

AQA A-level English Language - Language Change Practice Test (Sample)

Study Guide



Everything you need from our exam experts!

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Introduction

Preparing for a certification exam can feel overwhelming, but with the right tools, it becomes an opportunity to build confidence, sharpen your skills, and move one step closer to your goals. At Examzify, we believe that effective exam preparation isn't just about memorization, it's about understanding the material, identifying knowledge gaps, and building the test-taking strategies that lead to success.

This guide was designed to help you do exactly that.

Whether you're preparing for a licensing exam, professional certification, or entry-level qualification, this book offers structured practice to reinforce key concepts. You'll find a wide range of multiple-choice questions, each followed by clear explanations to help you understand not just the right answer, but why it's correct.

The content in this guide is based on real-world exam objectives and aligned with the types of questions and topics commonly found on official tests. It's ideal for learners who want to:

- Practice answering questions under realistic conditions,
- Improve accuracy and speed,
- Review explanations to strengthen weak areas, and
- Approach the exam with greater confidence.

We recommend using this book not as a stand-alone study tool, but alongside other resources like flashcards, textbooks, or hands-on training. For best results, we recommend working through each question, reflecting on the explanation provided, and revisiting the topics that challenge you most.

Remember: successful test preparation isn't about getting every question right the first time, it's about learning from your mistakes and improving over time. Stay focused, trust the process, and know that every page you turn brings you closer to success.

Let's begin.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to help you study more effectively and approach your exam with confidence. Whether you're reviewing for the first time or doing a final refresh, here's how to get the most out of your Examzify study guide:

1. Start with a Diagnostic Review

Skim through the questions to get a sense of what you know and what you need to focus on. Your goal is to identify knowledge gaps early.

2. Study in Short, Focused Sessions

Break your study time into manageable blocks (e.g. 30 - 45 minutes). Review a handful of questions, reflect on the explanations.

3. Learn from the Explanations

After answering a question, always read the explanation, even if you got it right. It reinforces key points, corrects misunderstandings, and teaches subtle distinctions between similar answers.

4. Track Your Progress

Use bookmarks or notes (if reading digitally) to mark difficult questions. Revisit these regularly and track improvements over time.

5. Simulate the Real Exam

Once you're comfortable, try taking a full set of questions without pausing. Set a timer and simulate test-day conditions to build confidence and time management skills.

6. Repeat and Review

Don't just study once, repetition builds retention. Re-attempt questions after a few days and revisit explanations to reinforce learning. Pair this guide with other Examzify tools like flashcards, and digital practice tests to strengthen your preparation across formats.

There's no single right way to study, but consistent, thoughtful effort always wins. Use this guide flexibly, adapt the tips above to fit your pace and learning style. You've got this!

Questions

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- 1. David Crystal's tide metaphor explains language change as which of the following?**
 - A. Language gradually becomes better or worse**
 - B. It ebbs and flows, bringing in new words and taking out others**
 - C. Changes are inherently good**
 - D. Language remains mostly stable over time**

- 2. Which best describes the Inkhorn controversy?**
 - A. A movement to standardize spelling**
 - B. A movement to Latinize English**
 - C. A period of pride in English leading to borrowing and coinage**
 - D. A ban on foreign words**

- 3. Functional shift is the conversion of one word class to another.**
 - A. Adding a prefix to form a new word**
 - B. Borrowing from other languages**
 - C. Compounding two words**
 - D. The conversion of one word class to another**

- 4. What is political correctness primarily concerned with?**
 - A. Maintaining strict grammar rules**
 - B. Language should not change**
 - C. Refraining from causing emotional harm**
 - D. Borrowing words from other languages**

- 5. Which of the following is one of the attitudes Donald Mackinnon categorizes toward language use?**
 - A. Economical or expensive**
 - B. Pleasant or ugly**
 - C. Politically correct or incorrect**
 - D. Loud or quiet**

- 6. Which term is NOT part of Kachru's three circles of English?**
- A. Inner circle**
 - B. Outer circle**
 - C. Expanding circle**
 - D. Peripheral circle**
- 7. Which statement about pronunciation is considered proper in prescriptive views on English?**
- A. Pronunciation is of great importance; dropping the 'h' and 'g' is improper.**
 - B. Pronunciation is of little importance; dropping the 'h' and 'g' is standard.**
 - C. The dropping of letters in pronunciation is a natural change.**
 - D. Pronunciation should always match spelling exactly.**
- 8. Which description best characterizes the Great Vowel Shift (1400-1600 AD)?**
- A. A conventional spelling reform**
 - B. A minor vowel shift in pronunciation**
 - C. A huge phonological change**
 - D. The introduction of new grammatical moods**
- 9. Which spelling pair is a classic example of Webster's differences?**
- A. Colour vs Color**
 - B. Theatre vs Theater**
 - C. Centre vs Center**
 - D. Honor vs Honour**
- 10. The Inkhorn controversy is associated with which trend?**
- A. The standardization of spelling across England**
 - B. The decline of English vocabulary**
 - C. The growth of vocabulary through coinage, affixation, and borrowing**
 - D. The invention of printing press**

Answers

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1. B
2. C
3. D
4. C
5. B
6. D
7. A
8. C
9. A
10. C

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Explanations

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1. David Crystal's tide metaphor explains language change as which of the following?

- A. Language gradually becomes better or worse**
- B. It ebbs and flows, bringing in new words and taking out others**
- C. Changes are inherently good**
- D. Language remains mostly stable over time**

The main idea being tested is that language change is a dynamic, ongoing process, like the movement of tides. Crystal's image shows language as something that ebbs and flows: new words, meanings, and forms come in, while older ones drift away or fall out of use. This captures the natural way language evolves through social contact, technology, and changing needs, without making a value judgment about whether the changes are good or bad. So, this metaphor best fits the idea that change involves both the arrival of innovations and the loss of older forms, in a constant cycle. The other notions—that language gradually becomes better or worse, that changes are inherently good, or that language stays mostly stable—don't describe the ongoing, patterned flow that the tide metaphor is intended to illustrate.

2. Which best describes the Inkhorn controversy?

- A. A movement to standardize spelling**
- B. A movement to Latinize English**
- C. A period of pride in English leading to borrowing and coinage**
- D. A ban on foreign words**

At the heart of this item is understanding that the Inkhorn controversy concerns whether English should welcome words borrowed from Latin and Greek to name new ideas and things, and how that reflects the language's development. It was seen by many writers as a sign of English's growing prestige to borrow and coin terms, especially in fields like science, law, and scholarship. This sense of pride in English's ability to expand and enrich itself is the best fit for describing the period. It isn't mainly about standardizing spelling, Latinizing English, or banning foreign words—the debate centers on the value and impact of importing vocabulary to enlarge the language.

3. Functional shift is the conversion of one word class to another.

- A. Adding a prefix to form a new word**
- B. Borrowing from other languages**
- C. Compounding two words**
- D. The conversion of one word class to another**

Functional shift happens when a word changes its grammatical category without changing its form. This is why it's the right choice: it defines the idea of moving words from one class to another while keeping the same spelling. For example, text is typically a noun, but in "to text someone" it functions as a verb without any change to the word's shape. Similarly, water can be a noun and can be used as a verb in "to water the plants." The other options describe different processes: adding a prefix creates a new word through affixation, borrowing comes from another language, and compounding is joining two words into one.

4. What is political correctness primarily concerned with?

- A. Maintaining strict grammar rules**
- B. Language should not change**
- C. Refraining from causing emotional harm**
- D. Borrowing words from other languages**

The main idea here is that political correctness centers on the impact of language on people and aims to avoid terms or phrasing that could cause emotional harm or exclusion to marginalized groups. It isn't about keeping grammar strict or freezing language in time, and it isn't about borrowing words from other languages. Language often changes to be more respectful and inclusive, so the emphasis is on reducing harm through careful word choice. That's why refraining from causing emotional harm is the best fit. For instance, using respectful labels and avoiding stereotypes shows this approach in practice.

5. Which of the following is one of the attitudes Donald Mackinnon categorizes toward language use?

- A. Economical or expensive**
- B. Pleasant or ugly**
- C. Politically correct or incorrect**
- D. Loud or quiet**

Attitudes toward language, for Mackinnon, are about the affective, aesthetic response listeners have to speech. He highlights a dimension that measures how language use is judged in terms of pleasantness versus ugliness. This captures the immediate impression of how something sounds or feels when spoken—the sound, rhythm, and overall beauty or roughness of the language. That makes it the best fit because it centers on subjective beauty or ugliness, not on practical concerns like cost, political correctness, or volume. The other descriptors describe functional or perceptual aspects (economy, norms, loudness) rather than the aesthetic evaluation Mackinnon emphasizes.

6. Which term is NOT part of Kachru's three circles of English?

- A. Inner circle**
- B. Outer circle**
- C. Expanding circle**
- D. Peripheral circle**

Kachru's framework groups global English into three circles: the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. The inner circle covers varieties used by native speakers in countries like the US and UK; the outer circle includes English varieties that have long-standing institutional status in countries where English is a second language; the expanding circle comprises places where English is learned as a foreign language and used for international communication. Peripheral circle isn't part of this model, so the term that isn't included is peripheral circle.

7. Which statement about pronunciation is considered proper in prescriptive views on English?

- A. Pronunciation is of great importance; dropping the 'h' and 'g' is improper.**
- B. Pronunciation is of little importance; dropping the 'h' and 'g' is standard.**
- C. The dropping of letters in pronunciation is a natural change.**
- D. Pronunciation should always match spelling exactly.**

Prescriptive views treat pronunciation as something to be regulated, with a strong emphasis on standard forms. They hold that there is a correct way to pronounce words, taught as part of formal education and widely used in dictionaries and prestige contexts. In that stance, dropping sounds like the “h” or the “g” disrupts the standard pronunciation and is considered improper because it deviates from what is taught as proper speech. This explains why the correct statement says pronunciation is of great importance and dropping those sounds is wrong. By contrast, other views often see such changes as natural variations or don't insist on matching pronunciation to spelling or to a fixed norm.

8. Which description best characterizes the Great Vowel Shift (1400-1600 AD)?

- A. A conventional spelling reform**
- B. A minor vowel shift in pronunciation**
- C. A huge phonological change**
- D. The introduction of new grammatical moods**

The key idea is a major reorganization of long vowel sounds in English during the transition from Middle to Early Modern English. This wasn't a small tweak or a change in spelling; it was a widespread reshaping of how long vowels were pronounced across many words, over roughly two centuries. As a result, the pronunciation of many core vowel sounds shifted, giving Modern English its characteristic vowel system and creating the gap between spelling and speech that still puzzles learners today. It's also not about grammar or new grammatical forms, so the description that fits best is a broad, substantial phonological change that affected the vowel inventory, not a reform of spelling or any grammatical feature.

9. Which spelling pair is a classic example of Webster's differences?

- A. Colour vs Color**
- B. Theatre vs Theater**
- C. Centre vs Center**
- D. Honor vs Honour**

The idea being tested is how American English, as shaped by Noah Webster, often uses simpler spellings than British English. A classic manifestation of this is the -our ending in British English becoming -or in American English, as in colour versus color. This pair epitomizes Webster's approach: drop the extra letter to make spelling more phonetic and streamlined, a change that applies to many common words (honour, favour, flavour, labour, etc.). That broad, recognizable pattern is why colour vs color is the standout example. Other options show related shifts (theatre vs theater, centre vs center, honour vs honor) but they illustrate different changes; the colour/color pair most clearly captures the typical Websterian simplification.

10. The Inkhorn controversy is associated with which trend?

- A. The standardization of spelling across England**
- B. The decline of English vocabulary**
- C. The growth of vocabulary through coinage, affixation, and borrowing**
- D. The invention of printing press**

The main idea here is that the Inkhorn controversy is about expanding English vocabulary through new coinages, affixation, and borrowing from other languages. Inkhorn terms were learned, often Latinate or Greek-derived, created or imported to express new ideas. Proponents argued English needed these additions to grow and modernize, while critics saw them as unnecessary or pretentious. This makes the described trend the growth of vocabulary through coinage, affixation, and borrowing. It isn't about standardizing spelling, vocabulary decline, or the invention of the printing press.

Next Steps

Congratulations on reaching the final section of this guide. You've taken a meaningful step toward passing your certification exam and advancing your career.

As you continue preparing, remember that consistent practice, review, and self-reflection are key to success. Make time to revisit difficult topics, simulate exam conditions, and track your progress along the way.

If you need help, have suggestions, or want to share feedback, we'd love to hear from you. Reach out to our team at hello@examzify.com.

Or visit your dedicated course page for more study tools and resources:

<https://aqaalevelenglishlangchange.examzify.com>

We wish you the very best on your exam journey. You've got this!

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