

# 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. Outline a concise methodological plan for analyzing a pair of texts from different periods to identify language-change features.**
  - A. Choose texts; determine features to compare (lexical, syntactic, semantic); extract examples; use corpora to quantify changes; discuss historical/contextual factors; draw conclusions.**
  - B. Rely on a single modern text and assume changes.**
  - C. Ignore context.**
  - D. Only analyze punctuation.**
  
- 2. Affixation is adding a prefix or suffix to a word.**
  - A. Two words combined together**
  - B. The conversion of one word class to another**
  - C. Adding a prefix or suffix to a word**
  - D. Taking words from other languages**
  
- 3. Which pair of English words illustrates French influence on vocabulary in the Middle English period, in the legal/government and culinary domains?**
  - A. Bread and Cheese**
  - B. Court and Beef**
  - C. Beef and Pork**
  - D. Court and Bread**
  
- 4. Prescriptivism is the belief that one type of language is acceptable - judgemental.**
  - A. Belief that all types of language are acceptable - non judgemental**
  - B. Belief that one type of language is acceptable - judgemental**
  - C. Borrowing is the main driver of language change**
  - D. Language should always stay the same**
  
- 5. Diachronic change refers to which aspect of language?**
  - A. Sound changes in a single speech community**
  - B. The historical development of language**
  - C. Language change at a moment in time**
  - D. Language use in social contexts**

- 6. Which two processes of lexical change are illustrated by the pairings below?**
- A. Coinage — 'internet'; Borrowing — 'ballet' (French); Semantic extension — 'mouse' (computer mouse)**
  - B. Coinage — 'ballet'; Borrowing — 'internet'; Semantic extension — 'mouse'**
  - C. Coinage — 'shampoo'; Borrowing — 'parliament'; Semantic extension — 'keyboard'**
  - D. Coinage — 'keyboard'; Borrowing — 'shampoo'; Semantic extension — 'parliament'**
- 7. Which option correctly matches Beowulf, Chaucer, and Shakespeare to English history changes in morphology, syntax, and vocabulary?**
- A. Beowulf shows Old English inflection; Chaucer reflects Middle English fusion with French; Shakespeare demonstrates Early Modern English expansion and flexible syntax.**
  - B. Beowulf shows Modern English; Chaucer reflects no French influence; Shakespeare uses rigid syntax.**
  - C. Beowulf shows French infusion; Chaucer shows Old English inflection; Shakespeare uses modern vocabulary.**
  - D. Beowulf shows standardized spelling; Chaucer uses fixed syntax; Shakespeare shows simple morphology.**
- 8. 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**
- 9. Which term is NOT part of Kachru's three circles of English?**
- A. Inner circle**
  - B. Outer circle**
  - C. Expanding circle**
  - D. Peripheral circle**

**10. Which pair illustrates an example of borrowing?**

- A. Judge - France, Opera - Latin**
- B. Judge - France, Opera - English**
- C. Run - fast**
- D. Smoke - fog**

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## Answers

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

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## **Explanations**

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**1. Outline a concise methodological plan for analyzing a pair of texts from different periods to identify language-change features.**

**A. Choose texts; determine features to compare (lexical, syntactic, semantic); extract examples; use corpora to quantify changes; discuss historical/contextual factors; draw conclusions.**

**B. Rely on a single modern text and assume changes.**

**C. Ignore context.**

**D. Only analyze punctuation.**

The main idea here is to plan a systematic, evidence-based comparison of language across periods. Start by selecting texts from different periods that are comparable in genre or register so you aren't chasing changes caused by genre rather than time. Then decide which features to compare across levels of language—lexical choices, syntactic structures, and semantic or pragmatic meanings—to map how language has shifted in multiple dimensions. Next, pull out representative examples from both texts, noting frequencies, patterns, and contexts so you can track how particular forms or usages recur or fade. Use a corpus or larger reference data to quantify these changes, giving you measurable evidence rather than relying on intuition alone. It's also important to discuss historical and contextual factors—the social, cultural, and communicative circumstances that help explain why certain features emerged or declined. Finally, bring the findings together to draw informed conclusions about the direction and nature of language change between the periods, and acknowledge any limitations or areas for further investigation. This approach is best because it combines careful text selection, multi-level analysis, empirical quantification, and contextual interpretation, giving a robust, coherent picture of how language evolves. Relying on a single modern text would miss the comparative evidence, ignoring context risks misinterpreting shifts, and focusing only on punctuation wouldn't capture the broader linguistic changes at play.

**2. Affixation is adding a prefix or suffix to a word.**

**A. Two words combined together**

**B. The conversion of one word class to another**

**C. Adding a prefix or suffix to a word**

**D. Taking words from other languages**

Affixation is the process of attaching prefixes or suffixes to a word to create a new form or change its meaning or grammatical function. This precisely describes adding something like un- to a word or -ness to a base, which derives a new word or shifts its category (for example, happy becomes unhappy, or quick becomes quickly). By contrast, putting two words together to form one is compounding, changing a word's class without adding material is conversion, and taking words from another language is borrowing. So the correct idea is focused on adding those affixes to a base word.

**3. Which pair of English words illustrates French influence on vocabulary in the Middle English period, in the legal/government and culinary domains?**

- A. Bread and Cheese
- B. Court and Beef**
- C. Beef and Pork
- D. Court and Bread

After the Norman conquest, English absorbed many French words in both official life and everyday life like cooking. Court comes from Old French via Anglo-Norman and became the standard term for the royal or legal center of governance. Beef comes from French boeuf, used for the meat itself, while the animal name stayed Germanic (cow). This pairing shows French influence in both the legal/government and culinary domains. The other options don't capture this cross-domain French origin: the first two are Germanic for the pair, and the remaining option mixes a legal term with a culinary term that aren't both clearly French-derived.

**4. Prescriptivism is the belief that one type of language is acceptable - judgemental.**

- A. Belief that all types of language are acceptable - non judgemental
- B. Belief that one type of language is acceptable - judgemental**
- C. Borrowing is the main driver of language change
- D. Language should always stay the same

Prescriptivism is about prescribing norms for how language should be used and judging deviations as incorrect. That's why the statement that there is one type of language that is acceptable and that this judgmental stance is central to prescriptivism is the best fit. It reflects the idea of a fixed standard of correctness and the moralizing tone often attached to language usage. The other ideas describe different approaches: believing all varieties are acceptable aligns with descriptivism, which records how people actually use language rather than judging it; saying borrowing drives language change focuses on diffusion and influence in change rather than normative judgments; and claiming language should always stay the same echoes a resistance to change but does not capture the evaluative, rule-based stance of prescriptivism.

**5. Diachronic change refers to which aspect of language?**

- A. Sound changes in a single speech community
- B. The historical development of language**
- C. Language change at a moment in time
- D. Language use in social contexts

Diachronic change focuses on how language evolves across time. It traces the historical development of a language, showing how sounds, grammar, and vocabulary shift from era to era. Think of why Modern English differs from Old or Middle English and how those changes accumulate over centuries. The other descriptions describe aspects that aren't about language changing over time: one is a snapshot of sound patterns within a single moment, another is a momentary change rather than historical development, and the last concerns language use in social contexts rather than historical evolution.

6. Which two processes of lexical change are illustrated by the pairings below?

- A. Coinage — 'internet'; Borrowing — 'ballet' (French); Semantic extension — 'mouse' (computer mouse)**
- B. Coinage — 'ballet'; Borrowing — 'internet'; Semantic extension — 'mouse'
- C. Coinage — 'shampoo'; Borrowing — 'parliament'; Semantic extension — 'keyboard'
- D. Coinage — 'keyboard'; Borrowing — 'shampoo'; Semantic extension — 'parliament'

This item tests your understanding of three ways words can change what they mean or how they come into a language: coinage, borrowing, and semantic extension. Internet is a brand-new word built to name a global network, so it's coinage—it didn't exist in English before. Ballet comes from French and has been adopted into English with little or no change in form or meaning, which is borrowing. Mouse gaining a new sense as the device used with computers shows semantic extension: the existing word broadens to cover a new, related use without losing its original meaning. Together, these examples illustrate three separate processes that can operate in language growth. The other options mix up at least one pairing, so this set best demonstrates the correct concepts.

7. Which option correctly matches Beowulf, Chaucer, and Shakespeare to English history changes in morphology, syntax, and vocabulary?

- A. Beowulf shows Old English inflection; Chaucer reflects Middle English fusion with French; Shakespeare demonstrates Early Modern English expansion and flexible syntax.**
- B. Beowulf shows Modern English; Chaucer reflects no French influence; Shakespeare uses rigid syntax.
- C. Beowulf shows French infusion; Chaucer shows Old English inflection; Shakespeare uses modern vocabulary.
- D. Beowulf shows standardized spelling; Chaucer uses fixed syntax; Shakespeare shows simple morphology.

This item tests how English changes across historical periods in morphology, syntax and vocabulary. Beowulf comes from Old English, a language with rich inflection: nouns, adjectives, and verbs carry distinct endings for case, number, and gender, and word order often shifts to reflect grammatical roles. Chaucer writes in Middle English, a period shaped by Norman French influence, bringing many French loanwords and a trend toward simplifying inflection, so vocabulary expands and syntax becomes more flexible as word order grows more informative without relying as heavily on endings. Shakespeare belongs to Early Modern English, a stage marked by a huge expansion of vocabulary through borrowings and coinages, along with continued tendency toward flexible syntax as inflection fades, yielding a broader, more varied range of sentence structures. So the best mapping is Beowulf to Old English inflection, Chaucer to Middle English with French influence, and Shakespeare to Early Modern English with vocabulary growth and flexible syntax. The other ideas don't fit historical evidence—Beowulf isn't Modern English and Chaucer clearly shows French influence; Shakespeare's style isn't simply rigid, and Early Modern English isn't defined by standardized spelling alone.

**8. 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.

**9. 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.

**10. Which pair illustrates an example of borrowing?**

- A. Judge - France, Opera - Latin**
- B. Judge - France, Opera - English
- C. Run - fast
- D. Smoke - fog

Borrowing happens when a word is taken from another language and used in English. In this pair, judge entered English from French, and opera entered English from Latin, so both items are loanwords from languages other than English—clear examples of borrowing. The other options don't fit because run and fast are native English (Germanic) words, smoke and fog are also native, and labeling opera as English would be inaccurate since its origin is Italian, not English.

## 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](mailto: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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