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Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **9093/42**

Paper 4 Language Topics **February/March 2025**

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.

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Section A: English in the world

Question 1

Read the following text, which is an extract from an article on the American website *Wired* in 2023.

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]

ChatGPT Is Cutting Non-English Languages Out of the AI[1] Revolution

AI chatbots are less fluent in languages other than English, threatening to amplify existing bias in global commerce and innovation.

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That could further a spiral of imposition and influence of English.

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Section B: Language and the self

Question 2

Read the following text, which is an extract from a personal essay on *Literary Hub*, an American website. It was published in 2022.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the text relating to the ways in which language can shape and reflect how individuals think about themselves and others. 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]

Generation Amazing!!! How We're Draining Language of Its Power

I noticed it recently when I scheduled my pet for a veterinarian's appointment. The person who answered the phone was friendly enough and greeted me warmly, and then I made my request.

I'd like to make an appointment, I said. *Wonderful*, said the scheduler. *Excellent*.

I was surprised anyone could be so over the moon about making an appointment for a pet but in a way, grateful too.

When I shared this story with a friend, she told me about a conversation she overheard between two parents at the park. *What are your children's names?* one of them said as they watched a pair of boys playing together. The other responded but my friend didn't catch the answer. The conversation went on and one side sounded something like this: *Really? Amazing. That's so beautiful. Just beautiful. How did you choose names like that?*

Their names: Matthew and David. Fine names. But when you ooze words like *amazing* and *beautiful*, I imagine we're dealing with something like Hercules and Tiberius.

We reach for over-the-top words for just about anything. These *amazings* and *wonderfuls* and *incredibles* and *fantastics*, we throw them around as we once did *OKs* and *thank yous* and *I can help with thats*.

What is it that makes us talk this way? That to express a modicum of emotion, we have to reach for words like *fantastic*, *incredible*, *unbelievable*, and *unreal*, words meant to convey a certain level of magnitude, but that no longer carry their original weight.

The less potent our words are, the more we have to reach for particularly emotive ones to say what we want to say.

Martin Hilpert, who teaches linguistics at the Université de Neuchâtel in Switzerland, told me this is nothing new. 'Words with evaluative meanings lose potency as speakers apply them to more and more situations. Toilet paper that is especially soft can be "fantastic", a train delayed by ten minutes can be "a disaster".'

A pop-linguistic term for this is 'semantic bleaching', like staining all the color out of our words, and it happens with overuse. Another way to describe it is supply and demand. When we use a word too much and there are too many *excellents* and *beautifuls* floating around, each becomes less valuable.

Writers and thinkers have many times over made the case that stale language is both a symptom and cause of the deterioration of critical thought. George Orwell[1], famously,

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for one. He writes in ‘Politics and the English Language’ that a speaker who uses tired language has ‘gone some distance toward turning himself into a machine. The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself.’ *35*

[1]*George Orwell*: English novelist and writer

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