

## URGENT POST LANGUAGE RESOURCES AUDIT MATTERS

The recently completed national language resources audit at South African public higher education institutions highlighted the following matters for urgent attention.

### **1. Expertise and support in language planning and management**

In the South African academic setting, the implementation of robust language policies is crucial for fostering an inclusive learning environment. Moreover, with the increasing globalization of education and the diverse linguistic backgrounds of our student body, a strategic approach to language planning and management becomes imperative. This extends beyond the classroom to encompass broader institutional and societal contexts. There is, however, a lack of capacity and limited expertise available at institutional level. An impartial national entity where universities can seek advice, be supported in language planning and management endeavours, and access services and products were strongly advocated for. Given the significance of these matters, the mobilization of resources to secure the expertise and support required to address the challenges in language planning and management in the South African higher education context, SADiLaR is positioned to set in motion collaboration with experienced professionals, conducting workshops, and fostering partnerships, which will contribute to capacity development.

### **2. Monitoring and reporting**

In the dynamic realm of language policy and planning, effective monitoring is paramount to ensuring the successful implementation and continuous adaptation of institutional strategies – systematic and ongoing monitoring of language policy and planning initiatives is crucial. Regular monitoring enables institutions to assess the impact of their policies, identify areas of improvement, and respond proactively to evolving linguistic needs. SADiLaR is positioned to act as agent to support universities to navigate the complexities of language planning with agility, and fostering an inclusive and responsive linguistic environment that aligns with educational and societal objectives.

### **3. Co-ownership and co-responsibility – collaboration and funding**

In the realm of language planning and management, the principles of co-ownership and co-responsibility underscore the importance of collaborative efforts and shared financial commitments. The transformative impact of partnerships that involve various stakeholders, including educational institutions, governmental bodies, and private organizations cannot be underestimated. Collaborative initiatives not only distribute the responsibility for language planning but also draw on a diverse pool of expertise and resources. Moreover, shared funding arrangements contribute to the sustainability of language policy implementation, ensuring that the financial burden is distributed equitably among invested parties. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of collective ownership, enriching the language planning process and enhancing its effectiveness in addressing the multifaceted linguistic challenges in both academic and broader societal contexts.

### **4. Hegemony of English**

Addressing the hegemony of English requires a concerted effort to promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism. There is a dire need for the valorisation and inclusion of diverse languages in educational and societal frameworks. Implementing policies that recognize and support the use of local languages alongside English fosters a more inclusive linguistic environment. Furthermore, investing in the development of resources, educational materials, and language proficiency programs for less dominant languages is crucial. By empowering individuals to use their native languages in academic and professional settings, we not only

challenge the dominance of English but also contribute to a more equitable and culturally rich linguistic landscape. This approach aligns with SADiLaR's commitment to language planning that embraces diversity and seeks to break down linguistic hegemony in educational and social spheres.

## 5. Academic language development

An urgent focus on academic language development underscores its pivotal role in fostering effective communication and scholarly engagement. Moreover, the profound impact that academic language ability has on students' academic success cannot be understated. Academic language ability extends beyond everyday communication, encompassing the specialized vocabulary, discourse structures, and rhetorical conventions essential for scholarly discourse. Cultivating these skills equips students to articulate complex ideas, engage with academic literature, and contribute meaningfully to their respective fields. Importantly, a strong foundation in academic language is a cornerstone for research excellence, critical thinking, and effective knowledge dissemination. Many universities in South Africa have pockets of excellence in academic language ability / academic literacies development, and there are several entities outside of the higher education sector that can also contribute to capacity development where needed. SADiLaR is well-positioned, through its vast networks, to connect experts.

## 6. Language ability of staff at conversational level

A conversational proficiency in language enhances interpersonal communication, fostering a more inclusive environment. This proficiency not only contributes to a harmonious workplace but also aids in building strong relationships with students. Additionally, in a multicultural setting, conversational language ability promotes cultural sensitivity, creating an atmosphere that values diversity. Language departments and/or schools at universities can play a significant role in advancing multilingualism. Ringfenced institutional funding, however, is required for success in this regard.

## 7. Multilingual pedagogies training

The adoption of pedagogical approaches that embrace linguistic diversity in the classroom is of great importance. Multilingual pedagogies training goes beyond conventional language teaching methods, acknowledging the rich tapestry of languages spoken by students. This training equips educators with the skills to leverage students' multilingualism as a valuable educational resource, enhancing communication and comprehension. By fostering an inclusive learning environment that accommodates diverse linguistic backgrounds, multilingual pedagogies contribute to equitable education, cultural appreciation, and improved academic outcomes. SADiLaR can act as agent to bring together expertise in this regard currently residing at mainly three South African universities.

## 8. Terminology development

The importance of multilingual terminology development cannot be overstated. Multilingual terminology is the linchpin for effective communication across diverse linguistic landscapes, ensuring clarity and precision in academic and professional discourse. As languages evolve alongside specialized fields, the cultivation of accurate and standardized terminology becomes indispensable. This development not only facilitates cross-cultural understanding but also supports knowledge dissemination on a global scale. Although there are numerous examples of such lists at universities, SADiLaR can play a significant role in collecting, aggregating, fostering multilingual term banks and texts that reflect the nuances of various languages, thereby enriching academic and professional dialogue and fostering a more inclusive and connected community of learners and teachers.

- The complete online report can be found here: <https://repo.sadilar.org/handle/20.500.12185/667>
- It is urgent and important that we gather as much data as possible for future endeavours in the best interest of all universities in South Africa. Please help us by completing the following short questionnaire: <https://languageresourcesaudit.questionpro.com/AvailableResources>
- Please get in touch: <https://sadilar.org/index.php/en/>  
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