# MA-TESL Comprehensive Exam for January 12, 2016

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 Sociolinquistics).
- 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 each question on a

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

- 1. Numerous concepts are important in understanding English as a second/foreign language learning and teaching, including:
  - (1) Learning Strategies
  - (2) Motivation
  - (3) Learning Styles
  - (4) Communicative Competence
  - (5) Critical Period Hypothesis
  - (6) Zone of Proximal Development
  - (7) Noticing

Select THREE of these terms. For each one, (a) define it to show its breath and complexity; (b) explain its significance for language learning in general; and (c) discuss how such concepts can be incorporated into teaching of 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. Nowadays, teachers have access to new instructional materials (e.g., textbooks, Web sites, CDs) and new technologies (e.g., video, software, podcasts, email) that can be used to enhance their teaching of the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Assume that you have been hired to develop a state-of-the-art course that focuses on two skills. In a short introductory paragraph, briefly identify the two skills of your choice and describe the instructional setting (i.e., ESL/EFL, age of learners, learner's proficiency levels, and major goals and objectives).

Then identify the range of materials and/or technologies that you will use to promote student improvement in the <u>two</u> target skills. Provide a rationale for your selections and the ways in which each type of material and/or technology will be used to accomplish your goals and objectives for each skill area. In your discussion of each skill, make clear the complex nature of the skill and how a pre-, during-, and post-instructional format can assist students in mastering the skill. Identify the limitations of the materia(I)0.2 5s(e) 0.2 0 0 Tm /TT1pn.2 tihe(r6.0 3BT 50 0 0256898.

# Section II: Grammar (2 questions, answer both)

1. Analyze the following

# **Section III: Sociolinguistics (2 questions, answer both)**

- 1. Discuss the difference between the concepts of register (e.g., Sports Announcer Talk) and communicative style (e.g. New York Jewish conversational style). Identify two registers and two communicative styles studied to date; list three linguistic features typical of each of these, and specify the functional motivation for their occurrence.
- 2. Examine the two excerpts below. Identify four linguistic characteristics on which they differ, and explain the reasons for the differences.

Sample A: Biology textbook

Migration, thus, is not an easy out; but for many bird species there is no alternative. Physical or

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

- 1. Consider the interface between language program administration and curriculum planning in a language teaching institution.
  - a. How and why do language program administration and curriculum planning fit together in language programs?
  - b. Identify THREE different roles that a language program administrator can play in overseeing a vibrant, current, and meaningful curriculum. Describe those roles in detail, explaining how an administrator's decisions can affect curriculum development, curriculum implementation, and faculty morale.

Refer to relevant literature when appropriate.

2. One of the major emphases in English language teaching today is English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In response to such emphases, language programs with ESP student populations oftentimes work diligently to convert some segments of their English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curricula into curricula with more of a focus on ESP.

Explain how language programs might facilitate such a curricular conversion. What steps might be taken? What purposes might those steps serve, taking into consideration the different needs of EAP and ESP students? Give specific examples to illustrate your points.

Refer to relevant literature when appropriate.

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

- 1. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) has led to a long-standing yet contentious line of research in SLA. Define the CPH. Then, cite two opposing positions related to the CPH; describe both theoretical rationales and empirical research used to justify each position. Finally, again for each position, discuss implications of the CPH to educational policy and practice. Refer to relevant studies as necessary.
- 2. Much like other areas of SLA (e.g., L2 morphosyntax), lexical development involves the interplay of different factors. Describe different types of lexical knowledge learners might have. Then, explain how vocabulary knowledge develops, considering the effects of 3 different types of variables—internal (