

The KOTESOL Intl. Conference as Professional Development

By Dr. David Shaffer

When English language teachers think of professional development, what usually pops to mind is reading a book on English language teaching (ELT) or taking a course. Actually, there are many and varied self-improvement methods available to the English language teacher, but here I will concentrate on just one – a major event that took place in Korea during October. This annual fall event is the KOTESOL International Conference (KIC), by far the largest event of its kind in Korea. Just ask the over 1,000 teachers who attended. There are more than a dozen ELT associations in Korea with annual conferences, but none of them comes near to KOTESOL in attracting participation in conference-goers and exhibitors. I may be partial to KICs, but I also think that no other association's conference has as much to offer to their members as the annual KIC. Here I will point out some of the conference offerings that I think I have facilitated my growth in the area of ELT through attending KICs and other KOTESOL conferences over the past two decades – self-improvement through conferencing.

The People and Networking

I cannot think of any other event in Korea where so many ELT people congregate in one place. They are varied and dynamic. Many are native English speakers; many are from outside of Korea; and they are set in many different ELT contexts. Teachers of young learners, teenagers, university students, and business people; and private institute teachers, teacher trainers, and school administrators – all have experiences to share, a desire to learn, a sense of adventure. Aside from the many presentations on offer, just being part of this dynamic, and interacting with old friends and new acquaintances alike, would

make attending the conference well worthwhile. The conference is a prime time for networking. The “KOTESOL Cafe” set up at the conference was abuzz throughout the two days of the event – as was the “members’ networking social” at the close of the



first day's presentations. There was buzz about what people heard in many presentations: new classroom techniques, interesting research results, teaching philosophy, theo-

retical insights. Buzz about who's doing what, who's teaching where, new books, new technology, what's going on within KOTESOL. There's so much to learn by just talking with folks at the conference.

The Conference Sessions

This year's KIC was spread out over three days (October 3-5) as Friday was a national holiday. During the two days of the main conference, there were over 150 concurrent presentations given. What sets KICs apart from other ELT associations' conferences in Korea is that KICs cater to sessions presenting practical classroom techniques, while the other conferences limit themselves almost entirely to research-based presentations.

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■ Joining Korea TESOL

Who May Join: English teachers of any level or nationality are eligible to join KOTESOL. We welcome native and non-native speakers teaching at primary schools, secondary schools, language institutes, colleges and universities, and other organizations. University students may join as student members.

What Memberships Types Are Available?

- **Regular 1-Year Membership** (40,000 won).
- **Lifetime Membership** (400,000 won). Student and International Membership options are also available.

How to Join: Apply by using the online membership form at <http://www.koreatesol.org/>. On the front page, click on “Join KOTESOL” in the menu, and follow the directions.

Alternately, paper membership application and renewal forms are available at Chapter meetings for those who prefer making a hard-copy application with Chapter assistance.

Membership payment may be made by:

- Bank transfer to **KOTESOL**: Korea Exchange Bank account number 630-006952-841
- Payment in cash to the Chapter Membership Officer at a Chapter Meeting

KOTESOL International Conference...

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Over 300 presentation proposals were submitted to this year's KIC from which about 150 were selected. Most other Korean conferences on the other hand, must select almost all of their submitted proposals to form a program of 30-50 presentations. As the KIC is an international conference, close to half of the proposals regularly come in from outside of Korea.

From many of the KIC concurrent sessions, attendees can pick up a new technique or activity that they can use back home in their class on Monday morning. You can walk past some very quiet sessions presenting research findings while further down the hall, the noise level emitting from the session room may be high as the attendees are trying out a new technique or participating in a class activity. There is something for everyone and more than enough for anybody. Everyone leaves with their bag of classroom resources much fuller than when they came and their store of ELT knowledge much richer.

The Names

In addition to an international slate of concurrent session presenters, the KIC invites big-name speakers to participate in the conference. These renowned authorities on ELT and applied linguistics come from many corners of the globe to give plenary and featured presentations. It is a rare opportunity for the average classroom English instructor to listen to and even speak with the experts in their field. Some of the names invited to recent KICs include Scott Thornbury, David Nunan, Keith Folse, Paul Nation, Thomas Farrell, Jack Richards, Stephen Krashen, Rod Ellis, and Michael Long. This year, our KIC included a series of pre-conference workshops in which a dozen of our plenary and featured speakers participated, giving the attendees in these smaller sessions a greater change to interact with "the names."

The Exhibitors

The KIC is more than just a collection of presentations on the various areas of ELT; it offers a materials exhibition for the attendees. Dozens of exhibit booths line the corridors offering books and other ELT materials by familiar publishers such as Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Macmillan Publishers, Cengage Learning,

Collins Learning, Helbling Language, and YBM Sisa. Materials include teachers handbooks, student coursebooks, young learner graded readers, and much more. These products are on offer at discounted prices to the conference attendees.

The Bonuses

On top of these many opportunities for professional development that KICs offer, there is more. Participants often transform from conference-goer to conference presenter, honing presentation skills that carry over into better teaching skills, and to presenting at conferences outside of Korea. KICs do not put themselves on: they require the skills and dedication of a large group of KOTESOL volunteer members. These conference organizers meet throughout the year to plan the annual KIC and in the process, learn more about their professional field, develop bonds with their fellow conference planners, and end up putting on an exceptional conference. If you haven't yet been a part of a KOTESOL International Conference, or one of its national or regional conferences, you would do well to consider doing so for your self-improvement as an English teacher.

THE PRESENTER

David Shaffer is a long-time educator in Korea and an early member of KOTESOL. He has attended almost all



of the 22 KOTESOL International Conferences and has been an integral part of the past 14 International Conference Committees as well as numerous National and Chapter KOTESOL conferences. Dr. Shaffer is a presenter and/or attendee at more than a dozen ELT conferences each year in and outside of Korea. He is

President of Gwangju Jeonnam Chapter, Chair of the National Publications Committee, and father of two members of KOTESOL.

(A portion of the October 11th Chapter meeting features impressions and insights that Chapter members have of the recently completed KOTESOL International Conference 2014 at COEX in Seoul Oct. 3-5.)

Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL October Chapter Meeting

- Time: Saturday, October 18, 2014, 1:45–5:00 p.m.
- Place: Chosun University Main Building (Gwangju), 4th Floor, Room 4211

■ Schedule

- 1:45 pm:** Sign-in and Meet-and-Greet (Admission is free. Future membership is welcomed.)
- 2:00 - 2:50 pm:** Special Share – IC 2014:
Sharing of ideas, activities, impressions, and information gained from the International Conference by all who attended.
- 2:50 - 3:10 pm:** Refreshment Break
- 3:10 – 3:30 pm:** SPECIAL PRESENTATION: *Why Is Korean Like That?*
Dr. David Shaffer (Chosun University)
- 3:30-4:30 pm:** *Special Q & A Session with Special ELT Panel*
PANEL MEMBERS: Lindsay Heron, Dr. David Shaffer, and others.
The panel will act as facilitators for the questions, which will be opened to the group.
- 4:30 pm:** Announcements / Drawing for Door Prizes / Closing
- After-meeting dinner at The First Alleyway.

Upcoming Chapter Events

October 19, 2014.

Gwangju International Center (GIC) Day
Gwangju-Jeonnam Chapter KOTESOL booth
10:00 am – 5:00 pm; Gwangju City Hall Park

10 Poetry Activities for the EFL Classroom
Dr. Yeon-seong Park (Chonnam Natl. University)
Reflective Practice SIG Morning Session Topic:
Video Observations – Learning Through Others

November 8, 2014. Chapter Meeting

The “I Am Happy” Project: Working with Young Learners – Billie Kang (Taebong Elem. School)

Dec. 6. Chapter Meeting & Year-End Dinner

Getting the Most Out of Your Coursebook Activities
Jessica Ives (Dongshin University)

Upcoming KOTESOL Events

November 8, 2014.

Yongin-Gyeonggi Chapter Conference
Useful Classroom Activities and Techniques
Kangnam University, Yongin, Gyeonggi-do

What’s Not. The Changing Face of ELT in Korea
Featuring David Sperling of Dave’s ESL Café
Woosong University, Daejeon

November 22, 2014.

The Annual KOTESOL National Drama Festival
Hosted by Jeonju-North Jeolla Chapter
Jeonju University, Jeonju, Jeonbuk

November 30, 2014.

Reflective Practice SIG Workshop
Featuring Dr. Thomas Farrell (Brock University)
Seoul

November 29, 2014.

Daejeon-Chungcheong Chapter Symposium and Thanksgiving Dinner
The Winds of Change: What’s New, What’s Hot,

December 13, 2014.

Korea TESOL Conference at English Expo
The 2014 Exposition on English Education, Educational Opportunities, and Employment
COEX Convention Center, Seoul

Upcoming Korea ELT Events

November 22, 2014.

2014 GETA Conference

Towards Creativity in ELT: Issues and Directions
Honam University, Gwangju