

## MA-TESL Comprehensive Exam

**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 you 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, yet 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 I: Foundations and Methods (2 parts – Answer both questions)**

1. In discussions of English as a second/foreign language teaching and learning, the following terms are often mentioned:

- (1) Motivation
- (2) Communicative Competence
- (3) Zone of Proximal Development
- (4) Learning strategies
- (5) Noticing
- (6) A postmethod era

Select **THREE** of these terms. For each, (a) provide a brief definition that reveals its breadth and complexity; (b) explain its significance to the language classroom in general; and (c) describe how these concepts will influence your teaching of English as a second/foreign language.

Strengthen your response with concrete examples. Where appropriate, refer to relevant literature. Be sure to include a brief introduction, in which you identify the three terms that will be discussed in your response, and a conclusion.

2. Select TWO (and only two) skills that can be integrated in classroom instruction from the following list: 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 rationale for skill integration in this setting.
- c) Describe in detail the range of teaching techniques and classroom activities that could lead to both meaningful skill integration and discrete skill development 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 to add support to your response. Frame your response with a proper (and brief) introduction and conclusion. In your introduction, be sure to identify the two skills that you plan to discuss.

**Section II: Curriculum and Program Administration (2 parts — Answer both questions)**

1. Imagine that you are applying for a position in a language program that involves curriculum-development responsibilities. During a conversation with program personnel, you learn that the program has just completed a self-study and that faculty and administrators now agree that the current curriculum, in place for over a decade, no longer meets students' needs.

As part of your job application, you are asked to submit a statement that details the steps that the program should take to revise its curriculum. Write a statement, providing as much detail as possible, for each step in the curriculum-renewal process. Provide a rationale, pose questions that should be asked, introduce options that might be considered, and propose decisions that will need to be made. Refer to relevant literature, when appropriate.

2. Many MA TESL graduates assume leadership positions in their early years of full-time employment. Examples include chair of a textbook selection committee, an assessment team, a program accreditation subcommittee, a guest speaker committee, a curriculum renewal committee, or a course-articulation committee.

Imagine that you have been asked to serve as chair of one such committee. What principles of leadership can you draw from the language program administration literature that will guide you in serving effectively? Identify at least FIVE principles. For each principle, explain how you will translate it into practice and why it is important for a person in a leadership position.

Be sure to include a brief introduction and conclusion in your response. And cite relevant sources to strengthen your response.

### Section III: Sociolinguistics (2 parts – Answer both questions)

1. Read the transcript of classroom interaction below. Then (a) explain how the interaction is structured by identifying at least three (3) interactional features associated with the register represented; (b) compare and contrast these features with three (3) features of everyday conversation; and (c) comment briefly on the social roles that account for the differences observed in the classroom discourse.

(T = teacher; S = student)

- 1 T: Where was the picture taken? Yes, please?
- 2 S1: In the airplane.
- 3 T: In the airplane. Good, yes, in the airplane.
- 4 T: Now, second question. What do we call this man in the white shirt? Yes please?
- 5 S2: The . . .
- 6 T: Just one word is enough.
- 7 S2: Pilot.
- 8 T: Pilot. Yes. The pilot.
- 9 T: Now what is this other man holding? Yes, please?
- 10 S3: A pistol.
- 11 T: A pistol. Right.

2. What has variation research shown about gender-related differences in speech? In your response, (a) summarize at least three studies that have dealt with this area; (b) explain their findings; and (c) note at least two possible implications for either 1) language teaching OR 2) further empirical research in this area.

## Section IV: Grammar (2 parts — Answer both questions)

**Part I:** A register perspective on language use has pointed to many grammatical differences between face-to-face conversation and informational writing. Describe the types of grammatical structures that are typical of conversation versus the types of grammatical structures that are typical of informational writing. In your response, identify at least five grammatical features that are especially common in conversation, and at least five grammatical features that are especially common in informational writing. Provide examples for each of those grammatical features from Text Excerpts 1 and 2 below.

### 1. Conversation:

Sandra: Does my hair look okay or should I brush it before I leave? Does it need brushing?

Sally: You can use my brush in the car. You know you don't have to worry about your hair like I do. Oh, excuse me if I bumped into you there.

Sandra: No problem.

Sally: Hey, I should give you my Mom and Dad's number. It's nineteen seventy nine.

Sandra: Oh forget it. I won't remember that, when we get back to my house.

Sally: You don't know anybody who was born in nineteen seventy nine?

Sandra: Well, I guess I won't forget that. That's pretty easy.

Sally: Now help me with Torca. While we're driving if he sees another dog and he barks, I wanna really whomp him.

Sandra: How am I gonna whomp him?

Sally: I'm gonna show you how.

### 2. Science News Article:

The first dinosaur fossil discovered in Norway is also the deepest one that has been found anywhere in the world. The 195-210-million-year-old specimen was found 2.3km (1.4 miles) below the floor of the North Sea by an offshore oil drilling platform.

Norwegian paleontologist Jorn Harald Hurum, from the University of Oslo, identified the fossil as the knucklebone of a plateosaur. Details of the discovery are to appear in the Norwegian Journal of Geology. Marine reptile fossils have been found in some previous North Sea drill cores, but to find a terrestrial animal at such a depth is rare. The crushed knucklebone was identified in a long cylinder of rock drilled out from an exploration well at Norway's Snorre offshore field.

**Part II.** 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.

1. You know you don't have to worry about your hair.
2. The first dinosaur fossil discovered in Norway is also the deepest one that has been found anywhere in the world.
3. What did you call it?
4. It is amazing that there are so many ways to be personally in touch with what's happening in the world.
5. Having the girls along made it a blessing in disguise.

**Section V: Second Language Acquisition (2 parts — Answer both questions)**

1. Long's interaction hypothesis (1983, 1996) has led to a number of theoretical propositions and a substantial body of research. Focus on **TWO** of the constructs listed below. For each construct, address each of the following **THREE** issues in your response: (a) Identify and describe the constructs you choose. (b) 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 (c) 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. A number of individual differences have been studied in SLA. Choose and identify **TWO** individual differences (other than age), and then address the **THREE** points below for each:

- (a) describe the theoretical rationale(s) that justify its connection to second language learning along with the predictions of theory;
- (b) explain what empirical research has shown with respect to the predictions of theory; and
- (c) discuss its pedagogical implications based on theory and empirical research.