



ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 4 Language Topics

May/June 2025

2 hours 15 minutes

You will need: Answer booklet (enclosed)

- 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.

- 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.

Section A: English in the world

Question 1

Read the following text, which is taken from an article published in the British newspaper *The Guardian* in 2022.

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]

**English is picking up brilliant new words from around the world
– and that's a gift**

From 'lepak'¹ to 'deurmekaar'², terms borrowed from its 1.75 billion global speakers are enriching the language we share.

Who owns the English language? The answer to this question is no longer as straightforward as 'the English'. According to the latest figures from the British Council, English is 'spoken at a useful level' by about 1.75 billion people. Counted among this vast anglophone population are not only the hundreds of millions who speak English as a first language, but also the hundreds of millions more who speak it as a second or foreign language in different parts of the world. 5 10

Today, the predominance of English as a language of science, technology, business, diplomacy and entertainment has given many people around the world a strong incentive to acquire the language.

Speakers of world varieties of English are remaking its vocabulary to better express their identities, cultures and everyday realities. In Hong Kong, people exclaim *add oil* as a show of encouragement or support, an expression literally translated from the Cantonese *gā yáu*, with reference to petrol being injected into an engine. In the Philippines, many houses have a *dirty kitchen*, which is not actually a kitchen that is dirty in the sense you think, but a kitchen outside the house where most of the real cooking is done – a necessary convenience in a tropical country where it is best to avoid trapping heat and smells indoors. 15 20

In Oxford University Press's Gift of Words campaign this year, we have asked people who speak more than one language to 'gift' a word from their first to their second language, and vice versa. The responses we have so far received highlight even more words that multilingual English speakers felt they had to borrow from their other languages for lack of a direct equivalent in English: words such as *saudade* (nostalgic longing) from Portuguese, *gezellig* (a sense of cosiness and togetherness) from Dutch, *nomakanjani* (come what may) from isiZulu, and *apapacho* (affection, comfort) from Nahuatl by way of Spanish. 25

Calling these borrowed words 'gifts' is an important reframing, as many value language purity over diversity and consider external influences a threat to the integrity of a language. But this is in contradiction to how language works, as the borrowing of words is part of the natural evolution of all living languages. 30

Changing our attitudes towards multilingualism and language variation is vital to fight the linguistic prejudice that causes people to be discriminated against for not using the 'right' words or for speaking in the 'wrong' accent.

It is only when we share ownership of English, and embrace the language in all its diversity, that it can truly be a gift that everyone can benefit from. 35

¹ *lepak*: Malay - to loiter aimlessly

² *deurmekaar*: Afrikaans - confused, muddled

Section B: Language and the self**Question 2**

Read the following text, which is taken from an article on the *BBC* website, published in 2021.

Discuss what you consider to be 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]

Africa's lost languages: How English can fuel an identity crisis

Some children who have grown up in Africa being forced to speak English are facing an identity crisis.

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‘It makes you see the world in a different light, it makes you feel like you are a part of something, something greater than yourself, something that has been there for generations, and will continue to be there for generations.’

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