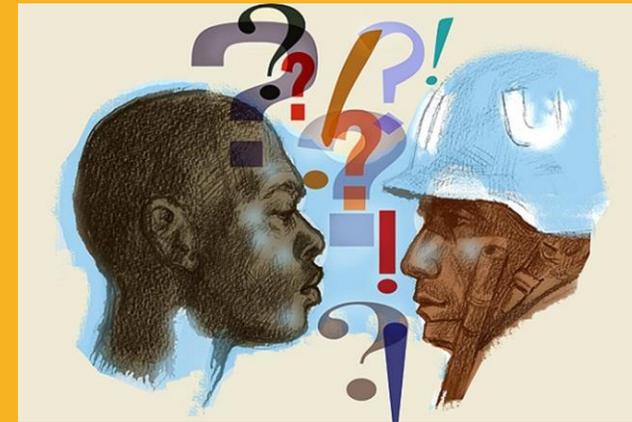


# New Internationalist

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

# ENGLISH FOR PEACE?



NEW INTERNATIONALIST EASIER ENGLISH  
READY PRE-INTERMEDIATE LESSON

# **THIS LESSON:**

Grammar: questions

Reading: infographic and article

Vocabulary: words about war and  
peace

Writing: a formal letter

# ORDER THIS QUESTION:

many languages  
world? in  
there are  
How the

# ORDER THESE 2 QUESTIONS:

speakers?  
languages  
most  
have  
the  
Which

the  
have  
Which  
countries  
languages?  
most

Now try to answer all 3  
questions – then check on the  
infographic on the next slide

## WHOSE LANGUAGE?

- A country's official language often has more to do with colonial or historical legacies and geopolitics than with what most people actually speak.
- 90% of Africans have no knowledge of the official language of their country.<sup>2</sup>
- At least 40-50 million EU citizens (10% of the EU population) speak something other than their country's official language(s).<sup>3</sup>
- Fewer than 4% of languages have any sort of official status in the countries where they are spoken.<sup>4</sup>

## THE GLOBAL PLAYERS

Most of us speak the same languages already – just 4% of the world's languages are spoken by 96% of the world's population.

### The top 20 languages<sup>1</sup>

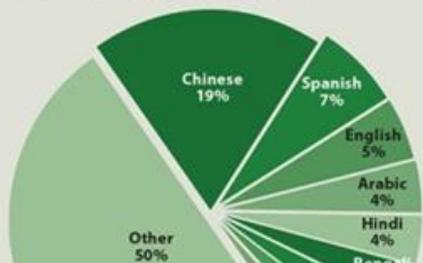
Speakers as first or second language (in millions)



Six of the top 10 languages are those of colonizing countries – English, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, German, French.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 500 languages have fewer than 100 speakers; around 1,500 have fewer than 1,000; 3,340 have fewer than 10,000.<sup>5</sup>

Languages with 100+ million speakers as percentage of world population<sup>6</sup>



# Languages big and small - the facts

There are between 5,000 and 7,000 languages in use today, but every fortnight one of them goes extinct. Linguists predict that within two centuries we could be left with just 200 (approximately one per country) and by 2300 we could all be speaking just one language. The last speakers of half of the world's languages may already be alive today.<sup>1</sup>

## EDUCATION

To be taught in your mother tongue is a luxury, not a right, for most. Fewer than a third of the world's languages have a written form<sup>7</sup> – so the push for literacy tends to favour a country's dominant, written, language.

87% of Africans have no access to education in their mother tongue.<sup>8</sup>

Fewer than 10% of the world's languages are used in education.<sup>8</sup>

## THE DIGITAL AGE

- Social media and the internet may help revitalize endangered languages by connecting diasporas and isolated groups.
- By the year 2000, there were at least 500 languages with an internet presence.<sup>5</sup>
- An iPhone App launched in 2012 by FirstVoices<sup>9</sup> allows indigenous language speakers from North America, Australia and New Zealand/Aotearoa to text, email and chat on

## LANGUAGE HOTSPOTS

Some countries are hotbeds of linguistic diversity. Papua New Guinea – with a population of just 6.5 million – tops the list. Europe is the poorest continent, linguistically speaking – only 3% of the world's native languages are found within its borders.<sup>11</sup>

Where are most languages spoken?<sup>6</sup>



## TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

Official recognition of minority languages is important, but is not enough on its own to ensure their survival. Government support is often little more than window-dressing.

Country	Good in theory...	...but in reality
United States	1990 Native American Languages Act	Of 250 indigenous languages spoken before the arrival of Europeans, only Navajo is spoken by more than 25,000 people. <sup>12</sup>
Canada	The Northwest Territories Act (1877) recognizes 9 Native American languages.	Canadian Constitution grants official status only to English and French. Indigenous languages have no legal recognition outside the Northwest Territories. <sup>13</sup>
Australia	Bilingual education introduced in the Northern Territory (NT) in 1973.	NT government ruled in 2009 that the first four hours of a school day had to be taught in English. Attendance rates slumped. <sup>14</sup>
Wales	The National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act 2012 gives equal status to Welsh and English within the National Assembly.	The percentage of Welsh speakers dropped from 21% to 19% between 2001 and 2011. <sup>15</sup>
Ireland	1937 Constitution of Ireland made Irish the official first language.	Just 3% of the population use Irish as their main language. <sup>16</sup>
Scotland	Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 gives Gaelic official status.	Gaelic is not an official language of the EU or the UK. Less than 2% of the population speak it. <sup>17</sup>

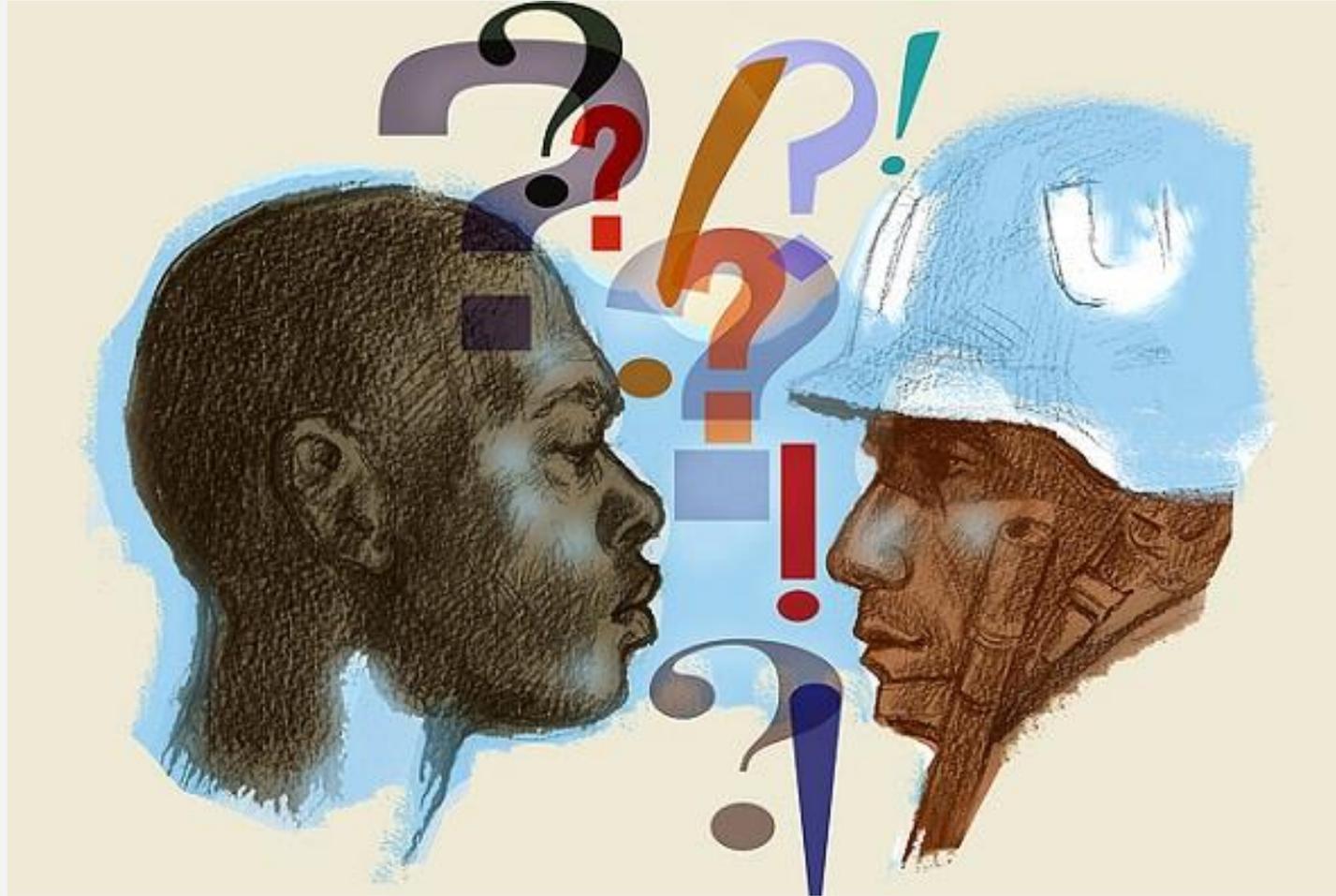
# ENGLISH AROUND THE WORLD

Is it good or bad to use English around the world for:

- business
- education
- politics
- military
- tourism

In groups, think of positive and negative points

# WHERE, WHAT AND WHY?



# WHAT'S THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION?

We land in Kaga-Bandoro on a small mud airstrip in the middle of the Central African bush. Flying for one hour saved us a day of driving. There is always a risk of armed rebels putting up road barriers and shooting. This is the only aerodrome in the Central African Republic (CAR) with its own restaurant. And they sell the best curried chicken.

Our plane needed fuel – this takes about 45 minutes – and I need the toilet. A UN military base, with facilities, is the other side of the airstrip. At the entrance, two foreign UN peacekeepers (the local people call them '*Casques bleus*' or 'blue helmets') smile at me. I speak to them in French; but they frown and shake their heads. Ah.

'Do you speak English?' I ask.

'Yes, yes!' one of them says.

'Can I please use the bathroom in the base?'

# WHAT'S THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION?

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'Do you speak English?' I ask.

'Yes, yes!' one of them says.

'Can I please use the bathroom in the base?'

'Yes, yes!' But he doesn't understand.

I point to the toilets inside the base (I've been here many times before) and they wave me through.

On my way back, I say hello to a Central African security guard. He points at the two peacekeepers: 'These men don't speak our language – where are they from?' I tell him I don't know and I ask. With gestures and a few words of English the two peacekeepers tell me they are from Nepal. I tell the Central African.

'So they have come here to protect us: but how can I talk with them?' he replies.

# MATCH:

1/ an airstrip

2/ a rebel

3/ aerodrome

4/ to frown

5/ a military base

6/ a peacekeeper

7/ a conflict

8/ a civilian

a) a small war / fighting

b) to do this with your face: >>



c) a long, clear area for planes to land and take off

d) someone who tries to keep things peaceful

e) someone not in the army or police

f) a small airport

g) wild, natural country

h) a place where the army etc stay and keep weapons

i) a person who is against the political system in their country and tries to change

# NOW ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS ON THE WHOLE TEXT:

- 1/ Where is the airstrip (town and country)? .....
- 2/ What does 'casque bleu' mean in English? .....
- 3/ Why did the writer want to go into the aerodrome? .....
- 4/ What nationality were the security guards? .....
- 5/ Why do many MINUSCA employees not speak English? .....  
.....
- 6/ What do the local people think about MINUSCA? .....  
.....
- 7/ When will the UN forces leave? .....
- 8/ What will the UN forces do now? .....

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This UN mission, MINUSCA (the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic), that started in April 2014, is the eighth peacekeeping mission here since 1997.

It began badly. Pakistani *casques bleus* were sent to Kaga-Bandoro when Seleka rebels were controlling it. The people thought these new armed men who didn't speak French were rebels, and began to demonstrate against them. This was because the UN had not explained the peacekeeping to the people it wanted to protect. The Pakistanis could not say anything because they had no language in common with the Central Africans. It was a mess.

MINUSCA now has about 10,000 peacekeepers, and 2,000 civilians, across CAR. They come from more than 25 different European, Asian and African countries. Most of the peacekeepers are men and a lot of them are from India and Pakistan. They get peacekeepers mainly from poorer countries with not so much power internationally. Rich Western countries control the overall UN operations and still have too much control of CAR's politics. The conflict here is complicated, but it is basically a fight about myths, money and trust.

The UN forces are going to be here for at least the next 10 years. Now they know they need to talk and listen to local people across CAR. Rebel groups in the bush protest because their communities are not included in politics. But they need to talk – it doesn't matter what language!

# **ENGLISH FOR PEACE?:**

1/ How can teaching and learning English help the world?

2/ Can English improve peace in the world? If so, how?

# WRITING

Write a letter to the UN:

- Explain the problem
- Ask for a solution

# READ SOME OF THESE EASIER ENGLISH ARTICLES ABOUT LANGUAGE:

- [https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Issue\\_4](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Issue_4)

