

“There ought to be a journal . . .”

Mark Landa

When the idea of starting a journal first came up in 1980, MinneTESOL was still a relatively new organization. Some of us felt that, like any new arrival, it needed its own goals and challenges, or it would not be able to develop. The affiliate had taken on the missions of “fostering professional development” and “collecting and disseminating information pertinent to ESL.” Putting out a journal seemed a good way to accomplish those objectives; another way was establishing an ESL materials resource center at about this same time. These projects would supplement the organization’s conferences and social events.

As I recall, the four of us who ended up working on the 1981 issue—Eric Nelson, Sharon Dwyer, Dianne Pecoraro and I—were aware that it would set a precedent for members to decide whether to consider submitting articles. There was no shortage of topics and capable writers, but we obviously lacked the budget and scope of other established organizations and their journals. We wondered what our niche would be?

We wanted a collection of articles with broad and practical appeal. At the same time, we wanted to include readable research-based articles. Of the 17 authors in the first three years, four were university faculty, eight were ESL instructors in the area, and five were graduate students. The journal became a blend with features of TESOL’s *Essential Teacher*. Most articles were written by teachers for teachers.

The first articles that came in covered a variety of subfields: the role of the ESL teacher, assessment, conversation and listening comprehension courses, and a bibliography for teaching children. The articles needed little editing, but we faced a major challenge—and a weekend crisis or two—in preparing them for publication. Remember, this was back before the Internet and e-mail, and yes, even before we had access to word processing.

We re-typed each article on blue-lined paper using the ESL secretary’s electronic typewriter in Klaeber Court. Fortunately, we had enough white correction paper and fluid to cover our flaws. The first issue was eventually on its way to the printer in downtown Minneapolis. A few weeks later, what a joy to see the green covered *MinneTESOL Journal* in the hands of members!

From this humble beginning, the journal has evolved to today’s outstanding publication—*The MinneWITESOL Journal*, now accessible to me by website as I sit here at my desk in Japan.

AUTHOR

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