



## A Language of Learning

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### Article

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**DAKAR, Senegal** (Achieve3000, March 26, 2018). In sub-Saharan Africa, most children go to schools where lessons are not taught in the same language they speak at home. Instead, schools use a language that is more international. That means the language is more commonly used worldwide. Some believe this prepares kids for a successful future. Others say that teaching in an unfamiliar language can confuse children and slow learning.

In Senegal, for example, students learn to read in French. But that is not their first language. French is Senegal's "colonial language." It became the country's official language when Senegal was a colony of France. But many people in Senegal speak a local language at home instead of French. It's the same in other African nations. Many people speak local languages rather than the colonial language.

Now, many people are calling for schools to use colonial languages less. Mbacke Diagne is a language expert in Dakar. He wants schools to add local languages into their programs. Diagne points to Wolof. Most children in Senegal speak this language at home. They do this for at least seven years before they start school.

Diagne points out that these children start out learning Wolof. But when they go to school, this knowledge is set aside. They must learn French. Diagne and others believe this slows learning. They say it can also make children dislike school.

Forcing children to learn in French may, in fact, be having a harmful effect. More than half of Senegal's secondary school-age children no longer go to school.

Such concerns have led schools in some countries to begin teaching in local languages. In 2014, the Ethiopian government started a reading program in seven Ethiopian languages. And in 2015, Tanzania, once a British colony, began teaching children entirely in Swahili.

But not everyone agrees with these efforts. Some people believe it is good for children to learn to speak international languages. They may have more opportunities. Many parents agree.

Others have mixed feelings. Meissa Dieng is one. He is the headmaster at a school in Dakar. Dieng understands that international languages are important. But he's concerned. He worries about how well children adjust to doing schoolwork in a language not spoken at home.

Some groups have been testing bilingual teaching programs in Senegalese schools. In these programs, children learn to speak French. But they also build reading and writing skills in a local language. The local language is later used as a base to learn and read in French.



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*At school, these students in Senegal learn in French. This is not the language they speak at home.*

More than 90 schools have been trying these programs. It is hoped that there will be good results. If so, perhaps the Senegalese government will fund the program in more places and with more local languages.

*Information for this story came from VOA.*

### **Dictionary**

**bilingual** (*adjective*) in two languages

**confuse** (*verb*) to make someone or something get mixed up

**local** (*adjective*) having to do with a place nearby

**opportunity** (*noun*) a chance to do something

**secondary school** (*noun*) high school

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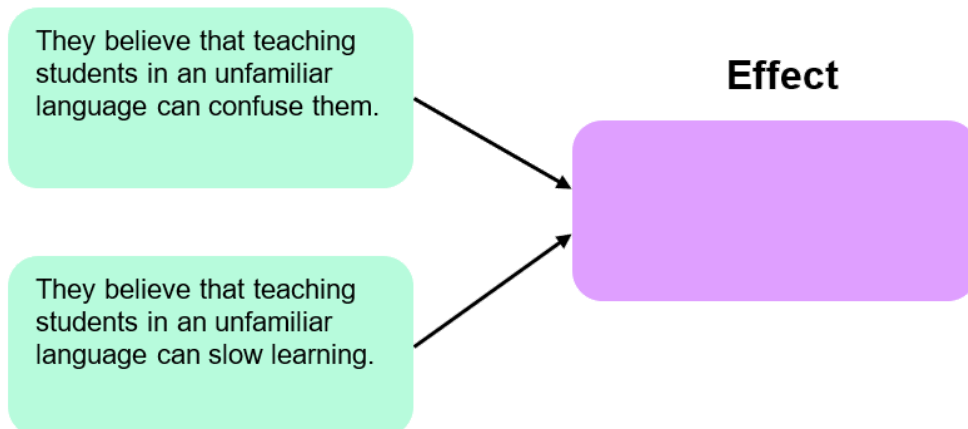
## Activity

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### PART 1

#### Question 1

### Causes



Based on the Article, which fits best in the empty box above?

- Ⓐ Some people want schools to teach students using international languages.
- Ⓑ Some people say that students who are taught in local languages are less likely to stay in school.
- Ⓒ Some people say that students who learn in international languages will have more opportunities.
- Ⓓ Some people want schools to add local languages into their programs.

#### Question 2

Suppose you were writing a summary of the Article. Which of these would be **most** important to put in the summary?

- Ⓐ Some groups have been testing bilingual teaching programs in Senegalese schools.
- Ⓑ In 2014, the Ethiopian government started a reading program in seven Ethiopian languages.
- Ⓒ French is the colonial language of Senegal because the country was once a colony of France.
- Ⓓ In sub-Saharan Africa, many students are taught in a different language than they speak at home.

#### Question 3

Which two words are the closest **synonyms**?

*Only some of these words are used in the Article.*

- (A) Unfamiliar and known
- (B) Concerned and troubled
- (C) Local and international
- (D) Important and unnecessary

Question 4

Which of these is an opinion?

- (A) In Tanzania, children are taught entirely in Swahili.
- (B) Some children in sub-Saharan Africa are taught using international languages.
- (C) It would be best to begin teaching children French in preschool.
- (D) Most children in Senegal speak a local language such as Wolof.

Question 5

Suppose Riley wants to find out about the history of Senegal. He would find the **most** information by \_\_\_\_\_.

- (A) Reading a book about Africa's oldest languages
- (B) Looking in an encyclopedia of sub-Saharan African countries
- (C) Reading a study about students dropping out of Senegal's schools
- (D) Looking at a map of the country of Senegal

Question 6

The Article states:

**Forcing children to learn in French may, in fact, be having a *harmful* effect. More than half of Senegal's secondary school-age children no longer go to school.**

Which would be the closest **antonym** for the word *harmful*?

- (A) Large
- (B) Gradual
- (C) Good
- (D) Unplanned

Question 7

The reader can tell from the Article that \_\_\_\_\_.

- Ⓐ Most people suspect that bilingual teaching programs do not work well.
- Ⓑ Mbacke Diagne would like to see bilingual teaching programs tested in more places.
- Ⓒ Meissa Dieng believes that it is best for students to learn in an international language.
- Ⓓ Most people agree that learning French doesn't offer kids enough opportunities.

Question 8

Which quote from the Article best supports the idea that being able to speak and read a commonly used language like French is important to future success?

- Ⓐ Some people believe it is good for children to learn to speak international languages. They may have more opportunities.
- Ⓑ In 2014, the Ethiopian government started a reading program in seven Ethiopian languages.
- Ⓒ It is hoped that there will be good results. If so, perhaps the Senegalese government will fund the program in more places and with more local languages.
- Ⓓ More than half of Senegal's secondary school-age children no longer go to school.