

Read the following two passages and complete the writing tasks in your own words. You are encouraged to draw on your knowledge of the topics and your personal experience. This test is 100-minute long.

PASSAGE A

[Excerpted from “Baffled at a Bookcase” by Alan Bennett, 28 July 2011, *London Review of Books*]

I have always been happy in libraries, though without ever being entirely at ease there. A scene that seems to crop up regularly in plays that I have written has a character, often a young man, standing in front of a bookcase feeling baffled. He – and occasionally she – is overwhelmed by the amount of stuff that has been written and the ground to be covered. “All these books. I’ll never catch up,” wails the young Joe Orton in the film script of *Prick Up Your Ears*, and in *The Old Country* another young man reacts more dramatically, by hurling half the books to the floor. In *Me, I’m Afraid of Virginia Woolf* someone else gives vent to their frustration with literature by drawing breasts on a photograph of Virginia Woolf and kitting out E.M. Forster with a big cigar. Orton himself notoriously defaced library books before starting to write books himself. This resentment, which was, I suppose, somewhere mine, had to do with feeling shut out. A library, I used to feel, was like a cocktail party with everybody standing with their back to me; I could not find a way in.

The first library I did find my way into was the Armley Public Library in Leeds where a reader’s ticket cost tuppence¹ in 1940; not tuppence a time or even tuppence a year but just tuppence; that was all you ever had to pay. It was rather a distinguished building, put up in 1901, the architect Percy Robinson, and amazingly for Leeds, which is and always has been demolition crazy, it survives and is still used as a library, though whether it will survive the present troubles I don’t like to think.

We would be there as a family, my mother and father, my brother and me, and it would be one of our regular weekly visits. I had learned to read quite early when I was five or six by dint, it seemed to me then, of watching my brother read. We both of us read comics but whereas I was still on picture-based comics like the *Dandy* and the *Beano*, my brother, who was three years older, had graduated to the more text-based *Hotspur* and *Wizard*. Having finished my *Dandy* I would lie down on the carpet beside him and gaze at what he was reading, asking him questions about it and generally making a nuisance of myself. Then –

¹ tuppence: two pence, 1 British pound=100 pence

and it seemed as instantaneous² as this – one day his comic made sense and I could read. I'm sure it must have been more painstaking than this but not much more.

Having learned to read, other than comics, there was nothing in the house on which to practise my newly acquired skill. My parents were both readers and Dad took the periodical *John Bull*, the books they generally favoured literature of escape, tales of ordinary folk like themselves who had thrown it all up for a life of mild adventure, a smallholding on the Wolds, say, or an island sanctuary, with both of them fans of the naturalist R.M. Lockley. There were a few volumes of self-help in the house but the only non-library book of autobiography was *I Haven't Unpacked* by William Holt, who had got away from the dark, satanic mills by buying a horse and riding through England.

The Armley library was at the bottom of Wesley Road, the entrance up a flight of marble steps under open arches, through brass-railed swing doors panelled in stained glass which by 1941 was just beginning to buckle. Ahead was the Adults' Library, lofty, airy and inviting; to the right was the Junior Library, a low dark room made darker by the books which, regardless of their contents, had been bound in heavy boards of black, brown or maroon embossed with the stamp of Leeds Public Libraries. This grim packaging was discouraging to a small boy who had just begun to read, though more discouraging still was the huge and ill-tempered, walrus-moustached British Legion commissionaire³ who was permanently installed there. [...]

I have been discussing libraries as places and in the current struggle to preserve public libraries not enough stress has been laid on the library as a place not just a facility. To a child living in high flats, say, where space is at a premium and peace and quiet not always easy to find, a library is a haven. But, saying that, a library needs to be handy and local; it shouldn't require an expedition. Municipal authorities of all parties point to splendid new and scheduled central libraries as if this discharges them of their obligations. It doesn't. For a child a library needs to be round the corner. And if we lose local libraries it is children who will suffer. Of the libraries I have mentioned the most important for me was that first one, the dark and unprepossessing⁴ Armley Junior Library. I had just learned to read. I needed books. Add computers to that requirement maybe but a child from a poor family is today in exactly the same boat.

Writing task (50%)

As an effort to urge the British government to keep the funding for local libraries, playwright

² Instantaneous: occurring or done instantly

³ commissionaire: a uniformed door attendant at a theatre, a hotel, or a building

⁴ unprepossessing: not attractive or appalling to the eye

Alan Bennett shares his early experiences in reading and his visits to libraries. What is your own memory about libraries? Do you enjoy reading in the library? Or do you consider visiting a library a boring thing to do? Do libraries play an important role in your education? Write a short essay (250-350 words) in which you develop your opinions on the role of libraries, preferably using your own experiences to support your viewpoints.

PASSAGE B

[Excerpted from “All the World Speaks Globish” by Robert McCrum, June, 12, 2010, *Newsweek*]

[...] English is now used, in some form, by approximately 4 billion people on earth—perhaps two thirds of the planet—including 400 million native English speakers. As a mother tongue, only Chinese is more prevalent⁵, with 1.8 billion native speakers—350 million of whom also speak some kind of English. [...] And as English gains momentum as a second language all around the world, it is morphing⁶ into a new and simplified version of itself—one that responds to the 24/7 demands of a global economy and culture with a stripped-down vocabulary of words like “airplane,” “chat room,” “taxi,” and “cell phone.” Having neatly made the transition from the Queen’s English to the more democratic American version, it is now becoming a worldwide power, a populist tool increasingly known as Globish. [...]

I wasn’t alone in noticing this change. In 2007 I came across an article in the *International Herald Tribune* about a French-speaking retired IBM executive, Jean-Paul Nerrière, who described English and its international deployment⁷ as “the worldwide dialect of the third millennium.” Nerrière, posted to Japan with IBM in the 1990s, had noticed that non-native English speakers in the Far East communicated in English far more successfully with their Korean and Japanese clients than British or American executives. Standard English was all very well for Anglophones⁸, but in the developing world, this non-native “decaffeinated English”—full of simplifications like “the son of my brother” for “nephew,” or “words of honor” for “oath”—was becoming the new global phenomenon. In a moment of inspiration, Nerrière christened it “Globish.”

The term quickly caught on within the international community. The (London) *Times* journalist Ben Macintyre described a conversation he had overheard while waiting for a flight from Delhi between a Spanish U.N. peacekeeper and an Indian soldier. “The Indian spoke no Spanish; the Spaniard spoke no Punjabi,” he says. “Yet they understood one another easily.

⁵ prevalent: widespread

⁶ morph: change from one shape to another

⁷ deployment: use

⁸ Anglophones: English-speaking people

The language they spoke was a highly simplified form of English, without grammar or structure, but perfectly comprehensible, to them and to me. Only now do I realize that they were speaking ‘Globish,’ the newest and most widely spoken language in the world.”

For Nerrière, Globish was a kind of linguistic tool, a version of basic or so-called Easy English with a vocabulary of just 1,500 words. As I saw it, however, “Globish” was the newly globalized lingua franca, essential English merged with the terminology of the digital age and the international news media. [...]

The fact is that English no longer depends on the U.S. or U.K. It’s now being shaped by a world whose second language is English, and whose cultural reference points are expressed in English but without reference to its British or American origins. Films like the 2009 Oscar-winning *Slumdog Millionaire* hasten the spread of Globish—a multilingual, multicultural cast and production team creating a film about the collision of languages and cultures, launched with an eye toward Hollywood. The dialogue may mix English, Hindi, and Arabic, but it always falls back on Globish. When the inspector confronts Amir on suspicion of cheating, he asks in succinct Globish: “So. Were you wired up? A mobile or a pager, correct? Some little hidden gadget? No? A coughing accomplice in the audience? Microchip under the skin, huh?”

In the short term, Globish is set to only grow. Some 70 to 80 percent of the world’s Internet home pages are in English, compared with 4.5 percent in German and 3.1 percent in Japanese. According to the British Council, by 2030 “nearly one third of the world’s population will be trying to learn English at the same time.” That means ever more voices adapting the English language to suit their needs, finding in Globish a common linguistic denominator⁹.[....]

Writing task (50%)

1. Briefly explain what Globish is in 100 or less words (20%)
2. The author believes that Globish will continue to grow and that more people will be using Globish rather than standard American or British English for international communication in the near future. In 250 to 300 words, explain why we should or should not teach Globish rather than standard American or British English in Taiwanese schools. (30%)

⁹ denominator: a shared trait