

CLDN NEWSLETTER



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CHILD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT NODE



CLASS seminars

We would like to introduce our Child Language Africa Seminar Series (CLASS), a series of six seminars on a theme. This year the theme is bilingualism.

Dr Michelle White presented our first CLASS seminar on 18 February 2026. Dr White discussed her 2023 article in her talk

“Difference or Disorder? Practical

Approaches to Bilingual Child Language

Assessment”. The talk focused on bilingual child language assessments, their practices and approaches. Dr White presented these with a particular focus on their applicability in South Africa.

Our second CLASS seminar was presented

by Prof. Mikateko Ndhambi on 25 March

2026. Prof. Ndhambi discussed her 2026

article in her talk “What can Xitsonga-

speaking children teach us about early

vocabulary development?” The talk

focused on Prof. Ndhambi’s findings on

noun bias in the early vocabulary

development of 95 monolingual Xitsonga-

speaking toddlers aged 16-32 months. The

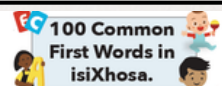
vocabulary data was collected with the

Xitsonga-adaptation of the MacArthur-

Bates Communicative Development

Inventory.

100 Common First Words



Children learn words from many different kinds of everyday experiences. These include the names of familiar objects in the home, words linked to daily routines and play, action words, descriptive words and social words used in interaction with others. To make this visible and useful, we have developed a resource showing the first common 100 words that Afrikaans- and isiXhosa-speaking children typically learn across these different types of words. The resource groups words into simple, meaningful clusters so that parents, caregivers and practitioners can see the range of words children typically acquire early on. It will be shared with children’s organisations to support early language development in practical and accessible ways.

Click below if you would like to view the isiXhosa and Afrikaans versions of the resource:

[isiXhosa](#)

[Afrikaans](#)

About Us

The Child Language Development Node (CLDN) of the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR) is hosted at Stellenbosch University. The node works to advance knowledge about children’s language development in South African languages. A core function is to digitalise child language development data so that it is freely available on the SADiLaR platform. The data can inform the development of valid diagnostics tools and interventions to promote language development amongst South African children.

Child Language Development

The Child Language Development Node is currently undertaking a MacArthur–Bates Communicative Development Inventory (MB-CDI) norming project to document typical early language development in all South Africa’s official spoken languages. The MB-CDI is a widely used parent-report tool used to track how infants and toddlers acquire their language. The project aims to establish developmental norms that reflect the country’s linguistic diversity. At present, the team is norming the MB-CDI for isiXhosa and Afrikaans, working with more than 800 parents and caregivers in each language group. The urban phase is nearly complete, and the project will next move into rural areas of the Eastern Cape and Western Cape, with the most recent fieldworker training having been completed at the end of March 2026.

isiXhosa CDI’s completed (urban areas)

400

Afrikaans CDIs completed (urban areas) 353

400

Click the link below, if your family is Afrikaans-speaking and you would like to help us by completing the Afrikaans MB-CDI:

[Afrikaans CDI](#)

New Publication in Child Magazine

We are excited to share that the CLDN has published two articles in Child Magazine - an online publication equipping South African parents with the tools they need to make parenting ‘easier’.

Our first article, “**How We Talk To Our Children Matters**” (November 2025), delves into the importance of consistent and early language exposure for a child’s language learning.

Read it [here](#).



Our latest article, “**The More, The Merrier: Multilingualism**” (March 2026), debunks common myths about childhood multilingualism. Read it [here](#).

CLDN Announcements:

Recent Publications

Brookes, H., Southwood, F., Makaure, P., White, M. J., Mössmer, M., Defty, C., Yalala, S. L., Brink, N., Kruger, H., Matfunjwa, M., Ndhambi, M., Ndlangamandla, S., Bhuda, T. M., Bronn, C., Buthelezi, N., Jiyana, W., Khumalo, F. P., Miriri, L., & Skosana, N. (2025). **A Crosslinguistic Study of Gesture and Lexical Development in South African Infants.** *First Language*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/01427237251388512>

Southwood, F., Brönn, C., Brookes, H. J., Defty, C., & Kruger, H. (2025). **The psychometric status of child language assessment tools in South Africa's official languages.** *South African Journal of Communication Disorders*, 72(1), e1-8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajcd.v72i1.1132>

Congratulations to our graduates!

We would like to congratulate our Stellenbosch University graduates for December 2025.

Atshilaho Viola Nethathe (pictured right) graduated with her Master's (Cum Laude) in Child Language Acquisition. She was supervised by Prof. H.J Brookes.

Emma Thom (pictured left) graduated with her Honours (Cum Laude) in Child Language Acquisition. She was supervised by Prof. F. Southwood.

We would like to extend our gratitude and congratulations to our graduates and their supervisors for their commendable work.



Your hard work and dedication have paid off. Congratulations!

Book series recommendation



Author: Jill de Villiers

Illustrator: Salem Sloane

Book Series Title: Mind the Book (This book series is forthcoming)

Publisher: Ventrus Learning

More details about the book series: [Mind the Book – Ventrus Learning](#)

This children's picture book series presents child language researchers and practitioners with aspects of grammar, syntax and semantics, and building stories around them, to help children improve their skills in understanding complex forms.

Visit [Bookdash](#) for new South African Sign Language children's books.

Thank you for 500 followers!

We are happy to announce that our Instagram profile has surpassed 500 followers!

We would like to thank everyone who has followed us thus far for their continued support. If you have not followed us yet, feel free to head to our account!

UPCOMING CONFERENCES & WORKSHOPS

* Child Language Symposium 2026

When: 6-7 July 2026

Where: University College London, United Kingdom

Click [here](#) for details

* 14th International Conference on Third Language Acquisition and Multilingualism (IAM 2026)

When: 2-5 September 2026

Where: Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

Click [here](#) for details

* XXV International Congress on Infant Studies (ICIS) 2026

When: 6-9 July 2026

Where: Hotel Riu Plaza, Panama

Click [here](#) for details

* 69th Annual Conference of the International Linguistic Association

When: 30 April - 2 May 2026

Where: New York, USA

Deadline: 23 March 2026

Click [here](#) for details

* 8th African Linguistics School (ALS)

When: Summer 2026

Where: University of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

Deadline: 15 March 2026

Click [here](#) for details

* 4th International Conference on Early Language Learning and Multilingual Education in Early Childhood

When: 8-9 September 2026

Where: Gdańsk, Poland

Deadline: 20 March 2026

Click [here](#) for details

