

SA languages spell checker now available for free download

Citizens can now access a spelling and hyphenation checker tool for South Africa's 10 official languages, excluding English.



Image source: berna naroglu – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

This tool, known as the Spelling Checkers for South African Languages, is now available for free to download from the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR).

Developed by the Centre for Text Technology (CTexT), based at North West University, the spell checker has been made freely available to the public by SADiLaR, funded by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), as part of the South African Research Infrastructure Roadmap (SARIR).

SARIR is a systemic intervention by the DSI to provide research infrastructure across the entire public research system, building on existing capabilities and strengths, and drawing on future needs.

The speller and hyphenation tool, which works with Microsoft Office Suite, allows the user to choose their South African language in the relevant Microsoft software. It then recognises and corrects spelling, hyphenation and typing errors, and offers suggested alternatives for words that are not recognised.

The tool offers an extensive wordlist for Afrikaans, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, SiSwati, Sesotho, Sesotho sa Leboa, Setswana, Tshivenda and Xitsonga.

“In recognition that our South African languages are underresourced, in terms of available data required for tools such as this, and that language is constantly changing and evolving, the tool also provides for a custom dictionary to which users can add words they regularly use and are not in the tool’s existing wordlists,” SADiLaR said.

The custom dictionaries can, if the user so chooses, be shared with the developer to be verified and included in updates.

SADiLaR said it welcomes contributors and collaborators to help with expanding the tool’s wordlists.

Executive director of SADiLaR, Professor Langa Khumalo, described SADiLaR as a national research infrastructure mandated to support research and development in the domains of language technologies and language-related studies.

“It is thus a great triumph for us to be able to make available such a valuable tool to support multilingualism in South Africa and build up the necessary technological resources to ensure our languages remain relevant in the fourth industrial revolution,” he said.

Head of CText, Dr Martin Puttkamer, said by working close with linguists in South African universities and the national language bodies, the team has developed spell checkers that evaluate words according to the official orthography of each language.

“We hope that making the spelling checkers freely available will help strengthen the digital presence of all our indigenous languages, facilitate the production of more digital texts in these languages, and provide access to information technology to all our citizens,” he said.

To download the tool and for more information, visit the [SADiLaR website](#).

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>