

AQA A-LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE – LANGUAGE CHANGE PRACTICE TEST (SAMPLE) STUDY GUIDE



SAMPLE STUDY GUIDE WITH LIMITED QUESTIONS

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THE FULL VERSION STUDY GUIDE**

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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. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is best described as which idea?**
 - A. The idea that different languages create different ways of thinking
 - B. The claim that language determines thought
 - C. The belief that all languages share a universal grammar
 - D. The notion that language evolves solely through technology

- 2. According to David Crystal, what primarily drove the spread of English?**
 - A. It was driven by technology alone.
 - B. It was driven by power, not just colonisation.
 - C. It was driven by religious reform.
 - D. It was driven by geographical expansion.

- 3. Which option correctly describes amelioration and pejoration?**
 - A. Amelioration: a word loses meaning; Pejoration: a word gains meaning
 - B. Amelioration: a word gains a more positive meaning; Pejoration: a word gains a more negative meaning
 - C. Amelioration: a word becomes more formal; Pejoration: becomes more informal
 - D. Amelioration: a word broadens in scope; Pejoration: narrows in scope

- 4. Which process describes a sense shift where a word broadens its meanings over time?**
 - A. Semantic narrowing
 - B. Semantic bleaching
 - C. Semantic generalization
 - D. Semantic broadening

- 5. Which statement best captures the view that languages change because people change?**
 - A. All living languages change. They have to. Languages have no existence apart from the people who use them. And because people are changing all the time, their language changes too, to keep up with them. The only languages that don't change are dead ones.
 - B. Languages are fixed and do not change.
 - C. Changes occur randomly with no relation to speakers.
 - D. Changes are always for the better.

6. Which statement about Global English is accurate?

- A. 2.0 billion speakers; most are native
- B. 1.5 billion speakers; 1/4 native; 1/4 L2; 1/2 functional fluency
- C. 500 million speakers; all L2
- D. 100 million speakers; no L2

7. What is a euphemism?

- A. An indirect, less offensive way of saying something that is unpleasant
- B. A word that becomes shorter over time
- C. A word gaining negative meaning
- D. A word gaining positive meaning

8. Which term describes the shortened form of a word produced by clipping, such as "bus" from "omnibus"?

- A. Euphemism
- B. Clipping
- C. Amelioration
- D. Neosemic shift

9. Which is an example of semantic shift in modern English?

- A. Literally used as an intensifier
- B. Literally used to indicate precision
- C. Literally used only in religious texts
- D. Literally never used figuratively

10. What is diachronic corpus linguistics?

- A. A prescriptive approach to grammar instruction.
- B. A method for annotating phonetic features in contemporary speech.
- C. The study of language change over time using large, time-stamped text corpora.
- D. A technique for predicting future language forms using folklore.

Answers

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

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Explanations

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1. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is best described as which idea?

- A. The idea that different languages create different ways of thinking
- B. The claim that language determines thought
- C. The belief that all languages share a universal grammar
- D. The notion that language evolves solely through technology

Language shapes thought and perception. The Sapir-Whorf idea, often called linguistic relativity, suggests that the way a language encodes the world can influence how its speakers notice, categorize, and remember things, leading to different patterns of thinking across cultures. That's why the option that says different languages create different ways of thinking is the best fit here: it reflects the idea of influence rather than a strict, all-determining claim. If we contrast with the other views: claiming language determines thought is a stronger form—linguistic determinism—which the Sapir-Whorf debate generally treats with more nuance, so it's not the standard takeaway. The notion of universal grammar is about an innate shared structure across all languages, not about language shaping thought. And language evolving solely through technology isn't related to how language might influence cognitive processes.

2. According to David Crystal, what primarily drove the spread of English?

- A. It was driven by technology alone.
- B. It was driven by power, not just colonisation.
- C. It was driven by religious reform.
- D. It was driven by geographical expansion.

The central idea is that English spread mainly because of power, not just due to colonisation. David Crystal argues that the language became global because the societies that wielded real influence—economically, politically, and culturally—championed and used it as a tool to participate in international networks. English is the language of global business, science, technology, media, and diplomacy, so people learn it to access those networks and opportunities. Colonisation helped spread English, but the long-term and wide-reaching spread unfolds through the advantage and reach of English-speaking powers, which keeps reinforcing its status even beyond formal colonial ties. Technology and geography can explain some factors, but they don't capture why English becomes the default in so many diverse contexts; religious reform isn't the driving force Crystal identifies.

3. Which option correctly describes amelioration and pejoration?

- A. Amelioration: a word loses meaning; Pejoration: a word gains meaning
- B. Amelioration: a word gains a more positive meaning; Pejoration: a word gains a more negative meaning
- C. Amelioration: a word becomes more formal; Pejoration: becomes more informal
- D. Amelioration: a word broadens in scope; Pejoration: narrows in scope

The idea being tested is how the positive or negative value attached to a word shifts over time. Amelioration is when a word takes on a more positive or favorable sense, sometimes extending to new contexts. Pejoration is the opposite: the word develops a more negative or disapproving sense. Classic examples help make this clear: "nice" once meant foolish, but now means pleasant; "awful" once meant full of awe, but now means terrible. A word like "sick" also shows amelioration when used in slang to mean excellent. So the statement that exactly captures this is that amelioration involves gaining a more positive meaning, while pejoration involves gaining a more negative meaning. Descriptions that talk about losing meaning, or about becoming more formal or about broader/narrower scope, describe different kinds of semantic change and don't capture the specific positive/negative shift these terms describe.

4. Which process describes a sense shift where a word broadens its meanings over time?

- A. Semantic narrowing
- B. Semantic bleaching
- C. Semantic generalization
- D. Semantic broadening**

The main idea being tested is how a word's range of meaning can expand over time—that is, the word starts to cover more things than it did before. This is semantic broadening. It happens when a term takes on new contexts or is extended metaphorically, so its referents grow and the word ends up in more situations than in the past. A classic illustration is broadcast. Originally it meant to scatter seeds widely across a field; now it also means to transmit radio or television signals widely. This shows the sense shift from a narrower set of meanings to a broader one. This differs from semantic bleaching, which would lose descriptive power or detail in a word's meaning rather than add new scope. It also differs from narrowing, where a word's meanings become more restricted. Semantics generalization is sometimes used as a synonym for broadening, but the description "broadens its meanings" aligns most directly with semantic broadening.

5. Which statement best captures the view that languages change because people change?

- A. All living languages change. They have to. Languages have no existence apart from the people who use them. And because people are changing all the time, their language changes too, to keep up with them. The only languages that don't change are dead ones.**
- B. Languages are fixed and do not change.
- C. Changes occur randomly with no relation to speakers.
- D. Changes are always for the better.

The main idea is that language is a social tool that evolves with its speakers. Language exists through use by people, not as a separate, fixed thing; as speakers change—their vocabulary, norms, technology, and ways of communicating—their language shifts to fit those new realities. Because people are continually changing, language changes too, and the only languages that don't change are the ones that are no longer in use. This captures why the view emphasizes a direct link between how people live and how their speech evolves. The other ideas miss that connection: language isn't fixed, change isn't purely random, and it isn't necessarily about getting better—it's about adapting to changing human use.

6. Which statement about Global English is accurate?

- A. 2.0 billion speakers; most are native
- B. 1.5 billion speakers; 1/4 native; 1/4 L2; 1/2 functional fluency**
- C. 500 million speakers; all L2
- D. 100 million speakers; no L2

Global English describes how English functions as a world language, used not only by native speakers but by many non-native users who rely on it as a common means of communication. The best description reflects a total around 1.5 billion speakers, with a mix: roughly a quarter native, about a quarter learned it as a second language, and roughly half using it with functional fluency for everyday tasks. This captures the idea that while there are native speakers, the vast majority of users are non-native and that many engage with English enough to communicate effectively in real-world situations, even if they aren't fully proficient. That broader picture aligns with how English is actually used globally, unlike the other statements which either overemphasize native speakers or underestimate total speakers or ignore the L2 and functional-user reality.

7. What is a euphemism?

- A. An indirect, less offensive way of saying something that is unpleasant**
- B. A word that becomes shorter over time
- C. A word gaining negative meaning
- D. A word gaining positive meaning

Euphemism is a way of talking about something difficult or unpleasant by using a milder or indirect term rather than a blunt word. This makes the statement less shocking or offensive, which is why a description of it as an indirect, less offensive way of saying something unpleasant is exactly right. For example, saying someone "passed away" instead of "died" or "downsized" instead of "fired workers" keeps the tone gentler. The other ideas describe different word processes: a word becoming shorter over time isn't about politeness but compression; a word gaining negative meaning is pejoration; a word gaining positive meaning is amelioration. So euphemism is specifically about softening language to avoid discomfort or offense.

8. Which term describes the shortened form of a word produced by clipping, such as "bus" from "omnibus"?

- A. Euphemism
- B. Clipping**
- C. Amelioration
- D. Neosemic shift

Clipping is the process of shortening a word by cutting off part of it. In the example, "bus" from "omnibus" shows how a longer word is reduced to a shorter, easier form that's commonly used in everyday speech. This kind of shortening happens frequently in English, giving familiar forms such as lab from laboratory or phone from telephone. The other terms describe different kinds of language change that affect meaning rather than length: a euphemism substitutes a milder term, amelioration is a shift to a more favorable meaning, and neosemic shift refers to creating or adopting a new sense for a word. So the correct term for this shortened form is clipping.

9. Which is an example of semantic shift in modern English?

- A. Literally used as an intensifier
- B. Literally used to indicate precision
- C. Literally used only in religious texts
- D. Literally never used figuratively

Semantic shift happens when a word's meaning moves over time. Here, the word literally used to mean something true and exactly in accordance with the letter of the fact. In modern English, it's often used as an emphatic intensifier, even when what's being described isn't literally true. That shift—from a precise truth claim to a broad, non-literal emphasis—illustrates how words evolve with how people actually use them in conversation and writing. So, using literally as an intensifier shows the semantic change clearly. The other possibilities describe different aspects of usage that don't illustrate this shift: indicating precision would keep the old sense, usage restricted to religious texts is a historical note but not a modern shift, and claiming it's never used figuratively is simply inaccurate in contemporary usage.

10. What is diachronic corpus linguistics?

- A. A prescriptive approach to grammar instruction.
- B. A method for annotating phonetic features in contemporary speech.
- C. The study of language change over time using large, time-stamped text corpora.
- D. A technique for predicting future language forms using folklore.

Diachronic corpus linguistics is the study of how language changes over time by analyzing large collections of texts that have dates attached. The idea is to track usage across different periods, measuring how word frequencies, meanings, spellings, and grammatical patterns shift as language evolves. By slicing corpora into time periods, researchers can spot trends, such as words gaining new senses, Moran collocations changing, or syntactic structures becoming more (or less) common. This approach relies on actual historical data rather than intuition, making it possible to observe long-term developments in real usage. It differs from methods that prescribe rules, focus only on sounds in contemporary speech, or try to predict the future from folklore, because it centers on documented changes in language over time using dated texts.

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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