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Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **9093/41**

Paper 4 Language Topics **October/November 2025**

2 hours 15 minutes

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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 published on the website of the British weekly newspaper *The Economist* in 2023.

Discuss what you feel are the most important issues raised in the text relating to the changing use 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]

As it spreads across the world, who owns English?

Or, for that matter, French or Portuguese?

What country does French belong to?

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In the end, it will be theirs too.

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Turn over for Question 2

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Section B: Language and the self

Question 2

Read the following text, which is the opening of an article published in 2022 on a business communications company website.

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]

Forget the 'female email' rules

In a writing workshop last week, someone said to me: 'I'm trying to make my writing more confident. Particularly my emails. I think they're too … female.'

I've heard this before. In fact, we've all been hearing it for years; from an app built in 2015 to a *Fast Company* article just last month. As women, we're told to swerve certain 'female' writing habits in emails and presentations. If we want to be taken seriously at work, we need to:

- cut out any self-deprecation – *sorry, I'm no expert, does that make sense*?
- stop softening our tone with exclamation marks and emojis
- take out phrases that 'dilute' your message, like *just* and *I think*.

Here's why it's all nonsense.

Challenge the system, not the writer

Behavioural science tells us that it's always easier to focus on individual actions than the massive systems at play. And sometimes, that can be a handy tool: we wrote about it in the context of the climate crisis, for example.

But in this case, asking women to change their writing style – putting the onus on them – isn't just a cop-out; it's a bizarre oversimplification. *If you want to get ahead at work, make sure your emails are assertive*: never mind the 25% pay gap in your office, or the 90% male board of directors. The issue is you and your emails.

It's nice to be nice

I've had a *can I ask a stupid question?* habit for years, and I used to feel it was a bad habit – I cringed whenever I said it.

But actually, I've come to see that question as a handy tool: it opens up the conversation and puts the other person at ease. Same with *sorry*, same with *just*, same with emojis, if they're your thing. And why is it so terrible to say *I think*? I do think it, and I'm open for conversations on how I could think differently.

Okay, it's good to be assertive at work from time to time: but isn't it more regularly important to build relationships and create emotional connections? In other words, where are the apps helping men soften their tone?

As a sidenote: in writing workshops, we often do encourage men to soften their tone. Not to even the balance, but because it works better. Just take the difference between

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'I need this today' and 'would you be able to finish this today?' – I know which I'd respond more positively to.

Besides, personality policing is a pointless distraction

We're damned if we do and we're damned if we don't. Too fluffy, and we're told we're not assertive enough. Not fluffy enough, and we're told we're being harsh. *35*

As someone who helps other people change the way they write, I can tell you: giving someone reams of rules to remember just makes them less confident.

Encouraging women to agonise over every email and overthink each exclamation point is just a distraction from the important stuff. *40*

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