MA TESL Comprehensive Exam - January 2012

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

1. To promote L2 acquisition, the following methods/approaches have been developed.

   Audio-lingual Method
   Direct Method
   Total Physical Response (TPR)
   Task-based Language Teaching
   Content-based Instruction
   Communicative Language Teaching

   Choose any TWO of the methods listed above. For each one selected, (a) describe the typical types of classroom activities often used for learners, (b) explain the learning principles underlying these classroom activities, and (c) discuss advantages/disadvantages of each of the selected methods in terms of learners’ language skill developments and classroom implications. Refer to relevant literature in your response.

2. In discussions of language teaching and skills instruction, English language teaching professionals debate the best way to promote skill mastery. Although language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) are rarely separated from one another in real life, many language programs often teach these skills independently.

   Assume that you have been hired to develop a state-of-art course that focuses on TWO skill areas. In a short introductory paragraph, identify the TWO skills that you will target and describe the instructional setting of choice (i.e., location, age of learners, proficiency levels, and objectives). Provide a rationale for integrating the TWO target skills in an ESL/EFL setting of your choice. Explain how you would integrate the skills in a way that shows your full understanding of the complexity of each skill and the benefits of integrating them. Be sure to include concrete examples of instructional activities that could be used for each skill development. Refer to the literature to support your response.

Section II. Curriculum and Program Administration (2 questions, answer both)

1. You are the language program administrator (LPA) at an American university. You have been asked to plan an academic English language program for an in-coming group of international students with low intermediate English skills. Your needs analysis has determined that the students are motivated and have an even profile of language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing and grammar) for this level.

   In your response, address the following aspects of your program: a) Briefly describe some of the situational factors that you might consider; b) Describe the type of syllabus that you would use and include a rationale for this selection; and c) describe how your choice of syllabus reflects learner and teacher roles. Refer to related literature.

2. Christison and Stoller (1997 & 2010) describe four roles that language program administrators must carry out: Leader; Promoter; Organizer; and Visionary. Select two of these roles and provide a thorough description of the role and how it is realized in an IEP.
Section III. Sociolinguistics (2 questions; answer both)

1. Identify and describe FIVE (5) linguistic or structural characteristics of conversation in American English. Include discussion of at least TWO (2) of these characteristics that can vary across linguistic and cultural groups. For these two, describe the differences for at least one other linguistic/cultural group, and discuss how these differences can present difficulties for L2 speakers of English. Refer to related literature in your response.

2. How has sociolinguistic research contributed to the understanding of success and failure among “disadvantaged” groups? What information has sociolinguistic research provided that may be relevant to improved language and literacy instruction for students from such groups? Refer to related literature in your response.

Section IV. Grammar (2 questions; answer both)

1) Describe the syntactic and semantic differences between that restrictive relative clauses and that noun complement clauses. Give specific examples to illustrate the differences.

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. One of the things I want to do is to sort through our books.
   b. That is why the issue needs to be evaluated for its classroom validity.
   c. Furthermore, differences in the scoring of osteoarthritis are a strong indication that mechanical factors played an important role in the decline.
   d. To be European in Italy is a logical extension of what is already assumed to be one’s natural multiple identities.
   e. This is the second year in a row that the opposition leader has claimed to be too busy to talk to the boisterous crew.

Section V. Second Language Acquisition (2 questions; answer both)

1. Instructed SLA

Questions pertaining to the effects of instruction are central to the applications of L2 theory and research. Write out two (2) questions this line of research has addressed. For each question, explain what the findings to date have shown regarding the relationship between L2 instruction and L2 learning. Be sure to discuss major approaches/types of instruction and different areas of L2 knowledge/ability, citing both seminal and current studies.

2. Age/CPH

The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) has led to a long-standing and polemic line of research in SLA. Define the CPH and the controversy surrounding it, citing two different positions. For each of these positions, describe what the accumulated research on age has shown with support from both empirical and theoretical/position papers. Discuss implications of findings related to the CPH to L2 policy and practice.