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**NATIONAL  
LANGUAGE  
RESOURCES  
AUDIT**



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***National Language  
Resources Audit***

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Scope

This report documents the findings of a comprehensive language resources audit conducted by the [South African Centre for Digital Language Resources \(SADiLaR\)](#) as supported by the Board of Universities South Africa (USAf) and the Community of Practice for the teaching and learning of African Languages (CoPAL), a sub-committee of USAf. The mandate from USAf was to conduct this audit at all public higher education institutions, from which conclusions can be drawn, and recommendations made, in terms of existing language resources at universities, milestones already achieved and envisaged, as well as language resources still required by universities to successfully implement the National Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions.

The audit therefore was conducted to, as a first phase, determine the readiness of higher education institutions to implement the Policy Framework. It comprised an in-depth analysis of staff and student perspectives on relevant issues related to advancing multilingualism and the availability of language resources across five domains: **(1) institutional information, (2) language services, (3) teaching and learning practices, (4) communication and administration, and (5) student life and co-curricular activities.** The audit results yielded valuable insights into challenges and prospects associated with advancing multilingualism to meet the imperatives of the National Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions.

## Embracing Multilingualism

It emerged from the audit that public higher education institutions must embrace multilingualism in a manner consistent with the requirements of the National Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (2020), and espouse and uphold constitutional values such as inclusivity, social cohesion, and equity of access.

*With regard to fostering multilingualism, it was highlighted that staff and students must be fully invested in transforming the perception that multilingualism is not a liability but instead an institutional and national asset.*

Approaching institutional language policy development from a top-down perspective, and language planning and implementation from a bottom-up perspective, was recommended as a novel and inclusive approach towards effective language management that will contribute to advancing multilingualism.

## Teaching & Learning

It was evinced in the audit that both staff and students envision a multilingual pedagogical landscape. While some language resources do exist at some of the public higher education institutions, such as multilingual study guides, there remains a glaring need for more resources in all official languages, particularly for the indigenous languages.

More financial resources are required to support special multilingual projects with a specific focus on terminology development, creation and maintenance of shared resource banks, multilingual glossaries, exam paper translation, multilingual communication with staff and students, automated subtitling, and a prioritisation of academic language support courses (also known as academic literacy courses).

Furthermore, institutional frameworks are required for multilingual teaching and learning that clearly articulate the implementation of multilingual pedagogical principles and approaches. The principle that language must never be a barrier to access to knowledge and student success, was clearly enunciated. English and languages other than English (LOTE) must be used in teaching and learning endeavours to achieve parity in functional use at public higher education institutions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

*This audit report is an important precursor to a Phase II, which models a solution towards the successful implementation of the National Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions. There emerged three key recommendations from the audit report that would ensure the continuation of this important work.*

1

There is a clear need for a **national centre or entity that is going to assume the function of a HUB**, with the important role of providing guidance in language policy, planning and management through an established network of experts.

2

There is a need for an **independent, non-competing, and strategic national centre** that will harness, aggregate, and create a constellation of (digital) language resources that will be technically maintained and made accessible to all public higher education institutions.

3

There is a need for an open, collaborative, and inclusive process to support the DHET in the implementation of the National Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions, which includes the proposed national HUB, and key institutions such as PanSALB, DIRISA, and all the public universities, collaborating with the CoPAL and the University of the Western Cape (UWC), as the latter has been identified by the DHET as a key roleplayer.

In summary, the audit offers insights into the state of, as well as presents a compelling case for embracing, multilingualism within South African Higher Education. The audit underlines the need to view multilingualism as an asset, and stresses the immutable need for transparent communication and inclusive language support mechanisms. A golden thread in participants' responses is that caution should be exercised where so-called "window-dressing" and "ticking the boxes" are a temptation, whereas in practice everything undertaken remains bound to an English-only approach.

Effective implementation and strict monitoring by an external body was strongly advocated. The value of nurturing linguistic diversity is evident across the dimensions of teaching, learning, communication, as well as staff and student engagement. Ultimately, these audit findings provide a roadmap for promoting inclusivity and advancing multilingualism within public higher education institutions.





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# REPORT

## 1. BACKGROUND

Aligned with Section 29(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in 2020 promulgated the new Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions in terms of Section 27(2) of the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997.

The purpose of this is to provide a framework “for the development and strengthening of indigenous languages as languages of scholarship, teaching and learning and communication at South African public higher education institutions, in particular, universities” (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020: 3). Application of the Framework took effect in January 2022. It is unique in the sense that, firstly, vice-chancellors will have to report annually on the execution, monitoring and evaluation of their language policies and implementation plans. Secondly, next to English, at least two indigenous languages should be included in the daily activities of universities. Lastly, no so-called escape clauses will be allowed.

Since language is viewed as a vehicle for teaching and learning (that is, language is used to structure, to contrast, to compare, to define, to describe, to argue, to evaluate, and so forth), and it is considered to be a variable contributing in a statistically significant way to the study of academic success, the imperative with the Framework is to improve epistemic access and to address attrition by improving student achievement.

The Community of Practice for the teaching and learning of African Languages (CoPAL), which is a devolved structure of Universities South Africa (USAf), first considered the implementation of the Framework and initiated a series of VC colloquiums to discuss different aspects of the new policy framework towards the creation of a sector-wide model. Here SADiLaR, as a national centre, was in a position to support and conduct a sector-wide audit regarding the current status of language policies and plans at SA Universities to see what is available, what is needed and what successes might be shared between universities.

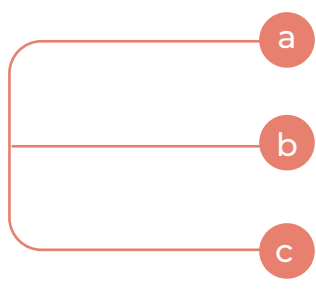
SADiLaR is a national entity supported by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) as part of the new South African Research Infrastructure Roadmap (SARIR), which is a “high-level strategic and systemic intervention to provide research infrastructure across the entire public research system, building on existing capabilities and strengths, and drawing on future needs” (Department of Science and Technology, 2016: ii). SADiLaR has an enabling function, with a focus on all official languages of South Africa, supporting research and development in the domains of language technologies and language-related studies in the humanities and social sciences.

*It advances multilingualism and supports the creation, management and distribution of digital language resources, as well as applicable software.*

## 2. MANDATE

The mandate received from the USAf Board, was to conduct a language resources audit at all 26 public higher education institutions, from which conclusions can be drawn, and recommendations made, in terms of existing language resources as well as the resources required by universities to implement the Policy Framework.

*The broad objectives of the audit were to:*

- 
- a identify resources already available at universities that could support the implementation of the Policy Framework;
  - b identify and define the range of resources still required to successfully implement the Policy Framework; and
  - c identify milestones and make recommendations for implementation of the Policy Framework.

## 3. TEAM

The core language audit team includes Prof Langa Khumalo (Executive Director: SADiLaR, and member of CoPAL), Prof Tobie van Dyk (Professor of Applied Linguistics, North-West University, School of Languages), Ms Ilana Wilken (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), Dr Natasha Ravyse (North-West University, Faculty of Law), Mr Juan Steyn (Operations Director: SADiLaR), Ms Lebogang Boemo (Project Manager: SADiLaR), and Mr Deon du Plessis (Linguist and Researcher: SADiLaR).

Additional support and guidance from experts in the field of language planning and management, in particular Prof Bassey Antia (UWC), Prof Rosemary Cromarty (NWU), Prof Theo du Plessis (UFS) and Mr Johan Blaauw (NWU) are also acknowledged.

## 4. METHOD AND SCOPE OF WORK

For the language resources audit, two questionnaires were designed, one directed at staff, and the other directed at students. Both questionnaires consist of five sections, each focusing on specific domains in higher education:

- SECTION ① — Institutional information
- SECTION ② — Language services
- SECTION ③ — Teaching and learning (and scholarship)
- SECTION ④ — Language of communication and administration
- SECTION ⑤ — Student life / co-curricular activities

Restricted questions were used as far as possible for ease of data analyses. Open-ended questions were also included where qualifications or more detailed information were required. A total of 64 questions were included in the staff survey, with 10 of these being open-ended. A total of 43 questions were included in the student survey, with 20 of these being open-ended. Applicable clauses from the Policy Framework were added at sections, along with questions to establish articulation with the Policy Framework and to provide context. The QuestionPro software package was used for administering the surveys.

For quantitative data analysis, all variables/questionsthat are measurable were considered. From numerical data at our disposal, we were able to deduce important facts, which in turn, are qualified by open-ended questions. Quantitative analyses are also considered accurate and reliable and should preferably be used in combination with qualitative data.

***The Atlas ti software package (version 23) was used for coding and analysing qualitative data. For this, a hermeneutic approach was followed in doing a content analysis, where the coders refrained from ideology, only worked with the views of participants, considered bigger and smaller units of meaning, and sought a balance between lumping and splitting data.***

The data was prepared beforehand by creating codes (this was an iterative process where the coding team analysed, discussed, and amended codes as necessary). A code book with frequencies and code quotation reports was also created. Consistency between coders and reporting was also established.

The principles of attribute and magnitude coding were followed: a qualitative inquiry code is often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data; the portion of data coded can range in magnitude from a single word, to a complete sentence, to an entire page of text, to a stream of moving images. Experienced staff were involved with data analyses. Data included in this report stems from trends (i.e., codes that are repeatedly assigned to certain viewpoints).

Apart from the online questionnaires, which were completed on site (see Table 1 for a summary of audit events), semi-structured interviews were also conducted to prompt discussion to further explore themes or responses offered by staff and students respectively. Two scribes were involved to note matters raised by participants. These were compared and also analysed using Atlas ti.

The language resources audit was administered at 24 of the 26 public higher education institutions, starting in the latter half of 2022. In order to be as representative as possible, both staff and students were involved. Among the staff contingent, participants included both academic and support staff, on managerial and lower levels. Among the student contingent, as many fields of study as possible, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students were involved.

Additional data can be availed on request, including the questionnaires, code books and so forth.

**Table 1:** Summary of participating institutions, number of participants and participation rates

1	4 November '22	University of Mpumalanga	UMP
2	22 November '22	Vaal University of Technology	VUT
3	28 November '22	University of South Africa	UNISA
4	16 February '23	Tshwane University of Technology	TUT
5	3 March '23	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	CPUT
6	3 March '23	University of Johannesburg	UJ
7	6 March '23	Stellenbosch University	SU
8	12 April '23	Central University of Technology	CUT
9	21 April '23	Sol Plaatje University	SPU
10	9 May '23	University of the Witwatersrand	WITS
11	15 May '23	Rhodes University	RU
12	16 May '23	University of the Western Cape <sup>3</sup>	UWC
13	17 May '23	Nelson Mandela University	NMU
14	2 June '23	University of the Free State	UFS
15	20 June '23	Walter Sisulu University	WSU
16	22 June '23	University of Fort Hare	UFH
17	11 July '23	University of Limpopo	UL
18	17 July '23	University of Zululand	UNIZULU
19	24 July '23	University of KwaZulu-Natal	UKZN
20	25 July '23	University of Pretoria	UP
21	27 July '23	North-West University	NWU
22	31 July '23	University of Cape Town	UCT
23	10 August '23	University of Venda	UNIVEN
24	11 August '23	Durban University of Technology	DUT
25	Did not participate in phase 1	Mangosuthu University of Technology <sup>4</sup>	MUT
26	Did not participate in phase 1	Sefako Makgato University <sup>5</sup>	SMU
<b>TOTALS</b>			

<sup>1</sup> "Dropouts" refers to incomplete questionnaires.

<sup>2</sup> Although the completion rate for students at TUT seems low, it needs to be taken into consideration that there were technical difficulties with the Question Pro App on the day of the audit. This resulted in students not being able to complete the questionnaire. The participation rate of students at TUT, however, was the highest of all universities.

	TOTAL RESPONSES	COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES	TOTAL DROPOUTS <sup>1</sup>	TOTAL RESPONSES	COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES	TOTAL DROPOUTS
	STAFF MEMBERS			STUDENTS		
	44	43	1	52	29	23
	31	24	7	35	29	6
	58	48	10	24	23	1
	85	66	19	649	206 <sup>2</sup>	443
	57	50	7	161	59	102
	83	58	25	37	22	15
	31	22	9	12	10	2
	41	35	6	47	34	13
	63	47	16	76	34	42
	47	47	0	37	36	1
	20	16	4	7	7	0
	12	10	2	1	1	0
	52	42	10	46	40	6
	46	41	5	56	47	9
	19	9	10	19	12	7
	14	12	2	25	22	3
	46	34	12	55	45	10
	54	51	3	33	19	14
	24	18	6	43	21	22
	35	31	4	18	13	5
	59	58	1	25	20	5
	33	28	5	7	7	0
	59	33	26	29	17	12
	35	30	5	56	48	8
	<b>1048</b>	<b>853</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>1550</b>	<b>801</b>	<b>749</b>

<sup>3</sup>Note that due to student unrest at UWC at the time of the audit, fewer than anticipated staff members and students were able to participate. The questionnaires were, however, accessible for an additional two weeks after the scheduled audit date. Following this, an email was sent late in July as a reminder to the institutional organisers to encourage staff and students to complete the questionnaires.

<sup>4</sup>Note that MUT had internal issues with ethical clearance for the audit to continue and could not secure a date in time.

<sup>5</sup>Note that no response at all was received from SMU, despite repeated attempts to get in touch. A last attempt was made by email early in July.

## 5. COSTING

Working from the position of a consideration of available language resources before implementing plans to advance multilingualism in the higher education sector is important as it allows for a more data driven approach to focused resource allocation and structured improvement planning.

The South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) as established through the Department of Science and Innovation's (DSI) South African Research Infrastructure Roadmap (SARIR) was uniquely positioned to support the initial phase of the USAf supported language audit in terms of dedicated staff time as well as availing resources towards the actual costs associated with site visits and virtual engagements. The DSI is thanked for their support in this regard.

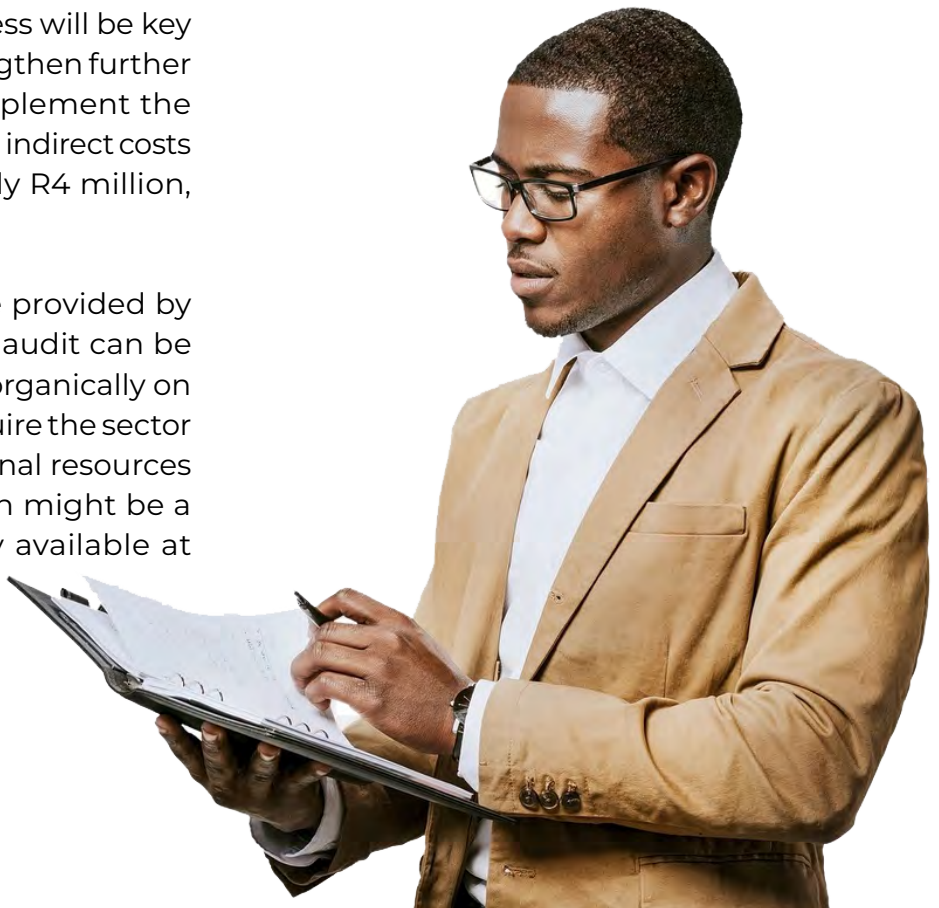
The costs associated with the USAf supported language audit were considerable and SADiLaR trusts that the networks and collaborations established as part of this process will be key in providing a firm base to strengthen further endeavours to successfully implement the Policy Framework. The direct and indirect costs are estimated at approximately R4 million, which SADiLaR fully funded.

It is foreseen that the baseline provided by the USAf supported language audit can be expanded on and maintained organically on an annual basis, so as not to require the sector to immediately allocate additional resources for developmental work, which might be a duplication of what is already available at certain institutions.

This will ensure that the investment made by USAf and SADiLaR can be built on and used to the advantage of all universities in South Africa.

*Costs connected with the audit include (i) those pertaining to the available time of staff linked directly to SADiLaR, (ii) funding of a secondment to SADiLaR to support the rollout and reporting of the audit conducted, (iii) contracting costs associated with the creation of the audit instruments and analyses of the raw data, (iv) costs associated with generation of the final reports, which includes proofreading, editing, design and layout, (v) costs of site visits, which includes travel and accommodation.*

Costs not taken into account include those linked to the time and effort of all institutions in planning and executing site visits and the attendance thereof. This was truly a sector-wide effort and we thank all involved stakeholders who made this possible.



## 6. DATA, FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

In this part of the report, the focus is on the five sections of the staff and student questionnaires. First, the purpose of the particular section is explained. Then a summary of findings for that particular section is provided. This is followed by detailed recommendations for the specific section. So-called “low-hanging fruits” are then highlighted; these are matters that institutions can, preferably jointly, focus on in the short term to successfully implement the Language Policy Framework.

Both the quantitative and qualitative data resulting from the questionnaires are then presented. In terms of the former, frequencies and percentages are used to indicate whether data is concentrated in specific areas, or distributed across the measurement scale. In terms of the latter, the principles of attribute and magnitude coding are adhered to (see Method and scope of work above for an explanation).

Recurring themes were identified and tagged accordingly; from this one can identify trends and outliers that are non-numeric in nature and assist in qualifying or explaining data in an integrated manner.

Quantitative data for staff and students are presented separately. Data is presented collectively only; individual institutions are mentioned only in cases where specific points need to be emphasised or explained. It is important to note that, for the sake of consistency, the classification of Bantu language groups in this report is based on Guthrie’s taxonomy (1948), which was updated by Maho (2009). The naming of languages is, furthermore, as it appears in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.





6.1.1 SECTION 1:

*INSTITUTIONAL  
INFORMATION*



## PURPOSE

The purpose of this section was to gather institutional information on the status quo in terms of language policies, language policy implementation plans, language monitoring, regional languages, official languages of universities in specific regions, strengths and weaknesses, as well as priority areas that need to be addressed. This section articulates with Clauses 24, 25, as well as 41, 42, 44 and 45 of the Language Policy Framework.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

At the institutional level, participants repeatedly stressed the concept of buy-in, highlighting the need for individuals to be invested in the cause of multilingualism. This necessitates a paradigm shift in attitudes, where multilingualism transforms from being a liability to being an asset. Both top-down (at policy level) and bottom-up (at plan and implementation level) approaches were advocated for.

The alignment of regional languages with the official languages employed by higher education institutions indicated resonance between linguistic diversity in a particular region of South Africa and institutional identity. While, at present, Afrikaans and English are predominantly employed as the principal languages of teaching and learning, audit results indicated value in nurturing the language ability of university staff to at least a conversational level in the relevant official languages of institutions.

The reasoning behind this was that it will contribute to an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere at universities, as well as help achieve effective engagement and communication from, and between, staff and students. The matter of effective and transparent communication at institutions was emphasised repeatedly.

Language policies and plans, presented in a clear, concise and easily digestible manner for both staff and students, were considered to be crucial in eliminating confusion and avoiding unmet expectations. Introducing improved monitoring mechanisms to bridge the gap between policy and practice was considered to be crucial.

It was consistently advocated that the traditional top-down approach followed by universities should be reconsidered – language policy implementation should be a matter of co-ownership and responsibility that requires a bottom-up approach.

A need for targeted guidance to facilitate language policy and plan development, potentially with the support of institutions like SADIaR, was steadfastly expressed.

A scarcity of financial resources (repeatedly highlighted) could be addressed by means of a unified and shared model with resources in a central national repository – participating universities have shown a willingness to contribute records of milestones/achievements and strengths, such as products and expertise, to maintain and augment the proposed repository.



## TAKE HOME MESSAGE

It is clear from the data that participating universities are implementing the current Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions to varying degrees. As noted from the questionnaire results, language policies at different institutions do exist; however, they seem not to address the real language issues experienced by staff and students on a daily basis. Moreover, many universities have not, in practice, embraced the demands of the current policy framework, that requires that universities embrace multilingualism in “[...] all functional domains of public higher education including scholarship, teaching and learning, as well as wider communication [...]”.

The imperative, therefore, exists that universities align their institutional language policies not only with the framework, but also in a manner that addresses institution-specific needs – a one-size-fits-all-approach is not advisable. Guidance and support from a knowledgeable entity or individuals, whether internal to the institution, or external, is a need emphasised repeatedly in the data set. For this reason, it is recommended that support with language management, incorporating the notions of designing and executing language policies and plans, should include training in how to design and manage a functional multilingual institutional language policy.

To this end, it was considered crucial for universities to commit to developing a clear multilingual teaching and learning framework (MT&LF) that supports the requirements of the national language policy framework, so as to avoid the inevitable relapse to default monolingual English instruction.

The MT&LF must assert multilingualism, and more specifically, functional multilingualism (where the motivational factor for acquiring an institutional language has value and is not just of symbolic value, i.e., window-dressing), as an asset and not a liability. It must provide a broad strategy on how an institution can use language as a teaching and learning resource and articulate how universities can collaborate in accessing language resources across and among each other. The focus should remain on sound policy design before implementation is carried out.

**Expertise seems to be lacking and universities should consider employing the services of entities that do have expertise in language planning and management.**

A further recommendation therefore speaks to the fact that there is a need to support universities in the exercise of developing inclusive institutional language policies that have a critical buy-in from all stakeholders. Equally, to assist institutions to develop implementation plans that have clear enablers, actions, responsible functionaries, targets and timelines. Thus, the recommendation to seek guidance and support from a knowledgeable entity or individuals, whether internal or external to the institution, is recommended, where it should be noted that shortcomings regarding the lack of co-ownership and co-responsibility may be related to institutional culture – non-participation is not necessarily related to language issues.

It is recommended, in addition, that in guiding the development and implementation of language policies and plans, the respective institution's frameworks and plans need to articulate an assigned structure to provide monitoring and evaluation of the implementation plan, which can best be executed by an independent structure that has the requisite expertise and experience.

A further consideration with regard to the implementation of language plans is that, according to the results, in most universities a top-down approach is seemingly followed where a language committee or centre or directorate takes responsibility for designing policies and plans, without proper consultation with the lower levels of staff (consultation typically occurs only with senior managers, e.g., deans, directors and heads of department).

Accordingly, it is recommended that a more democratic and collective ownership of language policies and plans be established. This recommendation would also aid in improving the experience of participants that internal communication regarding language policy is not good, in that, while managers are aware of policies and plans, staff (and students) with lower profiles are not always aware of these. It is thus important that staff have co-ownership of and take co-responsibility for designing and implementing language plans; however, they do not always know how to do so.



## LOW-HANGING FRUITS

- Approach language planning and management from both a top-down and bottom-up perspective and ensure critical buy-in
- Ensure that advancing multilingualism does not occur as an afterthought or an add-on – make it part of the institutional culture; it is everybody's responsibility
- Learn from what has been done at all levels at your institution
- Learn from what has been done at all levels at other institutions



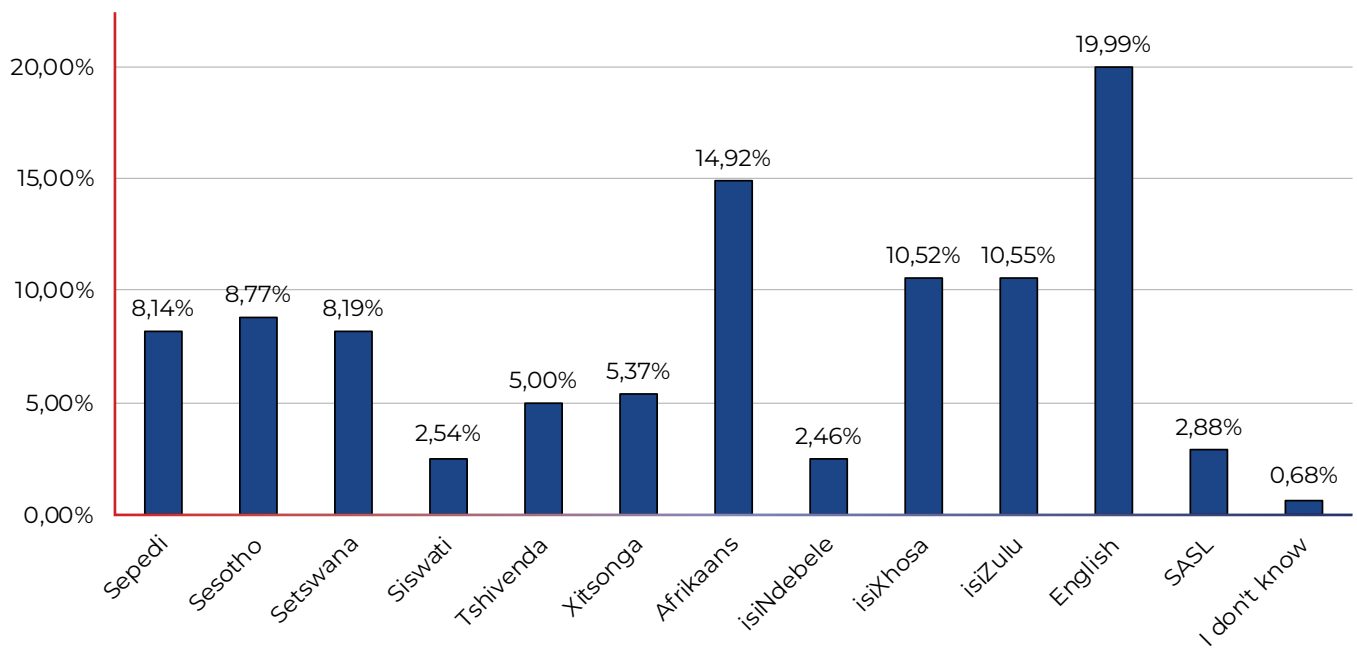
## DETAIL FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

All nine provinces are represented in the audit. The majority of institutions are situated in Gauteng (N=7), followed by KwaZulu Natal (N=4), the Eastern Cape (N=4), and the Western Cape (N=4). In Limpopo and the Free State the numbers are 2 each. In Mpumalanga, the Northern Cape and North-West provinces, the number is 1 each. Note, however, that multicampus institutions may be situated across more than one province, e.g., the NWU and TUT. In these cases, data from all campuses were included.

The occurrence of regional languages being used in general in the different provinces is displayed in **Figure 1**. English (19.99%) and Afrikaans (14.92%) occur most frequently, and Siswati (2.54%) and isiNdebele (2.46%) occur least frequently. When grouped together, the Nguni languages occur 26.07% and the Pedi languages (also known as Sotho-Tswana languages) occur 25.10%.

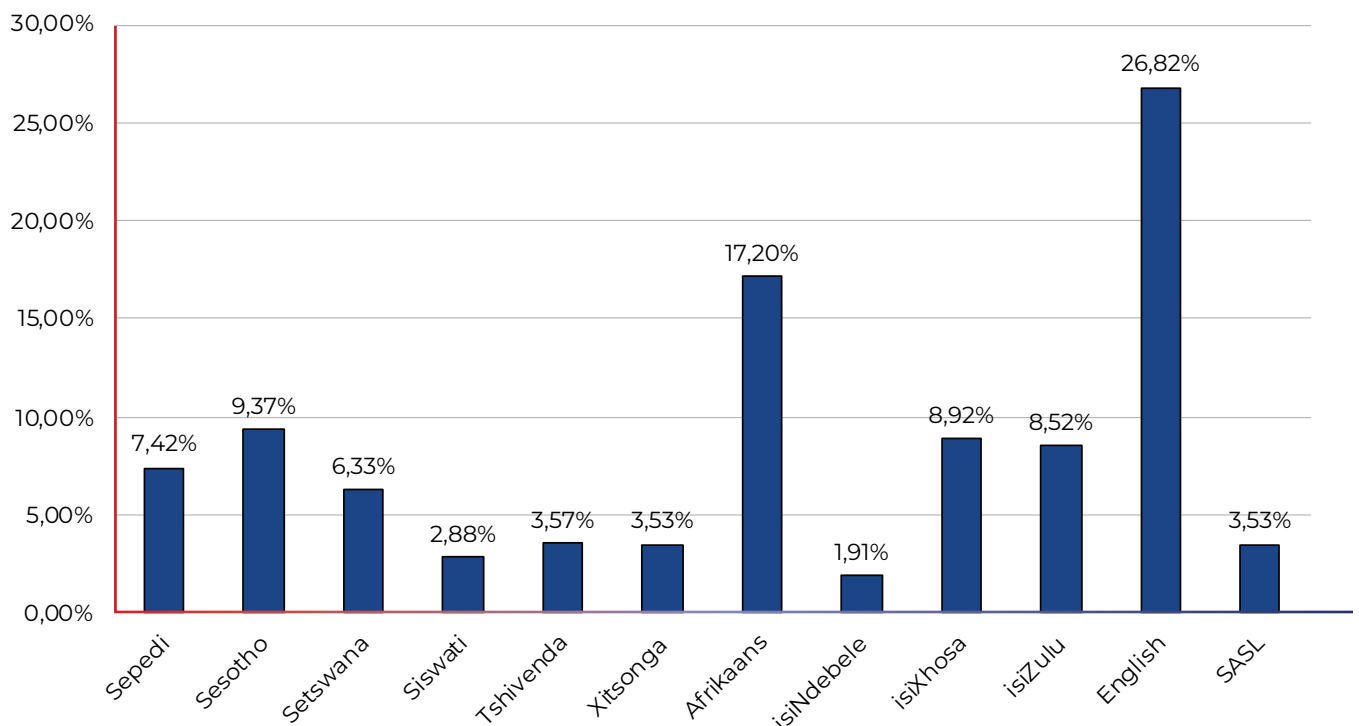
The option “I don't know” was also included since not everybody is familiar with language use in their provinces. Interestingly, South African Sign Language (2.88%), is also included as a regional language.





**Figure 1: Staff - Occurrence of languages in provinces**

Languages included in the language policies of higher education institutions are presented in **Figure 2**. Again, English (26.82%) and Afrikaans (17.20%) occur most frequently as official languages used, and Siswati (2.88%) and isiNdebele (1.91%) occur least frequently. When grouped together, the Nguni languages (including isiNdebele and Siswati) occur 22.23% and the Pedi languages (also known as the Sotho-Tswana languages) occur 23.12%. It is noteworthy that South African Sign Language (3.53%) is already included as an official language at some higher education institutions. Language occurrence in provinces (also referred to as regional languages) also concur with the official languages used at higher education institutions situated in specific provinces – note Table 2.



**Figure 2: Staff - Official languages of public higher education institutions**

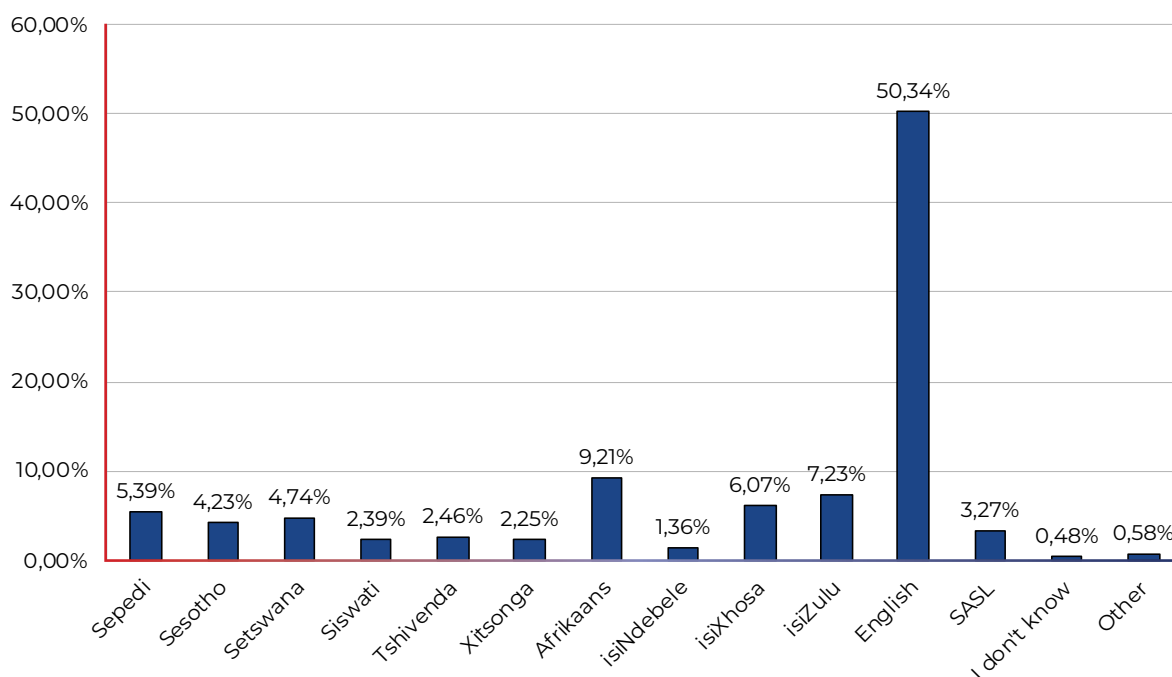
**Table 2:** Provincial languages and official institutional languages

All	University of South Africa
Eastern Cape	Nelson Mandela University
Eastern Cape	Rhodes University
Eastern Cape	University of Fort Hare
Eastern Cape	Walter Sisulu University
Free State	Central University of Technology
Free State	University of the Free State
Gauteng	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences
Gauteng	Tshwane University of Technology
Gauteng	University of Johannesburg
Gauteng	University of Pretoria
Gauteng	University of the Witwatersrand
Gauteng	Vaal University of Technology
KwaZulu-Natal	Durban University of Technology
KwaZulu-Natal	Mangosuthu University of Technology
KwaZulu-Natal	University of KwaZulu-Natal
KwaZulu-Natal	University of Zululand
Limpopo	University of Limpopo
Limpopo	University of Venda
Mpumalanga	University of Mpumalanga
North-West and Gauteng	North-West University
Northern Cape	Sol Plaatje University
Western Cape	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Western Cape	Stellenbosch University
Western Cape	University of Cape Town
Western Cape	University of the Western Cape

<sup>6</sup> Note that these language groupings were correct at the time of writing the report. They are presented as communicated to the SADiLaR team, and/or as made publicly available, e.g., on institutional websites. It is interesting to note that responses to the question on the official languages used at universities in most cases rendered an array of answers, which might be an indication that both staff and students do not really know what the official languages of their institution are.

Official provincial languages (presumed)	Official institutional languages <sup>6</sup>
Not applicable. UNISA is located across South Africa, and abroad.	Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Siswati, South African Sign Language, Tshivenda, Xitsonga
isiXhosa, Afrikaans, English	Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa
isiXhosa, Afrikaans, English	Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa
isiXhosa, Afrikaans, English	Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa
isiXhosa, English, Afrikaans	English, isiXhosa, Sesotho
Sesotho, Afrikaans, English	Afrikaans, English, Sesotho
Sesotho, Afrikaans, English	Afrikaans, English, Sesotho
isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, Sesotho	English
isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, Sesotho	Afrikaans, English, Sepedi, Setswana, Siswati
isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, Sesotho	Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, Sepedi
isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, Sesotho	Afrikaans, English, Sepedi
isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, Sesotho	English, isiZulu, Sesotho, South African Sign Language
isiZulu, English, Afrikaans, Sesotho	Afrikaans, English, Sesotho
isiZulu, English	English, isiZulu
isiZulu, English	English, isiZulu
isiZulu, English	English, isiZulu, Sesotho
isiZulu, English	English, isiZulu
Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, English	English, Sepedi, Tshivenda, Xitsonga
Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, English	English, isiNdebele, Sepedi, Siswati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga
Siswati, isiZulu, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, English	English, isiNdebele, Siswati
Setswana, Afrikaans, English	Afrikaans, English, Sesotho, Setswana
Afrikaans, Setswana, English	Afrikaans, English, Setswana
Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English	Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa
Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English	Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa
Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English	Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa
Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English	Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa

From student data, the languages used for teaching and learning purposes (see **Figure 3**), which are typically linked to the languages used in provinces and the official languages of institutions – see Table 2, include English (50.34%), Afrikaans (9.21%), Setswana (4.74%), Sepedi (5.39%), isiZulu (7.23%), isiXhosa (6.07%). From this it is evident that English remains the main medium of instruction, followed by Afrikaans – these percentages, however, do not articulate with the numbers presented in **Figure 2** (Official languages of higher education institutions). This might be an indication that theory does not align with practice. The Pedi and Nguni languages, when grouped together, account for 14.34% (Pedi languages) and 17.05% (Nguni languages).



**Figure 3: Students - Languages used for teaching and learning at public higher education institutions**

The home language representation of staff that completed the survey, is indicated in **Figure 4**. Determining the home language provides insight into the linguistic diversity of staff members and their ability to advance multilingualism at higher education institutions. Note, however, that champions/advocates of specific languages may not necessarily themselves be speakers of those languages.

From **Figure 4**, it is clear that Afrikaans (17.92%), English (15.35%) and isiZulu (13.06%) are the home languages that occur most. In general, it can perhaps be argued that such staff members are probably not proficient in the other official languages of South Africa, except for cases where languages are mutually intelligible. This might be an indication that language development (at least at a conversational level) and support in the indigenous African languages, other than Afrikaans, should perhaps be considered a priority.

With regard to students (see **Figure 5**), it is evident that linguistic diversity is even more prominent than with staff. English only accounts for 4.85% of home languages and Afrikaans for 8.14%, which is much lower when compared with that of staff. The Pedi languages when grouped together account for 31.67%, the Nguni languages for 41.50%, and Xitsonga and Tshivenda together account for 11.96%.

Only one student (0.06%) indicated that South African Sign Language is their home language. Only 1.81% of students indicated that their home language is not an official South African language, including Portuguese, French, German, Tshiluba, Yoruba, Shona, Khelobedu, isiHlubi Arabic – the majority of these students are most probably international students from the SADC region. When staff and student data are compared, one could argue that higher education institutions might perhaps invest in supporting students in their home languages apart from the languages that lecturers are proficient in and the official institutional languages. This, however, would be a costly and time-consuming endeavour.

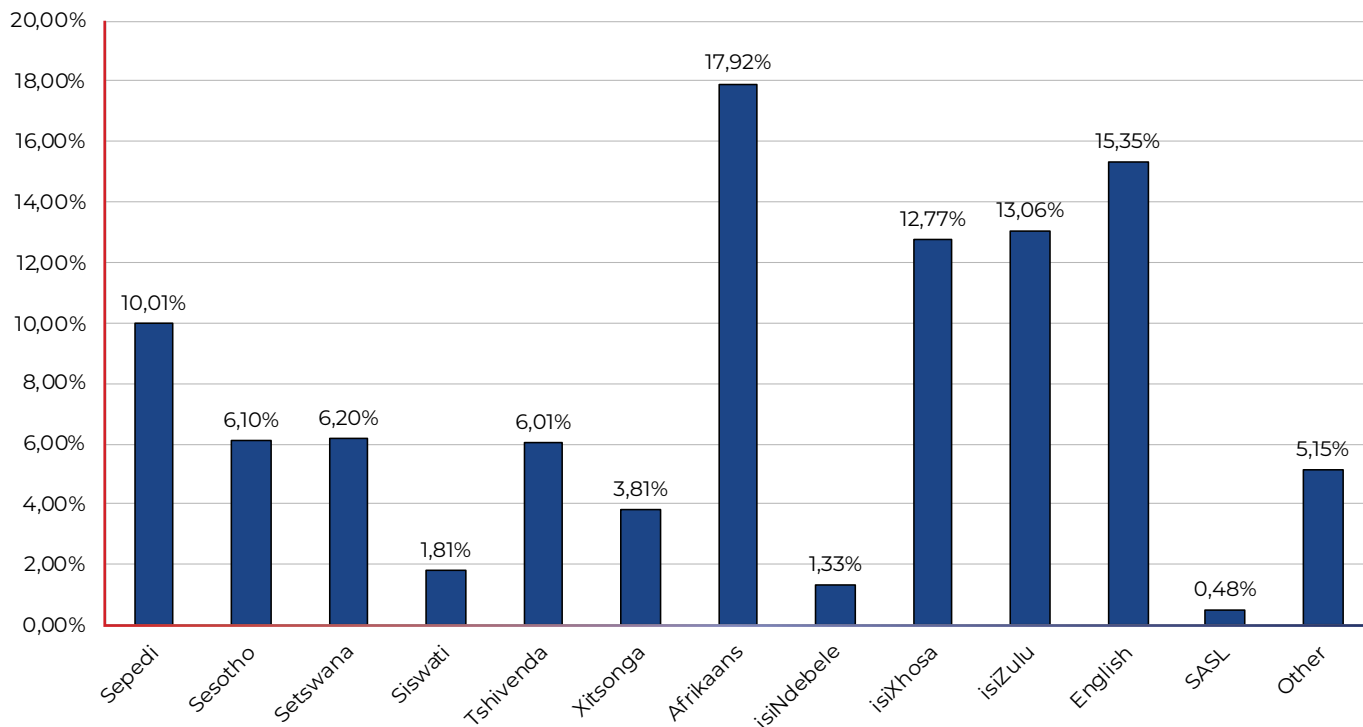


Figure 4: Staff - Home language representation

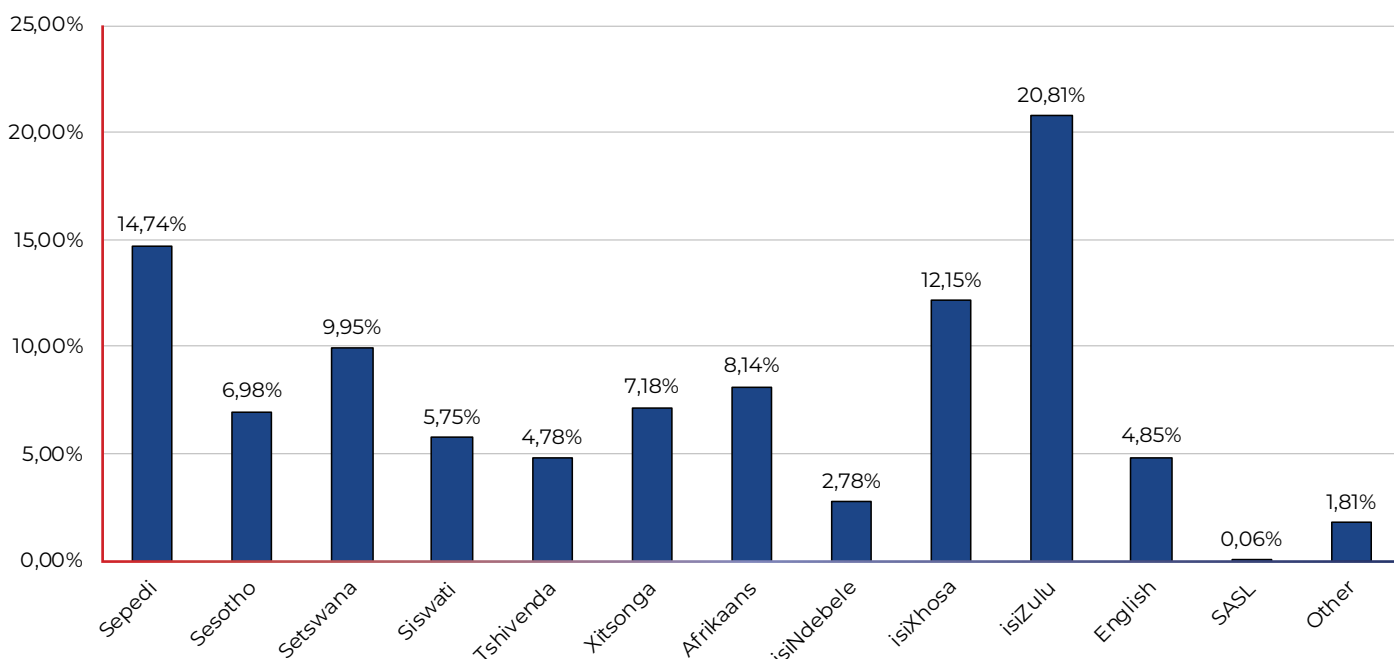


Figure 5: Students - Home languages of students at public higher education institutions

In terms of language policies and implementation plans at universities, as communicated by staff, Table 3 can be considered for an overview.

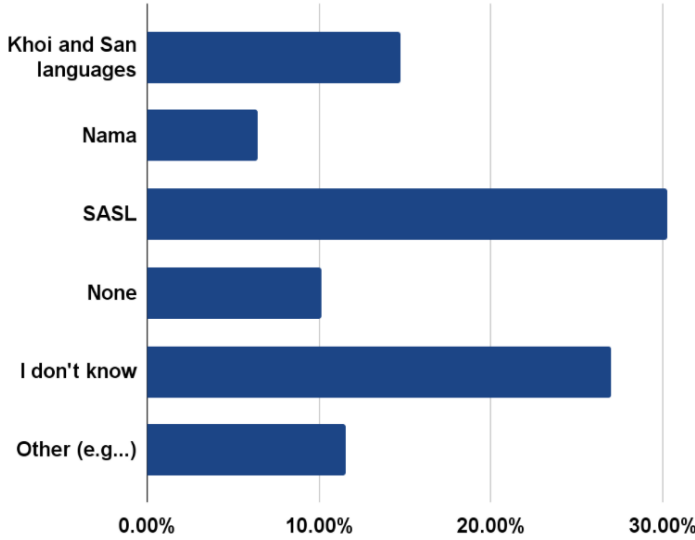
**Table 3:** Data on language policy, implementation plans, identification and ombud services (according to staff)

LANGUAGE POLICY (Staff)	
<b><i>Does your institution have a language policy?</i></b>	Yes = 82.02% No = 3.33% I don't know = 14.65%
<b><i>Which office/entity is the owner/custodian of the institution's language policy?</i></b>	DVC: Academic/Teaching and Learning = 51.20% (N=491) Language Director = 8.76% (N=84) Language Centre = 8.76% (N=84) Faculty/College = 4.28% (N=41) I don't know = 18.25% (N=175) Other = 8.76% (N=84) Office of the Registrar = 48.81% Multilingual Languages Services Office = 2.38% Corporate Governance = 1.19% Vice-chancellor = 5.95% Higher Education Development and Support (HEDS) = 1.19% Academy for Multilingualism = 3.57% Institutional planning = 1.19% Language Committee = 7.14% Equity and Institutional Culture Office = 2.38% DVC: Transformation = 3.57% DVC: Institutional Advancement = 1.19% DVC: People Development & Culture = 20.24% Senate = 1.19%
<b><i>If the language policy is visible/accessible to staff, where can they view it?</i></b>	Website = 49.60% (N=553) Internal documents = 29.24% (N=326) On request = 9.87% (N=110) It is not visible to staff = 1.88% (N=21) I don't know if it is visible and/or where to find information on it = 9.42% (N=105) Other = 0% (N=0)

<p><b><i>If the language policy is visible/ accessible to students, where can they view it?</i></b></p>	<p>Website = 51.29% (N=536)  Internal documents = 17.61% (N=121)  On request = 11.58% (N=121)  It is not visible to students = 2.30% (N=24)  I don't know if it is visible and/or where to find information on it = 17.22% (N=180)  Other = 0% (N=0)</p>
<p><b><i>If the language policy is visible/ accessible to the public, where can they view it?</i></b></p>	<p>Website = 56.74% (N=501)  On request = 14.72% (N=130)  It is not visible to the public = 5.89% (N=52)  I don't know if it is visible and/or where to find information on it = 22.65% (N=200)  Other = 0% (N=0)</p>
<p><b>LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION PLANS (Staff)</b></p>	
<p><b><i>Does your institution have a language implementation plan/plans?</i></b></p>	<p>Yes = 57.28% (N=582)  No = 7.97% (N=81)  I don't know = 34.74% (N=353)</p>
<p><b><i>Which office/ entity is the owner/custodian of the institution's language implementation plan?</i></b></p>	<p>DVC: Academic/Teaching and Learning = 56.37% (N=398)  Language Director = 13.60% (N=96)  Language Centre = 11.90% (N=84)  Faculty/College = 8.78% (N=62)  Other = 9.85% (N=66)  Office of the Registrar = 24.24%  All executives = 1.52%  All divisions = 1.52%  Multilingual Languages Services Office = 1.52%  Higher Education Development and Support = 4.55%  Centre for Academic Development = 1.52%  Academy for multilingualism = 1.52%  Institutional planning = 1.52%  Equity and Institutional Culture and the Language Committees = 3.03%  DVC: People Development &amp; Culture = 16.67%  Language Committee = 7.58%  Office of Equity and Institutional Transformation = 3.03%  DVC: Research and Innovation = 1.52%  I don't know = 28.79%</p>

<p><b><i>If the language plan is visible/ accessible to staff, where can they view it?</i></b></p>	<p>Website = 41.20% (N=330)          Internal documents = 31.84% (N=255)          On request = 12.98% (N=104)          It is not visible to staff = 2.37% (N=19)          I don't know if it is visible and/or where to find information on it = 11.49% (N=92)          Other = 0.12% (N=1)          Departments responsible for their own implementation plans = 50%          Via work of the Language Policy Committee = 50%</p>
<p><b><i>If the language plan is visible/ accessible to students, where can they view it?</i></b></p>	<p>Website = 42.43% (N=325)          Internal documents = 22.72% (N=174)          On request = 14.62% (N=112)          It is not visible to students = 4.05% (N=31)          I don't know if it is visible and/or where to find information on it = 16.19% (N=124)          Other = 0% (N=0)</p>
<p><b><i>If the language plan is visible/ accessible to the public, where can they view it?</i></b></p>	<p>Website = 52.81% (N=319)          On request = 18.54% (N=112)          It is not visible to the public = 5.13% (N=31)          I don't know if it is visible and/or where to find information on it = 23.51% (N=142)          Other = 0% (N=0)</p>

**IDENTIFICATION**

<p><b><i>How does your institution identify itself in terms of its official language policy?</i></b></p>	<p>Monolingual = 18.85% (N=194)          Bilingual = 13.02% (N=134)          Multilingual = 68.12% (N=701)</p>														
<p><b><i>Which marginalised South African languages, which are not considered official languages of South Africa, are to be found in your institution's feeder area?</i></b></p>	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Language</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Khoi and San languages</td> <td>15.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nama</td> <td>7.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SASL</td> <td>30.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>None</td> <td>10.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I don't know</td> <td>27.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other (e.g...)</td> <td>11.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Language	Percentage	Khoi and San languages	15.00%	Nama	7.00%	SASL	30.00%	None	10.00%	I don't know	27.00%	Other (e.g...)	11.00%
Language	Percentage														
Khoi and San languages	15.00%														
Nama	7.00%														
SASL	30.00%														
None	10.00%														
I don't know	27.00%														
Other (e.g...)	11.00%														

	<p>Other languages</p> <p>Afrikaans/Kaaps = 29.66% (N=43)</p> <p>Fanakaloh = 0.69% (N=1)</p> <p>isiBhaca = 0.69% (N=1)</p> <p>isidubada = 0.69% (N=1)</p> <p>Isicamtho = 1.38% (N=2)</p> <p>Khelobedu = 3.45% (N=5)</p> <p>Salobedi = 0.69% (N=1)</p> <p>Selebedu = 3.45% (N=5)</p>	<p>Sekgolokwe = 0.69% (N=1)</p> <p>Sephuthi = 0.69% (N=1)</p> <p>Sepitori = 29.66% (N=43)</p> <p>Sepulana = 4.14% (N=6)</p> <p>Setebele = 0.69% (N=1)</p> <p>Setlokwa = 1.38% (N=2)</p> <p>Shona = 1.38% (N=2)</p> <p>Swahili = 1.38% (N=2)</p> <p>Tsotsitaal = 19.31% (N=28)</p>
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## LANGUAGE OMBUD

<b><i>Does your institution have a language ombud function?</i></b>	<p>Yes = 11.02% (N=109)</p> <p>No = 26.59% (N=263)</p> <p>I don't know = 62.39% (N=617)</p>
<b><i>Where is the language ombud function situated?</i></b>	<p>Language directorate = 49.17% (N=59)</p> <p>Language centre/unit = 23.33% (N=28)</p> <p>Faculty/College = 12.50% (N=15)</p> <p>I don't know = 10.00% (N=12)</p> <p>Other = 5.00% (N=6)</p> <p>Independent = 16.67%</p> <p>Office of the Ombud = 33.33%</p> <p>DVC: Teaching and Learning = 33.33%</p> <p>Division for Teaching Excellence = 16.67%</p>
<b><i>Is it generally known to staff, students and the public that you have a language ombud function and what its responsibilities are?</i></b>	<p>Yes = 56.88% (N=62)</p> <p>No = 25.69% (N=28)</p> <p>I don't know = 17.43% (N=19)</p>
<b><i>Where can staff view information on the language ombud and its responsibilities?</i></b>	<p>Website = 56.82% (N=50)</p> <p>Internal documents = 25.00% (N=22)</p> <p>On request = 12.50% (N=11)</p> <p>Staff cannot view information on the language ombud and its responsibilities = 0% (N=0)</p> <p>I don't know = 5.68% (N=5)</p> <p>Other = 0% (N=0)</p>
<b><i>Where can students view information on the language ombud and its responsibilities?</i></b>	<p>Website = 54.55% (N=48)</p> <p>Internal documents = 20.45% (N=18)</p> <p>On request = 18.18% (N=16)</p> <p>Students cannot view information on the language ombud and its responsibilities = 0% (N=0)</p> <p>I don't know = 6.82% (N=6)</p> <p>Other = 0% (N=0)</p>

<b>Where can the public view information on the language ombud and its responsibilities?</b>	Website = 69.12% (N=47) On request = 19.12% (N=13) The public cannot view information on the language ombud and its responsibilities = 0% (N=0) I don't know = 11.76% (N=8) Other = 0% (N=0)
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With regard to the open-ended question asking whether or not students know what a language policy is, responses varied considerably. Some students indicated that they do not know or are unsure, while others provided explanations indicating that a language policy promotes indigenous languages. A number of participants indicated that a language policy is a system of rules and regulations for languages in an institution; it in other words governs the use of different languages in teaching, communication, and other activities. Some participants indicated that the purpose of a language policy is to ensure linguistic diversity, promote inclusivity, and protect the rights of individuals to learn in their native language / home language, regardless of the institution or the region.

The results also indicate that students feel that there is room for enhancing awareness and knowledge about language policies, as some indicated only a vague understanding of what a language policy entails. In summary, it can be concluded that most students are aware of what a language policy is and what it is supposed to be doing within specific contexts (including provinces, institutions, faculties, departments and so forth). Notions of inclusivity and promoting the indigenous languages were also emphasised repeatedly.

**Table 4,** (below) provides insight in the quantitative student data.

**Table 4:** Language policy (according to students)

LANGUAGE POLICY (Students)	
<b>Does your university have a language policy?</b>	Yes = 54.23% (N=839) No = 2.78% (N=43) I don't know = 42.99% (N=665)
<b>Where can you find the language policy?</b>	Website = 50.48% (N=530) Internal documents = 19.43% (N=204) On request = 11.52% (N=121) I don't know = 18.57% (N=195)
<b>Do you think your university is implementing its language policy?</b>	Yes = 49.63% (N=740) No = 13.41% (N=200) I don't know = 36.96% (N=551)

<b>Do you experience your university as:</b>	Monolingual = 45.14% (N=673) Bilingual = 22.67% (N=338) Multilingual = 32.19% (N=480)
<b>Does your university have a complaints office [language ombud] that looks after language policy implementation matters?</b>	Yes = 21.80% (N=325) No = 13.08% (N=195) I don't know = 65.12% (N=971)
<b>Do you have access to the complaints office [language ombud]?</b>	Yes = 75.70% (N=190) No = 7.97% (N=20) I don't know = 16.33% (N=41)

When staff and student data are compared (**note Table 3 and 4**) it is evident that students are less informed and less knowledgeable about language policy, language planning and language management, which confirms previous results noting the need for enhancing awareness of language policies, particularly among the student body. It is advisable that students be informed better about their institutional rights, privileges and responsibilities, and what a specific institution can offer. ***In this way, students can also become advocates for advancing multilingualism and not only be insistent on language issues, e.g., the use of all languages as languages of teaching and learning at a particular institution.***

Notwithstanding, this might be impracticable, and it is not a requirement of the policy framework. A further concern is that the majority of students experience their institutions as being monolingual, which does not necessarily reflect the staff view. From the qualitative data it was clear that theory and practice do not align – what is stated in policy documents is not necessarily what staff and students experience on a daily basis.

A further matter for consideration is that both staff and students are not necessarily aware of the details of their language policies, plans and management efforts.

***Nevertheless, it is encouraging that information on language policies, plans and management matters is publicly available, e.g., on websites.***

It is also of concern that senior management is typically indicated as being the custodians (i.e., taking ultimate responsibility for compiling it, implementing it, monitoring it, etc.) of both language policies and language implementation plans. This might be an indication of a top-down approach only, whereas a top-down and bottom-up approach might work better, as a safe space for co-ownership and co-responsibility is thereby created. For example, one would like to see faculties and schools/departments taking responsibility for the custodianship of language plans, while language policy matters could be dealt with at institutional (i.e., senior management) level.

In a related question, staff were asked how they think their institution can improve the way it uses language to contribute towards establishing a truly functional multilingual environment in terms of the Language Policy Framework.

The results, firstly, showed a desire for more support from institutions in promoting multilingualism, by e.g., creating opportunities for advancing their own multilingual repertoires. Secondly, it was also noted that indigenous languages in particular should be considered important, and free introductory courses on the official languages of an institution were strongly advocated – the rationale behind this is that it will perhaps contribute to advancing multilingualism and creating an inclusive and welcoming environment.

It was also noted that marginalised languages (in particular those that are official institutional languages) should be used in an array of university operations.

Establishing language centres and/or translation and editing entities were, thirdly, also highlighted as ways in which multilingualism can be promoted. Official recognition of SA Sign Language was emphasised, with the expressed need for subtitling software and interpretation services – collaborating with other institutions was consistently pointed out as a desired outcome.



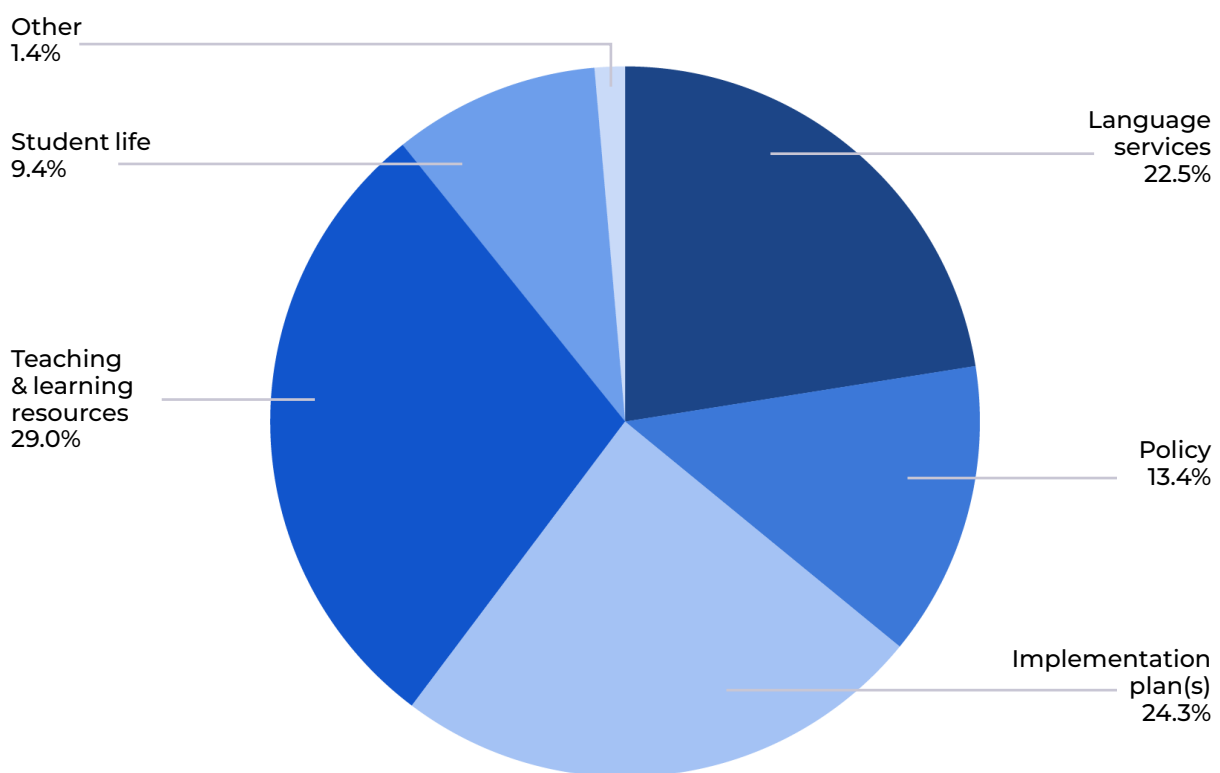
**Table 5** provides insight into staff views on monitoring language policies and plans (this is quantitative data). From open-ended questions it was stressed repeatedly that monitoring language policies and implementation plans is of great importance. In theory, it is advisable that monitoring occurs regularly, independently, impartially and fairly. It is, however, not always practical or affordable to do so regularly, and higher education institutions typically opt for internal monitoring practices and procedures by e.g., a directorate, a committee, or a language ombud at certain points in time. With regard to monitoring the implementation of the Language Policy Framework specifically, establishing a separate entity to take responsibility for this was repeatedly mentioned. Such a central entity could monitor and evaluate successes and strengths at regular intervals, which could lead to creating communities of practice and greater collaboration among universities.

**Table 5:** Monitoring language policies and implementation plans (according to staff)

<b>MONITORING LANGUAGE POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS (Staff)</b>	
<b><i>Is the implementation of your institution's language policy and plans monitored?</i></b>	Yes = 44.93% (N=448) No = 10.03% (N=100) I don't know = 45.04% (N=449)
<b><i>How often is the implementation of your institution's language policy and plans monitored/reviewed?</i></b>	Continuously = 46.38% (N=205) Every year = 13.12% (N=58) Every 2 years = 1.36% (N=6) Every 3 years = 4.07% (N=18) Every 4 years = 1.13% (N=5) Every 5 years = 7.24% (N=32) Every 5+ years = 0.68% (N=3) I don't know = 24.43% (N=108) Other = 1.58% (N=7) Quarterly = 85.71% Ad hoc = 14.29%
<b><i>Which entity is responsible for monitoring the implementation of your institution's language policy and plans?</i></b>	Language directorate = 26.90% (N=138) Language centre/unit = 25.73% (N=132) Faculty/College = 20.47% (N=105) I don't know = 13.26% (N=68) Other = 13.65% (N=70) DVC: Teaching and Learning = 27.14% Institutional Research Office = 1.43% Multilingual Language Services Office = 2.86% Office of the Registrar = 17.14% Policy Development and Management Office = 1.43% Senate language committee = 4.29% Language committee = 17.14% Centre for Academic Development = 1.43% Division for Teaching Excellence = 4.29% Academy for multilingualism = 1.43% Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning = 1.43% DVC Academic = 2.86% DVC: People Development & Culture = 8.57% Institutional research office = 2.86% Office for Institutional Strategy = 1.43% Senior Executive Team = 1.43% Transformation Office = 2.86%

Priority areas identified by staff to give effect to the Policy Framework are illustrated in **Figure 6**. From this, it is evident that multilingual teaching and learning resources (28.95%) should be prioritised. Language services (22.50%) and implementation plans (24.34%) were also highlighted as important matters to attend to. In open discussions this was confirmed – staff indicated that they require tangible resources (e.g. multilingual glossaries, language and content proficient tutors and language practitioners), as well as support in the form of different kinds of services and technologies (e.g. translation and editing services, software).

The importance of clear and practical language implementation plans (including practical targets, realistic time frames and proper capacity development programmes) was also highlighted. Other matters to consider include sufficient provision of human and financial resources in both academia and support divisions and the establishment of a national entity where universities can seek advice on language policy and plan development and where they can gain access to resources.



**Figure 6:** Staff - Priority areas to consider



6.1.2 SECTION 2:

*LANGUAGE  
SERVICES*





## PURPOSE

The purpose of this section was to gain insight into language services already rendered by institutions, and those urgently required.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In terms of the availability of language services at higher education institutions, it transpired that there are indeed services available. These, however, are seemingly few and far between, and staff are not necessarily aware of their existence. Moreover, language services are typically for the exclusive use of university management, and funding is either not available or sufficient for the use of such services, whether internally or externally.

A need was also expressed among student participants for accessible and effective language support services and resources, especially for non-English speakers, to address learning barriers and encourage inclusivity. The recommendation, as will also be noted below, is that resources should be integrated into teaching and learning activities, rather than presented as stand-alone tools.

Costs consistently arose as a challenge, with students concerned about the availability of financial resources to be able to access language services. Furthermore, a lack of awareness among staff members on the matter of technical resources was highlighted.

This might be an indication of potential underinvestment and/or poor communication. This also perhaps serves as proof of the overall need for effective communication on language service and resource availability to ensure fair and reasonable access across the board.



## TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Language services remain an important resource in achieving a functional multilingual environment within the higher education sphere. Based on the results, a great concern was expressed among both staff and students about the limited range of language services available. In this regard, it is recommended that language services need to be extended to all staff (in particular translation and editing services) and students (in particular translation, editing, and interpreting services). However, funding may be an issue.

As noted in a recommendation alluded to elsewhere in this report, it is advisable to consider creating a funding model that funnels resources through a single entity so that all universities can benefit from it. This approach could potentially enhance efficiency by offering a centralised solution. Within the ambit of such a model, the proposed entity could be responsible for the development and implementation of solutions catering to all official languages, provided it receives substantial funding to do so.

Subsequently, these solutions would be made accessible to all universities. An alternative might be that universities set aside a percentage of their annual budgets for language services. Finally, the use of technology and software that support various language services should be encouraged. In this respect, it is recommended that a national repository of such tools be created with a managing entity to accommodate the functionality and service provision of electronic language tools/software.



## LOW-HANGING FRUITS

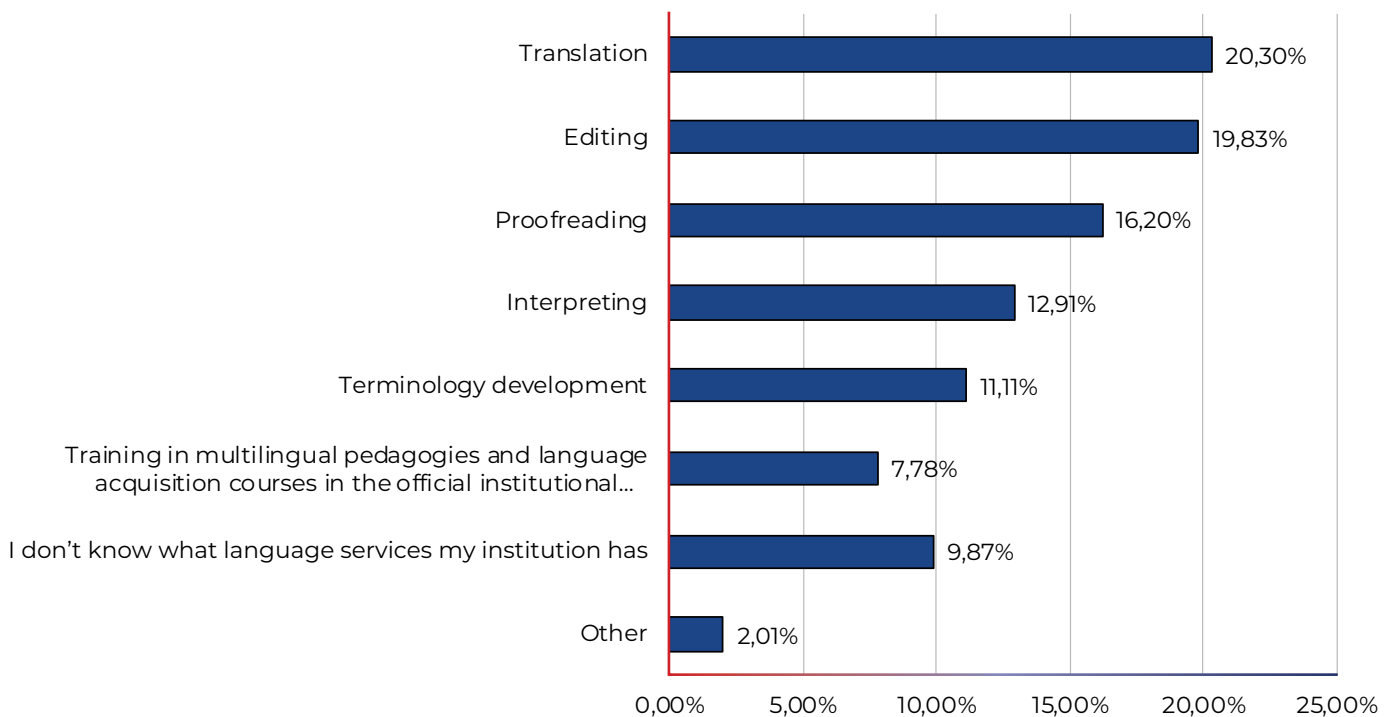
- Communicate regularly, openly utilising multiple platforms and mediums to increase the uptake and utilisation of what is already there, both internally and externally
- Stimulate a culture of sharing information and provide platforms to aggregate and disseminate such information
- Collaborate with other institutions to enhance language services, e.g., glossaries for machine translation and interpretation



## DETAIL FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

**Figure 7** provides an overview of services available in the sector, as identified by staff. The majority of students on the other hand (note **Figure 8**) indicated that they are not aware of language services at their institutions, which was to be expected, as these are indeed not necessarily available to students. Translation, editing, proofreading and interpreting services are apparently available to students, but there is no certainty whether these are actually readily available, of a high quality, or provided free of charge to students – it might be the case that, e.g., writing laboratory consultants also edit student texts.

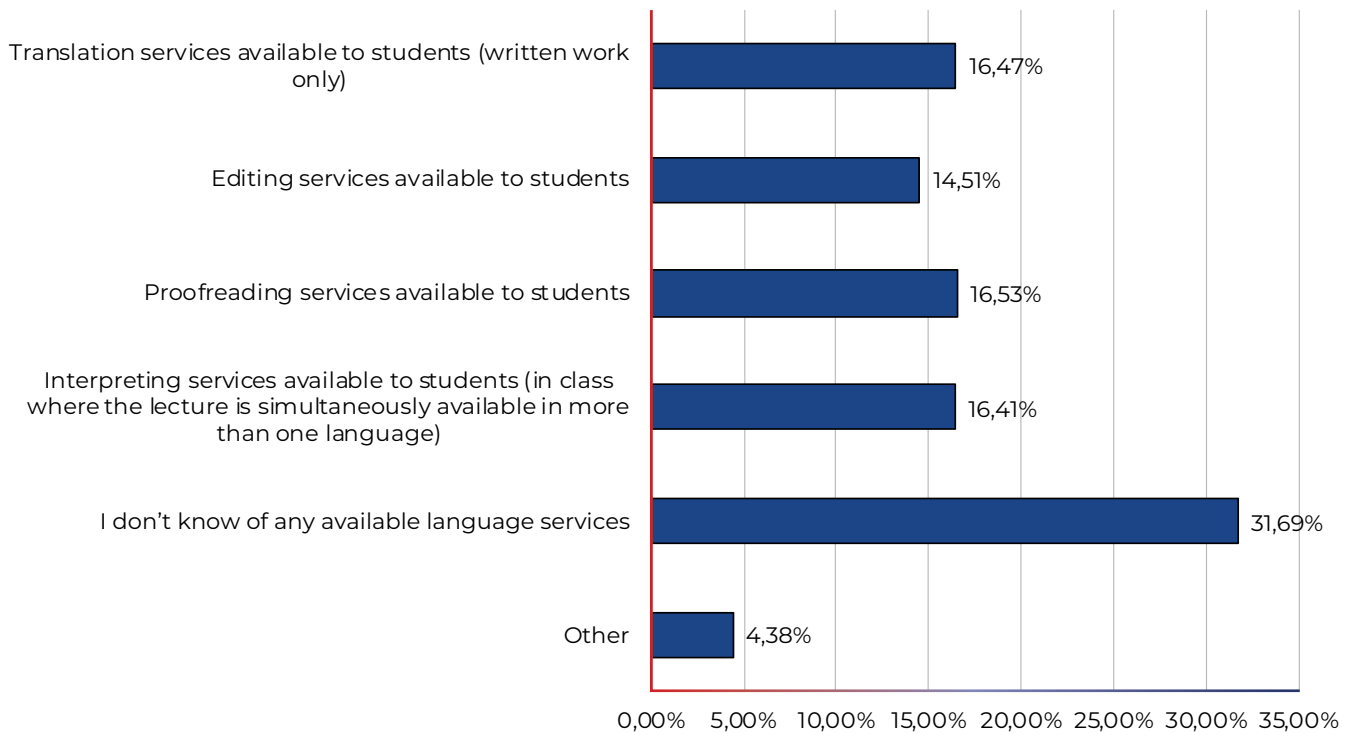
*Other language services that students highlighted include academic writing support and academic reading programmes, alongside academic literacy courses in the languages of teaching and learning. Perhaps it would be worthwhile for universities to investigate what kinds of services students require, and how they might be managed in a sustainable manner. Funding such services, however, remains an issue.*



**Figure 7: Staff - Language services available at institutions**

With regard to the availability of language services at institutions, the majority of staff participants mentioned that common language services such as translation, editing, and interpreting are available at their institutions, but in the majority of cases only to a select few. Staff highlighted the importance of universities establishing partnerships with other institutions to support language learning and advance multilingualism. Reference to language services that were not mentioned earlier in the questionnaire also appeared continuously in the staff feedback.

Examples include language learning software, online resources, language learning centres, language exchange programmes, language immersion programmes, and language tutoring services. Language services varied across the surveyed institutions, in terms of availability, accessibility, usage, and effectiveness. The most common responses on the availability of language resources and whether those that already exist should be improved, included needs for (improved) editing services, interpreting services, and translation services. Accessibility to these services free of charge was a matter alluded to a few times.



**Figure 8: Students - Language services available at institutions**



With regard to the availability of language services, the majority of student participants mentioned that they are not aware of any language services available at their institution. In a question to students on whether or not language services are important, it is clear that students indeed have a need for such services (see Figure 9).

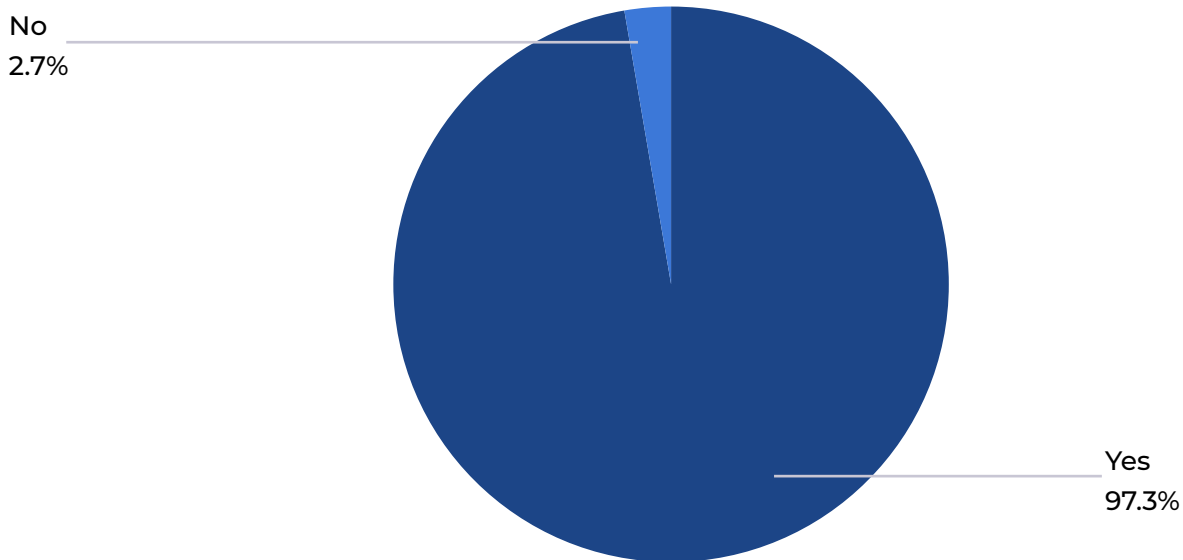


Figure 9: Students - Importance of language services

From the responses to open-ended questions, students repeatedly noted that language services play a crucial role in creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment, enabling students to fully participate and excel in their academic pursuits. They further explain that language services are significant in terms of developing a sense of cultural diversity, which is important in today's globalised world. Additionally, it was emphasised that language services could help students improve their communication skills, express themselves better, and build self-confidence.

Moreover, it allows students the opportunity to access information and resources in their preferred language, leading to better understanding and academic success. Some participants mentioned that communication and lectures should be conducted in a language that all students can understand, and certain language services will be required for this (this is probably an indication of a need for multilingual support).

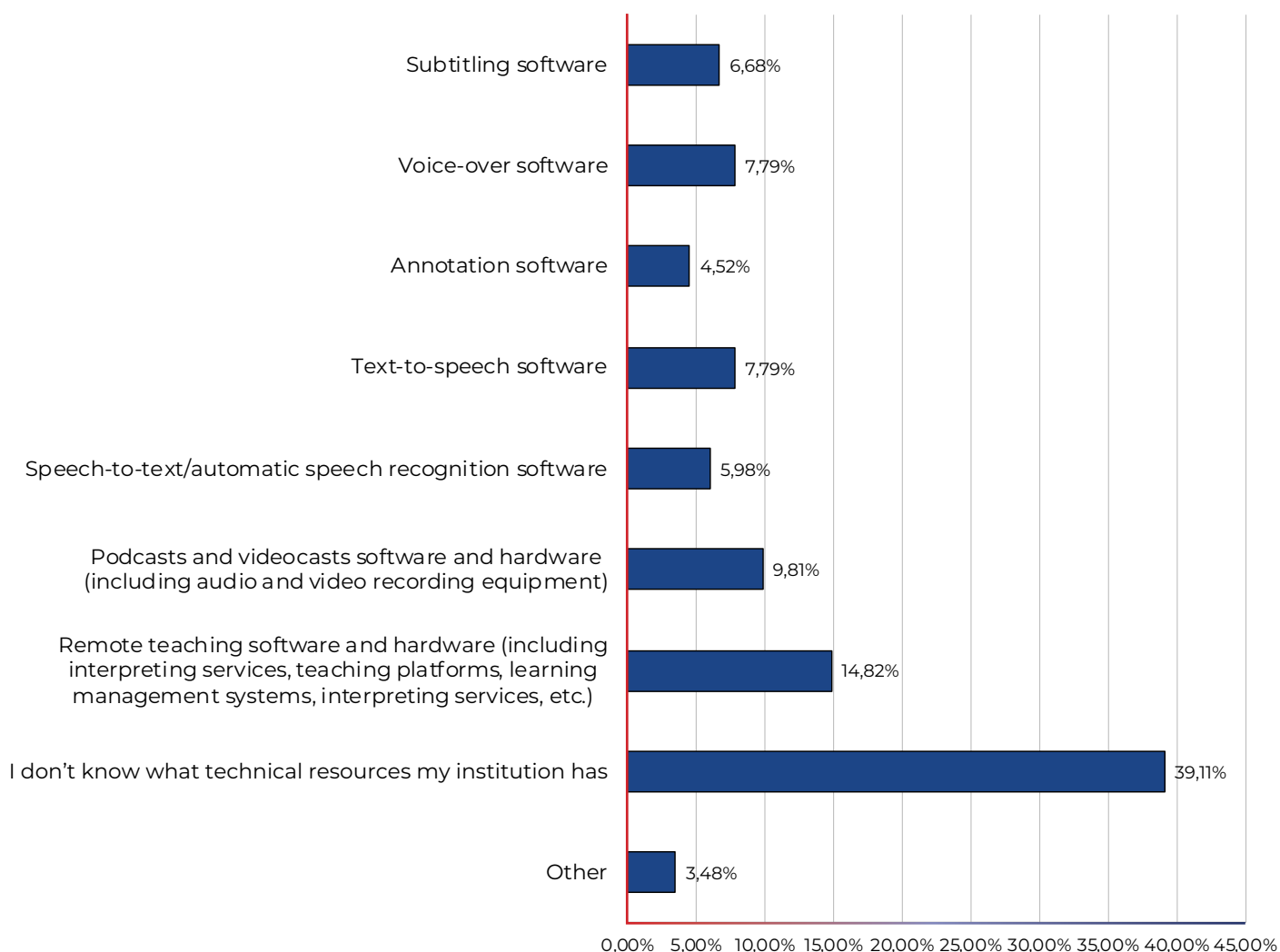
There were also requests for more than only the official institutional languages to be included in translation, interpreting and editing services and for the services to be more easily accessible to students. The main reason offered is that these additions and improvements would support students in better understanding their assignments, i.e., to accurately interpret and understand concepts and tasks, and ultimately improve their marks. From this it can be inferred that students indeed experience lack of ability in the languages of teaching and learning as a barrier to study success.

*The question, however, is whether it will be affordable and practical to implement such services in more than only the official institutional languages. To this end, collaborative efforts, or the services of a national entity, might in part be the solution.*

Even though it resides technically in the domain of teaching and learning (see also the next section of this report), students also expressed in this section of the questionnaire the need for provision of English language lessons or modules, in particular for those who exhibit poor written communication skills. This assertion did not directly extend to the other official languages, presumably because English is the de facto language of teaching and learning. Note, however, that repeated reference was made to the necessity of academic language ability classes, in all official languages, also known as academic literacy development. This might seem like a contradiction in terms, but the hegemony of English cannot be underestimated here.

Following a question to students asking which language services are not available and should be added, it is clear that not every service (interpreting, translation or editing) is available to students at every university, as students are requesting a variety of language services to be added, including interpreting, translation services, editing services, and Sign Language training.

*Many students also mentioned the need for interpreting services to accommodate students with disabilities or those who do not speak the primary language. Additionally, some students mentioned the need for translation or interpreting services to help understand lectures and materials in their native language.*



**Figure 10: Staff - Availability of technical resources**

Several suggestions, and repeatedly so, were made with regard to resources that universities can invest in, including but not limited to provision of multilingual dictionaries or glossaries in languages other than isiZulu, isiXhosa and Afrikaans, and offering prescribed books in multiple languages other than isiZulu, Afrikaans, and English.

Multilingual textbooks and academic scripts were also advocated for, and the availability of multilingual PowerPoint slides used in class – note in particular here the link to language services such as translation and editing services. Overall, students expressed a desire for more language resources to improve effective functioning at university.

In terms of technical resources that could be used to advance multilingualism in general (see **Figure 10**), the majority of staff indicated that they are not aware of the existence of these, which might be an indication that there is not sufficient investment in technologies and the required human resources to implement and sustain these.

This finding is supported by the qualitative results that, based on the responses, not much has been done in terms of utilising technical resources.

*In addition, it seems that there might be a lack of awareness or utilisation of these resources, especially at the institution-wide level. Consequently, it might be the case that communication with regard to the existence of technical resources is poor.*

Most universities invested in remote teaching software and hardware, which can be explained by the COVID 19 pandemic and universities being required to transfer to online and multimodal teaching and learning. In general, institutions do indicate a range of technical resources available that can also be employed as part of language support mechanisms, including hardware, software, and online platforms. However, staff need to be made aware of these, and trained to use them for more than one purpose; in other words, there seems to be a need for further investment and support to enhance the effectivity of these resources and ensure their widespread use and accessibility.







6.1.3 SECTION 3:

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*TEACHING &  
LEARNING*



## PURPOSE

Although English is the de facto language used for teaching and learning at higher education institutions, the use of other official languages to uphold Constitutional values such as inclusivity, social cohesion and equity of access is of great importance.

The purpose of this section, corresponding to Clauses 29, 30 and 31 of the Policy Framework, was to gather information on the readiness and (language) flexibility of institutions to include, develop, nurture and encourage the use of indigenous languages in their teaching and learning endeavours, as well as to provide support to students for whom English is not a home language. Universities have to clearly demonstrate in their policies and plans how they will support and enhance the values mentioned above, and how they can contribute to the development and intellectualising of the indigenous languages.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

***With regard to teaching and learning practices, both staff and students envision a multilingual pedagogical landscape. They highlighted the availability of multilingual study guides and materials, but some also indicated a lack of awareness that these resources exist.***

With due emphasis on funding and specific projects to promote multilingualism, a need for particular focusses on terminology development, creation and maintenance of resource banks, multilingual glossaries, exam paper translation, multilingual communication with staff and students, and a prioritisation of academic language support courses (also referred to as academic literacy courses) is evident. Although the majority of students expressed a desire to improve their general language skills (in any of the official South African languages), students' language needs for academia and work readiness were also highlighted as important.

Mixed opinions on the languages to be used for discussions in class and for completion of assignments were also evident. Though the majority of students expressed that English met their communication and administration needs at their higher education institutions, its perceived universality contrasts with the unmet specific language needs of some students.

Overall, improvements in multilingual resources for teaching and learning and providing opportunities and support for students (i.e., proper implementation that also serves a pedagogical purpose) to minimise the risk that language might be a barrier to study success, were highlighted repeatedly. Recognition of the manner in which Afrikaans developed to a fully-fledged academic language was also flagged as an important guiding factor that institutions can use to advance inclusivity and develop indigenous languages.



## TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Based on the results, it was noted that staff should become more multilingual in the official languages of the institution, at least at a conversational level, for which short learning programmes are recommended. It is, however, necessary to caution that if a language has no functional use, it is unlikely there will be a motivation to learn such a language. For instance, the results indicate that the Sintu languages do not play a functional role on most campuses, so the move to have staff acquire it may be a malinvestment if not managed carefully. Functional multilingualism should remain the focus.

Towards the attainment of functional multilingualism, the results indicate that English be retained as the main medium of instruction, with the recommendation that language support and resources for students who speak languages other than English be extended. If an institution plans to implement teaching and learning practices in an indigenous language, the provision of language support should be phased in gradually, as it would be difficult for students to switch immediately to learning in another language.

An important consideration of phasing languages in, is the (lack of) relation between language policy and practice in both higher education and pre-higher education spaces, especially since the role of language as an instrument of teaching and learning is emphasised. Ideally, the recommendation would be to have the Department of Basic Education be the catalyst for students to learn to function in their languages at an academic level before entering higher education (as demonstrated by the Eastern Cape Education Department in providing more support and access for students to learn and function in isiXhosa).

***Nevertheless, the recommendation in the context of higher education, is that students should first and foremost receive support with academic language development courses in the main medium/media of instruction (also referred to as academic literacy courses).***

Another recommendation in relation to the development of academic literacy is that terminology development in different disciplines is crucial. Many institutions focus on the development of multilingual glossaries (note that there are a number of multilingual glossaries available from different institutions for different fields of study), however, an important consideration and recommendation is to ensure that these are not only scientifically correct, but that they are also integrated in pedagogical planning and execution – merely providing a resource does not mean students will use it and will actually learn anything.

Many multilingual resources still need to be developed and preferably made available at a central point or through an overarching entity to oversee the gathering of existing resources, to commission the development of further resources, and to establish and maintain a central repository with resources (available to all public higher education institutions; all institutions should contribute to this). Moreover, it is highly recommended that collaboration (internally between faculties and departments; and externally between institutions) take place in terms of resource development and pedagogical functionality. Considering the recommendation of having a central entity to oversee the development, establishment and provision of resources, it is important to first investigate and then define the role of such an entity.

Accommodating language support in the teaching and learning environment is achievable through establishing academic reading and writing laboratories/centres to foster the implementation of functional multilingual language policies and plans. It is pointed out, however, that sometimes existing laboratories are never used. Language laboratories, albeit an outdated resource, can address a very important need, but it is recommended that their use be properly planned (pedagogically) and executed.

Further considerations regarding the provision of exam papers in more than one language are noted; however, costs, timeframes, and quality assurance are issues that need to be considered carefully, with the recommendation that guidance is provided to staff by professional entities through workshops.

There seems to be an idea among staff at certain institutions that translanguaging is the ultimate solution to advancing multilingualism. There are, however, two schools of thought on this matter. The biggest critique against translanguaging is that lecturers are not well-trained in this endeavour, with the end result showing no signs of proper pedagogical planning and execution. In most cases translanguaging seems to be window-dressing. There seems to be no convincing relation in the nomenclature between code-switching and mixing and bi- or tri-lingual competence. Moreover, the very nature of what is considered translanguaging actually nullifies the need for promoting multilingualism. It could very well be considered a contradiction in terms by some scholars.



## LOW-HANGING FRUITS

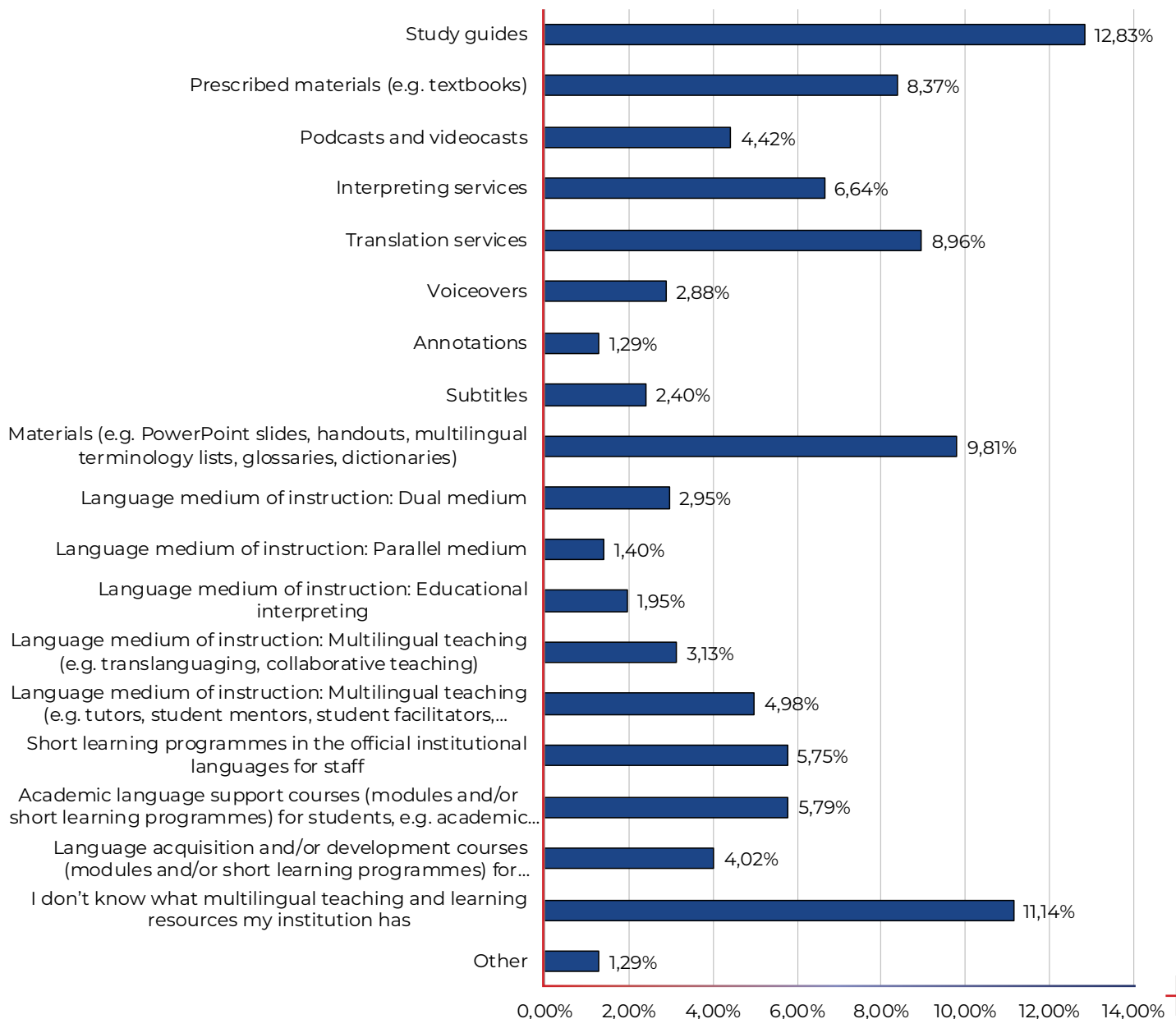
- Harness and enable support that is provided by students for students
- Make the ability to acquire languages that are not known accessible to both staff and students
- Grow communities of practice, both internally and externally, with regards to multilingual assignments and subsequent assessment
- Stimulate a culture of sharing information and provide platforms to aggregate and disseminate such information, especially those that are already openly available for different domains of higher education
- Collaborate with other institutions to enhance teaching and learning resources, e.g., multilingual glossaries, text books, exam papers
- Institutionalise and invest in academic language ability support and development



## DETAIL FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

In terms of multilingual teaching and learning resources (see **Figure 11**) staff indicated that study guides and other materials like PowerPoint presentations, handouts, terminology lists, etc. are indeed available in a number of languages. However, and again, a large number of participants indicated that they are not aware of the existence of such resources in their specific institutions, or in their specific disciplines. The need for sufficient funding and opportunities for specific projects like the development and sustaining of resource banks or repositories, the development of multilingual glossaries, translation of exam papers, multilingual communication with staff and students, language development opportunities for staff and students, and so forth were highlighted in feedback.

Of particular interest was the fact that academic language support courses (typically in English) were highlighted as really important in open discussions, despite their having a relatively low value in the quantitative data (5.79%). Translation services are indeed available, but it was reiterated that such services came at a high cost, or were available to a select few only. Another anomaly is the percentage of 9.81% awarded to multilingual prescribed materials – in open discussions it was argued that prescribed materials are available in English only in the majority of cases; however, it was emphasised that staff go to the trouble of translating important parts of, e.g., text books into indigenous languages. Although at a low value (5.75%), the availability of short learning programmes in the official languages for staff is commendable.

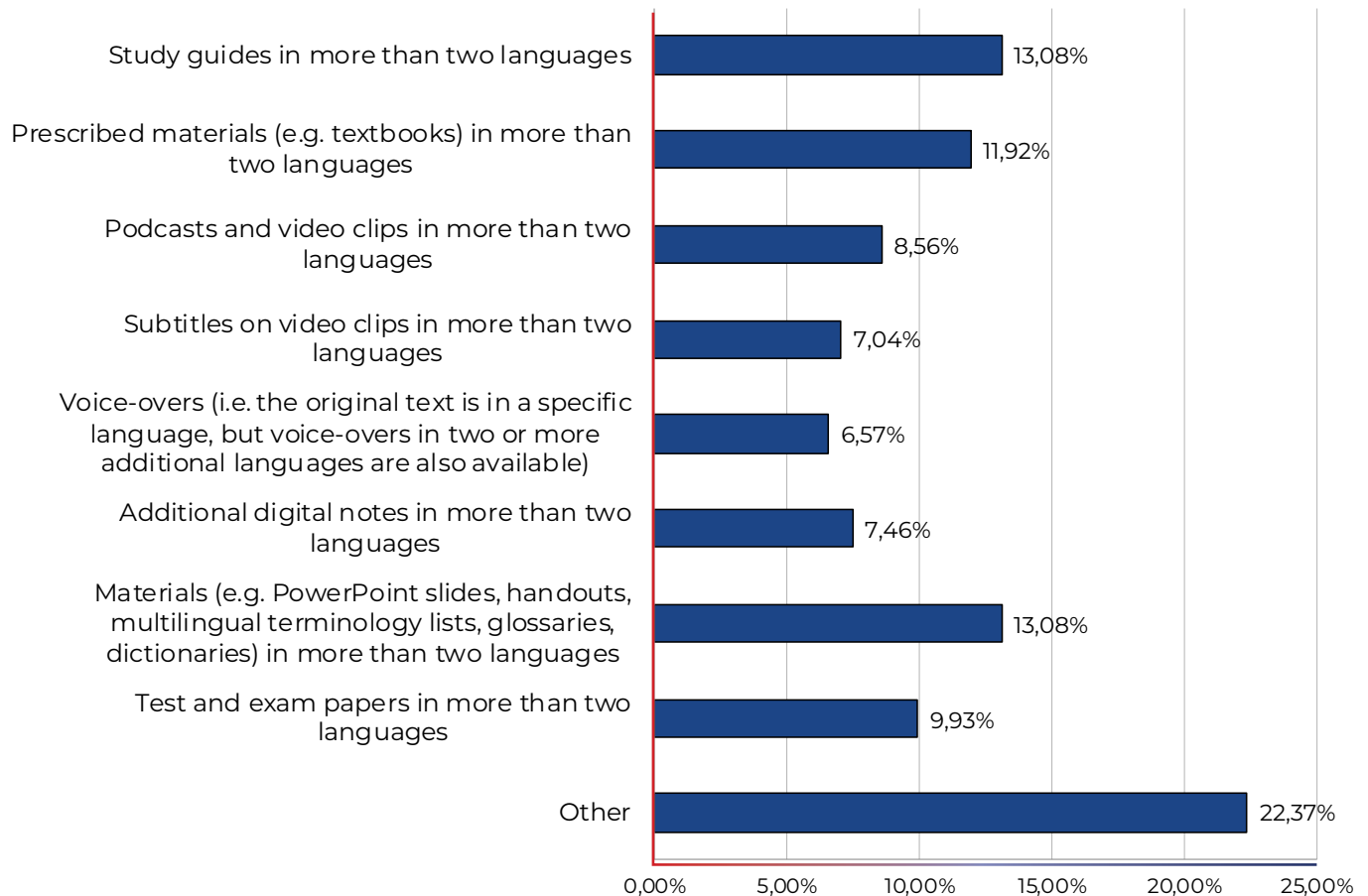


**Figure 11: Staff - Multilingual teaching and learning resources available at universities**

Student feedback is included in **Figure 12**. A similar picture unfolds as with staff. Multilingual study guides (13.08%) and lecture materials (13.08%) are measuring at the highest levels. It is of interest that the multilingual prescribed materials category (11.92%) is also measuring high, as is the case with staff. The same anomaly as discussed above was also noted in open discussions with students where they indicated that almost all prescribed materials are available in English only.

In response to the question about other multilingual teaching and learning resources at their university, many students indicated that they did not know of any, or that their university did not have such resources. Some students mentioned the availability of specific resources like posters, transcription services, language laboratories, library resources, interpreting services, and online classes, but overall, the majority of students indicated that there were no other multilingual resources available at their university.

Resulting from this feedback, the theme that emerged strongly was that of a lack of multilingual teaching and learning resources available at universities – the main medium of instruction is, e.g., English, but then there is a lack (or absence) of translation services. In some instances, students indicated that the current language policy specifies English (only) as the medium of instruction.



**Figure 12: Students - Multilingual teaching and learning resources available at universities**

*Student data also shows that institutions indeed have a range of initiatives and (sometimes informal) support systems in place to promote multilingualism and accommodate students with different language backgrounds. These, however, are few and far between.*

*Examples of enhancing services and support include:*

- offering courses and study materials in multiple languages
- providing translation and interpretation services
- facilitating the use of different languages in lectures and assignments
- organising cultural events and activities

- availing printed and electronic media
- providing more language support inside classes, as well as outside of the classroom
- appointing lecturers who speak multiple languages (especially the official institutional languages)
- training lecturers in the official languages of an institution
- introducing compulsory language modules in the curriculum
- creating language policy and planning awareness-raising events
- encouraging inclusivity and accommodation through different languages

It also emerged that students have mixed opinions about the use of English. Some perceive English to be prioritised over other languages; some are of the opinion that using English only is a practical and sustainable approach. The inferred question in response to the latter, was highlighted repeatedly: *What would be the cost not to implement mechanisms to support access in multiple languages?*

Also, if English only is considered to be the only practical and sustainable solution, it can be considered an escape clause in itself, which is not allowed by the Policy Framework.

Further considerations regarding students' preferred languages for discussions in class were noted when they were asked if it is sensible to use any language other than English to communicate research findings or complete assignments (note Table 6). Responses were mixed. Some students believed it would be sensible to use other languages, such as their home language or other South African languages. Others believed that English should remain the primary language for communication. The same mixed response is evident from the qualitative results where some students mention their preference for class discussions being conducted in English, while some students mention that they prefer a mixture of English and their home language to better express their views.

**In a related question asking students what they believe should change in the classroom regarding language use, responses include suggestions for inclusivity of indigenous languages, the use of multiple languages, and the availability of interpreters.**

In another related question, students were asked if it is sensible to use any language other than English to communicate research findings or to complete assignments. The majority of participants indicated that it is sensible to use languages other than English in research assignments. Many feel that using their mother tongue or another South African language would allow for better understanding and expression of ideas. Some also mention the importance of inclusivity and accommodating students who are not native English speakers.

*Some students also argued that it was important for people to understand the content of published research regardless of the language, while others felt that it could be beneficial to use languages that would better serve the needs of certain individuals or communities. Some students, however, expressed concerns about the practicality and potential exclusion of non-English speakers. Overall, the survey responses indicated a range of perspectives on the topic.*

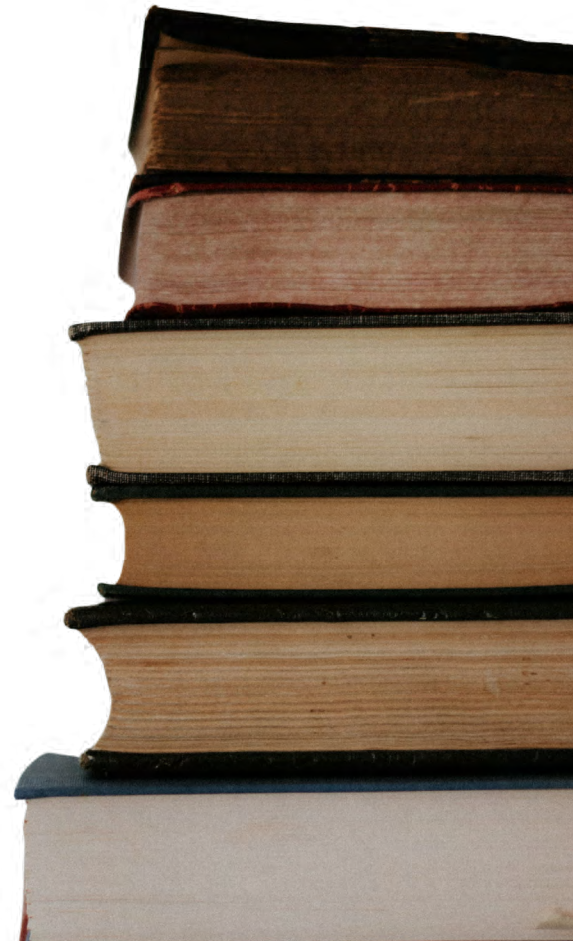
Students were also asked if they felt that their lecturers were equipped to proficiently perform their teaching and learning responsibilities in the official language of the university. Based on the survey responses, it is clear that opinions in this matter are divided. Some students believe that lecturers are well-equipped and proficient in multiple languages, while others feel that many lecturers are only fluent in one or two languages, which may make it difficult for them to teach in all official languages – note that there is no expectation that lecturers should be able to teach in all official languages of an institution.

Additionally, some students mentioned that lecturers from foreign countries may not be familiar with South African indigenous languages and need to develop their knowledge of South African languages.

There are students who believe that the majority of lecturers are equipped and proficient in the official languages, especially English. It is also worth noting that some students mentioned that lecturers should stick to using English, or Afrikaans, as the medium of instruction since they don't necessarily display adequate mastery of other languages. It was also confirmed repeatedly that lecturers have the necessary qualifications and training to teach their discipline and in most cases are able to effectively communicate and teach in English or Afrikaans.

A few, however, indicated that some lecturers struggle with English as a medium of instruction, and may struggle with teaching in the native languages of South Africa due to their own language limitations or diverse backgrounds. Students were also asked what they felt should change in the classroom regarding language use.

Based on the responses from the survey, the most common suggestions for changes in classrooms in terms of language use are that lecturers should firstly accommodate a diversity of languages in their teaching and learning endeavours, e.g., by structuring lessons in such a way that students can communicate in different languages, allowing interpretation of concepts and discussions where necessary, and having translations of subject-specific terminology readily available for use in class.

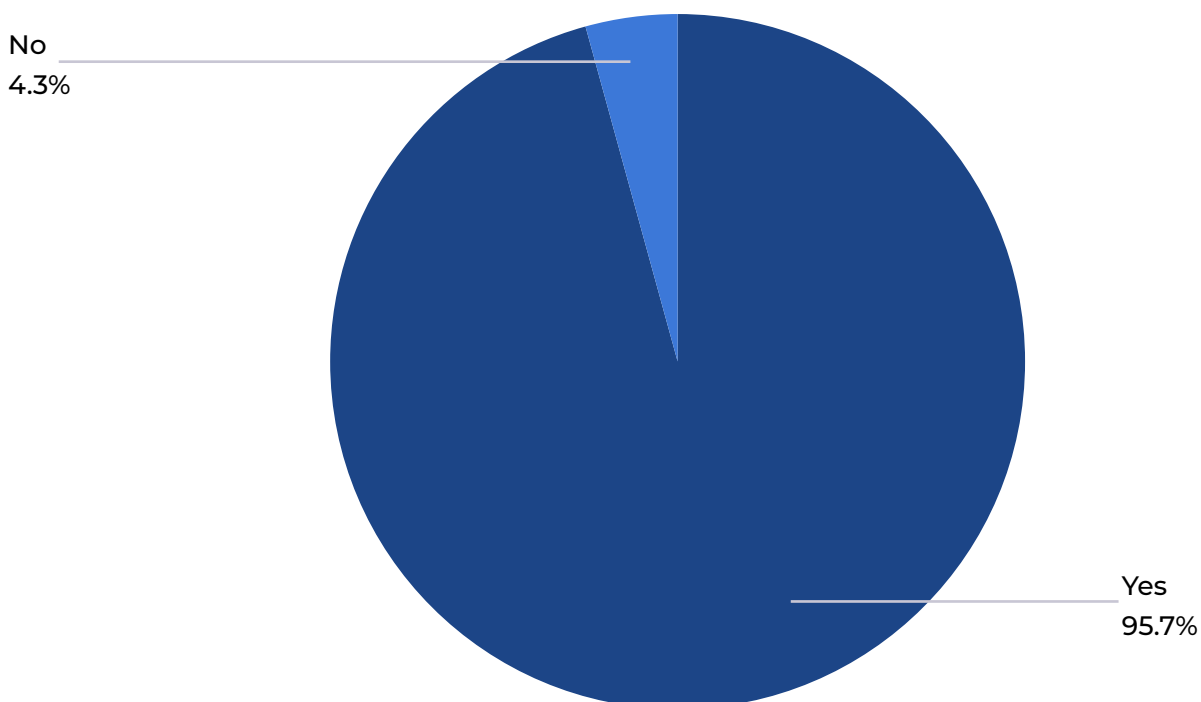


*Students also expressed the need to communicate in the language they feel most comfortable with, and would appreciate it if accommodations were made for students who speak different languages (apart from using the official languages of the institution only).*

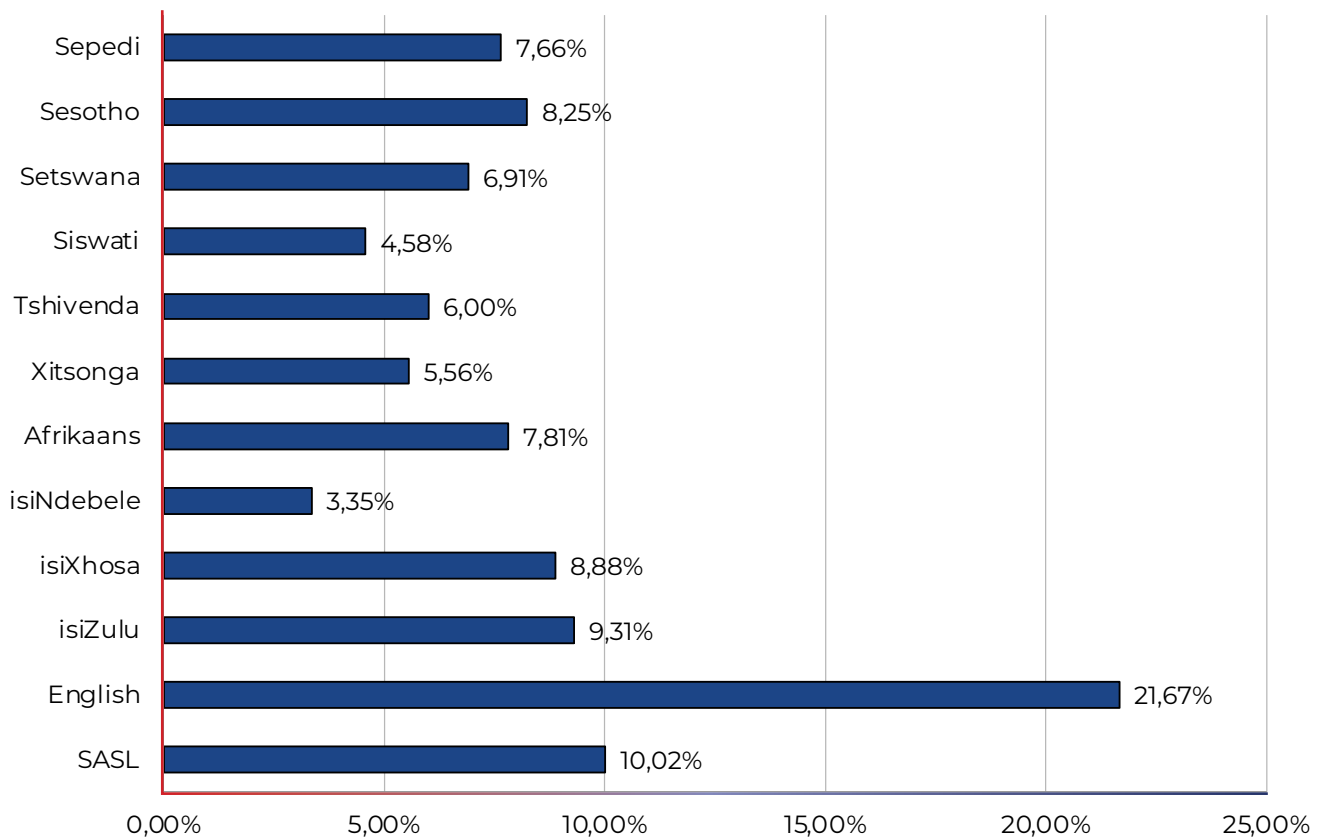
When students were asked whether they would like to improve their general language skills (**Figure 13**), and if so, in which languages (**Figure 14**), the majority were in support of further language development (95.73%) in the official languages of South Africa, including English. This might articulate with the assertion that students are content with English as the main medium of instruction, but that they need support with English for academic purposes. It is of interest that further development in Afrikaans (7.81%) drops here, compared to data presented above where Afrikaans is highlighted as one of the main media of instruction and also included as an official language at institutional level.

Noteworthy, is the large need for improving SA Sign Language (10.02%), isiZulu (9.31%), isiXhosa (8.88%), Sesotho (8.25%) and Tshivenda (6.00%). It might be the case that lecturers prefer students to communicate in English (e.g., assignments and exams) and not necessarily in Afrikaans, or any other language for that matter.

The same applies to students preferring to communicate in English. The interest in SA Sign Language is perhaps due to a greater awareness among students regarding matters of social justice and the advocacy for SASL in general, as well as the fact that it recently became the 12th official language. Unfortunately, no language, except for SA Sign Language and English, measured higher than 10%.



**Figure 13:** Students - Needs expressed to improve general language skills



**Figure 14: Students - Languages students wish to improve**

Overall, it seems that there is a desire for more language inclusivity and flexibility in classrooms, enabling students to learn and express themselves in the language they are most comfortable with. The consensus among the responses is that there should be more flexibility and accommodation regarding language use in the classroom. Students believe that they should be allowed to use their home languages and have content translated or interpreted to improve understanding. Some students also suggested using English as the primary language for teaching and learning, but incorporating other languages for better comprehension.

**Others mentioned the need for language modules (in particular academic language ability modules) and the use of translators or translation tools. Overall, it seems that students have a desire for multilingual teaching and learning contexts and equal opportunities to learn and participate. Students are seemingly very willing to advance their language ability and improve their language skills, both generally and academically.**







**6.1.4 SECTION 4:**

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*LANGUAGE OF  
COMMUNICATION &  
ADMINISTRATION*

## PURPOSE

This section articulates with Clause 32 of the Framework, where it states that “[a]ll official internal institutional communication must be conveyed in at least two official languages other than English, as a way of cultivating a culture of multilingualism. Institutions must consider all possible options to accentuate the use of indigenous African languages in official communication and ceremonies.”

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Communication and administration require alignment with the ethos of multilingualism. This audit report encourages institutions to seriously consider a multilingual approach to signage, marketing and general communication, as well as to explore ways to incorporate languages other than their official languages in institutional communication. The predominant role of English in communication is acknowledged while highlighting the value of the need for inclusivity.



### TAKE HOME MESSAGE

There are two important considerations in terms of the recommendations for the languages of communication and administration. These two considerations address the notion of establishing true functional multilingual institutions, and perhaps matters of communication and administration need to have their role re-examined in terms of supporting functional multilingualism in the public higher education sphere. The findings specifically note that universities should perhaps invest in communicating with stakeholders in more than one language only, despite most participants noting that English does meet their needs.

There were a significant number of participants though, who noted that they would like to see equal treatment of all languages. There is potential here to discuss the role of English compared to underrepresented languages of the respective institutions with regard to official communication, signage and marketing.

Retaining English as the main medium of communication (although participants do seem mostly comfortable with this status quo) has the potential to undermine functional multilingual efforts. Furthermore, the results also show that marketing and signage should appear or be available in more than one language. In order to elevate underrepresented official languages of the institution, it is recommended that such languages be promoted to reach the same level of function as, in this case, English.

Another important consideration is that this recommendation is dependent on the success of the other recommendations regarding promoting functional multilingualism in the design, execution, and maintenance of language policies and plans with regard to language policy and implementation as well as teaching, learning and scholarship.

In sum, it is recommended that general communication on administrative, educational and research matters should be available in more than one language so that all languages of the institution become functional. Further, signage and marketing materials should be available in more than one language as this creates a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere.



## LOW-HANGING FRUITS

- Build on successes and lessons learned from institutions who provide administrative and other forms of documentation in multiple languages
- Utilise computer aided translation which can make translations more efficient by reusing and sharing translation memories
- Utilise “tooltips” or similar technologies in online text that can unlock meaning in more languages

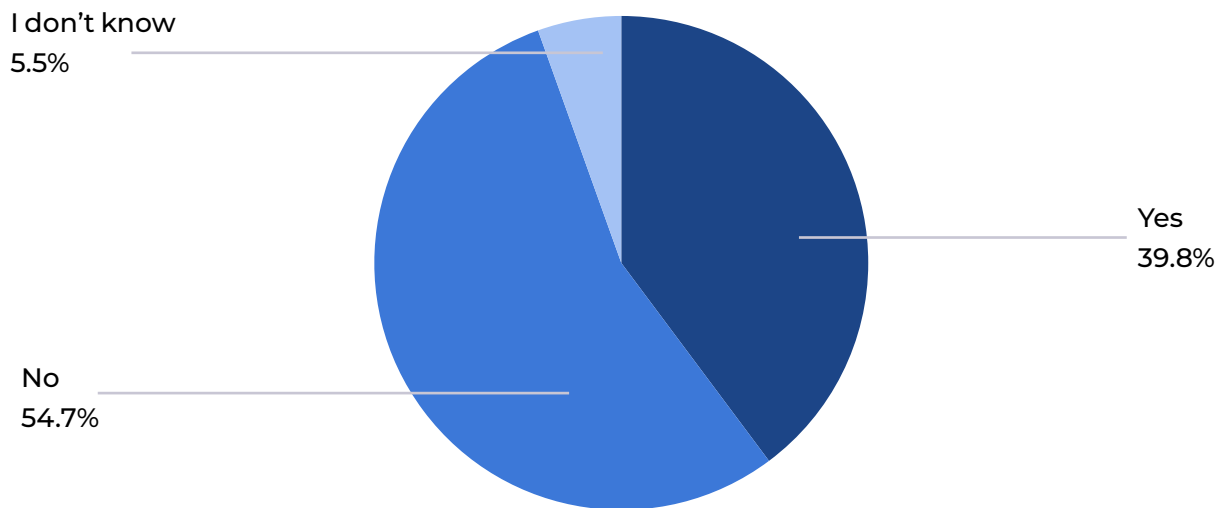




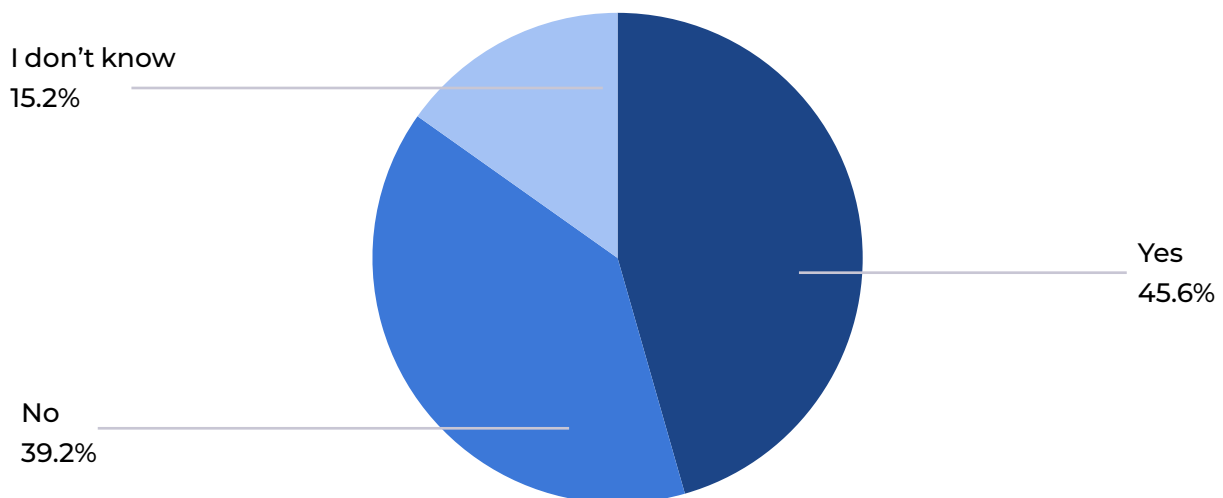
## DETAIL FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

Responses by staff on whether institutions adhere to the principle of using English and at least two additional languages, indicate that a fairly large number (39.79%) of institutions indeed use English and at least two additional languages, but the majority of universities (54.73%) do not – see **Figure 15**. Note that in open discussions it was seen that some institutions in practice use English only.

Responses by students (**Figure 16**) on whether institutions adhere to the aforementioned principle, also indicate that a fairly large number (45.57%) of institutions indeed use English and at least two additional languages, and 39.24% do not. It is alarming that a fairly high percentage of students (15.19%) do not know. Perhaps this is the case because students do not necessarily pay attention to language per se in internal communication. Note that in open discussions it was seen, as with staff, that some institutions in practice use English only.



**Figure 15: Staff - Use of languages other than English for internal communication**

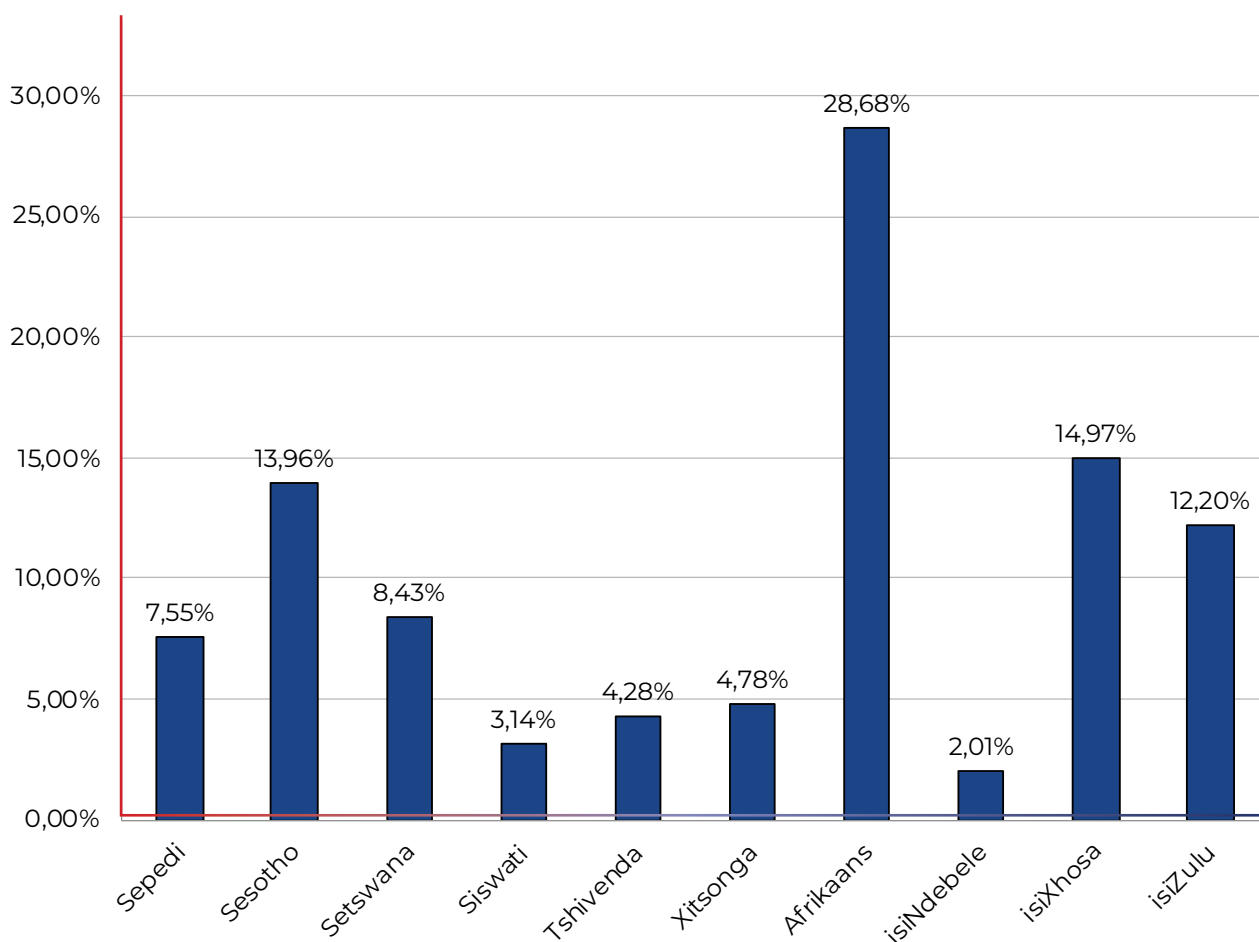


**Figure 16: Students - Use of languages other than English for internal communication**

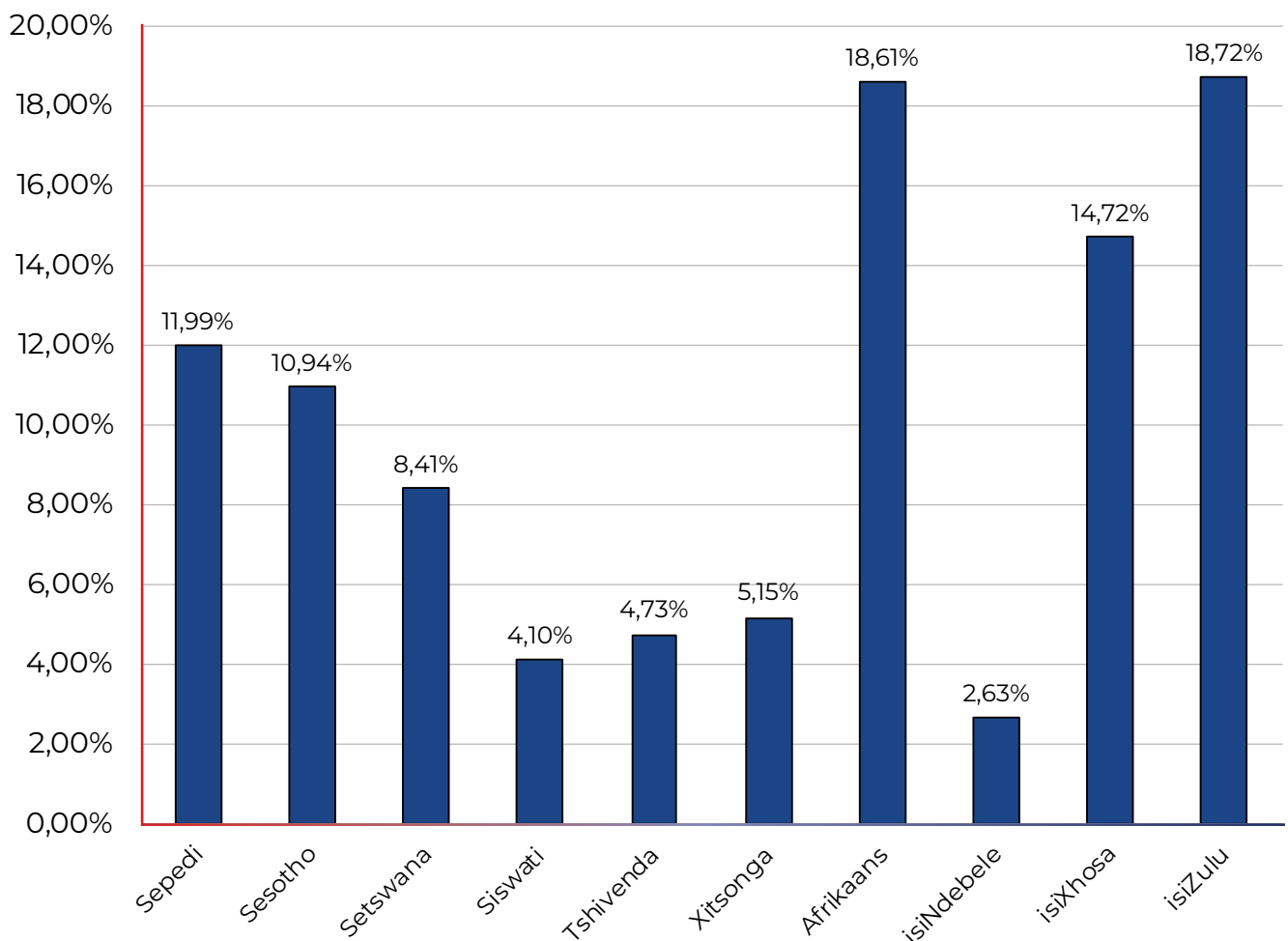
**Figures 18 and 19**, respectively, provide insight into the languages, other than English, already used for internal communication. Afrikaans (28.68%) is highlighted by staff as the language used most frequently for internal communication and administration, apart from English. Of interest is the fact that students highlighted isiZulu (18.72%) as the language being used most frequently, apart from English. The difference between isiZulu and Afrikaans, however, is marginal in the student data. If compared to the official languages used in higher education (see **Figure 2** and Table 2), it is noteworthy that universities should perhaps invest in communicating with stakeholders in more than one language only.

*When asked if the languages of communication and administration at their university meet students' needs, the majority of students responded positively, stating that they understand the languages used or that their university accommodates their language preferences.*

However, there were also some students who expressed dissatisfaction, stating that their home language or other languages are not included, or that they would like equal treatment for all languages. Some students also mentioned the need for improvement and the inclusion of more indigenous languages.



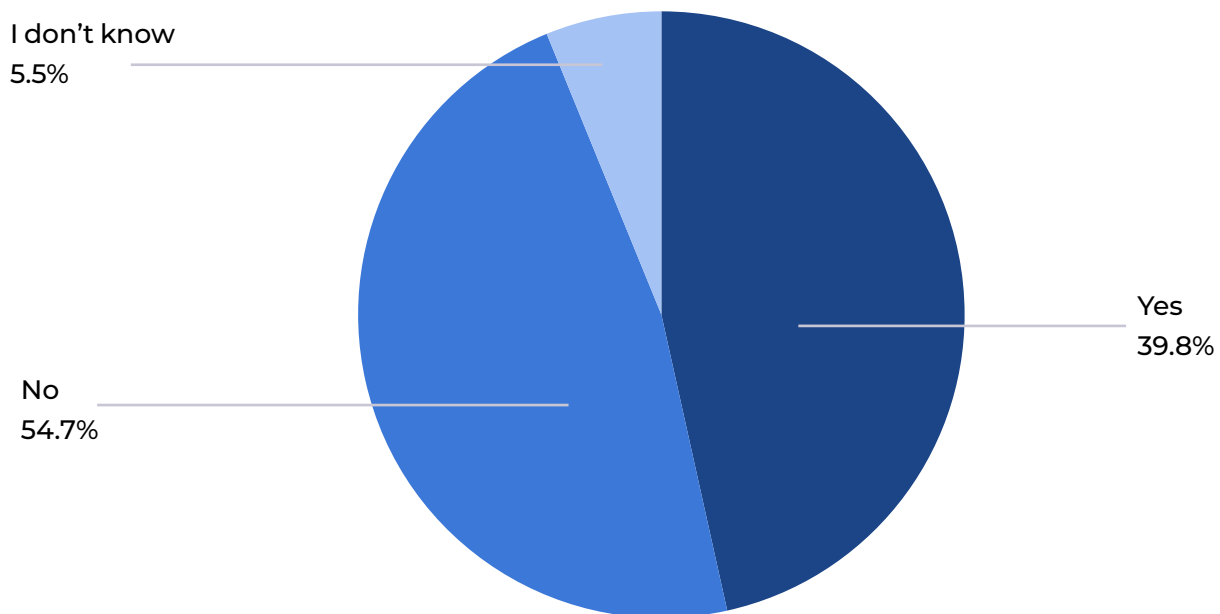
**Figure 17:** Staff - Specific languages other than English used for internal communication



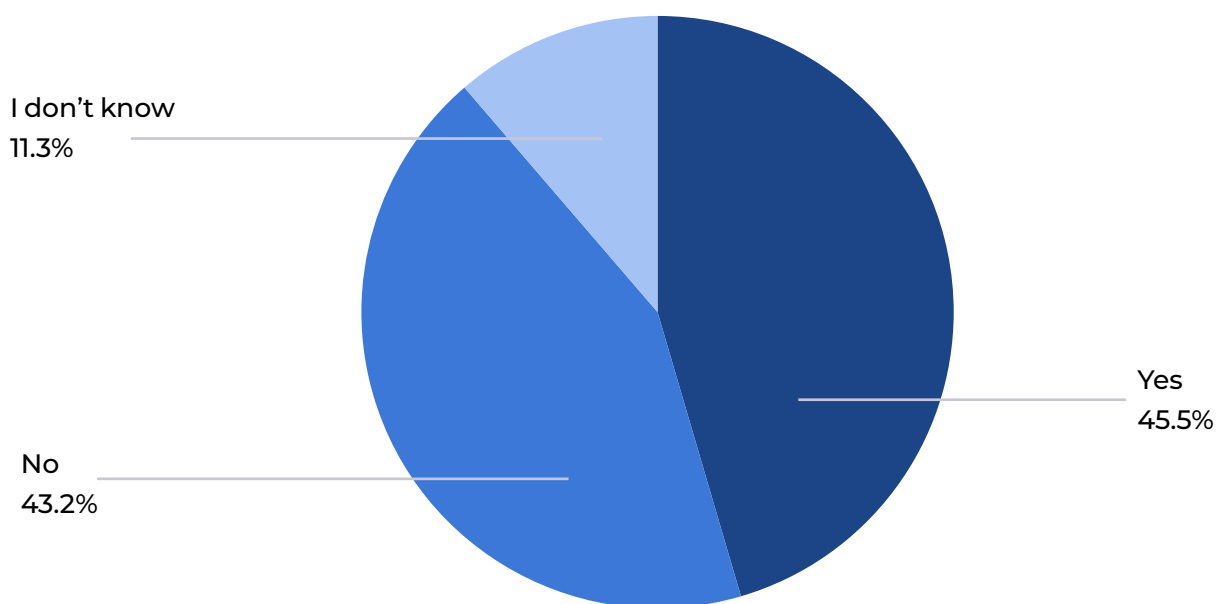
● **Figure 18:** Students - Specific languages other than English used for internal communication

With regard to signage, 46.51% of staff indicated that their institutions indeed use at least two additional languages, apart from English, and 47.31% indicated that their institutions do not – see **Figure 19**. It was reiterated in open discussions that some universities use English only. 45.45% of students indicated that their institutions indeed use at least two additional languages, apart from English, and 43.24% indicated that their institutions do not – see **Figure 20**. An alarmingly high number of students (11.31%) indicated that they don't know.

*Perhaps this is the case because students don't necessarily pay attention to language per se when considering signage on campus. Note that in open discussions it was noted, as with staff, that some institutions in practice use English only.*



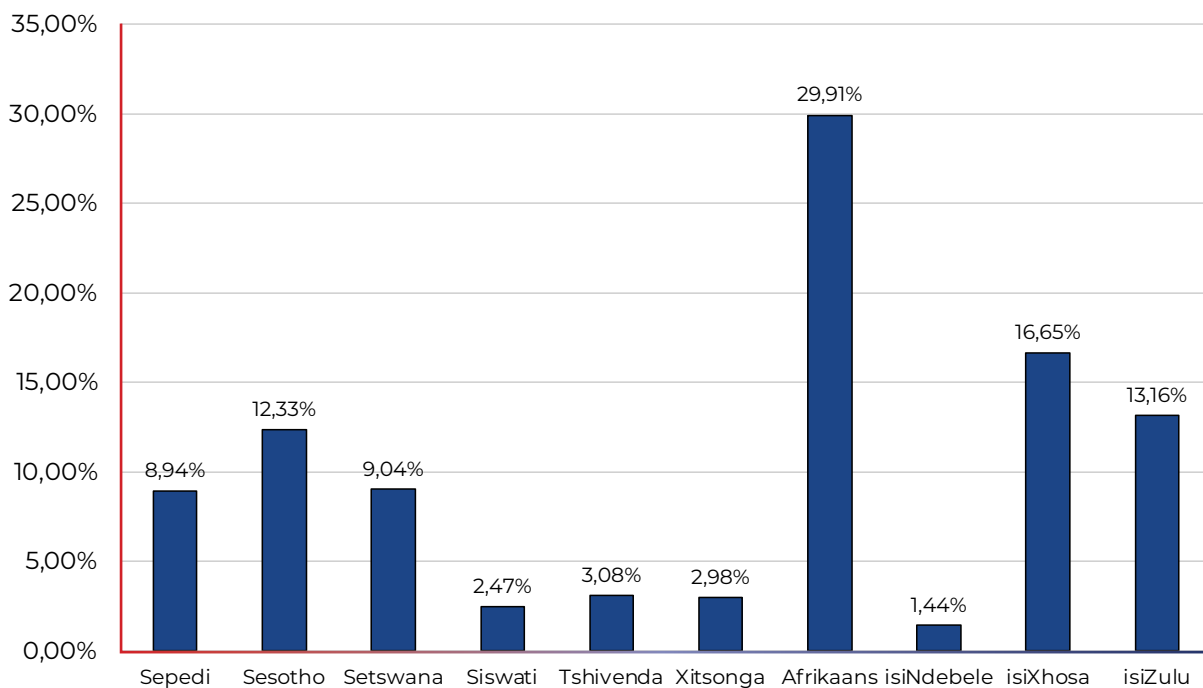
● Figure 19: Staff - Languages other than English used for signage



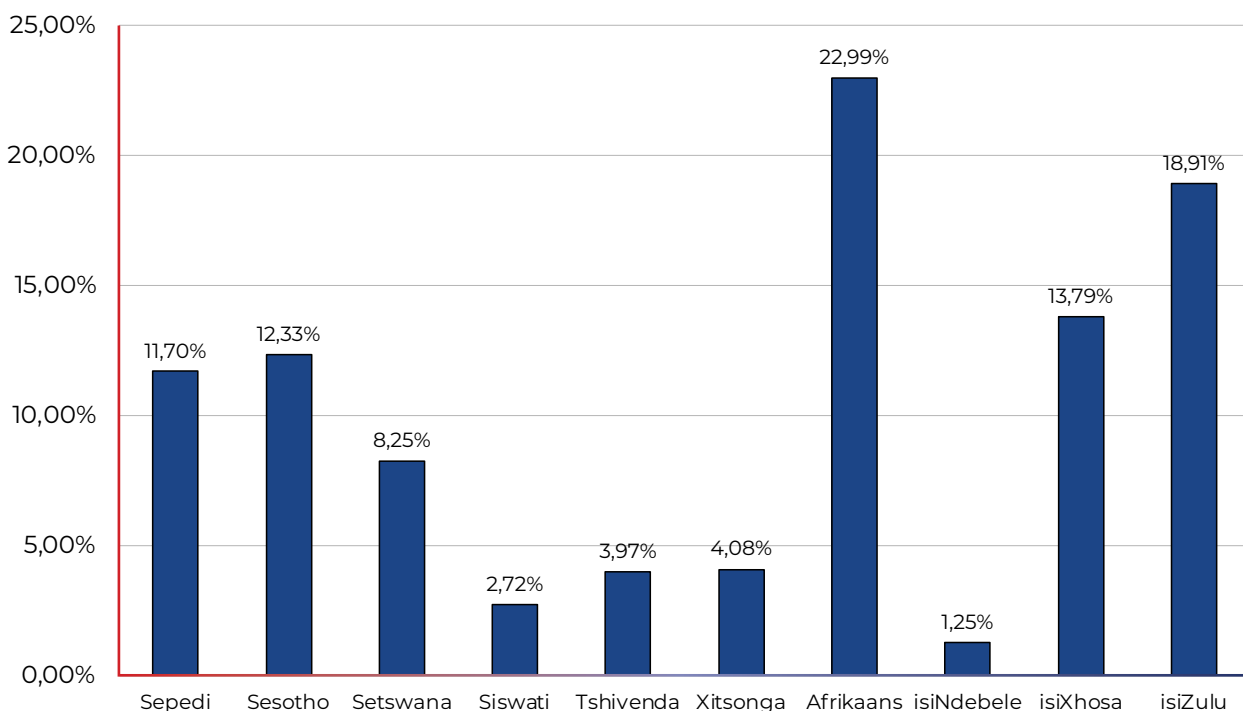
● Figure 20: Students - Languages other than English used for signage

When asked which languages are used for signage, apart from English, it again transpired from the staff feedback that Afrikaans occurs most frequently (29.91%), with isiXhosa (16.65%), isiZulu (13.16%) in second and third positions. isiNdebele (1.44%), Siswati (2.47%) Xitsonga (2.98%), and Tshivenda (3.08%) occur least frequently, which again is understandable as there are few institutions with these languages included as their official languages.

**Figure 21** provides more detail. Student feedback on languages used for signage, apart from English, indicates that Afrikaans occurs most frequently (22.99%), with isiZulu (18.91%) and isiXhosa (13.79%) in second and third positions, and Sesotho (12.33%) in fourth position. IsiNdebele (1.25%), Siswati (2.72%), Tshivenda (3.97%) and Xitsonga (4.08%) occur least frequently, which again is understandable as there are few institutions with these languages included as their official languages. Staff and student data in this case articulate with each other. **Figure 22** provides more detail.

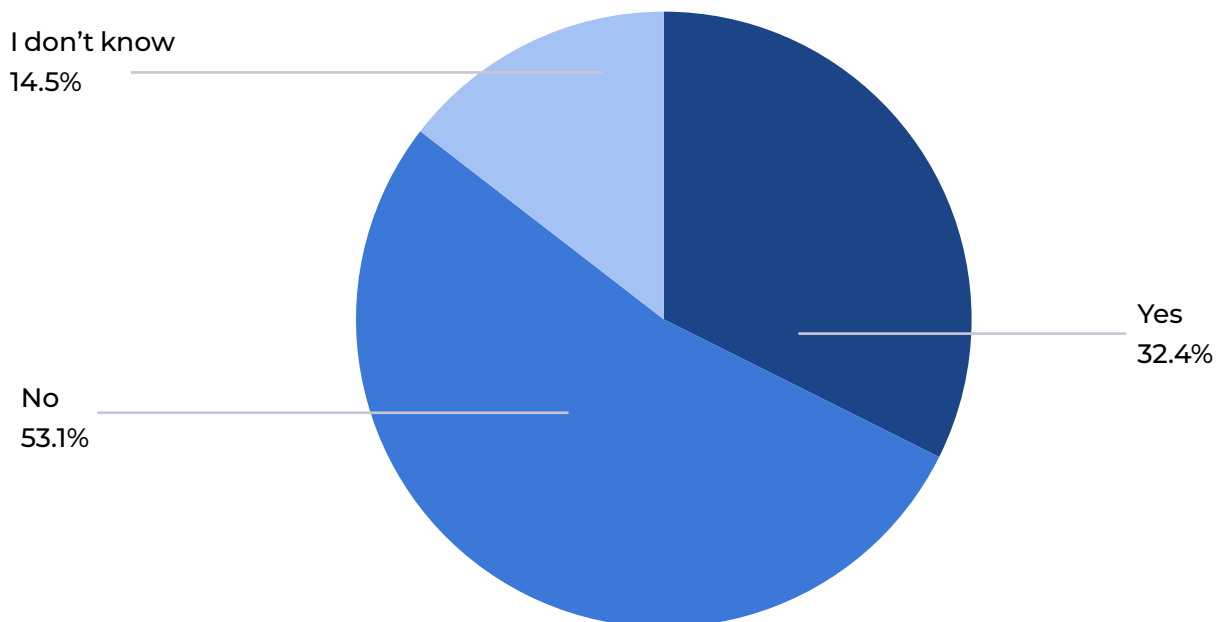


**Figure 21: Staff - Specific languages other than English used for signage**

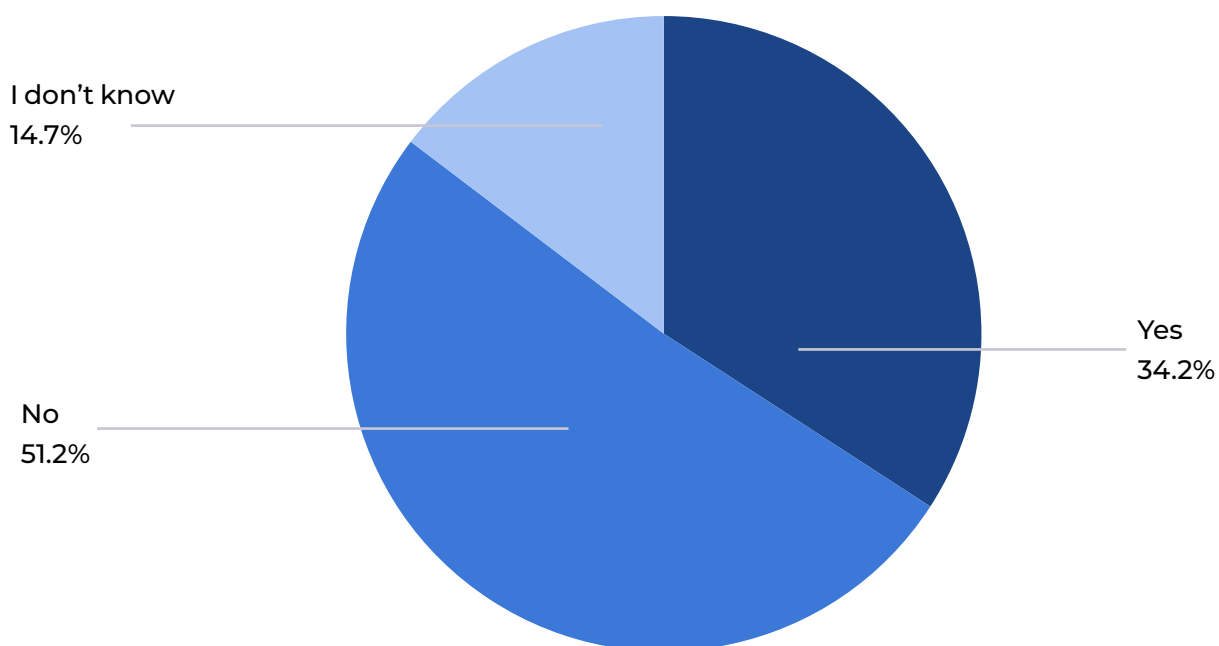


**Figure 22: Students - Specific languages other than English used for signage**

With regard to marketing, 32.38% of staff and 34.15% of students indicated that their institutions indeed use at least two additional languages, apart from English, and 53.09% (staff) and 51.17% (students) indicated that their institutions do not - see **Figures 24** and **25**. A fairly large percentage of both staff and students do not know.



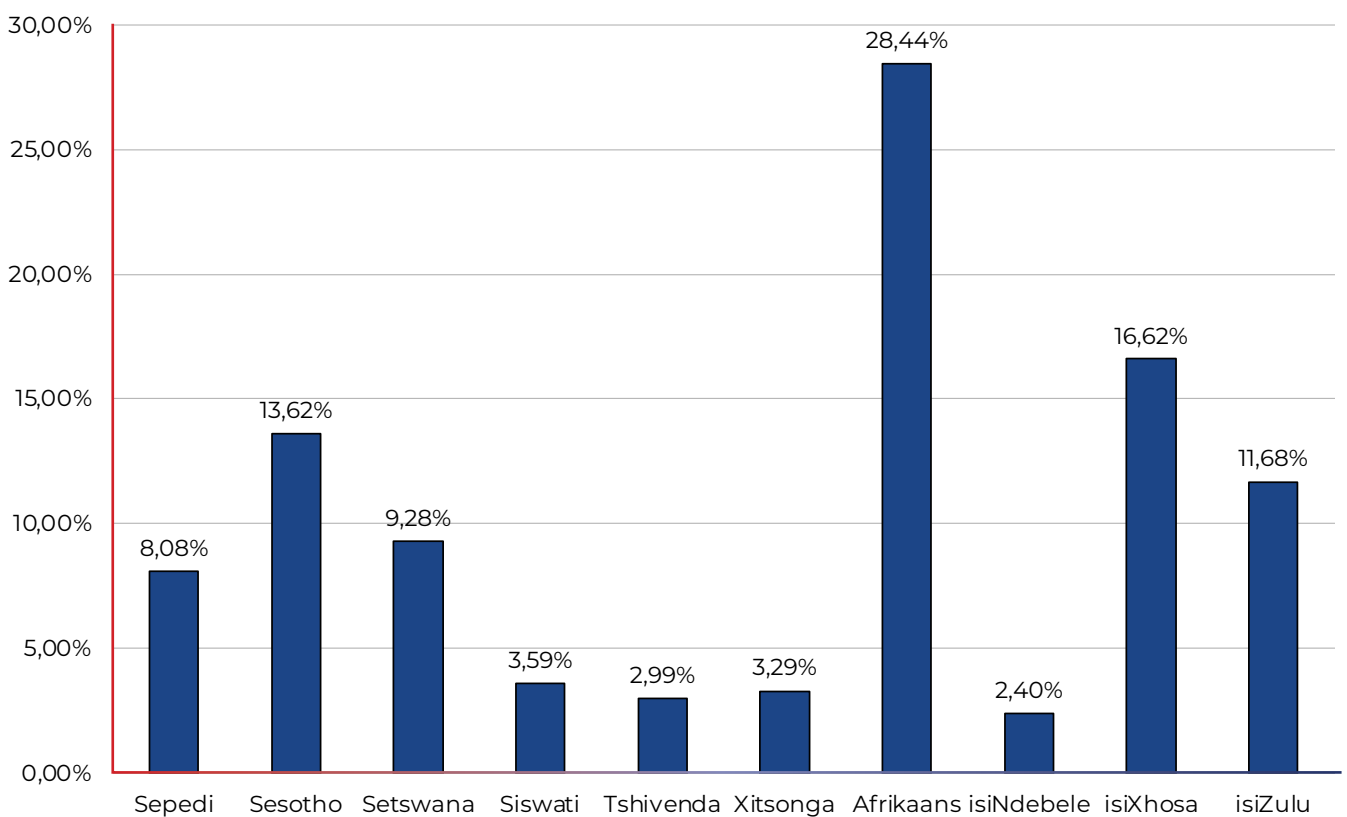
• **Figure 23:** Staff - Languages other than English used for marketing



• **Figure 24:** Students - Languages other than English used for marketing

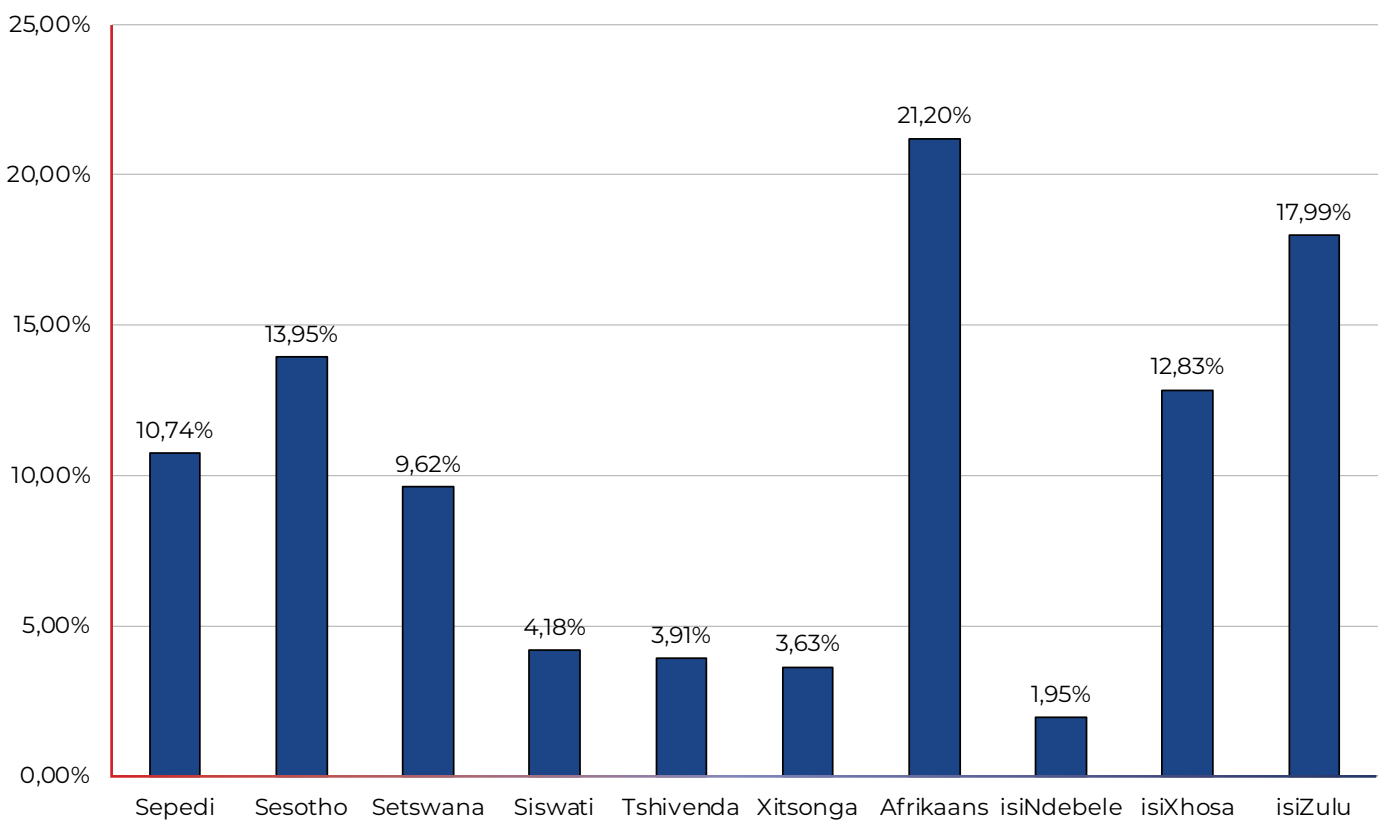
When asked which languages are used for marketing, apart from English, it again transpired that Afrikaans occurs most frequently (28.44% staff, and 21.20% students). From the staff survey isiXhosa (16.62%) and Sesotho (13.62%) were highlighted as those languages used most frequently, apart from English and Afrikaans. IsiNdebele (2.40%), Tshivenda (2.99%), Xitsonga (3.29%) and Siswati (3.59%) occur least frequently, which again is understandable as there are few institutions with these languages included as their official languages.

From the student survey isiZulu (17.99%) and Sesotho (13.95%) were highlighted as those languages used most frequently, apart from English and Afrikaans. IsiNdebele (1.95%), Xitsonga (3.63%), Tshivenda (3.91%) and Siswati (4.18%) occur least frequently. Staff and student data in this case, therefore, also confirm each other. **Figures 26 and 27** provide more detail.



● **Figure 25:** Staff - Specific languages other than English used for marketing





● **Figure 26: Students - Specific languages other than English used for marketing**

*It is important to note that some participants listed multiple languages (also reflected in the quantitative results) apart from the official South African languages, while others indicated that they did not have any experience with unofficial languages. The frequencies for the unofficial languages were, however, not high enough to report any significant use of the former by either students or staff.*

Staff were also asked how they think languages can be used by different stakeholders (students, staff, the institution, etc.) for different tasks or purposes to truly and effectively foster and advance multilingualism. The responses indicate much the same narrative as suggestions made in other sections of the report.







## 6.1.5 SECTION 5:

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### *STUDENT LIFE / CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES*







## PURPOSE

Also referring to Clause 32 of the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions, communication for co-curricular activities should be in two official languages other than English.

*Guiding factors identified that could assist in informing the choice(s) of language(s) used in the various co-curricular programmes and activities at higher education institutions, include:*

(i) The situation and context in which the co-curricular programme and activity are conducted. (ii) The purpose and envisaged outcome of the co-curricular programme or activity. (iii) The sustainability of the language approach in future instances. (iv) The language needs and proficiency of members participating in the co-curricular programme or activity, seen in the context of improving the language capacity of the members.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Finally, although the majority of respondents had little to comment on language use in student life, some students emphasised the significance of language for communication, building relationships, cultural understanding and the importance of linguistic diversity, pointing out that knowing multiple languages enhances social interaction and cross-cultural connections.

Overall, students confirmed the significant role of language in their lives and its benefits in communication, broadening perspectives, developing emotional skills and creating opportunities. The value of multilingualism in student life and co-curricular activities, as well as the value of its enrichment and diversity, is evident from the data.



## TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Multilingualism is seen as an asset, and broadly speaking, it was noted by participants that multilingual approaches to student life and co-curricular activities should be encouraged. The diversity of languages spoken on campus outside of the teaching and learning context, was noted as being helpful in building positive relationships between different cultures. In this context, the recommendation would be to continue with the various institutions' efforts in fostering a multilingual student life experience as expressed in the details from the questionnaires. Such approaches include:

***“creating groups of people and organising activities for those who speak the same language, organising additional classes or meetings to communicate in their home language in an attempt to support their peers, translating materials, holding campaigns and workshops, teaching others, and being ambassadors for their language [...] Other initiatives include language awareness weeks, and short courses in other languages. Institutions also provide multilingual initiatives, developing language policies, and promoting communication in more than one language. Various programs, societies, and events targeting the promotion of multilingualism are offered, such as bilingual tutorials, music ensembles, language awareness campaigns, and filmmaking.”***



### LOW-HANGING FRUITS

- Learn from what is offered in the sector, partner e.g., in running language appreciation weeks
- Students are core to the implementation of the Policy Framework – provide mechanisms to enable grassroot activities and involvement





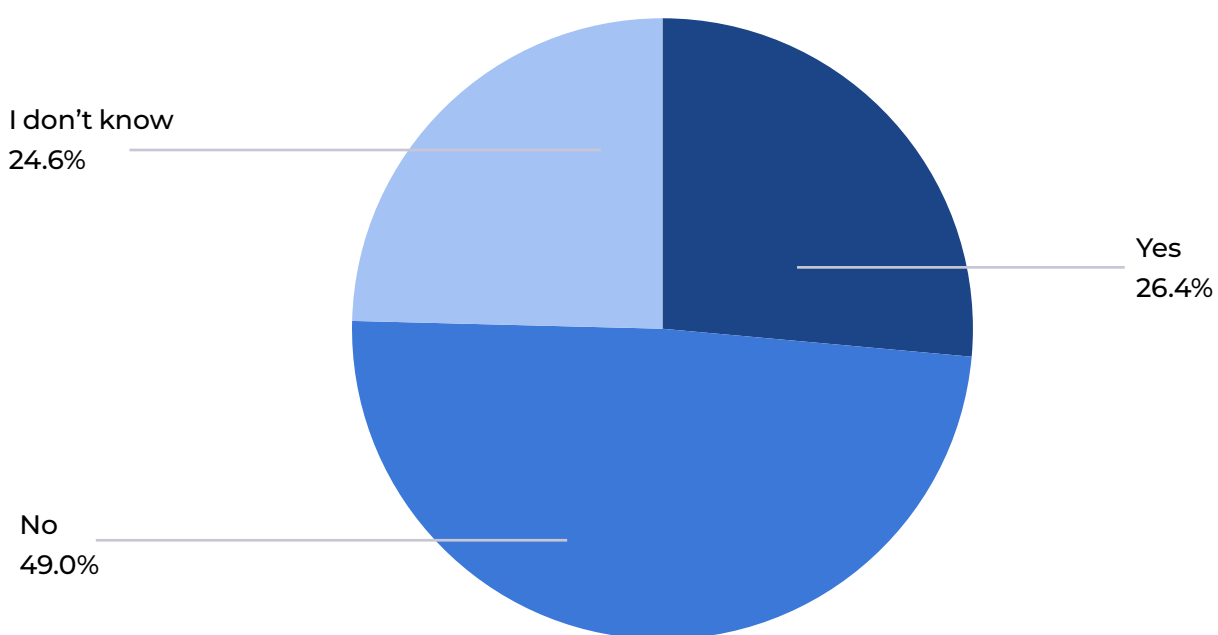
## DETAIL FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

In the survey, students were asked what their thoughts were regarding language use as part of student life in general. From the responses, emphasis was placed on the importance of language in student life and the benefits of understanding and being able to communicate in different languages. Some participants indicated that language and multilingualism are of great importance and play a crucial role, while others noted that there is still a lot that needs to be done in terms of language development and promotion.

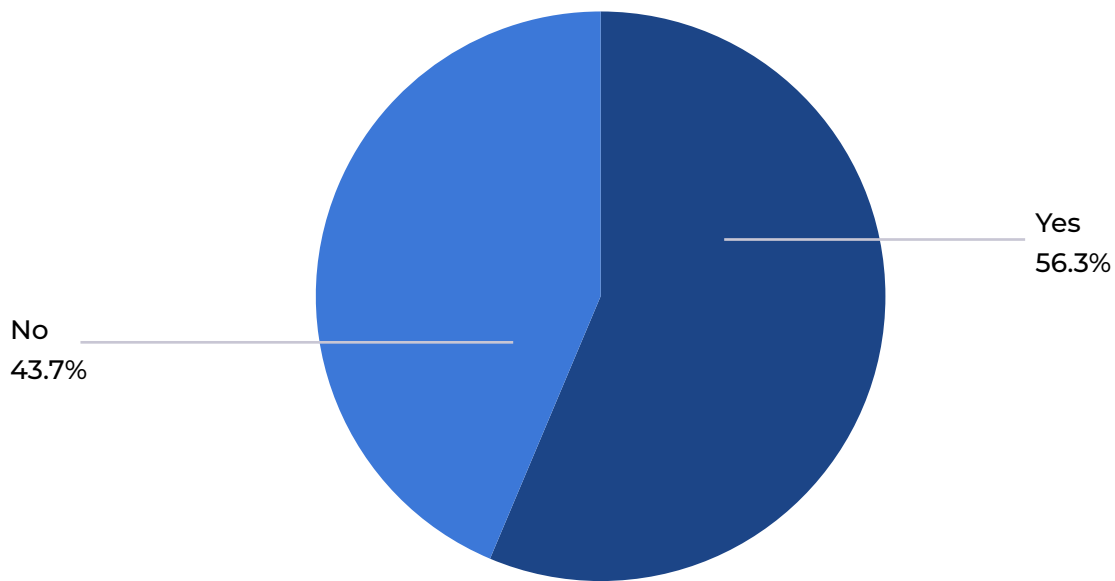
Some students mentioned the need for professional language usage and the importance of accommodating multiple languages to cater to students from different backgrounds. Many students emphasised the importance of English as the main language of communication at their institution, but also mentioned the need for promoting multilingualism. A number of participants expressed the importance of language for communication, building relationships, and understanding different cultures.

It was also reported that students should be allowed to express themselves in a language they are comfortable with, and an interpreter should preferably be available for those who do not understand. In general, students recognised the importance of language for effective communication and expressed a desire for language diversity and inclusivity in their student life.

With regard to the use of at least two other official languages, apart from English, for co-curricular activities, 48.97% of staff participants indicated that institutions do not use additional languages, and 26.44% indicated that institutions indeed use at least two additional languages, apart from English. 24.60% did not know, which is understandable as the majority of staff is not necessarily involved in co-curricular activities – see **Figure 27**. 56.35% of student participants indicated that other languages, apart from English, are used for co-curricular activities at their institutions, whereas 43.65% indicated that this is not the case (**Figure 28**).

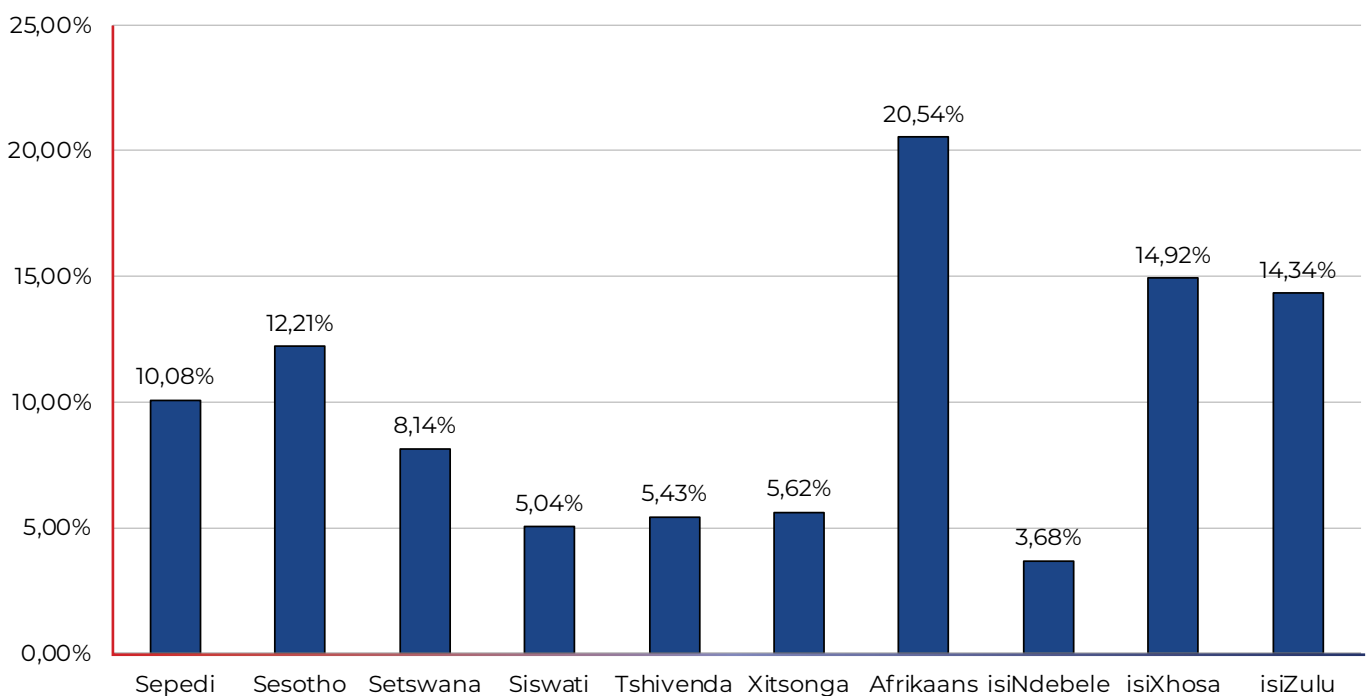


**Figure 27:** Staff - Languages other than English used for co-curricular activities

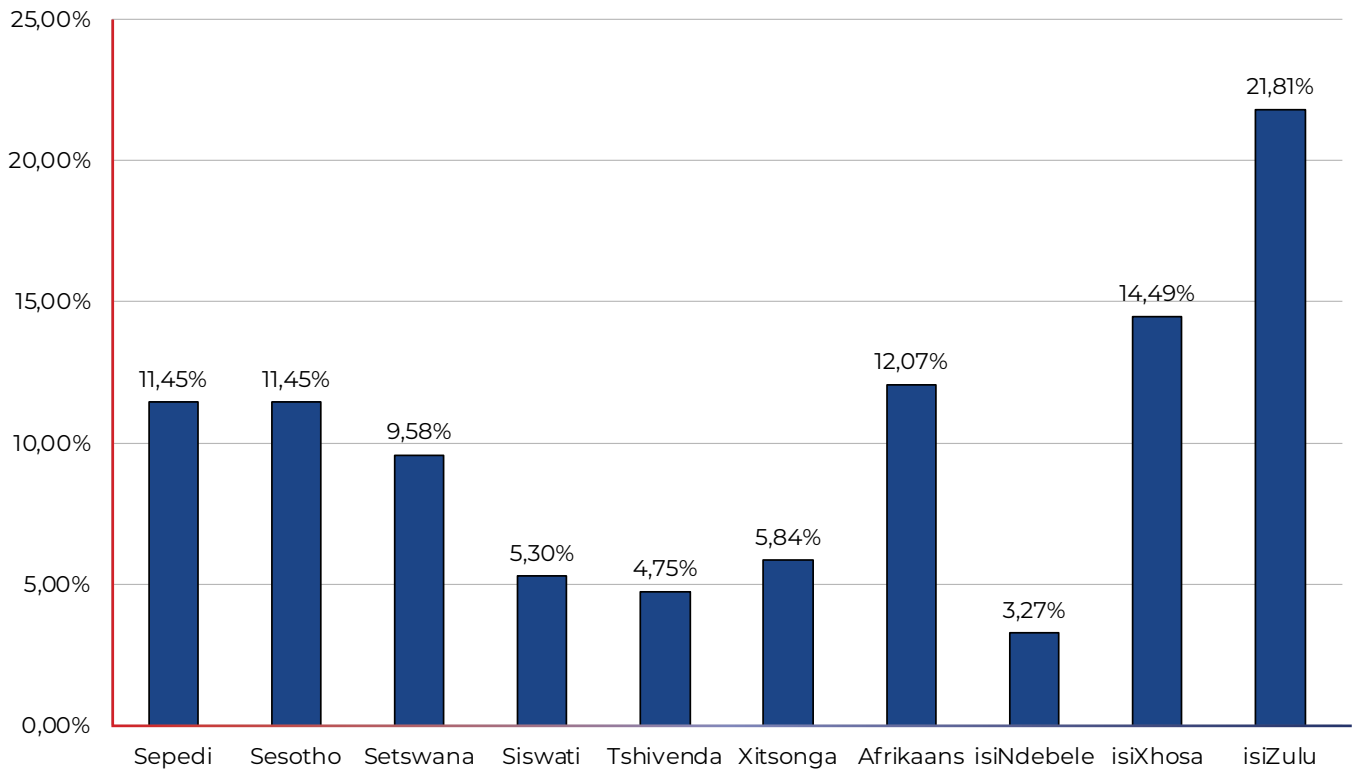


**Figure 28:** Students - Languages other than English used for co-curricular activities

In terms of using other languages, apart from English, as part of co-curricular activities, the majority of staff indicated that Afrikaans (20.54%) and isiXhosa (14.92%) occur most frequently, followed by isiZulu (14.34%), Sesotho (12.21%) and Sepedi (10.08%). Languages used least frequently include isiNdebele (3.68%) and Siswati (5.04%). **Figure 29** provides more detail. In terms of using other languages, apart from English, as part of co-curricular activities, the majority of students indicated that isiZulu (21.81%), isiXhosa (14.49%) and Afrikaans (12.07%) are used most frequently for co-curricular activities. Sesotho and Sepedi (11.45%) are both in fourth place. Languages used least frequently include isiNdebele (3.27%) and Tshivenda (4.75%). Note that these results are regionally nuanced. **Figure 30** provides more detail.

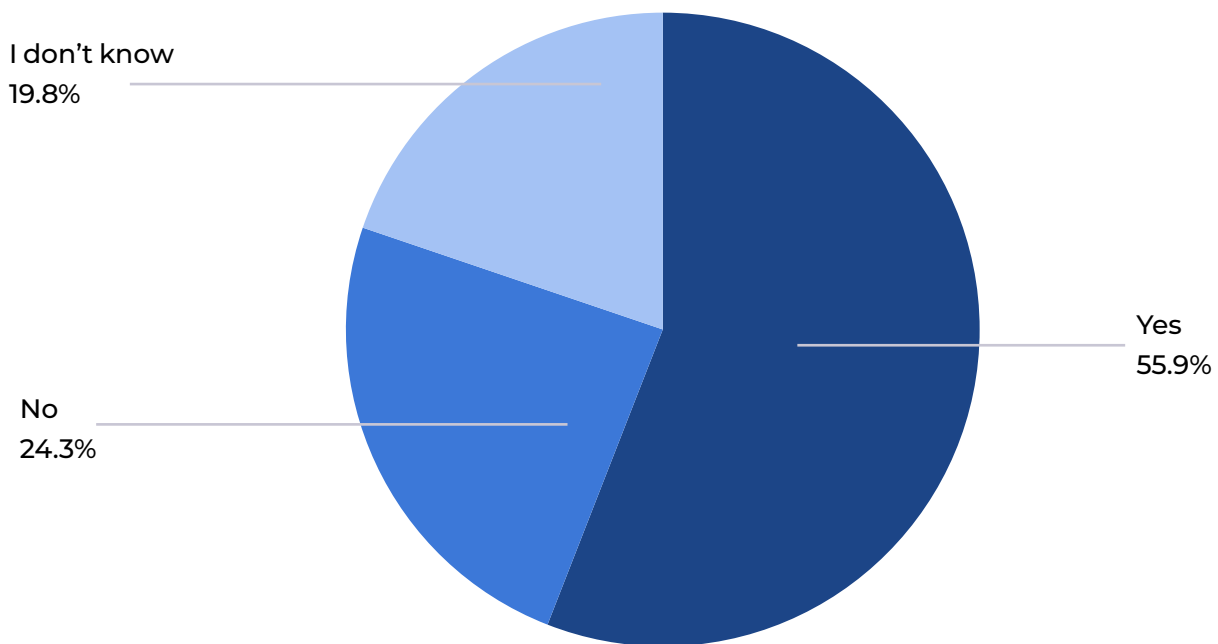


**Figure 29:** Staff - Specific languages other than English used for co-curricular activities

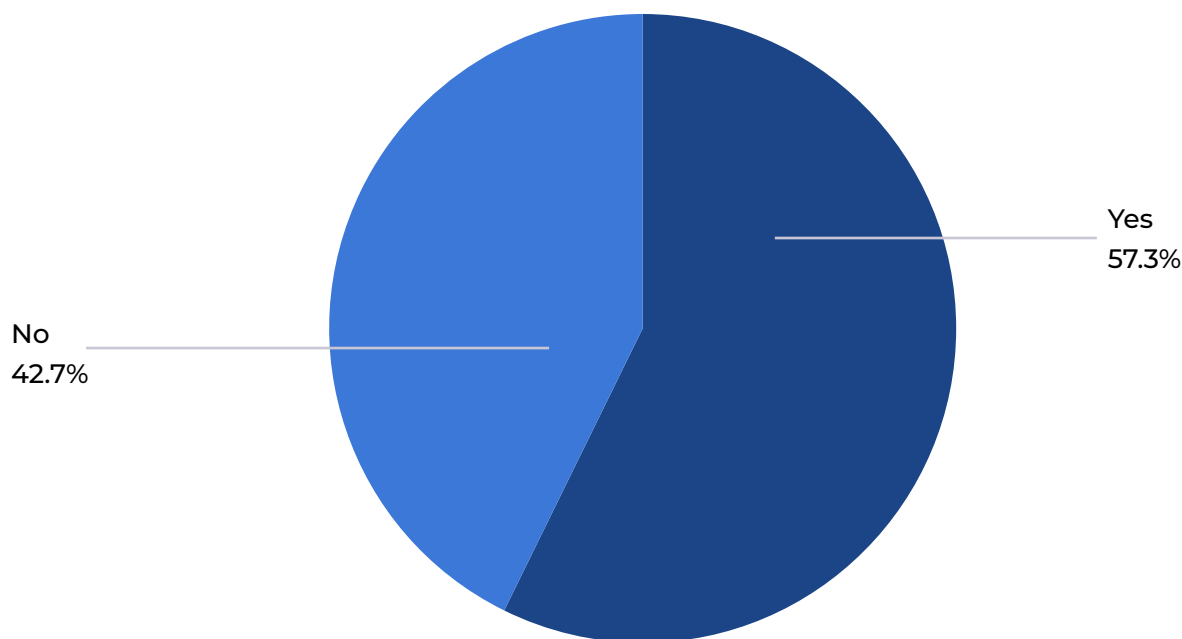


**Figure 30: Students - Specific languages other than English used for co-curricular activities**

The promotion of linguistic diversity among the student communities seems to receive attention at universities (55.93% staff, and 57.28% students), but 19.79% of staff participants did not know whether it actually happens – see **Figures 32 and 33**. Even though staff are not necessarily involved in co-curricular activities, it is important to know what kinds of events and support programmes that advance multilingualism do occur.



**Figure 31: Staff - Promotion of linguistic diversity**

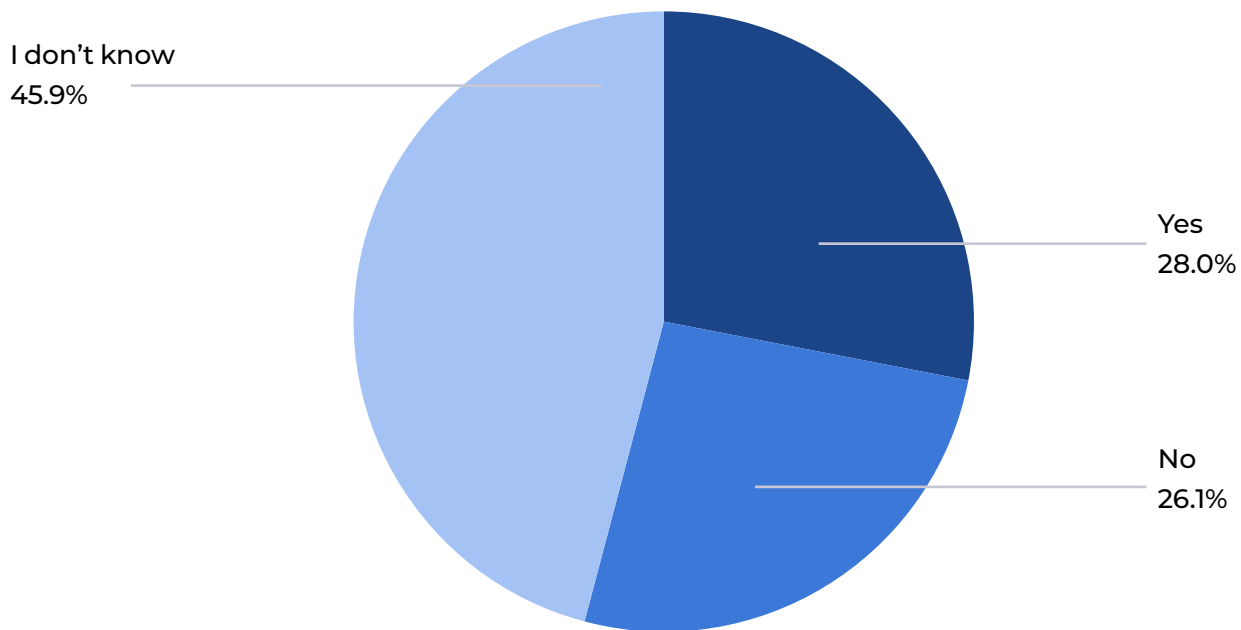


● **Figure 32:** Students - Promotion of linguistic diversity

A question on advancing student access through the use of multiple languages indicated that 28.04% of staff participants are of the opinion that language indeed contributes to advancing access at their specific institutions. On the other hand, 26.07% of participants indicated that this is not the case, probably because many languages are not used in co-curricular activities. An alarming 45.89% of staff participants did not know.

**Figure 33** displays this graphically. An open-ended question to staff on the matter of language and promoting access in co-curricular activities, revealed that institutions actively promote student access to full participation in co-curricular activities and programmes related to multilingualism through various methods, such as introducing creative writing events and language competitions, providing different resources and support to enhance communication, offering formal and informal programs in indigenous language development, scheduling dedicated time for cultural and language activities and events, using different languages and other mechanisms like interpreters and translators to enhance inclusivity and effective communication, raising awareness continuously of the value of multilingualism, and involving students in implementing the institution's language policy and plans (also in co-curricular activities).

Also mentioned was the need for a renewed focus on researching African knowledge systems, allowing students to express themselves in their own languages, providing access to various resources and elective studies, and utilising inclusive committees with strong student participation. Other initiatives mentioned include language awareness weeks, short courses in other languages, and allowing time for participation in activities without penalisation for missing classes.



**Figure 33:** Staff - Language and promoting access at universities

According to the qualitative data, students noted that linguistic diversity is promoted in the student community and in co-curricular activities by allowing students to speak in their home language, exposing students to courses that informally focus on language acquisition and development, providing signage in more than one language, accepting and accommodating people from different cultures and speaking different languages, hosting events and campaigns related to language and culture, releasing communication on events in multiple languages (orally, in print and online), encouraging students to speak their home language on campus, providing translations or interpreting services, establishing and fostering language and cultural societies and activities.

When students were asked if they would be willing to get involved in promoting their home language and, in a follow-up question, what they thought could be done to develop their home language, around 20% of the total number of students who completed the survey expressed an interest in getting involved in promoting their home language.

*Some ideas about developing their home language included: creating groups of people and organising activities for those who speak the same language, organising additional classes or meetings to communicate in their home language in an attempt to support their peers, translating materials, holding campaigns and workshops, teaching others and being ambassadors for their language.*

Despite the low percentage of students completing these questions, certain students are seemingly willing to contribute to the promotion of their home languages and indeed value the importance of linguistic diversity. Others, however, feel that their home language is already well-promoted or that they don't have the time or knowledge to actively promote it. Interestingly, some students indicated that they would prefer to focus on improving their proficiency in English.

## 7. TOWARDS A PROPOSED MODEL TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LANGUAGE POLICY FRAMEWORK

Reflecting on the broad aims of the national language resources audit (cf. Mandate above) it can be concluded that SADiLaR completed the audit task successfully. This section of the report makes certain recommendations aimed at mapping out pathways that will enable the successful implementation of the National Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions.

As a point of departure a sector-wide model or framework is recommended, based on the expressed need for an independent entity to guide and support institutions with the implementation of the Policy Framework. It is proposed that SADiLaR assists with this endeavour.

### *SADiLaR's value proposition*

The South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) is a non-competing independent national Centre with an enabling mandate. The Centre can play a key role in providing and modelling both the expertise and technical infrastructure backbone required towards the implementation of the Policy Framework.

SADiLaR, with its extensive local and international networks and internal expert base, can provide guidance and support on language policy, planning and management, as well as resource development and implementation. SADiLaR aims to consistently develop capacity across South Africa by providing guidance and support through specialised projects of different shapes and sizes in an open and collaborative way as part of its broader interaction with multiple stakeholders.

### *What has SADiLaR contributed to date?*

SADiLaR has been actively involved in discussions related to language policy and planning at various entities in recent times which helped to structure and determine the scope of the audit. It also contributed to establishing networks and relationships with institutions that in the long run will benefit the sector as a whole. Note that completion of the audit would not have been possible without the support from multiple stakeholders and individuals within. This should now be leveraged to ensure continuity by, among others, establishing further secondments to SADiLaR and introducing different support mechanisms in terms of guiding language planning and management, as well as resource development, curation, maintenance, sharing and allocation.

## ***What resources are available, what resources are still required and where does SADiLaR fit in?***

From the audit it was evident that scores of resources have been developed over many years by different institutions. Many institutions invested large sums of money in acquiring equipment/infrastructure, building capacity and creating communities of practice by e.g. establishing entities that are focused on language development and support, and producing tools and resources that are practical, user-friendly and pedagogically sound.

All these can now be leveraged to further the successful implementation of the Policy Framework. Notwithstanding, it has become clear that a national coordinated effort is required to open up access to products, processes, roles and services available at different institutions to the benefit of the sector as a whole; the wheel need not be reinvented by individual institutions if resources already exist elsewhere.

This can typically take the form of a body or entity that could coordinate endeavours to enhance collaboration and cross-institutional support, resulting in further initiatives and developments. SADiLaR is ideally positioned to provide this kind of support and ensure continuation of the work started as part of the audit. SADiLaR is institution-independent and can assist with aggregating and maintaining resources and information on what is available and what needs to be developed, as well as expert advice in terms of language management and monitoring.

Note that participation from different institutions and further funding will be required to make this a truly collaborative sector-wide solution.

With regards to the range of resources still required to successfully implement the Policy Framework, SADiLaR, in collaboration with participants in the audit, was able to facilitate discussions as part of site visits to help universities unpack what is required at their institutions to successfully implement the Policy Framework. Though institutions have unique needs, overarching themes were identified and are shared in this report. A need clearly expressed in the audit, is the creation and maintenance of a single resource repository (technological, human, physical, etc.) available to all universities. Following this, SADiLaR, as a first step, is currently compiling a list of resources available at institutions which will be distributed sector-wide in the near future.

As part of site visits it became clear that institutions have also reached certain institutional milestones that are worth sharing and building on. Information to specific processes and activities identified that could benefit the development of institution specific plans could be aggregated and a single entity such as SADiLaR in support of the sector as a whole. This will foster a culture of knowledge and process sharing which includes lessons learned.



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• Acknowledge and thank the retired USAf CEO, Prof Ahmed Bawa for his commitment and support of the work of the COPAL in driving this initiative forward.

• Acknowledge and thank the current USAf CEO, Dr Phethiwe Matutu for her leadership and support.

• Thank the Vice Chancellors of all the public higher education institutions for embracing this initiative and moving the language discourse from the periphery of the academy to the centre of Higher Education imperatives.

• Thank the USAf Board for supporting the outcome of the 1st VC Colloquium, that of entrusting SADiLaR with the important task of carrying out the sector-wide language resources audit.

• Finally, to acknowledge and thank all the Deputy Vice Chancellors, Language Directors, Staff and Students at all the universities that actively participated in the language resources audit with so much commitment and enthusiasm.



## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CoPAL</b> - Community of Practice for the teaching and learning of African Languages
<b>CSIR</b> - Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
<b>DHET</b> - Department of Higher Education and Training
<b>DIRISA</b> - Data Intensive Research Infrastructure of South Africa
<b>DSI</b> - Department of Science and Innovation
<b>HE</b> - Higher Education
<b>NWU</b> - North-West University
<b>PanSALB</b> - Pan South African Language Board
<b>SADiLaR</b> - South African Centre for Digital Language Resources
<b>SARIR</b> - South African Research Infrastructure Road Map
<b>USAf</b> - Universities South Africa

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- Section 29(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. 1996.