

CLDN NEWSLETTER



SA-CDI.ORG



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CHILD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT NODE

CLASS Seminar

On the 19th of August 2026, Prof. Daniela Gatt presented our first Child Language Africa Seminar Series (CLASS) talk of the 2nd semester.



Her talk, titled **How Bilingual Contexts Shape Language Acquisition**, examined how child-external factors shape bilingual children's language development. Drawing on research with Maltese-English bilingual preschoolers, Prof. Gatt showed that comparisons across languages and between bilingual and monolingual children require careful attention to children's linguistic and socioeconomic contexts. She demonstrated that socioeconomic status and differences in exposure may affect children's two languages differently, with higher socioeconomic status more strongly associated with English than with Maltese naming skills.

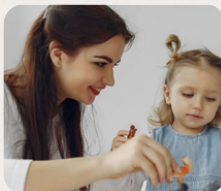
New Child Magazine Articles

We are excited to announce that the CLDN has recently published two articles in Child Magazine, an online publication that shares parenting tips and practical advice to make parenting a little easier for South African parents. For both articles, we partnered with speech-language therapist and a member of our team, Helena Kruger, who shares practical ideas that parents can incorporate into their everyday communication with their children to support their language development.

The first article, **"Encourage your child's language development"** (July 2026), provides tips on how to encourage your child's language development at every stage. Read it [here](#).



The second article, **"Language development opportunities"** (August 2026), builds on the previous articles by providing activities and practical strategies for language development. Read it [here](#).



If you missed our previous articles, see them on our website, [here](#).

New Publications

White, M.J., Kruger, H., Brink, N., & Southwood, F. (2026). **Vocabulary size of Afrikaans-speaking infants and toddlers: Influence of health-related and household-related risk factors across SES group.** In B. Gerber, M. Burger, S. Swartz-Filios, & E. van Niekerk (Eds.), *Early Childhood Development and Intervention in a Majority World Context: A Multi-Disciplinary Perspective* (pp. 167-184). AOSIS Scholarly Books. <https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2026.BK507.10>



Norming Updates: isiXhosa, Afrikaans & isiZulu

The Child Language Development Node (CLDN) is currently establishing developmental norms for children aged 8 to 30 months using the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory (MB-CDI, or CDI). This widely used parent-report tool, adapted for over 100 languages including all South Africa's official spoken languages, maps children's early language acquisition.

The CLDN is pleased to announce that we have completed our rural and urban data collection for our isiXhosa CDI norming. Our isiXhosa fieldwork teams completed 852 CDIs. The collected data is currently being analysed. Our fieldwork teams are continuing data collection for the Afrikaans rural and urban norms. Altogether, the project will gather reports on children's language development from approximately 1,600 parents and caregivers for each of the participating language groups.

During the week of 17 August, the CLDN trained Afrikaans-speaking fieldworkers in Beaufort West, Western Cape, to collect data from rural communities across the Karoo. We are also preparing for isiZulu norming, with data collection due to commence in urban and rural communities in December 2026.

Afrikaans CDIs completed (rural and urban areas) 756 800

Total isiXhosa CDIs completed (rural and urban areas) 852

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

[Afrikaans CDI](#)

Thank you for following!

We are excited to share that our Instagram page has reached 915 followers! Our Facebook community is also growing, as we are currently at 250 followers.

Thank you to everyone who has supported us thus far. If you haven't joined our online community yet, we would love to have you. Please feel free to follow our accounts!

Language Resource: DIY Games

Every month on our social media, we share language resources that you can use to help build your little one's vocabulary and support their language development. These resources include DIY language games you can create at home, fun naming games, and practical everyday activities that you can easily incorporate into your daily routine to encourage language learning.

In this instalment of our newsletter, we are focusing on DIY language games! These simple, fun activities are easy to create using items you may already have at home and provide a great way to turn everyday playtime into an opportunity for your little one to learn and use new words.

This instalment's DIY game uses words your little one already knows to help expand their vocabulary through a **fun rainbow scavenger hunt!**

Want to try it at home? Visit our [website](#) for the full game instructions and ideas for adapting the activity as your little one's vocabulary grows.



Keep an eye on our website and social media pages for more language resources!

Upcoming Funding and Conference Calls

* **17th International Congress for the Study of Child Language – IASCL 2027**

Where: São Paulo, Brazil

When: 26–30 July 2027

Abstract submission deadline: 18 October 2026

[Click here for details](#)

* **National Research Foundation Postgraduate Scholarships**

Who: 2027 Honours students

Application closing date: 23 November 2026

[Click here for details](#)

* **International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) 2027 annual meeting**

Where: Cape Town, South Africa

When: 18–21 May 2027

Abstract submission deadline: 16 October 2026

[Click here for details](#)

* **AI For African Languages conference**

Where: Makerere University, Uganda

When: 10 December 2026

Paper submission deadline: 2 October 2026

[Click here for details](#)

/L+/ Summer/Winter School on Language Acquisition

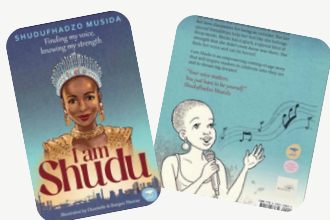
The third edition of the virtual /L+/ summer/winter school took place online on 24–28 August 2026. With practical sessions and lectures, the summer/winter school programme aimed to promote knowledge about first language acquisition and establish a global network of collaboration between researchers and students.

CLDN co-director, Prof. Frenette Southwood, presented a lecture on developing assessment tools. Her lecture titled **Considerations for Creating Child Language Assessment Tools for Under-Resourced Languages** reviewed the best practices for creating culturally appropriate tools to assess the language skills of children who speak under-resourced languages. She presented the development of the CDI in the 11 official spoken languages of South Africa as a case study.

Prof. Southwood explored aspects such as how to respectfully collect child language data from adults with low literacy levels as well as how to avoid pitfalls in the development of child language assessment tools.



Book Recommendation



Author: Shudufhadzo Musida (Illustrations by Chantelle and Burgen Thorne)

Book Title: I am Shudu: Finding my Voice, Knowing my Strength

Languages: Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa, isiZulu, and Tshivenda

Publisher: Jacana Media

More details about the book: Former Miss South Africa Shudufhadzo Musida wrote **"I Am Shudu: Finding My Voice, Knowing My Strength,"** an empowering story about finding your voice, discovering your strengths, and embracing who you are. When Shudu moves to a new town, she is bullied for being an outsider, but special friendships help her find a sense of belonging. Along the way, she discovers an inner strength she didn't know she had and learns to confidently be herself. This book can help your little one talk about feelings, friendship and belonging, build confidence in expressing their thoughts and ideas, recognise the value of their own voice, embrace who they are, and dream big. [Click here for more details about the book.](#)

Thank you, Book Dash!

Through our partnership with Book Dash, we are able to provide books to participants in our CDI norming study. To date, 1,430 Afrikaans, English, isiXhosa and wordless books donated by Book Dash have been distributed to parents, caregivers and daycares during our isiXhosa and Afrikaans norming data collection. As data collection continues across rural and urban communities, even more books will be distributed. Book Dash has also generously provided us with isiZulu books, which will be distributed during the norming of our isiZulu CDI. Thanks to Book Dash, we are helping to improve children's access to books in their home languages, both in their homes as well as their daycare centres!

For more information, visit [Book Dash's website](#).

