

KOTESOL to hold conference in Seoul



English teachers take part in last year's KOTESOL International Conference. The annual event will take place at Sookmyung Women's University on Oct. 12-13 and is expected to draw over 1,400 English teachers.

/ Courtesy of KOTESOL

1,400 English teachers to attend international event at Sookmyung University Oct. 12-13

By John Redmond

Over 1,400 English teachers are expected to meet at the 21st annual KOTESOL International Conference in Seoul to hear and share views from the world's top language educators and each other at Sookmyung Women's University on Oct. 12-13.

KOTESOL stands for Korea TESOL (Korea Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages). It was founded in 1992, and is the official Korean affiliate of both TESOL International (USA) and IATEFL (United Kingdom) as well as a partner in the Pan Asian Consortium of Language Teaching Associations.

This year's theme is "Exploring the Road Less Traveled: From Practice to Theory."

Billed as a teachers' conference with practical applications, useful experiences and fresh ideas for teachers of English, conference chair Carl "Dusty" Dusthimer will address a broad range of ELT (English Language Teaching) issues.

"Teacher training programs generally emphasize the importance of basing our classroom instruction on ELT theory, but are the scholars listening to the teachers' realities?" Dusthimer said in an email.

"The route between practice and theory is bidirectional: traditionally, theory informs practice, but less commonly, classroom practices and their results can inform ELT theory. A positive cycle between research and reality is created. Each provides a destination, each destination becomes a new starting point."

Dusthimer pointed out that teachers want tools they can use in their classrooms.

“Our participant surveys highlight the fact that conference attendees are most pleased with those conference elements that lead to better teaching the very next week of school.”

The two-day event will include groups from several local education offices and a book exhibition.

“The book exhibition is another huge draw” said Dusthimer. “We are expecting 30 publishers and distributors to show their educational materials and offer special workshops during the weekend.”

While some have pointed to KOTESOL as an “expat teachers’ society,” President Lee Mi-jae points out that she herself is representative of the thriving Korean aspect of the organization. “Nearly one-third of our members are Korean,” she observed. “Our strength is our bicultural membership.”

“We have more members than ever, representing diverse English teaching settings across Korea, including hagwon (private language school) teachers, public school teachers, kindergarten teachers, and university faculty.”

There will also be 17 specially invited speakers at the conference, including three that join a colloquium via web-cam. “KOTESOL conferences have always been Korea’s cutting-edge in terms of presenters,” said Dusthimer, “and I’m particularly pleased that our three plenary speakers represent the state of the art in how classrooms inform theory.”

The speakers include Dick Allwright (Lancaster), Thomas S. C. Farrell (Brock University) and Graham Crookes (University of Hawaii).

An additional 11 featured speakers have also been invited.

Conference co-chair Ralph Cousins noted that the KOTESOL annual event has become much more than a teaching conference. “Each year our social areas are busy with teachers meeting up with old friends, discovering new peers, and sharing their insights well beyond the established program. This year we are incorporating more networking into the program. This is the true heart of conferencing.”

KOTESOL has 800 teacher members, 30 percent are Korean teachers of English and 70 percent are expatriate teachers in Korea.

The cost is 50,000 won for members, 75,000 won for non-members and 30,000 won for undergraduate students (current enrolment certificate is required) .

Annual membership dues are 40,000 won, and may be paid at the conference to qualify for the 25,000-won member discount.

For more information contact www.koreatesol.org.