



# Korea TESOL Happenings and News

Spring 2026

# Korea TESOL Happenings and News



Member Spotlight: Meerbek Kudaibergenov	2
IOC Travel Reports	5
Connecting on Connections Day	9
Chapter News	12
Special Interest Group News	20
Committee News	24
National News	30

## Editorial Team

**Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Andrew White**

**Layout Design: Courtney McLaren**

**Publications Committee Chair: Dr. David Shaffer**

*Korea TESOL Happenings and News (HAN)*, published quarterly, is the online companion publication of *The English Connection*, the official magazine (ISSN: 1598-0456) of KOTESOL (Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), an academic and professional organization. All materials contained within *HAN* are copyrighted by the individual authors and KOTESOL. Copying without the expressed written permission of the individual authors and KOTESOL, beyond that which is permitted under law, is an infringement of the law and ethical principles within the academic community. All copies must identify *HAN* and KOTESOL (Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), as well as the author. The articles and opinions contained herein are solely those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of KOTESOL or the opinions of the editors, officers of KOTESOL, or individual members.

Cover Photo: Sunmee Seen (Instagram: [@seen\\_by\\_sunmee](#)).

## Member Spotlight: Meerbek Kudaibergenov

*“Meerbek Kudaibergenov” is a name you may have seen in recent years as the author of research articles and in reference lists. You may have noticed his name as a presenter at KOTESOL’s Seoul Chapter or at the 2025 KOTESOL International Conference. His name also appeared on last year’s IC organizing committee’s list as program director and as IC co-chair. But more recently, you are likely to have encountered his name as conference chair of the 2026 KOTESOL International Conference scheduled for this May. HAN was recently able to corral this busy member for the Spotlight interview that follows . . .*



**HAN:** Hello, Meerbek. I want to thank you for this opportunity for *Happenings and News* to do this interview with you. Would you begin by telling our readers about yourself before you came to Korea?

**Meerbek:** Thank you for having me. Sure, I was born and raised in the Kyrgyz Republic (or Kyrgyzstan), which is a beautiful, mountainous country in Central Asia with a population of over seven million people. As a child, I was into math and English. They were my favorite subjects at school, and so I could spend the entire weekend solving math problems and memorizing English words [laughs]. For university, however, I chose to study simultaneous interpreting. Like most students, I worked part-time. I taught English at a local language school – it’d be called a *hagwon* here – where I realized I wanted to do a master’s in something related to teaching English. And so, here I am. I came to Korea in 2015 to do a graduate degree in TESOL and have been here since then.

**HAN:** It’s not so common to meet a person from Kyrgyzstan in ELT in Korea. What pointed you in the direction of the Far East?

**Meerbek:** Okay, long story short, when I was in my senior year at university, my wife – then-girlfriend – and I applied for the GKS scholarship to study in Korea. Honestly, I didn’t know much about this country back then, and so my application was not convincing; it was rejected. But my wife’s application made it through all the stages, and she eventually got the scholarship. When she left for Korea, I missed her greatly and wanted to reunite with her [laughs]. So, the next year, I applied again and got the scholarship. I felt really happy when I came to Korea because I had someone waiting for me and also because I met wonderful people on campus... you know, students and professors.

**HAN:** Then you went on to get a PhD at HUFS. You’re quite active now as a researcher. What are your main areas of academic research interest?

**Meerbek:** Yes, research has been central to my life in Korea, as I came here as a graduate student in the first place. My primary focus has been on teacher identity. I am particularly interested in how pre- and in-service teachers negotiate their experiences and develop professional identities. So, ideas of privilege and marginalization, native-speakerism, and intersectionality are all interesting to me. I am also interested in international higher education, particularly, in how international sojourn can be a

source of personal transformation for students aspiring to become EFL teachers abroad, their struggle and triumphs, experiences of belonging and exclusion, agency, and legitimacy!

**HAN:** In addition to your academic journal publishing, you're also on the editorial board or staff of a number of international journals. Could you give us some details on that – and also on how you find time for all of this research-related work.

**Meerbek:** Well, I was privileged to be invited to serve as a regional editor for the *Journal of International Students* (an ESCI-indexed journal) and join the editorial boards of *Sage Open* (an SSCI-indexed journal) and the *Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia* (indexed in Scopus). These are peer-reviewed journals advancing academic debates in the humanities and social sciences as well as international and global education. With teaching, research, and family, finding time is certainly an issue! But I've learned to stick to a "three-to-two" plan, which means I teach three days a week, and on the other two (Tuesdays and Fridays), I focus on research and publishing. This coming spring semester, however, is shaping up to be quite busy, as I will be teaching two brand-new courses, and there might be some "turbulence" as my plate is filling up.

**HAN:** Well, we hope you have smooth sailing. Lately, you've been quite active in our organization as well as in your academic pursuits; how did you first get involved in KOTESOL?

**Meerbek:** I love this question [laughs]! Back in 2021, when I was about to graduate with a PhD in TESOL, I was actively looking for jobs. You know, the ELT market is tough in Korea with a lot of preference being given to native speakers of English. So, as I was looking for opportunities, I asked different people for advice including some KOTESOL members, one of whom was Kevin Kester. I didn't know him personally back then; someone had introduced me to him. Kevin's advice was to join KOTESOL, as it is really a community where you get to meet a lot of people and make meaningful connections. If my memory doesn't fail me, he said, "You never know, but professional communities offer a lot!" So, I followed his advice and became a KOTESOL member. I wasn't active at first, as my primary focus was on getting hired, and when I finally got a job, I started to attend KOTESOL events and engage in some planning and decision-making.

**HAN:** And that led to further involvement. Last year, you were program director and international conference co-chair; this year you have moved up to the position of KOTESOL 2026 conference chair. Would you give us a rundown on what we can expect from this year's conference?

**Meerbek:** This year, the conference is going to be of a substantial scale, as we received over 480 submissions – from workshops to research presentations and from poster sessions to panel discussions. We also have an exciting lineup of plenary and featured speakers, including Thomas Farrell from Brock University, Canada, and Nathanael Rudolph from Kindai



*Meerbek announcing the 2026 KOTESOL IC at the 2025 National Conference in Incheon.*

University, Japan. Our attendees can look forward to a strong program that offers meaningful discussions on criticality, innovation, and compassion in ELT.

Apart from this, we are also working hard on the cultural dimension of the conference, as academic exchange is at its best when it is complemented by opportunities to engage with local culture, and we are eager to offer memorable experiences in this regard. Some planning is taking place for pre-conference cultural activities, opening ceremony, and food. Lots of good hustle and bustle is taking place, and I am confident that KOTESOL 2026 is shaping up to be an outstanding event!

**HAN:** It is always an outstanding event. What would you like to convey to the EFL teacher who hasn't been to a KOTESOL conference to convince them that they should attend KOTESOL 2026?

**Meerbek:** If you are up for a truly useful experience, meaningful connections, and critical conversations, you cannot miss it!

**HAN:** You're also the new facilitator of the Research Special Interest Group (SIG), which has not been so active post-Covid. What plans might you have for reinvigorating the SIG?

**Meerbek:** Yes, I was recently appointed as facilitator for the SIG. We recently kicked off with two invited talks. One was a policy research session titled "Educational Development and Public Policy in Tension: The National Curriculum Reform and Foreign English Teacher Recruitment in South Korea" with Dr. Teri Rose Roh, and the other was a practical workshop on designing a research project, "From Classroom Problems to Researchable Questions: Designing TESOL Studies That Matter" by Dr. Pariwat Imsa-Ard. And there will be more to come. Look for more information on our Research SIG webpage and on our Facebook group.

**HAN:** Do you have a bucket list? What might be on it?

**Meerbek:** Well, one thing on it is publishing a book. I can't tell you what it will be about just yet, as I don't like to share things prematurely, but I would certainly be happy to check that box off.

**HAN:** Before we wrap up this interview, what would you like to say to our readers?

**Meerbek:** I'd like to thank them for reading this piece. I hope it was an interesting read. I'd also like to invite them to the upcoming international conference on May 16–17 at Sookmyung Women's University. It is going to be an experience you should not miss!

**HAN:** And we'd like to thank you for this interview. Good luck with all the preparations for this May's Korea TESOL International Conference!



*Meerbek with a recent book by Prof. Kilryoung Lee (right), a featured speaker for the 2026 IC.*

Interviewed by **David Shaffer.**

# Exploring ThaiTESOL

By John R. Baker

I am honored and grateful to KOTESOL for the opportunity to have attended the 45th annual ThaiTESOL conference, held at the five-star Jubilee Prestige Hotel Ratchadapisek, Bangkok, January 30–31, 2026. As has been the case perennially, the event was remarkably well-organized and executed with grace and precision, and, as always, the hospitality and coordination were exceptional.

Arriving the afternoon before via a convenient airport Grab, I was delighted by an unexpected executive floor room upgrade with an exquisite city view and found registration was already underway, supported by a cadre of helpful staff – a proactive start that ensured a seamless opening. The event's self-contained design made transitions effortless, while the permanent tea break stands and "glamour photo" services on each floor provided a delightful way to network and capture group memories.

After check-in, I headed to the hotel's restaurant, Loong Foong, to meet a ThaiTESOL friend, colleague, and coauthor, Saiwroon Chumpavan, where we enjoyed a lovely afternoon, exchanged gifts, and bid each other an early "Happy Lunar New Year." After which, I retired to the room to dress for the upcoming reception dinner.

At dinner, I joined ThaiTESOL's president, Monthon Kanokpermpoon, and past president, Thanakorn Thongprayoon, alongside representatives from other organizations: Richmond Stroupe (JALT) and Rob Waring (World ER Foundation). After a warm, humorous welcome from the president, we enjoyed local delicacies, hotpot, and great conversation. It was a pleasure to reconnect with old friends and meet new ones. Like most, I then retired early, awakening refreshed for what proved to be a brilliantly organized and jubilant event.

The day began with a lovely breakfast, 7:30 registration, and a punctual opening ceremony. Following a coffee break, attendees engaged in 15 parallel workshops and plenaries, leading into a prompt buffet. After a midday break and several rounds of afternoon sessions, the final presentations concluded at 5:20. Since presenters stayed on-site, they had ample time to freshen up for the Gala dinner – a delightful evening of talks, performances, and local cuisine.



*Opening Ceremony at ThaiTESOL 2026.*

The second day followed a familiar, reassuring rhythm of breakfast and registration while publisher booths buzzed with activity. The morning opened with 15 parallel sessions and three plenaries. Post-lunch, the variety increased with four colloquia, another 15 parallel sessions, and a graduate/professional poster session. After a final set of parallel workshops and two concluding plenaries, the event wrapped up at 5:30 with a closing ceremony, group photo, and lucky draw.

The second evening offered vibrant recreation, with the hotel coffee lounge, pool, gym, and spa all open for evening refreshments. My fellow speakers and I gathered in the lounge for coffee and dessert, while others took advantage of the hotel's central location near the metro to explore local shopping and tourist attractions.



*Publishers' tables, at ThaiTESOL 2026.*

represent KOTESOL, which is always an honor; attend many exciting presentations; meet friends I hadn't seen in years and make new ones; and interact with coauthors and colleagues in a vibrant mosaic of effervescent enthusiasm brought by delegates from other nations, which made for a truly global, joyous intellectual exchange of culture and ideas, all while enjoying the warmth and hospitality of Thailand, the Land of Smiles. Thank you, KOTESOL.

### **The Author**

*John R. Baker, PhD English (Composition & TESOL), has worked with writing and self-access centers and taught writing, research, ESOL, and literature in the U.S. and Asia. His research interests include second-language reading/writing, center administration, literary studies, and interdisciplinary methods. He has also worked with international and local journals and publishers.*



During the conference, I had the opportunity to present Korean gift sets to the president, the past president, and the conference chair, attend the affiliate meeting with numerous KOTESOL partners, meet with potential new affiliates, and deliver a featured presentation. Throughout the event, I also enjoyed conversing with fellow speakers, gifting them magnets and cards, and inviting them to submit abstracts for future KOTESOL events.

Overall, it was a wonderful conference. I had the opportunity to

## Conferences, Cuisine, and Cambodia: CamTESOL 2026

By Victor Reeser

As it was my first time visiting Cambodia, I decided to arrive a couple of days early to spend some time exploring Phnom Penh before the 22nd CamTESOL conference began. It felt like the right approach to actually getting a sense of the city. My first full day started with a cooking class I had found on Tripadvisor at La Table Khmère. It was well-reviewed, reasonably priced at \$35, and ended up being one of the better decisions I made on the trip. The class ran about four hours and was led by a professionally trained local chef. It started, not in the kitchen, but with a visit to a nearby wet market.



*La Table Khmère offered a four-hour cooking class led by a professionally trained local chef for just \$35. Victor considered this one a must-do!*

Food is a big part of how I experience a place – I’m a pretty enthusiastic home cook and a newly budding content creator – so this was very much in my wheelhouse. The market itself was packed with fresh ingredients: papaya, mango, bananas, herbs, vegetables, and freshly prepared meats and fish from earlier that same day. At first glance, it might look a bit different from what many people are used to, but the system makes sense – everything is fresh, sold quickly, and replaced daily due to the heat and the cost of refrigeration.

The conference itself was held at the Institute of Technology Cambodia (ITC), and once things got underway, it was clear that a lot of effort had gone into making it run smoothly. There had been a few minor communication hiccups beforehand, but on the ground everything was easy enough to navigate. The venue and hotel were

close to each other, and getting around the city using Grab made things straightforward.

The opening ceremony ran a bit long, as opening ceremonies sometimes do, but the plenary sessions that followed were engaging and relevant, particularly in their focus on AI and digital education. It’s clearly a major area of interest across the region right now, and it was interesting to see how those conversations are developing in different contexts.

One of the most impressive aspects of the conference was the number of volunteers. Students from the local university were everywhere in their conference shirts, and it made a noticeable difference. Anytime I had a question or needed help finding a room, there was always someone nearby ready to assist. It’s a small thing, but it goes a long way in making an event feel organized and welcoming.



*Victor's workshop on using ChatGPT as a teaching assistant drew a packed, fully engaged room – and stood out as one of the trip's real highlights.*

I was also glad to be there in support of SUNY Korea colleagues Terence Oliga and Andrew Lasher, both of whom delivered strong, well-received sessions. My own workshop on using ChatGPT as a teaching assistant ended up being one of the highlights of the trip for me personally. It was a packed room, and the audience was fully engaged – asking questions, participating, and staying involved throughout. It's always a good feeling when a session really clicks, and this was definitely one of those moments.

That said, the conference wasn't without its challenges, most notably the heat. Phnom Penh is hot and humid, and not all of the rooms had full climate control. If there's one practical takeaway for future attendees, it's this: Bring sunscreen and drink more water than you think you need.

What stood out to me more than anything else about my time in Phnom Penh was the people. Everywhere I went, whether it was walking down a quiet side street late at night, navigating the busier main roads, or spending time along the Mekong River, I was met with kindness, patience, and often a smile. In reflecting on the experience, I can say that Phnom Penh is a city that offers a lot. Representing KOTESOL at CamTESOL February 6–8 was a privilege, and I appreciated the opportunity to connect with colleagues, share ideas, and be part of a larger regional conversation on language education.

Between the food, the conference, and the people, it was a trip that delivered on all fronts – and one I'd gladly repeat.



*Dr. Willy A. Renandya takes the stage at the plenary panel.*

# Connecting on Connections Day

By Kay Lint, Jeonju–North Jeolla Chapter Member-at-large

I didn't know what to expect while I was climbing up the steep hill to the TESOL building at Sookmyung Women's University. The building loomed above us promising shelter and a welcome end to the climb. I had travelled all this way with another girl from North Jeolla Province, and we were both relieved to finally make it. This relief turned to joy once we entered the building and were met by coffee, tea, and some of the biggest muffins I have ever seen. We had to split them into three to share them!

A lot of the initial faces I met surprised me by already knowing my name. For other people I had the same reaction, people who had sent me emails or helped me to set up my membership but who remained a name at the end of an email until this weekend. Once we had finally settled in, and made our teas and coffees, we were finally ready for the conference to begin.

I really enjoyed our first event. We were encouraged to mix old and new members with other chapters all over the country to form teams of four. We were going to solve a murder mystery! Since our Jeonju group was made up of five people, we split off to find some new friends and make brand new teams.

The characters in the story were all members of KOTESOL leadership, and on the screen in front of us, we had to identify them from their baby pictures. This gave us a clue that led us into a bit of acting. Where I, as the newest member of the group to join KOTESOL, was sent to the front of the room to find out the titles of the SIGs. I had to act out such words as "justice" and "welfare." What really impressed me was my team's ability to translate the strange ways I mimed some of these words! Another word puzzle saw us using the names of the SIGs to create an anagram that needed solving.



At first, I couldn't possibly understand how the clues could help us to figure out the story, but slowly the events that led to the murder became clear. We were invited to tell the tale of the murder, but although we knew a lot, it was a different team that finished the story and won the prize, branded KOTESOL mugs!

After our ice breaker, we stayed together for a more serious talk about conflict resolution within chapters. It quickly opened up to discussions of other parts of our life where we need to resolve conflict. At first, I didn't think there was anything I would be able to take away from this presentation. But as with many presentations I see at KOTESOL, I ended up reflecting on myself and my teaching style. In the



end, I found myself offering my own anecdotes of times I have managed conflict, times where it worked, and other times where I failed. There was definitely a lot to reflect on.

Afterwards, the groups were given the option of two different presentations. The only problem with this was that I wanted to go to both of them! I decided to go to the workshop Publicity Committee Collaborative Meeting and Planning Session. We began with a discussion of Canva and its benefits before getting into a discussion about the work of the publicity team and how they can help the chapters. We

*New sign-ups, new energy. Connections Day gave SIGs and committees the time and space to grow their groups and inspire others to get involved.*

also discussed online platforms that could be used to increase membership for the organization. I think the most useful part of the workshop was learning the purpose of the publicity committee and how we can work together.

After this, we had to choose again, and fast, the times were very tight for the presentations and runovers were inevitable. But this was all taken in stride, and no one seemed to be pushing their talks further over the limit than they needed to. There were a quick few moments to grab a coffee, a cookie, or another wedge of those giant muffins before we got back into it. This time I went to the Membership Committee Collaborative Meeting and Planning Session. I am the membership coordinator for my chapter, so I thought it would be useful. But it did mean I missed the talk about how to publish within Korea and KOTESOL. Another Jeonju member said it was the best presentation that she saw all weekend!

That being said, the membership meeting was also incredibly interesting. It was led by Membership Committee chair and KOTESOL president Lindsay Herron, and she wanted to talk specifically about opportunities for KOTESOL members, such as discounts for the international conference, restaurants, and courses. After this, we discussed the ideas we had to improve membership numbers and to retain those that we already have. I came away with a lot of ideas that, as membership coordinator, I plan to try and implement in my own chapter.

After this, tight to the time again, we came to the part of the event that I was most looking forward to, that was the KOTESOL Committees and SIGs Meet and Greet. I was really looking forward to this because not only do I want to write about them for the KOTESOL blog, but I also really wanted to join some for myself. So, I spoke to as many SIG leaders as I could. There were far more groups than I realized that were interested in a range of topics I wanted to learn more about. For example, there's the Environmental Justice SIG, where they talk about the effect of humans on climate change. The Research SIG for people who are planning to publish academic papers in the future. But there were even some less intellectual groups like the Well-Being and Personal Development SIG, which focuses



*Curious about getting more involved? Dr. Lindsay Herron made a compelling case for the Membership Committee at Connections Day on March 14.*

on looking after yourself through the stresses of being a teacher. They all sounded so interesting, and I ended up signing up for an awful lot of SIGs, and even feeling inspired to create one myself.

The final things for us to do for the serious part of the event was a short quiz with the chance to win some KOTESOL branded diaries (beautiful, honestly), I, being very extroverted attempted to answer every question that was asked, even though I was pulling guesses out of the very air! It

wasn't until the final chance question, "Who do you speak to if you have an artisan friend who would like a table at the international conference?" that I had a chance. I knew the answer to that one, and, thanks to my fast reflexes, I was the first to answer the question and managed to win one of the stylish notebooks.

That was the end of Connections Day. Since we were all starving, the only thing that was left to do was to go out for dinner. And in some ways, these meals can be just as important as the Connection Day itself! A great chance to solidify new connections and have some amazing discussions over incredible food. We went to a nearby Indian restaurant that was serving delicious set menus and Nepalese beer. We split off again into little groups of four and had the chance to improve the connections we had already made that day.

The only expectation I really had for this weekend was to meet some of the people I had heard of and to learn more about the organization. I think I achieved that and much more. I really enjoyed talking about skills that can be used for teaching, and learning all about the opportunities that can be offered by KOTESOL and the incredible ideas of all the teachers who are members.

### **The Author**

*Kay Lint is a Korean history fan and horror movie fanatic who likes to spend her time studying Korean, reading books, writing, and counting down the days to the next Jeonju Film Festival. Her former life includes every job in catering you can imagine, a BA and MA in history and a position as house manager for English Heritage, though now she spends her days on the eternal challenge of making grammar fun!*



# Chapter News

## Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu Chapter

By Gabriela Villafradez, President

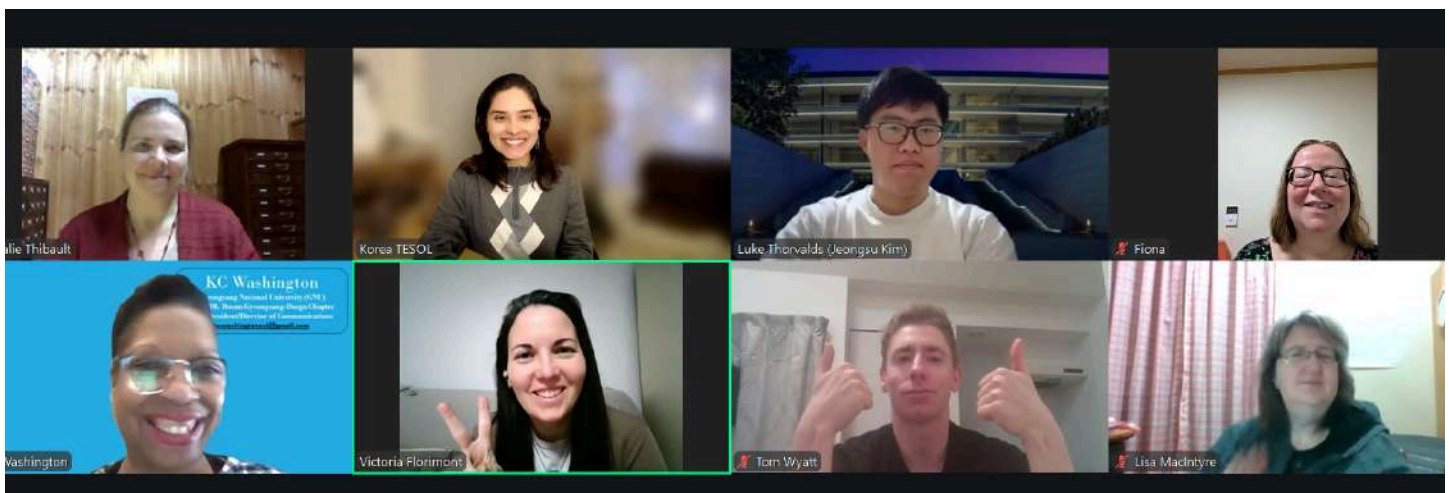
Hello, KOTESOL community. The BGD Chapter began the year with a highly engaging online event on Wednesday, January 28: a Frozen: “Let It Go” themed Trivia Night. Open to all, the session brought together members from a range of teaching backgrounds.

As the event operated on an honor system, participants were asked not to use a search engine; it relied heavily on trust, collaboration, and good humor. Encouragingly, this approach appeared to enhance the overall experience. Attendees participated enthusiastically, contributing to a lively and supportive atmosphere throughout the session. Would you have been able to identify this letter “p” correctly? “Well done” to our VP for taking home the prize.

In February, the chapter made the decision to cancel the planned Jazz Evening in Daegu due to unfavorable cold weather conditions. While this was disappointing, the decision was met with understanding, and the event has since been rescheduled for the summer, when attendance is expected to be more accessible and enjoyable for all.

In place of the cancelled event, an online session titled “An Evening of Teaching Resources Swapping” was held on Tuesday, February 10. This event focused on practical classroom applications and peer collaboration. Danny Jones opened the session by presenting a selection of his own teaching materials, which have been positively received by his students, and provided clear guidance on how these could be implemented effectively in different teaching contexts. Following this, we were invited to share our own resources, ideas, and experiences. Contributions ranged from successful classroom activities to reflections on less effective approaches, fostering an open and constructive exchange of pedagogical practices. Importantly, all materials shared during the session were offered for collective use, reinforcing a collaborative ethos and reducing concerns around ownership or attribution. Overall, the event was both practical and collegial. We hope our students enjoy the fresh lessons and materials we are now incorporating.

Later in the month, on Thursday, February 26, Dr. Natalie Thibault delivered a workshop titled “Toward Meaningful Student–Faculty Interactions in Higher Education.” This session focused on enhancing the quality and frequency of interactions between educators and students, particularly in university settings. Drawing on



*Natalie Thibault's insightful talk about connecting with our students.*

empirical research, Dr. Thibault guided us through key considerations in fostering meaningful engagement, including awareness of student needs, reflective teaching practices, and strategies for effective communication across diverse cultural contexts. The session incorporated opportunities for discussion and knowledge-sharing, allowing us to reflect on our own practices while learning from others. Although particularly relevant to those working in higher education, the insights presented were applicable across a range of teaching settings. The biggest takeaway was that genuine connections with students require effort and time, but are absolutely worth it.



*Ina's engaging talk about the OASIS Program.*

The chapter's March event, held on Saturday, March 21, featured Ina Udonava, who delivered a talk on launching a business in Korea. The session introduced the OASIS program, a government-supported initiative designed to assist foreign entrepreneurs throughout the startup process, including business registration, incubation support, and visa acquisition. Drawing on her personal experience, Udonava provided a clear and accessible overview of the opportunities and challenges involved in establishing a business in Korea. Attendees benefited from both the practical information shared and the speaker's personal insights, which added depth and relatability to the session. The talk was particularly valuable for those considering long-term professional opportunities in Korea beyond the classroom. Everyone who attended is now ready to commit to their professional objectives.

Looking ahead to April, the chapter is pleased to welcome Dr. Milan-Devi LaBrey, who will present on Emotional Social Intelligence on Thursday, April 16. Following the success of her talk at the 2025 KOTESOL International Conference, this session is expected to attract strong interest.

In addition, a call for presenters is now open for the upcoming JALT Fukuoka–KOTESOL Busan-Gyeongsang-Daegu Symposium 2026, which will take place on Saturday, September 12, in Fukuoka. KOTESOL members are encouraged to submit proposals and contribute to what promises to be a dynamic and collaborative event. Japanese ramen, and cats, anyone? (Not together, of course.)

Finally, the chapter is delighted to share that it has been awarded a Busan Global City Foundation grant for the second consecutive year. This funding will support the upcoming Cherry Blossom and Hanbok Experience in April. We will start our walk to Haeundae from Songjeong Station along the ocean Blueline trail and visit the Cheongsapo Daritdol Skywalk. The event will include lunch and hanbok rental for participants. This event is open to all KOTESOL members, but there is limited space, so please contact us as soon as possible.

For further information about upcoming events or participation, please visit our [website](#).

## 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

- Michael Free and Michael Griffin gave a workshop on critical judgment with AI on February 7. Attendance was modest, but the discussion was focused and thoughtful.
- Kara Waggoner led a workshop titled "Navigating Google Drive" on January 24. Another intimate session, with participants getting hands-on guidance.
- Claudia Tumba continues to impress. She has been collaborating online with Martin Sketchley on Teacher Talk Radio, and she presented at the KOTESOL Connections Day on the topic of publishing. Claudia is a force to be reckoned with!
- Maiah Hollander has joined the International Conference team, taking on the role of Publicity Director and already hitting the ground running. More on Maiah below!

### Upcoming Events

Martin Sketchley will be giving a workshop titled "Getting Student Writing Post-AI" on April 10. This promises to be a timely and practical session – mark your calendars!

Michael Free will be speaking at the KAPEE conference in Chuncheon on June 27. His talk is titled "Beyond 'How': Developing AI Mindset in Pre-Service Elementary Teacher Education."

### Chapter Highlights

Gangwon is lucky to have such active and talented members. Claudia Tumba and Maiah Hollander have both been stepping up in big ways – presenting, connecting, and contributing to KOTESOL far beyond the chapter level. Chapter President Michael Free is, frankly, delighted.

### Member Spotlight: Maiah Hollander

Maiah Hollander is an American (California and Washington) who broke out of the typical 9 to 5

to become an EFL teacher. Maiah has been teaching around the world for four years, earning her master's in communication and education with a focus on media literacy and AI technologies in the classroom. Fresh from two years of teaching English in Spain, Maiah made her way to Korea in August of last year (2025) as part of the EPIK program. Eager to find a new community, Maiah started looking for groups and people to connect with online. There she found KOTESOL and her first connection, Gangwon Chapter President, Michael Free. From there Maiah jumped in with both feet, attending symposiums, KOTESOL Connection Day, and in May, the 33rd KOTESOL International Conference! She even picked up the role of International Conference Publicity Director and got straight to work. As part of KOTESOL, she is excited to find new opportunities to connect education with frameworks around technology and meet fellow educators and members.



*Maiah Hollander, Gangwon member and IC2026 Publicity Director.*

## Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter

By **Dr. Maria Lisak**, President

The Gwangju–Jeonnam Chapter began the year with a quiet January, allowing space for rest and

informal connection following the winter break.

In February, the chapter hosted a small but meaningful community gathering centered on care and connection, alongside a social tea and tteok sharing. The event also marked a personal milestone, celebrating Maria Lisak's 30 years in Korea – an occasion that deepened the sense of continuity and community within the chapter. She shared "Love Letters" to the past, present and future Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL members on our Facebook group as a reflective and relational practice.

March has been a period of renewed activity and leadership development. The chapter participated by sending five members to Connections Day and Leadership Retreat in Seoul, focusing on strengthening relationships, clarifying roles, and envisioning future directions. Professional development has also been a key focus this month. The chapter hosted a reflective practice session, "Knowing When to Walk Away: Questions, Concepts, and Frameworks for Quitting," facilitated by Bryan Hale. In addition, members participated in an online reflective practice session via Zoom with J. Tom Wyatt, extending opportunities for dialogue and professional reflection beyond the local setting.

The chapter is also in early conversations about supporting the upcoming KOTESOL National Conference, reflecting a desire to remain actively engaged at the national level.

### Upcoming Activities

Looking ahead, the chapter is planning a steady rhythm of events and engagement:

**April:** Two events ("double" programming) with Tory Thorkelson and Ide O'Connell, with dinner afterwards.

**May:** Participation in and support for the International Conference (IC), along with a planned community outing to the 5-18 Museum and/or a film afternoon.

**June:** Additional double programming with Melvin Dixon and Dr. YeonSeong Park.

**Summer:** Exploration of informal social gatherings to maintain connection during the break.

**Fall:** Plans to support other chapters, including Jeonju's conference, as well as participation in the KOTESOL National Conference in November.



*Reflection and dialogue with Bryan Hale at the March chapter workshop.*

The chapter is also developing a *Gwangju News* article currently “in the hopper,” with more details to be shared in the coming months.

### Closing Note

Across this reporting period, the Gwangju–Jeonnam Chapter has been intentionally balancing rest, relational community-building, and reflective professional development. Moving forward, the focus remains on sustainable engagement, meaningful programming, and strengthening both local and national connections within KOTESOL.

## Gyeonggi Chapter

By **Kristina Kauss**, President

It has been an incredibly active and inspiring start to 2026 for the Gyeonggi Chapter. From strategic planning in the snowy depths of winter to our recent vibrant online discussions, the first three months of the year have laid a strong foundation for professional growth and community engagement. Here is a look back at what we have accomplished together and a preview of what is just around the corner.

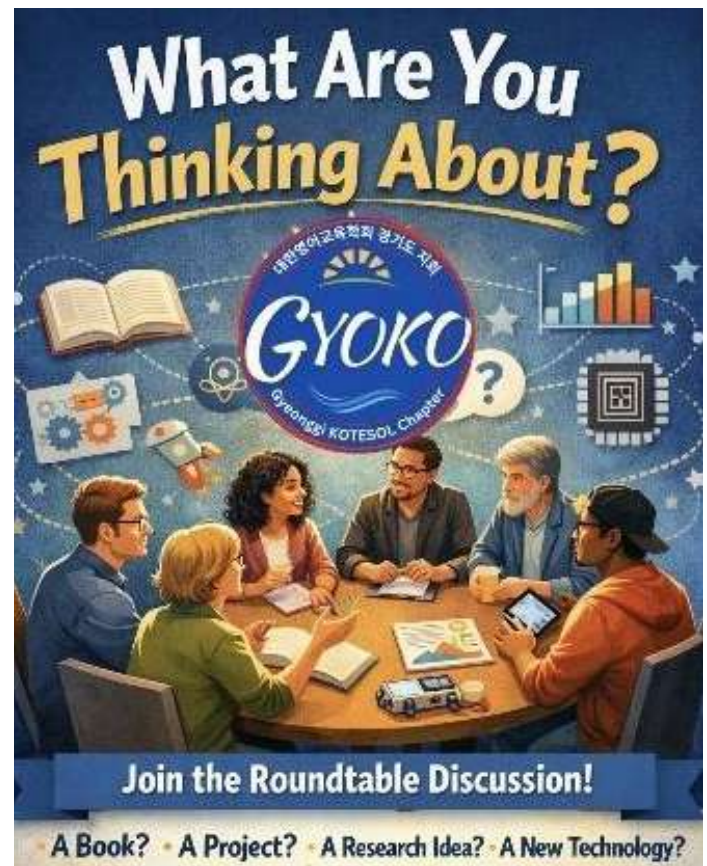
### January: Strategy and Foundations

We began the year with a focus on vision and structure. On January 11, the executive team gathered in person in Bundang, Yongin, for our first executive meeting and planning session. With seven executive council members attending in person and others contributing via a collaborative shared document, the energy was high as we mapped out the 2026 calendar of events.

Key discussions centered on improving membership outreach, with a specific focus on better supporting and engaging educators in public schools and hagwons. We also spent time refining our remuneration policies for presenters to ensure that we continue to attract high-quality speakers, while also exploring new digital tools to streamline our chapter operations.

Following the planning session, we transitioned into professional development on January 24

with our first online workshop of the year: “A Curriculum Wheel.” Delivered via Zoom, this session provided participants with a fresh perspective on curriculum design, helping teachers visualize the interconnectedness of their pedagogical goals.



### February: Navigating the AI Frontier

In February, we tackled one of the most pressing topics in modern education. On February 21, we hosted David Kim for a timely online workshop titled “AI in the Classroom.” This session went beyond the hype of generative AI, focusing instead on the foundational skill of prompting. Participants explored practical frameworks for effective prompt design and engaged in a hands-on workshop to see how these tools could be integrated directly into their teaching practice. The event was a success for those looking to enhance their digital literacy and gain the confidence to lead AI-driven initiatives in their own classrooms.

### March: Connection and Reflection

March was a month defined by both leadership and member-driven dialogue. On March 14–15, members of our chapter leadership attended the

KOTESOL Connections Day and Leadership Retreat. This in-person event was a vital opportunity to coordinate with other chapters and align our local efforts with the national vision.

On March 22, we held a unique online event titled "What Are You Thinking About?" This roundtable-style session allowed members to take the floor for 3–5 minutes each to share their current passions – ranging from research papers and new textbooks to identity and pedagogy. By sharing our individual "learning landscapes," we were able to create a collective mind map of the interests that will drive our chapter's curiosity throughout the rest of the year.

### Upcoming Events

As we look toward the next National Council meeting, please mark your calendars for these upcoming opportunities:

**April:** We will host a follow-up to our roundtable series: "What Are You Thinking About? Meets NotebookLM." This online session will explore how to use AI tools to organize and synthesize our research and teaching ideas.

**May 16–17:** The KOTESOL International Conference is the premier event of the spring. We encourage all Gyeonggi members to attend for world-class networking and professional development.

We are also excited to highlight some of our members who are potential vendors at our upcoming International Conference Marketplace. Be sure to check out these diverse tables:

- Kristina's Treats: A one-stop shop for everything sweet and fashionable, delivered with a signature touch of sarcasm.
- Rhett's Daybak Materials: Stop by to browse and purchase a variety of specialized teaching materials.
- Nik's Coateslang Academy: Visit Nik to learn about this online academy and take advantage of a free career orientation test offered to all attendees.

**Late May:** Shortly after the International Conference, we will hold an online conference debrief to share our favorite takeaways and discuss how to apply what we learned to our local contexts.

We look forward to seeing you online and in person as we continue to grow together!

## Incheon Chapter

By Victor Reeser, President

The Incheon Chapter began the year with a brief, informal hiatus during January and February taking time to reset and prepare for the months ahead. As we move into the spring season, the chapter is excited to return with renewed energy and a focus on rebuilding connections within our local community.

In April, the chapter will host both a professional workshop and a more relaxed coffee meetup in Songdo. These events are designed to provide a



KOTESOL INCHEON CHAPTER

# Coffee Hangout

Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, at 2 pm  
 Coffee Bean  
 Songdo Triple Street

Join us for coffee and conversation with chapter members! We extend a warm and friendly invitation to discuss the current state of English education.

Everyone is welcome!  
 Chapter members enjoy a complimentary drink!

balance of professional development and informal networking to give members and guests a chance to share ideas, discuss current trends in English education, and reconnect after the winter break. We look forward to welcoming both familiar faces and new participants.

Beyond local activities, several Incheon Chapter members will be attending the upcoming KOTESOL International Conference where they will contribute to and support the broader work of the organization. Their participation reflects the chapter's continued commitment to active involvement at the national level. In addition, some members have recently begun exploring collaborative opportunities with organizations and institutions outside of Korea. These efforts have the potential to develop into meaningful partnerships in the coming months, and we are optimistic about what these connections may bring.

As the chapter moves into a new season of activity, we encourage members to stay connected and keep an eye out for upcoming events and announcements. We look forward to an engaging and productive spring.

## Jeonju-North Jeolla Chapter

By Ingrid Zwaal, Treasurer

The Jeonju–North Jeolla executive had two successful planning meetings over the winter



*February officers planning meeting.*

break. One of the decisions was to hold a regional conference, our first since the pandemic. Our theme is “Challenges and Opportunities for Provincial Education in Korea.” This will be held at Jeonbuk National University in Jeonju on September 5. A call for papers will be out soon. Our presenters are all set for the spring.

We kicked off our presentations on March 7 with a local presenter, Ingrid Zwaal, explaining the Theory of Multiple Intelligences and how to use it in the classroom. Since that was my session, I will quote a participant: “Examining my own type of intelligence through the questionnaire has opened my eyes to the various needs of the learners in my class. Enlightening!” The second presenter was Lowell Sanborn from Gyeongsang National University who presented



*Chapter event March 7, with presenters Ingrid Zwaal and Lowell Sanborn.*

on creating textbook resources for publication. He inspired two of our members to seriously consider getting published.

A week later, four officers wandered into Seoul to attend Connections Day and the Leadership Retreat. Lisa MacIntyre-Park, Natalie Thibault, Kay Lint, and Lily Tintin represented JNJ to the rest of KOTESOL and learned more about it and other members. A quote from one participant: "It was an energizing experience that allowed me to connect with other members and share valuable ideas and insight. I've made some new friends, too!"



*Lowell Sanborn presents on creating textbook resources for publication.*

On April 5 at Jeonbuk University our own Dr. Natalie Thibault will present "Learning with diagrams: Enhancing Expression, Comprehension and Ideation in EFL Classroom." We will also be hearing from Nicole Cyr on "Social-Emotional Learning and Your Classroom."

## Seoul Chapter

**By Christopher Miller, President**

### Recent Activities

February 7, we held a chapter social in a coffee shop near City Hall. A great time was had by all. It was nice to hear from a variety of educators

working at different age levels, as well as the public, university, and corporate world.

March 7, we held a reflective practices meeting in the Gangnam area. Six people attended. The theme was goals for the upcoming academic year. Issues discussed included how to motivate reticent students, navigating a PhD, and strategies to thrive as a mid-career academic in South Korea. These meetings are a great opportunity to bring together people from diverse educational contexts.



*Members of the Seoul Chapter at their early April workshop with Daniel Svoboda and Soojung Kang.*

March 25 (7 p.m. online), Seoul KOTESOL was delighted to host Dr. Alvaro Fuentes for an event titled "Learning-to-Learn with AI: Re-thinking Human-Centered Intelligence in Education." This event highlighted the rapid growth of AI in a variety of domains in just the past few years, the increasing integration of AI into education including Korea's daring approach to implement AI textbooks. The session closed with an emphasis on the need for the human touch in education and words that Dr. Fuentes mentioned multiple times during the session: AI scales knowledge but humans scale wisdom.

### Future Activities

- April 4 (2 p.m.) Daniel Svoboda: "Financial Success as an Educator" and Soojung Kang: "Singing and Learning English with Adult True Beginners from North Korea."
- April 25: Hiking social near Ansan.

# Special Interest Group News

## Christian Teachers SIG

By Heidi Vande Voort Nam, Facilitator

On January 21, 2026, the Christian Teachers SIG Book Club discussed the final chapter of *On Christian Teaching*, which focused on the need for Christian approaches to teacher training, particularly in higher education settings. We shared our own positive and negative experiences with pre-service and in-service training. Most of us agreed that teachers can learn a great deal by watching other teachers in action, but it is difficult to schedule time for peer observation. The group suggested alternatives to real-time class observation, such as recording a lesson and then discussing it together over Zoom. We also suggested sharing a textbook page sample and discussing how the material could be taught in a Christian way.

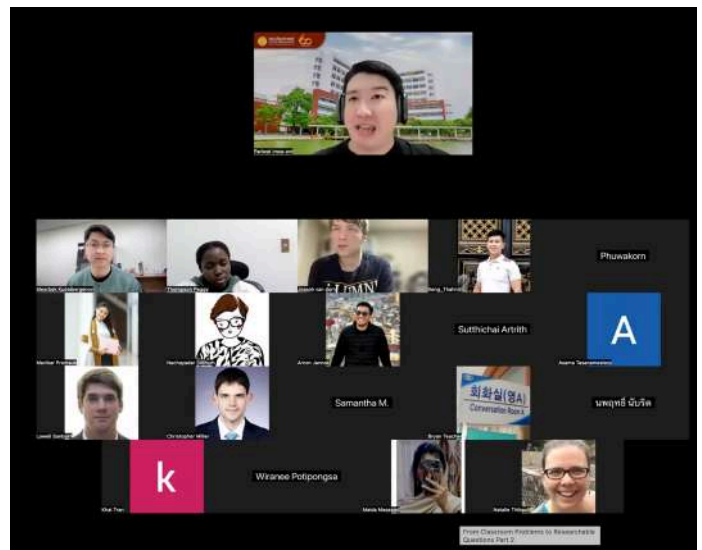
As we move forward, we decided to continue holding book discussions on a monthly basis, and we posted a poll in the CT SIG Facebook Group to select the next book. Some members of the group are interested in meeting more than once a month and trying out some different formats, such as recorded lesson observation or a discussion about how to teach a particular topic in a Christian way. We may try these alternative formats whenever members of the SIG volunteer to lead them.

The group chose Kitty Pergason's *Professional Guidelines for Christian English Teachers* as our next book for discussion, and the group reconvened on February 11. This time, we were joined not only by teachers from Korea but also from Japan, China, and Lithuania. Following Chapter 1 of the book, we discussed how our faith might influence our teaching differently depending on our teaching contexts. Several teachers brought up the difficulty of balancing institutional demands with the desire to care for our students.

## Research SIG

By Dr. Meerbek Kudaibergenov, Facilitator

On March 21, the KOTESOL Research SIG hosted a highly engaging session titled "From Classroom Problems to Researchable Questions: Designing TESOL Studies That Matter," presented by Dr. Pariwat Imsa-ard of Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand. The turnout was excellent, signaling strong demand among practitioners to deepen their understanding of research. The session explored how teachers can transform classroom concerns into theoretically grounded, publishable inquiries, emphasizing the importance of clear problem conceptualization. Through practical examples, participants examined common pitfalls and refined research questions. We extend our sincere thanks to Dr. Pariwat Imsa-ard for his insightful presentation. The SIG remains committed to advancing research in ELT through meaningful scholarly engagement.



## Social Justice SIG

By Jocelyn Wright, Leadership Support

In the first quarter of 2026, members of the KOTESOL Social Justice SIG who had previously participated together in two online SIG book clubs on World Englishes submitted a proposal to the 2026 KOTESOL International Conference as an off-shoot of a book review project we conducted together. As our submission was accepted, we will present a panel on "K-English: Ambiguity, Identity, Hybridity, Codification." If you are interested in exploring issues in research on Korean English, Jocelyn Wright, Robert Dickey, and Kara Mac Donald invite you to attend.



*Jocelyn Wright of the Social Justice SIG couldn't be more thrilled with the response during Connections Day signups on March 14.*

A saying that predates the Black Lives Matter movement but which has often been heard since that time is "No justice, no peace." Another upcoming IC presentation that has an SJ-theme due to its peacebuilding focus but one that also intersects with reflective practice is "Learning from Shame in Language Learning Through

Reflective Practice." Cheryl Woelk and Jocelyn Wright invite you to attend this session, which will present the fruit of a long-term project we have been working on, exploring experience with a peacebuilding framework we presented in two workshops at the 2024 IC.

Aside from launching her new undergraduate course, Understanding K-English, inspired by the book club activities, and preparing for collaborative IC presentations over the winter vacation, Jocelyn Wright and former SIG facilitator Maria Lisak began working on a dialogic project connecting silences in language education to the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Sustainability (IDEAS) framework presented in the article *Leveling the Playing Field: Artificial Scarcity in Language Education and Strategies to Resist or Overcome It* (Wright & Jacobs, 2025) shared with the SIG last fall.

Jocelyn Wright also represented the SJ-SIG at the KOTESOL Connections Day on Saturday, March 14 at Sookmyung Women's University in Seoul. It was lovely to meet a few KOTESOL members who expressed interest in joining this SIG there, and we always welcome others to jump on board!

Activity in our Facebook group since our last report includes the promotion of various types of SJ-related events:

- A reflective practice session for 2026 through a social-justice-oriented lens with Maria Lisak (January 3)
- A call for abstracts for an edited book tentatively titled *AI for Recentering Community Voices in Language Education and Beyond: Towards Equity, Identity, and Linguistic Justice*
- A podcast discussing issues with the term "inclusion" featuring Ben Goldstein
- A British Council invitation to join practical webinars aimed at promoting equality
- An offer to receive a complimentary copy of an upcoming volume entitled *Virtual Exchange as Justice-Oriented Practices: Navigating Identity, Language, and Power* in exchange for a review and/or help with promotion
- A Modern English Teacher webinar on well-

being

- An invitation to read creative nonfiction essays from *Bending Genre*, which is still open
- An online discussion on the ways Americans talk about Muslims, hosted by the TESOL Social Responsibility Interest Section
- A call for submissions to an Open TESOL IC focused on technology, policy, well-being, and criticality in language education

In addition, resources shared and/or discussed, include ones that span diverse SJ themes:

- An academic article entitled *It's Not You, It's the System: Women Professors in TESOL and the Persistence of Gender Bias*
- A review of *The Long Arc of Leadership*, a book by the last director for Peace Corps Korea
- A news update on a case of 2025 teacher suicide recognized as an occupational accident
- A news article reporting on the exposure of foreign teachers' data on recruiter websites
- Another article on legal lingo and court interpreters assisting foreigners to navigate the Korean justice system
- A review of *Mongle Mongle Mongle*, a Seoul Broadcasting System series on love and people on the autism spectrum

Thanks go out to those who shared, liked, and commented on posts. It would, of course, be wonderful to cultivate more sharing of relevant news, events, resources, and opinions by diverse participants in this group.

If you are a KOTESOL member looking to get involved in this SIG, either on- or offline, and/or would be willing to help us (co-)facilitate, please get in touch. You can find us on the [KOTESOL website](#), [Facebook](#), or contact via [email](#).

## Well-Being and PD SIG

By **Gabriela Villafradez**, Facilitator

Greetings and salutations, everyone. The KOTESOL Well-Being SIG continued its commitment to supporting members' personal and professional well-being through a series of thoughtfully designed events in early 2026,



*Well-Being members Mr. Yoo and Zak shopping at the Gimhae International Market.*

combining reflection, creativity, and community engagement.

On Wednesday, January 21, the SIG hosted an online session titled "Beyond Academia" with Claudia Tumba. This talk focused on sustaining creativity alongside the demands of a busy professional life. Drawing on her experiences as an EFL instructor, author, actor, and public speaker, Tumba reflected on the role of creative practice in maintaining balance and motivation. The session explored how engaging in creative pursuits beyond the classroom can contribute positively to professional well-being, confidence, and identity. In addition to personal insights, participants were offered practical guidance on developing public speaking opportunities and expanding their professional scope. We were all left with food for thought as we all want to improve our mental health, preserve our happiness, and avoid burnout.

In February, the Well-Being SIG shifted focus towards in-person community building with a social and cultural outing on Sunday, February 22, in Gimhae. The event brought together members for a relaxed day centered on



*Claudia Tumba's online session was a total success.*

connection and exploration. It was a pleasure to see both new members and familiar faces in the day's activities. The outing began with a leisurely walk through Gimhae's city center, including visits to local historical sites. We then explored the Gimhae International Market, where a wide range of international shops offered products from diverse cultural backgrounds. We bought Uzbek tea, Indonesian durian cakes, and Middle-Eastern spices, to name a few. The day concluded with a shared lunch at a Turkish restaurant, where we were able to continue conversations about emotional health and the importance of moving our bodies.

In addition to these events, the Well-Being SIG's weekly online yoga sessions have continued to provide members with regular opportunities to prioritize physical and mental well-being. These sessions remain open and accessible, offering a consistent space for relaxation and self-care. Join our weekly free online yoga classes on Zoom every Friday from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. These classes are open to all levels. The

sessions are a consistent space to pause, move, breathe, and reconnect at the end of the working week.

Looking ahead, the SIG has planned further events aimed at supporting member well-being, including an upcoming jazz talk and evening with Martin Sketchley, and a conflict resolution course led by Cheryl Woelk. Please join our Facebook group to stay up to date with our events.

**Collaboration Across Borders**  
 A Fukuoka JALT –  
 Busan-Gyeongnam-Daegu  
 KOTESOL Symposium

📅 Saturday, 12 September 2026  
 📍 Fukuoka City, Japan  
 🗣️ Call for presenters TBA  
 🌐 <https://fukuoka.jalt.org/cab26>  
<https://tinyurl.com/busangdchapter>

# Committee News

## Financial Affairs Committee

By John Tom Wyatt, Chair

The Financial Affairs Committee is happy to report that we completed the 2025 Quarter 4 audit. No inconsistencies were found. Now that Quarter 1 of 2026 has ended, an audit of Q1 finances will soon be undertaken.

In other news, as of March 29, committee chair J. Tom Wyatt was appointed by the National Council to the vacant position of KOTESOL treasurer. As such, he has left his position as Financial Affairs Committee chair to take up his new role.

J. Tom will be joined at Treasury by Vivi Gallo, who will be assisting as bookkeeper during the busy International Conference period, and by Lindsay Herron, who will be giving support with banking. If anyone is interested in becoming the new Financial Affairs Committee chair, they may contact J. Tom, the Nominations and Elections Committee chair, or the president.

## International Conference 2026

By Dr. Meerbek Kudaibergenov, Chair

As preparations continue for the upcoming KOTESOL International Conference, there is a strong sense of momentum and shared purpose across the organizing team. For me, this process has been an incredible journey of learning and bonding, an opportunity to work closely with dedicated colleagues, exchange ideas, and grow together. It has been both professionally rewarding and personally meaningful, and I am genuinely excited to see what the conference itself will be like when all of these efforts come together. Guided by this year's theme, "Criticality, Innovation, and Compassion: Rethinking Language Education in Times of Change," the event is steadily taking shape as a dynamic and engaging experience.

The Program team, led by Gabriela Villafradez along with Michael Free and J. Tom Wyatt has been particularly active in shaping what promises to be a rich and thought-provoking academic program. With a high number of submissions reviewed through a careful vetting process, the final selection reflects a diverse range of perspectives and teaching contexts. The schedule has been thoughtfully designed to balance sessions with opportunities for interaction, creating space for both critical engagement and professional connection.

This year's lineup of speakers strongly reflects the conference theme. Plenary speakers Thomas S. C. Farrell and Nathanael Rudolph will be joined by an outstanding group of featured speakers, including Curtis Kelly, Hyun-Sook Kang, Kilryoung Lee, Ju Seong Lee, Michael Rabbidge,



ICC Group Photo Taken Post-ICC Meeting, March 14.

Kyungja Ahn, and David D. Perrodin. In addition, invited speaker Janet Mikyung Kim brings valuable industry perspectives. Two invited panel discussions, one focusing on criticality and the other on compassion in ELT, will further encourage reflection on how we teach, support learners, and respond to change. Big thanks to Dave Shaffer, our Invited Speakers director, for excellent coordination!

Many other teams are contributing essential work to ensure a smooth and welcoming conference experience. Registration and partnerships, coordinated by Lindsay Herron, are progressing steadily, with growing engagement from both domestic and international partners. The logistics team, led by Sean O'Connor, is working closely with the venue to finalize room allocations and equipment needs.

Publicity efforts, led by Maiah Hollander and Martin Sketchley, have been building excitement through regular content, including announcements, videos, and conference updates. At the same time, Julie Ha continues to support communications and conference materials, while Wesley Martin is assisting with human resources coordination. Financial planning and sponsorship coordination by Dave Shaffer provide a solid foundation for the event's continued development.

The conference experience is further enriched by the contributions of Mike Peacock in guest services and Lisa MacIntyre-Park and her team in organizing The Marketplace, which will offer valuable opportunities for networking and resource sharing. International outreach, supported by Victor Reeser, is helping to strengthen global connections and broaden participation.

What stands out most at this stage is the strong sense of collaboration and shared commitment across all teams. The conference represents not only a professional gathering but also a collective effort to reflect on and rethink language education in meaningful ways. As we approach the event, we look forward to welcoming participants into a space where criticality, innovation, and compassion come together,

creating opportunities for learning, connection, and inspiration.

## International Outreach Committee

**By Victor Reeser, Chair**

The International Outreach Committee (IOC) has had an active start to the year with KOTESOL members continuing to represent the organization at conferences across the region. In January, John Baker represented KOTESOL at the Thailand TESOL Conference, while Victor Reeser attended CamTESOL 2026. By all accounts, both conferences were highly successful, and we are pleased to see KOTESOL maintaining a strong presence in Southeast Asia. For more detailed reflections, please see the full narrative reports included elsewhere in this issue of *HAN*.

Looking ahead, the IOC is especially excited to welcome seven international partner representatives to the upcoming KOTESOL International Conference in May. Confirmed participants will join us from a range of partner organizations, including ETA-ROC (Taiwan), JALT (Japan), PALT (Philippines), ThaiTESOL (Thailand), ELTAM (Mongolia), HAAL (Hong Kong), and NELTA (Nepal). These representatives will not only attend the conference but will also contribute to the program through research presentations on topics such as literature in language learning, digital storytelling, EMI and equity, ESP curriculum design, corpus-based teaching, and technology in ELF classrooms. The IOC looks forward to welcoming our colleagues in person, continuing to build meaningful connections, and supporting ongoing collaboration across the Asia-Pacific ELT community.



## Membership Committee

By **Dr. Lindsay Herron**, Chair

The Membership Committee invites all members to join us at The Social @KOTESOL2026, our annual fête featuring conversation, camaraderie, and copious libations! The event will be held on Saturday, May 16, from 6–8 p.m. at Sookmyung Women’s University, and it will again include dinner, passed hors d’oeuvres-style, catered by Spoon Seoul. Tickets are available for purchase online through May 5, and a limited quantity will be available for purchase in person at the membership and registration desks at the conference. (Note: You do not have to be attending the conference to participate in this event!)



### Membership Perk Highlight

Did you know members can promote their microbusinesses via KOTESOL at a substantial discount? Members can reserve a display table at the international conference for a reduced price, and they can advertise in *KOTESOL News* (our monthly email newsletter) up to three times a year for free (a 200,000 KRW value).

### Membership Numbers

As of March 25, 2026, KOTESOL has around 570 members. This is our most active – and most volatile – time for memberships; since the international conference, one of our main membership draws, is in the spring, memberships purchased for the previous year’s conference expire in the first quarter of the year, and many new members are added for the upcoming conference. So far this quarter, we have added 170 members (new or renewing), many of whom will be presenting at the international conference.

## This or That?

*KOTESOL Membership Edition*

<p><i>The English Connection</i></p> <p><b>Branded Tumbler</b></p> <p><b>Materials Development Microcredential</b></p> <p><b>Reflective Practice SIG</b></p> <p><b>Research Grant</b></p> <p><b>Attend the Conference in Person</b></p> <p><b>Publish Your Research</b></p> <p><b>Run for Chapter Office</b></p>	<p><i>Korea TESOL Journal</i></p> <p><b>Branded Water Bottle</b></p> <p><b>Teaching English Using Video Microcredential</b></p> <p><b>Social Justice SIG</b></p> <p><b>Travel Grant</b></p> <p><b>Watch Videos from the Conference at Home</b></p> <p><b>Present Your Research</b></p> <p><b>Run for National Office</b></p>
--	--

#allthisandmore #lovekotesol  
#joinkotesol



Korea  
TESOL

KOTESOL · 대한영어교육학회

## Nominations and Elections Committee

By Dr. David Shaffer, Chair

The Nominations and Elections Committee is tasked with preparing a slate of candidates for national elected-officer positions. These seven positions are president, first vice-president, second vice-president, secretary, treasurer, International Conference Committee co-chair, and Nominations and Elections Committee chair.

Elections will be held in October, just ahead of the early-November annual business meeting, and nominations of candidates will officially be received during the August–September period. However, it is never too early to begin to consider running for one of these elected offices. The duties of each office can be found on the [N&E webpage](#).

At present, the office of national treasurer is vacant. If serving in THIS office is of interest and you are a KOTESOL member, please contact the N&E Committee chair at [elections@koreatesol.org](mailto:elections@koreatesol.org)

Although it is technically beyond the purview of this committee, there are many other ways in which KOTESOL members can serve the organization. There are appointed national committee chair and committee member positions, chapter elected and appointed officer positions, special interest group positions, and more. Of particular note is the largest of the committees: the International Conference Committee, with a wide variety of skillsets required for organizing and holding the annual spring conference.

Serving KOTESOL not only benefits the organization, it also benefits the volunteer with increased experience, knowledge, skills, and wisdom, in addition to a warm sense of satisfaction. Consider how you can best serve KOTESOL.



## Publications Committee

By Dr. David Shaffer, Chair

The Publications Committee wishes to begin by thanking our readers of *Korea TESOL Happenings and News (HAN)*. We hope you find each issue of value. We also thank all of our contributors and editing staff for their efforts. Without their contributions, *HAN* would not have become the success that it is. With this issue, *HAN* is starting its very successful third year of publication. Look for a new issue quarterly – in early July, October, January, and again in April.

*The English Connection (TEC)* is also published quarterly. The most recent issue was our pre-international conference issue, the Spring 2026 issue, which went online March 1 and into mailboxes later in the month. It contains interviews or an article by each of our nine plenary and featured speakers to the 2026 Korea TESOL International Conference coming up in May. In addition, it carries the Editorial, the President's Message, a conference overview by the conference chair, and articles by our three regular columnists.

*KOTESOL Proceeding 2025* had an overwhelming response from 2025 international conference presenters – almost double the number of submissions of the previous year! Fifty-nine articles have been selected for publication in two volumes: 35 invited speaker and research papers in Volume 1 as well as 24 workshop, techniques and approaches, poster presentation, panel discussion, and roundtable articles in Volume 2. Volume 1 is in layout and should be published soon; Volume 2 will follow soon thereafter. If you are presenting at KOTESOL 2026, consider submitting a paper on your presentation to *KOTESOL Proceedings 2026*.

The *Korea TESOL Journal*, Volume 21-2, will contain six full research articles, three brief reports, and three book reports. Volume 22-1 currently has fourteen papers in some stage of review or production. Additionally, we are now

accepting submissions to Volume 22-2 of *KTJ*.

Don't overlook *Scribes Square*. It is the easiest space to publish in – short word count, light editing. And the focus can be any topic related to ELT, language acquisition, or education in general. Don't keep your thoughts, opinions, and ideas to yourself. Share them with the wider ELT community via *Scribes Square*.

Issues of *KTJ* and *Proceedings* are available on our website as limited access to members for the first year after publication (after six months for *TEC*). Just log in first to gain access. Following the limited access period, these publications become open access. Back issues are available all the way back to the very first issues, published in the 1990s. *HAN*, *Scribes Square* articles, and the annual Spring issue of *TEC* (the pre-conference issue) are always open access.

If you are a KOTESOL member and think you should be receiving a print copy of *TEC* but are not, check your SEND / DO NOT SEND settings in your KOTESOL profile. Also check that your mailing address is current and correct. All of our publications are available online. So, if you are receiving print copies but find that you are reading *KTJ* online, consider joining our save-a-tree campaign by opting out of being sent a print copy of *TEC*.

The Publications Committee invites you to consider a submission to one of our publications: For more information, suggestions, and submissions use these email addresses:

*The English Connection* and *HAN*:  
kotesolteceditor@gmail.com  
*Korea TESOL Journal*  
journal@koreatesol.org  
*KOTESOL Proceedings*  
2026.kotesol.proceedings@gmail.com  
*Scribes Square*  
publications@koreatesol.org



## Publicity Committee

By Lisa MacIntyre-Park, Chair

Over the past few months, the KOTESOL Publicity Committee has been actively supporting the organization by sharing news, events, and initiatives across our national platforms. Through regular outreach to chapter leaders, SIGs, committees, and conference organizers, the committee has fulfilled publicity requests submitted by groups across the organization in a timely manner, as they are received. These posts were shared across multiple platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter (X), and TikTok, extending their reach and helping members connect with KOTESOL activities. We are always happy to support chapters, SIGs, and committees in promoting their news and events. Quick links to all national platforms can be found in the images on this [Publicity Committee page](#).



In addition to ongoing posting, the committee has been working closely with the International Conference Publicity Team to support promotion for the 2026 conference. Recent content has included calls for proposals, speaker announcements, and promotional videos, with more materials currently in development. Efforts are being guided by a structured content plan,

with the goal of increasing visibility and engagement as the conference approaches. The committee also took part in KOTESOL Connections Day, where members connected with others, shared ideas, and explored ways to strengthen publicity efforts across the organization.



*Mike Peacock and Lisa MacIntyre-Park took the stage at Connections Day on March 14 to share all things Publicity Committee.*

Looking ahead, the Publicity Committee aims to build on this momentum by expanding its outreach and exploring new initiatives. Plans include putting together a professional development content series using existing KOTESOL resources, and better highlighting KOTESOL's work both on and offline. Members are encouraged to submit their news and events for promotion and to engage with KOTESOL's platforms by sharing and interacting with posts. Through these collective efforts, the committee hopes to continue strengthening KOTESOL's visibility and sense of community.

## Research Committee

**By Ian Moodie, Chair**

For the January–March period, the Research Committee's primary activity has been the administration of the 2026 research grant cycle. The application period has now closed, and we appreciate the strong interest from members. The committee is currently in the review phase,

and the results of the applications for research and travel grants will be announced prior to the upcoming KOTESOL International Conference.



## Sponsorship Committee

**Dr. Lindsay Herron, Acting Chair**

The KOTESOL Sponsorship Committee's primary focus is currently on providing a dynamic, mutually rewarding experience for exhibitors, sponsors, and attendees at the 2026 KOTESOL International Conference. With multiple program book advertisements and more than two dozen displays already sold, we're off to a solid start. In addition, we're delighted to announce the return of The Marketplace @KOTESOL, a collection of local artisans selling handmade items and community members promoting nonprofits and microbusinesses – a truly unique experience for conference-goers and a superb opportunity to purchase one-of-a-kind crafts and gifts. Please be sure to visit the display area at the conference during the lunch breaks or coffee break!

We're looking for a Sponsorship Committee chair. If you're detail-oriented and work well with professional contacts, contact [president@koreatesol.org](mailto:president@koreatesol.org)



# National News

## National Council Meeting

By Heidi Vande Voort Nam, Secretary

The National Council convened over Zoom on March 29. Officers, committee chairs, and chapter presidents each presented updates, and the National Council made several important decisions. To establish a new domestic partnership, the council formally approved an MOU with Korea Association of Primary English Education (KAPEE). Additionally, the council appointed J. Tom Wyatt to fill the position of treasurer. Tom has been serving as chair of KOTESOL's Financial Affairs Committee, and in that role, he has conducted audits of KOTESOL's financial transactions. The National Council is grateful that he is willing to step into the role of treasurer. Preparations for the International Conference are underway, regular attendee registration will be opening shortly, and the committee is seeking volunteers to help out during the conference. As the organization looks ahead toward the fall, the Daejeon-Chungcheong and Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapters expressed an interest in co-hosting the 2026 National Conference. A formal proposal for the conference will be prepared for the June National Council meeting.

## Special Interest Group News

The new SIG Guidelines 2026 and SIG Funds Form are available on the KOTESOL Google Drive. Please make use of this information and SIG benefits.

We are calling for new facilitators for the following SIGs:

- Classroom Management SIG
- Reflective Practice SIG
- Young Learners and Teens SIG
- CALL

Thank you to the previous facilitators. We wish you all the best in your new projects.

Please contact [Gabriela Villafradez](#) if you are interested in leading any of these amazing groups.

## Conference Travel Grants

The recipients of KOTESOL's second annual conference travel grant were announced in March. The grantees for 2026 are Thi My Dung Dang (Vietnam) and Made Wahyu Mahendra (Malaysia). Sponsored by KOTESOL lifetime member and *KTJ* editor-in-chief Kara Mac Donald, this grant is designed to help presenters with financial need, especially those from under-represented countries, participate in the 33rd Korea TESOL International Conference. The grants include waived registration fees, a one-year international membership, and up to a million won for travel expenses to and from the conference.

## Domestic Partnerships

KOTESOL is pleased to announce two new domestic partnerships! First, we now have a partnership with the Korean Association of English for Specific Purposes (KAESP). KOTESOL president Dr. Lindsay Herron and KAESP president Dr. Seohyun Paik digitally signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) last fall, with the final document approved by the KOTESOL National Council and KAESP board at their respective meetings in December 2025. The other partnership is with the Korea Association of Primary English Education (KAPEE); the MOU, signed by Lindsay and KAPEE president Dr. Tecnam Yoon, went into effect in March after approval by each organization's board.

The MOUs pledge mutual promotion of events, a presentation slot and fee-waiver for a representative to each organization's

international conference, and an interest in other forms of cooperation.

## President's Corner

By Dr. Lindsay Herron, KOTESOL President

KOTESOL is off to a running start this semester! Conference planning, travel and conference grants, research grants, publications, tons of events, and more have kept our dedicated volunteers busy. We've renewed our status as an associate member of IATEFL and an affiliate member of TESOL International, invited our domestic and international partners to our upcoming international conference, and signed partnership agreements with two new domestic partners, the Korean Association of English for Specific Purposes (KAESP) and the Korea Association of Primary English Education (KAPEE). The spring issue of *The English Connection* is stuffed with thoughtful, enlightening articles by conference invited speakers, and KOTESOL Proceedings 2025 is nearly finished as I write this. We're also now able to accept credit cards in a limited way (in USD via a PayPal invoice, which can be paid by card even if the payer doesn't have a PayPal account). We have a lot to celebrate this quarter!

In addition, KOTESOL Weekend, held March 14 and 15 at Sookmyung Women's University, was a huge success, featuring a triple-header of organization events designed to maximize participation and minimize costs. Saturday started with a meeting of the International Conference Committee and continued with KOTESOL Connections Day – a delightful afternoon of brainstorming, sharing, learning, and murder (well... a playful and engaging murder mystery, anyway). On Sunday, chapter leaders came together at the same venue to discuss shared problems, solutions, ideas, and inspiration. Gratitude to the organizers, conference committee chair Meerbek Kudaibergenov, second vice-president Gabriela Villafradez, and first vice-president Mike Peacock, respectively; to Sookmyung Women's University for generously providing the venue; and to all the curious members and intrepid

volunteers who dedicated their time, energy, and insights to the weekend!

Our spring is just getting started, though. Attendee pre-registration for the 33rd Korea TESOL International Conference is now open (through May 5), and tickets are on sale for The Social @KOTESOL2026, two wonderful opportunities for community and connections. I look forward to seeing you at a KOTESOL event in the near future!



## Membership News

### Lifetime Memberships

KOTESOL is delighted to welcome the following new lifetime member:

Stephanie Ptak (Gyeonggi 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!

### Recent Publications

*Virtual Exchange as Justice-Oriented Practices: Navigating Identity, Language, and Power* (2026), edited by C.-C. Lin, C. Vaz Bauler, and E. Servano, includes a chapter by KOTESOL

president, Dr. Lindsay Herron. Chapter 13: *Expanding Perspectives, Engaging Empathy: Critical Cosmopolitan Connections in a Virtual Exchange in Korea*.

Anyone interested in this topic can purchase the book on the Multilingual Matters website for 30% off, using the discount code VEJP30 (through August 31, 2026).

The following research articles have recently been published by Dr. Andrew White, editor-in-chief of *The English Connection (TEC)* magazine and *Happenings and News (HAN)* newsletter.

**Modern English Education, Vol. 27, pp. 179–196**

White, A. (2026). *How task type shapes discourse marker functionality in L2 interaction: A comparison of spot-the-difference and decision-making tasks*. Published by the Modern English Education Society (MEESO).

**Korean Journal of Applied Linguistics, Vol. 42, Issue 1, pp. 53–82**

White, A. (2026). *Discourse markers in spoken task interaction: Effects of target language immersion on discourse marker functioning*. Published by the Applied Linguistics Association of Korea (ALAK).

These two studies investigate how different pedagogical environments and task designs influence how L2 learners use discourse markers in spoken interaction. The research compares the functional use of these markers across various task types, such as spot-the-difference and decision-making activities, while also examining the impact of target language immersion. The findings offer practical insights for educators looking to enhance conversational fluency and interactional competence in the EFL classroom.

## The 33rd Korea TESOL International Conference

# Marketplace 2026



**Browsing,  
Inspiration,  
Something Special  
for Everyone**

To get involved as a vendor, email: [conf-sales@koreatesol.org](mailto:conf-sales@koreatesol.org)