

UNIZULU hosts Human Language Technology workshop

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

THE Department of African Languages and Culture at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently hosted a three-day workshop on Human Language Technology (HLT).

The seminar was an initiative of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS), whose main aim is to contextualise isiZulu through HLT at an academic level. The workshop therefore made a huge contribution towards achieving this aim, by empowering students with translation skills.

HLT deals with tools for promoting the growth and professionalisation of African indigenous languages. It refers to technology that can process human language. It enables the checking and correcting of spelling, translation of documents into other languages, as well as speech recognition and transcription. The national Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) adopted HLT to support its work in the domain of language development and to promote access to information and multilingualism. It has partnered with several experts in the domain.

Conducted by the national DSAC team, the training was targeted at postgraduate students in the Department of African Languages and Culture. The opportunity was also extended to all other interested persons to participate via an online platform.

Participants from UNIZULU, DUT, UKZN, DSAC and NIHSS as well as other field experts converged at the UNIZULU Science Centre and engaged in a vibrant discussion throughout the three days.

Welcoming the attendees, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Professor Mogomme Masoga emphasised the importance of African languages. "We are about to launch the Centre of Languages soon and we will be focusing on Nguni linguistics,



Pictured are some of the members of the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences, which aims to contextualise isiZulu through HLT at an academic level.

but we are actually going beyond South Africa. We have a lot in the pipeline at the University of Zululand. We should be the people who are going to be proactive in ensuring that we guard and protect our languages. It is very important. We should do that in how we teach and research. We should be vigilant to the type of research that our students are bringing," Prof Masoga said.

According to Tsikani Mabasa from DSAC, the workshop is part of a DSAC-

funded initiative to promote the understanding and use of the Autshumato ITE translation software by as many South African citizens as possible, irrespective of whether they are linguists, translators or interpreters.

"Autshumato is named after one of the first interpreters in South Africa. It is a translation software application that is freely available and can be shared with anyone across the country. In that way, the public will have access to informa-

tion in their own languages," explained Mabasa.

Technologies developed because of this collaboration include spelling checkers for the 10 official indigenous languages, speech recognition and speech synthesis for the 11 official languages, and a range of translation tools - including machine translation functionality from English into isiZulu, Sepedi and Afrikaans. Development work to add other languages is underway.

Research indaba to probe ways of advancing LIS field

NALEDI HLEFANE

THE development of a precise postgraduate research proposal with a strong theoretical framework, and the publishing of this postgraduate thesis and dissertation are some of the topics set to be discussed by keynote speakers at an upcoming research indaba hosted by the Department of Information Studies at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU).

The 2022 Research Indaba will take place virtually (via Microsoft Teams) on March 30, under the theme "Trends and future of LIS Education and Research". It is an initiative which aims to cultivate a culture of relevant and meaningful research, while empowering supervision relationships among postgraduate students and supervisors in the department.

Giving context to the event, Professor Velile Jiyane, who forms part of the organising team, said the idea of hosting the indaba was sparked by the Information Studies Department's recognition at the university's annual Research Awards ceremony for achieving above-average research output per capita of staff in 2021. This accomplishment inspired staff to embark on a mission to boost postgraduate research output in addition to that produced by staff.

"The Research Indaba adds to a series of research activities the department aims to use to enrich and strengthen the culture of research and supervision in the topical areas, and new development in the library and information studies sector," she said.

To achieve the latter, Dr Neil Evans, Head of the Information Studies Department said the department has prepared a rich and varied programme that includes keynote addresses both from individuals in professional institutions and prominent academics. These individuals possess a wealth of knowledge and experience



The 2022 Research Indaba will take place virtually (via Microsoft Teams) on March 30, 2022.

in the library and information studies (LIS) sector.

These include, among others:

- Prof Marlene Holmner, from the University of Pretoria whose presentation on "Information Ethics and the 4th Industrial Revolution" seeks to emphasise the essence of upholding ethics in research amid technological developments.

- Dr Buhle Mbambo-Thata, University Librarian at the National University of Lesotho, will share her knowledge. Her address, "Digital initiatives in Africa: creating an environment for research informed digital growth" will shed light on digital initiatives in Africa that promote a conducive environment for research.

According to Prof Jiyane, the department and its postgraduate students look forward to an informative event where experts will impart knowledge that will guide postgraduate students and supervisors to better manage their research in alignment with new trends in the profession.

She added that she hopes to see the target audience conducting more research with a strong focus on developing solutions to the challenges in the LIS field, therefore contributing new knowledge, new theories and new methodologies, and growing the sustainability of the profession.

'Problematising the scholarship of teaching and learning in the context of African thought' webinar

PRECIOUS SHAMASE

THE Faculty of Arts at the University of Zululand (UNIZULU) recently hosted a webinar titled "Problematising the scholarship of teaching and learning in the context of African thought".

The webinar was held as part of a series of lectures and webinars conceptualised by the office of the Vice-Chancellor. In her opening remarks, UNIZULU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Xoliswa Mtsose expressed her excitement about how opportune the webinar was, as it came shortly after the university had adopted its new vision and mission. "This webinar could not have come at a more auspicious moment. The continual review of a new vision and mission is a critical function of the university in gearing itself for a sustainable and prosperous future. The notion of the university as an institution 'restructured for relevance' has been taken to a different level. UNIZULU has decided to sharpen its African-centred orientation by ensuring that it is an African university in character and in its scholastic trust," she said.

The first presenter was Professor Morgan Ndlovu from the Department of Anthropology and Development Studies. He laid the foundation for the day by highlighting the importance and challenging nature of teaching and learning, the core business of the university. He emphasised that as academics seek to make sense of the idea of scholarship of teaching and learning, they cannot do this without an understanding of the circumstances that led to the development of this idea – and of the meaning that was given to it at that moment. From there, they can then develop their own understanding and meaning that is suitable to African interests, agendas, desires and goals. Prof Ndlovu also sought to address

the fact that teaching and learning is the core business of the university.

Prof Zoliswa Fikelepi-Twani, who heads the Creative Arts Department, took the audience forward by discussing entrepreneurship and innovation as a pragmatic method of teaching and learning. Prof Fikelepi-Twani believes this approach could possibly unlock the economic potential for poverty and inequality reduction in South Africa.

"UNIZULU is engaging students on entrepreneurship developments so that there are businesses that are run by students. There are enormous possibilities. Among the National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences 2022 creative arts awards, I was proud to discover that one contestant was a young female graduate from the UNIZULU Creative Arts Department, who is competing with seasoned artistic scholars. She has started her own business using painting to design fashionable jackets and sneakers to fight her struggles," noted Prof Fikelepi-Twani.

Responding to the presentations, Prof Mogomme Masoga, Dean of the Faculty of Arts provided practical ways of addressing teaching and learning. "The whole scholarship of teaching and learning provides us with an opportunity of transforming teaching, research and community engagement. It is a very important practice for a university to embrace; we have an opportunity to own what we teach, own what we research and own what we do in community engagement."

According to Prof Masoga, UNIZULU has consciously decided to follow the African thought direction. "Therefore, in teaching, research and community engagement, we cannot divorce ourselves from engaging in an African way."



Professor Morgan Ndlovu



Professor Zoliswa Fikelepi-Twani

Rosetta D33P is shooting for the stars after DJ talent search victory

NALEDI HLEFANE

UNIVERSITY of Zululand (UNIZULU) alumnus, Nompumelelo Rosetta Hlatshwayo, still cannot believe her fortune after recently scooping a R100 000 cash prize along with other perks in the Smirnoff Shaya Ingoma Top 10 Female DJ competition.

Hlatshwayo, whose stage name is Rosetta D33P, received the life-changing news during the finale, which was held at Nsimbini Lifestyle in Folweni, Durban. Apart from the cash prize, she will be traveling to Ibiza in 2022 on a trip worth R200 000, she also won a three-month residency on a national radio station worth R430 000, Spotify playlist, two months of direct PR profiling, having a main slot in Shaya Ingoma music activations during 2022, and the opportunity to DJ at 2022 Smirnoff events.

The talent search began in mid-October 2021. The first leg entailed aspiring DJs producing and uploading on their personal social media accounts a three-minute video mix featuring a minimum of six tracks, each of which had to play for at least 30 seconds. After uploading, entrants were required to promote their video entries on their social media platforms. This was followed by a selection of the top 10 entries that met all the requirements of the first stage. In the second and final round, the budding DJs had to drive votes on the official Smirnoff Shaya Ingoma 1818 website.

"The competition was so challenging because all the contestants are talented. The other challenge was getting people to vote for me every day because they were busy and would sometimes forget to vote due to other commitments," Hlatshwayo said.



Nompumelelo Rosetta Hlatshwayo wins the Smirnoff Female DJ competition.

She nevertheless persisted in her campaign, ensuring to prompt everyone she knew to vote and to encourage as many people as they could in their circles to follow suit.

Recalling the hours preceding the announcement, Hlatshwayo said it was a "nail-biting" experience as she was sitting in second spot, with a gap of more than 5 000 votes between her and the lead contestant at the time. "This situation

inspired my never-say-die attitude and I had to draw all my energy to drive votes on social media to get my fans to help close the gap within 24 hours. I managed to close the gap and I was leading with 975 votes," she recalled.

She admitted that while she partly expected to win from the onset, she strongly relied on the power of God, which she knew would far surpass her efforts to increase her chances of victory.

She is eternally grateful for the support of her fans, family and friends as well as the Godfathers of Deep House SA, by whom she was trained and mentored to become a DJ and producer. Furthermore, she expressed appreciation for Smirnoff SA's initiative to shine the spotlight on female DJs.

Winning the talent search has elevated Rosetta D33P's brand, both in the music industry and the social media space. She is now keenly awaiting the logistics of the trip to Ibiza to be finalised, as she hopes to meet music personalities from all walks of life who will help advance her knowledge of the DJing craft.

On her future, Hlatshwayo said she intends enrolling with Pioneer DJ Institute for a DJ Pro course and an Advanced Course in Music Production as a way of improving her craft. She is also working on releasing an EP.

MUSICAL JOURNEY

Hlatshwayo's love for music was developed from as early as 10 years old, when she formed a choir comprising her peers from Clermont, Durban, where she was born and raised.

Although she studied towards a Bachelor of Science degree in Hydrology and Geography, and graduated in 2018, music remained a great passion of hers. Soon after completing her university studies, the opportunity to pursue a career in music presented itself. A friend of hers with whom she had studied at UNIZULU convinced her to attend a show where deep house music greats, The Godfathers of Deep House SA, were performing. Their impeccable sound prompted her to join their academy for DJs and producers.

A NODE FOR AFRICAN THOUGHT



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