MA-TESL Comprehensive Exam for January 6, 2015

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

Section I: Foundations and Methods (2 questions, answer both)

1. Individual differences play a key role in second language learning. Among individual differences are (a) personality, (b) motivation, (c) attitudes, (d) learning styles, (e) learning strategies, and (f) aptitude. Select and explain THREE of these individual differences in detail. For each one, (a) provide a brief definition and (b) describe how these individual-difference factors will inform and influence your teaching of English as a second/foreign language. Give specific examples in your explanation.

Refer to relevant literature as appropriate. Frame your response with a proper (and brief) introduction and conclusion. In your introduction, be sure to identify the three individual differences that you plan to discuss.

2. Imagine that you have been hired for a language teaching job in a well-established, but rather traditional, EFL program that centers much its instruction around grammar teaching. The program's administrators and most of its teachers believe that explicit instruction in the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) is not important because students learn the skills by simply using them (i.e., students learn to read by reading, students learn to speak by speaking).

Knowing what you know about language learning, you want to change the program's traditional orientation to a more explicit skills-based orientation and guide your colleagues in restructuring their curriculum. Describe what you perceive to be the most desirable approach to teaching TWO of the four skills: Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing. For EACH skill, describe the following: (a) the complex nature of the targeted skill, (b) sub-skills covered, (c) effective classroom activity types, and (d) the characteristics of an ideal textbook that could be used to teach each of the two skills.

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: Grammar (2 questions, answer both)

Consider the following five sentences:

1. Jones said he had <u>asked for</u> permission to see the flight deck.
2. It has given me time to <u>sort out</u> my priorities.
3. They told them to <u>make up</u> and <u>talk to</u> each other.
4. I <u>looked at</u> that and thought it would be nice.
5. I <u>went to</u> Eddie's girl's house to <u>get back</u> my wool plaid shirt.

1. Draw tree diagrams to analyze all five sentences.   In your diagrams, label the structures, grammatical functions, and word classes of all words and constituents in each sentence.

2. Identify and illustrate the major types of multi-word lexical verbs in English. Explain the structural tests that can be used to distinguish among the types. Include discussion of the underlined words in Sentences 1-5 above.

Section III: Sociolinguistics (2 questions, answer both)

1. Discuss the differences between the concepts of register and communicative style. Include a more detailed description of ONE register and ONE conversational style. For the register description, you should 1) identify 3-4 linguistic features that are especially characteristic of the register, and 2) describe the functional relationship between those linguistic features and the situational context of the register. For the conversational style description, you should 1) identify 3-4 linguistic features that are especially characteristic of the style, and 2) describe the groups of speakers who employ the style.

2. Discuss the nature of linguistic variation in World Englishes. In your response, identify at least three World English varieties, and discuss some of the distinctive linguistic characteristics of each one (phonological, grammatical, syntactic, or lexical). Address the implications of such differences for English language instruction and teacher training.

Section IV: Curriculum and Program Administration (2 questions, answer both)

1. Course and curriculum development processes are inherently multifaceted. Consider the case of new course development. **Briefly** describe the context for this new course, then address the following points. What are the steps that course designers should take to convert a good idea for a new course to actual course implementation? Describe the process in detail, starting with early information gathering and continuing through the piloting phase. Describe <u>each</u> step in detail, referring to relevant literature to strengthen your claims. Be sure to frame your response with a brief introduction and conclusion.

2. Imagine that you are a language program administrator. You have just returned from an interesting three-week trip during which you have visited several other language programs to gather ideas for improving your program. You have decided that you want to (a) inspire innovation among faculty, (b) reinvigorate burnt out faculty, (c) initiate strategic planning, (d) become a better advocate of 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 (a-f) for immediate attention. Provide a rationale for your decision to pursue each area, and then describe the steps that you might take to bring about each of these programmatic changes. Refer to relevant literature when applicable.

Be sure to include a brief opening paragraph that identifies the FOUR target administrative activities that you plan to discuss. In your closing paragraph, provide a summation statement.

Section V: Second Language Acquisition (2 questions, answer both)

1. 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/or output;
- explain at least two studies that tested aspects of this theoretical approach, discussing the proposed recommendations for pedagogy; and
- evaluate the viability of implementing such recommendations in classroom teaching or syllabus design.

2. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) has led to a long-standing yet contentious line of research in SLA. Define the CPH and then cite two opposing positions related to the CPH. For each position, describe what research on age from both empirical and theoretical papers has shown. For each position, discuss implications of the CPH to educational policy and practice.