

HOW

Volume 33, Number 1, pages 12 - 17

<https://doi.org/10.19183/how.33.1.919>



On Transformation in the ELT Community: Words from the President of ASOCOPI

JHONATAN VÁSQUEZ-GUARNIZO*

Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia

Tunja, Boyacá, Colombia

jhonatan.vasquez@uptc.edu.co

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0630-6321>

How to cite this article (APA, 7th ed.):

Vásquez-Guarnizo, J. (2026). On transformation in the ELT community: Words from the president of ASOCOPI. *HOW*, 33(1), 12- 17. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.33.1.919>

On Transformation in the ELT Community: Words from the President of ASOCOPI

Transformation is the result of a collective commitment of individuals rather than a single effort to move things forward. If ASOCOPI is “*you, me, and all of us*” then transformation is not something we initiate but something we inevitably inhabit. We understand transformation as an ongoing process through which an academic community remains open to listening, learning, unlearning, relearning, and co-constructing knowledges. Thus, ASOCOPI has been a space of belonging, resistance, and hope; not only of inclusion, but of epistemic justice.

To begin with, the ways we name ourselves also reflect this ongoing process. In this sense, we have come to understand ourselves as *English-language teachers*. For this Association, the connotation of this term does not seek to replace previous understandings, but rather to expand them, allowing for more inclusive and nuanced ways of engaging with language, identity, and pedagogy. As the Colombian Association of English-language Teachers (ASOCOPI), we aim to serve as a forum that fosters professional collaboration, promotes high academic standards, and encourages the exchange of ideas and resources within the ELT community. In this regard, a *Statutory Reform* took place last year, through which six areas of action were approved by the General Assembly to promote inclusive participation and equitable access to knowledges. These areas are: a) Education; b) Culture; c) Science, Technology, and Innovation; d) Social Development; e) Support for Nonprofit Organizations; and f) Support for Educational Initiatives and Entrepreneurship.

Rather than representing a mere structural adjustment, this reform was understood as part of the ongoing transformation of ASOCOPI, as it opened new possibilities for how we come to be understood and to position our academic identity within and beyond our community. In this sense, these areas do not work as isolated domains, but as interconnected spaces through which ASOCOPI continues cultivating, supporting and treasuring the ELT profession in Colombia.

Regarding *Education*, this transformation is also evident in the expansion of professional opportunities we offered throughout the year at ASOCOPI, which included webinars, express workshops, and diploma courses. These opportunities moved beyond isolated events and pointed toward a more sustained and accessible model of engagement, where continuous learning became a shared and ongoing process within the ELT community. Equally significant is the diversification of the perspectives addressed within these academic spaces such as cultural identity, masculinities, queer literacies, contextualized materials, socioemotional learning, among others. This reflected a transformation toward more critical, situated, and socially responsive approaches to English language teaching. Thus, knowledges were not only transmitted, but collectively co-constructed.

The 60th ASOCOPI Annual and 6th International Conference, held in Santa Marta, further illustrated this transformation through the diversity of its participants, and with a total of 113 presentations. The presence of English-language teachers from 15 departments of Colombia (Antioquia, Atlántico, Bogotá D.C., Boyacá, Caquetá, Caldas, Casanare, Córdoba, Huila, Magdalena, Nariño, Quindío, Santander, Valle del Cauca, and Cauca) and 7 countries (Argentina, Brazil, Canada,

Chile, the United States, the Philippines, and Japan) around the world pointed to a more inclusive and representative academic community.

We also had the honor of welcoming international plenary speakers, including *Veronico N. Tarrayo*, Ph.D., from the Philippines, and *Marjorie Campo Ringle*, Ph.D., from the United States, alongside the participation of Colombian plenary speakers *José Vicente Abad Olaya*, Ph.D., *Astrid Núñez-Pardo*, Ph.D., *Isabel Tejada Sánchez*, Ph.D., and *David Alfonso Suaza Cardozo*, a school teacher from Garzón, Huila. An academic community grounded in dialogue does not remain static; it evolves, expands, and, in doing so, transforms.

Transformation is not possible without the support of our sponsors, who have placed their trust in us: *HP, World YMCA, YMCA, the British Council, Intrax Education, Lingo Quest, Wisdom, and National Geographic Learning*. Although we valued their financial assistance, their support reflected a shared commitment to strengthening English language education and fostering spaces where knowledges can circulate more broadly and equitably.

ASOCOPI also expanded the circulation of knowledges beyond formal presentations and traditional academic formats. This year, we included some interviews as part of the conference experience which allowed more personal, situated, and accessible exchanges, where diverse voices and experiences were acknowledged and valued. In this way, interviews became not only a means of documentation, but also a dialogic practice that humanized academic work and strengthened the sense of community that characterizes our Association.

During the celebration of ASOCOPI's 60th anniversary, we counted on the presence of former ASOCOPI presidents, including *Ricardo Romero-Medina* (1995; 2003–2005), *Rigoberto Castillo* (2006), *Melba Libia Cárdenas-Beltrán* (2007–2010), *Álvaro Hernán Quintero-Polo* (2011–2012), *Carmen Helena Guerrero-Nieto* (2013–2016), *Harold Castañeda-Peña* (2017–2018), *Carlo Granados Beltrán* (2019–2020), *Jairo Enrique Castañeda-Trujillo* (2021–2022), and *Claudia María Uribe-Hoyos* (2023–2024), whose leadership has been fundamental in shaping the Association across time. Additionally, we honored *Harold Castañeda-Peña*, Ph.D., with the ASOCOPI 2025 Clare de Silva Award, in recognition of his outstanding trajectory and sustained contributions to English language teacher education, research, and academic leadership in Colombia and beyond.

The participation of ASOCOPI in cultural events and academic activities across different territories of the country further broaden this transformation. Last year, we had the honor of being invited to various educational institutions, as well as to the Embassy of Canada in Colombia and the Embassy of the United States in Colombia, where the Association extended its presence beyond formal academic settings. In addition, we were honored to participate in the 2025 Global English Education China Assembly in Beijing, where a Memorandum of Understanding was signed.

In relation to *Science, Technology and Innovation*, we were honored to receive support from *Hewlett-Packard Colombia, World YMCA, and YMCA Colombia* for printing the Special Issue of *HOW Journal*, which contributed to expanding access to teachers' voices and fostering a broader circulation of knowledge within our academic community. Transformation was further enriched by *Harold Johan Ortigón Reyes*, whose creative contribution visually embodies the spirit and cover of this publication. Additionally, this process was accompanied by the renewal of *HOW Journal's* logo, a move that not

only reconfigures its visual identity but also reinforces its commitment to counting on a biannual, free, open-access publication for diverse voices, both national and international, in the field of ELT.

In the same spirit, this is an opportunity to extend our gratitude to *Edgar Lucero-Babatina*, who served since September 4th, 2018, as HOW Journal's Editor; and *José David Largo-Rodríguez*, who joined on September 5th, 2019, as HOW Journal's Assistant to the Editor. Although they are no longer part of the team, their dedication and long-standing commitment have consolidated the journal's trajectory and impact, leaving a lasting mark on its development. As part of this ongoing collective transformation, this is also an opportunity to welcome *Silvia Lucia Molina-Higuera*, new HOW Journal's Editor, and *Elianna María Serna Corrales*, HOW Journal's Assistant to the Editor. We trust that their knowledges will continue opening new paths for dialogue within an academic community that is committed to understanding and engaging with differences.

In terms of *Social Development*, ASOCOPI has knocked on several doors to establish alliances, seek funding, and identify opportunities that enable us to design and implement initiatives aligned at strengthening the quality of education in vulnerable communities. At present, we have held meetings to consolidate efforts with programs, with the purpose of co-constructing projects that respond to local needs and contribute to more equitable access to educational opportunities.

Within the scope of *Support for Non-Profit Organizations*, ASOCOPI has engaged in conversations with other non-profit entities to provide academic, pedagogical, and logistical support for various initiatives, as well as to develop educational projects related to English language teaching. Particularly, a collaborative partnership has been established with the YMCA Colombia through which both organizations have joined efforts to strengthen teacher education, promote English language learning, and contribute to social transformation.

In the last area, *Support for Educational Initiatives and Entrepreneurship*, ASOCOPI launched this new area of action by supporting four English-language teachers with their entrepreneurship during the 60th National and 6th International ASOCOPI Conference in Santa Marta. This support included a fully sponsored stand, allowing not only their knowledges and work to be shared with the academic community, but also giving visibility to teacher-led projects that contribute to strengthening ASOCOPI's mission.

In line with these efforts, ASOCOPI has also strengthened its presence in digital spaces, recognizing the role of social media in expanding the reach of the Association and fostering greater engagement with the ELT community. Through platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, ASOCOPI has shared webinars, conference sessions, and academic content, creating more accessible spaces for keeping in touch with diverse knowledges. This growing digital presence not only reflects the Association's commitment to visibility and communication but also contributes to co-constructing a more connected and participatory academic community. Similarly, we have taken steps to strengthen ASOCOPI's sustainability and operational capacity. Last year, we established an institutional mobile line exclusively for ASOCOPI, enhancing communication and supporting the coordination of its activities.

In the same way, ASOCOPI benefited from the support of nine interns, whose contributions were essential to the Association. Three of them (*Juana Sofía Rodríguez Reina*, *María Camila Suaza Acevedo*, and *Melissa Liney Vega Sotomonte*) joined during the first semester of the year, while the remaining

six contributed during the second semester. Of these, four supported ASOCOPI's administrative processes (*Juana Botero Cárdenas*, *Nicolás Candia Roa*, *Karen Niño Rodríguez*, and *Camilo Rojas Castellanos*), and two contributed to the work of the HOW Journal (*Eliana Serna Corrales* and *Emigdio Cáceres Acero*).

As part of this collective transformation, we would also like to recognize the invaluable work of *Miryam Cristina Vera Peña*, ASOCOPI's Administrative Manager, whose leadership, dedication support and commitment were fundamental to the Association, accompanying much of the administrative work that took place behind the scenes.

All in all, last year was marked by collective efforts, meaningful collaborations, and a shared commitment to strengthening our academic community through transformation. As we move forward, we remain committed to fostering more inclusive, connected, and context-responsive practices that continue to shape the future of English language teaching in Colombia. Thank you for believing in us and for continuing to co-construct an academic community grounded in dialogue, belonging, and epistemic justice.

To conclude, the upcoming 61st ASOCOPI Annual and 7th International Conference, to be held Universidad Industrial de Santander in Bucaramanga from October 1st to 3rd, 2026, offers a renewed opportunity to keep on learning from each other. On behalf of the National Board of Directors, we would like to invite our academic community to continue sharing experiences and co-constructing knowledges that respond to the diverse realities of English language teaching in Colombia. We are looking forward to coming together in dialogue and continuing to weave knowledges across our diverse contexts.