**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 sections on the test. You must complete threeof them.

* All MA-TESL students must take the ESL Foundations and Methods section. MA-TESL students will then choosetwo 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 threesections, 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 should 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. The following concepts are important in understanding English as a second/foreign language learning and teaching:

(1) Corrective Feedback

(2) Motivation

(3) Learning Styles

(4) Communicative Competence

(5) Critical Period Hypothesis

(6) Zone of Proximal Development

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

2. Choose a setting for second/foreign language instruction and briefly describe the location, institution, students, and their proficiency levels. Assume that you have been called in to develop a language-teaching curriculum oriented around the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). In this context of your choice, focus on any TWO skills and provide the following for EACH of the two skills you chose:

• a discussion of the complex nature of the targeted skill

• detailed explanations and examples of how instruction would be carried out effectively.

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

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

1. Imagine that you have just been hired in a language program that endorses, at most of its levels of instruction, a grammar-based approach. Faculty and student discontent have inspired program administrators and faculty to rethink the curriculum. You have been hired specifically to assist them in the curriculum-renewal process.

What are the steps that you would take as part of the curriculum-renewal process? For each step, describe the process in detail, providing a rationale for the step, a description of the actions that would you take, and a discussion of considerations that might come to play. Refer to relevant literature when appropriate.

1. Language program administrators often find themselves with responsibilities that fall into the following areas: (a) faculty empowerment, faculty burn out, faculty development; (b) outreach on campus and off campus; (c) advocacy of students, faculty, and curriculum; and (d) oversight of the meetings, grants, and technology.

Select ONE of these four areas of responsibility: (a), (b), (c), or (d). With this area of responsibility as your focal point, answer the following questions, making reference to the literature when appropriate.

1. What administrative issues are likely to emerge for this area of responsibility?
2. What principles of effective language program administration can guide the administrator in dealing with the issues that are likely to emerge?
3. What roles should the administrator play to address these administrative responsibilities?

**Section III: Sociolinguistics (answer both questions)**

1. Survey the major external (i.e., non-linguistic) parameters that have been used to study patterns of linguistic variation in sociolinguistics. Include discussion of social, regional, and situational characteristics.

Then, choose three different social variables for more detailed discussion. For each variable, summarize two empirical studies that have investigated sociolinguistic variation across social categories (referring to researchers by last name and date). Include discussions of the external (i.e., non-linguistic) characteristics that were studied, as well as a description of the patterns of linguistic variation.

1. Examine the following excerpt from a conversational interaction between a cashier and a customer in a university bookstore. Analyze the conversational features observed and relate them to the register reflected in the excerpt. Describe the situational characteristics of this register; identify three linguistic features that are especially typical of the register; and describe functional reasons for the prevalence of those features in this register. In addition, describe any genre characteristics that you notice in this text excerpt. Finally, discuss ways in which this interaction is similar to – and different from – everyday face-to-face conversations between friends.

1: I can help you . . hello.

2: You take Visa don't you?

1: Yep. Sure do.

2: I started only getting a couple of hats and then I thought well if I do that.

1: Mhm.

2: Not happy but.

1: Fifty three seventy five is your total.

1: You need to sign that.

1: Uh oh. Somebody trying to sneak out with clothes.

2: That's not good.

1: No.

2: What is that, twenty five percent on my next visit?

[laughter]

1: No you only get those coupons on Fridays.

1: Your receipt's in the bag.

2: Thank you.