



LANGUAGE CONFERENCE REPORT

OCTOBER 2018



LOST IN TRANSLATION

A language conference on immigrants' perceptions of language on their day to day public interactions with other people from culturally and linguistically diverse background.

PREPARED FOR

Fullah Friends of SA, Fulbe Australia, Gortankaku Community Association, Bantal Pulaar Community Association, Modiobereh Fulbhe Victoria Inc, Musidal Queensland, Multicultural Communities Council of SA and Australia Diverse Multicultural Community Groups and their Service providers.

PREPARED BY

Sidique Bah

Chairperson Fullah Friends of SA

June 28, 2018

ABOUT FULBE AUSTRALIA

Fulbe Australia Inc. is the peak, national body representing Fulbe/Fullah People in Australia. Our role is to advocate and promote issues on behalf of its constituency and member's state organisation to government, business and the broader community.

We strive to ensure that the needs and aspirations of Fulbe/ Fullah Australians from all backgrounds are pursued and fulfilled. We work with member states to participate in the development of their new homeland Australia and be recognized in the development of any public policy that impacts us and the community as a whole.

Fulbe Australia believes in a collaborative approach and works from a strength base approach. The Integration of our people in the host country and the cohesion between all communities is important for us as a peak organisation hence we partner with new and emerging communities to share best practice and promote fairness and responsiveness to our constituency in the delivery and design of government policies and programs.

We promote multiculturalism as a core value that defines what it means to be Australian and we are proud to do so in all our work.

Sarjoh Bah

PRESIDENT, FULBE AUSTRALIA



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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In November 2017 Fullah friends of SA and Fulbe Australia Inc. in collaboration with the Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCCSA), the African Communities Council of South Australia (ACCSA), South Australia's diverse ethnic speaking communities and Fullah speaking Australians hosted the 'Lost in Translation' language conference in Adelaide.

The conference was focused on the challenges new and emerging communities face learning a second language. It gave participants the opportunities to discuss how language affects our relationship as a community.

A collated report from the conference's discussion point was documented and would be shared amongst participants and other stakeholders.

The two day event comprised a;

- » Language Conference & Workshop
- » A Soccer Tournament and
- » A Gala Dinner

Welcome to Country

- » Katrina Power - Kurna Elder

Opening remarks

- » Sidique Bah - Chairperson, Fullah Friends of SA

Key Note Speakers

- » Darryl Buchanan, EO Ethnic Schools SA
- » Dr Sulay Jalloh, Lecturer Darwin University
- » John Rice, lecturer English Language Centre
- » Patricia Rios - Spanish Speaking Seniors SA

Guest Speakers

- » The Hon Zoe Bettison - Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- » The Hon John Gardner - Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs
- » Mr Mabok Deng Marial - Chairperson African Communities Council of SA
- » Mr Sarjoh Bah - Chairperson Fulbe Australia

LOST IN TRANSLATION

A conference and workshop on immigrants' perceptions of language on their day to day public interactions with other people from culturally and linguistically diverse background and mainstream Australia

SECTION 1

Introduction to the Workshop

Introduction

Today, many people from migrant or refugee background are faced with challenges adapting to and understanding the nuances of the language of their host country. The effect of these challenges can be either positive or negative.

Purpose of the Workshop

The FFSA language conference workshop aims to objectively discuss the importance of language and culture in our adopted country and give participants the opportunity to workshop how we can address the challenges posed by misperception of our thoughts and actions by others in our community. What is acceptable and normal to someone can easily be misinterpreted leading to a negative or positive chain reaction. FFSA hopes that that having a dialogue around some of these issues will go a long way in improving community relation.

Significance of the Workshop

There are three primary groups that may benefit from this workshop. The first group is CALD community groups who may learn how to respond to future interactions in the wider community. Discussing their experiences during the workshop and learning from each other how the situations was handled will help foster understanding and reduce anxiety and worries associated with bad interactions. The second group to benefit from this workshop will be service providers who work with CALD communities. It will broaden their perspective and shed light in to some of the problem posed by lack of knowledge of language of the host country and some of the negative effects it has on their clients. It will help them learn how to tackle these problems in the future. The third group to benefit from this workshop is the government as information gleaned from this workshop will help shape their policy making process to address some of these challenges. Measures can be put in place to help migrants with better orientation process in terms of understanding the way of life of Australians in relation to behavior and mannerism.

Scope of the Workshop

The workshop was limited to the day to day experience of workshop participants and their perceptions around difficulties they face communicating with the wider community. Language challenge is not just between mainstream Australians and CALD groups but even amongst CALD groups there is challenge in getting along due to different understanding based on language influence backed by culture and tradition. The information and data for this workshop report was collated during the workshop and is based on feedback and data collected through registration at the door.

Method of the Study

Data for this study were collected using questions developed by the FFSA and Fulbhe Australia. After some deliberation three questions were chosen to be used in the conference workshop.

The first question asked participants how often do they get misconstrued or misconstrue someone else in their day to day activities. They were encouraged to discuss situations where they or someone they know got caught up in a language misinterpretation.

The second question was, considering younger migrant Australians tend to move away from the language of their parents, is it worth the effort to try preserving one's language in a foreign land? - Discuss the value of ethnic/language schools with regards to identity.

The Third question was what can be done to improve understanding across different languages and cultures.

Source of the information

The roundtable discussion involved government officials, service providers, language educators, community organization and visitors from interstate.

Sample Selection

The respondents involved in the workshop were the conference attendees comprising Fulbe Australia representative from interstate, service providers and invitees from various communities in SA. A questionnaire was placed on each table with the same questions. A team leader and a scribe were chosen to discuss the questions and provide short answers. At the end all the feedback sheets were taken and the answers recorded.

Findings method

Simple technique was used to present the results of this study. All the responses and feedback were collated and transferred in to a word document. The responses were then placed beneath the relevant questions. Topics arising from the discussions were highlighted and briefly explained in some instances followed by examples cited by the participants.

Limitations of the study

The study may be limited due to certain factors. Time and lack of interpreters meant the responses were not in depth as would be expected. Lack of funding and professional help meant members have to use a straight forward commonsensical approach in presenting this report.

SECTION 2

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings - Questions & Responses

There were eight tables for the workshop. Each table was presented with three questions to form the basis of their discussion. The questions are;

1. How often do you get misconstrued or misconstrued someone else? Discuss situations where you or someone you know got involved in a language misinterpretation situation
2. Considering younger generations tends to move away from the language of their parents, is it worth the effort to try preserving ones language in a foreign land? - Discuss the value of ethnic/language schools with regards to identity.
3. What can be done to improve understanding across different languages and cultures – Discuss how we can achieve a successful relationship in a multicultural society

The responses to the questions are outline below.

*Topic 1 - How often do you get misconstrued / vice versa -
Discuss situations where you or someone you know got caught
up in a language misinterpretation*

There were many similar responses to this question which is indicative of the common challenges people face adjusting in a new and different society.

Pronunciation - Mispronunciation in English affect interactions with mainstream Australia including other migrants from different cultural background.

Examples;

- bus and boss, butter, bother and border, air conditioner and air con, perfume and par fum - can be awkward when trying to clarify in general or in the workplace
-

Accent - Speaking with an accent affect communication with others. Understanding each other becomes difficult and some people just shy away from further interactions to avoid embarrassment and awkward conversations.

Examples;

- For and four, bus and boss
 - How are you going to day can sound like how are you how are going to die (Aussie Accent)
-

Body language - difference in communicating behaviors leads to mistrust and tense interactions. In some cultures it is not polite to stare in to some ones face when talking whereas in the mainstream Australian culture it is rude to be looking the other way.

Examples;

- Eye Contact - not polite to look elder in the eye but may be considered rude in Australia to not maintain eye contact
 - Greeting - Offering a handshake to Muslim woman can result in an awkward interaction
-

Inferences and language interpretation can also lead to mistrust and tense interactions. Words meanings and interpretation can be different across cultures. Words spoken in one language can be different and have no direct meaning in another. A polite gesture from one individual will translate as rude or aggressive by another individual.

Examples;

- Miscommunication in regards to actions and expression, humor /Jokes misrepresented - bring a plate, 5 minute of smoke, break a leg
 - Translated direct in English - “I slept with my dad” ‘instead of ‘I share a room with my dad’
-

While discussing the questions the following points were also made by some of the participants;

- » Translating or interpreting in health related issues is fraught with complications for people from migrant communities who in most cases might not fully understand what they have been diagnosed with and the necessary steps they need to take to keep in good health.
- » There is a strong feeling of despair and frustration when people from CALD background get the feeling that people dislike their accent or tone and take things the wrong way. It is a big challenge having to interpret English in one’s language whilst trying to respond in real time situations.
- » Insecurity from accent and mispronunciation impedes positive interactions in the workplace undermining confidence and trust amongst employees
- » First impression goes a long way, a first encounter fraught with misunderstanding undermines building relationships
- » Age of technology where people have to deal with automated voices to access some services can be daunting and frustrating
- » Navigating the current citizenship test is difficult it will be good if translated in one’s language.

Topic 2 - - Considering younger generations tends to move away from the language of their parents, is it worth the effort to try preserving ones language in a foreign land? - Discuss the value of ethnic schools with regards to identity

This question and discussion topic was about deliberating on the necessity of schooling kids from culturally and linguistically diverse background in their language of origin. The overwhelming response was a 'Yes' it is important to teach them and reflected a strong support for the preservation of language of origin.

Values of language - participants were overwhelmingly of the view that it is very important to preserve their original language while living in Australia. All the responses reflected a desire for the passing on of language and culture from home country to the children born or growing up in Australia. Reasons giving for why it is important is as follows;

- Language tells where you come from and help preserve cultural identity
- It is a communication tool worth having
- It will help empower migrant kids for their future
- It is good to have a unique second language that you share with your parent/ child, it brings the family closer together

Role of Government (Establishment of Ethnic schools) - Participants from all the tables supported the idea of state government setting up ethnic schools for migrant children to learn and understand their language of origin.

Role of Parents - participants from some of the tables pointed out that parents have a role and responsibility to help their children learn their language and understand their culture. Some of their suggestions are parents should

- Teach their children about their culture (Tell them stories, show them videos and link them with other community members)
 - Encouraged them to attend community meeting and participate in organized activities.
 - Take them back for holidays to visit country of origin.
-

Discussion points

There was an overwhelming support for preserving language. It was a consensus amongst the tables that language carries value that cannot be attained elsewhere and will help new and emerging communities in keeping connection to their root. It will extend the possibility for younger generation to be future interpreters and also increase their understanding about cultural and traditional norms.

When living in another country people become conscious of the important role of language because they sometimes feel lost and empty without any connection to their past.

Language contributes to social identity, preserves culture, adds to the richness of Australian multicultural community

Topic 3 - Discuss what you think can be done to improve understanding across different languages and cultures

This question and discuss point has the most responses from all the tables. Outlined below are the many suggestions made on the role the government and people should perform to improve relations across cultures.

1. Local and State government should;

- support and promote Community events by connecting cultural groups and organizing kid friendly activities
- Improve interpreting services - Centrelink
- Provide funding and support for ethnic schools
- Support new and emerging communities undertake cultural activities and promote diversity, run projects that encourage people to collaborate (Conference, sport, food, dance, modelling)
- Link mainstream to multicultural education
- Support those in the community who are leading the change
- encourage government officials to participate in cultural events
- promote cultural awareness in the workplace

2. Parents, community leaders and mainstream Australians should;

- Work towards building cross cultural relationships
- Share stories to help find a common ground and learn from each other
- Exercise a willingness to engage - take a step outside of our comfort zone
- Have a tolerant approach and recognize our differences
- Support those in the community who are leading the change
- Be accepting of Intermarriages
- Be making the effort to try and understand different cultures and languages
- Should be respectful of each other's culture
- Learn about the cultural dos and don'ts of others
- Support community education - volunteer teachers who have a broad knowledge of the culture and the language to pass on to the children

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the responses several conclusions concerning the effect of language on communication can be drawn. The responses clearly indicate people from culturally and linguistically diverse background are in some instances negatively affected in their interactions with mainstream Australian society.

Mispronunciation and accent resulting in awkward and mistrustful interactions were indicated as two areas most affected as most of the participants express their embarrassment in such difficult situation which affect moral and confidence in both employment and social circles.

From these responses it can be concluded that people from CALD background are aware of these challenges and would like the state and local government to help them engage with mainstream Australians to improve communication and understanding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the responses and conclusions in this report the following recommendations are made

- » Both local and state government should be actively involved in promoting ethnic language education for children from CALD background
- » There should be an ongoing collaboration amongst South Australia's diverse communities to host community events and social activities comprising people from CALD background and mainstream Australians
- » Cultural education should be part of school curriculums and should be taught at the workplace
- » Regular hosting of conferences and information sessions around language and culture awareness

CONFERENCE AND WORKSHOP ATTENDANCE LIST

Service Providers	
Department of Education South Australia	1
New Royal Adelaide Hospital	1
Penguin Club Adelaide	1
Australian Refugee Association	6
Thebarton Senior College	1
Salisbury Council	1
Salisbury Library Services	1
Northern Community Legal Services	1
Len Beadel ESL Group	1
Central Adelaide Local Health Network	1
Tongan Community Radio	1
Ethnic School Association SA	1
Multicultural Communities Council of SA	3
	22

Community Organisations	No of Attendees
Fijian Seniors SA	1
Congolese Youth SA	1
Dinka Bor Ethnic School	1
PAASA - Pakistan Australian Association of South Australia	1
Ivorian Community SA	1
Fullah Friends of SA	33
Fulbe Australia	1
Bantal Pulaar Community Group Australia Inc.	12
Iranian Women of SA	1
Bantu Ethnic Communities	1
African Muslim Information Centre	1
Tongan Community Radio	1
ALCASA - Arabic Language and Culture Association of SA	1
Sierra Leone Community SA	3
African Women's Federation SA	1
African Communities Council SA	2
Modiobereh Fulbhe Victoria Inc	18
Musidal Queensland	8
Cambodian Youth SA	2
Somali Bantu Community SA	2
Madi Community SA	2
Gabriela Mistral Spanish Speaking School and Cultural Centre Inc	3
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