

FROM THE GUEST EDITORS

The founding of MEXTESOL in 1973 did not, of course, start English language teaching in Mexico, but it did contribute greatly to the professionalization of our field. It was the first professional organization for teachers of English to students of other languages in the country, and it is still the largest. Other major contributions were: the first issue of the MEXTESOL Journal (1976); the organization of FEULE (Foro de Especialistas Universitarios en Lenguas Extranjeras), an event rather than an association started by Peter Hubbard in 1986; the booming of teacher training in ELT and TESOL in the 1990s, both pre-service and in-service, ranging widely from shorter courses (especially the COTE courses) to BA programs and MA programs, with different modes of delivery (traditional face-to-face as well as distance modes).

Within this intense process of change and updating of the profession, a watershed for some of us was the thought-provoking session at the 1994 MEXTESOL Conference by Sue Wharton, later published in the spring issue of the MEXTESOL Journal, 1995. Wharton drew our attention to the fact that the rapid changes taking place in Mexico at the time and their "demand for continuing quality in change" create "a drive towards professionalisation" (Wharton, 1995, p. 24), which is characterized by different "ways of belonging" to the professional community. At one level, individuals become readers of professional publications (such as this one) and become participants in or attendees at professional events (such as MEXTESOL Conferences); at another level, individuals become more equal interactors with the community, by using ideas from the established community as the seed for their own research in their own environment. However, it is at the third level that individuals become full professionals when they publish their own research in an established journal of the community and are thus able to break out of their isolation and engage in the on-going flow of ideas of the professional community. Wharton raised our awareness of the relevance of participation in professional development.

In Mexico, this sense of increased participation in the profession started in the 90s and has been gaining momentum ever since. One expression of this is the number of topic-based professional conferences, other than the annual MEXTESOL and FEULE conferences, such as: the Conference on BA Programmes in ELT (Mexico City, 1999), the Encuentro Internacional para Licenciaturas en Lenguas "Perspectivas en México" (Zacatecas, 2001), the First Qualitative Research Conference (Mexico City, 2003) and the First and Second International Qualitative Research Conferences in Guanajuato (2005, 2007) among others. Special attention should be given to the fact that for the first time, ELT specialists in Mexico participated as a team in the National Educational Conference in Education (COMIE, in Spanish), in Hermosillo, Sonora (2005) at the invitation of Dr. José Luis Ramírez, and a book with the regional reports on the state of the art in research in ELT (2000-2005) is forthcoming. This brings us to the second manifestation of the increased participation in the profession in Mexico, which is

the fact that more and more articles about the Mexican context are being published.

This special issue of the MEXTESOL Journal is dedicated to sharing experiences and accounts on the ELT professionalization processes in Mexico, to reflect on them in order to construct a communal history, and to record the different perspectives on national and local issues within our profession. To quote Wharton (1995), the texts that are published in this Special Issue deal with local communities and develop "a unique approach to its subject of study: an approach which is grounded in an individual context and yet which is sufficiently well-researched and well-documented so that those who do not belong to its native context can still assess its relevance to themselves" (Wharton, 1995, p. 30).

Half of the articles we received for this Special Issue were selected for publication. All of the articles were peer blind reviewed at least once with many of them being read two and even three times by different reviewers. All of the articles received represent the variety and quality of the work that these professionals are doing in ELT in Mexico.

This issue consists of 10 articles which draw their data from a variety of contexts. Some speak with the voice of longstanding experience, others draw on research; some are native English teachers who helped forge ELT in this country, others are younger Mexican ELT professionals, full of hope for the future. All of them speak with concern, with pride.

Paul Davies' article on ELT in primary and secondary schools critically discusses these educational settings within the social-economic and educational contexts in Mexico contrasted with the wider context of ELT around the world.

In the next article, Roger Dunne provides a history of the development of the EXAVER English language proficiency tests developed by the Universidad Veracruzana.

Sarah Dietrich reports on a teacher education project in the northern part of Mexico. Her article describes the challenges experienced by two distinct groups of in-service ELT teachers and their experiences in professionalization.

Research activity by members of a profession is an indication of the development of the profession. In this next article José Luis Ramirez and María Elizabeth Moreno Glockner present the methodological design and main results of a study conducted in 2005 on research in the area of foreign language teaching and learning in Mexico. Their study identifies the kind and amount of research in the country done in the field of ELT.

Michael Witten and others report on the challenges of incorporating innovative programs into established ELT higher education contexts. They

examine innovation based on Markee's framework and report and analyze the results of six innovation attempts in their setting.

The next two articles from Oscar Narvaez and Irasema Mora & Brad Teague both look at student – teacher relationships through their beliefs and conceptions of each other. Both research projects present thought provoking and insightful findings related to this important area.

The next two articles by Gerrard Mugford and William Sughru & Angeles Clemente both deal with students' voice. The former looks at finding students' voice in BA level thesis writing and the latter looks at acknowledging and encouraging students' voice in curriculum design.

And finally Martha Lengeling's article presents a narrative account of beginning teachers' reasons for entering the ELT profession. She also provides a historical perspective on becoming an ELT teacher in Mexico.

In selecting these articles, we hope to present a wide range of perspectives and histories of ELT in our country.

We would like to deeply thank all of the peer reviewers for their exceptional work and the feedback they provided the authors. We were truly impressed with the quality of the comments and feedback the articles received.

And we owe a huge debt of gratitude to Uli Schrader for his invaluable assistance, advice, and patience. We are all very grateful for this opportunity to put together this special issue.

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