

MA-TESL Comprehensive Exam for January 7, 2014

Instructions for test-takers: This is a “closed book” exam. Thus, you may not use any reference materials while responding; you may not consult notes, books, and/or articles during the examination. If you are writing the examination on the computer, you may not access any additional files or documents that may reside on the computer hard drive or be available through a network, the Internet or any other external website or device, or in your own email.

There are five (5) sections on the test. You must complete **three (3)** of them. All MA-TESL students must take the ESL Foundations and Methods section. MA-TESL students will then **choose two (2)** of the remaining four sections (ESL Curriculum and Program Administration; Second Language Acquisition; Grammar; and Sociolinguistics). PhD students taking the test for screening purposes can answer questions in **any three (3)** sections, but they cannot choose both (a) ESL Foundations and Methods and (b) ESL Curriculum and Program Administration.

You will have **four hours and fifteen minutes** to complete this test. This period includes printing time and any breaks you need to take. You should plan to spend approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes on each section you answer. Each section has two questions, and you must answer both questions. Thus, you should spend approximately 40 minutes per question. Budget your time so that you can quickly review your responses.

Your answers to the questions should be well written, and synthesize relevant knowledge in a coherent and insightful manner. You should include references to specific sources and studies, including current scholarship. We recognize that this test requires rapid written responses, and you should strive to write as clearly and effectively as possible.

- Begin your answer to each question on a new sheet of paper.
- Write the last four (4) digits of your university ID number in the upper right hand corner of each page. (DO NOT write your name on the exam responses.)
- Number your pages.
- Print your responses as you finish each section. Do not wait until you have completed the entire test to begin to print your responses.

Section 1: Foundations and Methods (answer both questions)

1. In discussions of second language acquisition and language teaching, the following terms are often mentioned:

- (1) Interlanguage
- (2) Communicative competence
- (3) Learning styles
- (4) Learning strategies
- (5) Critical Period
- (6) Motivation

Select THREE of these terms. For each one, (a) provide a brief definition that reveals its complexity; (b) explain its significance to the language classroom in general; and (c) discuss how these will inform your teaching of English as a second/foreign language. Include concrete examples to illustrate your points. Refer to relevant literature as appropriate. Be sure to include (a) a brief introduction that tells your reader which three terms you plan to discuss and (b) a brief conclusion to provide some closure to your response.

2. Select TWO (and only two) skill areas, from the following list, that can be integrated in classroom instruction: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Then discuss the two skill areas from the following perspectives:

- a) Briefly identify a teaching situation in which the two skills can be integrated.
- b) Provide a detailed rationale for skill integration in this setting.
- c) Describe the range of teaching techniques and classroom activities that could lead to meaningful skill integration in this setting. Provide an explanation for proposing these specific techniques and activities that demonstrates your understanding of each skill and the needs of L2 learners.

Refer to relevant literature as appropriate. Be sure to include an introduction and conclusion to frame your response.

Section 2: Sociolinguistics (answer both questions)

1. Register comparison/analysis

Read text samples A and B below. Identify 4 or 5 of the most frequent linguistic features found in each one; then compare these two texts, noting two similar linguistic features and two distinctive ones for each. Finally, provide a functional explanation for the similarities and differences observed.

Text A— Excerpt of classroom teaching

Instructor: For today what we need to do is go over your findings for the theories of time and place adverbials. And, talk about if you were gonna write this up, for instance, for a corpus-based mini project, what would it look like, when you write it up? What would you do? And then we'll talk about the lexico grammar chapter. And, then we'll do some lexicogrammatical analysis next class.

[Student raises hand]

Student: OK, the, the, the list that you put on kind of the last overhead from last time, was, I wrote down, association between adverbial and verb.

Instructor: Right.

Student: Um, and-and, that's not the title of what's on the slide. That's one of the items, right?

Instructor: yep.

Student: OK. Is that, was this, list, um, specifically for, the preferred form that, the place time or was it for all of them that - could - that needs to be examined for each of them.

Instructor: This was a list of ideas of factors you might wanna consider if you were running out of ideas.

Text B—Selection from a linguistics textbook

From an articulatory point of view, consonants and vowels are both made by positioning the vocal tract in a particular configuration. However, consonants are distinguished from vowels in that consonants are produced with a constriction somewhere in the vocal tract that impedes airflow, while vowels have at most only a slight narrowing and allow air to flow freely through the oral cavity. We can also distinguish consonants and vowels acoustically, based on the type of sounds they produce: consonants are much quieter than vowels and usually cannot function as the nucleus of a syllable. The syllable nucleus is the “heart” of the syllable, carrying suprasegmental information such as stress, loudness, and pitch, which vowels are much better suited to do than consonants.

2. Major topics in sociolinguistics

Select three different topics from sociolinguistics that have, in your view, provided information of greatest relevance for applied linguistic research or language teaching in a setting where you have taught or might expect to teach. For each topic, identify at least one empirical study; summarize its research focus and findings, and indicate the implications of this research for further research or for language and literacy instruction in the setting envisioned.

Section 3: Grammar (answer both questions)

1. There are numerous structural devices in English that can be used to vary word order. So, for example, adverbial clauses can be placed at the beginning or end of a main clause. The text passage below, from a classroom lecture, illustrates the use of some of these devices. Describe the grammatical characteristics and discourse functions of three of these structural devices, making reference to the text passage. (*Do not include* the placement of adverbial phrases/clauses as one of your devices.) Be sure to include discussion of the discourse functions that influence the choice between grammatical variants.

And if you do sell stocks, then, usually they should give you the money resulting from the transaction, and this is called 'contributed capital' by experts working in the field. The capital is contributed to your company by giving you the money and buying your shares.

[*long pause*] OK. The presentation is over. Close your eyes, because I'm going to turn the light on. OK?

2. Analyze the following sentences using the diagramming system that you are most familiar with. In your diagrams, label the forms, grammatical functions, and word classes of all words and constituents in each sentence.

- a. Usually they should give you the money resulting from the transaction. (Lecture)
- b. The capital is contributed to your company by giving you the money. (Lecture)
- c. So, how do you think he manages to use that approach? (Lecture)
- d. Therefore the company's claim that they improve grades is supported by the evidence. (Lecture)
- e. Knowing what I know about law school, you will probably never get the chance to see things from that other side. (Lecture)

Section 4: Curriculum and Program Administration (answer both questions)

1. Imagine that you have applied for a language program position that has a significant administrative component. As part of the application process, you've been asked to explain your approach to resolving administrative issues that you might face as a program administrator. Of the four dilemmas presented below, choose **three** and state: (1) specific steps that could be taken to resolve the dilemma and (2) a rationale for the steps that you propose. Refer to relevant literature to strengthen your answers. The overall response should include a brief introduction and conclusion.

- The program shows signs of stagnation at curricular, staffing, and technological levels.
- The language program is misunderstood by many constituents both on and off campus.
- The majority of language program faculty consider monthly faculty meetings to be a total waste of time. Yet all would agree that meetings are important for the health of the program.
- The language program wants to articulate more closely with other departments on campus to better meet their needs.

2. The course- and curriculum-development process has been described by many in the field. Consider the case of new course development. What are (a) the steps that course designers should take and (b) the decisions that course designers must make to convert a good idea for a new course into a course ready for implementation? Describe the process, starting with early information gathering and continuing through the piloting or implementation phase. Describe **each** step in detail, referring to relevant literature to strengthen your claims. Make sure to include a brief introduction and conclusion to frame your response.

Section 5: Second Language Acquisition (answer both questions)

1. Input & Interaction

Long's interaction hypothesis (1983, 1996) has led to a number of theoretical propositions and a substantial body of research. Address each of the following three issues in your response to this prompt, focusing on **TWO** of the constructs listed below: 1) Identify and describe the constructs you choose. 2) Explain how these two constructs relate to each other and to language learning more generally, both in theory and as described in results found in the empirical literature. And 3) Discuss how the interactionist tradition of SLA has contributed to L2 pedagogy both generally and with respect to the two constructs you've chosen.

negotiation of meaning
negotiation of form
feedback
modified/comprehensible input
(pushed) output
noticing

2. L2 Vocabulary Development

Much like other areas of SLA (e.g., L2 morphosyntax), lexical development involves the interplay of learner internal, learner external (i.e., environmental), and linguistic variables. In your response to this question, describe (a) the different types of lexical knowledge learners might have, (b) the process by which vocabulary knowledge develops, considering the different types of internal, external, and linguistic variables involved, and (c) the pedagogical implications of research on L2 vocabulary development. Refer to relevant studies as necessary.