



Cambridge International AS & A Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

9093/41

Paper 4 Language Topics

October/November 2024

2 hours 15 minutes



You must answer on the enclosed answer booklet.

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Answer **all** questions.
- Follow the instructions on the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper, ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.
- Dictionaries are **not** allowed.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is 50.
- The number of marks for each question or part question is shown in brackets [].

This document has **8** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

Section A: English in the world

Question 1

Read the following text, which is an extract from an article published in 2022 on *Rest of World*, a website which focuses on global issues relating to technology.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the text relating to the changing use of English in an international context. You should refer to specific details from the text as well as to ideas and examples from your wider study of English in the world. [25]

Why Indian universities are ditching English-only education

Native language education is more inclusive – but with 200+ spoken languages in India, it could leave India’s tech ecosystems splintered.

Of the 10 million students who take high school finals in India every year, 65% come from non-English medium schools. However, higher education in the country, especially in STEM¹ subjects, is currently almost entirely English based. For students, learning in a language that’s unfamiliar adds an additional challenge that may be insurmountable for some, leading thousands to drop out of premium institutes every year. The language barrier is more severe among marginalized communities where the dropout rates can go as high as 60%. 5 10

In response, India is seeing a surge in ‘mother tongue’ education, with courses now being taught in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, and other non-English languages. In 2021, 1230 seats in state-approved engineering schools were allocated for study in native languages. The growing demand for accessing digital services in local languages forced the state to allocate money for the creation of a National Language Translation Mission last year, with the sole focus of expediting local-language translation. India’s apex body for technical education, All India Council for Technical Education, has bolstered efforts to translate online courses to eight Indian languages. Edtech giants that previously catered to the elite English-only market are now translating question banks and lectures, to cash in on the demand for non-English-based learning. 15 20

‘It’s a very bad investment for the country to be leaving 99.9% of the population behind so that a few people can become CEOs in America,’ said Sankrant Sanu, author of the book *The English Medium Myth*.

In his book, Sanu contends that India, unlike its East Asian neighbors, privileges English-only higher education and promotes a language-class separation, ‘thus creating a glass ceiling for progress for those educated in the native languages’. A child from a village in Japan or China could aspire to be an engineer or doctor without a forced language medium shift. That can’t be said of Indian kids. ‘I’m not against English,’ Sanu told *Rest of World*. ‘I think it’s a good skill to have. The only problem is when it becomes a barrier to entry, rather than just a skill.’ 25 30

The UN’s Independent Expert on Minority Issues recently recommended that quality public education should be conducted in regional languages, as it reduces dropout rates, creates better learning outcomes, increases self-esteem, and improves levels of fluency both in mother tongue and official languages.

Certainly not everyone is on board: at least one academic has called the recent trend 'the beginning of the end' of India's global technical competence. Academics believe that local-language technical education creates dissonance with global demand and that those students graduating from vernacular medium higher education institutes may struggle to find jobs.

¹*STEM*: science, technology, engineering and mathematics

Section B: Language and the self

Question 2

Read the following text, which is an extract from an article published in 2021 in the British newspaper *The Guardian*.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the text relating to the ways in which language can reflect personal and social identity. You should refer to specific details from the text as well as to ideas and examples from your wider study of Language and the self. [25]

Oh my days: linguists lament slang ban in London school

'like', 'bare', 'that's long' and 'cut eyes at me' among terms showing up in pupils' work now vetoed in classroom

A London secondary school is trying to stop its pupils from using 'basically' at the beginning of sentences and deploying phrases such as 'oh my days' in a crackdown on 'fillers' and 'slang' in the classroom. 5

The school has produced lists of 'banned' language which includes 'he cut his eyes at me', which the Collins dictionary says originates in the Caribbean and means to look rudely at a person and then turn away sharply while closing one's eyes dismissively.

The lists – intended to steer the language used in formal learning situations and exams rather than in the playground – have drawn criticism from linguists who described it as 'crude and shortsighted ... a disservice and discredit to young people'. 10

Teachers say it guides pupils to use language that fits more formal situations and helps them succeed. The school said the specific words and phrases on the list were selected because they were 'showing up a lot in pupils' work' and it stressed the importance of pupils expressing themselves 'clearly and accurately'. 15

Expressions that must not be used at the beginning of sentences include: 'ermmm', 'because', 'no', 'like', 'say', 'you see', 'you know', and 'basically'.

'The development of reading and speaking skills is a central part of what drives our school to help our students learn effectively and fulfil their potential in academic and non-academic ways,' said the principal at the school in Camberwell, south-east London. 20

'None of the words or phrases listed are banned from general use in our school or when our students are interacting socially. But this list is used in some formal learning settings to help students understand the importance of expressing themselves clearly and accurately, not least through written language in examinations.' 25

Dr Marcello Giovanelli, a senior lecturer in English language and literature at Aston University, said: 'Slang has always been at the forefront of linguistic innovation.' He described 'he cut his eyes at me' as a 'wonderfully creative example' and said 'dismissing students' home or own use of language may have negative effects on identity and confidence'. 30

Tony Thorne, a language consultant at King's College London and the director of the Slang and New Language Archive, said: 'It shouldn't be about good or bad language, it should be about appropriate language for the context.'

'You don't want to make them feel they have to reject the cultural aspects of their own language,' said Dr Natalie Sharpling, who teaches applied linguistics at Warwick University. 'We should celebrate the different ways language is being used and concentrate on the content of what is being said.'

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Sharpling said she had observed an increasing trend in schools to police language and said, 'it would be a shame if it becomes a case of if you want to be successful, this is the way you have to speak'.

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