

CELEBRATING FORUM @ FORTY

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The prototype for what we know as the "English Teaching Forum" was a newsletter published by the Information Center Service of the United States Information Agency in 1962. The overwhelming positive response to the newsletter indicated worldwide support for the publication, and it has continued as a journal for teachers of English overseas for four decades. At its peak during the mid-1990s, the "English Teaching Forum" had a circulation of 120,000. The "Forum" has offered the opportunity to many teachers for publishing their first article; and it has attracted manuscripts from such noted specialists as Mary Finocchiaro, Marianne Celce-Murcia, Larry Smith, Mario Rinvolucci, and others.

Conceived as a journal providing practical ideas for classroom teaching, curriculum development and materials writing, the "Forum" is not the vehicle for people to publish chapters from their master's theses or dissertations. The typical article may begin with theory or a short description of an action research project, but it will then focus on applications useful to other teachers and program developers.

Though the Forum has modified its format and added an on-line option, it continues to encourage the active exchange of ideas and experiences of teachers of English worldwide. This talk will look at how teachers can use the "Forum" in training both teachers and trainers of teachers. While the "Forum" provides a historical narrative of the evolution of the teaching of English to non-native speakers, it remains a practical tool for meeting present-day challenges.

At this first international conference of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines, I think that it is appropriate to recognize the birthday of one of the great resources available to teachers of language and linguistics around the world, the *English Teaching Forum*.

But before I begin my formal remarks, I would like to give you a short *Forum* Trivia Quiz to find out how much you already know about the journal. The first person who raises his/her hand and correctly answers one of my questions will receive a forum@forty, retractable pen. (The answers appear at the end of this paper.)

1. What is the last feature or department in every issue of the *Forum*?
2. Who was the *Forum*'s longest-serving Editor-in-Chief?
3. How many editors has the *Forum* had in its forty-year history?
4. The *Forum* has featured world famous authors on its covers over the last forty years. Which author was never on a cover of *Forum*: Ernest Hemingway, Alice Walker, Willa Cather, or William Faulkner?
5. In its commemoration of the centennial of the motion picture industry in 1995, what movie was featured on *Forum*'s cover?

As I suspected, you measure high in *Forum* intelligence! But let's go into some detail that you may not know about the *Forum* and discuss the role that journals in Applied Linguistics play in language education policy development and classroom teaching.

The prototype for what we know as the *English Teaching Forum* was a newsletter published by the Information Center Service of the United States Information Agency in 1962. The overwhelmingly positive response to the newsletter indicated worldwide support for its continued publication, and a quarterly publication schedule was put into place. The *Forum* has continued to serve as a valued resource for teachers of English overseas since that time.

At its peak, during the mid-1990s, the *English Teaching Forum* had a circulation of 120,000. The creation of an electronic version of the *Forum* (<http://exchanges.state.gov/forum>) and the withdrawal of the U.S. government subsidy that had allowed the print version to be distributed free or at "give-away prices," have resulted in a 50% drop in circulation; but the journal can still boast of having the largest distribution of any publication for teachers of English as a Foreign Language.

Forum has offered the opportunity for many teachers to publish their first article; and it has attracted manuscripts from such pioneers in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language as Clifford Praetor, Mary Finocchiaro, Marianne Celce-Murcia, and language specialists from around the world. Filipino linguists of the generation ahead of mine will remember Professor Praetor since he led the UCLA project in language education at Philippine Normal College in the late 1950s and 1960s. I co-hosted Mary Finocchiaro at the PNC in 1987, and we have Marianne Celce-Murcia with us today as the keynote speaker for this convention. So you see, linguists who have made scholarly contributions to the Philippines have done the same for the *Forum*.

The *Forum* looks more like a magazine than an academic journal like the *TESOL Quarterly* or *Language Learning*; and indeed its content is relentlessly "applied" rather than theoretical or research-focused. But that doesn't mean that the *Forum* is slow to respond to changes in the theory and practice of language teaching. The application of drama to foreign

language instruction was popularized in the *Forum* when articles by East-West Center professor and former Broadway stage director Richard Via appeared in the early 1970s. In 1979, one whole issue of *Forum* was focused on the Notional/Functional approach to language education. And current teaching approaches like Content-Based Instruction and Cooperative Learning were introduced to *Forum* in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Forum does not avoid theory or research, but the manuscripts that are selected for inclusion in each issue are not chapters out of someone's master's thesis or Ph.D. dissertation. Instead, those manuscripts selected for publication in *Forum* move from a theory- or research-focus to a practical application derived from a particular theoretical premise or research study. This practical focus is what has made the *Forum* so popular with teachers around the world.

Another reason for its popularity is that *Forum* articles are written for teachers by teachers around the world. Teachers in Third World countries (with large classes and limited resources) may have more to gain from others in similar circumstances than from teachers in the United States or UK where classes are relatively small and well equipped.

Forum articles can be divided into two categories: those that provide ready-made lessons that teachers can use with minimal adaptation for their own classrooms; and those articles that present theory or research as a foundation for further reflection about language and education. The latter category is vital to a teacher's continuing professional development.

In 1994, as Chief of the Materials Development Branch of the English Language Programs Division of the United States Information Agency, I was tasked with editing an anthology of *Forum* articles from the previous five years. Noting the dichotomy characterizing the articles that are published in the journal, I produced not one but two anthologies for the years 1989-1993. *Teacher Development: Making the Right Moves* was conceptualized as a text for pre-service and in-service teacher education courses because its articles provide paradigms for language education that student and practicing teachers can reflect on. The second text, *Creative Classroom Activities*, provides activities that teachers can xerox and use directly in their classes. One such article was by Susan Stempleski on "Linking the Classroom to the World: The Environment and EFL" (*Forum*, October 1993). Using content-based instruction, Stempleski provided a thematic unit on environmental preservation that required students to collaborate with one another on topics that heightened their awareness of environmental issues while also enhancing their English language skills.

I have described my personal experience in compiling anthologies of *Forum* articles because I see this activity as directly relevant to teacher training classes. Student teachers can be asked to select *Forum* articles from the past year that they found especially relevant for Philippine classrooms. After making their selection, they can be asked to explain why they chose those particular articles, identify the theoretical or methodological approach that is being applied and explain what teaching or training objectives would be served by including the articles in the anthology. This is a real life activity that puts student teachers in a role they may play during the course of their careers. After the student teacher makes his/her own selection, s/he should join with peers as an informal "editorial board" so they can discuss collectively which of the selected articles should go into the "*Forum* Anthology" to be produced by the class.

With the revolution in Information Technology (IT), the *English Teaching Forum* has developed two separate, independent, electronic journals: *Language and Civil Society* and *Language and Life Sciences* (<http://exchanges.state.gov/forum/journal/>). Both contain ready-to-use lesson plans that are suitable for students at the intermediate level. They deal with such current issues as business ethics, biotechnology and crop engineering and civic education. Teachers can download the lessons, adapting them to the needs of their students; and they can email the *Forum* staff about how the material worked in their classes. The IT revolution has made the discussion forum that *Forum* was to stimulate all the more immediate and accessible to all. Prior to 1995, the "Letters to the Editor" department in the *Forum* provided the vehicle for readers to share their reactions to *Forum* materials. Now those reactions can be shared almost at once.

As exciting as the electronic journals may be, and as easily accessible as the online version of *Forum* is to internet users, the IT revolution may signal the end of the *English Teaching Forum* as we have known it for the last forty years. When the first online version of the *Forum* appeared ten years ago, it was basically text; the attractive illustrations and handsome layout design were missing. Now the online version is as attractive as the print version. Only the copyrighted materials that are included in the print version are missing from the online version.

For this reason, we should perhaps celebrate *Forum* at forty all the more enthusiastically, because I am doubtful that the print publication will make it to fifty; we may have only the electronic journals. But far from being a loss, this may be a gain for all who have loved *Forum* over the years. Thanks to IT, the journal can be accessed directly from one's home or school computer without the bother of getting postal money orders and placing subscriptions.

For those of you who still wish to subscribe to the *Forum*, we at the Cultural Affairs Office are happy to assist. Write to the Cultural Affairs Office (ETF), Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, P.O. Box 151, Manila. A one-year subscription to the quarterly is available for PHP150. If you wish to contribute to the *Forum*, you can send your manuscript to:

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The *Forum* has enjoyed an illustrious past because of the contributions of its readers turned authors. The future is dependent on your continuing support contributing manuscripts to be shared with the worldwide audience. We celebrate *Forum's* fortieth anniversary, but in fact we are celebrating the global community of teachers of English as an International Language.

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Answers to the *Forum* Trivia Quiz:

1. The "Lighter Side" page
2. Anne Covell Newton, who served from 1975-1993
3. Eight. In chronological order, they are Elizabeth Sadler (1962-1975), Anne Covell Newton (1975-1993), Thomas Kral (1993-1996), Deloris Parker and Tom Miller (1996-1997), Damon Anderson (1997-1999), Melvia Hansman (2000), and the current Editor-in-Chief William Ancker (2001-).
4. William Faulkner never appeared on a *Forum* cover. Unlike Hemingway, Walker and Cather, Faulkner strikes most TEFL specialists as too linguistically and culturally challenging for their students.
5. Jurassic Park. The cover has the terrifying picture of the Tyrannosaurus Rex used in the movie advertisements.