**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 Foundations and Methods section. MA-TESL students will then choosetwo of the remaining four sections (Curriculum and Program Administration; Sociolinguistics; Second Language Acquisition; and Grammar).
* PhD students taking the test for screening purposes can answer questions in any two of the following sections: Sociolinguistics, Grammar, Second Language Acquisition.

MA-TESL students will have **four hours and fifteen minutes** and PhD students will have **two hours and fifty-five minutes** to have 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 Strategies
4. Communicative Competence
5. Autonomy
6. Zone of Proximal Development
7. Aptitude

Select **THREE** of these terms. For each one, (a) define it to show its breadth and complexity; (b) explain its significance for language learning in general; and (c) discuss how such concepts can be incorporated into the teaching of English as a second/foreign language. Include concrete examples for each term 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 model 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 and explanations of how instruction would be carried out effectively.
* in your discussion, include descriptions about how a pre-, during-, and post- instructional format can assist students in mastering the skill,
* and detailed examples of activities at each point in the lesson (pre, during, and post)

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 for a language program position with both teaching and administrative responsibilities. As part of your administrative duties, you’ll be chairing two important committees: A) the ESL Resource Center Committee and B) the Faculty Professional Development Committee. For both committees, you anticipate some of these typical administrative activities:

* Planning and running committee meetings
* Delegating responsibilities
* Inspiring innovation among committee members
* Empowering committee members
* Making decisions and negotiating
* Managing your time (and the time of the committees)

From this bulleted list, choose the THREE (3) administrative activities that you think will prove most challenging for you in your capacity as Chair of both committees. For each activity, explain (a) its importance from an administrative and program-wide perspective, (b) the challenges that you anticipate, and (c) possible actions that you can take to turn the administrative challenges into positive opportunities for program and faculty growth. Refer to the literature to support your ideas.

Include a brief opening paragraph that identifies the three administrative activities that you plan to discuss. In your closing paragraph, provide a summation statement.

2. Imagine that you are a language program administrator. You have just returned from a TESOL convention where you attended numerous sessions on language program administration. During those sessions, you gained insights into some of the challenges that you are currently facing. You’ve returned to your home institution determined to do the following: (a) inspire innovation among faculty, (b) reinvigorate burnt out faculty, (c) initiate strategic planning, (d) become a better advocate of language program students and faculty, (e) improve perceptions of the academic legitimacy of your program, and (f) improve outreach with other campus and community entities.

Select **FOUR** of these areas for immediate attention. In your opening paragraph, identify the challenges that you are going to focus on. Provide a rationale for your decision to pursue each area, and then describe the steps and actions that you might take to bring about each of these programmatic changes. Refer to relevant literature when applicable.

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

1. Write an essay that explains how register variation is related to the field of sociolinguistics. In your answer, define register variation and discuss the methods that have been used to define registers. Then, compare register variation to other approaches to sociolinguistic investigation that are concerned with linguistic variation.
2. Consider the following excerpt of interactional discourse (adapted from MICASE), which takes place between a teacher (T) and a student (S) during office hours. Using the excerpt below:
3. Describe some situational characteristics of an office hour setting; identify at least three linguistic features in the sample below; provide a functional reason for the occurrence of the features you have identified.
4. Discuss the similarities and differences between the office hour text and the conversational register described in Deborah Tannen’s Thanksgiving Dinner study or in any other sociolinguistic research you know that describes the conversational register.

T: actually this is good too.

S: okay so how 'bout, we do something like this?

T: you know what? I don't think you should decide yet. I think this week is a- is perfect timing, the lectures this week are perfect timing for you and I think you should listen on Tuesday and Thursday

S: okay

T: because I think uh I I think it'll just, really fall into place for you but, uh some of the things that I’ve out- um highlighted today, um... you're ready

S: okay

T: you're ready. uh I wanted to talk to you about um... did you, work on your node diagram?

S: oh, a little bit, not too much

(…)

T: well then, I’m gonna give you some homework <LAUGH> I think it would be really, helpful and um, if you have trouble with it I think, it would be great for you to make an appointment with Professor Olsen

S: oh I don't think I’ll have a problem with it it just\_ I don't know there's other things I’m just working on right now.

T: yeah? I think it would go\_ it would, blend nicely, and really help you along this way so with the node diagram and with the two lectures this week, I think it'll really help you shake out, a nice introduction, um, okay so

S: well the, the one thing I was thinking of if I go into the node diagram,

T: mhm

S: I basically figured that i would have to throw out, numerous

T: no i don't mean it goes in your paper.

**Section IV: Second Language Acquisition (answer both questions)**

1. Questions pertaining to the effects of instruction are central to the applications of L2 theory and research. Write one major goal that this line of research has addressed. Then, citing relevant studies, explain the following:
2. What aspect of instructed SLA are the researchers interested in?
3. What type(s) of instruction/approach was involved?
4. What different areas of L2 knowledge/ability were targeted?
5. What have the findings to date shown regarding this question?

2. A great deal of SLA research has sought to describe interlanguage development. In your response to this question, first define interlanguage. Then, describe one specific area of interlanguage development (morphosyntax, pragmatic, phonology, or a specific linguistic target (e.g., question formation, negation, tense/aspect) and discuss the challenges that researchers face in this line of inquiry. Cite relevant studies to support your answers

**Section V: Grammar (answer both questions)**

1. Verbs can be grouped into verb types, or 'valencies' (e.g., intransitive, monotransitive). The valency type specifies the obligatory elements that occur with a verb. Identify the possible valency types of verbs in English, describing the defining criteria for each valency. Also discuss the range of variants that can fulfil the functions specified by the valency of the verb. In many cases, a single verb can occur with different valencies in different clauses. Identify and illustrate specific verbs that can function as multiple types. Then, give a brief account of how to deal with elements in the sentence that are NOT required by the valency of the verb.
2. Draw a fully-specified\* tree diagram for each of the sentences in (i) – (vi) below. If anything is controversial, also include brief justification for your analysis.
3. To tell the truth, we failed to turn the engine off so the battery was dead.
4. What has this book taught us about the thoughts expressed in the column on societal norms?
5. If Liza starts asking questions, maybe he will appear.
6. They said that they thought it was funny that she was departing so late.
7. Larry waited until the guy had placed the phone on the large side table.

\*fully-specified: where applicable, include information about the phrase type, syntactic function, verb valency pattern, voice.