

## FROM THE EDITORS

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary volume of the *MinneWITESOL Journal*! It is a remarkable accomplishment to have not only a professional organization for teachers in the state for more than 25 years, but to also have a quarter century of scholarly contributions from ESL teachers and researchers in our region. To mark this special anniversary, part of this volume of the *Journal* is devoted to looking back on this accomplishment. First, we include at the beginning of the volume a journey in the way-back machine to the early days of the *Journal* with Mark Landa, the first editor (1981-1983). Second, a table of contents for Volumes 1 to 24, can be found at the end of this 25<sup>th</sup> volume.

In *There Ought to be a Journal...*, Mark describes the challenges of starting a journal and notes the technological changes from typewriter to web site, but in reading his comments, we realized that much has stayed the same over the years: The *Journal* continues to offer articles with broad and practical appeal as well as readable descriptions of research with an emphasis on regional importance.

In addition, compiling the cumulative table of contents brought to light how many topics have appeared repeatedly over the years. In particular, the special topic of the current issue—research and best practice concerning the instruction of ESL learners with low levels of literacy—was first addressed here in 1982 with the article *Designing an ESL program for the preliterate adult: An account of one program's development*. This topic continues to be of great interest for ESL educators in our region. In the *Journal* editors' survey at the 2006 MinneTESOL conference, it topped the list of subjects that attendees said they wanted to read about.

### Section 1

The first section of this volume includes articles that concentrate on our special topic: research and best practice concerning the instruction of ESL learners with low levels of literacy.

In the opening article, "Maestra! The letters speak." Learning to Read for the First Time: Best Practices in Emergent Reading Instruction,' Patsy Vinogradov provides an insightful overview of research-based methods for teaching ESL students with low levels of literacy. This is an article that you can hand to new teachers in search of guidance who find themselves teaching this population of students for the first time.

A second article you may want to share with such a teacher is Julia Reimer's 'Learning Strategies and Low-Literacy Hmong Adult Students,' in which she details a year-long research study on teaching learning strategies to Hmong students with low levels of literacy. Reimer provides an extensive literature review on learning strategies instruction with low-literacy students and insights into what may or may not work when teaching strategies to this student population.

If you are a teacher in need of guidance in choosing a textbook, this section of the *Journal* also includes several reviews of materials which may be used for working with low-literacy students. Anne Lazaraton and Andrew Baker present a comparative review of materials from the series *Literacy Plus*, *English-No Problem!*, *LifePrints*, *Ventures*, *Taking off* and *Longman ESL literacy*. Rhonda Petree examines *Step Forward Introductory Level I: Language for Everyday Life*, a textbook for pre-literacy adult

students, Parthy Schachter reviews *Sam and Pat 1: Beginning Reading and Writing* and Kate Clements reviews *The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary*.

## **Section 2**

The second section of the journal includes articles on a range of topics. First is an article by Lisa M. Bolt Simons, "Conversations about Inclusion: Connecting Mainstream and ESL," that discusses what the inclusion model of ESL teaching looks like in action and provides numerous examples of the varieties of inclusion.

In "Classroom Strategies and Tools for Differentiating Instruction in the ESL Classroom," Anne Dahlman, Patricia Hoffman, and Susan Brauhn explore how Differentiated Instruction can be used in the ESL classroom.

The section finishes with a book review of *Teaching Content to English Language Learners: Strategies for Secondary School Success* from Kathryn Huebsch.

There will not be a special topic for Volume 26 of the *Journal*, but we hope that readers will continue to submit their work on various issues related to teaching ESL, with special encouragement to submit grammar usage studies, which have appeared in the journal in the past, but have been fewer in number in recent years. We welcome your explorations into the realms of American English grammar which (after these 25 years) remain unexplored.

Finally, another year, another editorial change. We thank Marguerite Parks and Michelle Fuerch for their service as journal editors and ask our Wisconsin readers to consider volunteering as editors since the editorial staff is currently without a WITESOL representative. Many hands make light work.

We thank all of those involved in the process of creating this volume of the *Journal*, particularly the authors and the Editorial Advisory Board. We also thank Hamline University and the University of Minnesota for their support of the editorial process.

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