

MEXTESOL NEWS AND COMMENTS

MEXTESOL: YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW¹

Enrique Gutierrez
 Cenlemex
 Mexico City

Members of MEXTESOL,
 Distinguished guests,
 Ladies and Gentleman:

It is with great pleasure that I am here to welcome you to the THIRD ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE MEXICAN ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES.

I am very happy to see that, again, as we experienced with our first and second conventions, we have been able to attract a great number of teachers of English and people related to English Language Teaching in Mexico, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and many other countries. I have been informed that almost 500 people have registered for this Convention.

Many things have happened since the formation of MEXTESOL, many things are happening now and many more will happen in the future.

It is my intention to take you through all these happenings because we, in the National Executive Committee, want to share with you the satisfaction we have experienced in being close witnesses of the rapid growth of an organization we all want to see become stronger and worth belonging to.

In June of 1973, a group of teachers of English from Mexico were returning to our country after attending the seventh annual convention of TESOL in Puerto Rico. They were commenting on the accumulated experiences they had had during that convention, the excellence of the workshops, seminars, round table discussions, and the great moments they had had communicating with colleagues from all over the world, sharing techniques, learning new approaches to different problems in teaching the same language to different peoples all over the world.

They thought of the possibility of forming a Mexican Association of Teachers of English, in order to concentrate on the problems we face in our country, teaching English mainly to Spanish speakers.

We should all be very grateful to these teachers because they had the strength and dedication to succeed in their efforts.

¹ Plenary address given by MEXTESOL national president Enrique Gutierrez at the Third Annual Convention, Guadalajara, Jal., Oct. 8, 1976.

The first meeting for the formation of the Association was called for August of 1973, to be held at CEMAC in Colonia del Valle.

Some teachers thought at first that this meeting had political implications, or that it was a move from groups or institutions to gain power. Fortunately, most of us attending that meeting realized that it was a genuine effort to form an organization we all had envisioned. The meeting was long- it lasted more than 8 hours- but in the end, la Asociación Mexicana de TESOL (as it was first called) was formed.

Officers were elected at that meeting and they were given their first and extensive task: the writing of the Constitution of the Association.

The members of the First National Executive Committee were headed by Harley Stevenson as President, Bill Marshall as Vice President, Grace Scott as Treasurer, and Vivian Blair as Secretary.

They immediately became aware of the need of forming a National Association and local chapters wherever a group of Teachers of English would be interested in joining the Association.

The Mexico City Chapter, the Tampico Chapter and the Toluca Chapter were formed and they then elected their local Executive Committees.

The National Executive Committee took on the writing of a Constitution, modeled after the TESOL Constitution, but taking into consideration the legal and practical situation in the Mexican Republic. A draft was approved and taken to a Public Notary to have our Association legally constituted as an ASOCIACION CIVIL, (a non-profit institution according to the Mexican Law). The Name was changed to MEXTESOL, the Mexican Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, as it is now known.

Having its members divided in different geographical areas, Mexico City, Tampico and Toluca, the need for a meeting to communicate, discuss new trends in our profession and meet old and new friends, became imperative. Plans started, a Convention Committee was formed, and the FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION was scheduled to be held in the City of Tampico.

That FIRST CONVENTION, organized with the efforts of the First National Executive Committee and the Tampico Chapter was a definite success. Two hundred and eighty teachers from all over the Republic went to Tampico to find themselves among a group of like-minded professionals, eager to communicate, to learn, to share, to spend time talking, both academically and socially, to colleagues from almost every State in the Republic of Mexico.

Prof. James Alatis, Executive Secretary of TESOL, and Dean of Georgetown University's School of Languages and Linguistics and Prof. Clifford Prator, at that time Dean of the School of Linguistics of the University of California at Los Angeles, came to our Convention representing the international organization which inspired ours and made us aware of the great potential our young association had.

There were more than 35,000 teachers of English in the Republic. Millions of pesos were spent each year in this area of education. A great percentage of those teachers were unable to communicate in the language they were teaching. These facts alone made MEXTESOL's existence valid. MEXTESOL should be the force of encouragement for all teachers to be better prepared to face their daily obligations in the classrooms, to become better teachers, and to try to improve themselves.

The academic program of that first Convention was praised by everybody who attended it and we all left Tampico looking forward to a year of work in our different schools, feeling that we had then a real forum to discuss our individual efforts in the classrooms, a forum all professionals must have in order to improve themselves.

During the business meeting of the Tampico Convention, elections were held for new members of the National Executive Committee. At that time there were no bylaws to determine election procedures. However, members understood this lack and the electoral process proceeded congenially.

Grace Scott was elected President for the 1974-1975 term together with Vince Carrubba as First Vice President, Herlinda Díaz as Second Vice President, Miriam Rosas as Treasurer, Carmina Florencia as Secretary and Paul Davies as Parliamentarian.

This new Executive Committee had the difficult task of strengthening the newly formed Association, spreading the word so that new chapters could be formed and, of course, consolidating the efforts of that first group.

Grace Scott's charm and hard work, Miriam Rosas's firmness and organizational know-how, and all of the other officers' efforts were very successful and we began to witness the creation of new chapters in Ensenada, Comitán, Mérida, and Monterrey.

The Mexico City Chapter, with Richard Rossner as President, became the most active, offering its members an excellent program of academic activities. Audiences of more than 300 members became a common occurrence at Saturday meetings. Speakers not only from Mexico City, but from many other parts of the country and even from other countries gladly donated their time to MEXTESOL, and this organization was really on its way to becoming the prestigious Association we all wanted it to be.

Vince Carrubba, Jo Claudio and some other very active members, aware of the need to communicate with colleagues from other parts of the country, published a Bulletin, which then was distributed to the different chapters. We recognize the amount of work it involved, especially at times when very little funds were available. They built the foundations for future MEXTESOL publications.

The second ANNUAL MEXTESOL CONVENTION was scheduled for October 1975 in Cocoyoc, State of Morelos. This time almost 400 members attended. The President of TESOL, Mary Galván, attended the meeting, together with Christina Bratt Paulston, then First Vice President, and now President of TESOL for the 1976-1977 term. Both spoke very highly of the academic program of the convention and encouraged us to pursue our efforts to have a stronger and better MEXTESOL.

The high academic quality, the focusing on problems of relevance to teachers of English in Mexico and the variety of workshops, talks, reading of papers and plenaries, were praised by everybody who attended the Cocoyoc Convention.

However, problems were brought up by some of our members during the Annual Business meeting. One of them was, that, in some people's opinion, the convention was too expensive for some teachers. The other problem mentioned in that meeting was, that of not having a well defined electoral process, open to all members of MEXTESOL in the Republic. I think both of these problems have been taken care of for this convention. Members from all over the country have been able to register for only the academic part of this convention, without having to pay for hotel accommodations, meals, etc. At the same time we have been able to offer packages which include food and lodging for those interested in them. The other problem, that of defining election procedures, has also been given a solution. A nominations form was published in the MEXTESOL NEWSLETTER Number Three, almost three months ago, together with a suggested procedure for election of officers, which is going to be carried out during the Business Meeting this afternoon.

MEXTESOL's third year of existence was initiated at the end of the Convention of October 1975 with the new elected officers: myself as President, James Taylor as First Vice President, Jerrilou Johnson as Second Vice President, Gloria Nelson as Treasurer, Ana Maria Payan as Secretary, Antonio Cabrera as Parliamentarian, Grace Scott was then elected by the Board as Ex-Officio member; she later was replaced by Vince Carraha when she left Mexico.

The first difficult and painful steps in the formation of an organization such as ours, had been taken. We were aware that the members of Executive Committees of local chapters had direct contact with members affiliated to those chapters, but there was very little contact with members of the National Executive Committee. We felt that, except for the Convention, members knew very little of our existence and our functions. Thus, we became convinced of the great need of establishing better and continuous means of communications between the Executive Committee of National MEXTESOL and all of its members in the Republic. At the same time, we did not want to have as our only function that of organizing a convention.

After deliberating on this and many other related matters, we decided to establish several objectives for our term of office:

The first and most important, as I mentioned before, was the establishment of a good media to communicate with our membership, at that time around seven hundred.

The MEXTESOL JOURNAL, a professional publication aiming to serve as a forum for disseminating new ideas and techniques in English Language Teaching, serving the specific needs of those working in Mexico, was created.

Looking for the right person to be the Editor of this JOURNAL was not an easy job, but we were lucky to find Dr. Eugene Long willing to give his time and expertise to this very ambitious project. With his advice, we appointed the rest of the Editorial Board, Josephine Claudio as Associate Editor, Paul Davies as Methodology Editor, to edit the Chalk Talk Section (a section devoted specifically to methodology and classroom activities and letters to the editor on problems of EFL teaching in Mexico) Francine Marasco as Managing Editor for Advertising, Gloria Nelson as Assistant Managing Editor to keep the finances in order and Linda Anthony and Penelope Johnson as Review Editors; later on we asked Barbara Langworthy to join us as Copy Editor.

It was a wonderful experience for all of us to embark on an operation of this kind. Finally, after all kinds of problems, delays, etc., the first issue appeared in April of 1976. I must say that we were very happy with the results. The Editor received many letters from all over the Republic, The United States and other countries praising the journal and encouraging us to continue the effort. Ruth Crymes, Editor of the TESOL QUARTERLY wrote a very impressive letter congratulating us and saying that the articles seemed to her "very practical and meaty, ..An excellent contribution to professionals in our field." We are grateful for this support. We are also very grateful to the commercial enterprises and institutions which supported us right from the beginning. They bought advertising or Institutional memberships when there was no material thing to show to them. But they believed in our dream and that dream came true. Thank you again.

At the present time three numbers have appeared, and I must say that the quality has been very much improved. Thanks to the good will and overtime work from the Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales printing shop, and the hard work and dedication of Jo Claudio, we were able to publish a convention issue, which now you must have seen. Thank you again to all those people who contributed to this worthwhile project.

Besides the JOURNAL, we wanted a publication which could be a vehicle for announcing matters of importance to all members, academic programs of different schools, Chapter programs, job opportunities and, perhaps, in the near future, one or two professional articles. The first NEWSLETTER was painfully mailed (Gloria Nelson and I licked stamps for three hours at the Post Office), but fortunately Kamila Knap agreed to be Editor of the MEXTESOL NEWSLETTER, and things have improved considerably. We have published 5 NEWSLETTERS, the last one also a convention issue, containing the bylaws of MEXTESOL, so that you will be able to read them and comment during the Business Meeting.

We have decided to use the NEWSLETTER as a means of attracting new members to our organization, advising them of the different MEXTESOL programs in the various chapters in the Republic. To this end we are mailing the MEXTESOL NEWSLETTER to more than 2000 teachers of English in Mexico, irrespective of

whether or not they are members of the organization. (The MEXTESOL JOURNAL is only sent to paid up members of NATIONAL MEXTESOL.)

Our Second objective was the drafting of the much-needed Bylaws of the Association. A Bylaws Ad-hoc committee was appointed with this special objective as its goal. Tony Cabrera as Chairman and Josephine Claudio, Richard Rossner, Jim Taylor and myself served on this committee. We met at least once a month from the beginning of the year and in the last stages we received the very valuable cooperation from Aaron Berman, former President of CATESOL (the California Chapter of TESOL) and at present working for TESOL as Exhibits and Advertising Manager, based in Mexico City.

I must tell you about several important considerations we had in presenting the Bylaws to you in their present form. These matters are very important for the future of MEXTESOL, and I hope you will consider them very carefully.

The FIRST CHAPTER deals with membership; it specifies the dues we have to pay in order to become members of MEXTESOL.

The SECOND CHAPTER specifies the duties of each officer of the NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, which as you know, is composed of a President, a First Vice President, a Second Vice President, a Treasurer, a Secretary, a Parliamentarian, and an Ex-Officio Member from the past Executive Committee.

The THIRD CHAPTER presents an idea that we feel can be very good for the future of MEXTESOL. It provides for the possibility of the Executive Committee of our organization appointing an Executive Secretary of MEXTESOL. This person would function as Secretary of MEXTESOL and Secretary to the Executive Committee, of which he or she would be an Ex-Officio non-voting member. The Executive Secretary would be, in business terms, a Director or Manager of the Association. I think it is time we have a person, appointed by the Executive Committee, to take care of the more and more demanding tasks of MEXTESOL.

If we really want to see our Association grow and provide the excellent services we demand from it, we have to have a person dedicating if not one hundred per cent of his time, at least enough time to make things work. This person would be responsible for the day-to-day operation and the well-being of our Association.

CHAPTER FOUR of the BYLAWS defines all Standing Committees of MEXTESOL, such as the Convention Committee, the Nominations Committee, the Publications Committee, the Speakers Bureau and the Membership Committee.

I am going to explain briefly the functions of each one of these committees:

The BYLAWS provide for a Convention Committee with overlapping terms, so that there will be greater continuity and efficiency from convention to convention. The committee will consist of the Second Vice President, The Exhibits and Advertising Manager, the Local Chairperson and the previous year's Second Vice President.

These people will have to select, among themselves, a chairman to be approved by the President.

A very important committee is the Nominations Committee, it will be formed by one representative of each Chapter, plus one member chosen by the President. They will convene once a year to formulate a slate of officers. This slate will be mailed to all members of MEXTESOL in the form of a Ballot. This way, every member of MEXTESOL will be able to vote for his candidates, and not only those attending the Convention. In my opinion, this will increase the participation from members throughout the Republic and we will be able to have good representation in the Executive Committee.

The Publications Committee will consist of the Editor of the MEXTESOL JOURNAL, the Editor of the MEXTESOL NEWSLETTER, any Co-editors of the preceding publications, the Exhibits and Advertising Director and two other members chosen by the President. The members of this committee will select from among themselves a Chairman, subject to the approval of the President.

The Speakers Bureau will consist of a Chairman chosen by the President or by the Executive Secretary. This person will collect, screen, and disseminate information about persons who are available for speaking, within the Republic, on topics of professional interest to MEXTESOL Chapters and/or members.

The Membership Committee will consist of a Chairman chosen by the President or the Executive Secretary. This person will maintain up-to-date lists of the membership. He will be able to provide mailing lists to any MEXTESOL Committee Chairman or the Treasurer. He may rent the list to any commercial enterprise wishing to send direct mail advertising to the membership.

The FIFTH CHAPTER sets the rules for election of officers. As I mentioned before, the new elections procedure will require members to mail their ballots before the Annual Convention. There is a problem, however: our present Constitution requires the General Assembly to elect the officers of the Executive Committee at the Annual Business Meeting. Therefore, in the Bylaws, we are providing for the President to entertain a motion from the floor to request ratification of the results of the balloting. If those results fail to be ratified, elections of officers will be held on the floor at the General Meeting. In case, later on, it is decided to conduct elections only through mail balloting, the Constitution should be amended. This would require the proposal of the amendment at least 6 months before the next Annual Convention, and its approval by at least 75% of the members attending the Annual Business Meeting.

The SIXTH CHAPTER defines the General Assembly. It sets down the rules for eligibility for delegate membership. In other words, only members in good standing will become delegates, and therefore will be able to vote on any matter brought before the Assembly meeting.

CHAPTER SEVEN defines the special relationship between Chapters and the National Organization. We want each Chapter to have its own Constitution and Bylaws.

which can be molded after MEXTESOL's own Constitution and Bylaws. Therefore, according to this Chapter, any group of 25 or more teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, may become regional Chapters of MEXTESOL.

We will require from the Chapter the following information:

- I. Statement of membership.
- II. Summary report of the Annual Meeting of the Chapter
- III. Results of the election of officers.
- IV. A summary of projects undertaken or proposed.
- V. A notice of special situations and problems in the Chapter's area.
- VI. A notice of the special needs of the Chapter.

MEXTESOL, the National organization, will cooperate with the regional affiliates, through the office of the President or the Executive Secretary, by:

1. Screening applications and keeping records of the Chapter's activities.
2. Providing counsel and appraisal.
3. Assisting and promoting local and regional meetings and programs.
4. Sending speakers to local Chapter meetings through MEXTESOL's Speakers Bureau. These speakers will be experts in specific areas of interest to the different Chapters.

We would like to receive a copy of each Chapter's yearly program, stating when they would need a speaker and on what subject. This way, the Speakers Bureau will be able to contact the different speakers and be sure they are available at the required time.

I am happy to say that there are very good possibilities of receiving a grant from the United States Information Service, which will give us the opportunity of sending speakers and pay not only transportation, but also food and lodging. We have experienced that in most cases this is very difficult, if not impossible. Especially in cases when we are trying to open a new Chapter. We hope now, with this grant, to be able to meet the demands from the various chapters for programming speakers at their local meetings.

The remaining chapters, EIGHT, NINE, and TEN, specify the rules for amending the bylaws, parliamentary authority, and a moral obligation for any member of MEXTESOL to separate any commercial interests from any MEXTESOL activity.

I am very grateful to the members of the BYLAWS COMMITTEE and Aaron Bernan

for the wonderful job they have done. During the Business Meetings, this afternoon, you will be able to make the necessary comments or changes in these bylaws, but I think that they are a definite step forward in the maturity of MEXTESOL.

The THIRD OBJECTIVE of our present Executive Committee was that of increasing membership. This in my opinion, should be a consequence of meeting the previous objectives, that is, if we become a well organized Association, if we have something to offer to our members, it should be very easy to affiliate as many members as we want to.

This year we were able to add two more chapters to our list, the Guadalajara Chapter with more than 150 members, and the Puebla Chapter with close to 50. These chapters, plus the members we already had, increased our membership to almost 1,000.

We know that groups of teachers from Morelia, Pachuca, Guanajuato, Poza Rica, Veracruz, Tijuana and many other cities in the Republic are anxious to form Chapters of MEXTESOL. I am sure that with the organization we are providing for our future Executive Committee, it will be possible to help organize Chapters in these areas and affiliate all these teachers to our organization.

I have been telling you about what has happened and what is happening at the moment. I want to talk to you now about the many objectives MEXTESOL can meet in the very near future. The number and quality of the services MEXTESOL can provide to the membership are innumerable.

FIRST, MEXTESOL could operate some sort of a placement service. We could develop a candidate file, consisting of brief resumes of qualified job seekers in the field of EFL. I think this is a necessity in our field. There are many qualified teachers looking for jobs and many institutions looking for teachers; it should be a natural thing for us to help both. The Membership Committee could be in charge of this operation.

SECOND, We have been very busy publishing the MEXTESOL JOURNAL and the MEXTESOL NEWSLETTER, but with the experience gained, and with the Publications Committee operating, we should be able to start publishing other volumes related to our profession, such as a Survey of English Language Teaching in Mexico. Fred Hess and Geoffrey Kaye have done extensive research in this field and they would probably be interested in publishing with us. Also, this time, we will try to publish some, if not all, the papers presented in this Convention in a special volume.

THIRD, We should be affiliated with other organizations whose main interest is the teaching of languages, in order to exchange information. There are organizations of this sort in many parts of the world, such as the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, the Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes, the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language, and so many others existing in the world. I think we would benefit by keeping in close contact with all of them.

FOURTH. MEXTESOL should play an important role in teacher-training programs. I am certain that our Association could organize these programs in conjunction with TESOL in the United States or IATEFL in the United Kingdom. I see a lot of possibilities of doing a good job in this area.

FIFTH. We wanted very much to organize meetings of Special Interest groups during this convention. Unfortunately, there has not been enough time. I hope the next Executive Committee will start working immediately in this area. It should be of great advantage to all members of MEXTESOL, because they would be able to attend meetings geared specifically to the areas they are interested in. Some of the areas of special interest that have been suggested to me are the following:

English as a second or foreign language for pre-primary children.

English as a second or foreign language for primary students.

English as a second or foreign language for secondary students.

English as a second or foreign language in adult education.

Bilingual and bicultural education.

Applied linguistics.

English Literature for Spanish Speakers.

Meetings of the Special Interest Groups could be held during our Annual Convention and also, perhaps, during meetings of the local chapters.

SIXTH. I am convinced that the growth and progress of MEXTESOL depends upon the health of its regional affiliates. We should maintain close contact with all of them, helping in every possible way. I know that our new BYLAWS provide for this kind of cooperation and I am confident that the new Executive Committee will be aware of this fact.

SEVENTH. We all know that a professional organization should not be primarily concerned with making money. At the same time, without it we would not be able to meet the objectives we have set for MEXTESOL. A member who registers for NATIONAL MEXTESOL pays only \$50.00 and he receives 4 copies of the MEXTESOL JOURNAL, 10 copies of the MEXTESOL NEWSLETTER, plus all kind of information and notices of programs, conventions, etc. It is obvious that it would be impossible to even meet the printing costs of these publications with the dues we are collecting now. We have had many dedicated professionals who have accepted to go to chapter meetings and conventions, and in many cases, they have provided personal funds for the work we have been asking them to do. It is time we started paying expenses at least, and eventually even rewarding these people with an honorarium. I am, then, proposing a careful study of our budget for the coming years, which will depend on the services we think we will be able to offer to our members, and in accordance with that, set the dues we will have to charge for membership.

We have been able to sell advertising in the MEXTESOL JOURNAL, and that has helped us financially very much. However, I think this income should be used for the JOURNAL, to cover its own budget and make it a self-supporting publication. Something similar should occur with the NEWSLETTER. Here I am very happy to communicate to you that the United States Information Service, through our friend Pete Cocere, has agreed to print the NEWSLETTER at no cost for us. This will save us quite a considerable amount of money. And here a special note of thanks to Pete.

So, the future looks very promising for MEXTESOL, if we all work hard to make it come true. I am sure that in a very short time we will be able to see many of these, at the present time dreams, become a reality.

I have to thank all of those people who worked very hard all this year to make things happen: Jim Taylor bringing more and more members to MEXTESOL; Jerrilou Johnson organizing this convention with the very valuable help of Mike Long, the academic Chairman; Gloria Nelson, who succeeded in keeping the money away from us and worked extremely hard in every single project we undertook this year; Tony Cabrera as the most strict Parliamentarian I have met in my life, Ana Marfa Payán as Secretary and later on, Ninfa Gonzalez as Assistant Secretary; Grace Scott, who was with us for a short time this year before she moved to Washington; Vince Carrubba sharing with us his experience and wisdom; Gene Long doing a wonderful job with the JOURNAL and Jo Claudio working very closely with Gene on this job; Francine Marasco going after advertisers and selling what at first was only an intangible promise; Linda Anthony for her reviews, assisted by Penney Johnson. Paul Davies for his section, Chalk Talk. Kamila Knap as Editor of the MEXTESOL NEWSLETTER; and Gladys Gudino as the first employed person of MEXTESOL doing secretarial work and being responsible for the mailing of all our publications.

Some days ago I was talking with Michael Scott, the Director of the Instituto Anglo-mexicano de Guadalajara and a group of teachers from the Guadalajara Chapter about MEXTESOL's activities, problems of the Convention, and many other things, and a person asked us... Why do you do all this?... Are you being paid or something?... Upon trying to answer this question, many thoughts came to my mind. I remember when I was finishing my studies in Architecture and I had doubts about whether I really wanted to work as an Architect after all, or to continue teaching Spanish and English, as I had done to support myself up until that time. Unfortunately, the image I had of language-teaching and language teachers at that time was not the greatest. And I am sure that many of you would have echoed my feelings. Most of our English teachers did not present the professional image I wanted to be associated with. In my own case, after many years of taking English courses in various schools as part of a regular program, I did not communicate well in English. I felt the teaching was somehow deficient.

Although my views at that time did not convince me in the end, and I decided to dedicate myself to language teaching, they were instrumental in my having joined the ranks of all those many present who have taken up the heavy task of working to upgrade our profession, to give it the professional image it deserves, and make every English teacher proud of his or her work and able to share experiences, problems and interests with others through MEXTESOL. At the same time, the sense of vitality, of youth-

fulness, idealism and social mission, makes all of us work with enthusiasm and affection for this organization...

So after expressing these thoughts, it occurred to me that there is another important reason; we work in MEXTESOL because it is fun.

And so, to all of those present, I hope that in addition to learning and sharing in this Convention, you will have lots of fun.

Thank you.