

Cambridge International AS & A Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

9093/42

Paper 4 Language Topics

May/June 2021

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 4 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 written by the Icelandic novelist Ragnar Jonasson and published in a British newspaper in 2018.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the text relating to the causes and effects of the expansion of English around the world. 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]

Can the language of the Vikings fight off the invasion of English?

'Coffee and kleina¹,' reads a large sign at a roadside coffee shop by one of the main roads in Reykjavik. Not so many years ago, such a billboard would simply have read: '*Kaffi og kleina*' – in the language of the Vikings, the official language of Iceland.

It is a privilege of the few to be able to read and write Icelandic, a language understood by only around 400,000 people worldwide. Icelandic, in which the historic Sagas were written in the 13th and 14th centuries, has changed so little since then on our small and isolated island, that we can still more or less read them as they were first written. 5

But Iceland is not so isolated anymore, and there are signs its language is facing challenges never seen before. Following the economic crash of 2008, tourism has emerged as the largest industry in Iceland, with 2.5 million tourists expected to visit a country of 350,000 people this year alone. 10

And everyone is catering to the tourists in English. At restaurants and coffee shops, people are frequently greeted in English rather than Icelandic, and often Icelandic will get you nowhere if you want to order food or drink. Companies use English names or are rebranding themselves in English. The importance of tourists to the economy is rapidly making English not only a second language in the service industry, but almost the first language. 15

And we must consider the effect on our youngest generation. In Iceland, foreign films or TV shows have always been shown with subtitles, rather than being dubbed, resulting in most Icelanders being able to speak English. While Icelandic broadcasters have always dubbed cartoons and children's shows, the online world has no borders. Kids today have almost an unlimited access to entertainment in English – movies and TV series on streaming services, video games, YouTube. Recent research shows an alarming rise in students under 15 struggling to read their own language. And they are picking up English at a much faster pace than before – it is not strange to hear them speaking it in the playground. 20 25

Will Icelandic soon become the second language of Icelanders? All languages evolve, but so far we have managed to help Icelandic adapt to technological changes by creating new words for modern inventions such as the telephone (*simi*), TV (*sjónvarp*), email (*tölvupóstur*) and computer (*tölva*). Further evolution is, of course, inevitable. But with the ubiquity of English, is the Icelandic language at risk of disappearing more or less completely, and sooner rather than later? 30

And this, of course, leads to the question: what value does a language have? If it is in danger, should we make an effort to save it? In my mind, the answer is clear. Not only should we make an effort, but it is almost our moral obligation. 35

Notes:

¹ *kleina*: an Icelandic pastry, similar to a doughnut

Section B: Language and the self

Question 2

Read the following text, which is an extract from an article by linguist John McWhorter. It was published in the online magazine *Aeon* in 2016.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the text relating to the ways in which language can shape and 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]

Euphemise this

Euphemisms are like underwear: best changed frequently. What work are they doing in our language and why do they expire?

What we would today call *cash assistance for the differently abled* could in a different era permissibly have been called *welfare for cripples*. The terms *welfare* and *crippled* sound somewhere between loaded and abusive today, and yet once were considered civil by educated, sensitive people. There actually was an organisation called the International Society for the Welfare of Cripples established in 1922. 5

However, in 1960 it was retitled the International Society for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled. As appropriate as that seems from our vantage point, it demonstrated a general tendency towards which we often roll our eyes. ‘Okay, what are we supposed to call it now?’ we sometimes think, as terms considered proper for a group or phenomenon seem to change every generation or so. The implication is that we find this rolling terminology a bit much – why can’t the names of things just stay put? On *disabled*, for example, what was wrong with *handicapped*, and why must we now move on to *differently abled*? 10 15

What the cognitive psychologist and linguist Steven Pinker has artfully termed ‘the euphemism treadmill’ is not a tic or a stunt. It is an inevitable and, more to the point, healthy process, necessary in view of the eternal gulf between language and opinion. We think of euphemisms as one-time events, where one prissily coins a way of saying something that detracts from something unpleasant about it. That serves perfectly well as a definition of what euphemism is, but misses the point that euphemism tends to require regular renewal. This is because thought changes more slowly than we can change the words for it, and has a way of catching up with our new coinages. Since that is likely eternal, we must accept that we’ll change our terms just like we change our underwear, as a part of linguistic life in a civilised society. 20 25

A word is like a bell tone, with a central pitch seasoned by overtones. As the tone fades away, the overtones can hang in the air. Words are similar, with opinion, assumption and, more to the point, bias as equivalents to the overtones. *Crippled* began as a sympathetic term. However, a sad reality of human society is that there are negative associations and even dismissal harboured against those with disabilities. Thus *crippled* became accreted¹ with those overtones, so to speak, to the point that *handicapped* was fashioned as a replacement term free from such baggage. 30

However, because humans stayed human, it was impossible that *handicapped* would not, over time, become accreted with similar gunk. Enter *disabled*, which is now long-lived enough that many process it, too, as harbouring shades of abuse, which conditions a replacement such as *differently abled*. 35

Notes:

¹ *accreted*: gradually added to with new layers or parts

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