

South Sudan adopts English as its official language

Africa's newest country South Sudan has adopted English as its official language. Why? Because its new leaders believe English will make them "different and modern". After decades of civil war, the widespread learning of English will present some serious challenges for a country brought up learning a form of Arabic. It represents a major change after decades of Arabisation and Islamisation by their former rulers in Khartoum, Sudan. The predominantly Christian and African south by opting for English as its official language has taken a bold decision, as most of the country's education system is very short of resources and most people are illiterate. Edward Mokole at the Ministry of Education: "From now on all our laws, textbooks and official documents have to be written in that language. Schools, the police, retail and the media must all operate in English."

South Sudan is a devastated country recovering after decades of civil war. It has many remote villages with no industry, banks or landlines, with erratic electricity and connectivity, where 85% of the people are illiterate and the education system is shattered. South Sudan does not just have very little English, but very little written language at all. An example of this is the Head of English at Juba University. He has no books in his office, let alone electricity or a computer. News director at *South Sudan Radio* Rehan Abdelnebi: "With English, we can iron out our tribal differences and communicate with the rest of the world." *The British Council* in Juba has appointed Tony Calderbank to oversee the spread of English in the new nation. Wherever he goes people ask him for books in English. He said, "English has become the tool for development and while the British in Sudan are sometimes seen as colonial overlords, the English language is respected."

Currently there are about 150 different spoken languages in South Sudan. The country appears to be a bit like a 'Wild West' frontier town with traders from Uganda and Kenya pouring into the country, as well as about two million returnees from the north, refugees and Westerners seeking fortunes or bringing aid to South Sudan.

Category: Africa / South Sudan / Learning English

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. **Countries that have adopted English as their first language:** Briefly, think of three countries where English has been adopted as their first language. Go round the room swapping details.

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?
- c) Would you like to go to South Sudan?

6. **Geography: South Sudan:** Where is South Sudan? What is its capital? What countries surround it? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.

7. **South Sudan:** Think of five things about South Sudan. Then add five challenges the country faces in learning English. Write them below. Explain to your partner why you chose these.

Five things about South Sudan	Five challenges in learning English there
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Learning English**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

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9. Let's roleplay: BBC Africa: In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *BBC World Africa TV* studio in London. Today's interview is about: *Learning English in South Sudan. 5-10 minutes.*

1	Head of English at Juba University	3	British Council boss in Juba
2	Brigadier-General Awur Malual (p4)	4	South Sudan Radio boss

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

10. Presentation: In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: ***The challenges in teaching English in South Sudan.*** Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation.

11. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) How many different languages are there in South Sudan?
- 2) Explain the term 'Wild West' frontier town.
- 3) What did the News Director say?
- 4) What is the difference between Sudan and South Sudan?
- 5) What did the Ministry of Education man say?

Student B

- 1) Who is Tony Calderbank?
- 2) Sum up what Tony Calderbank said.
- 3) What percentage of the South Sudanese people are illiterate?
- 4) Why has South Sudan adopted English as its official language?
- 5) Describe the situation in the remote villages.

12. Daily life in South Sudan: In pairs, think of five aspects of how daily life might be like in a village in South Sudan. Then add what it might feel like to be in a 'Wild West' frontier town in South Sudan. Write them below. Discuss them together.

Village	'Wild West' frontier town in South Sudan
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

13. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: '**Learning English in South Sudan**'.

14. Sentence starters: Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) South Sudan _____
- b) Learning English _____

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DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Why has South Sudan opted to use English as its official language?
- 3) How do you think the South Sudanese people think about learning English?
- 4) Would you like to go to South Sudan to teach English?
- 5) Do you think the unemployed people in England should consider going to South Sudan to teach them English?
- 6) What things might encourage someone to want to go to South Sudan and teach English?
- 7) What challenges might an English teacher face in South Sudan?
- 8) What challenges might a student face in learning English in South Sudan?
- 9) What challenges might the British Council in Juba face teaching people English?
- 10) Has this lesson made you realise the hardships faced by others in other countries?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) What bits of advice would you give the Minister of Education in South Sudan?
- 3) How can you help the people of South Sudan? Explain.
- 4) If you were a charity in Africa what things might you do in South Sudan?
- 5) What economic opportunities can you think of in South Sudan?
- 6) Would you consider seeking your fortune in South Sudan? Explain.
- 7) How important is English these days? Explain.
- 8) If you were the Head of English at Juba University what challenges might you encounter?
- 9) What does the future hold for the people of South Sudan?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! The difficulties of learning English in South Sudan - *Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1*

Discuss the following **real life** situation: Then create two situations of your own to discuss.

Brigadier-General Awur Malual has asked the British Council in Juba South Sudan to teach his soldiers English. The Brigadier-General himself has grown up speaking his tribal tongue of Bor and Juba Arabic, a colloquial form of Arabic, but he can now speak remarkably good English. He learnt it "By picking up books in the bush when I was fighting. I read some books about that man Shakespeare." When asked about Dickens or Jane Austen he scratched his head and said, "I don't know about them." (Source BBC News)

The teacher can moderate the session.

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GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

South Sudan adopts English as its official language

Africa's newest country South Sudan has adopted English as its official language. Why? Because its new leaders believe (1)_____ will make them "(2)_____ and modern". After decades of civil war, the widespread learning of English will present some serious (3)_____ for a country brought up learning a form of Arabic. It represents a major change after decades of Arabisation and Islamisation by their former rulers in Khartoum, Sudan. The predominantly Christian and African south by opting for English as its official language has taken a (4)_____ decision, as most of the country's (5)_____ system is very short of resources and most people are illiterate. Edward Mokole at the Ministry of Education: "From now on all our laws, textbooks and official (6)_____ have to be written in that (7)_____. Schools, the police, retail and the media must all (8)_____ in English."

language

documents

challenges

bold

different

education

operate

English

South Sudan is a devastated country recovering after (1)_____ of civil war. It has many (2)_____ villages with no industry, banks or landlines, with erratic electricity and connectivity, where 85% of the people are (3)_____ and the education system is (4)_____. South Sudan does not just have very little English, but very little written language at all. An example of this is the Head of English at Juba University. He has no books in his office, let alone electricity or a (5)_____. News director at *South Sudan Radio* Rehan Abdelnebi: "With English, we can (6)_____ our tribal differences and communicate with the rest of the world." *The British Council* in Juba has appointed Tony Calderbank to oversee the spread of English in the new nation. Wherever he goes people ask him for books in English. He said, "English has become the tool for development and while the British in Sudan are sometimes seen as (7)_____ (8)_____, the English language is respected."

iron out

illiterate

overlords

shattered

remote

computer

decades

colonial

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GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

South Sudan adopts English as its official language

Africa's newest country South Sudan has adopted English as _____ . Why? Because its new leaders believe English will make them "_____". After decades of civil war, the widespread learning of English will present some serious challenges for a country brought up learning a form of Arabic. It represents a _____ decades of Arabisation and Islamisation by their former rulers in Khartoum, Sudan. The predominantly _____ south by opting for English as its official language has taken a bold decision, as most of the country's education system is very short of resources and most _____ . Edward Mokole at the Ministry of Education: "From now on all our laws, textbooks and official documents have to be written in that language. Schools, the police, _____ must all operate in English."

South Sudan is a devastated country recovering after _____. It has many remote villages with no industry, banks or landlines, with erratic electricity and connectivity, where 85% of the people are illiterate and _____ is shattered. South Sudan does not just have very little English, but very little written language at all. An example of this is the Head of English at Juba University. He has no books in his office, _____ or a computer. News director at *South Sudan Radio* Rehan Abdelnebi: "With English, we can iron out our _____ and communicate with the rest of the world." *The British Council* in Juba has appointed Tony Calderbank to oversee _____ in the new nation. Wherever he goes people ask him for books in English. He said, "English has become the tool for development and while the British in Sudan are sometimes seen as colonial overlords, the English _____."

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GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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Africa's newest country South Sudan has adopted English as its official language. Why? Because its new leaders believe English will make (1)___ "different and modern". After decades of civil war, the widespread learning of English will present (2)___ serious challenges for a country brought up learning a form of Arabic. It represents a major change after decades of Arabisation and Islamisation by (3)___ former rulers in Khartoum, Sudan. The predominantly Christian and African south by opting for English as its official language has taken a bold decision, as most of the country's education system is (4)___ short of resources and (5)___ people are illiterate. Edward Mokole at the Ministry of Education: "From now on all (6)___ laws, textbooks and official documents have to be written in (7)___ language. Schools, the police, retail and the media (8)___ all operate in English."

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he

and

him

but

for

the

our

we

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	challenges	11	connectivity
2	serious	12	erratic
3	wherever	13	devastated
4	colonial	14	official
5	sometimes	15	adopted
6	illiterate	16	shattered
7	differences	17	iron out
8	widespread	18	communicate
9	documents	19	development
10	resources	20	returnees

LINKS

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15216524>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-15231436>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14204148>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-14761020>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Sudan
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/south-sudan>

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: South Sudan adopts English as its official language: Africa's newest country South Sudan has adopted English as its official language. Why? Because its new leaders believe **English** will make them "different and modern". After decades of civil war, the widespread learning of English will present some serious **challenges** for a country brought up learning a form of Arabic. It represents a major change after decades of Arabisation and Islamisation by their former rulers in Khartoum, Sudan. The predominantly Christian and African south by opting for English as its official language has taken a **bold** decision, as most of the country's **education** system is very short of resources and most people are illiterate. Edward Mokole at the Ministry of Education: "From now on all our laws, textbooks and official **documents** have to be written in that **language**. Schools, the police, retail and the media must all **operate** in English."

South Sudan is a devastated country recovering after **decades** of civil war. It has many **remote** villages with no industry, banks or landlines, with erratic electricity and connectivity, where 85% of the people are **illiterate** and the education system is **shattered**. South Sudan does not just have very little English, but very little written language at all. An example of this is the Head of English at Juba University. He has no books in his office, let alone electricity or a **computer**. News director at *South Sudan Radio* Rehan Abdelnebi: "With English, we can **iron out** our tribal differences and communicate with the rest of the world." *The British Council* in Juba has appointed Tony Calderbank to oversee the spread of English in the new nation. Wherever he goes people ask him for books in English. He said, "English has become the tool for development and while the British in Sudan are sometimes seen as **colonial overlords**, the English language is respected." (V1)

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