

A large, iridescent soap bubble is the central focus, floating in a dense forest of green trees. The bubble's surface reflects a spectrum of colors, including purple, blue, green, and yellow. The background is a lush, green forest with many thin tree trunks and a thick canopy of leaves.

Korea TESOL Happenings and News

Summer 2026

Korea TESOL Happenings and News



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Cover Photo: Greg Lewis

Member Spotlight

This issue's Spotlight is on a KOTESOL member who is no newbie to either Korea or KOTESOL. You may have seen her giving a presentation at a KOTESOL conference, or leading a Gyeonggi Chapter event, or as a vendor at the international conference's Marketplace. Learn more about this super-active KOTESOL member through our recent interview with Kristina Kauss. — HAN



HAN: Thank you, Kristina, for arranging time for this interview with *Happenings and News*. As we regularly start off our Member Spotlight interviews, would you begin by telling us about the life of Kristina Kauss before she came to Korea?

Kristina: Hi. I grew up in rural Manitoba, Canada. I first came to Korea in 1997, so I will have to do a deep dive into my memory banks for this question. I moved to Winnipeg and finished high school in the early 90s, gained a liberal arts degree in 1997, and came to Korea for the first time in late '97.

HAN: What was it that brought you to Korea? It seems that everyone has an interesting story about their teleportation to this peninsula, and each story is different. What's yours?

Kristina: I was originally looking at teaching in Japan but saw an ad in the university career center, did a little more research, and decided Korea was a better fit after working a summer in Europe in a German work-exchange program for university graduates.

HAN: Where and what levels have you taught during your years in Korea?

Kristina: I have taught elementary, middle school, and high school students in Gyeonggi-do and Chungcheongnam-do—first in a hagwon and later in public schools. I am now at a rural public elementary school. In between my first years at a hagwon and my later years at public schools, I taught at a few universities in Korea. I really enjoyed working at Gunsan National University, but [sigh] funding cuts. I also trained teachers—Korean and EPIK teachers—in modern teaching approaches for the Gyeonggi-do Office of Education.

HAN: You have recently been working on a Master of Education degree. Could you tell us about the program you selected and how satisfying it is?

Kristina: I am in the Master of Education program, on the Advanced Teaching Techniques track, through the University of the People, which is a fully and internationally accredited online university based in California that believes quality education should also be affordable.



Kristina with a birthday tree and students' projects

HAN: What area, or areas, of TESOL are most interesting to you? I know you've done a number of presentations at KOTESOL events.

Kristina: I am particularly interested in project-based learning (PBL), inclusive and differentiated instruction, learner motivation, language acquisition, and curriculum development in EFL contexts. Much of my work focuses on translating research into practical classroom strategies that support mixed-proficiency and neurodiverse learners. I am especially interested in student voice, learner agency, communicative language teaching, and the use of

technology to create meaningful learning experiences. My master's studies have further strengthened my interest in connecting educational theory to effective classroom practice.

HAN: What do you find most rewarding about teaching EFL in Korea? Most frustrating? Most enjoyable? Most exasperating?

Kristina: The most rewarding aspect of teaching EFL in Korea is seeing students gain confidence in expressing themselves in English. One memorable example was a university class where students created and played English-language board games for their final exam. At the end of the 90-minute session, I pointed out to the students (who had begun the semester apprehensive about speaking English) that they had spent the entire exam communicating only in English. Their surprise and pride were priceless.

The most frustrating aspect is balancing meaningful language learning with exam-oriented expectations, especially in mixed-ability classrooms.

The most enjoyable part is the creativity involved in designing projects, adapting materials, and helping students connect English to their interests and experiences.

The most exasperating challenge is seeing students with learning difficulties go unsupported because of social stigma around assessment and diagnosis. This has strengthened my commitment to inclusive teaching and differentiation.

HAN: You were on the International Conference Committee for the first time this year. Tell us about that experience.

Kristina: Serving on the International Conference Committee as part of the Marketplace Planning Team was a rewarding experience. I helped with pre-conference planning, recruiting marketplace participants, and advising based on my experience as a vendor. During the conference, I checked in

with vendors while also balancing roles as an organizer, presenter, attendee, vendor, and chapter president. The experience gave me a greater appreciation for the teamwork required to run a successful conference.

HAN: Yes, at this year's conference, you also had a display in the Marketplace area that was full of baked goods and T-shirts with interesting wording on them. Where do you find the time for everything?

Kristina: [Laughing] I was baking Sunday through Thursday to prepare for the conference—baking and packaging always take up the most time. The other items were already made, and it was only a matter of which items to bring in hopes that they would sell. I have a few hobbies, and I keep myself busy when I am not at work or working on my master's degree.

HAN: How did you first get involved in KOTESOL?

Kristina: I think it was when I worked in Nonsan at Konyang University in 2009–10. I had a great mentor teacher, Kim Dammers. He introduced me to KOTESOL, and I have been involved ever since when in the country.

HAN: And now you're the president of the Gyeonggi Chapter. What are your plans for your tenure at the chapter's helm?

Kristina: As president of the Gyeonggi Chapter, I hope to continue providing meaningful professional development opportunities while expanding outreach to educators throughout the region.

I am particularly interested in promoting practical, classroom-focused professional development in areas such as project-based learning, inclusive education, technology-enhanced language learning, and learner-centered pedagogy. I have a great team with the GyoKo executive, and there have already been some really interesting online seminars for AI tool use (such as NotebookLM) and integration into the classroom at all levels, as well as on research and its application.

Most importantly, I want the chapter to remain a welcoming community where educators can connect, share ideas, and grow professionally.

HAN: You have presented at numerous conferences and workshops over the years. What advice would you give to teachers who are considering presenting for the first time?

Kristina: Many teachers assume they need to be experts or researchers to present, but some of the most valuable presentations come from classroom teachers sharing practical ideas that worked with their students. Start small, focus on something you are passionate about, and remember that your experiences can help other educators. KOTESOL provides a very supportive environment for first-time presenters, and it is a great way to grow professionally and connect with colleagues who share similar interests.



Kristina manning her Sweet Treats table at the IC 2026 Marketplace



Kristina presenting at Jeonju Chapter

HAN: After nearly three decades in education, what continues to motivate and inspire you as a teacher?

Kristina: The students. Every year brings new personalities, challenges, and opportunities to learn. I enjoy finding creative ways to help students succeed and watching them gain confidence in themselves and their abilities. I am also motivated by the fact that education is always evolving. Whether it is new research, new technologies, or new approaches to teaching, there is always something new to learn and explore, which keeps the profession exciting and meaningful.

HAN: What do you see yourself doing in five or so years from now?

Kristina: Ideally, I would like to be at the same elementary school, watching the kids grow into confident future leaders. Alternatively, it would be interesting to be back to a university setting, but hopefully not too far from where I am now—I like my countryside apartment. I am also considering pursuing a Doctorate of Education if I find a program that is worth my time and is set up in a way my neurodivergent brain can manage.

HAN: Do you have any words for our readers as we wrap up this interview?

Kristina: I would encourage readers to stay curious, keep learning, and never underestimate the impact they have on their students. Some of the most meaningful moments in teaching come from small successes that may not seem significant at the time. I also encourage educators to connect with colleagues through professional communities such as KOTESOL. Teaching is a lifelong learning journey, and we grow best when we learn from and support one another.

Interviewed by **David Shaffer**.

Member Spotlight

Chapter News

Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu Chapter

By Gabriela Villafradez, President

Here is a condensed update on what the BGD Chapter has been up to this second quarter. In April, we happily used the grant awarded to us by the Busan Global City Foundation to fund our cultural day trip in East Busan. The day started with a leisurely coastal walk from Songjeong Beach to Haeundae Beach. The weather was beautiful, albeit too hot, and the scenery was breathtaking. We walked nonstop until we reached the lively restaurant area for a well-deserved lunch. We had planned to have traditional Korean food, but it seems that that was everyone else's plan too, so most places were full. We opted for a hearty lunch at Gorilla Bar, a foreign-food bar, and enjoyed its Western-style menu. Afterwards, we rushed to a hanbok rental shop near the old railway. Here, we were able to experience traditional Korean attire. The colour and size options suited everyone perfectly, and we enjoyed a breezy, warm afternoon in Haeundae while taking pictures in our hanboks

We recommend this itinerary to everyone travelling down to Busan.



The KOTESOL Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu Chapter officers enjoying a productive meeting with their colleagues from the JALT Fukuoka Chapter



BGD Chapter members basking in a hanbok moment in Busan

In May, we focused exclusively on the Korea TESOL International Conference. It was a wonderful experience to work with the International Conference Committee, as well as to see familiar faces and meet new people.

June began with a weekend packed with informative academic talks. On Saturday, June 6, Dr. Meerbek Kudaibergenov presented his work and expertise on “Social Approaches in ELT Research: Ethnography, Duo-Ethnography, and Narrative Inquiry” in a collaboration with the Research SIG. All attendees left inspired to conduct research of their own and even plan to apply some reflective practices in their classroom. On Sunday, June 7, Dr. David Shaffer shared his knowledge on “A How-to to Research Report Writing.” A great talk that went over half an hour beyond its scheduled time because our participants engaged with the material and the speaker, and it was only concluded because we had another meeting. We closed this month's activities with a meeting with our JALT Fukuoka teammates about our Autumn Symposium to discuss programme and venue logistics. The event is shaping up nicely, and from the BGD end, we have all of our speakers confirmed and airplane tickets in the bag.

Daejeon Chungcheong Chapter

By Rosemary Sorg, Membership Coordinator

April: Blossoms and Big Screens

On April 4, the scene shifted to the serene landscapes of Sejong. Though the day began with a persistent drizzle, the “DCC luck” prevailed. While we enjoyed a delightful light brunch at the Grocery Store Market Cafe, the clouds parted just in time for our Spring Walk.

As the sun emerged, we wandered through a canopy of breathtaking cherry blossoms, the perfect backdrop for meaningful conversation and fresh air. The afternoon continued with a culinary journey at Fastars Garden Place, where we indulged in a rustic Italian-style feast.

For the grand finale, several members traveled to Daejeon for a cinematic escape, catching a screening of “Project Hail Mary.” It was a day that perfectly captured the spirit of our chapter: a balance of intellectual curiosity, appreciation for nature, and genuine friendship.



Rosemary Sorg (left), Woo-Jin Park, and Tory Thorkelson (right) working hard at the 2026 International Conference

May: Conference, Collaboration, and Colleagues

In May, several of our members volunteered and attended the KOTESOL International Conference. Volunteers assisted with food

Fukuoka JALT –
Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu KOTESOL
Joint Symposium
**Collaboration Across
Borders**

September 12, 2026 | Fukuoka, Japan
Seinan Gakuin University Community Center, Nishijin

9:45 Opening Ceremony
10:00 Plenary 1 (Fukuoka Chapter)
11:15 Concurrent Session 1
KOTESOL - Dr. Bryan Meadows (research)
12:00 Concurrent Session 2
KOTESOL - Dr. Natalie Thibault (workshop)
12:45 Concurrent Session 3
KOTESOL - Dr. Daniel Svoboda (research)
13:15 Lunch
14:15 Concurrent Session 4
KOTESOL - Maiah Hollender, Sarah Slagle & KC Washington (panel)
15:00 Concurrent Session 5
KOTESOL - Dr. Kevin Kester (hybrid, research)
15:45 Concurrent Session 6
KOTESOL - Ashley Ford-Mihashi (workshop)
16:30 Plenary 2 - Dr. Nathanael Rudolph & Dr. Miso Kim (Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu Chapter)
17:30 Closing Ceremony
18:30 Dinner

Entrance Fee
20,000 won
Free for KOTESOL members

koreatesol.org/busan bgkotesol@gmail.com

Looking ahead, we will be taking a short break in July, and returning fully fueled and ready for our fun summer events in August. We warmly invite you to our 3rd Annual Beach Hop in Busan on Saturday, August 8. This time, we will be visiting Busan’s eastern beaches, surfers’ paradise, Songjeong, and lively Haeundae. You can join us for the whole day (10 a.m. – 5 p.m.) or jump in where/when possible. Finally, help us bid farewell to the summer holiday by joining us in powerful Daegu for an afternoon of networking and city exploring on Friday, August 21. We will be going to Suseong Lake (Suseong-mot) to try Daegu’s famous duck paddle boats, then dining at a local restaurant, and concluding the evening with drinks at a jazz bar (the first drinks are on us). For more information about all of our events, please email us at bgtesol@gmail.com. We look forward to welcoming you to Gyeongsang.



service, the information desk, and the DCC Chapter table. Attendees thoroughly enjoyed the conference, participating in sessions, networking with colleagues, socializing, and exploring the Marketplace. We hope that even more members will have the opportunity to enjoy the conference next year, both as attendees and volunteers.



Michael Peacock (left), Michael Free (center) and Meerbek Kudaibergenov (right) with the hard-working conference volunteer team

The Journey Continues

Our calendar is only just beginning to fill! We are looking forward to a year of milestones, including:

- September: Our highly anticipated, and hopefully sun-drenched, Chapter Picnic
- November: The return of our signature Thanksgiving Dinner
- December: The festive End-of-the-Year Party

The DCC Chapter is more than just a professional organization; it is a community. Whether you are a veteran educator or a prospective member looking for a home away from home, we invite you to join us for our next adventure. Stay tuned—the best is yet to come!

Gangwon Chapter

By Michael Free, President

What has Gangwon been up to? Quite a lot, as it turns out! Here's the full update.

Recent Events

Martin Sketchley gave a Zoom workshop on April 10 titled "Getting Students Writing Post-AI." Martin shared his experience using blog posts to get undergraduate students writing while integrating AI into the process. It was a timely and practical session that generated lively discussion.

Michael Free presented at ICETT 2026 (12th International Conference on Education and Training Technologies / ICLL) in Seoul, May 22–24. His presentation, "SAMR as a Critical Design Tool in an AI Integration Course," won Best Presentation of the Session; a well-deserved recognition!



Michael Free at ICETT 2026 in Seoul, May 22–24, winning Best Presentation of the Session

Claudia Tumba attended her first-ever IATEFL Conference in Brighton, UK, and came back buzzing with energy, new connections, and a title for her teachers' guide.

Maiah Hollander continues to shine in her role as IC Publicity director, now turning her attention to the KOTESOL IC 2027 planning cycle alongside the conference team.



Maiah Hollander shining with chapter president Michael Free at the 2026 International Conference

Upcoming Events

Michael Free will be presenting at the KAPEE Conference in Chuncheon on June 27. His talk is titled “Beyond ‘How’: Developing AI Mindset in Pre-Service Elementary Teacher Education.”

Claudia Tumba will be running a webinar on June 26 on using music in the EFL classroom, co-hosted with musician and fellow English teacher Sam Burns.

Maiah Hollander will be presenting at the Fukuoka Joint JALT/KOTESOL Event, where she will moderate a panel she proposed titled “Culture Context in the Classroom.”

The chapter is planning one or two events in August: one aimed at university teachers with a focus on culture and intercultural communication, and potentially a second geared toward public school teachers and those working with young learners. Details to follow!

Chapter Highlights

Gangwon is lucky to have such active and talented members. The 33rd KOTESOL International Conference was a true Gangwon Chapter moment: Maiah Hollander was out front driving publicity, Claudia Tumba was selling her book, and Michael Free was sneaking around behind the scenes keeping the program together. Beyond the IC, all three have been presenting, connecting, and contributing to KOTESOL far beyond the chapter level. Chapter president Michael Free remains, frankly, delighted.

Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter

Dr. Maria Lisak, President

The second quarter of 2026 was characterized by active professional development, strong engagement with the wider KOTESOL community, meaningful place-based learning, and significant scholarly contributions by chapter members.

In April, the chapter hosted a double workshop event at Gwangju National University of Education. Tory Thorkelson presented “The Pros and Cons of Textbooks,” sharing practical strategies for adapting required materials to diverse classroom contexts. Ide O’Connell followed with “Artful Language Learning: Creative Approaches for Young Learners,” demonstrating how creative projects can support communication, confidence, and meaningful language use. Members and guests continued discussions over dinner following the event.

May was highlighted by substantial participation in the KOTESOL International Conference. Chapter members contributed across organizational, leadership, volunteer, and presentation roles. Lindsay Herron served as director on the Registration Team, while Phillip Schrank, Courtney McLaren, Bill Mulligan, and Sally Arkley served as conference managers. Dr. David Shaffer contributed in dual leadership capacities as Invited Speakers director and Financial Affairs director.



In April, Ide O'Connell's presentation, "Artful Language Learning: Creative Approaches for Young Learners," explored how creative projects can enhance communication and confidence

Chapter members also contributed to the conference program through a range of presentations:

- Jocelyn Wright and Cheryl Woelk: Learning from Shame in Language Learning Through Reflective Practice
- Jocelyn Wright, Robert Dickey, and Kara Mac Donald: K-English: Ambiguity, Identity, Hybridity, Codification



Dr. Yeon-seong Park examined how unexpected challenges can shape EFL teachers' professional growth

- David Shaffer: Power Up on APA References and Citations
- Stefania Pasternak: Adapting Games and Resources to Maximize Participation
- Jeffrey Aaron Baldwin, Natasha Powell, and Reece Randall: Student Perceptions of Human vs. ChatGPT Writing Feedback (Preliminary)
- Valencia Epps: Navigating Race and Ethnicity: Expatriate Women's Experiences in East Asian ELT (online presentation)
- Ian Moodie: Invited Presentation, Rethinking Expatriate TESOL Careers in Korea: A Photo-Narrative Inquiry into Professional Growth

Later in May, chapter members gathered for a visit to the May 18 Museum in Jeonil Building 245. The event encouraged participants to engage with Gwangju's democratic history and reflect on themes of memory, evidence, civic responsibility, and the role of educators in fostering critical literacy and historical understanding.

In June, the chapter hosted another successful double workshop event. Melvin Dixon facilitated "Creating Community Through the Practice of Inclusion," an interactive session exploring how KOTESOL can strengthen belonging and participation. Dr. Yeon-seong Park presented "The Cold Mountain Path: Linking Gary Snyder's Critical Incidents with EFL Teacher Experiences," examining how unexpected challenges can become transformative moments in educators' professional development.

Upcoming Activities

Looking ahead, the chapter plans to maintain a balance between professional development and community engagement:

- July: Coffee Chat and farewell gathering for Jocelyn Pages
- August: Summer Potluck
- September: Support for the Jeonju–North Jeolla Regional Conference
- Q4: Continued chapter workshops and participation in the KOTESOL National Conference

Closing Note

With one of the largest groups of KOTESOL lifetime members in the country, the Gwangju–Jeonnam Chapter serves as both a local community and an international network. We are proud to connect educators in our region with opportunities across Korea and beyond while also maintaining ties with former members who have moved elsewhere. Many of our colleagues may no longer live in Gwangju or Jeollanam-do, but they remain part of our story. We continue to celebrate their achievements, welcome their participation, and think of them as neighbors no matter where they now call home.

To all past, present, and future members: You are always welcome in Gwangju–Jeonnam.

Gyeonggi Chapter

By Kristina Kauss, President

Greetings! It has been an incredibly active and fulfilling spring and summer for our chapter. From exploring cutting-edge AI tools to making a major splash at the KOTESOL International Conference, our community continues to drive professional growth and meaningful connections. Here is a look back at what we've been up to, along with a preview of what's just around the corner.

Spring Tech Exploration: NotebookLM Meetup (April 19)

Building on the momentum of our March “What Are You Thinking About?” session, Rhett Burton facilitated an engaging online follow-up via Zoom. Participants put Google’s NotebookLM to the test, using its audio overview and infographic features to generate AI interpretations of our collaborative notes. After creating and sharing their customized audio summaries, attendees engaged in a lively reflection on the tool’s accuracy, surprise value, and practical utility in the EFL classroom, weighing its strengths against its limitations.

Making an Impact at IC 2026 (May 16–17)

The KOTESOL International Conference at Sookmyung Women’s University was a major milestone for GyoKo. Beyond hosting a chapter table, three of our members (Kristina, Rhett, and Nick) successfully managed active Marketplace spaces. The chapter was also proudly represented by two stellar workshop presentations: Nikolay Nee delivered a highly practical session on “Career Guidance and Decision-Making: Helping Learners Avoid Mismatched Career Choices,” offering vital strategies for student goal alignment. Kristina Kauss presented “Giving Students a Voice Through Project-Based Learning in EFL,” sharing innovative PBL frameworks specifically tailored for inclusive, mixed-ability, and neurodiverse classrooms.



Nikolay Nee’s session at IC2026, offering vital strategies for student goal alignment

Reflecting and Connecting: Conference Recap (May 23)

Shortly after the international conference, Kristina Kauss facilitated an intimate roundtable check-in. Five members gathered online to exchange shared notes, digital handouts, and favorite professional takeaways from IC 2026. The informal setting allowed attendees to unpack the ideas inspired by the conference and discuss how to apply them directly to their local teaching contexts.

Community & Fun: GyoKo Summer BBQ (June 20)

We kicked off the summer season in style at Gangnam University in Yongin, drawing a fantastic turnout of 17 participants for our annual GyoKo Summer BBQ! This family-friendly potluck focused on sustainability, with attendees bringing their own beverage tumblers. The afternoon was packed with a diverse mix of activities, including board games, an epic giant bubble challenge for the kids, a dynamic mentorship discussion, and a highly entertaining Treasure-or-Trash item swap.



Our annual summer BBQ was June 20

Look Ahead: Upcoming Events

As we head into the second half of the year, we have plenty of opportunities to keep the momentum going. Be sure to mark your calendars for the following:

- July–September 2026: Monthly presentations featuring guest speakers (TBA)
- September/October: Our Fall Meet-up and dedicated online sessions, scheduled for the 3rd weekend of the month
- October/November 2026: Joint activities surrounding the KOTESOL National Conference (tentative)

- December 2026: Wrapping up the year together with our annual Christmas Potluck!

Thank you to everyone who presented, volunteered, and attended over the last few months. We look forward to seeing you online and in person this fall!



Rhett Burton having the time of his life at the GyoKo summer BBQ

Incheon Chapter

By Victor Reeser, President

Summer is typically a quieter period for the Incheon Chapter, as many of our members work in higher education and spend part of the season away from Korea. Even so, the chapter has been actively planning for the months ahead and is excited to resume regular programming as members return for the fall semester. We currently have two online workshops scheduled with events planned for August and September. These sessions will provide opportunities for professional development, discussion, and networking as we reconnect after the summer break. Members should also keep an eye out for the return of our popular Coffee Hangout series.

These informal gatherings have become a great way for educators to connect, share ideas, and build community in a relaxed setting outside of formal conference and workshop environments.

Jeonju-North Jeolla Chapter

By Ingrid Zwaal, Treasurer

On April 4 at a workshop at JBNU, Dr. Natalie Thibault, one of our own, presented on “Learning with Diagrams.” She spoke about how students’ creating has positive impacts on learning. She showed us different ways to do that in class using things like Venn diagrams and flow charts, and how expansive it can be.

Nicole Cyr explained about social emotional learning. Then we discussed things like practical applications and using SEL competencies in your class. Self-reflection is also an important part of teaching using SEL.



Attendees discussing teaching and reflection at another successful JNJ Chapter workshop

We had an executive meeting before the workshop to discuss our regional conference, Challenges and Opportunities for Provincial Education in Korea on September 5, 2026. We are very happy that Dr. Natalie Thibault accepted our proposal to be our plenary speaker!

As usual we did not have a meeting in May because of the International Conference. Three of our members were involved in the ICC and others showed up to participate as attendees.

Because of the holiday the week before, we had our June meeting on the 13th. We welcomed

Kristina Kauss, and we talked about creative ways to handle typical problems in class. Kristina also explained about problem-shooting things like fonts and dealing with undiscussed learning problems. Our own member, Liliana Tintin, presented on a theoretical framework for listening and active interpretive processing. We learned about bottom-up and top-down listening, activities that go along with them, and how to implement strategies like scaffolding.



Liliana Tintin sharing her presentation on listening and interpretive processing for the JNJ Chapter

Although we don’t have any workshops in the summer, the executive will be busy working on our September 5 conference, Challenges and Opportunities for Provincial Education in Korea. It will be held at Jeonbuk National University on the first Saturday of September. If you’re really quick, you might be able to slide in a presentation proposal although the call does technically close June 26. Do consider joining us for a day of connections, professional development, and idea



JNJ Chapter members enjoying some post-workshop socializing

sharing. And if you've never been to Jeonju, we are a tourist destination, famous for our Hanok Village plus some other lovely sightseeing places. Come for the conference, stay for the weekend. It is our first conference since Covid, and we're very much looking forward to it.

Seoul Chapter

By Christopher Miller, President

Seoul Chapter has maintained a vigorous schedule over the April to June second-quarter period.



Practical tips and inspiring stories: Dan Svoboda (third from left) explored financial responsibility in South Korea, and Soojung Kang (second from right) shared her rewarding experiences working with North Korean refugees

Our first academically oriented face-to-face event of 2026 occurred on Saturday, April 4. Dan Svoboda shared strategies for being fiscally responsible in South Korea, while Soojung Kang shared her experiences and successes in working with North Korean refugees. Both sessions were quite interesting and took attendees into underexplored territory, so to speak.

On April 25, we had our first hiking social of the year. A great time was had by all. We took May off for the International Conference. Then we kicked back into high gear on June 20 with a double-header featuring prominent KOTESOL members: Bryan Hale presented on the finer



The adventure begins! Members aboard the bus for our April 25 hiking social

points of grouping students and Natalie Thibault delivered a much appreciated presentation about exploiting music video for a wide range of uses beyond mere gap-fill listening.

Looking forward, on July 1, Seoul will welcome back past-president Stafford Lumsden as he presents on social semiotics and multimodality in TESOL. On September 19, we will hold a symposium tentatively titled "Transcending Borders" featuring guest presenters from Indonesia and a panel on AI, among others. The event will be held at Sookmyung Injaekwan running from 12 to 5 p.m.



June 20's double-header offered attendees two practical sessions: Bryan Hale (right) on student grouping and Natalie Thibault (second from right) on expanding the classroom potential of music videos

Special Interest Group News

Christian Teachers SIG

By Heidi Vande Voort Nam, Facilitator

This year, the Christian Teachers SIG Book Club is discussing Kitty Purgeson's *Professional Guidelines for Christian English Teachers*, focusing on one chapter each month, and in April we looked at Chapter 3, which addresses goals for language teaching and models of integration between faith and language teaching. In addition to language goals (e.g., tasks, topics, situations, functions), a language class may also have explicit or implicit educational goals (e.g., interpersonal skills, learning strategies, critical thinking). Christian teachers may also hope to facilitate the growth of virtues (e.g., humility, kindness, forgiveness) or create an environment that reflects Christian peace and love. The discussion emphasized the importance of communicating goals to students and taking practical steps to build community. Our teaching context will affect how we disclose (or conceal) our faith at work. Some of us teach in Christian schools where students are already involved with Christian communities and those experiences naturally arise in conversation, whereas others work in contexts where students are less familiar with Christianity.

In May, our reading centered on what we choose to reveal about our religious identity at work. Some of us work in Christian schools where we have the freedom to talk explicitly about faith although faith may not always be incorporated into the official curriculum. One member of the group who works in a secular context shared that she intentionally makes a statement about her faith in self-introductions at school. Since our meeting was held just a few days before the KOTESOL International conference, we also talked about compassion, which was one of the

conference themes. We observed that not only teachers but also students can practice compassion in class. Several ways to encourage compassionate behavior are to facilitate peer coaching and to explicitly teach language for offering to work with classmates in need of a partner.

In our June meeting, we explored ways to introduce more spiritually meaningful topics into classroom activities, particularly by asking questions to elicit students' own experiences and reflections. We noted that some students may be reluctant to communicate about deeper topics for emotional or cultural reasons or because of linguistic limitations. The group came up with several suggestions for supporting students, such as increasing preparation time, using think-pair-share, having students select topics, and providing example language through sentence stems or checklists. We also noted the importance of discussing lighter topics in order to build rapport among the students.

The Christian Teachers SIG meets from 8 to 9 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month. More information is available online [here](#).

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KOTESOL · 대한영어교육학회

Multimedia and CALL SIG

By **Victor Reeser**, Former Facilitator

Call for a Facilitator

The Multimedia and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (MCALL) SIG is currently looking for a new facilitator to help lead the group into its next stage. The role is open, and it would be a great opportunity for a KOTESOL member interested in educational technology, online teaching, AI, digital tools, or simply getting their feet wet with a leadership role in the organization.

During my time as facilitator, I had the chance to work with organizations such as JALT and TESOL International, connect with educators outside Korea, and help organize online events that brought together teachers from different contexts. The SIG has also continued to serve as a space for sharing ideas through the MCALL Facebook group and through conference-related sessions and presentations.

The SIG is currently in a quieter period, but there is plenty of room for the next facilitator to shape what comes next. Responsibilities include coordinating online events, preparing or organizing MCALL-related workshops and presentations for KOTESOL's national and international conferences, managing the Facebook group, promoting SIG activities such as TechBriefs, and helping cultivate a sense of community among members interested in technology and language education. There are many possible directions for the next facilitator to take the SIG, including webinars on AI tools, digital literacy, classroom media, online teaching, or practical tech training for teachers. Anyone interested in helping the MCALL SIG become more active is encouraged to consider stepping into the role. Contact the 2nd vice-president Gabriela Villafradez.

Reflective Practice SIG

By **Christopher Miller**, Facilitator

The Reflective Practice SIG kicked back into gear on May 27. The facilitator of the SIG, Christopher Miller, helmed an invigorating discussion among the six attendees. Themes included the value and pitfalls of not updating one's teaching materials as well as students' perceptions of the value of classwork. Jake Kimball deserves special mention due to his disciplined and principled use of questioning to elicit valuable input and consequently generate richer self-awareness and personal insights among the participants. The RP SIG is tentatively planning on holding an online event in late August or early September. Details will be made available on the [KOTESOL website](#).

Research SIG

By Dr. Meerbek Kudaibergenov, Facilitator

On June 6, the Research SIG, in collaboration with the Busan GD Chapter, conducted an academic session titled Social Approaches in ELT Research. During the session, Dr. Meerbek Kudaibergenov introduced participants to several socially grounded qualitative research methodologies commonly used in English language teaching (ELT) research, including ethnography, duo-ethnography, and narrative inquiry. The presentation explored the theoretical foundations of these approaches, highlighted their value in examining the social, cultural, and contextual dimensions of language education, and provided practical examples of how they can be applied in ELT research. The session also encouraged participants to consider how these methodologies can deepen understanding of teachers' and learners' lived experiences and support more contextually sensitive research.

Social Justice SIG

By Jocelyn Wright, Leadership Support

In the second quarter of 2026, three members of the KOTESOL Social Justice (Critical Educators in Korea) Special Interest Group (SJ-SIG) were especially active. Together with Robert Dickey and Kara Mac Donald, Jocelyn Wright participated in a panel discussion entitled “K-English: Ambiguity, Identity, Hybridity, Codification” at the 2026 KOTESOL International Conference at Sookmyung Women’s University in Seoul in May. This activity was the first publicly visible outcome of a SIG Zoom book club that started in the summer of 2025. Although the session was scheduled at 9 a.m. on a Sunday morning, those who attended engaged actively in dialogue. We thank everyone for their participation!

The second collaborative outcome of this book club was a hybrid book review published in a special issue of *Languages* in June, co-authored

jointly by the three SIG members. The paper explores Alex Baratta’s *The Societal Codification of Korean English* (2022), highlighting Korean English, which we might even call “K-English” (K-영어, K-yeongeo). The review offers a conceptual matrix to understand orientations to research on the variety and a metaphor to depict the complexity of KE and its codification. The full article, which is open-access, is available [here](#). Although not a research SIG per se, the SJ-SIG



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accomplished many research projects in the second quarter of the year. These were not instant projects, of course, but the result of persistent labor and love. Though the SIG may have appeared somewhat dormant in previous quarters, lots was happening behind the scenes.

As always, there was also activity in our Facebook group. Various resources were shared: a free book, a position paper, and an article. Announcements for the IC, workshops, and webinars were posted as were calls for presenters and chapters. Thanks goes out to those who read, liked, shared, and commented on posts. We invite more contributions of relevant news, events, resources, and opinions by diverse participants in this group.

And, of course, if you are a KOTESOL member looking to get involved in this SIG, either on- or offline, and/or you would be willing to help us (co-)facilitate, please get in touch. You can find us on the [KOTESOL Social Justice SIG webpage](#), [Facebook](#), or send us an email at sjsig@koreatesol.org.

Well-Being and PD SIG

By **Gabriela Villafradez**, Facilitator

We hope all our KOTESOL members are well this season. The Well-Being SIG has focused on taking it slow, so this quarter only saw two official events and a handful of guest events (Busan Fit Day, Yoga and Chime Making, Boxing at the Beach).

On Friday, June 5, we hosted a calming film night on Zoom, screening the famous Japanese film, *Perfect Days* (2023), directed by Wim Wenders. With a rating of 7.9/10 (myasiantv), our high expectations were not crushed after finishing the film. The cinematography, the script, the pace, and the soundtrack of the film transported us to Tokyo and kept our emotions at the mercy of the storyline. Even with limited dialogue, the message of the film was clear: We create meaningful lives by enjoying every moment of the journey or experience in whichever way possible. We loved the film, and concluded the night with reflections on the ending and the moral of the film (we agreed to disagree on the meaning of the closing scene).

After rescheduling the event twice, we are finally visiting the Queen's Collection at the ELAND Museum in Ulsan on Saturday, June 27. We are excited to see such relics in person and discuss their relevance in modern society.

This summer, we will be collaborating with the Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu Chapter and co-hosting their annual beach hop event, where we will start the day by doing yoga and meditation at the beach. We hope to see you at Songjeong Beach (Busan) on Saturday, August 8 at 10 a.m.



In September, we will be partnering with Cheryl Woelk and Matthew Rich-Tolsma to host a nonviolent communication workshop in Seoul. We are very excited about this event and will provide more information this summer.

For more information about all our events, please visit our FB page: [KOTESOL Well-Being & Personal Development SIG](#).



Committee News

International Conference 2027

By Gabriela Villafradez, Chair

Theme: The Hidden Dimensions of Educators: Shining a Light on Identity, Labour, and Well-Being

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate.”

This quotation, popularly attributed to Carl Jung, has come to encapsulate a growing concern within my field: Our teaching professionals have become so accustomed to enduring hardship created by aspects of our vocation that these difficulties appear to operate silently in the background without clear recognition of their effect on us. Conversely, dialogues with colleagues and other educators demonstrate that there is some conscious acknowledgement of the challenges in our field, but, unfortunately, accompanied by a diminished belief in our confidence that these can be resolved, resulting in the normalisation of hardships, resignation, or even radical acceptance. I make this conclusion as conversations with peers seem to converge to discussions about terse communication with directors, farcical events at work, contentious interactions with co-workers, stern bureaucracy, and all-encompassing exhaustion, without concrete solutions or a way out. And, compassionately, we can attribute this to insufficient information, agency, or energy. So, I do not say this lightly: We need to address the problems that aspects of teaching and its conditions—institutional structures, invisible labour, workplace cultures, identity, expectations, and precarity—cause to our physical, mental, and emotional health if we are to continue being effective and enriching educators, productive scholars, and healthy beings. As the title of the conference highlights, we need to bring awareness to the struggles we face as educators, humans, and individuals, and

approach them as a community. We can no longer assign these difficulties ancillary roles; they must be a priority. The KOTESOL International Conference Committee 2027 seeks to start this dialogue by offering a platform to the vast array of voices in our community to collectively unveil, label, and confront the hidden dimensions of educators with hope, vitality, and assurance.

It is, therefore, with great pleasure that I cordially invite you to join us either as a presenter or participant at the 34th Korea TESOL International Conference in May 2027, at Sookmyung Women’s University in Seoul. Let us work together to make our wonderful EFL profession stronger, healthier, and more rewarding than in years past.

The call for abstracts will start in November 2026.

The 34th Korea TESOL International Conference

THE HIDDEN DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATORS

SHINING A LIGHT ON IDENTITY, LABOUR, AND WELL-BEING

Creating space for critical inquiry into the complexities, and realities shaping educators' work, relationships, and professional sustainability.



Saturday & Sunday
15 - 16
May 2027
(tentative dates)



Sookmyung
Women's
University
Seoul, South Korea



Research
Workshops
Panels
Roundtables
Posters



International Outreach Committee

By Victor Reeser, Chair

The International Outreach Committee (IOC) was happy to welcome representatives from our partner organizations to this year's KOTESOL International Conference. Our guests joined us from around the region, contributed to the conference program, and helped make the event feel more connected to the wider ELT community in Asia.

For the IOC, one of the best moments of the conference was the partner luncheon on the first day. It gave everyone a chance to sit down together, talk more casually, and finally meet after months of online correspondence. These conversations help us learn what other organizations are working on, share news about upcoming events, and keep KOTESOL connected with teachers and associations outside Korea.

The IOC is also currently promoting two upcoming opportunities for members to represent KOTESOL abroad. The first is the 12th BELTA International Conference 2026 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the second is the 72nd TEFLIN International Conference in Jakarta, Indonesia. Representing KOTESOL overseas is a great way to meet educators from other contexts, share your own work, and help maintain our partnerships in the region. Members interested in these or future opportunities should keep an eye on *KOTESOL News* (our email enews) for application details and other announcements from the IOC.

Membership News

By Dr. Lindsay Herron, Chair

The Social @KOTESOL2026 was held on Saturday, May 16, at the 33rd Korea TESOL International Conference. Around 100 participants gathered in the Han Sung Eun Lounge in Sookmyung Women's University



Connecting at The Social @KOTESOL2026

Centennial Building for an evening of passed hors d'oeuvres (catered again by Spoon Seoul); copious libations; delightful raffle prizes, including contributions from sponsors and artisans at the Marketplace @KOTESOL2026; and an evening full of camaraderie. The event was sponsored by the Membership Committee, the Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu Chapter, the Gangwon Chapter, the Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter, the Seoul Chapter, lifetime member Dr. David Shaffer, and the KOTESOL president.



Socializing at The Social @KOTESOL2026

Membership Perk Highlight

KOTESOL is an IATEFL Associate; as such, all KOTESOL members are entitled to a 65% discount on IATEFL membership (27 GBP

instead of 76 GBP)! Instructions and our IATEFL Associate discount code are available on the [KOTESOL website](#).

Membership Numbers

This quarter (April 1 – June 30), we added 165 new and renewing members. We have 565 members as of June 25, 2026: 145 lifetime members, 273 international (annual) members, 132 domestic (annual) members, and 15 (annual) undergraduate student members.

Nominations and Elections Committee

By Dr. David Shaffer, Chair

The big event for the Nominations and Elections Committee is coming up this autumn: election season for KOTESOL's national elected offices. These consist of seven positions: president, first vice-president, second vice-president, secretary, treasurer, International Conference Committee co-chair, and Nominations and Elections Committee chair. If you are a KOTESOL member in good standing (which basically means that your membership dues are paid up), consider running for an elected position on the National Council. Updated details will soon be available on the KOTESOL website.

At the March National Council meeting, important election-related dates were set:

- Nomination Period: September 1–30, 2026
- Voting Period: October 12–27, 2026

Voting will be conducted online. Links to ballots will be emailed to individual members. Election results will be announced at the November 1 (tentative) Annual Business Meeting.

Take a moment to consider how you might contribute to KOTESOL, whether it be by running for a national office, by serving in another elected or appointed position, or in some other manner. Personally, KOTESOL has done a lot for me over the years; I try to give a little of that back. Send inquiries to elections@koreatesol.org.

Publications Committee

Dr. David Shaffer, Chair

The Publications Committee has been super busy over the past several months. We hope you have noticed and are reading our most recent publications. But in case something has slipped by unnoticed, we will alert you to what has come off the presses in the past three months.

The most recent is, of course, the Summer issue of HAN (*Happenings and News*), which you are reading now. We hope you enjoy it and find it informative. If you have any suggestions on how we might improve upon it, let us [know](#).

April and May saw the publication of two volumes, yes two, of *KOTESOL Proceedings 2025*. The papers in these volumes are based on presentations given by their authors at last year's international conference. Submissions were so much greater than in previous years that it warranted two volumes. The first volume contains seven papers by invited speakers to the conference and an additional 28 papers based on conference research sessions—over 400 pages to add to your professional development. Volume 2 contains reports on workshop presentations, approaches and techniques, poster presentations, and panel and roundtable discussions. They are available to all members on the KOTESOL website under Publications.



June saw the publication of another collection of research papers: *Korea TESOL Journal 21–2*. It contains six full research papers, three brief

reports, and another three book reports. Topics range from AI to written reflection, to virtual exchanges, to drama, and to story time.

Our other quarterly publication, *The English Connection* (TEC), also came out in June. If you haven't noticed the pattern, TEC comes out in March, June, September, and December. HAN is published in the following months (i.e., April, July, October, and January). The June TEC contains six ELT articles, in addition to the usual three columns, the Editorial, and the President's Message. Of particular interest to me in this issue was Dan Svoboda's field guide to financial success for educators in Korea.

Did you know that the Publications Committee provides yet another publication space. It's *Scribes Square*, it's blog style, and it's on our website. We've had three articles recently published there: one on written reflection, one on teaching and coaching, and the third on teachers who never planned to teach. Check them out. And consider contributing your own teaching ideas, activities, or philosophy to the Square. It's a great place to start out in ELT publishing, and it's an excellent place to post a brief article and get it published quickly.



Consider also submitting an article to one of our other publications. TEC, the Journal, and Proceedings are all KOTESOL periodicals for KOTESOL members. For more information on contributing to one of our publications, go to our website, or email publications@koreatesol.org.

Erratum (of sorts): In our most recent mailing of TEC to individual members, there have been

instances of the surname of the receiver being incorrect. This appears to have been due to a sorting error and should not affect future mailing label production, as a new iteration of the database is used for each mail out. We regret the error.

While on the topic of TEC mailings, I would like to remind you that if you are receiving a print copy of TEC but prefer reading it online, you can opt out of receiving your print copy. Just log in to your KOTESOL account, click the Edit tab, and scroll down to check the Don't Send (Postal) Mail box. Join KOTESOL's save-a-tree campaign, help KOTESOL save on postage expenses, and feel good about yourself!

A final reminder is that if you are moving or changing jobs during the vacation time, remember to log in to your account to change your mailing address. You will find it in the Edit tab. Be sure to enter your address exactly; and if it is a Korean address, the preference is to enter it in Korean.

We at the Publications Committee hope that you have an enjoyable summer, and we hope that you enjoy some of it with our KOTESOL publications.

Publicity Committee

By Lisa MacIntyre-Park, Chair

The Publicity Committee has had a busy spring, supporting KOTESOL events and initiatives both online and beyond. Since the last issue of HAN, publicity requests from chapters, SIGs, committees, and the International Conference team have been shared across KOTESOL's national platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, X/Twitter, and YouTube. These posts have helped promote chapter and SIG events, conference information, committee news, and special announcements. We have also seen continued growth in engagement and followers across several of our platforms.



A major focus this spring was supporting the 2026 KOTESOL International Conference. Conference publicity included speaker announcements, promotional materials, social badges for participants, and a reusable welcome banner created by the IC publicity team. KOTESOL also received visibility through several external channels. Prior to the conference, the organization appeared in *The Korea Times*, and committee representatives participated in the *ELT Experiences* podcast to discuss the conference and KOTESOL's activities. Following the event, attendees continued to share their conference experiences online, helping extend the conference's reach even further.

The committee has also introduced an updated Publicity Requests Form designed to make the submission process easier for both organizers and platform coordinators. Chapters, SIGs, and committees are encouraged to use the form whenever they have news, events, projects, publications, or opportunities they would like shared through KOTESOL's national channels. Including graphics or photos with requests is especially helpful, as visual content tends to attract greater attention across social media platforms.

Looking ahead, the Publicity Committee hopes to help members rediscover valuable professional development resources from KOTESOL's publications and YouTube channel. Over the years, KOTESOL has produced a wealth of articles, presentations, and other content that remains useful today. If you've come across a KOTESOL article, video, presentation, or other

resource that you think deserves renewed attention, we'd love to hear from you. Suggestions may be submitted through the Publicity Requests Form or sent directly to publicity@koreatesol.org.

We would also welcome hearing from members who run blogs, vlogs, podcasts, newsletters, or other media channels. If you have a platform that might be interested in sharing KOTESOL news and events, please get in touch. Building connections with media creators can help us introduce KOTESOL to new audiences and share the excellent work being done throughout the organization.



As always, we welcome your publicity requests and are happy to help spread the word about the many excellent activities taking place throughout KOTESOL.

Research Committee

By Dr. Ian Moodie, Chair

The Research Committee is currently overseeing the administration of the 2026 KOTESOL Research Grant. As reported, this year's grant has been awarded to Sarah Warfield for a project examining AI use and instructor readiness in

STEM English-medium instruction contexts in South Korea.

The committee also encourages members who are considering applying for the 2027 KOTESOL Research Grant to begin reviewing the application process and proposal guidelines. More information is available on the [KOTESOL website](#).

Sponsorship Committee

By Dr. Lindsay Herron, Interim Chair

KOTESOL would like to express its gratitude to the sponsors of our 33rd Korea TESOL International Conference: Turnitin, Express Publishing, Twinkl, the University of San Francisco, Hawaii Pacific University, the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and Eigo.AI/LingoLesson. Other sponsors at the international

conference included Freedom Speakers International; Eunsoo Stay, Dog Korean Rescue, & Love Second Chances; Academic Connections; and Vote From Abroad.

Marketplace vendors included Ton Atelier, Angry Ajumma, Coateslang Online Language Academy, HanjiNaty & Halfmoon Moggies, YoGiYo Accessories, Daybak Materials, Chungsil's Jipbap, Juliette Céramiques, The Dragon's Hoard, Earthhotel, ZSJ Sweet Treats & ZSJ Silks Korea, Sarah's Candles ROK, Dear Lee, Kari & Co., Snacktives / Yousability, LLC, Laughing Lamb, KAESA, The Fizzy Strap, Anxiety and Kimbap, Assessment Korea, Speak Easy, MaxxMade, Ori's Cakery, Cornelia's Garden, and 다시쌈 (Dasisseum).

We hope everyone attending the conference had a chance to explore these booths and their many offerings. Thank you, all, for supporting KOTESOL!



National News

National Council Meeting

By Heidi Vande Voort Nam, Secretary

The KOTESOL National Council met on June 28 to review recent operations and consider several motions. The leadership highlighted the outcomes of the 2026 International Conference (IC), which successfully hosted 595 attendees with a full slate of academic presentations, an active Marketplace, and a well-attended members' social. The National Council thanks 2026 conference chair Meerbek Kudaibergenov and the many volunteers who made this conference possible. Looking ahead to the 2027 IC, incoming conference chair Gabriella Villafradez tentatively set May 15–16 as the conference dates and announced the theme: Hidden Dimensions of Educators: Shining a Light on Identity, Labor, and Well-Being. It is hoped that the theme will open discussions that extend beyond language education into teacher identity and working conditions.

On the administrative front, the treasury confirmed that taxes were filed and chapter dues shares (CDS) will be distributed in early July. Across regional chapters, presidents reported a robust lineup of recent and upcoming events, ranging from professional development workshops to social hikes and picnics.

Following the chapter and committee reports, the Council addressed two motions. First, the Council officially voted to terminate its memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Macau Association of Applied Linguistics (MAAL) due to six years of inactivity. A second motion was proposed to discount student membership rates for graduate students who are not working full-time. However, given the difficulty of verifying work/study status or altering the membership application form on the current website, the motion was ultimately withdrawn with plans to revisit the proposal during the December budget

meeting once website capabilities are reassessed.

As it plans for the future, the Council is actively seeking chairs for both the Financial Affairs and Sponsorship Committees. Council members are reminded of the following deadlines: the September 1 opening of election nominations, a September 25 HAN submissions deadline, and a September 29 deadline for constitution and bylaws amendment proposals. The next NC meeting will most likely convene on October 18, and the ABM will be held on November 1.

Grants

2026 KOTESOL Research Grant

The Research Committee is pleased to announce the recipient of the 2026 KOTESOL Research Grant (~~\$~~₩500,000). This year's award goes to Sarah Warfield for the project "AI Use and Instructor Readiness in STEM EMI Contexts in South Korea."

Focusing on the growing role of artificial intelligence in higher education, this study explores how EMI instructors teaching STEM subjects understand, use, and evaluate AI in their teaching. It also investigates how these instructors conceptualize their readiness to teach disciplinary content through English. The committee believes this project addresses a timely and important issue at the intersection of EMI and educational technology.

The Research Committee also invites KOTESOL members to submit proposals for the 2027 Research Grant cycle. Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis, and we encourage projects that address timely issues in English language teaching and learning, particularly those with clear relevance to the Korean context. Members interested in applying are encouraged to begin developing their proposals early and to

consult the guidelines available on the [KOTESOL website](#). Good luck!

2026 Presenter Travel Grant

KOTESOL's second annual presenter travel grant was awarded this year to Made Wahyu Mahendra (University of Malaya, Malaysia) and Thi My Dung "Michelle" Dang (Foreign Trade University—Ho Chi Minh City Campus, Vietnam). This grant, founded and funded by lifetime member Dr. Kara Mac Donald, is designed to help presenters with financial need attend the annual KOTESOL International Conference in person. The grant includes waived registration fees, a one-year international membership, and up to a million won for travel expenses to and from the conference. Congratulations to this year's recipients!



Travel grant winners Made Wahyu Mahendra (University of Malaya, Malaysia) (in black left) and Thi My Dung "Michelle" Dang (Foreign Trade University—Ho Chi Minh City Campus, Vietnam)(in black right), with Dr. Kara Mac Donald (right)

President's Corner

By Dr. Lindsay Herron, KOTESOL President

I hope everyone enjoyed the 33rd Korea TESOL International Conference! I had a fantastic time, and I heard a lot of praise for the event. The participants I spoke with were impressed by the breadth of the offerings and our meticulously coordinated schedule, and they particularly extolled the positive, welcoming atmosphere of the conference. As the conference registration

director, I rarely have an opportunity to attend sessions, and this year was no exception—but I can attest the basement space near registration and the exhibits area was always pulsing with life and laughter. The free snacks and coffee, conversation corners, and a Marketplace full of talented local artisans seemed to generate energy and positive vibes throughout the weekend. I always say KOTESOL is a community, not just a collection of individuals, and the annual conference is always a wonderful place to experience that!

Other highlights of the weekend for me included presenting a KOTESOL Patron Award to Dr. Curtis Kelly, one of our organization's staunchest supporters; hosting our annual pre-conference VIP dinner, which was attended by twenty-six international and domestic partners, invited speakers, and several longtime patrons of our organization; and the Social @KOTESOL2026, which featured its usual assortment of tasty treats, liberal libations, and comfortable camaraderie.



Presenting the KOTESOL Patron Award to Dr. Curtis Kelly

Speaking of camaraderie and connections, our organization will be supporting our domestic and international partners throughout the summer and fall. At the end of June, our newest partner, the Korea Association of Primary English Education (KAPEE), hosted its annual conference at Chuncheon National University of Education, and Gangwon Chapter president Michael Free represented our organization as a

featured speaker. In early July, the Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE) hosted its annual international conference at Kyungpook National University in Daegu, where our organization was represented by second vice-president/Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu Chapter president/incoming conference chair Gabriela Villafradez. Partners KASEE, GETA, and ALAK all have conferences coming up this fall, as well.

KOTESOL members looking for new challenges this summer might consider submitting a proposal for (or making plans to attend) one of the many autumn international conferences hosted by our partners: ELTAI (October 7–10, Pune, India) is accepting abstracts through August 15; the proposal submission deadline for BELTA (November 20–21, Dhaka, Bangladesh) is July 31; and proposals are now being accepted for NELTA (February 19–21, 2027, Lalitpur, Nepal). Also, registration opens in August for JALT 2026 (November 20–22, Nagoya City, Aichi Prefecture, Japan) and MELTA 2026 (September 12–13, Ipoh, Malaysia). Registration is open now for TEFLIN 2026 (October 7–9, Jakarta, Indonesia), and it should be open soon for ETA-ROC 2026 (November 14–15, Taipei, Taiwan). The ELTAM/Mongolia TESOL conference is also coming up soon, on September 25–27 (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia).

I hope your summer is off to a great start! I wish you rest, reflection, and rejuvenation in the coming months, and I look forward to seeing you at one of our many KOTESOL events this autumn!

Membership News

New Lifetime Members

KOTESOL is delighted to welcome the following new lifetime members:

- Brandy Bippes (Incheon Chapter)
- Suhhee Kang (Jeonju-North Jeolla Chapter)
- Liliana Marisol Tintin (Jeonju-North Jeolla Chapter)

We offer our heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing support and dedication. Thank you for choosing KOTESOL—and welcome to a lifetime of perks, privileges, and opportunities!

Awards

2026 KOTESOL Patron Award

At the opening ceremony of the 33rd Korea TESOL International Conference, KOTESOL president Dr. Lindsay Herron presented a KOTESOL Patron Award to Dr. Curtis Kelly in recognition of his ongoing contributions to our organization. Dr. Kelly has supported KOTESOL for many years in a variety of ways, including by presenting at our conferences (often paying out of pocket to do so), writing a regular column for The English Connection, collaborating on our national conference (FAB11 & KOTESOL National Conference 2017), participating in our COVID-era AMA series (“Ask Me Anything”), and more. Thank you, Dr. Kelly, for your extensive contributions to and continued support for KOTESOL!



2026 Reflective Language Teacher Award

Also at the opening ceremony of the international conference, the annual Korea TESOL Reflective Language Teacher Award was presented. Dr. Thomas Farrell, founder of the award and this year’s conference plenary speaker presented the

award to Bryan Hale, a Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter member and educator at Jeonnam Foreign Language High School.

Recent Publications

Spotlight on “K-English” (K-영어)

Is it time to officially welcome “K-English” (K-영어, K-yeongeo) to the global stage? While expanding-circle varieties of English are often overlooked, a fascinating open-access article in the journal *Languages* explores how the language is evolving in South Korea. Robert Dickey, Kara Mac Donald, and Jocelyn Wright explore Alex Baratta’s book *The Societal Codification of Korean English* (2022). Highlighting the rise of “K-English” (K-yeongeo), the reviewers introduce a conceptual matrix to map research approaches and a vivid metaphor to depict the variety’s complex codification. Whether you are an educator, a language enthusiast, or a fan of the Hallyu wave, this piece offers a fresh perspective on how localized English thrives. Read the full article [here](#).

From Drills to Voice

Dr. Maria Lisak (Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter) recently has an article titled “From Drills to Voice: Content Creation with Young Learners in Korea” published in the June 2026 issue of the *Gwangju News* (pp. 34–35). Her article can be accessed in [flipbook format](#) and also at [Gwangju News Online](#).

Dr. David Shaffer continued his extensive contributions as editor-in-chief of *Gwangju News*, and through his work with partner organizations including AsiaTEFL.

Language Teacher Careers and Development

Dr. Ian Moodie (Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter) has demonstrated a strong record of scholarly productivity, as reflected in the following recent publications:

- Whitehead, G. E. K., **Moodie, I.**, & Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2026). I’m Going to Stay...: Exploring Factors Impacting English Language Teachers’ Occupational and Organizational Commitment. *English Teaching & Learning*.

- **Moodie, I.** (2026). *Grounded Theory in Applied Linguistics Research: A Practical Guide* (2nd Edition).
- **Moodie, I.**, & Greenier, V. (2026). The Unfolding of Careers: Examining Why Expat English Language Teachers Quit the Profession. *TESOL Quarterly*.
- **Moodie, I.** (2026). Review of Praxis-Oriented Pedagogy for Novice L2 Teachers. *System*.

Negotiating Legitimacy and Belonging

Meerbek Kudaibergenov (Seoul Chapter) has maintained his prolific streak in impactful academic journals. His most recent duoethnographic study, co-authored with a person who is no stranger to Seoul KOTESOL, Stewart Gray, explores how foreign English teachers (FETs) in South Korea negotiate professional legitimacy and belonging within a transnational ELT landscape shaped by native-speakerism, racialization, and institutional constraints.

Gray, S. J., & Kudaibergenov, M. (2026). Negotiating Legitimacy and Belonging: A Duo-Narrative Inquiry of Two Foreign English Teachers in Korea. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 1–17.

You can find more details about Meerbek and Stewart’s article online [here](#).

Uh-huh...Mm-hm

Andrew White (Seoul Chapter) continues his research into discourse markers. [This comparative study](#) investigates how Korean EFL learners and native English speakers utilize “weak continuers,” brief vocal and verbal cues like *uh-huh* or *mm-hm*, during spoken interaction. The research explores how these discourse elements are strategically managed to shift away from passive listening (“passive reciprocity”) and actively regulate the floor within conversational structures.

White, A. (2026). The pruning of passive reciprocity: A comparative study of weak continuer usage among Korean EFL learners and native English speakers. *The Sociolinguistic Journal of Korea*, 34(2), 233–265.