

# YOU ARE INVITED



## South African Languages Empowerment and Intellectualization – A Community Engagement Forum and Hands-on Workshop

At: University of Cape Town  
Department of Electrical Engineering  
Cape Town, South Africa

Venue: GH Menzies Building, Upper Campus  
Date: 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017  
Registration on: 28<sup>th</sup> Nov'17 at 08h00 - 08h30

Organized by: Dr. Mohohlo S. Tšoeu  
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Human languages are at the centre of modern civilization. They enable inter-racial/cultural communication and underpin economic activity from: tourism, education, functions of government and business to diplomatic affairs. Languages are part of cultures and a core part of thought/idea generation, comprehension and articulation. Language can empower or marginalize people. They can also unite or polarise societies.

The fast spreading hegemony of English and other colonial languages in Africa and globally at the peril of indigenous languages and disadvantage of native people raises a plethora of questions – a global problem to which South Africa is no stranger. South Africa has eleven (11) official languages recognised in 1996, a South African Sign Language (SASL) and several other languages. This is both a blessing of diversity in cultures and creativity, and a curse of language divide that perpetuates the dominance of colonial languages in the face of low literacy levels. The subject of language usage and empowerment enjoys much debate in many sectors of society.

Literature and media content are indeed replete with a litany of diverse – some divergent – ideas on how to preserve heritage, enhance global citizenship and bolster economic activity, education and creativity. The recent calls for decolonized education at South African higher education institutions are also intricately linked to the complex question of 'language of instruction'. At the heart of the discourse on languages usage and empowerment sit many questions, some with no answers while some have multiple answers and no consensus.

Electrical Engineering Department of the University of Cape Town is proud to announce and invite all to its first community engagement forum. This forum will host esteemed speakers from the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), leading multilingualism technologies research group of the North-West University (NWU) and language experts from the University of Cape Town (UCT).

The aim is to facilitate the establishment of a telescoping perspective on the sensitive and controversial subject of languages from government legislation, policy, education, business and narrows down to the question of how modern electronic technology can be used to mediate between the ever growing and conflicting objectives of heritage preservation, decolonization, inclusive growth and social justice, globalization and the inevitable merging of once segregated cultures that results in code-switched hybrid human languages.

The forum provides a platform for constructive and robust discussions, among all stakeholders on problems born of language diversity and how they can be solved using technology, transformative legislation and policy frameworks.

The discussion forum is followed by free hands-on tutorial workshops on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The first is on instrumentation and processing for speech processing. The second will introduce theory and tools automatic language recognition and translation (ASRT). Participants in these workshops will receive a certificate of attendance issued by the IEEE Circuits and Systems Society (CASS).

### Community Engagement Forum

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> November 2017

Speakers: Dr. Nomfundo Mali (PanSALB)

Ms. Ulrike Janke (NWU)

Prof. Mamokgethi Phakeng (UCT)

Dr. Mohohlo Tšoeu (UCT)

Capacity: Open, but space is limited.

### Hands-on Workshop

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017

By: Dr. Mohohlo Tšoeu (UCT)

Capacity: 20 Delegates

### Hands-on Workshop

Date: 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017

By: Dr. Lehlohonolo Mohasi (NUL)

Capacity: 20 Delegates

