



# **JURONG JUNIOR COLLEGE**

## **JC 2 Preliminary Examination 2015**

**CANDIDATE'S NAME**

**GP TUTOR'S NAME**

**CLASS**

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### **General Certificate of Education**

**GENERAL PAPER**

**8807/2**

Paper 2

27 August 2015

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

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### **READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST**

This insert contains the passage for Paper 2.

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**Eric Garland** writes about minority languages.

- 1 Globalised economics and the media are changing the face of culture around the globe, reducing the number of languages that humans speak. As the world economy becomes more integrated, a common tongue has become more important than ever to promote commerce, and that puts speakers of regional dialects and minority languages at a distinct disadvantage. In addition, telecommunications has pressured languages to become more standardised, further squeezing local variations of language. 5
- 2 Over the past 500 years, as nation states developed and became more centralised, regional dialects and minority languages have been dominated by the centrist dialects of the ruling parties. Cornish has given way to English, Breton to French, Bavarian to High German, and Fu-jian-wa to Cantonese. Linguists concur that minority languages all over the world are giving way to more dominant languages, such as English, Mandarin, and Spanish, among others. The realities of commerce and the seductive power of world pop culture are placing pressure on speakers of minority languages to learn majority languages or suffer the consequences: greater difficulty doing business, less access to information... 10
- 3 These pressures are inducing a rapid die-off of languages around the world. Languages have been disappearing steadily, with 3,000 of the world's languages predicted to disappear in the next 100 years. According to the United Nations Environment Programme, there are 5,000 to 7,000 spoken languages in the world, with 4,000 to 5,000 of these classed as indigenous, used by native tribes. More than 2,500 are in danger of immediate extinction, and many more are losing their link with the natural world, becoming museum pieces rather than living languages. Futurists have noted this loss with no little despair, for significant, culturally specific information may disappear along with a language. For instance, knowledge about unique medicines and treatments used by aboriginal groups could be lost forever if the language used to transmit that information is banned by a majority culture. 15 20
- 4 The common wisdom is that globalisation is the wave of the future, and in many respects this is undeniable. For centuries, dialects and languages have been unifying to facilitate national identity, scientific research, and commerce. Without question, there will be a need for common languages, as standardisation allows growth in software and in people. However, swept up in this conventional wisdom is the notion that languages and cultures will simply cease to exist, and people will instead choose "global" cultures and languages that will transcend boundaries. This is not the only potential scenario. It is possible for globalisation and new technology to safeguard cultural identity while simultaneously allowing free exchanges of ideas and goods. Global prosperity and new technologies may also allow smaller cultures to preserve their niches. It is clear from several modern examples that a dying or dead language can turn around and become vibrant again, depending on people's determination and the government policies that are put in place. 25 30 35
- 5 The idea of saving languages is very modern. When linguistics scholar Joshua A. Fishman first wrote of "reversing language shift" in his book of that title in 1990, one reviewer actually laughed at the notion. The conventional wisdom among linguists, historians, and sociologists was that, if your culture and language were on the way out, their doom was assured in a globalised world. After all, the prevailing trends are toward globalisation and a unified world. Tiny dialects — such as Breton, the Celtic language spoken in Brittany, a province on the north-western coast of France — are not a benefit in the global economy, since they are 40

difficult to learn, poorly adapted to modern life, and unintelligible to almost everyone beyond a small region.

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- 6 Learning or relearning a native language is often a political statement, an act of self-definition, one that brings solidarity with our neighbours. It is political power, cultural reverence, and perhaps a feeling of control in a world where political and cultural borders are collapsing all around us. Minority languages may also have a place alongside majority forms of communication. The International Committee for the Defence of the Breton Language suggests that early bilingualism can help prepare young people to master several languages, which will be an advantage — if not a necessity — for the future in Europe. 50
- 7 Changing world geopolitics is already reforming the pressures on languages. The fall of the Soviet Union actually spurred a trend toward reversing language loss. In many of the former Soviet republics, older Turkic languages have been revived, now that the Russian influence is gone. Turkey is spending US\$1.5 billion to encourage the resurgence of Turkish throughout the region. Language is power, economic and otherwise, and the Turks are capitalising on the possibility of extending their reach, causing a reverse of language shift in the region. It is becoming clear that, when people have a strong cultural reason to reverse language shift, they can effectively resist the onslaught of majority languages. Moreover, the mass media technologies that allowed the one-way dialogue of majority languages to drive out minority languages and dialects are now helping those silenced languages to make a comeback. Speakers of these smaller languages can use interactive technologies such as websites, e-mail, and message boards to talk back to the world by creating and distributing media in their own language to a global diaspora. 65
- 8 Globalised commerce and the media are not necessarily the death knell for local languages, because certain trends support their preservation. Whereas one-way mass media technologies such as TV, radio, and print served to support majority languages, today's computer technology is turning the tables. It is considerably less expensive now to produce video and audio in any language, and communications technologies allow you to transmit these media to a diaspora anywhere in the world. In the future, with lower prices for powerful computers and dramatic advances in broadband Internet (such as IPv6 architecture that will soon turn any Internet connection into a broadcast device), majority languages may no longer possess an advantage in distributing information to the public. In the future, anybody anywhere on Earth could conceivably receive the evening news in Welsh or Irish Gaelic. Also, the availability of cheap, powerful multimedia will allow teachers to translate educational materials into a local language more easily. These educational technologies will be essential to the survival and prosperity of languages in the future. Only education of the youth assures the continuity of a language. 75
- 9 The pressures of globalisation on minority languages are undeniable, and many will likely disappear. However, extinction is not a certainty. The trend toward the homogeneity of global culture has stimulated many people to search for their native roots and hold tighter to their cultural identity. The availability of government services in a chosen language is the only path to its legitimacy in a political sense, but even more critical is for a minority language to be used in commerce. We are living in interesting times, linguistically, as powerful national languages encounter fierce resistance in their drive to dislodge local languages. New technologies are offering people greater freedom to choose their own cultural identity, and many are choosing minority local languages. The linguistic giants will not be the only choice in the future. 85

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