



Stellenbosch

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Report: Building communities through multilingualism workshops

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forward together
sonke siya phambili
saam vorentoe

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Executive summary

The Language Centre ran a series of workshops together with the Centre for Student Communities entitled 'Building communities through multilingualism' during April and May 2023. Twenty sessions of two to three hours each were facilitated to give all SU residence heads, house committee (HC) members and mentors an opportunity to attend a session with the Language Centre. Over 700 participants attended in total, out of a possible 1 074.

Engagement with different campus communities over the past three years has pointed out a need for sharing stories and experiences. These workshops therefore aimed at creating a safe space for the Stellenbosch University (SU) campus community to reframe conversations about language and discover the richness of their own language journeys and those of others. It further aimed to enable participants to explore how a [multilingual mindset](#) ties in with the values of integrity, respect and tolerance to build the inclusive, diverse, transformed and socially cohesive community we aspire to at SU, and to find support, partners and new inspiration in their multilingual journey.

The Language Centre's intent was not to lecture students or colleagues on the use of language, but to start creating a culture of conversation by sharing ideas and learning from one another, as well as invoking the house committee members' leadership skills to solve language-related issues. The notion that hearing another language does not equal exclusion was expressed multiple times, by both participants and facilitators, and facilitators confirmed in no uncertain terms that it is unconstitutional to prohibit anyone from speaking any language. It was felt that the residences had already done some remarkable work regarding language inclusion and the appreciation of residents' languages, and that these workshops were not the result of anyone being at fault.

Feedback from the participants of the workshops highlighted how language connects with identity and how a multilingual mindset and the space to speak one's preferred language can make people feel safe and acknowledged. It also showed that participants' perception of multilingualism had changed from something rigid and controlled to something attainable that can connect rather than divide. A recurring theme was the realisation that English as a common language is not the only way to be inclusive. Participants repeatedly expressed the desire to learn more languages to grow in diverse cultural understanding; it was clear that participants support the importance of building a community where diversity in all aspects of life is appreciated and accepted. Participants had expected the workshops to be repetitive and prescriptive, but it was evident that participants not only enjoyed the workshops but instead found it imperative that the workshops be presented to the greater SU community. They also repeatedly recognised the Language Centre as a valuable partner to support them in navigating multilingualism.

Feedback from the workshop facilitators centred around how impressed they were with the calibre and maturity of the student leaders and their ability to apply leadership skills; the overall positive reception of the workshops and the openness of participants to share and absorb; the sense of wonder experienced during the language journey activity; the large extent to which students were practising a multilingual mindset already; the overcompensation by Afrikaans students not to offend anyone by speaking Afrikaans and the resultant defaulting to English in the small groups; the willingness of students to meet each other more than halfway; the extent to which student leaders sometimes felt unsupported in their endeavours to promote multilingualism in their residences as well as the need for practical guidance and reassurance with regard to implementing multilingualism.

The workshops confirmed that creating spaces and opportunities to have conversations about the values we link to culture and language is a very important starting point within the larger context of changing the institutional culture at SU.

1. Introduction

The Stellenbosch University (SU) Language Centre has been offering voluntary workshops on multilingualism to student communities on a limited scale over the past few years. The SA Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)'s proposed remedial action in its recent report included training on the use of language at SU in residences. This prompted the Language Centre to collaborate with the Centre for Student Communities in a fresh new way. It must be stated that the previous SU Language Policy of 2016 was still in force during the events that brought on the recommendations of the SAHRC in the first place, and that the University has since adopted a revised language policy, the [SU Language Policy of 2021](#). However, the value of dialogue on a contentious topic in a safe, respectful space should never be underestimated, and the Language Centre embraced the opportunity to reach out to student leaders in residences to create an environment to have conversations about [multilingualism](#) and the use of language in residences.

In collaboration with the Centre for Student Communities, the Language Centre therefore ran a series of workshops aimed at the SU community entitled 'Building communities through multilingualism' during April and May 2023. Although the workshops took place after hours and at short notice, each workshop turned out to be an edifying experience for both facilitators and participants. Overall, the response to the workshops was overwhelmingly positive, and facilitators were impressed by the quality of student leaders in the residences.

The Language Centre's intent was not to lecture students or colleagues on the use of language, but to start having conversations by sharing ideas and learning from one another, as well as invoking the house committee (HC) members' leadership skills to solve language issues. It was also felt that the residences had already done some remarkable work already with regard to language inclusion and the appreciation of residents' languages, and that these workshops were not the result of anyone being at fault. The broad aim was to strengthen capacity to keep up and further the good work, promote a multilingual mindset and show how that dovetails with the 2021 Language Policy, and to raise awareness of the available support.

2. Format and reach of workshops

Attending the workshops was compulsory for residence heads, CSC coordinators and student leaders in residences. Apart from the short notice at which students had to fit in another after-hours activity into an already busy schedule, a number of other factors affected final attendance numbers, including a timetable clash with test week and Eid being celebrated on 22 April. Loadshedding was also an unfortunate reality.

2.1 Format

Three types of workshops were facilitated:

- **Residence head and CSC coordinator workshop**

One two-hour workshop was facilitated for residence heads and CSC coordinators on 5 April from 17:00 to 19:00 involving interactive sessions facilitated by Language Centre presenters, after an introduction by Dr Antoinette van der Merwe. This workshop also served as a pilot for the workshops to follow.



- **House committee workshops**

Seventeen workshops of three hours each with interactive sessions facilitated by Language Centre presenters, were presented for house committee members in groups of up to 30. A number of workshops took place simultaneously per timeslot (see Table 1). At least two Language Centre staff members were involved in each workshop.

The image on the right shows a social media story published by one of the residences (Sonop) about the workshop their HCs attended.



- **Mentor workshops**

Two large-group workshops of two hours each with an introduction by Dr Antoinette van der Merwe and Prof Deresh Ramjugernath on the Language Policy, followed by two interactive activities facilitated by Language Centre staff members, were presented in lecture halls in the Jan Mouton Building, with mentors from Tygerberg campus joining one of the workshops via Teams.



2.2 Reach

The totals for registration and eventual attendance for each of the workshops presented are listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Workshop reach

Workshop dates	Number of workshops	Registration numbers	Attendance numbers
Wednesday, 5 April 2023 (17:00 –19:00)	1	46	27
Tuesday, 18 April 2023 (17:30 – 20:30)	3	83	49
Thursday, 20 April 2023 (17:30 – 20:30)	4	129	97
Saturday, 22 April 2023 (09:00 – 12:00)	5	150	91
Saturday, 22 April 2023 (14:00 – 17:00)	3	87	72
Tuesday, 25 April 2023 (17:30 – 19:30)	2	49	21
Tuesday, 02 May 2023 (17:30 – 19:30)	1	310	142
Wednesday, 03 May 2023 (17:30 – 19:30)	1 (hybrid)	220	230
Totals	20	1 074	729

3. Methodology and content

The workshops followed an interactive peer-learning pedagogy. This included a ‘dialogue to change approach’ in terms of the content and format of the workshops. With this approach, facilitators could use the discussions to increase the chances that the engagement process would result in positive outcomes. The combination of people listening to each other, sharing their own experiences, and working together to solve problems could have a deep impact, both on the issue or topic at hand as well as on how the community continues engaging in future. Given the interactive nature of the workshops, the number of participants per workshop had to be kept to a maximum of thirty-five.

In the past, only the project coordinators for multilingualism in student communities, Helga Sykstus and Sanet de Jager (both Language Centre staff members), were responsible for presenting similar workshops to student leaders. Running enough workshops to ensure that the groups stayed small enough to create the kind of intimacy envisaged required a large number of Language Centre facilitators. Twenty additional Language Centre staff members volunteered to be trained to facilitate the workshops. The training involved attending a briefing on the presentation slides mainly developed by the project coordinators and observing at least one workshop where they also contributed by acting as small-group facilitators. After the pilot workshop with residence heads, the workshop format was further tweaked and developed, and then standardised to be used for all student workshops.



Project coordinators, Helga Sykstus (left) and Sanet de Jager (right), in action at the workshop for residence heads

The workshop content aimed for participants to equip each other with ways to manage language-related scenarios holistically, with a focus on the house values of the residence, in alignment with a multilingual mindset. To do this, the activities focused on creating a sense of individual identity within group belonging, reframing multilingualism as one leg of the University's holistic drive for transformation and diversity and tapping into what student leaders already know and practice to rethink language-related conflicts and opportunities.

3.1 Workshop activities

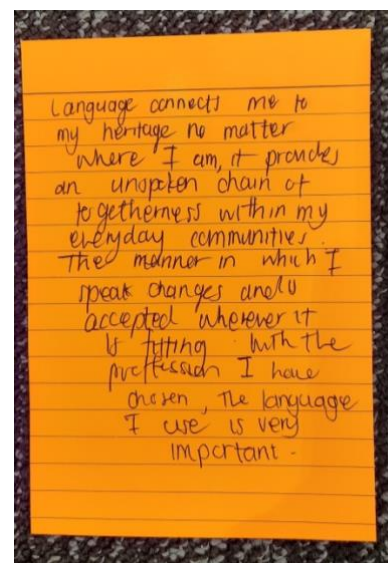
There were three main activities. Throughout the activities, the notion that hearing another language does not equal exclusion was expressed multiple times, by both participants and facilitators, and facilitators confirmed in no uncertain terms that it is unconstitutional to prohibit anyone from speaking any language.

3.1.1 Activity 1: Language journey

The first activity was an opportunity for participants to reflect on their own language journey and how it relates to their identity, and to explore what aspects of their language identity are shared among the group.



A participant reflecting on her language journey



A language journey one of the participants shared

3.1.2 Activity 2: House values and multilingualism

The second activity engaged with the pre-workshop activity for which participants added their associations with the word 'multilingualism' to a shared space. The participants were asked to discuss what associations resonate with their house values and to rethink the attainability of multilingualism through the lens of a multilingual mindset.



Participants engaging in the second activity: House values and multilingualism

For the residence heads, a different approach was taken with the second activity. Instead of having small-group discussions, participants divided into two groups debated for and against the topic, 'Using only English is more effective in achieving an inclusive, diverse, transformed and socially cohesive residence space.'



Residence heads participating in a debate

The debate created an opportunity for participants to rethink stereotypical arguments against multilingualism and to reimagine what inclusive multilingualism would entail.

3.1.3 Activity 3: Real-life scenarios

The third activity asked participants to exchange ideas on how to deal with real-life scenarios they could encounter in their space. The scenarios ranged from decisions about navigating inclusion during Welcoming and finding innovative ways to negotiate multilingual settings, to finding ways to connect with and trust each other in a space where you often encounter people and languages that you don't necessarily identify with. Students were encouraged to think of solutions through the lens of their house values and leadership skills, and to consider how multilingualism supports their goals, instead of trying to think of language 'rules'. The workshops for mentors did not include this activity as their responsibility for resolving conflict and presenting new opportunities does not typically stretch to the residence level.

3.1.4 Resources and support

During the last 10 minutes of the workshops, participants were invited to reflect on the workshop (see the next section for their feedback), after which Language Centre staff briefly explained the Language Centre resources and support available to students, both on a social and academic level, in support of multilingualism. Hard copies of the infographic summarising the 2021 SU Language Policy in English, isiXhosa and Afrikaans were available at the workshops, and links to those documents were shared. Other links that were shared included a link to a range of Language Centre multilingual mindset [resources](#) containing practical examples, and the [multilingual mindset landing page](#). A follow-up email containing the presentation slides and additional information on support was also sent to all participants.

4. Reception and feedback

Facilitators experienced some reluctance and apathy on the part of some participants at the start of all the workshops, and it was clear that participants were tired of speaking about language in the way they usually did. The language journey activity (Activity 1) served as an excellent icebreaker each time, and enabled participants to view language from a different perspective. This helped participants to reposition themselves and start viewing and speaking about language and multilingualism in new and creative ways – instead of multilingualism being a set of language ‘rules’, it is one more vehicle through which residences can channel their house values in support of the type of community they want to stand for. After each workshop participants remarked that they had dreaded attending the workshops, but in the end really enjoyed it. This change was also palpable in the venues.

4.1 Feedback from facilitators

Feedback from the workshop facilitators centred around how impressed they were with the calibre and maturity of the student leaders and their ability to apply leadership skills; the overall positive reception of the workshops and the openness of participants to share and absorb; the sense of wonder experienced during the language journey activity; the large extent to which students were practising a multilingual mindset already; the overcompensation by Afrikaans students not to offend anyone by speaking Afrikaans and the resultant defaulting to English in the small groups; the willingness of students to meet each other more than halfway; the extent to which student leaders sometimes felt unsupported in their endeavours to promote multilingualism in their residences as well as the need for practical guidance and reassurance with regard to implementing multilingualism.

Some comments by facilitators on their experience of facilitating the workshops:

“Students are thinking on a high level and are impressive. The small group I facilitated agreed among themselves that it is up to you not to feel excluded when you hear a language that you don’t understand and to ask someone to repeat or explain. They feel that their generation tends to be too fragile, and that they should ‘go for anti-fragile’. They approach language with a practical mindset and one of ‘just be reasonable, kind and not too easily offended’. One even expressed his gratitude that the session was not boring!”

“Students still seem afraid of breaking away from only using English. For example, the group I observed could all speak and understand Afrikaans, even though they were not all native speakers of the language. One of the students commented on the irony that they are attending a multilingual workshop, yet everyone is too scared to speak Afrikaans.”

“The students have shown that there is such receptiveness and positiveness when talking about language and culture. It was a joy to engage with the students in this way. This is fertile ground to grow a multicultural and multilingual mindset among our students. I hope we can honour their positivity and honesty as an institution.”

“It was felt that if other languages are attempted to show respect for one another, there should be no judgement, but rather appreciation that people are trying to accommodate speakers of other languages.”

“I definitely found a sense of ‘shame’ attached to being Afrikaans under some white female students. Because I am a white, Afrikaans-speaking female I assume that it was easier for them to be honest with me about this, therefore I believe that there might also be similar emotions attached to many other languages that students are not yet ready to be honest about in the group context. I strongly believe that we will only really be able to move forward with this if students don’t just display the positive side of multilingualism and language, but also the pain that is sometimes experienced.”



Some Language Centre facilitators

“It was beautiful to see the ‘aha’ moments during the language journeys and the recognition on the faces of students who came from different language backgrounds, but who realised they are not alone. Great to hear the stories and realisations. Also, interesting to see how assumptions prove to be wrong many times.”

“With all the sessions I attended the positivity and energy of the LC staff members could really be ‘felt’ and I think the motivation with which I could see they engaged with the students really did make a difference. I could see groups that were slow to speak or who tiptoed around the more sensitive stuff managed to open up a bit more with a facilitator who participated.”

4.2 Feedback from participants

Feedback was collected before the workshop and at the end of the workshops.

4.2.1 Pre-workshop activity

Before the workshop, participants were asked to indicate some of their associations with the word ‘multilingualism’, positive, negative or neutral, on a [padlet](#), an online tool where multiple respondents can add their thoughts simultaneously in real time using their mobile devices. Participants also completed a brief survey to give facilitators more insight into their expectations for the workshop and how they believe their role as residence head, house committee member or mentor ties into advancing a multilingual mindset.

4.2.2 Reflection after the workshop

During the last ten minutes of the workshop, participants were encouraged to reflect on whether the workshop had changed how they felt about multilingualism, their expectations of the workshop, what they were still anxious about, as well as what they still hoped could be achieved. Another padlet was used for this activity, and participants responded using their mobile devices.

4.2.3 Feedback via padlets

Feedback from participants highlighted how language connects with identity and how a multilingual mindset and the space to speak one's preferred language can make people feel safe and acknowledged. The also feedback showed that participants' perception of multilingualism had changed from something rigid and controlled to something attainable that could connect rather than divide. A recurring theme was the realisation that using English is not the only way to be inclusive and participants repeatedly expressed the desire to learn more languages to grow in diverse cultural understanding. It was clear that participants supported the importance of building a community where diversity in all aspects of life is appreciated and accepted. Participants had expected the workshops to be repetitive and prescriptive, but it was evident that participants not only enjoyed the workshops but instead found it imperative that the workshops be presented to the greater SU community. Participants also continually recognised the Language Centre as a valuable partner to support them in navigating multilingualism.

4.2.3.1 Workshop for residence heads

When the residence heads of 37 residences and the two heads of the 11 PSOs (private student organisations) who attended the workshop shared their associations with the word 'multilingualism', this contribution stood out, capturing the essence of having a multilingual mindset: "Multilingualism and multiculturalism is an attitude of appreciation and openness to engage and connect across language, accent, social class, ethnicity, gender, culture, religion, and other aspects of identity. It has to take into account how historic power dynamics and the domination of certain languages and cultures have shaped the confidence and lack thereof of students." See more associations in Figure 1 below.

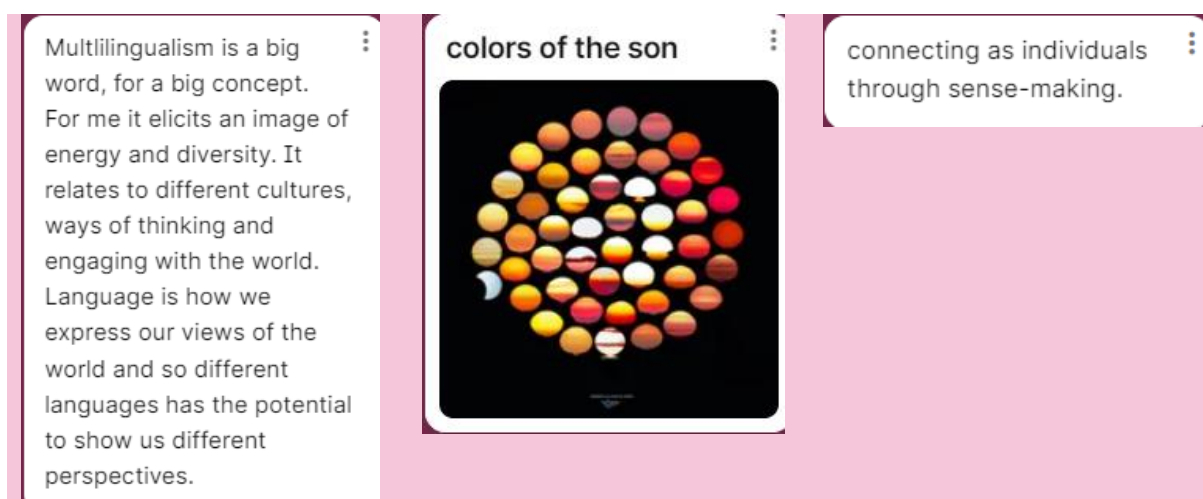


Figure 1: Residence heads' associations with the word 'multilingualism'

The reflection by residence heads contained comments making suggestions such as "Get a conversation together with the student leaders. Jointly so that we can all be vulnerable and celebrate making mistakes in advance." See the prompts for feedback and more comments below in Figure 2.

"I feel different about ..."

Great arguments and conversations happened. So much the same backgrounds and feelings.

"I hope ..."

That we will be able to keep our focus on what multilingualism is and stop being reactive to complaints

“I still feel anxious about ...”

Social media that'll breaks down the hard work that we are doing in the student communities. We need to see the great stories!

“I will apply what we talked about today by ...”

Engaging and having conversations with my students.

Figure 2: Residence heads' reflection with prompts

4.2.3.1 Workshops for student leaders

Student leaders also shared their associations with multilingualism as a pre-workshop activity, and showed great insight into how multilingualism resonates with the University's transformative vision: “At its core, multilingualism represents a recognition of the rich cultural diversity of our world and an acknowledgement of the value that each language and culture bring to our shared human experience. By learning and speaking multiple languages, we open ourselves up to new perspectives, new ways of thinking, and new opportunities for connection and understanding with people from different backgrounds.” See more associations in Figure 3 below.

Multilingualism

Integrity
Equality
Ubuntu
Diversity
Respect
Love

Multilingualism

Inclusivity, friendship, unity.
Understanding.
Conversation. Surety.
Misunderstanding.
Language barrier.
Discrimination.

Respect and compassion

For a community to flourish in multilingualism, people have to respect each other and have compassion for each other to create an environment where a common language is used to accommodate everyone, but people feel comfortable to learn new languages without feeling silly and groups should also feel comfortable to communicate in their home language when everyone in the group understands it.

Big Flex

I just think being multilingual is such a flex and living in such a multilingual society is a big flex. There's just so much beauty in language and the diversity that comes with being able to communicate in so many different languages

- It's also a way of respecting one another, by learning and/or respecting one another's home language.
- It can also help to create a safe space for everyone to express themselves in (as some words do not have English equivalents, or vice versa).
- It's also a way of respecting one another, by learning and/or respecting one another's home language.

♥ Integrity
♥ Equality
♥ Ubuntu
♥ Diversity
♥ Respect
♥ Love

Figure 3: Student leaders' associations with the word 'multilingualism'

The reflection padlets completed by students showed a change in mindset in terms of how they view multilingualism and contained comments such as, “I feel different about the way I view multilingualism because today it was explained to me as more of a ‘willingness’ than an enforcement.” Students also showed an eagerness to embrace diversity with comments such as, “[I will apply what we talked about by] embracing the different languages around me and using it as a tool to connect with bigger groups of people.” See more (inspiring) comments in Figure 4 below.

“I feel different about ...”

The attainability of multilingualism as well as my presumption of the definition of multilingualism which is not to speak multiple languages but to create an environment where you invite and accept and encourage different languages being spoken in all environments where it is ensure the languages being used is inclusive for everyone present

I definitely learnt alot about multilingualism. This has encouraged me to move forward with my dream for a true diverse country. Where all languages can be regarded as important and create centres where communities can learn all the languages of our beautiful country. This workshop should be presented to our government(because they have failed when it comes to language barriers)

The practicality of Multilingualism

Believed that practically implementing this was not possible / a concept not feasible to pursue.

However now realise that there are very simple and effective steps to apply to change the structures we have to achieve our goals.

How language influences one's sense of identity and relating to others.

And I have learned a lot about the different types of communities and the challenges they face.

the ways multilingualism is approached and developed. I learnt that promoting multilingualism is an ongoing project that takes times and the journey at Stellenbosch is still relatively young, but there has been progress when comparing the university to what it was 10 years ago.

I feel different about the perspective of multilingualism and how learning a language does not have to be complete but a start can get you further than not knowing anything at all.

Thinking only certain people have a language story, I've realised everyone has a language story, something to say and something to add to the table.

multilingualism. I initially just automatically switched to English and thought that would encourage multilingualism.

I feel different about that language does not have to divide people but it can actually be used to unite us

My perspective on multilingualism and the impact language can have on a community and the people within.

The options I have available as a student and HC at my residence.

The Language Centre is important for "active inclusivity" in language to be implemented in our spaces. We often forget or fail to appreciate the resources at our fingertips as well, Google translate might not be accurate most of the time, however, it is a good start. I feel different about how I view multilingualism in my personal and residenc space. I recognize that multilingualism is not simply the ability to speak multiple languages, it also the willingnes to learn different languages.

Just making space for people . It doesn't always mean going over and above to speak 1009 languages but just allowing that if someone spoke another language they'd do so comfortably.

Language

Language is not merely a medium for information transfer, it is integral to one's identity and culture

The way we should approach languages during o-week

I think communities need to make more of a constant effort to encourage thinking about it and being confident in learning new languages

Listening

Listening to a language is just as important as speaking it. People speak their language to be understood, and in order for people to be understood listening is key. Tryin to be louder than the other person just because you don't understand them defeats the purpose of understanding. You listen to learn. You listen to understand. You listen to love.

How to approach spaces with multiple languages present.

People should be allowed to express themselves in a language of their choice, while being aware of including other people around them.

I feel different about...

The way our familiar values can be attributed to multilingualism in unique ways that are also context-dependent

Being more intentional about creating a space where instruction and conversation are facilitated in all three languages.

This workshop gave me passion again for language, and the differences in language and culture that we experience daily. It gave me a renewed will to explore other languages, because different languages make us unique and influences our individual stories.

“I hope ...”

To learn more languages and that more people can be open minded to learning as well

To be able to connect with more people by learning South African languages

that people will have a willingness to be open-minded to a multilingual mindset and that it (a multilingual mindset) is introduced at an early stage of life.

Higher management training

I hope the University management receives this type of training because often HC implements multilingualism but in lectures it's only bilingual.

Multilingualism during welcoming

I think it would be amazing if the Language Centre could give a session for newcomers (in residents or clusters) during welcoming and integrating it into the welcoming programme.

I hope that people will understand that everybody feels safe speaking some language and that not everyone has the same “safe” language.

To be a part of creating a culture of language diversity at the university and in general life.

That these conversations continue so that people can embrace different languages instead of being apprehensive about them.

that this training could somehow extend further than the HC

That we can see it is a basic human interaction. If we are interested enough in someone else, then we will care enough to respect their language.

There can be more situations like this for the whole uni where most people are open to change

that student leaders will realise that being able to implement and promote multilingualism in res is an amazing privilege and opportunity and not something we should feel pressurised into doing or something negative. We have the opportunity to make a positive impact on the people around us but we're inevitably not responsible for other people's actions and not everyone will buy into the idea of multilingualism and that's okay.

That I will be able to bring what I learnt into my space and community and inspire others

that we can implement this workshop in schools already as well & during welcoming week

That leadership can apply what was discussed today in a more practical sense and not fear away from potentially difficult effort that comes with making accommodation for different people speaking different languages.

The lessons learnt in this workshop can be echoed across campus and the broader community.

That people are more aware of the possibilities that language possess and not the boundaries it apparently holds.

To have more conversations like this in res and that the university will facilitate these for everyone

I hope

I truly hope our exclusive tendencies and sub-cultures subside to greet people who speak different languages with a welcoming and inclusive outlook

“I’m still anxious/worried about ...”

The possibility that one external pressure lifts, these efforts will fall away

Engaging with people who have closed mindsets and who don'tt want to learn - how can what I say make them think differently about the matter

being misunderstood

People being discriminated against for speaking different languages.

How the University plans in creating a truly unique and diverse language policy

How to be inclusive of language but also be able to communicate in a language that is universal

Being able to do this in a practical and feasible way that respects everyone and affirms their feelings.

How other residents on our campus will receive this approach. I expect resistance.

If this workshop will actually make a positive change or if people will ignore what they learned here

The way in which people who aren't educated about multilingualism will judge those who are trying to learn new languages or not assimilated

I am still worried about...

Offending people by not pronouncing their names right because of the fact that i am not comfortable with their native language.

I feel scared to put myself out there speaking a new language but know that's the first step

people who are in leadership positions who aren't interested in multilingualism or respecting different languages

How these conversations will continue and how we can change people's mindset to embrace different languages and cultures.

Being unable to pronounce words in another language correctly and coming across as disrespectful or odd

Stigma tied to different languages and how people tie experiences to them

being able to make everyone feel comfortable and accepted within the multilingual space without having one language dominante the other

“I will apply what we talked about by ...”

Working on my multilingual mindset and by ensuring that people who I work with feel comfortable with now we communicate

Allowing people to express themselves however they want

by refraining from using “please speak English”

Making an effort to be more intentional when thinking about communicating with others

Making use of more translations when creating things like posters for example

encouraging people to stop saying please speak English

Relooking how my residence interprets and implements multilingualism so that people don't have a negative connotation towards the concept of multilingualism

Talking and listening in different languages to people

...continuing to embrace my identity as a lifelong learner, especially when it comes to language use

Sharing what I learnt in house meetings & making sure my HC shares this during their section meetings throughout the year not just at one meeting & leaving it at that.

continuously emphasising the importance of ensuring that each person does not feel like an outsider in any space.

<p>Viewing language as a vehicle to acknowledge people</p>	<p>Taking suggestions made about making official documents (house meeting minutes, constitution) of our residence more accessible to those who speak different languages so that they are able to receive important information in the language in which they feel most comfortable.</p>	<p>Creating safe spaces in res and putting in more effort and planning. Learning other languages</p>
<p>Not only including all voices in the room but also including all languages.</p>	<p>Going back to my community and applying collaborative approach to solving language issues</p>	<p>By making use of translators rather than just avoiding speaking a certain language.</p>
<p>I will apply what we talked about by Putting in my end of the year report that the leadership structures need to represent the house in terms of languages. Even though this might be difficult in terms of HC elections - but things like mentors, seniors comm and welcoming groups need to be considered.</p>	<p>Encouraging others to teach me more about their language.</p>	<p>To let the residents also understand that afrikaans people feel Stellenbosch is very English and English people feel Stellenbosch is very Afrikaans</p>
	<p>Telling everyone that the university doesn't hate Afrikaans</p>	

“I still need ...”

<p>More workshops about multilingualism in the BEGINNING OF THE HC TERM & BEFORE WELCOMING so that we can be proactive and not reactive</p>	<p>More workshops with different groups of people & different age groups</p>	<p>look into all the services the SU Language Centre</p>
<p>To actually start learning new languages and use the resources available to me.</p>	<p>I feel like I need to be exposed to more people who use sign language</p>	<p>To go find out what resources are at SU</p>
<p>To continue learning, growing and hearing stories</p>	<p>continuing my journey in becoming comfortable in speaking multiple languages</p>	<p>I still need More than just a multilingual workshop with the HCs, I still need assistance from the university in terms of planning and creating a multilingual environment.</p>
<p>To continue developing my knowledge on language and not end the journey here today.</p>	<p>I still need to learn how to normalise making mistakes, in our res, regarding language.</p>	<p>To educate myself more on other cultures and languages</p>
<p>To be sensitive about others and their languages and what languages they understand or not</p>	<p>ensure that I am being inclusive in section meetings by making sure all participants feel like they can speak their preferred language and ask questions in their preferred language, and ensuring that they are respected and understood by all members of the meetings.</p>	<p>Continue educating myself and those around me in order to continue growing as a person and always make those around me feel included and like they do matter.</p>
<p>To practice more practical ways to encourage others to be more inclusive without making it feel like 'policy'</p>	<p>To practice forcing myself out of my language comfort zone</p>	
<p>Courage to learn a new language</p>		

“I expected this workshop to be ...”

Boring and a waste of time that could've been spent working but it has been one of the most engaging and valuable sessions I have yet to attend as HC.

just a public relations initiative to tick off a box because of the backlash the University faced from the Human Rights Commission.

Less informative and engaging

None interactive, with only information. It was indeed not...

Tiresome and controlled but it was collaborative and that made it interesting.

More focused on Rigid policies — was pleasantly surprised

a lot more boring to be honest. but it was more engaging than i thought. i was part of some very profound conversations

somebody preaching about multilingualism for 2 hours. Instead it was engaging and I learnt so much

Boring. But I thoroughly enjoyed this. It was a good and necessary conversation

I expected it to be more controversial and cause a stir up. But everyone seemed to engage in a positive way

Time consuming but I have thoroughly enjoyed it.

Boring but it was very interactive

Bigger but I liked that it was small & we were in smaller groups.

Boring, but it was quite informative

A information overload, but I really enjoyed this.

Long and boring, but it wasn't. It was informative and worth walking up at 6am on a Saturday for!

I came into this thinking it is just repeating everything in different languages but understand now that the underlying values and reasons why we implement multilingualism is important.

I expected it to be more controversial and cause a stir up. But everyone seemed to engage in a positive way

boring but I got passionate about the topics. it was lekker

Alot more political, luckily it was not

Boring and like all the other workshops we have had to attend in the past.

To be in the beginning of the HC term for me to be able to relay the message to the newcomers

I expected this workshop to be almost a lecture format. However, it was very interactive which allowed me to be part of discussions and absorb more information and feedback

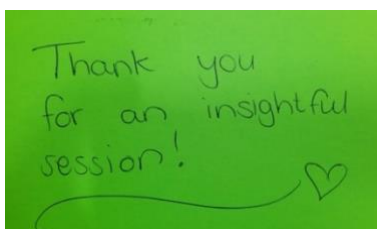
More of a lecture-like workshop, but I was pleasantly surprised at how interactive and interesting it actually was

less conversational, I'm so glad we got to engage with one another

“I will reach out to ...”

Next year's HC group and university resources for assistance	The Language Centre, my HC as well as others in the community so that I can continue to broaden my understanding and apply what I have learnt continuously.	The Language Centre to help with translation
The Language Centre and my community's multilingualism committee to bring forth my newly acquired information		the Language Centre to assist with any issues I may have in my residence.
Other residences in my surroundings because I have heard valuable suggestions in this workshop	Pretty much everyone I know, about my experience at this workshop and some of the things I learned. And more specifically the other leaders in my community (not necessarily HC) and encourage them to participate in similar workshops and conversations focused on multilingualism	First, the leadership in my community. And then the rest of the community, and people in would usually not engage with because of "language barriers" that I know now can be overcome.
Other students and communities to embrace the new approach and to use the Language Center for their problems		People who do not feel comfortable in English specifically
To people who challenge my way of thinking	People I know who are excluded	Members in my community who are passionate about translating to help with translating different forms of communication
As well other people who want to join me in changing South Africa for the better	I will reach out to more people I don't feel comfortable with	I will reach out
others and my leadership team to develop strategies to encourage inclusivity in a multilingualism context	Other communities to outsource ideas and resources when looking to have a new approach on these issues	To students that can help me become more educated in different languages and maybe getting help to learn another language such as Portuguese.
People of different language backgrounds to help me become more inclusive of their languages	People outside my home language more, people with a language that I don't encounter often and people willing to teach me their language	people who have other home languages
People around me who speak languages I don't try and better learn their mother tongue		My mentees in my next session and encourage them to embrace the beauty of multilingualism

Figure 4: Student leaders' reflection with prompts



A note left on a table after one of the HC workshops

5. Way forward

There was consensus that the workshops were very successful and made a valuable impact, and many of the residence heads and student leaders commented that it would have been helpful to receive this type of positive input on multilingualism earlier on in their terms of office. Accordingly, a decision has been taken to run a similar series of workshops in September/October 2023 for the new student leaders who will take up their positions in residences then. Thereafter, the workshops will be run on an annual basis. Options to co-create online resources with student leaders, a 'refresher' workshop during welcoming week, interactions with parents during welcoming week and the general involvement of the Language Centre during welcoming week will also be explored. The importance of opening dialogue and conversation about language rather than communicating 'language rules' was emphasised time and again. It seemed that environments sometimes made rules because they were not sure how to deal with the issues at hand in another way.

During the residence head workshop specifically there was a realisation that language discussions dovetail with all the issues that help to build communities, from initiatives to curb gender-based violence to promoting inclusion. A novel suggestion was made, namely that applicable Language Centre staff members be matched with the different residence clusters to become official friends of those clusters. This would create a close partnership between the Language Centre and the residences and make the Language Centre more approachable from a student viewpoint to give language support.

Important links

Language at SU: www.sun.ac.za/english/about-us/multilingualism

2021 SU Language Policy: www.sun.ac.za/language

2021 SU Language Policy infographics in:

- English:
https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Language/Final_Language%20policy%20infographic%20English.pdf
- IsiXhosa:
<https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Language/Language%20Policy%20infographic%20IsiXhosa.pdf>
- Afrikaans:
https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Documents/Language/Finaal_Taalbeleid%20inligtingsgrafiek%20Afrikaans.pdf

A multilingual mindset: <https://languagecentre.sun.ac.za/about/a-multilingual-mindset/>

Video on the Language Centre's approach to multilingualism:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLlFkD-wPOE>