

# CAMBRIDGE LANGUAGES TEST MINI-PAPER

# MOCK EXAMINATION 1

Cambridge Language Test

You have 45 minutes to complete this exercise.

Please read carefully the following adaptation of a book review from The Times and then write a single short essay which answers all the questions below. Please make your essay a total of 200-250 words long, no more and no less. Please answer in ONE of the modern languages that you are applying to study here, i.e. in a language that you are studying or have studied at A-level (A2) or equivalent. If you are studying at A-level (A2) or equivalent both of the languages that you wish to study here, then you're free to choose which of those two languages to write in.

The purpose of the exercise is for us to see how you write in the foreign language, to assess your grammar, your accuracy, your ability to express ideas, and your vocabulary, though we don't expect you to know the exact foreign-language term for each English term in the passage

# EXTRACT:

In every generation, there are critics who decry declining standards of English. Tim William Machan cites the worries of Alfred Knox, a Conservative MP of the 1930s, when moving pictures had recently acquired sound. Knox urged the Board of Trade to restrict the number of imported films from America, as they spread a dialect and accents that were “perfectly disgusting, and there can be no doubt that such films are an evil influence on our language”.

Machan, a professor of English at the University of Notre Dame, has a serious point. The English language is not static, nor are its boundaries clear.

The metaphor he uses is that English is a river. Its content is always changing and it has many tributaries. There can be no single definition of the English language.

It's not only the language but its speakers who are different from the past. In the middle of the last century, around 400 million people spoke English. The total is now 1.5 billion, while the proportion of them living in Britain, North America and Australasia has declined. There is no historical parallel for this growth in English usage and the shift in the language's centre of gravity.

Machan cites early attempts to codify rules of English, beginning with William Bullokar's *Pamphlet for Grammar* of 1586. As there was no such thing as English grammar taught in schools and universities of the time, these early codifications reflected the biases of their creators, who were drawn from a narrow social and geographical circle and believed that English should accord with Latin and Greek syntactical patterns. Thus was born the notion that the language was crucial to the moral character of English-speaking peoples.

It isn't hard to show that these choices were historically contingent if not quite arbitrary. Yet they persist in the popular genre of manuals of English style. Most of these manuals fail to distinguish between rules of grammar and mere stylistic preference.

All commentaries about English have to contend with the uniqueness of the language's status as the lingua franca of the digital age. But English is not bound to go the way of Latin and Greek, or to extinguish linguistic diversity. The sole reliable prediction is that, like a river, English never stands still.

(Adapted from Oliver Kamm, 'What is English? And Why Should We Care?' by Tim William Machan', The Times 17th August 2013. A review of *What is English? And Why Should We Care?* by Tim William Machan (Oxford University Press, 2013). Article accessible at <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/arts/books/non-fiction/article3842585.ece>)

Please answer all the following questions in a single essay of 200-250 words. Remember: Don't write in English!

- Describe some of the attitudes towards the English language expressed in this article.
- In your opinion, has the English language changed for the better in recent years?

Turn over for suggestions on how to approach this question...

# HOW YOU SHOULD APPROACH THIS QUESTION

It might be worth dividing your answer into paragraphs. One long paragraph can be daunting for whoever's marking your test, so a paragraph structure that is easier on the eye will give the marker an instantly good impression.

Relevant arguments that this article generates include the fact that every generation judges the next generation's use of language as somehow inferior; however, we need only look as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century – or further back to Shakespeare or Chaucer – to see how quickly language changes and what a natural process this is. On the other hand, you might agree with the purists and emphasise the need for strict control over the words admitted into dictionaries. The most important point is to justify your opinion; there is no wrong answer!

One main aspect to explore in relation to this article is the fact that many people attach emotional, social and political significance to language. Many people, including MPs and linguists, have seen linguistic change as a negative thing, as linguistic decline. On the other hand, Tim William Machan, the author of the book reviewed in this article, emphasises that language is constantly changing and should be viewed as a moving entity that cannot stand still. Try to present a balanced view of these two opposing opinions.

There is no right or wrong answer; what the examiners will be looking for is your ease of expression in the foreign language, so don't stress about mentioning every last detail from the article. Instead, bring out the elements you think are the most interesting and/or important, making sure you don't forget that the balance between the two questions invites you to summarise key points from the article as well as providing your own opinion.

Another way to make your answer read smoothly is to use connectors such as 'in addition', 'however' and 'moreover' (in the other language of course!) to highlight additions, concessions, contrasts etc. When expressing the views of others, try to vary the words you use for 'think'. Show off your knowledge of the language but don't, for example, put a subjunctive in every sentence if you are writing in a language that has a subjunctive. This may come across as excessive.

The second question is an opportunity for you to express your own views, which is something you will have to do a lot of when writing your undergraduate supervision essays if you do study at Cambridge!

Don't end your answer with a neutral 'on the one hand... on the other hand... overall, both of these points of view have their merits'. By all means, mention opinions that contradict yours if they are relevant, but you should come down on one side or the other and justify your opinion (but similarly don't be too dogmatic about it!).