



**HWA CHONG INSTITUTION**  
**JC2 Preliminary Examinations**  
**Higher 2**

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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS**

**9508/02**

Paper 2 Investigating Language Use in Society

**18 September 2023**

**3 hours**

No Additional Materials are required.

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**READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

An answer booklet will be provided with this question paper. You should follow the instructions of the front cover of the answer booklet. If you need additional answer paper ask the invigilator for a continuation booklet.

Answer **three** questions: you must answer at least one question from Section A **and** at least one question from Section B.

Answer each question on a **FRESH** page.

At the end of the examination, insert any additional booklets that you have used into the 12-page booklet.

All questions carry equal marks.

You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.

A reference chart of IPA Phonemic Symbols is provided at the end of this Question Paper.

## Section A: Language Variation and Change

Answer at least one question from this section.

Answers should demonstrate awareness of wider geographical/historical/social perspectives (as appropriate) in relation to English language.

Examples may be drawn from written or spoken English, or from both.

Do not repeat material in your answers to different questions on this Paper.

**1** Read Texts A(i) and A(ii) and then answer the following question.

Discuss in detail significant issues related to English as a global language.

You should include a range of examples and/or ideas from Texts A(i) and A(ii), and from your wider studies of the English language, with detailed reference to lexis, grammar, syntax and discourse as appropriate.

**[25]**

**Text A(i)** is an adapted article (2023) from the website of *The Economist*.

**In northern Europe, a backlash against English is under way.**

Many citizens of Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden are fluent in English and often impress tourists with their command of the language. This aptitude has also prompted controversy, however, as universities have become excellent, international institutions offering courses taught mostly—or even entirely—in English.

5

Some citizens of the Netherlands and Nordic countries wonder what space will be left for their national languages if their flagship universities increasingly do not teach in it. Linguists call it “domain loss”. The language does not die out, since new generations of children continue to be brought up with it, but speakers use it in fewer academic contexts.

In June, Robbert Dijkgraaf, Minister of Education in the Netherlands, announced that at least two-thirds of teaching in undergraduate programmes would have to be in Dutch. University leaders took it badly. The head of the Eindhoven University of Technology has said that “for a number of courses we can’t even find professors who can speak Dutch,” citing artificial intelligence as an example.

10

The worry is that a language like Dutch, if neglected in academic contexts, will eventually lack the vocabulary needed for cutting-edge topics. People discussing such subjects will have to pepper their Dutch with English words—until, that is, talking this way gets so cumbersome they switch to English entirely. It risks leaving the impression that Dutch is somehow unworthy, feeding a vicious cycle.

15

**Text A(ii)** is adapted from a *Reddit* post.

**The world is too obsessed with English.**

By vesetechet:

Probably an unpopular opinion here, but I think the world's obsession with English is to everyone's long-term detriment. It allows the unchallenged dominance of the art, culture, and worldview of a handful of English speaking countries. What this means is it leads to greater homogenisation, not diversity. I don't take much pleasure arriving in a major city to realise I may as well be in any other major city in the world. The marginalization of other languages and their culture, etc have got to stop! 5

By [deleted]:

I wholeheartedly agree, although many people prefer not to question the current supremacy of English and simply rattle off arguments about "international communication" (as though translators and interpreters didn't exist) and comparisons with Latin and French (as though the Internet existed when these two were the global languages then). Oh, and some can't bring themselves to say anything more than "well, languages die". 10

By rrrroboottt:

I am an Italian. When I learned English, it was like jumping from a pond to the ocean. The number of people I could now interact with, websites I could use, movies, shows and books I could now enjoy in their original language (or enjoy at all) was staggering, to the point that I felt sorry for the people who didn't know English well enough to do this. Now I'm curious, is there any language that is comparable to English for the amount of opportunities it offers to you once you learn it? 15 20

2 Read Texts B(i) and B(ii), and then answer the following question.

‘The Internet is fostering new kinds of creativity through language’ (Crystal). Discuss in detail how technology has shaped the English language, and people’s attitude towards it.

You should include a range of examples and/or ideas from Texts B(i) and B(ii) and from your wider studies of the English language, with detailed reference to lexis, grammar, syntax and discourse as appropriate.

[25]

**Text B(i)** an adapted blog post (2021) on the website of a Public Relations and Marketing agency.

### **The impact of technology on the words we use**

Now, I’m aware that not all of you see technology’s impact on language as wholly positive. Indeed, many polyglot purists view technology as downright corrosive, vehemently wagging their tongues at the emojis and ‘textspeak’ they feel have invaded their mother tongue.

‘Cya’, ‘I \*really\* hate him’, ‘SHUT. UP’, ‘: )’

5

Such ways of speaking, they feel, are lazy, uncouth, even vulgar.

But I ask you, dear reader, to suspend your disdain for just a few moments. Because the truth is that technology causes language to evolve in a wholly healthy and natural way, and the changes we see are part of a linguistic tradition that started at the very beginning of written communication.

Throughout history, with key events such as the rise and fall of Empires and the arrival of the printing press, the theme remains the same throughout the whole of human history: new mediums bring with them new written conventions, new graphical features, new rules, new expressions and new ways of talking. And from that perspective, the internet is simply the next step in a completely natural evolution. 10

For example, we now use capitals in a more emotive way. ‘WHERE ARE YOU????!’ an angry mother may WhatsApp her teen son/daughter if they stay out too late. And it’s not just capitals. The old rules of writing, set down hundreds of years before we had computers, are simply too inflexible for the digital world. In order to convey the immediacy and personality of a conversation in written form, rules need to be broken. 15

You would never see these changes in ‘standard’ writing. And perhaps that’s just the point: informal digital communication isn’t ‘standard’. In many ways, texting, emailing and instant messaging has more in common with spoken English than written. It has a rawness and immediacy that simply doesn’t come when, for example, one is slogging through the third draft of this blog. 20

So, with all that in mind, I say embrace the newly coined words. Slather your texts in emojis. Split infinitives in your tweets. Use capitals in your work emails until everyone hates you. And most of all, use words to do what they have always been designed to do – to express yourself. 25

**Text B(ii)** is adapted from the discussion segment of a scientific journal (2022).

### **Uses and Abuses of Netspeak**

Netspeak reflects the identity of certain groups as each group has some common Netspeak terms which could be understood by their group members. When used often enough, these terms can enter the English dictionary and lexicographers keep an account of new words formed by Netspeak. It is a modern way of online communication and has achieved wide popularity. The Internet users chatting online tend to use emoticons to express their feelings and attitudes and this has led to technological inventions. 5

Besides its uses, it has influenced the standard language. It has a bad impact on our writing. When we are in a formal situation, where we have to write formally, we use Netspeak patterns and expressions. Netspeak adversely influences the writing ability of the younger generation more. They accidentally use Netspeak in academic writing. Many teachers believe that Netspeak will distract the students from writing because they tend to ignore rules and regulations. Different slang terms like lol (lots of laughter or laughing out loud), brb (be right back), idk (I do not know), Rofl (rolling on the floor laughing), BTW (by the way), and others are in vogue. These examples are quite popular, but not everyone is familiar with them so this can ultimately lead to confusion and frustration. 10 15

## Section B: Language, Culture and Identity

Answer at least one question from this section.

Answers should demonstrate awareness of wider geographical/historical/social perspectives (as appropriate) in relation to English language.

Examples may be drawn from written or spoken English, or from both.

Do not repeat material in your answers to different questions on this Paper.

### 3 Read Texts C(i) and C(ii), and then answer the question below.

Discuss in detail ways in which language can be used by individuals and groups to construct identities.

You should include a range of examples and/or ideas from Texts C(i) and C(ii) and from your wider knowledge of English language, with detailed reference to lexis, grammar, syntax, phonology and discourse as appropriate.

**[25]**

**Text C(i)** is extracted from a national day rally speech (2022) by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

We have come a long way in our fight against COVID-19. We are now learning to live with the virus. With each infection wave, we have managed the impact better. The latest, the Omicron BA.5 wave, is now subsiding.

In many other countries, when a wave happens, cases shoot up furiously and then crash down suddenly, like a roller coaster. And when cases shoot up like that hospitals come under a lot of pressure. In Singapore, our waves grow as well as tail off more gradually. This suggests we have been effective in slowing down disease transmission. We have spread out the impact, and prevented our hospitals from being overwhelmed. 5

Thus far, we have had fewer than 1,600 COVID-19-related deaths. Every death is one too many. But if our mortality rates had been like other countries, we could easily have suffered 10,000 COVID-19 deaths, or more by now. Our collective efforts have saved many lives. 10

Key to our success has been the high level of trust in our society. In some countries, a precaution as simple and essential as mask wearing became a heated point of contention. But in Singapore, people worked with and not against one another. You trusted your Government. You patiently endured rounds of easing and tightening measures despite the inconvenience. The Government upheld your trust by being open and transparent. We spoke directly to you, shared information readily, and gave you the full facts even when things did not look good. Above all, there was trust amongst Singaporeans that we would each do the right thing and have each other's back. You practised personal and social responsibility. You took your vaccinations when your turn came, protecting yourself, plus everyone around you and society as a whole. You kept your masks on, especially indoors. You conscientiously washed your hands after coming home. You have also become experts at swabbing yourselves using ART kits – what used to be an unpleasant experience has now become a routine chore. And if two red lines appeared, you self-isolated to protect others. Everyone did our part to keep us all safe. 15 20 25

Many of you went out of your way to help others. For example Mdm Alice Chua, who is a retiree. She volunteered at vaccination centres in East Coast, and brought fellow seniors to their appointments. Because she spoke Malay and dialects, she also bridged language gaps, and could reassure and comfort the seniors during their jabs. Every bit counted in our national

vaccination campaign! Or take Mdm Ruku d/o Pakirisamy, a Yishun resident. She noticed many elderly neighbours were afraid to go out during the pandemic, so they were getting listless and moody. To lift their spirits, she cooked and distributed meals for her neighbours. Sometimes curry, sometimes beehoon. A simple pack of hot meal brought many warm smiles. Or Mr Razali Puasa, who stays in Toa Payoh. The playground near his block is very popular with young kids. But he saw that everyone was afraid of COVID-19. So he decided to wipe down and disinfect the playground, to reassure families that it was clean and safe to let their kids play there – a simple gesture, which made all the difference to the community. I am very glad that Mdm Alice, Mdm Ruku, and Mr Razali can join us here tonight.

Amid the darkness of the pandemic, through these personal acts of kindness, courage and concern, the Singapore spirit shone brightly. It has made us collectively a better people and a more resilient society.

**Text C(ii)** is an edited extract from an online article (2023).

### **Singlish 101: Common Singlish words for you to chat like a local in Singapore**

***So you know your Singlish and can tell the difference between lah, leh and lor? Come, we clap for you.***

A huge part of the Singaporean identity (besides our local food) is our language. We're talking about Singlish! Bottom line: Singlish is a truly peculiar 'language'. We use it when we order kopi at hawker centres and even at cafes when we mingle with our friends. Need a handy guide? We've decoded some of the essentials so you'll know what it means when someone accuses you of being kaypoh...

#### **1. Act blur**

**What it means: To play the innocent card or act ignorant.**

*Example: "Don't act blur, I know you took my stuff."*

#### **2. Bo chap**

**What it means: It translates to "don't care" in Hokkien, referring to someone who's indifferent.**

*Example: "She's so bo chap at work, she only does the bare minimum."*

#### **3. Catch no ball**

**What it means: To be absolutely clueless.**

*Example: "Can you explain the concept again, I really catch no ball."*

#### **4. Die die must try**

**What it means: To express something that's so good you must try it – no matter what.**

*Example: "I'm not kidding, this place has the best laksa. Die die must try."*

#### **5. Eye power**

**What it means: Someone who doesn't extend help. Instead, they just stand around and stare as if their eyes can offer assistance.**

*Example: "Don't eye power leh, come help us move the furniture."*

4 Read Text D, and then answer the following question.

Discuss in detail ways in which language can be used to dominate, manipulate, or persuade.

You should include a range of examples and/or ideas from Text D and from your wider knowledge of English language, with detailed reference to lexis, grammar, syntax, phonology and discourse as appropriate.

[25]

**Text D** is an article (2010) taken from an independent online newspaper, *The Moscow Times*.

**Controlling People Through Language**

While in England traveling with a British friend, I was speaking to a cashier at a railway station when I was dumbstruck by the look of frightened amazement on the woman's face at my use of the word "passenger." Seeing my perplexity, my friend explained: "We don't use that word in Britain. Railway employees are on strict orders to say 'client' instead of 'passenger.'" 5

In that sense, the privatized British railway differs from the Russian and French where they still remember that transportation exists not for "providing services to customers," but for the very specific and mundane purpose of transporting passengers.

But the new "Corporatese" is popping up everywhere. A journalist who asked me to comment on the new health-care bill phrased her question in that same annoying way: "In your opinion, how does that document influence the availability of medical services?" 10

"What medical services are you talking about?" I snapped. "You mean 'medical assistance.' Services are when I buy something I want at the market. But when a person has a heart attack or a broken leg, he doesn't need services. He needs assistance."

There are many examples like this. The new vocabulary hides behind the mask of political correctness, although it long ago lost any connection to it. Thirty years ago in the United States, people started to clean the language of racist and stereotypical terms that were offensive to women and minorities. In this way, they hoped to create a culture of equality and tolerance. It was a noble goal that never went beyond the level of language. The social problems themselves did not improve. 15 20

Worse, by fiddling with the language, participants in the debate increasingly lost sight of the goal and became mired in a discussion of linguistics. Meanwhile, the social aspect of the problems was regarded as taboo.

Market reforms have given rise to new revisions of the language. The content and meaning of all personal activities are now expressed in terms of buying and selling, providing services or upholding contractual obligations. We are witnessing the systematic dehumanization of the language, with the individual reduced to nothing but a consumer in the market system. 25

Totalitarian regimes of the 20th century showed that control of the language is one element in maintaining control over the people. Deprived of an adequate complement of words, the people are unable to express thoughts contrary to the standards imposed on them and become helpless and easily managed. Even if they are unhappy or dissatisfied with conditions, they are unable to put that discontent into words, much less actions. Control is more easily maintained at the linguistic level than through police repression and brute force. 30

In British writer George Orwell's anti-Utopian book "1984," this new language was called Newspeak. Fortunately, much has changed since 1984. The Soviet Union and other totalitarian regimes are gone, but not the totalitarian methods of exercising control over the people. The fewer options the ruling regime has of achieving sweeping political control, the 35



more it will resort to indirect methods of control, such as the manipulation of language, to preserve the existing order.

The best, albeit banal, defense against this insidious weapon is to speak the plain truth as much as possible. 40

## REFERENCE TABLE OF IPA PHONEMIC SYMBOLS (RECEIVED PRONUNCIATION)

1. Consonants of English		2. Pure vowels of English	
/f/	<u>f</u> at, rou <u>gh</u>	/i:/	be <u>a</u> t, kee <u>p</u>
/v/	<u>v</u> ery, <u>v</u> illage, love	/ɪ/	bi <u>t</u> , ti <u>p</u> , bu <u>s</u> y
/θ/	<u>th</u> eatre, <u>th</u> ank, ath <u>le</u> te	/e/	be <u>t</u> , ma <u>n</u> y
/ð/	<u>th</u> is, <u>th</u> em, wi <u>th</u> , ei <u>th</u> er	/æ/	ba <u>t</u>
/s/	<u>s</u> ing, thi <u>nk</u> s, lo <u>ss</u> es	/ʌ/	cu <u>p</u> , so <u>n</u> , bloo <u>d</u>
/z/	<u>z</u> oo, be <u>d</u> s, ea <u>s</u> y	/ɑ:/	ca <u>r</u> , hea <u>r</u> t, ca <u>l</u> m, au <u>n</u> t
/ʃ/	<u>s</u> ugar, bu <u>sh</u>	/ɒ/	po <u>t</u> , wa <u>n</u> t
/ʒ/	plea <u>s</u> ure, be <u>ig</u> e	/ɔ:/	po <u>r</u> t, sa <u>w</u> , ta <u>l</u> k
/h/	<u>h</u> igh, <u>h</u> it, be <u>h</u> ind	/ə/	a <u>b</u> out, su <u>dd</u> en
/p/	<u>p</u> it, to <u>p</u>	/ɜ:/	wo <u>r</u> d, bi <u>r</u> d
/t/	<u>t</u> ip, po <u>t</u> , ste <u>p</u>	/ʊ/	bo <u>o</u> k, wo <u>o</u> d, pu <u>t</u>
/k/	<u>k</u> ee <u>p</u> , ti <u>ck</u> , sca <u>r</u> e	/u:/	fo <u>o</u> d, so <u>u</u> p, ru <u>d</u> e
/b/	<u>b</u> ad, ru <u>b</u>		
/d/	<u>b</u> ad, <u>d</u> im	3. Diphthongs of English	
/g/	<u>g</u> un, bi <u>g</u>		
/tʃ/	<u>ch</u> urch, lu <u>nc</u> h	/eɪ/	la <u>t</u> e, da <u>y</u> , gra <u>t</u>
/dʒ/	<u>j</u> udge, <u>g</u> in, <u>j</u> ury	/aɪ/	ti <u>m</u> e, hi <u>gh</u> , di <u>e</u>
/m/	<u>m</u> ad, ja <u>m</u> , <u>s</u> ma <u>ll</u>	/ɔɪ/	bo <u>y</u> , no <u>i</u> se
/n/	ma <u>n</u> , no <u>,</u> sno <u>w</u>	/aʊ/	co <u>w</u> , ho <u>u</u> se, to <u>w</u> n
/ŋ/	<u>s</u> inger, lo <u>ng</u>	/əʊ/	bo <u>a</u> t, ho <u>m</u> e, kno <u>w</u>
/l/	<u>l</u> oud, ki <u>ll</u> , pla <u>y</u>	/ɪə/	ea <u>r</u> , he <u>r</u> e
/j/	<u>y</u> ou, be <u>y</u> ond	/eə/	a <u>ir</u> , ca <u>r</u> e, cha <u>ir</u>
/w/	<u>o</u> ne, <u>w</u> hen, <u>s</u> weet	/ʊə/	few <u>e</u> r, du <u>a</u> l
/r/	<u>r</u> im, br <u>e</u> ad		

## Copyright Acknowledgements

- Question 1 Text A(i) Adapted from <https://www.economist.com/culture/2023/08/04/in-northern-europe-a-backlash-against-english-is-under-way>
- Question 1 Text A(ii) Adapted from [https://www.reddit.com/r/languagelearning/comments/k5dlrx/the\\_world\\_is\\_too\\_obsessed\\_with\\_english/](https://www.reddit.com/r/languagelearning/comments/k5dlrx/the_world_is_too_obsessed_with_english/)
- Question 2 Text B(i) Adapted from <https://www.harvard.co.uk/the-impact-of-technology-on-the-words-we-use/>
- Question 2 Text B(ii) Adapted from <https://ijsses.tiu.edu.iq/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Uses-and-Abuses-of-Netspeak.pdf>
- Question 3 Text C(i): Adapted from <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/prime-minister-lee-hsien-loong-national-day-rally-2022-english-full-speech-2891461>
- Question 3 Text C(ii): Adapted from <https://thehoneycombers.com/singapore/singlish-101/>
- Question 4 Text D: Adapted from <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/09/15/controlling-people-through-language-a1453>