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**University Language Planning and Development Office
Fourth Quarterly Report: 2019**

INSPIRING GREATNESS

**Fourth Quarterly Report
October-December 2019.**

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1. Introduction

The highlight of the last quarter of 2019 was the hosting of the office's 3rd Biennial Language Research Symposium (LRS). This year's LRS was taking place in the context of the UN Declaration of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages. The theme of the LRS thus foregrounded this important recognition of indigenous languages.

The LRS had the distinction of attracting two very important experts in the area of Language, Decoloniality, Development and Corpus Planning. We were privileged to host Professor Muxe Nkondo, of the University of South Africa, a giant in the social development theory, and Professor Dion Nkomo, of Rhodes University a leading scholar in Language Policy development and Corpus Planning.

I am also excited to note that the development of our two novel corpora, the English-isiZulu Parallel Corpus (EiPC) and the IsiZulu Oral Corpus (IOC) are developing very well. We have met our targets in terms of short-term growth rates. These two novel corpora are important in the development of automated machine translation, and in developing text-to-speech technologies. The future is exciting.

Professor Langa Khumalo
Director: ULPDO

2. Language Research Symposium

The University Language Planning and Development Office hosted its Third Biennial Language Research Symposium at UNITE Building at the Howard College Campus.



The delegates to the 2019 Language Research Symposium

The theme of this year's Language Research Symposium was **Language and Decolonization in a Transforming Higher Education Sector: Celebrating the International Year of Indigenous languages.**

This theme was motivated by the fact that the year 2019 was declared by the United Nations as the Year of Indigenous Languages. The thematic strands were as follows:

1. Language policy and planning in Higher Education
2. Human Language Technologies
3. Terminology Lexicography and Dictionary Compilation
4. Corpus and Indigenous Language System
5. Language of teaching and learning, research and interventions

The Language Research Symposium was officially opened by the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, Prof Sandile Songca. He

emphasized that the University views language as vitally important in any academic process. He stated that the University is thus committed to development of isiZulu, and lauded the ULPDO for doing a sterling job in the implementation of the University Language Policy and Plan.



Prof Songca officially opening the 2019 Language Research Symposium

The LRS had two keynote speakers, Professor Dion Nkomo from the School of Languages and Literatures at Rhodes University and Professor Muxe Nkondo, a scholar of social policy, national strategy development, and discourse analysis and, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs) at the University of North (now the University of Limpopo) and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Venda.



Prof Nkomo delivering his keynote address

Prof Nkomo's presentation focused on the development of the African indigenous languages, with a special emphasis on policy and language planning, corpus development as well as terminology development as enablers. His address showed that the development of Human Language Technologies (HLT's) for African indigenous languages is a necessary step in advancing their use beyond their localized communities. His address was a very well researched presentation based on paradigms that are emerging across all South Africa's public universities.



Prof Nkondo delivering his keynote address

Prof Muxe Nkondo's address focused on language and politics and how the two are interlinked. He reflected on the history of colonialism and oppression in South Africa and the rest of the African continent, and liberation struggle movement. He argued that the history of South Africa and its Socio-Economic and Political dynamics are directly linked to the development, status and role of indigenous African languages. He underscored the importance of articulating issues that affect the masses, and the models of development within these communities using African languages.

The Symposium papers were very insightful. The papers were engaging, and mostly covered the importance of language in higher education, particularly its role in epistemological access and student success. Conferencing was lively and robust with a lot of ideas exchanged between presenters and the audience. It was interesting to note that both the students and academics presented at the symposium.



Prof N Hlongwa, the Dean: SoA chairing the panel discussion

The last day of the Symposium was equally a very interesting panel discussion with Professor Langa Khumalo leading the discussion on the milestones in the development of isiZulu and the operationalization of the University's language policy and plan.



Prof Khumalo leading discussions on the panel

The evaluation of the LRS showed that the office received positive reviews from the Symposium delegates. Some comments stated that the programme went well, and that the presentations were informed and informative as always. However, there are areas of improvement that were suggested as well, such as expanding the scope of the symposium to cater for academics outside UKZN.

3. Partnerships and stakeholder relations

3.1 Meetings with the Media Houses

In this quarter ULPDO embarked on the process of deepening its collaboration with its stakeholders for purposes of continuing with the corpus building project.

The Director and his delegation met with the Editor and the senior sub-editors of ISOLEZWE newspaper on 10 October 2019. The meeting was meant to first present how far ULPDO has gone in the building of the IsiZulu National Corpus

since the two teams first met in 2016. It was pointed out that the IsiZulu National Corpus has grown to be the biggest African language corpus in the world. At the center of the ULPDO's Director presentation was the role of corpus in the intellectualization of isiZulu. This included collecting isiZulu words from ISOLEZWE for Machine Learning, Automated translations, Spellchecker development etc.

ISOLEZWE newspaper received the presentation well and further committed to help ULPDO by allowing access to its resources including all published newspapers.

The meeting was concluded on a very high note with both parties eager to strengthen working relations and maintaining them going into the future.

3.2. International Translation Day

On 16 October 2019 the ULPDO also partnered with PanSALB, EThekweni Municipality and IsiZulu Dictionary Unit in hosting an International Dictionary Day at the Exhibition Centre. The event was graced by the presence of His Majesty King Zwelithini. Professor Khumalo presented to His Majesty and the delegates the vast progress that UKZN has made in making isiZulu a language of science and technology through the building of the biggest African language corpus, and the development of the first isiZulu spellchecker.

4. Autshumato Translation Training Workshop

The ULPDO hosted the Autshumato Translation Training Workshop on 4-5 December 2019 UNITE Building, Howard College Campus. The Autshumato Translation Training Workshop was aimed at offering an in-depth training on the used and functionalities of the Autshumato translation system. The focus was particularly training language practitioners on the effective use of the technology. It dealt with the architecture, functionalities, suites and effective usage of the translation system.



In the picture are the workshop participants including the facilitator, Mr Tshikani Mabasa from DAC: National Language Service.

The training was user orientated and covered a variety of topics including:

- Introduction to Autshumato as a computer aided translation application:
- Translation memory,
- Machine translation,
- Glossary creation,
- Alignment tool

The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Tshikani Mabasa from National Department of Arts and Culture, who has vast knowledge in the subject matter. He shared a lot of information that assisted the participants to understand the tool better. The workshop was attended by various stakeholders including the KZN Legislature, the KZN DAC, language activists and academics.

The training workshop was a success, participants suggested that the office should host this workshop again in future.

5. Running Projects

5.1. Bua Le Nna Sessions

The ULPDO, SGLD and Student residences have together hosted successful Bua Le Nna sessions from October-December 2019 in three UKZN Residences.



In the picture are the students who normally participate in this session including the ULPDO staff members.

In the period under review the office hosted the two last sessions to complete the 13 sessions that were planned for at the beginning of the year. The students, champions and ULPDO staff hosted these last two sessions with excitement, indicating their level of understanding of the Sesotho language. To some degree, the students are now able to converse at basic level in the Sesotho language. This was a positive way of ending the programme in 2019 with high expectations to begin well in 2020.

6. ULPDO HLT's

6.1. Parallel and Oral Corpus

The office is developing two novel corpora, the English-isiZulu Parallel Corpus (EiZPC) and the IsiZulu Oral Corpus (IOC). These two types of corpora are of vital importance in the strategic development of computational tools for isiZulu. The data transcribers were contracted to work on transcribing the oral corpus into e-text. The Parallel corpus consists of any documents and/or articles published by the university whereby both isiZulu and English text are aligned sentence by sentence. The overall purpose is to use it for machine learning and automated translations. Much work has been done but a lot more needs to be done to complete this assignment.