Some time ago, Andy Gao, one of my doctoral students, came to me in a state of excitement. He had just been informed by the editors of *Prospect* that one of his articles had been accepted for publication. ‘Do you know *Prospect*?’ he asked. ‘Well, as a matter of fact, I do,’ I replied. ‘I was the co-founding editor of the journal, along with Fred Wilson from the South Australian Adult Migrant Education Service.’

When I mentioned this anecdote to Denise Murray, Director of NCELTR and publisher of *Prospect*, she suggested that I might write a short piece looking back over the evolution of the journal. Rather than attempting an extensive overview of the development of the journal, I decided to compare Volume 1, Number 1 with Volume 20, Number 3.

I can remember debating the mission for the journal and its title with my co-editor and key members of the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) community. We finally settled on the title *Prospect* because it carried with it the twin connotations of exploration and looking forward. We wanted the journal to be a pedagogical and intellectual flagship for the AMEP. It is interesting to note that one change, and I think it is a significant one, is in the subtitle of the journal. Twenty years ago, this read, ‘The journal of the Adult Migrant Education Program’. Today it reads, ‘An Australian journal of TESOL’. This change reflects the growth in stature of the journal, and the fact that its remit is much broader than it was 20 years ago.

In the initial editorial, Fred Wilson and I wrote that our aim was to create a professional publication which:

- provides information on initiative and directions within the program, and which presents the policies and philosophy of the AMEP in a coherent and comprehensive manner;
- presents articles on applied research and theoretical issues of concern to those involved in language teaching;
- presents articles on practical issues related to course design and methodology.
Twenty years on the aims have evolved. The journal now seeks to:

- publish research articles, reports and reviews on issues in applied linguistics and in English as a Second Language;
- act as an international forum for discussion on issues in the Australian AMEP, TESOL programs, institutions and research centres in Australia and overseas;
- act as an interface between research and practice;
- provide articles which can be used as a stimulus for staff development sessions.

The inaugural issue of the journal, which appeared in June 1985, contained a foreword by Chris Hurford, then Minister for Education and Ethnic Affairs. This was followed by an editorial and the following ten articles:

- ‘The Adult Migrant Education Program’ by Jane Devitt, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs;
- ‘Language comprehension, learning and use’ by Peter Strevens, Bell Educational Trust;
- ‘Second language acquisition research in the Adult Migrant Education Program’ by Malcolm Johnston, NSW AMES;
- ‘Launching the ARCC research in the Adult Migrant Education Program’ by Oleh Lukomsky, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs;
- ‘Tertiary education providers to the Adult Migrant Education Program’ by Jane Devitt, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs;
- ‘The role of the National Curriculum Resource Centre within the Adult Migrant Education Program’ by David Nunan, National Curriculum Resource Centre (the precursor to NCELTR);
- ‘Program innovation in the AMEP’ by Fred Wilson, AMES South Australia;
- ‘ADP [Automated Data Processing] catches up with the AMEP information system’ by Alf Reina, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs;
- ‘The “action sequence” approach to course design’ by Chris Corbel, AMES Victoria;
- ‘What kind of Mexican jumping bean are you? A look at English language teaching in 1984’ by Jill Burton, AMES South Australia.
From the contents and contributors, you can see how inward looking the journal was 20 years ago. All but one of the articles were contributed by individuals who were part of the AMEP in some way. The only ‘outside’ contribution was from Peter Strevens, a leading figure in applied linguistics and language education, who happened to be on a lecture tour of Australia in 1985 and who kindly agreed to contribute a paper.

Does this inward focus mean that the initial issue is of little value 20 years hence? I don’t think so. The articles that focus on the AMEP provide a useful snapshot of an educational program for immigrants, which, then and now, is unmatched anywhere in the world. Two other articles are worthy of mention. These are the ones by Malcolm Johnston and Chris Corbel. During the 1980s, Johnston carried out some groundbreaking research into developmental sequences in second language acquisition. Unfortunately, this research was not widely published, and *Prospect*, Volume 1, Number 1, remains one of the few accessible introductions to the work. It is certainly an article to which I frequently return. I also continue to use Corbel’s article in courses on curriculum design. His ‘action sequence’ approach represents a highly innovative, early interpretation of project-based and task-based language teaching.

Today, *Prospect* has evolved in ways that Fred Wilson and I could hardly have imagined 20 years ago. It is solidly established in the international arena, its editorial board contains well-known academics from North America, Europe and Asia, and its contributors and articles also have an international focus.

Terminology has, not surprisingly, also changed quite dramatically. The current issue of *Prospect* contains articles whose titles include ‘scaffolding’, ‘genre’, ‘cognition’, ‘discourse’, ‘academic literacy’, and ‘narrative’ as a research tool – concepts that were largely absent from our professional discourse 20 years ago. Another point of difference is the fact that all of the articles are by university-based researchers, and that only one study draws its data directly from the AMEP.

Will *Prospect* still exist in 2025, and how many of us will still be around to enjoy it if it is? Who can tell? I think that it is a tremendous achievement that, 20 years after its inauguration, it has developed into such a significant international journal within the TESOL field. The international TESOL community owes a vote of thanks to the editors, reviewers and contributors who, over the last 20 years, have helped shape, define and refine the journal.