

ASR 2021 JC2 Prelim GP Paper 2 – SAQs – Suggested Answers

Q1: How does the author support his claim that 'language is the most powerful tool at the disposal of humanity' (line 9)? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|--|---|
| It is in the text messages we send, expressed in our private thoughts and it is the tool we use to understand the world around us. Language may have evolved over time, but its pivotal functions remain. Language today, as it did in the past, enables us to communicate , forms the basis of our relationships and drives the essential systems of our societies. [lines 5-8] | He does so by pointing out that language (a) can help us make sense of our surroundings (b) lets us converse/talk/exchange ideas , (c) is the foundation of our bonds/social ties/connections , and (d) is the engine of/powers/catalyses the vital structures/workings/mechanisms in our societies. (context of society must be mentioned) Marks Allocation: 1-2pts = 1m 3pts = 2m |
| Marker's Comments: - 'Tool' is a very important key word in this question. This key word indicates to students that they must identify points to relate to specific functions/roles of language (i.e. Points A-D). - Understandably, Point D was the most challenging for students due to the complexity of the expression. That said, students who were meticulous in paraphrasing the key ideas generally fared well. | |

Q2: Explain why the author uses 'mere' in line 19. [2]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|---|--|
| Given the complexity of language, it seems improbable that mere children could discover its underlying structure and use it deftly. [lines 18-19] | The author uses 'mere' (a) To show that language plays such an important role that /To highlight that he is surprised/ To show that it is unexpected that (b) children can use language in a skilful way/ understand language well (answer needs to capture use it <u>deftly</u> OR <u>Underlying</u> structure) (c) when it is something that is complicated/ complex (d) and children don't have much knowledge/experience with language Marks Allocation: 2-3pts = 1m 4pts = 2m |
| Marker's Comments: - Students who paid close attention to context scored full marks for this question, since they were able to see that the author was seeking to contrast the simplicity of children with the complexity of language, as well as express his surprise that children would nonetheless be able to 'use it deftly'. - Many students' answers that fell short did indeed broadly understand what the author was trying to convey, but failed to capture all four points. | |

Q3: Explain what the author means by languages are 'not always placed on an equal pedestal' (line 54). [2]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|---|--|
| However, languages are ' not always placed on an equal pedestal '. [line 54] | The author means that (a) languages [context] (b) are sometimes/rarely/seldom (c) ascribed/given/perceived to have (d) not the same value/significance/status Marks Allocation: No context = 0m 3 points, inclusive of point (a) = 1m 4 points = 2m |
| Marker's Comments: - Most students showed an understanding of the expression. But many students made avoidable mistakes that caused them to lose marks. For example, some students lifted the word 'always', while others failed to show the understanding that the phrase 'not always placed on the same pedestal' pertained to perceived importance (i.e. the value that people ascribe to languages, rather than the intrinsic value of languages). | |

Q4: In paragraph 5, how does the author illustrate the significance of learning English language in China? **Use your own words as far as possible.** [3]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|---|---|
| In China, proficiency in the English language is often tied to social and educational success . Presently, around 600 million Chinese citizens are learners of English. This is a staggering statistic , not only because it implies that almost 50 percent of China's population of 1.35 billion is currently learning the language, but also because this number surpasses the English-speaking population of the United States. This may be confounding for some given China's current reputation as an economic hegemon that is carving its own path. [lines 54-61] | <p>(a) Large/high numbers of Chinese citizens learn English language OR roughly half of China's huge numbers of inhabitants/citizens learn English language</p> <p>(b) This figure exceeds/outstrips the number of English speakers in the USA</p> <p>(c) This is because being competent in English language is linked to academic achievement and doing well in life/high standard of living/relationships/</p> <p>(Point (c): Must address BOTH social and education success.)</p> <p>Marks Allocation: Each point = 1m</p> |
| <p>Marker's Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A surprising number of students were not awarded Point A because they merely repeated the figure in question ('50 percent of 1.35 billion', or some variation of this) without drawing out the point the author was trying to make: <u>a very large number</u> of Chinese citizens are learning English. - Points B and C were captured in most answers (though the careless lifting of the words 'social', 'educational', and 'success' meant that many answers were denied Point C). | |

Q5: Why would the popularity of learning English language in China be 'confounding' (line 59)? [2]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|--|---|
| However, languages are not always placed on an equal pedestal. In China, proficiency in the English language is often tied to social and educational success. Presently, around 600 million Chinese citizens are learners of English. This is a staggering statistic, not only because it implies that almost 50 percent of China's population of 1.35 billion is currently learning the language, but also because this number surpasses the English-speaking population of the United States. This may be confounding for some given China's current reputation as an economic hegemon that is carving its own path. [lines 54-61] | <p>Format of Answer</p> <p>(a) Context of China being a global economic powerhouse</p> <p>(b) Expected outcome</p> <p>(c) Reason for expected outcome</p> <p>Focus: China's strong economic growth is a social leveller</p> <p>(a) Context: Since China is a <i>global economic powerhouse</i>,</p> <p>(b) English Language is not the <i>social leveller</i></p> <p>(c) as the Chinese can achieve it (social levelling) due to its own strong economic growth/ can achieve success on its own</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Focus: Mandarin should be the global language to learn</p> <p>(a) Context: Since China is a <i>global economic powerhouse</i>,</p> <p>(b) the Chinese do not need to learn English Language,</p> <p>(c) as Mandarin would be the global language to learn as non-Chinese will use it to do business with China/they can survive with just Mandarin</p> <p>Marks Allocation: Any 2 points = 1m 3 points = 2m</p> |
| <p>Marker's Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was very important for students to identify the correct context ('China's current reputation as an economic hegemon'). Once students correctly identified this as the context, then reasonable explanations that followed were given due credit. - Basically, students needed to explain why China being an economic hegemon made it <u>surprising</u> that so many of its citizens eagerly learn English. And many students gave sensible and well-developed explanations to this effect, drawing on their real-world knowledge and common sense. - Note: Many answers fell short not because of a lack of background knowledge or common sense, but specifically because the explanations they offered were incomplete, requiring the examiner to 'fill in the gaps'. It is important for students to understand that giving clear explanations is a key skill not just in Paper 1, but also in Paper 2. | |

Q6: Explain the irony in lines 63-64. **Use your own words as far as possible.** [2]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|--|---|
| In the global context, some languages are seen as social levellers – they are necessary acquisitions for the individual, regardless of his or her economic background, to secure better employment and business prospects. Ironically, this further advantages the rich who can easily seize any educational opportunities . [lines 61-64] | <p><u>Focus: Languages narrow or widen income gap/inequality</u></p> <p>(a) It is expected that some languages help to narrow the income gap/attain equality among different class/socio-economic groups.</p> <p>(b) However, in reality, acquiring these languages widens the income gap/ inequality as the rich are better able to learn these languages.</p> <p>OR</p> <p><u>Focus: Languages benefit the poor as they move up social ladder/promotes social mobility</u></p> <p>(a) It is expected that acquiring these languages would benefit the poor to move up social ladder /achieve social mobility.</p> <p>(b) However, in reality, acquiring these languages benefits the wealthy even more as they are better able to learn these languages.</p> <p>Marks Allocation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A <u>clear match</u> between (a)+(b) must be shown PLUS key ideas in (a)+(b) are not lifted = 2m If (a)+(b) have a <u>clear match</u>, but there are lift word(s) in (a) and no lift word(s) in (b) = 1m If (a)+(b) have a <u>clear match</u>, but there are lift word(s) in (b) and no lift word(s) in (a) = 1m No attempt at irony/no contradiction = 0 marks If paradox framework is used = 0 marks |

Marker's Comments:

- The demands of this question may seem stringent, but students who (a) methodically used the expectation-versus-reality framework for answering irony questions, and (b) paid close attention to the text were indeed able to score full marks.
- Students were expected to demonstrate the irony clearly. Thus, they were expected to show a clear contrast between the expected outcome and the actual outcome. See Accepted and Unaccepted Permutations below:

| Accepted and Unaccepted Permutations | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| | Expected Outcome | Actual Outcome | Remarks |
| ✓ | Language is expected to reduce economic inequality... | Language in fact worsens economic inequality [+ explanation] | Irony is clearly demonstrated as there is a clear contrast between Expected Outcome and Actual Outcome. |
| ✓ | Language is expected to benefit the poor more... | Language in fact helps the rich to benefit even more [+ explanation] | Irony is clearly demonstrated as there is a clear contrast between Expected Outcome and Actual Outcome. |
| ✗ | Language is expected to reduce economic inequality | Language in fact helps the rich to benefit even more [+ explanation] | Irony is not clearly demonstrated, as there is no clear contrast between Expected Outcome and Actual Outcome. |
| ✗ | Language is expected to benefit the poor more... | Language in fact worsens economic inequality [+ explanation] | Irony is not clearly demonstrated, as there is no clear contrast between Expected Outcome and Actual Outcome. |

Q7: Suggest why globalisation (line 79) might have led to languages dying out. [1]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|--|--|
| These include globalisation , the lack of support for regional languages in educational systems, the persecution of minority linguistic groups by governments, the disruption of communities during war, emigration... [lines 79-81] | <p><u>Format of Answer</u></p> <p>(a) Feature of globalisation</p> <p>(b) How this feature of globalisation causes languages to die out (impact).</p> <p>e.g. The pervasive use of English language in the Internet and social media platforms encourages people to use this language so often (a) that they do not use their own mother tongue languages which causes these languages to die out (b).</p> <p>Note: Any plausible <u>feature</u> of globalisation and <u>how</u> it causes languages to die out.</p> |
| Marker's Comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally, students knew how to answer this question, as they had the requisite background knowledge to explain how globalisation would lead to the dying out of some languages. Where some answers fell short was in the clarity and completeness of explanations. If an answer (a) failed to make some | |

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|--|------------------|
| kind of reference to a feature of globalisation, or if it (b) did not clearly spell out the process whereby globalisation causes certain languages to die out, then it was not given credit. | |

Q8: Identify the governments' contrasting attitudes towards the preservation of languages in paragraph 6. [1]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|---|--|
| Governments in numerous countries are clamoring to preserve mother tongues and dialects , but their efforts are often greeted by waning enthusiasm from the public. Unsurprisingly, the Internet has been at the receiving end of a great number of finger pointing. Of course, there are other factors alluding to the reality bite that many languages are dying out. These include globalisation, the lack of support for regional languages in educational systems, the persecution of minority linguistic groups by governments ... [lines 70-81] | The author states that (a) while some governments are demanding/striving/fighting to keep mother tongues and dialects , (b) other governments are discriminating against/oppressing /suppressing marginalised people who speak minority languages . Note: Lifting is allowed. * <i>Acceptable – if students refer to the same government conducting both actions</i> |
| Marker's Comments: - Generally, this question was well done. - Note: This question did not require students to paraphrase the points. | |

Q9: What does the author intend you to understand by the three dots (...) at the end of paragraph 6? [1]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|--|---|
| "...there are other factors alluding to the reality bite that many languages are dying out. These include globalisation, the lack of support for regional languages in educational systems, the persecution of minority linguistic groups by governments, the disruption of communities during war, emigration ..." [lines 78-81] | The author would like for us to understand that the list of reasons as to why languages are dying out is a never-ending/endless/inexhaustible. Note: Answer needs to have <i>both (a) context + (b) function of ellipsis</i> |
| Marker's Comments: - Generally, this question was well done. - Answers such as "There are <u>many</u> reasons as to why languages are dying out" were not credited as they did not show understanding of the punctuation as endless/never-ending. | |

Q10: Why do you think the author uses 'we' (line 95) in the concluding statement? [1]

| From passage | Suggested Answer |
|---|--|
| Languages enrich our human ecology and contribute to the sum of human knowledge and history. Thus, even if it proves to be an onerous endeavour, we must aggressively defend it. [lines 93-95] | The author is saying that we all have a role to play / as readers, we feel personally involved / stand along with the author to take action to preserve language [1m] Note: Any plausible answer that shows intent + context of preserving language |
| Marker's Comments: - Again, this question was generally well done. Most students were able to give a plausible explanation of the author's intent for using 'we'. | |

Q12. In this article, Archibald Bisby writes about the functions, value and issues of language in our lives. How applicable are his observations to yourself and your society? [10]

Sample Paragraphs

In line 38, Bisby observes that ‘language is the cornerstone on which identity is built.’ His observations are highly applicable to my society. Singapore is culturally diverse, and is home to people of different races speaking different languages, including Chinese, Malay, Tamil, and of course, English. With such diversity, Singapore has even created its own signature language called Singlish, which is a combination of English, the various mother tongue languages, and even dialects. Singlish then becomes a common language spoken by Singaporeans and even something we all take pride in. Major bookstores see the sale of popular books such as “Coxford Dictionary”, a satirical book dedicated to teaching Singlish phrases. Even fairy tales such as ‘Red Riding Hood, Lah’. come with a distinctly Singlish flavour. Singaporeans further rejoiced when at least 27 Singlish words were accepted into the Oxford dictionary, including the word “kiasu” (afraid to lose), which, in good fun, is recognized by locals as a humorous representation of the Singapore spirit. Thus, Singapore’s very own creole acts as a common medium for communication and the fostering of understanding between races, being a language that all Singaporeans are intimately familiar with and fiercely proud of. Indeed, Singlish is living proof of Bisby’s observation that language can help strengthen a community’s identity.

-Althea Wong, 21/22 (Edited)-

I find Bisby’s observation in paragraph 3 that ‘words also have the power to trigger emotions, fire imagination and rally collective action’ to be highly applicable to my society. Singapore was once a part of Malaysia until, in 1965, Singapore was ‘kicked out’. As such, Singapore, a small country with a lack of natural resources, had to pick itself up to improve and become a country on its own. On the radio was Mr Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, at once bitterly disappointed and resolute, urging Singaporeans to move on by ourselves and improve the nation. His rousing rhetoric galvanised Singaporeans, stirring in them a nascent nationalistic fervour that no doubt served as the impetus for national progress in the early years. The rest—as they say—is history, and Singapore rapidly advanced from an insecure third-world country to a first world nation that consistently tops various indices measuring national and human development. It is impossible to know what would have happened instead if, during the period of national separation, Mr Lee Kuan Yew had failed to use his oratorical skills to forge a new vision for Singapore. But I think that if Mr Lee Kuan Yew had not boldly declared in that famous, nationally-televised press conference on 26 August 1965, that “Singapore will survive”, it is likely that our forbears would have lacked the strength of will and clarity of purpose to drive Singapore to where it is today. Hence, I agree to a large extent that Bisby’s observation is applicable to my society.

-Muhammad Rasheen, 21/13 (Adapted)-

In line 54, Bisby states that ‘languages are not always placed on an equal pedestal.’ I find this to be highly applicable to my society, Singapore. As a multiracial country, Singapore has many different groups of people who speak different languages. In fact, Singapore has four official languages—English, Tamil, Bahasa Melayu, and Mandarin. It is thus expected that the importance of these four languages is seen as equal in our day-to-day life. Yet, that is most certainly not the case. With a large ethnic Chinese population (close to three quarters of the total population), Mandarin and Chinese dialects are by some distance the most commonly heard languages on the street. Yet this preference for a particular mother tongue even extends to job opportunities that are available to an individual. Quite often, employers in Singapore state in job listings that they require applicants to be proficient in Mandarin. Understandably, this has upset many non-Mandarin speakers who feel that a certain language is being elevated above the others such that it has become an actual job requirement, effectively serving as an unfair barrier to entry for even highly-qualified individuals. With such an overwhelming emphasis on and bias towards a particular mother tongue—Mandarin—and the opportunities afforded exclusively to its speakers, it cannot be denied that there exists a stark difference in social standing between Mandarin and Singapore’s three other official languages.

-Amelia Lee Tze Shuan, 21/06 (Adapted)-