

MA-TESL Comprehensive Exam for January 7, 2013

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 ESL Foundations and Methods and 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 I: Foundations and Methods (2 parts — Answer both questions)

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

- Critical period
- Input/intake
- Attention/noticing
- Communicative competence
- Affective factors
- Learning styles
- Communicative competence

Select THREE of the EIGHT terms listed. For each one selected, (a) provide a brief definition of the term, (b) explain its significance to and implications for the language classroom, and (c) describe how these factors will inform your teaching of English as a second/foreign language. Include concrete examples to illustrate your points. Refer to relevant literature when appropriate.

2. In discussions of language teaching and skills instruction, English language teaching professionals debate the best ways to promote skill mastery. Describe what you perceive to be the most desirable approach to teaching TWO of the four skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing). For EACH of the two skills that you chose, provide the following: (1) a discussion of the complex nature of the targeted skill, (2) a description of strategies you would teach to help ESL/EFL students, (3) at least one example of specific instructional activities that could be used. Refer to relevant literature, where appropriate, to strengthen your claims.

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

1. Vibrant language programs are always experiencing changes (and sometimes innovations), in response to new student populations, increases or decreases in enrollments, trends in the field, research findings, external mandates, textbook publications, improved technology, and new hires, etc.

Identify FOUR distinct administrative roles that a language program administrator can play in facilitating change and innovation. Explain each role in detail, in addition to (a) the types of changes and innovations that it may bring about and (b) the influence it may have on different program elements (e.g., students, faculty, staff, course offerings, curricula, facilities). Make reference to pertinent literature, where appropriate.

Be sure to include a brief opening paragraph that identifies the four administrative roles that you plan to discuss in relation to change and innovation. In your closing paragraph, provide a summation statement.

2. The curriculum development and renewal process involves multiple steps, including (a) needs and situation analyses, (b) specification of goals and objectives, (c) determination and specification of the most appropriate syllabus frameworks, (d) designation of course content, (e) development of syllabi, and (e) formulation of ongoing evaluation strategies.

Choose THREE steps from those listed above and describe what they might entail in detail and how they are related to one another. Refer to the literature, when appropriate, to support your response.

Be sure to include a brief opening paragraph that identifies the three curriculum development steps that you plan to discuss. In your closing paragraph, provide a summation statement.

Section III: Sociolinguistics (2 parts — Answer both questions)

1. Linguistic variation is the cover term for changes in linguistic form associated with a non-linguistic parameter. Identify 3 or 4 non-linguistic parameters that have been studied as influences on dialect variation. For each parameter, describe two specific studies; identify the researcher who carried out the studies; and summarize the major patterns of dialect variation documented in each study.
2. The following extract exemplifies a service encounter in the university Bursar's Office. (A student is paying her fees to the clerk in the office.) The two speakers are identified by their roles in the interaction. Compare/contrast the situational and linguistic characteristics of this service encounter with the characteristics of typical face-to-face conversations. In your response, identify 2 or 3 linguistic features that are more common in service encounters than in conversations, illustrate those features from the sample text below, and discuss the functional motivations for reliance on those features in service encounters.

Clerk: hello

Student: hi. I need to pay this.

Clerk: OK. [types on keyboard] seven oh eight [. . .] OK it's going to take a just a minute for that to go through. . . . alright

[printer sounds]

Clerk: OK it declined on that.

Student: it declined? Oh well then use this.

Clerk: OK . . . OK try that

[printer sounds]

Student: it's probably too big a withdrawal.

Clerk: well yeah and uh bank cards sometimes they have a limit of like five hundred or whatever so

Student: yeah

[printer sounds]

Clerk: OK go ahead and sign that for me.

[printer sounds]

Clerk: there you go.

Student: thanks

Clerk: have a good day

Student: you too

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

1. Individual Differences

A number of individual differences (IDs) have been studied in SLA. Choose and identify TWO, and then address the three points below for each:

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

2. Instructed SLA

Many researchers undertake second language acquisition research in order to derive implications for language teaching. Citing relevant literature,

- explain a theory or model of language development that includes input, interaction, and output;
- explain at least two research projects that tested aspects of this theoretical approach;
- discuss the proposed recommendations for pedagogy; and
- evaluate the viability of implementing such recommendations in classroom teaching or syllabus design.

Section V: Grammar (2 parts — Answer both questions)

1. There are numerous structural devices in English that can be used to vary word order, and the underlined parts of the sentences below illustrate the use of some of these devices. Describe the grammatical characteristics and discourse functions of three of these structural devices, making reference to the relevant example sentences (below) in your response. (*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.

- a. Of course, the big issue is your opposition to the war in Iraq, and you've pointed it out again today.
- b. Mr. Alexander, however, is not terrorized. As the conversation meanders along, he points out that about 93 percent of the funding for public schools now comes from state and local governments, and he says this must continue to be the case.
- c. That was the guy I was working with. I gave him a copy of the report I was working on, and then we met last week.
- d. The Jimmy Carter campaign gave donations to black ministers who supported him in the California primary.
- e. Yeah, well, I just don't know how Claire has managed to be so happy. That she put up with his nagging for all those years is just amazing to me.
- f. It is amazing that one sector of the water industry has been treated so favorably for all these years.
- g. After the deposition, Mr. Ashton was approached by a group of irate investors who had just learned about the proposed settlement.

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. What you should do is to write down all the ways that the variable X could be equal to two.
- b. What was the first thing that you had to do?
- c. Furthermore, differences in the scoring of osteoarthritis are a strong indication that mechanical factors played an important role.
- d. After determining if the changes could be mechanically induced, the patterns should be reconsidered to determine the range of activities included in the sample.
- e. This is not to suggest that osteoarthritis of the peripheral margin means the subject had to be a fruit picker.

V. Sociolinguistics (two questions; answer both)

1. Identify four (4) linguistic characteristics of Sports Announcer Talk (SAT), then describe the similarities and differences between this register and other types of everyday conversation. Note the functional motivations for the differences observed in SAT, citing literature as appropriate.

2. Briefly summarize previous research on World Englishes, including discussion of how these varieties develop and the present-day differences among World English varieties and citing related literature. In your discussion, identify and give examples of at least three linguistic systems that may be affected during the development of any variety of World English. Comment on the relevance of knowledge about World Englishes for postsecondary teachers and learners of English as a second or foreign language in the US, Singapore, and China.