

From the Editors

As newly appointed editors of the Journal, we face the same basic challenge our predecessors did: finding contributors. Collecting enough quality material to put together four issues a year is not as easy as it may sound. Articles accepted by the Journal (and by most other academic publications) are not likely to bring either fame or fortune. Compared to the average comic book, our readers are few indeed, and the "pay scale" our budget permits us to negotiate with writers runs between three and five free copies.

Like founding editor Eugene Long (1976-1978) and his successor Jerrilou Johnson (1978-1982), our success depends on your willingness to dedicate time and talent to the concerns of ESL in Mexico. Without that commitment, editors may possess superb judgment and brilliant ideas, and still produce a dull, mediocre journal. On the other hand, if a few enthusiastic and capable readers take the initiative, the Journal would probably look pretty good no matter how inept and unimaginative the editors were.

The typical Journal issue in recent years has followed the general guidelines of what we call Ms Johnson's (unwritten) "fairness doctrine." If we have decoded its principles correctly, every issue should strive to include: 1) an article by a British or North American ESL expert; 2) a piece leaning toward linguistic abstraction and theory; counterbalanced by (3) something firmly grounded in front of a blackboard - practical, instantly applicable, classroom tips. There should also be: 4) an article written in Spanish; 5) one from "provincia," and 6) a couple of book reviews.

The system is not perfect: there is too much overlap and a distinct danger of alienating many by trying too hard to please all. There is also something a bit too simple about the stereotypes and something disturbing about the (remote) possibility of rejecting quality in order to scrupulously measure out everyone's fair share of free speech. In spite of these reservations, the merits of the policy seem to outweigh its flaws, and unless someone comes up with a more convincing alternative, we intend to keep on trying to be representative of the wide range of MEXTESOL interest groups.

This issue does seem to cover the six above-mentioned points. We have even revived "Forum," a place for readers' opinions -- another idea Jerrilou tried out a couple of years ago in the pursuit of balanced participation.

So much for our adherence to tradition. We have also tried some ideas of our own. Our innovations are this column, in which we hope to present an overview of each issue's contents; the first in a series of interviews with people we feel can deepen our understanding of the history, state of the art and future directions of Mexican TESOL; and finally, in coordination with the National Convention Committees, we have invited readers to submit manuscripts for the "MEXTESOL Journal Book Review Awards." (See p. 7.)

Moving away from policy and toward specific content, articles in this issue include: María Celce-Murcia's description of the major problems in teaching pronunciation and the solutions she has found; Luis Fernando Lara and Leonardo Manrique Castañeda on Mexican language planning and politics; British linguist Tony Shaw's penetrating study of language-learning strategies, and Ann Barker's explanation of a brain-teasing game for English-Spanish bilingual whiz kids with practical potential for the ordinary second-language classroom. The subject of our interview is former MEXTESOL president, Paul Davies. The first contributors to "Forum" are two university professors concerned about cultural bias in textbooks and "privileged" students. The book reviews are by Phyllis Ryan, MEXTESOL Newsletter editor, and Alma Ortiz, this year's Academic Committee Chairperson.

Needless to say, we are eager and proud to publish work by people like Phyllis and Alma. However, we are just as anxious to discover new talent and determined to publish in future issues not just the polished professionals whom we can always count on to surpass our standards of excellence, but also previously unpublished writers. Thus, our contest and the section on research we plan to begin publishing next issue. Remember that the Journal is not restricted to MEXTESOL members, to Mexican residents, or even to English teachers. We will publish anyone from any discipline

who has something to say on topics relevant to second-language learning in Mexico. Let us hear from you.

Leslie Adams and David Howard