

Department of Linguistics

MATESL Program, Master's Thesis

The Master's thesis is an opportunity for highly qualified students to carry out specialized research to fulfill a part of the requirements for the MATESL degree. Standards of excellence will be applied to the work of those undertaking a Master's thesis.

Qualifications

In order to qualify for the Master's thesis, a student must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- Completion of at least 16 hours in the MATESL program (excluding curriculum prerequisites)
- Residence of at least one full semester in Linguistics
- At least a 3.75 GPA upon entering step 2 below.

Procedures

The following procedures describe the responsibilities, in their proper order, of:

- a student who meets the above qualifications and wishes to undertake a Master's thesis,
 - the Thesis Director and the Thesis Committee, and
 - the Graduate Services staff.
1. The student first secures the consent of a MATESL faculty member to serve as the Thesis Director. The director must be a MATESL faculty member with graduate standing. They are strongly urged not to move too far into the development of their thesis until they have a director. Failure to find a director at the outset can result in a great deal of wasted time, should it prove impossible to find someone who will act in that capacity. At this point, the Thesis Director and student begin to keep a record of the student's progress through the Master's thesis process by using the MATESL Thesis Checklist obtained from the Linguistics website.
 2. The student, in consultation with the Thesis Director, will then seek an additional faculty member to serve with the Thesis Director as a Thesis Committee. This faculty member may be in another department, if desirable. The committee may consist of other members. They, however, play an advisory and consultative role and not an official role on the committee. In consultation with the Committee, the student will devise an informal written proposal of the research to be undertaken.
 3. The student prepares a formal, written thesis proposal in consultation with the Thesis Committee and in accordance with specifications in Appendix 1. Upon its completion, the proposal is presented and defended before the Thesis Committee. If the Thesis Committee does not approve the proposal, the student will then follow one of three courses of action:
 - rewrite or revise the existing proposal only if the Thesis Committee so recommends;
 - attempt an entirely new proposal, possibly with a different committee;
 - discontinue work toward a Master's thesis.

4. After the student has received the Thesis Committee's approval of the proposal, the Thesis Director submits to the Graduate Services staff a thesis abstract prepared by the student then updates the student's MATESL Thesis Checklist.
5. The student then, in consultation with the Thesis Committee, proceeds with the research. The student must enroll in EIL 599, Thesis Research (0-8 hours), for at least one semester (but for no more than 8 hours) between the approval of the proposal and the successful completion of the oral examination. The student receives a grade of DF (deferred) for EIL 599 until such time as the thesis is completed.
6. Upon completion of the research, a formal thesis is written and submitted to the Thesis Committee. The format of this thesis will be in conformity with a standard style sheet and with the Graduate College guidelines for thesis preparation. The student must be careful to adhere to the Graduate College timetable for submission and approval of the thesis.
7. After sufficient time has elapsed, the Thesis Committee and the student meet together for approximately two hours in an oral examination on the thesis. The Thesis Director records the successful completion of the oral examination on the MATESL Thesis Checklist. At some appropriate point in the progress of the student's thesis, the following conditions must be met:
 - The student presents the essence of the research at a public colloquium, and
 - either i or ii: i the student submits the essence of the research for consideration as a professional conference presentation (e.g., TESOL, CALICO, MLA, AAAL, NAFSA/ATESL, LSA), or
 - the student prepares a version of the thesis as a manuscript for submission to a professional journal (e.g. LANGUAGE LEARNING, TESOL QUARTERLY).

Graduation is not contingent on having the conference paper or the journal article accepted.

The student submits to the Thesis Director a copy of materials sent to fulfill requirement b. (i.e., conference proposal for i. Or submission letter and manuscript for ii.). The Thesis Director puts these materials in the student's permanent file and notes this step on the student's MATESL Thesis Checklist.

After the student has successfully completed the oral examination and met the requirement outlined above, the Thesis Director submits to the Graduate Services staff a revised abstract prepared by the student then updates the MATESL Thesis Checklist.

8. The student follows the steps on the timeline to deposit their thesis with the Graduate College after going through the format checks.
9. The Thesis Director then prepares a Supplemental Grade Report to change all DF grades given in EIL 599 to S (Satisfactory).

Appendix 1

Guidelines for Writing the Formal Thesis Proposal

The proposal should consist of six sections—an introduction, statement of purpose, discussion of methodology, discussion of possible outcomes and conclusions, implications, and bibliography. Each of these sections is discussed more fully below.

1. **Literature Review:** The student should review the major studies previously conducted in the area of interest. The Literature Review should make apparent the importance and relevance of additional research in this area. This should reveal the student's depth of understanding of the major issues in this area as well as the strengths and weaknesses of prior research.
2. **Research Questions:** The statement of purpose should frame the research questions in an explicit manner and relate them directly to the literature discussed in the review. The research questions may be followed by specific hypotheses (when appropriate). A clearly presented statement of purpose is of great value to the student and the Thesis Committee. It can make readily apparent to the Thesis Committee the range and feasibility of the proposed thesis.
3. **Methodology:** Next, the student should explain, in detailed terms, what type of research project is to be carried out; whether or not a pilot study will be required; how subjects will be selected and tested (if subjects will be used); how data will be elicited and examined; and what practical problems might be encountered when trying to implement the study. In short, the student should discuss the various practical and technical facets of the research project.
4. **Possible Outcomes and Conclusions:** The student may anticipate any one of several different outcomes of the research and may thus anticipate arriving at any one of several different conclusions. Possible outcomes and conclusions should be stated clearly (e.g. "If there is no difference between the three groups, then..." or "If there are significant differences between the three groups, then..."). In this way, the student can be prepared for various results and can also demonstrate an understanding of the potential complexity of the research project.
5. **Bibliography:** The bibliography need not be as long as the one which will appear in the thesis. However, it should be complete enough to demonstrate to the Thesis Committee that the student has conducted a reasonably thorough literature search and has not overlooked any works of importance.