

# REPORT ON THE 1978

From ordering breakfast in the morning to bargaining for souvenirs in the evening, many of the English teachers attending the Twelfth Annual TESOL Convention (present writer included) got a small taste of what their limited English speaking students experience from day to day living in a foreign language environment. The 1978 convention, which attracted over three thousand teachers, administrators, researchers and publishers from forty-eight countries, was held from April 4th through 9th at the Hotel María Isabel in Mexico City. This marked the first time in the organization's history that its annual convention was held outside the United States.

Although a renewed empathy for their students was one benefit the non-Spanish speakers could take home with them, the convention presented a program as large and diverse as the Mexican hosts were hospitable. There were almost 250 presentations (selected from over 400 proposals) during the five and a half days. At times twenty or more workshops, colloquia, minicourses, and papers were being presented simultaneously, making it very difficult to decide what to attend. Graduate students had a particularly wide selection, with breakfast seminars providing a chance for them to meet informally with leaders in the field, chosen on the basis of a poll taken among graduate students prior to the convention. They could also take advantage of a special graduate student seminar, designed to give them an opportunity to exchange ideas and insights on their thesis/dissertation topics. In addition, an employment clearinghouse was open daily for job hunters to examine descriptions of job openings and arrange for interviews.

A publishers' exhibition, in which over forty publishers participated, provided *convencionistas* with the opportunity to examine the latest published materials for TESL/TEFL/TESD. Many of the publishers scheduled commercial demonstrations of

their materials so that one could see just how they were intended to be used. These demonstrations ranged in format and subject matter from conventional discussions, such as the one on how to teach reading to advanced students by *Libreria Britanica*, to a demonstration of jazz chanting, the setting to jazz music of colloquial English as a teaching tool, by Oxford University Press and a presentation on how to use instant photography in the classroom by the

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Polaroid Corporation. In addition to the demonstrations, many of the publishers scheduled times when their authors or editors would be in the publishers' booths to answer questions concerning their materials.

While the days were filled with official business and academic pursuits, the evenings were reserved for socializing. Tuesday evening, MEXTESOL, the Mexico affiliate, hosted a Margarita Fiesta at the *Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales*, (the 1978 TESOL host institution). The party was complete with mariachi bands, folk dancing, and free margaritas. Friday evening was the Presidential Banquet, again with music and folk dancing, followed by a dance in the hotel ballroom. Publishers' cocktail parties filled in the evenings in between, and it became good sport among convention goers to find creative new ways to wangle invitations from publishers. A travel desk, set up in the hotel lobby, arranged half-day city tours for those who elected to take the time away from the convention. But the highlight of the social calendar was a special performance of the Ballet Foklorico at the *Palacio de Bellas Artes* on Saturday evening. The troupe

# TESOL CONVENTION

by Thomas G. Huebner

lived up to its international reputation, but just the opportunity to see the Palacio, with its Tiffany glass proscenium curtain, was worth the price of the ticket.

All of this, however, was accessory to the core of the convention: the presentations and meetings. The number and variety of the presentations make it impossible to do justice to any one of them in a review of this length, but a quick glance at some of the areas covered may entice some readers to pursue one or two of these areas further on their own.

Mornings were usually reserved for workshops, colloquia, and minicourses of from three to twelve hours, afternoons for language minicourses and the presentation of 30-minute papers. For those *convencionistas* wishing to get a start on a foreign language while observing methodology from the other side of the desk, there were minicourses in Introductory French, Spanish, and German, using the Silent Way, C-L/CLL, Comprehension Approach, and Suggestopedia methods. For others, there were 12-hour workshops and colloquia such as Eskey, Beebe, Buckingham and Marshall's "Applied Linguistics for the Classroom," which introduced such concepts as competence vs. performance, deep vs. surface structure, and behaviorist vs. cognitive code learning models to classroom teachers with little or no formal linguistics training. For researchers, a colloquium on "Classroom Centered Research" by Fanselow and Allwright provided a forum to discuss conceptual and methodological issues in L2 research, and a workshop by Flahive and Perkins on "Research Designs and Statistics for Second Language Research" introduced researchers to widely used experimental designs and statistical techniques. Roger Anderson chaired a 12-hour colloquium on "Acquisition/Use of Spanish/English as a First/Second Language, a particularly timely topic in light of the convention site and the growing urgency to address the question of language education for the large Spanish speaking population in

the U.S. Teachers and researchers were brought together to discuss what each had to offer the other in Scovel, Schacter, and Bruder's minicourse on "Introducing Teachers to Language Learning Research."

Other workshops and papers covered almost all aspects of language teaching and language learning, from the axiomatic assumptions about language, education, and the brain, through procedural questions of materials selection, preparation, and presentation to implementational questions of tricks, techniques, and teaching aids. A number of papers dealt with our assumptions about the nature of language and their implications for language acquisition. Patricia Carrell's paper, for example, proposed that the linguistic distinction between assertion and presupposition is real and must be acquired by foreign language learners, while Schacter, Rutherford and Watabe reported that the distinction between subject prominent and topic prominent languages is one which manifests itself in student errors. Schumann examined the analogy between second language learning and pidginization, creolization and decreolization, while two papers, Selinker and Lamendella's and Sheen's, explored the nature of fossilization in second language acquisition. Seliger looked at correction behavior in L2 learners to gain insights into their sentence generating strategies. Huebner examined variation using a sociolinguistic paradigm and concluded that interlanguage is systematic. All of these papers looked at language learner production for insights into the learning process.

The relationship between politics and TESOL was examined by Judd, who explained how national language policy affects attitudes of teachers, administrators and students. Lupo and Alatis showed in a very specific way how national and international interests and federal commitment of resources affects educators' decisions regarding language programs in Florida.

Lamendella's "The Neutral Basis of Pattern Practice" explained the failure of pattern practice as a teaching technique in neurological terms. During repetitious tasks, the brain's higher level language processing systems simply tune out.

At the methodological level, there were explanations and descriptions of methodologies employed in various programs, such as Bode and Sferlazza's report on the Silent Way used in an intensive program at USC, Mohan's description of task-centered language programs in Canada, and Schwabe's paper on a self-monitoring program at U.C.—Davis. There were also experimental designs involving methodology, such as O'Brien's on the suggestopedic method, Ryan's on the C—L/CLL method, and Samii's on an integrative approach to TEFL.

McFadyen addressed the problem of when, where, and how to introduce reading into a bilingual education program. Papers on reading also included reports on research designed to help understand what we really do when we read, such as Araman's and Reitzel and Limtrakorn's. Descriptions of reading programs included Olshain's of a self-teaching program in Israel. Presentations involving materials included Crymes' workshop, "Vocabulary Instruction," which focused on the development of vocabulary exercises based on reading texts. Ebel's paper concentrated on materials and techniques at the elementary school level. McAlpin's "Overhead Projectors and Language Laboratories in Teaching Reading" is self-explanatory, while Selekmán and Kleinmann advocated the inclusion of a communicative interaction/problem solving activity into the reading lesson.

In other subject areas, Peppin and Krumm described the Georgetown University American Language Institute's use of charts, graphs, and tables from newspapers, journals, and academic texts to teach writing, while Cramer presented a workshop in creative writing for the ESL/EFL student. Teaching grammar in an interesting way received attention in MATSOL College Roundtable's discussion on imaginative language exercises and in vanNaerssen's ESL grammar games."

Some of the most imaginative presentations of the convention were to be found among those which explored new techniques

for teaching ESL/EFL. In addition to papers on using conventional teaching aids such as overheads, language labs, flannel boards, and tape recorders, there were presentations on the use of puppetry (Jennings and Tamura), jokes (Trachtenberg), soap operas (Black), news broadcasts (Brinton and Gaskill), films (Levert and Chasles), and computers (Strei and Otto). There was also a description of BYU—Hawaii's individualized English skills resource center by Pack, and a British Council film on the use of "activity day" in language learning.

Other papers included those on teacher training, testing, teaching Standard English as a second dialect, and bilingual education, with descriptions of bilingual education programs in Micronesia by Gibson and Emensiochl, in Hawaii by Oksendahl, and in Pennsylvania by McDivitt. Papers on English for special purposes included, in addition to the expected English for Science (Bogges and Brownscombe) and engineering (Takubo) students, English for bankers (Peterson and Kott), English for job applicants (Goldberg), and English for Iranian army helicopter pilots and mechanics (Fri-day and McLeod).

Plenary sessions were held every day just before noon. Two worth special mention were the panel chaired by Karl Diller consisting of Gattegno, Racle, and Winitz on three methods for language teaching, and a retrospective look at TESOL over the past twelve years by H. D. Brown, editor of *Language Learning*, and Crymes, past editor of the *TESOL Quarterly*. The diversity of TESOL as an organization was apparent from these papers. If this year's convention is any indication of the directions the organization will be taking in the next twelve years, the editors of those two journals will have a considerable task to perform at the 1990 convention.

Abstracts of the papers presented at the convention are printed in the convention program book. Many of the papers will be printed in *On TESOL '78* (Blatchford and Schacter, editors). Other papers may be available upon request from the authors, whose addresses are in the convention book.

The 1979 convention will be held in Boston. See you there.