain professional standards. In most sectors, a well-designed CPD system is a key instrument for doing so. However, this report does not attempt to design a full CPD framework or to pre-empt choices that will need to be made through further research, consultation and detailed planning. Instead, this chapter:

- Summarises the main CPD-related issues emerging from the survey, interviews and focus groups.
- Sets out guiding principles and objectives for a national CPD approach.
- Sketches what a CPD framework could look like under SALPC's leadership; and identifies areas where further work and consultation will be required.

The intention is to provide a direction of travel and a set of reference points, not a prescriptive blueprint.

10.2. The current CPD landscape: issues and patterns

10.2.1. Fragmented provision and uneven access

The research points to a patchwork of CPD activities rather than a coherent system. Practitioners report drawing on:

- Short courses and workshops offered by universities, universities of technology and private providers.
- Training events run by professional associations and specialist NGOs.
- Employer-based training in institutional language units or government departments; and
- Informal learning through peer networks, online resources and self-study.

This variety reflects the diversity of the sector and is a strength in many respects. However, it also results in considerable unevenness:

- Access to structured CPD is concentrated in a few metropolitan areas and institutions.
- Practitioners working in African languages, SASL and Deaf services often report fewer opportunities tailored to their contexts.
- Freelancers and small-agency practitioners are more likely to rely on self-funded, ad hoc training with no guarantee of recognition.
- There is no shared understanding of what “counts” as CPD, nor of how much CPD is appropriate for different stages of a career.

10.2.2. Limited recognition and weak links to progression

Across methods, practitioners indicated that even when they do invest in CPD, the benefits are not always formally recognised:

- Certificates from short courses are not systematically recorded or accepted across institutions.
- Learning gained through informal mentoring, practice-based supervision and self-study is rarely documented.
- CPD is seldom clearly linked to career progression, promotion or access to specialised roles.

This weakens incentives to invest in CPD, especially for practitioners who are already facing financial and time pressures.

10.2.3. Gaps in content: business, digital and cross-cutting skills

Survey and interview findings point to specific content gaps in existing CPD offerings:

- Business and practice management (pricing, contracting, marketing, project management, tax and compliance) – areas that many freelancers identified as major pain points.
- Digital and HLT readiness – practical exposure to CAT tools, machine translation, subtitling, corpus work and AI-assisted workflows, as well as ethical and pricing implications.
- Cross-cutting issues such as language rights, accessibility, working with vulnerable communities, and ethics in multilingual and intercultural settings.

Some providers and associations are beginning to address these gaps, but provision is still limited, not widely known, or not accessible to practitioners outside particular networks.

10.2.4. Inequalities and the risk of exclusion

Existing CPD patterns tend to mirror broader inequalities in the sector:

- Practitioners in well-resourced institutions have more opportunities to attend courses and conferences.
- Practitioners working in marginalised languages or communities, or located far from major centres, may struggle to access even basic offerings.
- Online learning has opened new possibilities but is constrained by connectivity, cost and digital skills.

Any future CPD framework will need deliberately to address these inequities to avoid unintentionally reinforcing them.

10.3. Vision and principles for a SALPC-led CPD framework

Given this starting point, the role of the SALPC is not to replace existing initiatives or to impose a single model from above, but to provide a coherent framework within which diverse providers and practitioners can operate. The framework should be developed through consultation and phased implementation, but a number of high-level principles can already be identified.

10.3.1. Coordinating rather than centralising

A central message from stakeholders is that the sector values the expertise and initiatives of existing institutions and professional bodies. A CPD system under SALPC should therefore:

- Set common reference points and minimum expectations.
- Recognise and, where appropriate, endorse CPD offerings by universities, professional bodies and other organisations; and
- Avoid duplicating or displacing successful existing programmes.

In practical terms, this suggests that SALPC would act as a coordinator and standard-setter, rather than as the sole provider of CPD.

10.3.2. Recognising diverse forms of learning

Practitioners acquire knowledge and skills in many ways, not only through formal courses. A credible CPD framework should:

- Recognise a range of activities (formal courses, workshops, supervised practice, mentoring, conference participation, self-study, contributions to HLT and corpus projects, etc.);
- Include mechanisms for recognition of prior learning (RPL) in relation to CPD, particularly for experienced practitioners who have built competencies outside formal programmes; and
- Encourage documentation of learning without creating excessive administrative burdens.

The detailed design of recognition rules will require further technical work, but the principle is that the framework should reflect how learning happens in the sector.

10.3.3. Balancing quality assurance and flexibility

Stakeholders expressed support for some level of quality assurance, while also warning against rigid or overly bureaucratic systems. A CPD framework under SALPC should therefore aim to:

- Define broad quality criteria for CPD activities (e.g. clarity of learning outcomes, appropriate duration and level, qualified facilitators).
- Put in place a simple process through which providers can have activities recognised as contributing to SALPC CPD; and
- Leave room for innovation and adaptation, especially in response to new technologies and emerging professional niches.

The exact balance between assurance and flexibility, and the mechanisms for provider recognition, will need to be developed in consultation with stakeholders and with reference to practice in other professions.

10.3.4. Promoting equity and inclusion

Given the inequities identified in the current landscape, equity considerations should be embedded in the design from the outset. This could include:

- Explicit attention to African languages, SASL and Deaf-related professions in CPD planning.
- Strategies for supporting practitioners in under-resourced settings (for example through low-cost online offerings, regional hubs or partnerships); and
- Monitoring of participation patterns to ensure that CPD does not become an additional barrier for those already at the margins.

Again, the precise mechanisms will require further work, but the principle is that CPD should reduce, not deepen, disparities in the sector.

10.3.5. Linking CPD to professional standards and careers

Finally, a future CPD system will need to be meaningfully connected to:

- Registration and renewal under SALPC.
- Specialisation and progression pathways (for example, moving from generalist to specialist categories, or into supervisory and mentoring roles); and
- The broader economics of language work, including employability, quality assurance and the sustainability of the professions.

This report can only sketch the direction: subsequent processes will need to determine, in detail, how CPD requirements are phased in, how they differ across categories, and how they interact with registration levels and designations.

10.4. Possible components of a future CPD system

The purpose of this section is not to prescribe the final form of a CPD framework for the language professions, but to sketch key building blocks that could be considered in subsequent design and consultation processes. These components are presented as illustrative elements that can be combined, adapted or phased in as appropriate.

10.4.1. A common CPD “currency” and broad activity categories

Most professional sectors use a simple “currency” (for example, CPD hours or points) to make different learning activities comparable. For the language professions, a similar approach could help practitioners and providers to plan, record and report CPD in a consistent way.

One possible model would be to:

- Define CPD in terms of time-based units (e.g. hours) or points derived from time.
- Group activities into a small number of broad categories, for example:
 - Formal courses and qualifications.
 - Short courses, workshops and webinars.
 - Supervised practice, mentoring and coaching.
 - Conference participation and professional meetings.

- Self-directed learning (e.g. structured reading, online modules).
- Contributions to sectoral infrastructure (e.g. HLT and corpus projects, terminology work, standards development).

The exact structure, terminology and thresholds would need to be developed through further technical work and consultation. The key point is that a shared “currency” and set of categories would allow diverse activities to be recognised within a single framework.

10.4.2. Linking CPD to registration and professional categories

Over time, a CPD framework is likely to be most effective if it is meaningfully linked to:

- Initial registration with SALPC.
- Periodic renewal of registration; and
- Recognition of specialisations or higher levels of responsibility (for example, specialist interpreters, supervisors, assessors, mentors).

There are several ways this could be achieved, all of which require careful calibration:

- Setting indicative CPD expectations per registration period (for example, a range of hours/points over three years), possibly differentiated by category or level.
- Associating particular types of CPD with certain specialisations (e.g. HLT/digital readiness for certain roles; Deaf culture and accessibility for SASL-related work);
- Recognising CPD activities that support the sector as a whole (e.g. Mentoring, training others, contributing to standard-setting).

At this stage, this report does not recommend specific thresholds or rules. Instead, it signals that any future decisions on CPD requirements should be developed through consultation, piloted, and phased in gradually to avoid unintended exclusion.

10.4.3. Recognising CPD providers and activities

For CPD to support quality and trust, SALPC will need some way of indicating which activities meet basic standards. A possible approach would be to distinguish between:

- **Recognised providers:** organisations (universities, professional bodies, NGOs, private providers, institutional language units) that meet agreed criteria and can offer CPD activities that carry SALPC recognition; and
- **Recognised activities:** specific courses, workshops or programmes that have been assessed against broad quality criteria (clear learning outcomes, appropriate level, qualified facilitators, suitable assessment or reflection).

The process for recognising providers and activities should aim to be:

- Lightweight and transparent, to encourage participation.
- Open to a variety of organisations, including those working in African languages, SASL and community-based contexts; and
- Aligned, as far as possible, with existing quality assurance processes in higher education and professional bodies, to avoid duplication.

It may also be useful to allow practitioners to submit individual activities (for example, international conferences, relevant short courses) for recognition on a case-by-case basis, especially in the early phases while the system is being built.

10.4.4. Integration with the practitioner database

Report 2 has already highlighted the importance of a national database of practitioners. A future CPD framework could be tightly integrated with this database so that:

- Practitioners can record their CPD activities in one place.
- Recognised providers can, with consent, upload attendance or completion records directly.
- SALPC can generate aggregated insights about CPD participation (e.g. by language, region, profession, type of activity); and
- Practitioners can access a personal CPD history for their own planning, applications and reporting.

The detailed technical design (data fields, interfaces, privacy protections) will require specialist input. What is important at this stage is to highlight that CPD and the database should be designed together, rather than as separate systems.

10.4.5. Priority CPD streams

While the CPD framework should be broad enough to accommodate many topics, the research points to several priority streams that warrant early attention. These could include, for example:

- **Core professional competencies:** translation, interpreting (including court and community interpreting), editing, terminology, language coordination and SASL/Deaf services.
- **Human language technologies and digital readiness:** as outlined in Chapter 9, including CAT tools, MT post-editing, subtitling and localisation, corpus work and AI ethics.
- **Business, practice management and labour-market skills:** pricing, contracting, project management, marketing, tax and compliance, working across borders or platforms.
- **Language rights, ethics and accessibility:** working in multilingual and intercultural settings, protecting vulnerable clients or communities, and ensuring accessibility in line with constitutional and legislative obligations.
- **Leadership, mentoring and supervision:** preparing experienced practitioners for roles as supervisors, mentors, trainers and assessors.

The content and structure of these streams should be shaped through dialogue with practitioners, training providers and professional bodies. The list above is intended to capture areas of consensus in the research, rather than to limit future innovation.

10.4.6. Phased implementation and ongoing review

Finally, any CPD system will need to be introduced gradually and with opportunities for learning and adjustment. A phased approach might include:

- An initial period focused on mapping existing CPD provision, agreeing principles, and piloting recognition processes in partnership with a small group of providers.
- A subsequent phase in which CPD recording and recognition are opened more widely, accompanied by information and support to practitioners; and
- Only at a later stage, the introduction of clearer CPD expectations linked to registration renewal and specialisations.

Throughout, there should be ongoing monitoring and review:

- To assess whether the framework is improving access and quality.
- To check for unintended barriers, especially for practitioners in under-resourced contexts; and
- To adjust rules, categories and processes considering experience and changes in the sector (including technological developments).

10.5. Conclusion

Across the survey, interviews and focus groups, continuous professional development emerged as one of the few levers that can realistically reach almost every practitioner over the course of a career. It is also the area where stakeholders most clearly expect the SALPC to provide direction. At the same time, the research shows that CPD in the language sector is currently fragmented, uneven and often informal, with significant gaps in access and content, and with little systematic recognition of learning that practitioners already undertake.

This chapter has not tried to design a complete CPD system. Instead, it has brought together the main issues identified in the evidence, suggested a set of principles for a SALPC-led framework, and outlined possible components and priority streams. These elements are intended to describe what CPD could look like, rather than to determine in advance how it must be organised. Decisions about thresholds, rules, provider recognition processes and the detailed relationship between CPD, registration and specialisation will require additional analysis and careful design.

In practical terms, the next steps will need to include targeted research and structured consultation with practitioners, training providers, professional bodies, government departments and other stakeholders. This should test the feasibility of the options outlined here, identify unintended consequences, and surface additional needs that may not have been fully captured in this study. It will also be necessary to consider resourcing, administrative capacity and the technical implications of integrating CPD tracking into the national practitioner database.

The CPD framework cannot be developed in isolation. It will need to align with the database and registration architecture set out in Report 2, with the work to be undertaken in Report 4, and with the HLT and digital-readiness roadmap proposed in Chapter 9. Over time, CPD should become one of the main mechanisms through which SALPC supports quality, equity and innovation across the language professions.

The detailed conception and roll-out of a CPD system for language practitioners will require further work, but the direction is clear: a more coherent, accessible and inclusive approach to lifelong learning is essential if the sector is to remain viable and responsive in the years ahead.

Chapter 11 Roadmap for Integration of Human Language Technology into Training and Practice

11.1. Introduction

Across the survey, interviews, and focus group discussions, Human Language Technologies (HLTs) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerge as both a source of anxiety and a central driver of change in the language professions. Practitioners repeatedly describe a sense of struggling to stay abreast of technology developments, with technology moving faster than training systems and regulation can respond.

The online survey and interview feedback confirm that digital and HLT skills are among the most significant gaps in current training provision. On the topic of “Digital Economy / AI”, survey respondents highlight a lack of competencies in digital language technologies and computational linguistics, and note that existing training rarely prepares practitioners to verify AI outputs or navigate multilingual digital spaces. Focus group participants in the December 2025 workshop reinforced this, identifying “business, digital, and human language technology skills” as critical missing components alongside more traditional language skills.

At the same time, practitioners and institutions are already using a wide range of tools in practice: terminology management systems in DSAC units, translation memories and open-source CAT tools for translators, AI tools such as ChatGPT for translation and drafting with human verification, automated language identifiers, and everyday platforms such as Grammarly, Teams, and Zoom. Organisations like SADiLaR are actively building infrastructure – spelling checkers, machine translation systems and corpora – that underpin future HLT development.

Yet the HLT-dedicated focus group was notably under-attended, and one participant remarked that they joined “because nobody wanted to talk about human language technology,” indicating that many practitioners are still ignoring or postponing engagement with these tools. In the main workshop, participants spoke openly about a tendency in the sector to “pretend it doesn’t exist,” even while acknowledging the risk that South African companies and African languages will fall behind if they do not adapt.

The interviews also capture the economic stakes of HLT adoption. Some interviewees emphasise the “misguided belief by big business that AI can do it as well or better,” combined with fears that up to 80% of certain generic language tasks could be taken over by machines. Others stress that AI lacks the human touch, authenticity and cultural nuance, particularly in indigenous languages, and argue that practitioners will increasingly be needed as high-level verifiers, editors, and strategic communication advisers.

Several contributors framed the issue in terms of employability. Job adverts – including posts in DSAC’s own National Language Unit – already list competence in electronic translation and CAT tools as explicit requirements. One participant captured the future of work succinctly: “your artificial intelligence will never replace language practitioners, but language practitioners who use AI will replace those who don’t.”

From an *Economics of Language* perspective, these findings underline that HLT integration is not a purely technical issue. It will shape whether South African practitioners can compete for work, whether African languages are present in the digital domain, and whether the language economy realises its potential for job creation, digital value and cultural exports.

This chapter therefore sets out a roadmap for integrating Human Language Technologies into training and practice under the leadership of the South African Language Practitioners Council (SALPC), directly informed by the survey results, interviews, and focus group discussions.

11.2. Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations are informed by the research.

11.2.1. Initiative 1: The Establishment of a Cost-Effective Economics of Language Unit

The core recommendation is that the relevant agencies establish a cost-effective unit to focus on relevant EOL studies to complement existing agencies and their research teams regarding strategic Language Policy and Planning matters and complement existing perspective. In addition to formal economists, provision would be made for inter-and trans-disciplinary collaboration, including with socio-linguistic and applied linguistic scholars and other social science perspectives. Efforts should also be made to include heterodox economists and economic sociologists, as this may result in productive synergies. Links with relevant research units and networks internationally will be advisable as they should allow a fruitful exchange of ideas on an ongoing basis, ensure topicality, and provide methodological expertise and experience where needed. Furthermore, overseas scholars will also bring fresh perspectives to South African realities.

This group or network could be based on a structure on a formal PPP basis to provide a more balanced and comprehensive set of inputs and help cut costs. The main government participants would be DSAC and PanSALB. The national Education department, the National Treasury, would be key stakeholders, and there would be linkages with provincial counterparts, academia and business. The experience of the SACO in working with multiple university bodies would be crucial in this regard. Networks and partnerships with relevant international agencies and bodies would provide a fruitful exchange of views and collaboration.

11.2.2. Initiative 2: Addressing South Africa's Language Deficit: Summit of Universities and HEI Institutions

The hosting of a 3-day national and international summit to discuss addressing South Africa's language deficit, in terms of the education and training programme development and research, on the promotion of foreign language proficiency and competences for the national and global economy, is recommended as a quick and universities and select HEI, TVCs and FE institutions along with government, the private sector and select stakeholders.

11.3. Strategic Roadmap for Integrating HLT into Training and Practice

11.3.1. Guiding principles (grounded in evidence)

The roadmap is built around four principles that reflect consistent patterns in the data:

1. **Augmentation, not replacement:** Interviews and focus group comments emphasise that AI does not remove the need for high-level human roles. Practitioners are already verifying AI outputs, curating corpora, training systems for indigenous languages, and navigating ethical questions about disclosure and privacy. The roadmap therefore positions HLTs as tools that extend human capabilities rather than displace them.
2. **Present-day employability:** Practitioners and educators emphasise that HLT competence is now about “present proofing” rather than only “future proofing”: job adverts already expect electronic translation and CAT skills, and focus group participants warned that those who do not adapt will be left behind. The roadmap treats HLT skills as a core employability requirement, not an optional specialisation.
3. **Digital inclusion for African languages and SASL:** Interviewees describe Africa as “lagging significantly behind” in language-related digital tools and note that mainstream platforms often exclude or mishandle indigenous languages. Focus group participants called for a “big forum” on including African languages on digital platforms. The roadmap therefore ties HLT integration to deliberate investment in African languages, Sign Language, and accessible tools.
4. **Practical CPD and curriculum reform, not abstract theory:** Across interviews and focus groups, practitioners criticise overly theoretical training and call for “practical crash courses” in HLT and AI, short workshops, and step-by-step introductions to specific tools. The roadmap prioritises hands-on, practice-oriented training formats that are accessible across provinces.

11.3.2. HLT Competency Levels Informed by Survey and Interviews

Drawing on the survey findings and the interview descriptions of emerging roles (localisation specialists, language tech specialists, subtitlers, etc.), the SALPC can adopt a tiered HLT competency framework:

- **Level 1 – Digital basics and safe practice**
 - Confident use of standard digital tools (word processors, cloud, collaboration platforms such as Teams/Zoom) identified in interviews.
 - Basic data protection, confidentiality, and file-management habits.
 - Understanding when AI/HLT use must be disclosed to clients, reflecting interviewees’ emphasis on transparency and AI ethics.
- **Level 2 – Everyday HLT tools for practitioners**
 - Competent use of CAT tools and machine-assisted translation (e.g. Autoshumato and related systems mentioned by SADiLaR).
 - Use of terminology management systems and translation memories similar to those used in DSAC.
 - Ability to post-edit machine translation to professional standard, reflecting the dual human–machine workflow described by researchers who use AI and then verify outputs.
- **Level 3 – Advanced HLT, corpus and language-tech roles**

- Skills in data and corpus curation (cleaning, alignment, annotation), as emphasised by SADiLaR specialists and HLT-focused interviewees.
- Participation in designing/testing HLT tools (speech-to-text, TTS, language identifiers, chatbots) for local languages.
- Working knowledge of AI ethics, bias, and representational challenges in indigenous and minority languages.

These levels can be mapped against the professions described in earlier chapters (translator, interpreter, subtitler, localisation specialist, HLT specialist, Deaf services, etc.) and reflected in registration categories and specialisations under the SALPC.

11.3.3. . Embedding HLT In Pre-Service Training

The survey and interviews show consistent gaps in formal programmes: digital skills, HLT, and AI literacy are often absent or marginal, while training remains heavily theoretical. Focus group participants argued for better alignment between theory and practice, more internships and work-integrated learning, and specialised courses in later years.

The SALPC, working with DSAC, DHET and providers, can therefore:

1. Issue evidence-based curriculum guidance

- Draw on the combined findings of this study (survey, interviews, focus groups) together with existing practice in universities and colleges to identify indicative graduate outcomes for digital and HLT competencies.
- Use examples emerging from the research to illustrate the kinds of tools and tasks that graduates are likely to encounter in practice (for example terminology systems, CAT tools, AI-assisted drafting and online collaboration platforms), as a starting point for dialogue with providers rather than a fixed prescription.

2. Promote practice-based modules and labs

- Encourage universities and TVET colleges to offer lab-style modules where students make practical use of CAT tools, MT platforms, subtitling software and corpus tools, rather than only hearing about them.
- Link student projects to real infrastructure such as SADiLaR’s “Escalator” programme and DSAC translation/terminology software, which interviewees identified as existing training resources that could be packaged for broader use.

3. Align graduate profiles with employer expectations

- Engage with DSAC units, broadcasters, universities and private firms to specify what HLT skills employers already expect from entry-level staff.
- Feed these expectations back into programme reviews and into SALPC’s future accreditation criteria for training providers.

11.3.4. . Integrating HLT into CPD and Lifelong Learning

Practitioners in interviews and focus groups consistently call for structured CPD on HLT and AI. They recognise the inevitability of these technologies and, in some cases, already use them informally, but feel under-supported and unsure about best practice and ethics.

The SALPC’s CPD system can respond directly to these findings by:

1. Creating a dedicated HLT and Digital Readiness CPD stream

- Offer short, stackable modules on:
 - Introductory AI/HLT and digital readiness.
 - CAT tools and MT post-editing.
 - Audiovisual localisation (subtitling, captioning, dubbing).
 - Corpus basics and language data work.
 - AI ethics, transparency and client communication.
- Recognise a mix of delivery formats (online short courses, webinars, micro-credentials), reflecting practitioners' calls for accessible "crash courses" rather than only formal degrees.

2. Partnering with existing centres of expertise

- Build formal CPD partnerships with SADiLaR, NexLA and DSAC terminology/translation units, who already provide HLT-related training (e.g. "Escalator") and package modules as accredited CPD units.
- Invite professional associations (SATI, PEG, ALASA, etc.) and universities piloting AI-related teaching to co-develop CPD content and share resources.

3. Phasing in HLT-linked CPD expectations

- Over a multi-year period, introduce minimum HLT CPD requirements linked to registration renewal for specific categories, with generous transition arrangements for practitioners who currently have limited digital access or who work mainly in under-resourced languages.
- Use the database described in earlier chapters to track HLT-related CPD and identify groups that need targeted support (e.g. rural practitioners, older cohorts, African-language and SASL practitioners).

4. Using CPD to shape perceptions of HLT

- Position HLT modules not only as technical training, but as spaces to discuss pricing, value, and business models in the context of AI – addressing the fear of undercutting and "job snapping" raised in interviews.
- Highlight case studies where practitioners have used HLT to move into higher-value services such as bespoke writing, consulting and accessibility work.

11.3.5. .Enabling new HLT-linked roles and service lines

Qualitative interviews and focus group discussions point to growth opportunities around digital content, HLT and platform development. These include:

- Language data and corpus specialists contributing to HLT infrastructure for all official languages.
- Localisation and platform specialists working at the interface of language, UX and product development.
- Audiovisual translation and accessibility roles responding to demand for dubbing, voice-over, and captioning across broadcasting and streaming services.
- Ethics and compliance advisers helping institutions navigate AI use, language rights and accessibility obligations.

The roadmap recommends that the SALPC:

- Reflect these roles explicitly in its profession and category framework (e.g., “HLT specialist,” “localisation specialist,” “AV translation and accessibility practitioner”).
- Use its CPD and accreditation systems to signal and support these career paths, especially for younger practitioners entering the sector.

11.3.6. . Phased Implementation Roadmap

Drawing on stakeholders’ repeated emphasis on urgency but also the need for realistic pacing, the roadmap is structured in three phases:

- **Phase 1: Baseline and consensus-building**
 - Use the SALPC database and future surveys to create a more granular baseline on HLT uptake and skills in different sub-sectors.
 - Convene a national HLT and Digital Readiness round-table with DSAC, PanSALB, SADiLaR, NexLA, universities, professional bodies and selected focus group participants.
 - Adopt the HLT competency framework and begin integrating it into registration forms, database fields and communication materials.
- **Phase 2: Curriculum and CPD integration**
 - Develop and disseminate curriculum guidelines reflecting the documented digital/HLT training gaps and existing good practice examples.
 - Launch the HLT CPD stream in partnership with SADiLaR and others, prioritising low-cost, online offerings that can reach practitioners nationally.
 - Pilot targeted support for African-language and SASL practitioners involved in corpus development and localisation work.
- **Phase 3: Consolidation and innovation**
 - Expand CPD offerings to include Level 3 competencies and formal recognition for HLT-linked specialisations.
 - Promote collaborative innovation projects (e.g. “Uber for interpreters” concepts, digital platforms for matching practitioners to clients) that were identified as opportunities in interviews.
 - Integrate HLT indicators (e.g. use of African-language tools, AI-related CPD completed) into routine monitoring of the health and growth of the language economy.

11.4. Conclusion

The evidence gathered in this study is unambiguous: Human Language Technologies are already reshaping professional practice in South Africa’s language sector. Practitioners are using a patchwork of tools, employers are beginning to demand HLT skills in job adverts, and major infrastructure investments are being made by institutions such as SADiLaR and DSAC. At the same time, the survey, interviews and focus groups highlight deep training gaps, widespread uncertainty, and a tendency in parts of the sector to try to ignore or postpone engagement with these technologies.

If the SALPC does not respond proactively, there is a real risk that practitioners will experience HLT primarily as a threat: reinforcing perceptions that AI can replace professional skills, worsening income precarity, and further marginalising African languages in digital spaces.

By adopting a phased, evidence-based roadmap (with clear competency levels, curriculum guidance, targeted CPD, and support for new HLT-linked roles) the Council can instead turn HLT into a central pillar of professionalisation and growth. Practitioners can use HLT to improve quality, productivity and income; African languages and SASL can gain a stronger foothold in digital domains; and the South African language economy can position itself more competitively in regional and global markets.

In this way, the roadmap for HLT integration directly advances the broader goals identified throughout the report: a more coherent, better regulated, and economically vibrant language sector, in which technology is harnessed to support – rather than erode – the value of human language work.

Chapter 12 Policy Implications and Recommendations

12.1. Introduction

This chapter translates the empirical findings of the needs and capacity assessment, together with insights from the literature review and stakeholder engagements, into a set of policy implications and strategic recommendations for the strengthening and professionalisation of the South African language sector. While South Africa's constitutional and legislative framework provides a strong normative foundation for multilingualism and the regulation of language practice, the research consistently demonstrates a persistent gap between policy intent and practical implementation.

The chapter therefore focuses on addressing this policy–practice divide by identifying the institutional, regulatory, economic and technological interventions required to support a sustainable and coordinated language economy. Central to this framework is the long-delayed operationalisation of the SALPC, which emerges throughout the study as the pivotal mechanism for regulation, accreditation, skills development, ethical governance and sector coordination.

In addition, the chapter responds directly to the emerging structural shifts in the profession, particularly the rapid expansion of HLTs, the growing need for structured CPD, and the establishment of a national practitioner database as a coordination and economic empowerment tool. The recommendations presented in this chapter are therefore framed not only as compliance measures, but as enabling mechanisms for professional growth, economic inclusion and institutional coherence within the broader South African language landscape.

12.2. Identified Gaps Between Intentions and Practical Outcomes

South Africa's legal framework for language professions promotes multilingualism and regulates practitioners, but resource limitations and inconsistent enforcement impede its full effectiveness.

- **Implementation Challenges:** The South African Cultural, Religious, and Linguistic Rights Commission (CRL Rights Commission) has identified difficulties in ensuring adequate access and fairness, especially for marginalized communities and uneducated populations, due to systemic language barriers and limited resources. Its 2023 report on the Use of Official Languages by Organs of State concludes: “While the law is very clear that all official languages should be treated equally and be given the same status, the people entrusted with the task of ensuring that this happens seem to be dragging their feet, and this is at the detriment of the members of the communities who are victims of this unfair treatment. Sadly, from what we heard; many organs of state are at the beginning of the implementation of the pieces of legislation. Those that have already started the implementation have also done the bare minimum (CRL Rights Commission, 2023).”
- **Operational Gaps:** Despite the legislative framework aiming to professionalize and regulate language practitioners, practical enforcement and monitoring may be weak,

leading to inconsistencies in registration, accreditation, and adherence to standards. Commenting on the promulgation of the 2013 South African Language Practitioners Council Act in August 2024, the SA Legal Academy comments: “It is not clear why the authorities concerned have taken nearly 11 years to operationalise the Act” (SA Legal Academy, 2024).

- **Policy-Practice Discrepancies:** The legislation promotes multilingualism and the development of language professions, but in practice, disparities persist in implementation across regions and sectors, limiting the realization of the legislation’s full intent (Brenzinger, 2017).

12.3. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Obligations

Except for paraprofessionals, persons registered with the Council will be required to participate in a system of continuing professional development (“CPD”) that will be introduced and administered by the Council in association with accredited institutions.

- a) The Council will determine the CPD system to be used and the portfolio required towards earning CPD units.
- b) Registered language practitioners who do not comply with the CPD system stand to have their registration withdrawn.

The Council must create relations with accredited institutions and in collaboration with these accredited institutions confirm events, courses and workshops to be conducted annually and the CPD units to be allocated to these.

12.4. Human Language Technologies

HLTs represent one of the most significant structural shifts currently reshaping the language practitioner sector in South Africa. The empirical findings of this study confirm that digitalisation, artificial intelligence and automation are no longer peripheral developments, but are rapidly becoming embedded within translation, editing, interpreting, terminology development, transcription and content generation workflows. However, this transformation has occurred unevenly and without a coordinated policy or regulatory response.

From a policy perspective, HLTs present both risks and opportunities. On the one hand, practitioners express concern about job displacement, downward pressure on rates, and the erosion of professional boundaries through unregulated machine-based services. On the other hand, the study confirms that new professional roles are emerging in areas such as post-editing of machine translation, dataset development, language data annotation, terminology verification, corpus development and AI quality assurance. These emerging roles require a distinct set of digital, linguistic and ethical competencies that are not yet systematically addressed in existing training frameworks.

The policy implications are therefore threefold. First, HLTs must be formally integrated into the national professional development framework under the future SALPC. This includes the accreditation of HLT-related CPD modules, particularly in machine translation post-editing, computational linguistics foundations, AI output verification, data governance and digital ethics. Partnerships with institutions such as SADiLaR and accredited higher education providers will be essential to ensure both quality and access.

Second, indigenous language technologies require targeted policy protection and investment. The study shows that African languages remain significantly under-represented in digital language infrastructure. Without deliberate intervention, HLT expansion risks reproducing existing linguistic and economic inequalities. Policy must therefore prioritise the inclusion of indigenous languages in AI training datasets, terminology banks, translation memories and digital publishing platforms, with appropriate remuneration for practitioners who contribute linguistic data and validation labour.

Third, the regulatory framework governing language practice must explicitly extend to digital and AI-mediated language services. This includes the development of ethical standards for AI-assisted work, clarity on intellectual property and data ownership, safeguards for cultural representation, and guidance on accountability where machine-generated content is deployed in high-risk environments such as courts, healthcare and education.

In this context, the SALPC is positioned as the central institutional mechanism through which HLT regulation, skills adaptation and ethical governance can be implemented in a coordinated manner. Rather than viewing automation as a threat to professional practice, the policy approach advanced in this report frames HLTs as a domain of strategic re-skilling, economic repositioning and technological inclusion, provided that regulation, training and public investment are appropriately aligned.

12.5. Implementation Plan

The establishment of the SALPC, mandated by the South African Language Practitioners' Council Act of 2014, is viewed as the critical intervention needed to professionalise and regulate the fragmented language sector.

The top priorities for the SALPC revolve around five core areas: Regulation and Accreditation, Economic Empowerment, Skills Development and Training, Inclusivity and Social Justice, and establishing a Centralized Database.

These priorities are derived directly from the needs assessment, which incorporated perspectives from academics, government officials, practitioners, and industry stakeholders.

12.6. Top Priorities for the Language Practitioners Council (SALPC)

12.6.1. Professional Regulation and Accreditation

The most critical priority for the future Council is to establish and enforce standards to legitimize the profession.

- **Regulate and Accredit:** The SALPC must regulate and accredit language practitioners to instil legitimacy and professional standards across the sector. Accreditation will serve as the primary mechanism for quality assurance.
- **Set Ethical Standards:** Establish a code of ethics or conduct, particularly for high-risk fields such as interpreting. All registered practitioners, except paraprofessionals, must adhere to this statutory Code of Conduct covering competency, integrity, and confidentiality.
- **Quality Control:** Ensure quality control by verifying professional profiles, qualifications, and experience. This is necessary to combat the problem of unregulated individuals ("hobbyists") claiming to be practitioners.

- **Monitor Compliance:** The Council needs to monitor compliance with language legislation.
- **Formal Recognition:** Provide formal recognition and "gravitas" to specialized language careers, such as academic literacy, which are currently grossly under-recognized.

12.7. Economic Value and Opportunity

A major focus is addressing the systemic undervaluation and under-remuneration of language work.

- **Regulate Pricing and Compensation:** The SALPC must regulate pricing to avoid "price dumping" and provide guidelines on professional pay rates to ensure equitable remuneration.
- **Job Matching Platform:** Function as a national registry and job matching platform (described as a "LinkedIn for language practitioners") to link verified professionals with private entities and institutions seeking services.
- **Advocacy and Visibility:** Advocate for better working conditions and remuneration. Increase public awareness of the sector's economic value and contributions to national identity and communication.

12.7.1. Skills Development and Training (CPD)

The Council is mandated to address the critical skills gaps, particularly regarding technology.

- **Mandate CPD:** Offer continuous professional development (CPD) and accurately track professional development records and certifications. Except for paraprofessionals, participation in CPD will be required to maintain registration, with the Council determining the system and portfolio required.
- **Re-skill for Digital Competencies:** A top priority is to re-skill practitioners to incorporate digital and AI technologies (Human Language Technologies or HLT, and computational linguistics). This includes training practitioners to verify and correct AI outputs.
- **Accredited Training Pathways:** Develop and provide accredited training pathways, potentially partnering with universities and institutions like SADiLaR to package HLT modules as accredited CPD units.

12.7.2. Accessibility, Inclusivity, and Development

The Council must ensure that language development contributes to social justice and transformation.

- **Social Justice Focus:** Prioritize societal transformation and social justice. Language must be recognized as a vehicle for empowerment, expression, identity, and opportunity.
- **Indigenous Language Support:** Identify and protect at-risk indigenous languages and cultural heritage. Support the use of indigenous languages in public life and ensure that the database and policies are inclusive of all indigenous languages.
- **Grassroots Inclusion:** Ensure the database includes and supports voices from rural and historically disadvantaged communities, particularly by making essential government programs, funding, and grants accessible through translation into indigenous languages.

12.7.3. Database Structure and Functionality

The Council must establish and maintain a professional, secure, and user-friendly central registry.

- **Centralized Database:** Establish a national, centralized database containing verified information, including specializations (e.g., lexicography, HLT, language planning) and experience.
- **Multilingual Interface:** The system must ensure a multilingual interface, starting with English but phasing in all 12 official languages to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.
- **Interoperability and Verification:** Design the system for user-friendly searching and easy retrieval of specialized information and contacts. The system should enable interoperability and linkages with external language associations (like SATI and AfriLEX) to enhance resource sharing and comprehensive practitioner identification.
- **Sustainability and Security:** Ensure the system is sustainable and continuously maintained, and that it guarantees strict POPIA compliance regarding data security.

The successful establishment and operationalisation of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) and its mandated national database require a phased implementation strategy that prioritises foundational governance, standardisation, security, and economic inclusivity.

The overall plan is anchored by the guiding principle of "no compulsion without a pathway," meaning accessible routes to registration must be established before registration becomes mandatory for any group. The resulting plan addresses the sector's fragmentation and the urgent need to integrate digital and business competencies.

12.8. Implementation Plan for the Language Practitioners Council (SALPC)

The implementation plan for the SALPC and its national database is structured into four sequential and overlapping phases, moving from foundational framework establishment to sustained professionalization and economic empowerment.

12.8.1. Foundational Governance and Strategic Setup

This initial phase focuses on establishing the core administrative, legal, and financial mechanisms of the Council:

- **Formal Establishment:** Fully operationalise the SALPC as the single professional statutory body. The long delay in its rollout (legislated in 2014) needs to be addressed to enhance credibility.
- **Classification and Standards:** Implement a standardised classification system defining three levels: Paraprofessional (Level 1), Professional (Level 2), and Expert (Level 3).
- **Funding Model:** Secure a **hybrid funding model** combining transitional public funding (government grants or appropriations) with a tiered, cost-reflective fee schedule to ensure sustainability. Fees must be affordable for students/unemployed (e.g., R100–R500) to avoid excluding grassroots practitioners.
- **Database Design:** Begin designing the national, centralised database, ensuring the system architecture guarantees strict POPIA compliance regarding data security.

12.8.2. Phase 2: Core Registration and Initial Accreditation Rollout

Phase 2 focuses on launching registration and ensuring fair access while adhering to the "pathway before compulsion" principle:

- **Establish Pathways:** Implement accessible routes to registration, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), to accommodate experienced practitioners lacking formal degrees.
- **Targeted Accreditation:** Prioritise the registration and accreditation of practitioners working in high-risk fields, such as court and health interpreting. Accreditation will be the primary mechanism for quality assurance.
- **Code of Conduct:** Implement the statutory Code of Conduct covering competency, integrity, and confidentiality for all registered practitioners.
- **Data Integration:** Launch the public register component of the database, ensuring it only displays minimal, necessary verification data. The system must be designed to be intuitive, accessible, and eventually multilingual.

12.8.3. Phase 3: Mandatory CPD and Skills Adaptation

This phase addresses the critical training and digital skills gaps identified in the sector:

- **Mandate CPD:** Determine the CPD system and the portfolio required towards earning CPD units. Participation in CPD is mandatory for Professional and Expert practitioners to maintain registration.
- **Curriculum Alignment:** Reform tertiary and CPD curricula to address critical gaps in **digital competencies** (Human Language Technology/HLT, computational linguistics, verifying AI outputs) and **business/entrepreneurial skills**.
- **Accredited Training:** Collaborate with accredited institutions (like SADiLaR) to confirm events, allocate CPD units, and package HLT modules as accredited training.
- **Indigenous Language Technology:** Prioritise training practitioners to accurately train AI tools for indigenous languages, ensuring they are reimbursed for this labour.

12.8.4. Phase 4: Economic Empowerment and Sustained Inclusivity

The final phase focuses on leveraging the regulated environment to achieve economic and social development goals:

- **Regulate Compensation:** Provide advice and guidelines on **professional pay rates** to avoid "price dumping," giving practitioners legitimacy and bargaining power.
- **Job Matching and Incentives:** Operationalise the database as a national registry and **job matching platform** (a "LinkedIn for language practitioners") to link verified professionals with private entities and institutions.
- **Social Justice and Access:** Ensure the database and policies are inclusive of all indigenous languages and actively support the use of language as a vehicle for **social justice** and access in township and rural economies. This includes translating critical government and grant documentation into indigenous languages.
- **Policy Expansion:** Advocate for a comprehensive National Language Act that extends policy influence over the corporate sector, promoting public-private collaboration for infrastructure and funding.

12.8.5. Rollout

The implementation of the SALPC is structured sequentially, ensuring that regulatory authority is established before compliance is enforced, and that professional support (CPD/HLT) is provided before economic benefits (job matching/pricing regulation) can be fully realised.

Table 69: Rollout of SALC structure.

Phase (Focus Area)	Key Steps & Objectives	Guiding Principle
PHASE 1: FOUNDATION (Governance & Security)	Establish SALPC as the statutory body. Define the tiered classification system (Paraprofessional, Professional, Expert). Secure hybrid funding (public grants + tiered fees). Design the POPIA-compliant national database architecture.	Statutory Authority (Legitimising the Council)
PHASE 2: ADOPTION (Registration & Ethical Standards)	1. Implement accessibility pathways, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). 2. Launch initial registration, prioritising high-risk groups (court/health interpreters). 3. Implement the statutory Code of Conduct. 4. Launch the public verification component of the centralized register.	Pathway Before Compulsion (Ensuring Inclusivity)
PHASE 3: DEVELOPMENT (CPD & Digital Skills)	1. Mandate and administer the CPD system for Professional and Expert practitioners. 2. Re-skill practitioners in Digital/AI/HLT technologies via accredited modules. 3. Integrate practical business acumen and entrepreneurial training into CPD. 4. Create partnerships (e.g., SADiLaR) to confirm events and allocate CPD units.	Excellence Over Compliance (Closing Training Gaps)
PHASE 4: EXPANSION (Economy & Inclusivity)	1. Regulate pricing and publish guidelines for professional pay rates. 2. Operationalise the database as a job matching platform. 3. Ensure full system multilingualism and accessibility to support rural/township economies. 4. Advocate for policy expansion to include the corporate sector and secure external funding (PPPs).	Social Justice and Economic Value (Maximising Sector Impact)

12.9. Conclusion

The SALPC's mission is akin to transforming a diverse marketplace where prices are opaque and quality is inconsistent into a regulated stock exchange: the Council's role is to verify the value (accreditation), ensure fair trading rules (pricing guidelines and ethics), and provide a central, technologically advanced platform (the national registry) so that consumers can trust the quality of the service they purchase and practitioners are equitably rewarded for their professional expertise.

The implementation plan is designed to be sequential, where the successful completion of foundational work (Phases 1 and 2) enables the high-value activities of professional development and economic leverage (Phases 3 and 4). This phased approach ensures the Council avoids the pitfalls of inconsistent implementation and resource limitations that have hampered previous language policies.

Chapter 13 Risks and Challenges

13.1. Introduction

The study identified numerous structural, financial, and technological barriers hindering the professionalisation and advancement of the language sector.

Language work faces fragmentation, undervaluation, and a need for modern digital skills. The establishment of the SALPC aims to fix these issues by regulating accreditation, training, and standards in the sector.

13.2. Risks Identified in the Study

Risks relate to potential negative consequences that could undermine the effectiveness, sustainability, and credibility of the SALPC and the language profession as it attempts to professionalise:

1. **Financial Exclusion of Practitioners:** A significant risk is that the implementation of high registration costs could actively exclude grassroots or informal practitioners from professionalization. Approximately 91% of survey respondents voiced substantial concerns regarding the potential for prohibitive registration costs. If fees are too high, the Council risks marginalising those it intends to help, particularly freelancers and those in rural areas.
2. **Data Security and Privacy Breaches:** The misuse or unauthorised sharing of personal data was identified as the foremost concern by practitioners (91%). Since many existing professional association databases rely on rudimentary systems like spreadsheets, the move to a national, centralised database creates a high risk for accountability if strict POPIA compliance protocols are not followed.
3. **Job Displacement Due to Technological Misconceptions:** The rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation poses an existential threat, fuelled by the "misguided belief by big business that AI can do it as well or better" than human practitioners. This belief leads to cost-cutting and diminished roles, threatening the economic viability of generic language services. Some experts suggest that 80% of people's jobs could be "snapped up" by machines.
4. **Erosion of Professional Standards by Unregulated "Hobbyists":** In the current fragmented environment, there is a risk of unregulated individuals claiming to be practitioners, which undercuts legitimate professionals and dilutes the perceived value and quality of services. The failure to implement accreditation quickly allows this problem to persist.
5. **CPD Becoming Bureaucratic Compliance:** While Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is mandatory for registration (except for paraprofessionals), there is a risk that this requirement could become a "massive overhead for the sake of compliance" or a "drain on people's arm" instead of genuinely aiming at professional excellence.

13.3. Description of Challenges Identified in the Study

Challenges represent existing structural, institutional, and economic difficulties currently faced by the language sector that the SALPC must overcome:

1. **Sector Fragmentation and Coordination Gaps:** The language industry is highly fragmented, operating through multiple separate entities, which leads to duplicated efforts, inconsistent standards, and inadequate coordination between groups. This lack of a unified professional organisation hinders effective support and standards development.
2. **Systemic Undervaluation and Inequitable Remuneration:** Language practitioners are broadly perceived as undervalued and under-remunerated compared to other professions. Professionals often "undersell their services" because they lack the bargaining power or legitimacy that a statutory body would provide.
3. **Policy Implementation Deficiencies:** South Africa possesses strong language policy frameworks, but the implementation is inconsistent and flawed. Government officials have cited a failure to establish mandated language units in departments due to a lack of political will. Furthermore, the perceived delay in the rollout of the SALPC (legislated in 2014) has impacted its credibility.
4. **Critical Skills Gaps in Training:** Current training, especially at tertiary institutions, exhibits a major gap between academic theory and industry demands. Key areas where training is lacking include:
 - **Digital Competencies:** Practitioners lack skills in Human Language Technology (HLT), computational linguistics, and the ability to verify and correct AI outputs.
 - **Business Acumen:** Training often neglects the essential "business aspect," such as marketing, client relationship management, and entrepreneurial skills necessary for freelancers.
 - **Practical Skills:** Students frequently lack foundational practical skills like mechanical editing, punctuation, and coherence, resulting in excessive reliance on time-consuming on-the-job training.
5. **Exclusion of Indigenous Languages in Technology and Policy:** Funding for indigenous languages remains inadequate, leading to their marginalization. The digital divide is exacerbated by the fact that technology tools often exclude indigenous languages or perform poorly.
6. **Uncertain Financial Sustainability:** The SALPC faces sustainability challenges due to unclear funding sources and fee structures. A purely fees-based model is considered unsustainable in the initial years.

13.4. Table of Risks and Challenges and Mitigating Actions

The following table summarises the core risks and challenges, along with the corresponding mitigating actions and recommendations proposed by the study to ensure the successful establishment and operation of the SALPC and the professionalization of the sector.

Table 70: Summary of risks and challenges to establishment and operations of SALPC.

Risk or Challenges	Description of Issue	Mitigating Action(s) to be Taken
C1. Fragmentation and Lack of Coordination	The language industry operates through multiple separate entities, resulting in duplicated efforts, inconsistent standards, and a lack of support for practitioners.	Establish the SALPC as the single professional statutory body to promote sector unity, enhance quality standards, and provide a national, centralised database.
R1. Financial Exclusion of Practitioners	High registration costs are a major concern (91% of respondents), risking the exclusion of grassroots and informal practitioners.	Implement a hybrid funding model combining transitional public funding (government grants) with a tiered, cost-reflective fee schedule. Fees must be affordable for students/unemployed (e.g., R100–R500).
R2. Data Security and Privacy Risk	The misuse or unauthorised sharing of personal data is the foremost concern (91%) due to reliance on rudimentary systems in existing bodies.	Ensure the SALPC system architecture guarantees strict POPIA compliance. Implement robust security measures, including end-to-end encryption, secure backups, and role-based access control.
C2. Undervaluation and Price Dumping	Practitioners are grossly underpaid and undervalued, frequently underselling their services due to lack of bargaining power and professional legitimacy.	The SALPC must regulate pricing to avoid "price dumping" and establish clear guidelines for professional pay rates to provide legitimacy.
R3. Job Displacement by AI/Automation	A widespread belief that AI can replace human practitioners threatens generic language roles and leads to cost-cutting measures by businesses.	Mandate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) focused on re-skilling practitioners in Human Language Technology (HLT) and computational linguistics. Train practitioners to be high-level verifiers and critical thinkers, focusing on bespoke services.
C3. Skills Gaps (Digital and Business)	Training lacks competencies in digital skills (HLT/AI) and entrepreneurial/business acumen necessary for modern freelance and industry demands.	Reform tertiary curricula to emphasise practical and entrepreneurial skills. Partner with institutions like SADIaR to package HLT modules as accredited CPD units.
C4. Policy Implementation Delay and Weakness	The SALPC operationalisation was delayed by nearly 11 years, impacting credibility, and current policy implementation across	Implement the SALPC via a Phased Rollout adhering to the principle of "no compulsion without a pathway," including Recognition of Prior Learning

	government is weak due to a lack of political will.	(RPL). Urgently establish the fully operational Council and set ethical standards.
C5. Marginalization of Indigenous Languages	Funding is inadequate, and African languages are excluded or perform poorly on digital tools, hindering their development and economic use.	Prioritise societal transformation and social justice, ensuring the database and policies are inclusive of all indigenous languages. Train practitioners to accurately train AI tools for indigenous languages (and ensure they are reimbursed for this labour).

13.5. Conclusion

The establishment of the South African Language Practitioners' Council (SALPC) is seen as a crucial vehicle for moving the sector from a fragmented, undervalued patchwork of service providers toward a professionalized, coordinated, and economically empowered industry. Successfully navigating these risks - particularly securing financial sustainability, managing data ethically, and rapidly adapting skills training to counter the threat of AI – will determine the Council's long-term effectiveness.

The process is analogous to launching a start-up that must simultaneously standardize an entire unregulated industry: the challenge lies not only in setting high standards (accreditation and CPD) but also ensuring the barrier to entry (fees and accessibility) remains low enough to include the very practitioners it aims to uplift, while defending human expertise against rapid technological change.

Chapter 14 Conclusion

This report represents a comprehensive national diagnostic of South Africa's contemporary language practitioner landscape. Positioned as the third report in the broader Economics of Language (EOL) series, the study has moved beyond conceptual and structural mapping to provide a detailed empirical assessment of practitioner knowledge, skills, qualifications, professional development pathways, regulatory readiness, digital capacity, and economic participation.

Across the literature review, policy analysis, online survey, qualitative interviews and focus group engagements, the findings consistently reveal a sector marked by high levels of experience and linguistic diversity, yet constrained by persistent structural fragmentation, weak regulatory implementation, uneven training articulation, limited access to structured CPD, and systemic economic undervaluation. Despite South Africa's progressive post-1994 constitutional and legislative framework for multilingualism, the professional ecosystem required to give full effect to these commitments remains underdeveloped.

Central to the report's findings is the critical role of SALPC as the missing institutional anchor for professional regulation, accreditation, ethics, CPD governance, economic coordination and public trust. The evidence shows overwhelming practitioner and stakeholder support for the urgent operationalisation of the SALPC, alongside the establishment of a national practitioner database, a mandatory CPD framework, and a coherent practitioner classification system.

The study also confirms that the language sector is undergoing rapid structural transformation driven by digitalisation, Artificial Intelligence and HLTs. While these developments present significant risks for displacement where practitioners lack digital competencies, they also present major opportunities for economic repositioning through verification services, language data work, localisation, post-editing, multilingual digital content production and AI-mediated communication services. The uneven readiness of practitioners, particularly those working in indigenous languages, however, underscores the urgency of targeted digital skills development and infrastructure investment.

From an economic perspective, the findings demonstrate both expanding demand and persistent precarity. Language services continue to underpin education, justice, governance, health, media, heritage, business and digital economies, yet income instability, weak pricing power, fragmented procurement access and the marginalisation of African languages remain defining features of the profession. The report therefore confirms that language must be repositioned not only as a cultural and social resource, but as a strategic economic asset within South Africa's development trajectory.

Taken together, the evidence presented in this report confirms that policy intent alone is insufficient. Without coordinated institutional implementation, sustained investment in professionalisation, digitally enabled CPD, training reform aligned to labour-market realities, and economic empowerment mechanisms, the transformative aspirations of the post-1994 language framework will remain structurally under-realised. This report therefore constitutes both a diagnostic baseline and a strategic intervention instrument for building a coherent, regulated, digitally enabled and economically sustainable language profession in South Africa.

14.1. Future Research

While this study establishes an essential national baseline, it also highlights several priority areas for future research that are necessary to strengthen policy design, institutional planning and economic modelling within the language sector.

First, there is a critical need for longitudinal labour-market tracking of language practitioners, including income trajectories, employment stability, platform-based work patterns, cross-sector mobility and generational entry and exit dynamics. Such data would enable more accurate forecasting of skills demand and supply under conditions of rapid digital transformation.

Second, sector-specific economic impact studies are required to quantify the contribution of language services to key value chains such as justice, health, education, tourism, creative industries, business process outsourcing (BPO), and localisation for global digital markets. These studies would strengthen the economic case for targeted public and private investment in language infrastructure.

Third, further research is needed into indigenous and minority language economies, including the commercial viability of local publishing, multilingual digital platforms, community interpretation services, localisation for public service delivery, and language-linked entrepreneurship in township and rural economies. Such research would directly inform inclusive growth strategies.

Fourth, sustained research into the impact of AI and HLT on professional identity, pricing, ethics, data governance and labour displacement is essential. This includes the legal and economic implications of language data ownership, consent, cultural representation and automated content deployment in high-stakes environments.

Finally, future studies should examine the effectiveness of CPD models, accreditation pathways and professional regulatory regimes in comparable international contexts, to inform evidence-based benchmarking for the South African SALPC system as it becomes operational.

14.2. Towards a National Green Paper on the Language Practitioner Sector

The findings of this needs assessment clearly demonstrate that South Africa has reached a point where ad hoc reforms and fragmented institutional initiatives are no longer sufficient to address the systemic challenges facing the language practitioner sector. What is now required is a formal, consultative and integrated national policy instrument in the form of a Green Paper on the Language Practitioner Sector.

Such a Green Paper would serve several strategic purposes. First, it would provide a unified policy platform through which to align the SALPC Act, PanSALB mandate, education and skills development frameworks, digital transformation strategies, public procurement systems and economic development policies. Second, it would offer a structured mechanism for national consultation with practitioners, professional bodies, universities, training providers, technology developers, private sector employers, and civil society.

Third, the Green Paper process would allow for the formal articulation of:

- A national professionalisation pathway for language practitioners;
- A regulatory and accreditation framework anchored in SALPC;
- A national CPD system linked to digital readiness and economic inclusion;
- A Human Language Technology governance framework covering skills, ethics, data ownership and AI accountability;
- A national indigenous language economy strategy aligned to public procurement, digital platforms and creative industries.

Crucially, the Green Paper would also enable government to define the economic positioning of the language sector within the broader creative, cultural and digital economy, linking language directly to employment creation, industrial policy, localisation, trade facilitation, and social cohesion.

In this sense, the transition from this Needs Assessment to a Green Paper process represents the natural next phase in the South African Economics of Language (EOL) policy trajectory—from evidence generation to structured national reform.

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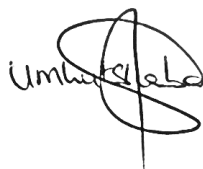
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APPROVALS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY - A Needs Assessment of the Knowledge and Capacities of Language Practitioners as outlined in the post-1994 Language Legislative Framework. December 2025

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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 fulfil 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 and 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 and 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 and 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 and Baker, 2000). Physicians also tend to provide fewer preventive care measures in these situations (Hu and 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 and Javier, 1991) or even unnecessary hospital stays (Hampers and McNulty, 2002). Both patients (Carrasquillo et al., 1999; Morales et al., 1999) and healthcare workers (Raval and 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.

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**
 - Chair: Prof. FS Madonsela
Tel: 012 429 4140
Email: madonfs@unisa.ac.za
 - Administrator: Ms. A Celliers
Tel: 012 429 8200
Email: cellia@unisa.ac.za
 - Language Heads:
 - Sesotho sa Leboa: Dr. FM Kanyane
Tel: 012 429 6970
Email: kanyafm@unisa.ac.za
 - Setswana: Prof. DS Matjila
Tel: 012 429 8097
Email: matjids@unisa.ac.za
 - Xitsonga: Dr. C Nkwinika
Tel: 012 429 2253
Email: khozanc@unisa.ac.za
 - IsiZulu: Dr. BBB Xaba
Tel: 012 429 6093
Email: xababbbb@unisa.ac.za
 - IsiXhosa: Mr. M Bomvana
Tel: 012 429 2185
Email: bomvam@unisa.ac.za
 - Tshivenda: Dr. ML Mudau
Tel: 012 429 6815
Email: mudauml@unisa.ac.za
 - Siswati: Dr. RJ Lubambo
Tel: 012 429 2083
Email: lubamrj@unisa.ac.za

University of the Free State (UFS)

- **Department of African Languages**
 - General Contact:
Pulane Moliko – PlaattjiesP1@ufs.ac.za, Tel: +27 51 401 7156

- Postgraduate: Marizanne Cloete
Tel: +27 51 401 2592
- Undergraduate: Neliswa Emeni-Tientcheu
Tel: +27 51 401 2536
Phyllis Masilo
Tel: +27 51 401 9683
- **Department of Linguistics and Language Practice**
 - General Queries: Pulane Moliko
Tel: +27 51 401 7156
Email: PlaatjiesP1@ufs.ac.za

University of the Western Cape (UWC)

- **Department of Foreign Languages**
 - Head of Department: Dr. Blanche Nyingome Assam
Email: bassam@uwc.ac.za
 - Departmental Administrator: Mrs. Vanessa de Louw
Email: vdelouw@uwc.ac.za
 - Section Heads:
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Email: msaidi@uwc.ac.za
 - Classical Culture: Dr. Mark Hermans
Email: mhermans@uwc.ac.za
 - French: Dr. Blanche Nyingome Assam
Email: bassam@uwc.ac.za
 - German: Ms. Kira Schmidt
Email: kschmidt@uwc.ac.za

University of Johannesburg (UJ)

Department of African Languages

Key staff include:

- Prof. Boni Zungu (Professor and Head of Department) – zungub@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 4662
- Prof. Z Mtumane (Head: School of Languages) – zmtumane@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 2867
- Dr. IK Mndawe (Senior Lecturer) – ikmndawe@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 4662
- Dr. MD Mojapelo (Lecturer) – dmojapelo@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 3454
- Ms. N Bobelo (Lecturer) – noxolob@uj.ac.za
- Ms. Martha Hadebe (Assistant Lecturer) – mhadebe@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 4555
- Dr. Sizwe Zwelakhe Dlamini (Senior Lecturer) – sizwed@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 3611
- Prof. Dumisani Sibiyi (Associate Professor) – dsibiyi@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 2784

- Prof. G Mazibuko (Associate Professor) – gmazibuko@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 4181
 - Igneciah Pocia Thete (Assistant Lecturer) – ignaciaht@uj.ac.za, Tel: 011 559 3210
- Full staff list covers a range of African language experts⁴.

University of Venda (UNIVEN)

Department of African Languages

Key staff include:

- Dr. Matodzi Rebecca Raphalalani (Senior Lecturer and Head of Department) – Tel: 015 962 8182
 - Prof. Mkhacani Thomas Chauke (Lecturer)
 - Dr. Mashudu Peter Makhado (Lecturer, Language Practice Section) – peter.makhado@univen.ac.za, Tel: 015 962 8184
 - 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.

Rhodes University Language Studies Departments and Staff Contacts

1. School of Languages and Literatures (SOLL)

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.

Key Contacts and Staff:

- **Head of School and Head of African Language Studies:**
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- **Afrikaans and Netherlandic Studies:**
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- **Classical Studies:**
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- **German Studies:**
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2. Department of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies

Head of Department:

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Academic Staff:

Name	Position	Research Areas	Email
Mark de Vos	Associate Professor and Head	Syntax, literacy	-
William Bennett	Associate Professor	Phonology, African languages	-
Ian Siebörger	Senior Lecturer	Systemic Functional Linguistics, media discourses	-
Idowu Adetomokun	Lecturer	Systemic Functional Linguistics, discourse analysis	-
Tracy Bowles	Lecturer	Psycholinguistics, literacy	-
Mbali Jiyane	Lecturer	Psycholinguistics, morphosyntax, Critical Discourse Analysis	-
Paige Cox	Lecturer	-	-
Tracy Kitchen	Augmented Programme Coordinator	Systemic Functional Linguistics, linguistics in education	-

3. Department of English Literary Studies

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Thabo Njovane	Senior Lecturer	t.njovane@ru.ac.za	-

4. Confucius Institute at Rhodes University (Chinese Studies)

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- Professor Patrice MWEPU
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- Administrator: Ms Sasha-Nyasha Kabwato
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Tel: +27 46 603 8338

5. Rhodes University Language Committee

- Chairperson: Dr. Jeanne du Toit
Email: J.DuToit@ru.ac.za
- Deputy Chairperson: Prof. Sam Naidu
Email: S.Naidu@ru.ac.za

NMU University

Nelson Mandela University (NMU) Language Department Staff and Contacts

School of Language, Media and Culture – Languages and Literature Department

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-

Stellenbosch University

Department of African Languages

Key Staff:

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Areas of expertise: African linguistics, isiXhosa communication, translation, sociolinguistics, endangered languages, and literacy.

Stellenbosch University Language Centre

Key Staff:

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Dr. Alta van Rensburg	Deputy Director	Tel: 021 808 2167
Susan Lotz	Language Practitioner and Content Coordinator	
Sanet de Jager	Interpreter and Marketing Liaison	
Eduard de Kock	Interpreter and Facilitator	

Nanette Nortje	Interpreter, SASL Interpreting Coordinator	
Dr. Vernita Beukes	Lecturer and Coordinator	
Dr. Arné Binneman	Head: Multilingual Learning	
Ydalene Coetsee	Lecturer and Coordinator	
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	
Susan van Zyl-Bekker	Facilitator	
Angela Govender	Head: Academic and Professional Literacies	

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Faculty Administrator (Arts and Social Sciences)

- Cheryl Richardson
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University of Cape Town (UCT) Language Departments and Staff Contacts

School of Languages and Literatures

UCT's School of Languages and Literatures includes departments covering African Languages, Afrikaans, Chinese, Arabic, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Portuguese, Classics, and Spanish.

General Contact Information

- Director of School of Languages and Literatures
Tel: +27 (0)21 650 2607
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Selected Departmental Staff Contacts

African Languages, Afrikaans, Chinese

- General queries: +27 (0)21 650 2301

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- **Dr. Mustapha Saidi (Section Head and Lecturer)**
Email: msaidi@uwc.ac.za
- **Prof. TawffEEK Mohammed (Associate Professor)**
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French Department

- **Dr. Blanche Nyingome Assam (Head of Department and Lecturer)**
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- **Mrs. Sandra van Reenen (Lecturer)**
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- **Ms. Jessica Glaeser (Lecturer Assistant)**
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German Department

- **Ms. Kira Schmidt (Section Head and Lecturer)**
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- **Ms. Karin Groenewald (Lecturer)**
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University of Cape Town (UCT) English Department

UCT English Literary Studies – Academic Staff

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Dr. David Seddon	Senior Lecturer	d.seddon@uct.ac.za	+27 21 650 8410
Dr. Jane McGregor	Lecturer	j.mcgregor@uct.ac.za	+27 21 650 7397
Dr. Keshni Pillay	Lecturer	k.pillay@uct.ac.za	+27 21 650 8850
Dr. Liezl Spencer	Lecturer	l.spencer@uct.ac.za	+27 21 650 8406
Prof. Mike Marais	Professor	m.marais@uct.ac.za	+27 21 650 8405
Dr. Nontobeko Ntsepo	Lecturer	n.ntsepo@uct.ac.za	+27 21 650 8407

Dr. Sam Naidu	Lecturer	s.naidu@uct.ac.za	+27 21 650 8587
Dr. Thabo Njovane	Senior Lecturer	t.njovane@uct.ac.za	(not listed)

University of Pretoria

Department of African Languages

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Office: Humanities Building HB 9-14
Fax: +27 12 420 3163
- Ms Renée Marais (Programme Manager: Translation and Interpreting Studies)
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Department of Ancient, Modern Languages and Cultures

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Dr Meja Ikobwa	Senior Lecturer	(email not listed)	(not listed)	Humanities 22-11
Dr Kroos Kritzing	Senior Lecturer	kroos.kritzing@up.ac.za	+27 12 420 2280	Humanities 22-26
Dr Jo-Marí Schäder	Senior Lecturer	jo-mari.schader@up.ac.za	+27 12 420 2427	Humanities 22-24
Mrs Carla De Abreu	Lecturer	carla.deabreu@up.ac.za	+27 12 420 3658	Humanities 22-16
Dr Sonja Gammage	Lecturer	sonja.gammage@up.ac.za	+27 12 420 3111	Humanities 22-28

Dr Luis Lancho Perea	Lecturer	luis.lancho@up.ac.za	+27 12 420 5312	Humanities 22-29
Dr Stephanie Rembold	Lecturer	(email not listed)	(not listed)	Humanities 22-22
Dr Carina Steenkamp	Lecturer	(email not listed)	(not listed)	Humanities 22-9
Mr Sihe Khumalo	Lecturer	(email not listed)	+27 12 420 5340	Humanities 22-21
Ms Vanja Yebra Soldo	Lecturer	(email not listed)	+27 73 188 5699	Humanities

General Contact for Language Students

- Student Service Centre
Tel: 012 420 3111
Email: ssc@up.ac.za

Annexure 3: Organisations Involved in Language in South Africa

1. African Language Association of Southern Africa (ALASA)

- Website: <https://alasa.org.za>
- Contact persons:
 - Dr Elias Nyefolo Maletle, University of the Free State, Email: maleteen@ufs.ac.za
 - Dr Mantoa Moletle, Central University of Technology, Tel: +27 57 910 3519, Email: moletem@cut.ac.za
 - Dr Arnold Mushwana, University of South Africa, Tel: +27 12 433 4826, Email: mushwa@unisa.ac.za
 - 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
Tel: +27 (0)18 299 1509
E-mail: ctext@nwu.ac.za

3. Die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns

- Chief executive officer
Dr Annelise de Vries
E-mail: annelise.devries@akademie.co.za
Tel: 084 554 7290

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

- **Chief Executive Officer**
Mr Vusumuzi Mkhize
Contact: Ms Hilda Pule

Tel: 011 877 3622

e-mail: ceo@sahrc.org.za

- **Communications Coordinator (Acting)**

For Media Interviews

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- **Eastern Cape**

Provincial Manager

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- **Northern Cape**

Provincial Manager

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- **Gauteng**

Provincial Manager

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Provincial Manager

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Provincial Manager

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Annexure 4: Schedule of Semi-Structured Interviews

Institution	Description
Statistics South Africa	Government Research Institution
Statistics South Africa	Government Research Institution
Department of Sports, Arts and Culture	National Government Department
Publishing	Book Publisher
SaDILaR	Academic Institution / Research Centre
University of the Western Cape Faculty of Humanities	Academic Institution / Research Centre
SaDILaR	Academic Institution / Research Centre
SaDILaR	Academic Institution / Research Centre
SALALS	Professional Association
Museum	Uganda National Museum
University of the Witwatersrand	Academic Institution / Research Centre
University of the Witwatersrand	Academic Institution / Research Centre
Freelance	Journalist / lecturer
Indigenous Languages Action Forum	Network of Language Practitioners
SA Small, Emerging and Informal Association	Business Network
University of South Africa	Research Fellow
Township Economic Commission South Africa	Business Network
University of South Africa	Academic Institution / University
University of South Africa	Academic Institution / University
University of Pretoria	Academic Institution / University
Editor	Media
Freelance editor / writer	Freelance editor / writer
Teacher	Teacher / Academic
Freelance	Independent secretarial services contractor
Editor	News agency
Consulate	Consul
University of the Western Cape	Academic Institution / University
Department of Sports, Arts and Culture	Government Institution
ENCA	Sub-editor
Advertising Agency	Content Director of ad agency
Freelance	Independent contractor and Copy Editor
Freelance	Theatre CEO and Freelance Editor
BEentreprenurING	Management consulting
University of Pretoria	Academic Institution / University
African Union	Media Group Director
University of Pretoria	Academic Institution / Research Centre
University of Stellenbosch	IsiXhosa Language Expert
PanSALB	Government Institution
University of South Africa	Academic Institution / University
CPUT	Academic Institution / University
Nelson Mandela University	Academic Institution / University

Institution	Description
University of Pretoria	Academic Institution / University
Nelson Mandela University	Academic Institution / University