



# INVEST IN YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE!

GERMAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
FOR CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

**GOETHE  
INSTITUT**

Sprache. Kultur. Deutschland.

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## INVEST IN YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE!

### Preface

Children today live in a highly connected environment. Also for children, the global processes and new communication technologies are leading to a change in the way they are using language. In many places, everyday life is already media-oriented for very young children, and it is becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual. In the communication across borders, English often is most prevalent and almost automatically invades the vocabulary of children because of the daily use of modern technologies.

This fundamental change involves both a challenge and an opportunity. Nowadays, good English language skills are already considered the standard worldwide, if you want to be successful in your career. This makes it all the more important to consider which languages, besides English, would be relevant for your children today and for their future. German as a foreign language offers children in Southern Africa a variety of opportunities and possibilities.

This brochure is intended to:

1. Give parents as well as educators suggestions on how to support and accompany children in the process of learning a foreign language in a meaningful way.
2. Explain, why German is a foreign language with perspective.
3. Show, which materials and projects exist to assist in learning the German language.



## CHILDREN TODAY

*The children's living environment has changed, as they communicate across continents from an early age.*

Your children, curious and open to new experiences, have already been confronted with modern information technologies and their changed language demands since some time ago.

Over the last few years, computers, tablets, smartphones and the internet have established themselves as media that are used every day, especially among today's 5 to 12-year-olds. Many schools have interactive boards, learning portals and electronic class registers. Social networks such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook or Instagram serve teachers and schools to convey information and provide learners with entertainment. On the internet and when travelling, but also in their everyday

lives, children increasingly encounter other cultures and meet people with a different mother tongue. You will undoubtedly agree that multilingualism has always been part of everyday life in Africa. But what is new, whether in a family environment, in kindergarten, primary school or in the neighbourhood, is that the world has become a networked global village.

Fortunately, compared to adults, this is where children are much more spontaneous and pragmatic in solving communicative hurdles.

## ENGLISH IS A MUST – GERMAN IS A PLUS!

German is not in competition with English or any other language. We strongly believe in multilingualism and the more languages you learn, the easier it will be to acquire a new language. An English-speaking person who wants to learn German will quickly realise that there are many analogies between the languages. Not only do a lot of the words have the same roots, but many structures can also be transferred. With the right method, which would point out these parallels, learning is great fun.

If their children do not speak English as their first language, the majority of parents ask for English as the first or second language, as they are convinced that this language is easy to learn, and that, as a global means of communication, it will guarantee their children's good prerequisites for their future learning- and professional-careers. However, they rarely reflect on the fact that English is globally so widely used that it is no longer a unique characteristic.

It is known that children under the age of 10 acquire new knowledge very quickly and easily. That is why children should start learning a foreign language as early as possible.



Research suggests that learning a foreign language stimulates critical thinking and creativity. Children who acquire a foreign language learn to concentrate better in class and perform better in other subjects, such as History and Mathematics<sup>1</sup>.

Children who come into contact with a foreign language at an early age often behave more positively and tolerantly towards other cultures. In this sense, foreign languages function as a key to other cultures. Children get the opportunity to learn more about their counterparts, to engage in a playful exchange and to get to know other perspectives virtually in passing.

The early exchange through the learning of another language opens up far-reaching development opportunities for each individual personality.

<sup>1</sup> Babak Ghasemi and Masoud Hashemi  
Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences 28 (2011)  
872 – 876

## STAGES IN THE LINGUISTIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

*What phases does my child go through in early language acquisition?*

In humans the orientation of the language already begins before birth.

From about the age of two, language acquisition happens consciously – language and thinking come together.

At the age of four, a child has acquired the most important structures of his or her own mother tongue.

A foreign language can be acquired without any accent up to the age of six.



Until adolescence, syntax and morphology are acquired effortlessly.

During the language learning process, the child should be given ample opportunities to try out what has been newly learnt in social interaction, e.g. with the teacher or with classmates.

Mistakes are developmental steps on the way to acquiring language and should be treated with patience and care as they are a legitimate aspect of the learning process.



## MY ROLE

### *How important am I as a parent?*

Parents should:

- be informed about the goals and contents of early foreign language learning as well as the prerequisites of the psychology of learning in a way that is appropriate for the specific target group.
- be regularly informed of their child's development and progress. This is the only way for them to understand, accompany, and support the learning process.
- not try to influence their children with corrections in the learning process. Error corrections should be reserved for educators and teachers, who will only make corrections very specifically and reservedly in order not to unsettle the child and not to disturb the flow of speech.
- be patient, just as you were patient when you taught your children their mother tongue during the first few years.
- encourage their children in situations and experiences in which the newly acquired language can be used spontaneously.



Some kindergartens in South Africa already offer several hours of learning German every week. Where this is not the case, parents could join forces and request German language offers as well. The same applies to primary school: together you could try to convince school principals to expand the range of foreign languages on offer so that your children can benefit directly.

**Your role in patiently accompanying your child is especially important.**

## WHY GERMAN?

### *What does German as a Foreign Language offer my child?*

With German, your children will learn a living language spoken by more than 100 million native speakers. In addition, more than 55 million people speak German as a foreign language.

Every year, 340 000 German-speaking tourists travel to South Africa. For these reasons, employers in Southern Africa are increasingly in need of employees with a good knowledge of German, because **language skills are fundamental to successful business relationships.**

By means of such language skills, you can get information about the target market directly and without translation errors; you will prevent misunderstandings and even more importantly: You will be able to reach customers on an emotional level.

Knowing German, your children will be able to gain access to professional training in Germany, to studies at German colleges and universities and to

**250 000  
German  
speakers**

**There are approx. 120 000 German nationals living in South Africa. A further 250 000 people grow up with German as their mother tongue, often in multilingual homes.**

**17  
billion  
Euros**

**With a trade volume of now approx. 17 billion Euros within the EU, Germany is by far South Africa's largest and most important trading partner.**

**90 000  
jobs**

**There are 600 German companies in South Africa, and they safeguard more than 90 000 jobs.**



the German labour market. And what is more, did you know that Germany is one of the largest study scholarship providers in the world?

Additionally, did you know that it is possible to study for free - without tuition fees! - regardless of the citizenship of your child? A German university degree is of high quality and is appreciated by employers throughout the world. Most universities require a B2 or C1 language level. Begin to invest in your child's future now.

**When your children learn the German language, they open up new perspectives for themselves on the internationalised labour market.**

## THE ABC OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### *What are the levels of Foreign Language learning?*

Learning a foreign language is divided into levels, starting at level A1. For each of these levels, it is precisely defined how proficient the learners are at that specific level.

These levels are referred to as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This Framework of Reference makes the learners' language acquisition, language application and language proficiency transparent and comparable. It is divided into three levels of proficiency:

A (elementary use of the language),  
B (independent use of the language) and  
C (proficient use of the language).



When children learn a foreign language at school, they ideally reach the competence level B1 or B2 at the end of their school career. In kindergarten and primary school, the children move on levels A1 and A2. To be able to study in Germany, they would, for instance, need German language skills at level B2, C1 or C2.

**Therefore: the sooner, the better.** The sooner your children start learning German, the greater the likelihood will be that they have reached competence level B2 at the end of their school career.

## LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY

*The three levels of proficiency are then again divided into six levels:*

**A1** At this level, your child can introduce himself and others, ask other people questions of a personal nature, and understand and use simple sentences. But don't worry – you will probably still be able to understand everything.

**A2** Your child will, however, be slowly improving and will be able to now communicate in simple, routine situations that involve a simple and direct exchange of information about more intimate and familiar things.

**B1** At this stage, your child will now be able to manage most situations linguistically if on a trip to a German-speaking country. And you will probably be asking yourself more often “what on earth was my child just saying?” Just a suggestion for the parents: Now is the time where you should also be attending a German course!



**B2** You don't understand your child anymore? Don't worry – that is normal, because your offspring is now able to communicate so spontaneously and fluently that a normal conversation with native speakers is possible without much effort on either side. If you did not follow the advice for parents from level B1, you will now have missed the boat.



**C1** Meanwhile, you might have bought a German-English dictionary to try and understand your child., as they are now able to understand a wide range of demanding longer texts, grasping implicit meanings. They can express themselves spontaneously and fluently and will be able to use the language effectively and flexibly in their social and professional life.



**C2** Congratulations! Your child is now proficient enough to easily understand virtually everything he/she is reading or hearing, and express him-/herself spontaneously, very fluently and accurately, as well as make finer nuances of meaning clear, even regarding more complex issues.



## OUR EXAMS

### *Can my child take an exam at the Goethe-Institut?*

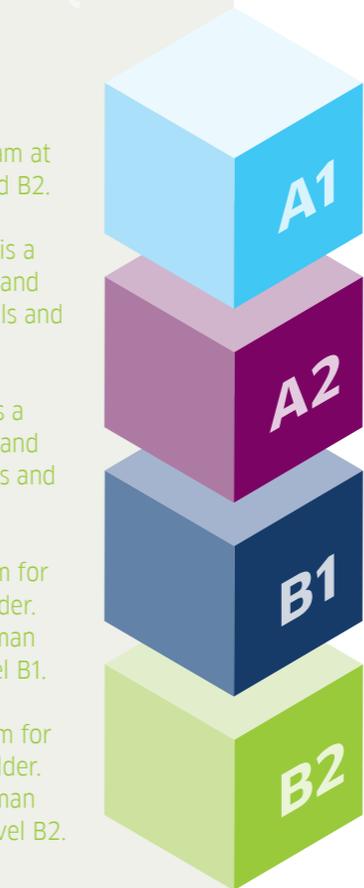
Children and young people can take an exam at the Goethe-Institut for levels A1, A2, B1 and B2.

The **Goethe-Zertifikat A1: Fit in Deutsch 1** is a German exam for young learners 10 years and older. It confirms very simple language skills and corresponds to the first level A1.

The **Goethe-Zertifikat A2: Fit in Deutsch** is a German exam for young learners 12 years and older. It confirms elementary language skills and corresponds to the second level A2.

The **Goethe-Zertifikat B1** is a German exam for young learners and adults, 12 years and older. It confirms an independent use of the German language and corresponds to the third level B1.

The **Goethe-Zertifikat B2** is a German exam for young learners and adults, 15 years and older. It confirms an independent use of the German language and corresponds to the fourth level B2.



Does your child need internationally recognised proof of their German language skills? **With its name, its quality management and its many years of experience, the Goethe-Institut stands for ensuring that the professional requirements for Foreign Language examinations are met.** The exams can be taken at the Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg or our examination cooperation partners in South Africa.

More information about our exams can be found under:  
<https://www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/spr/prf.html>



## MATERIALS

*Which offers of the Goethe-Institut will make it easier for my child to start learning German at an early age?*

Teachers' Training in Germany and in South Africa:  
[www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/spr/unt/for.html](http://www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/spr/unt/for.html)

Advice for educators:  
[www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/spr/unt/ber.html](http://www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/spr/unt/ber.html)

Why learn German?  
10 reasons for German:  
[www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/spr/wdl.html](http://www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/spr/wdl.html)

On our websites you will find exciting online games and other tips for children to learn German.  
**Courses for children and young people at the Goethe-Institut.**  
<https://www.goethe.de/ins/za/en/spr/kur/kuj.html>

Downloads, forum and much more:  
[www.goethe.de/de/spr/unt/kum/dki.html](http://www.goethe.de/de/spr/unt/kum/dki.html)

Practice German free of charge:  
[www.goethe.de/en/spr/ueb.html](http://www.goethe.de/en/spr/ueb.html)

The Nuremberg Recommendations for Early Foreign Language Learning:  
<https://www.goethe.de/en/spr/unt/kum/nue.html>

Professional training in Germany:  
[www.goethe.de/voca](http://www.goethe.de/voca)

DAAD Scholarship Database:  
[www.funding-guide.de](http://www.funding-guide.de)



## CHILDREN'S COURSES AT THE GOETHE-INSTITUT

- offer modern classroom methods and learning material
- create a safe, joyful and playful experience for children
- encourage your child to learn, engage and explore all, that German culture has to offer
- are offered by professional and enthusiastic teachers
- invite your child to join a stellar community of curious and excited learners

**Join in at the Goethe-Institut and find out!**



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