



Language Plan of Stellenbosch University (SU)

**2002 SU Language Plan incorporating the SU Council decisions of
16 November 2007
12 December 2008
30 November 2009
14 June 2010
13 September 2010**

1. Introduction

The Language Plan is the operationalisation of the Language Policy in various contexts in which language is used at the University, and must help ensure the realisation of the following ideal of the Language Policy: that a favourable environment for learning and teaching be created, within which the promotion of Afrikaans as an academic language and the development of multilingualism as an asset are able to receive the necessary attention.

The Plan devotes attention to:

- Afrikaans and English in the contexts of learning and teaching;
- the implementation of the Language Policy in the contexts of learning and teaching;
- the promotion of Afrikaans as an academic language in a multilingual context;
- the implementation of the Language Policy in the context of administration and management;
- the management structures responsible for the Language Policy and Plan;
- the role of the Language Centre;
- the establishment of an effective environment for language services.

2. Afrikaans and English in the contexts of learning and teaching

Afrikaans is the default language of undergraduate teaching of the University.¹ This is the first provision of the Language Policy. With this provision, the University affirms its commitment to the continued use and sustained development of Afrikaans as an academic language. The use of Afrikaans is further provided for in the particular language specifications (see 3.3) at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Through the use of Afrikaans in all these contexts of learning and teaching, the University seeks to empower all students and lecturers, both those who have Afrikaans and those who have English as their home language and/or language of preference.

English is also used in learning and teaching by the University in executing its function of advancing knowledge, thereby exploiting the considerable academic potential of the English language.

With regard to the use of language, in particular Afrikaans, there need be no discontinuity between undergraduate and postgraduate learning and teaching. Considerations such as the following nevertheless influence the broader language specifications for postgraduate learning and teaching:

- the presence in Honours and taught Master's programmes of lecturers and students with a weak command of Afrikaans or no command at all;
- the intensified preparation of Honours and Master's students to be able to participate both orally and in writing in international discussions in their specific discipline;
- the degree of modular learning and teaching used in postgraduate programmes; and
- professional needs and requirements.

3. Language specifications for modules

3.1 A hierarchy of specifications

The four language specifications are arranged in hierarchical order (A = Afrikaans, E = English, T = Bilingual, A&E = Afrikaans and English in separate streams, sometimes also called parallel-medium):

- a. The A language specification is the default option for all undergraduate modules.
- b. The A&E language specification (parallel-medium teaching) is a viable option that is encouraged where it is academically possible and justifiable, as well as

¹ This means that the A language specification of the Language Plan applies to all undergraduate modules. This option, therefore, does not need to be approved. Particular language specification options (see Section 3.3) may be selected only on the basis of thorough motivation.

affordable. As in the case of the A specification, the A&E language specification may be used without having to be motivated.

- c. In addition, there are two particular options for language specification that may be chosen, if motivated. These options also have their order of preference: the T language specification, followed by the E language specification.

Language specifications are made at the module level, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Modules with the A language specification are called A modules; modules with the T language specification are called T modules; modules with the E language specification are called E modules, and modules with the A&E language specification are called A&E modules.

3.2 The language specifications that may be used without being motivated

3.2.1 The A specification

The A specification is the default choice for undergraduate modules.

This means that, unless otherwise stipulated, the A specification of the Language Plan automatically applies to all undergraduate modules. Any deviation from this default position in undergraduate modules will be allowed only after a thorough motivation has been considered.

3.2.1.1 Characteristics

- (a) Prescribed textbooks are in Afrikaans and/or English.
- (b) The availability of teaching and learning material (excluding textbooks) in Afrikaans and English, as can be afforded.
- (c) Class notes drawn up by the lecturer are:
 - (i) fully in Afrikaans, or
 - (ii) where possible, fully in Afrikaans and fully/partially (e.g. core class notes) also in English.

The judicious use of class notes provided in both languages to students has the aim, above all, of promoting their mastery of the subject language in which they have a lower proficiency, with the appropriate support of lecturers, mentors and tutors in departments, and specialists in the development of academic language skills in the Language Centre.

- (d) Other compulsory reading material (e.g. scholarly journal articles, books, etc.) is in Afrikaans and/or English.
- (e) Module frameworks and study guides drawn up by the lecturer are in Afrikaans, and, where possible, are provided in Afrikaans and English to students whose study language of preference is English.
- (f) Transparencies and data-projector contents used by lecturers in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals are in Afrikaans and/or English.
- (g) The oral communication language of the lecturer in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals is Afrikaans, but key terms and concepts may be explained briefly in English. Students asking questions in English may be answered in English by the lecturer. Guest lectures by foreign and/or South African lecturers with an inadequate academic language proficiency in Afrikaans may be delivered in English occasionally.
- (h) Test and examination question papers are fully in Afrikaans and fully in English on the same question paper.

- (i) Written assignments from lecturers for tutorials, seminars and practicals are fully in Afrikaans and fully in English on the same handout.
- (j) Students' written answers to test and examination questions and assignments may be in Afrikaans or English.
- (k) Oral presentations by students in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals may be in Afrikaans or English.

3.2.2 The A&E language specification

The A&E specification entails that separate 'streams' are offered in Afrikaans and English respectively. It is accepted to be a viable option that is encouraged where it is academically possible and justifiable, as well as affordable. As is the case with the A specification, the A&E specification may be used without motivation.

The A&E language specification is normally considered as an option where it can be introduced for the full duration of a subject or programme.

3.2.2.1 Characteristics

Consult the characteristics of the A and the E language specifications.

3.3 Particular language specifications

The particular language specifications are used according to particular guidelines.

3.3.1 The T language specification

The T language specification entails the more extensive use of English in particular learning and teaching contexts where the target group of students have appropriate language proficiency in Afrikaans and English.

This level of language proficiency is established in entrance tests. Students will receive appropriate help, where necessary.

The use of Afrikaans in the learning and teaching contexts described below is the same as for the A module, and is at least 50%, though may be higher.

The T language specification may take various forms, as illustrated in the following two examples:

Example 1: Material not for assessment (class notes, module frameworks, study guides etc.) is provided fully in Afrikaans and English **throughout**. In this case, the oral communication language of the lecturer in class is approximately 50:50 Afrikaans and English.

Example 2: Material not for assessment is provided **alternately** in only Afrikaans or English, and the language of oral communication of the lecturer in class is alternately Afrikaans or English.

The T language specification is mainly used to expose students with English as their home language or language of preference systematically to the Afrikaans subject language, so that they are able to study with optimal efficiency in modules with an A language specification at the second-year level.

3.3.1.1 Characteristics

- (a) Prescribed textbooks are in Afrikaans and/or English.
- (b) The availability of teaching and learning material (excluding textbooks) in Afrikaans and English, as can be afforded.
- (c) Class notes drawn up by the lecturer are:
 - (i) fully in Afrikaans and fully in English, or
 - (ii) alternately in Afrikaans and English.
- (d) Other compulsory reading material (e.g. scholarly journal articles, books, etc.) is in Afrikaans and/or English.
- (e) Module frameworks and study guides are:
 - (i) fully in Afrikaans and fully in English, or
 - (ii) alternately in Afrikaans and English, depending on the language of oral communication of the lecturer in the particular classes.
- (f) Transparencies and data-projector contents used by the lecturers in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals are in Afrikaans or English.
- (g) The oral communication language of the lecturer in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals of a module is:
 - (i) Afrikaans and English in the same class, with the proviso that the use of Afrikaans must be at least 50%, or
 - (ii) alternately Afrikaans and English in different classes of a module or programme, with the proviso that the use of Afrikaans must be at least 50%.
- (h) Test and examination papers are fully in Afrikaans and fully in English on the same question paper.
- (i) Written assignments from lecturers for tutorials, seminars and practicals are:
 - (i) fully in Afrikaans and fully in English on the same handout, or
 - (ii) alternately in Afrikaans and English, depending on the language of the material not for assessment (class notes, module frameworks, study guides, etc.), where the average use of Afrikaans must be at least 50%.
- (j) Students' written answers to test and examination questions and assignments may be in Afrikaans or English, according to students' academic language of preference.
- (k) Oral presentations by students in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals in the T specification may be in Afrikaans or English, according to their preferred academic language.

3.3.1.2 Guidelines

The T language specification may be considered as an option in the following circumstances:

- T1 The student enrolment in the first year allows for more than one class group on the basis of language preference. In this case, the T module is combined with the default (e.g. T and A).
- T2 Programmes, or modules in programmes, are unique and therefore not offered at any other South African university.
- T3 The programme is in a professional field that is scarce in South Africa, and the students in the target market have a sufficient level of language proficiency in Afrikaans and English for effective study in a T module.

- T4 Professional or occupational bodies set particular requirements for professional registration with regard to the development of language proficiency and multilingualism in the curriculum in certain study areas.
- T5 Multilingualism is essential to operate effectively in the required practical functions of the programme.
- T6 Classes are presented by foreign lecturers or by South African lecturers whose academic teaching skills in Afrikaans are still inadequate.
- T7 The student target market is in a modular programme² or a programme presented with the aid of satellite technology, and these students have adequate academic language proficiency to study effectively in a T module.
- T8 The T specification is necessitated by regional cooperation.
- T9 The T specification is the appropriate choice to achieve *specific* strategic goals in accordance with the Strategic Framework of the University.

Important note:

Students taking an A or a T module generally require academic language proficiency in both Afrikaans and English to be able to study effectively at undergraduate level. A higher level of academic language proficiency in Afrikaans and/or English is required at postgraduate level.

3.3.2 The E language specification

The E language specification is a highly exceptional option for modules at the undergraduate level, but is more generally an option at postgraduate level. It may be considered as a language specification according to the following guidelines:

3.3.2.1 Characteristics

- (a) Prescribed textbooks are in English.
- (b) The availability of teaching and learning material (excluding textbooks) in Afrikaans and English, as can be afforded.
- (c) Class notes drawn up by the lecturer are fully in English, or, where possible, fully in English and fully/partially (e.g. core class notes) also in Afrikaans.
- (d) Other compulsory reading material (e.g. scholarly journal articles, books etc.) is in English and/or Afrikaans.
- (e) Module frameworks and study guides drawn up by the lecturer are in English, and, where possible, are provided in English and Afrikaans to students whose study language of preference is Afrikaans.
- (f) Transparencies and data-projector contents used by lecturers in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals are in English.
- (g) The oral communication language of the lecturer in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals is English, but key terms and concepts may be explained briefly in Afrikaans. Students asking questions in Afrikaans may be answered in Afrikaans by the lecturer. Afrikaans is not compulsory in the case of foreign lecturers.
- (h) Test and examination question papers are fully in English and fully in Afrikaans on the same question paper.

² In a modular programme, students are not on campus/in residence throughout the year, but attend lectures on campus for shorter periods in the course of the year.

- (i) Written assignments from lecturers for tutorials, seminars and practicals are fully in English and fully in Afrikaans on the same handout.
- (j) Students' written answers to test and examination questions and assignments may be in Afrikaans or English.
- (k) Oral presentations by students in lectures, seminars, tutorials and practicals may be in English or Afrikaans.

3.3.2.2 Guidelines

The E language specification is considered as an option for modules in programmes in the following circumstances:

- E1 The (undergraduate and postgraduate) programmes are unique in South Africa. They can therefore not be taken at any other South African university, and, for particular reasons, cannot be offered as a T module.
- E2 The student target market is in a modular programme or a programme presented with the aid of satellite technology, and the majority of the students do not have adequate (academic) language proficiency to study effectively in Afrikaans.
- E3 There are modules that are presented in full by foreign lecturers or by lecturers who are in the process of mastering academic Afrikaans to be able to teach in Afrikaans.
- E4 The E specification is necessitated by regional cooperation.
- E5 The E specification is the appropriate choice to achieve *specific* strategic goals in accordance with the University's Strategic Framework.

3.4 Support for academic language proficiency

Support for mastering academic language proficiency in Afrikaans and English is provided according to the language specification. This support takes the needs of the students into account, as, among others, determined by the academic literacy tests that form part of the battery of access tests written by all prospective first-time entering first-year students. Support is provided in departments by teaching assistants, tutors and mentors, as well as by means of intensive language proficiency courses and other forms of support presented by the Language Centre (see Section 9).

4. Afrikaans as an academic language

In the sustained use and continuous development of Afrikaans as an academic language, areas such as the following come into play:

4.1 Undergraduate learning and teaching

The University strongly supports undergraduate learning and teaching in Afrikaans by insisting at the outset that Afrikaans is the default language for undergraduate learning and teaching. In this way, it is ensured that textbooks and study material become part of the process of knowledge creation in Afrikaans. The costs of such

smaller print runs can be reduced by making greater use of the internet and of printing on demand.

4.2 Postgraduate learning, teaching and research

Afrikaans is used widely at the University in the entire research process, from learning and teaching in class, to individual discussions between lecturers and students. However, considerably more emphasis ought to be laid on theses and dissertations in Afrikaans.

4.3 Research publications

The number of research publications in Afrikaans, including articles in accredited journals, has declined sharply in the last decade. This trend can be rectified by supporting or creating internal publications (such as the Annals series and in-house journals) and encouraging them to publish contributions in Afrikaans as well.

4.4 Public lectures

Apart from inaugural lectures and the Stellenbosch Forum, relatively few public lectures are presented in Afrikaans. The commitment to Afrikaans as an academic language implies that many more such lectures must be presented in Afrikaans to raise the public profile of Afrikaans as an academic language.

4.5 Popular science

The University has already made a great contribution to popular science in Afrikaans. It is now necessary that the University better exploits the full potential of this important medium of scientific communication and empowerment for the sake of Afrikaans.

4.6 Terminography

The creation and publication of terminology are essential for science in Afrikaans, and also require the support of the University.

5. The Language Plan for administration and management

5.1 Points of departure

This section of the Language Plan deals with written and oral communication **outside** the learning, teaching and research activities of the University.

- (a) Afrikaans is the default institutional language of the University.³

This means that all official documents, in whatever medium, must be available in at least Afrikaans. It also means that Afrikaans is normally the language of official events, such as official meetings, ceremonial occasions, inaugural lectures, etc.
The spirit of the University's Language Policy and Plan nevertheless requires that the preferences of non-Afrikaans speakers should be understood and respected. 'Default' in this context therefore also means 'but not exclusively'.

- (b) Important policy and discussion documents are, where necessary and where possible, made available in English as well.
- (c) Documents relating to service conditions are made available in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa according to the needs of the staff.
- (d) Written communications in departments and divisions (agendas, briefing documents) appear in Afrikaans.
- (e) Within environments that continuously communicate with the public and students, the University ensures that there are a sufficient number of staff who can communicate with ease in English and Xhosa as well.
- (f) To implement (a) to (e), adequate translation, editing and (where possible) interpreting services should be made available.

5.2 Communication with students

5.2 1 Written communication

- (a) The language of recruitment is Afrikaans and English, and in certain cases Xhosa.
- (b) Official documentation from the University administration to students will be in Afrikaans or English according to the language of preference.

³ Within this context, Council approved the following codicil to the Language Policy: "Stellenbosch University respects the language policy and/or the language preferences of its partners. This means that the official communication with and documentation for these partners (including official meetings) will normally be held or presented in the language of preference of the partner, or that the necessary services (e.g. translation and interpreting services) will be put in place, taking into account the language preference. In cases in which the University does not have the capacity to provide a service in the language of preference, English will be the language medium."

5.2.2 Oral communication

Enquiries and requests by students will, where possible, be dealt with in the language of the enquiry or request.

5.3 Communication with the public

- (a) Where possible, both written and oral communication will be conducted in the client's language of preference.
- (b) The wording of written and oral communication aimed at protecting the University's legal position or safeguarding it against legal liability will be in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa.

5.4 Internal communication

Afrikaans is the default language of internal communication of the University.

5.4.1 Written communication

- (a) Policy documents for staff are systematically translated into English, or an executive summary is provided in English.
- (b) Documents on service conditions are available in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa, according to the requirements of the staff.
- (c) Guidelines are laid down for meetings of Council, Senate, the faculties, departments, divisions and other institutional entities concerning the availability of documentation in English.
- (d) Council, Senate, the faculties, departments, divisions and other institutional entities of the University lay down guidelines concerning the language use in documents that are disseminated for information or consultation.

5.4.2 Oral communication

- (a) Enquiries and requests from staff are, where possible, dealt with in the language of the enquiry or request.
- (b) Afrikaans is the default language of communication at meetings. Individuals are free to use English as well.

5.5 Language policy and corporate image

The corporate image of the University reflects the letter and the spirit of the Language Policy. The Communication and Liaison Division, in consultation with Management, determines the measures to be taken in this regard.

Two examples:

The University's website: The formulation of information on the website is in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the University's Language Policy and Plan. All presentations on the website must therefore be in Afrikaans and English, with Afrikaans as the language of first contact. Web page summaries must, where possible, be presented in Xhosa as well.

Ceremonial occasions: Given the letter and the spirit of the Language Policy and Plan, it is important that, alongside Afrikaans, English and/or Xhosa are also used at graduation ceremonies.

6. Language services

The successful implementation of the Language Policy and Plan is subject to the establishment of extended language services in the academic and administrative environments. These language services include translation, editing and interpreting services.

The University accepts the responsibility of establishing these services in consultation with the relevant role players.

7. Language planning in environments

Every environment in the University (faculties and support service environments) formulates a language implementation plan for the particular environment that indicates the way in which the Language Plan of the University will be implemented in that environment. These language implementation plans form part of the business plans of environments, and are submitted to Management for discussion and approval. Monitoring of the implementation will take place via normal management structures and quality assurance mechanisms.

Further investigations into, and the introduction of, the innovative use of language technology to promote multilingualism are encouraged.

8. The management of the Language Plan

8.1 Final responsibility

The final responsibility for the implementation of the Language Policy rests with Council. Once a year Management will report to Senate and Council on the implementation of the Language Policy and Language Plan.

8.2 Procedures for the choice and amendment of language specifications

Decision making on the choices of language specifications is dealt with as part of the annual process of Calendar amendments, and follows the route of the faculties' programme committees, teaching committees (also sometimes known as academic offering committees), the faculty boards, the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), the Academic Planning Committee (APC), the Executive Committee (Senate), Senate and Council.

- (a) The programme committee for each academic programme, made up of representatives of departments presenting the modules in the programme, discusses the choices of language specifications. As the A language specification is the default, and the A&E language specification may be used without having to be motivated, the programme committees in the faculties discuss only the particular motivations put forward by departments for the particular language specifications.

- (b) The language specifications laid down for the modules in a programme need not be identical across modules and year levels.
- (c) Forms for indicating the language specifications for modules will be provided to programme committees.
- (d) The language specification choices for modules, as indicated by the programme committees in faculties, will be submitted to the teaching committee of each faculty. This committee must, among other things, ensure that motivations offered for particular language specifications comply with the guidelines in the SU Language Plan and the specific faculty's approved language implementation plan.
- (e) The faculty teaching committee (or similar body) may, in consultation with the programme committees, recommend motivated amendments to the language specifications.
- (f) The language specifications for modules in programmes are, within the framework of the SU Language Plan and Policy and the faculties' approved language implementation plans, submitted by the faculties' teaching committees to the PAC, for recommendation to the APC.
- (g) During the first semester, the PAC considers the recommendations for the amendment of language specifications for modules together with all the other Calendar amendments, and prepares recommendations to the APC.
- (h) The Institutional Research and Planning (IRP) Division calculates the implications of the amendments recommended by the faculties and the PAC, to ensure that, should all the amendments be approved, SU's language offering as a whole will still meet Council's requirement (30 November 2009) that a minimum Afrikaans offering of 60% should be sustained for the foreseeable future.
- (i) Should it appear that the proposed amendments will cause Council's requirement not to be met, the Vice-Rector (Teaching) engages the deans as needed, to request adjustments.
- (j) The Vice-Rector (Teaching) may seek advice from the Integrated Language Planning and Management Project Team.
- (k) The APC considers the PAC's recommendations together with the report of the Vice-Rector (Teaching); makes recommendations to Senate, and notifies the faculties of these recommendations.
- (l) All Calendar amendments, including amendments to the language specifications for modules, serve before Senate via the faculty boards' reports (with an indication that the APC has been consulted).
- (m) The amendment of language specifications for modules pertaining to SU as a whole serves as a package before Senate via the APC's recommendation.
- (n) Senate recommends the amendment of the language specifications for modules to Council for approval.
- (o) Should faculties wish to amend their language implementation plans, this should be done during the second semester of a year (as part of preparing their business plans for the budgeting process), and should be tabled to Management, who reports to Council on the matter once a year.
- (p) The approved amended language specifications for modules are indicated in the Calendar.
- (q) The language specifications for modules may be amended in each cycle of programme amendments during the first semester of an academic year.

8.3 Management of the Language Policy for support services

The management of the Language Policy for support services is a line function of the respective heads of support services, taking into account the management structures within which these heads must function. The support services environment creates its own structure (it could be its own language committee), and, after consultation with the heads of support services and other relevant management structures, this body makes recommendations to Management on the language policy of support services.

8.4 Revision of the Language Policy and Language Plan

The Language Policy and Language Plan are thoroughly considered every three years for possible revision. Amendments to the Language Policy and Language Plan related to academic issues are referred to Council via Senate.

8.5 Dealing with complaints

Student complaints regarding the implementation of the Language Policy and Language Plan are dealt with by the deans via the Academic Affairs Council, or, in the case of support services, by the line manager.

9. The role of the Language Centre

9.1 The responsibility of the Language Centre

The Language Centre accepts, in accordance with its regulations, the responsibility for the provision and/or coordination of the relevant language support required for the effective implementation of the Language Policy and Language Plan.

This responsibility is carried out in consultation with the relevant language departments.

9.2 Services

The services to be provided by the Centre include, among others, writing laboratory services, language acquisition courses, the promotion of academic literacy, and the development of Afrikaans as an academic language. The Centre intends to phase in the following functions as soon as possible:

- (a) Participation in the promotion of Afrikaans as an academic language
- (b) The development of the Afrikaans and English language skills of students
- (c) The development of the Afrikaans language skills of staff who do not have Afrikaans as their home language
- (d) The development of language proficiency in Xhosa, as one of the official languages in the Western Cape

- (e) The development of Xhosa as an emerging academic language
- (f) Support for foreign students with regard to language proficiency in Afrikaans, English and Xhosa
- (g) Support for staff with regard to the establishment of subject-integrated development of language proficiency, including support for teaching assistants, tutors and mentors
- (h) Training in professional language skills
- (i) Research in the area of language proficiency development and document design
- (j) Language and text skills in the e-learning environment

10. Concluding perspective

The Language Plan is the instrument through which the letter and the spirit of the Language Policy could be realised. The success of both the Language Policy and the Language Plan is dependent on the acceptance of ownership by the University as a whole, and the establishment of the principle that the Language Policy and Language Plan require constant attention and should never be seen as finalised. With these two principles forming the foundation, the Language Policy and Language Plan indeed offer the University a special opportunity to create a favourable environment for learning and teaching, to promote Afrikaans as an academic language, and to develop multilingualism as an asset.