

## Forum in 2022

by TOM GLASS

The first two articles in our 60th-anniversary Reflections series looked back over *English Teaching Forum's* history, exploring the path *Forum* has taken as an evolving journal and the trends that have arisen in articles contributed by teachers around the world. In this article, we turn our attention to the present. We have seen where *Forum* has been; here, we look at *Forum* as it is now.

Since 2015, each issue has included six sections:

- Articles
- Reader's Guide
- Teaching Techniques
- My Classroom
- Try This
- The Lighter Side

What follows is a brief description of these sections and what we hope they offer to readers.

### ARTICLES

The Articles section is the “backbone” of each issue. Throughout *Forum's* history, articles have presented descriptions of innovative teaching practices, backed by theory and supported by relevant published findings. Literature reviews in these articles are typically not extensive—the focus of the articles is on the practice of teaching rather than theory or research—but

they provide a foundation to give readers confidence in the soundness of the practice that is presented.

The range of topics covered in the Articles section is extensive—almost anything related to the practice of teaching English language might find its way into this section. Most articles give an overview of the teaching practice being presented, along with specific examples demonstrating how teachers can implement the idea, the purposes it might serve, expected outcomes, the teacher's and students' roles, options for different teaching contexts, and other relevant information. Our hope is that readers will finish the article with a clear understanding of what the practice entails, confidence that they can use it productively with their learners, and excitement about having discovered a new teaching idea.

### READER'S GUIDE

This section was added in 2015 and came about directly from a suggestion by teachers. They said they often use *Forum* articles as the basis of discussion during teachers' meetings and in-service training, and they wondered if we could provide guiding questions, similar to the way many teachers prepare and support their own students who are reading something new. The Reader's Guide offers pre-reading and post-reading questions for each article in

## NOTE

This is the third of four articles commemorating the 60th anniversary of *English Teaching Forum*. Each 2022 issue will feature one of the articles.

that issue. The questions don't tell you what to think, but we hope they help you find specific points to think *about*.

We also hope you will ask questions of your own about the articles. Read the title of an article, and then take a moment to ask yourself—or your colleagues—about the topic, a word or phrase in the title, or a connection you see between the title and your teaching experience or current situation. It can be helpful just to ask general questions such as, “What do I expect to learn by reading this article?” and “What do I *hope* to learn by reading this article?” As you read, take notes about points you're curious about. After you finish reading, write reflection or discussion questions that come to mind. Interacting with the article in this way, along with responding to questions in the Reader's Guide, can help you understand the teaching practice, prepare to discuss it with colleagues, and better your chances of using it successfully with your students.

## TEACHING TECHNIQUES

Teaching Techniques are short articles that focus on descriptions of quick teaching ideas. While these articles will not change a teacher's entire approach to language teaching, we hope that readers will add these ideas to their teaching tool kits and use them

as needed. That's how we see the Teaching Techniques section: a convenient way to offer ideas that teachers can use as warm-ups, for practice and review, or at times when a change of pace is needed. Often, the article begins with a description of a teaching or learning challenge—and then goes on to suggest a technique that teachers can use to overcome that challenge.

One reason we added the Teaching Techniques section is that, prior to 2015, short articles did not fit in the format of *Forum*, and we sometimes had to turn down an article submission that offered a great idea—but that was too short for our format. We don't like to turn away great ideas, so we made room for them by adding the Teaching Techniques section. These articles have become popular. Most people find them easier to write and to read than full-length articles; they are shorter and don't require a literature review. Those of us who work on *Forum* are pleased with this section; from our point of view, the more great ideas we can include in each issue, the better.

## MY CLASSROOM

My Classroom, another section that was added in 2015, represents the biggest departure from previous versions of *Forum*. Each of these unique articles tells a story about what it's



## Forum Fact

The current structure of *English Teaching Forum* issues, containing the sections shown here, has been in place since 2015. Which section are you most likely to turn to first?



like to teach English in a different part of the world. So far, we have published nearly three dozen My Classroom articles. They cover teachers and schools in different countries, in urban and rural areas, in mountains and on islands, and in virtual and in-person settings; the articles highlight teachers in classes for young learners, in secondary schools and universities, and in classes for adult learners—in other words, the wide world of English language teaching.

These articles show that each teaching context offers its own set of challenges, but they also show that there are talented and dedicated teachers everywhere, willing to do whatever it takes to meet those challenges, often in creative and resourceful ways, and to offer the support and inspiration their students need. The My Classroom articles give a close-up look at what it's like to teach English all over the world.

### TRY THIS

Try This articles are similar to Teaching Techniques in that they offer straightforward descriptions of teaching practices; however, Try This articles are written in a step-by-step format rather than in paragraph style. The result, we hope, is a set of clear instructions that teachers can easily read and integrate into their teaching. Often, these articles offer sample prompts, specific instructions that teachers can give to students, and suggestions for scaffolding. Most of these articles also include options for using the teaching practice in different circumstances—with learners at different skill levels, for example, or with large and small classes—along with ideas for extending and following up the activity. We know that not all teachers need this explicit support, but we also realize that some teachers do. Teachers can use as much as they feel comfortable with. In any case, the idea is to make the articles useful for as many teachers as possible, no matter their level of confidence with the material or their overall experience.

In fact, we have heard from teachers that they appreciate the way each issue of *Forum* is organized: in general, as you move from the

front of the issue to the back, the teaching topics become less complex, and the articles become easier to read.

### THE LIGHTER SIDE

That brings us to The Lighter Side, the puzzle section that has been a mainstay of *Forum* since 1976. The primary goal of offering these puzzles is to let readers have fun, usually with some aspect of the English language. We encourage you to think about how you can use the puzzles in your teaching. The difficulty of the puzzles varies. If there's a puzzle that your students might enjoy, let them solve it—and then let them create similar puzzles of their own to share with one another. Although The Lighter Side appears in the back of each issue, we hope you'll see the puzzles as a beginning point for learning, not an end.

Every puzzle in The Lighter Side section is original; we create the puzzle content specifically for *Forum*. If you see a puzzle somewhere else that is identical to one in *Forum*, you can be sure it appeared in The Lighter Side first. Try solving these puzzles and thinking of ways to use them or adapt them for your students. The puzzles can be photocopied, and if you access them online at [americanenglish.state.gov/forum](http://americanenglish.state.gov/forum) (search for “The Lighter Side”), you can project them for students to solve in class. Many of the puzzle formats are simple enough that you can draw the puzzles on a blackboard or whiteboard, then let students work on them individually or in pairs or groups.

### CHALLENGES

Every teacher has challenges, and getting each issue of *Forum* ready for publication presents challenges as well. The biggest challenge with preparing content for any section of *Forum* is probably making it relevant to—and useful for—teachers in as many contexts as possible. *Forum* is read by teachers in more than 100 countries; they teach at all levels, from preschool to adult, from beginning-level learners to learners who are essentially fluent. Some teachers are required to follow

a specific curriculum; others have freedom to choose what and how they teach. Some have an abundance of resources and equipment available; others have almost no resources at all. Some readers haven't yet started their teaching careers; others have been at it for decades. As you can imagine, we can't make every article relevant to everyone.

But we try. We encourage authors to add options to accommodate teachers in different contexts. And since early 2020, authors have done their best to show how the teaching practice they are writing about can be conducted in both in-person and virtual settings. Some authors have been surprised to find that their in-person practice lends itself quite well to online teaching. That reinforces something that *Forum* articles over the years have shown: that some of the strongest teaching practices are versatile and can be adapted to a variety of situations, for a variety of purposes.

By the way, if you would like to see *Forum* continue to publish articles that help teachers meet their needs, there's a solution: write an article yourself and submit it to *Forum* for review. If you have had a particular challenge, and if you have found a solution for it, you can be sure that other English teachers face a similar challenge and would welcome the chance to find ideas about how to overcome it. That, of course, is how *Forum* has gotten this far, from the early 1960s to 2022: teachers have found solutions to challenges and then, in the pages of *Forum*, shared them with the rest of the world.

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ANSWER KEY:

## My Classroom: Matching

Each of these images was part of a My Classroom article published in *Forum*. Can you match the images with their countries?

\_\_\_ 1. Cambodia

A.



\_\_\_ 2. Ecuador

B.



\_\_\_ 3. Ethiopia

C.



\_\_\_ 4. India

D.



\_\_\_ 5. United States

E.



\_\_\_ 6. Uzbekistan

F.

