

## Interview with Featured Speaker Boyoung Lee

Conducted by Dr. David Shaffer

*In July, The English Connection caught up with the ever-so-busy Dr. Boyoung Lee for the following interview. She is a featured speaker at this year's International Conference. — Ed.*

**The English Connection (TEC):** Thank you for agreeing to do this interview for *The English Connection*. To start off, would you tell us a little about yourself and how you became involved in English language education?

**Dr. Boyoung Lee:** Hi. I've been active in TESOL in a variety of different fields as a book writer, TV/radio host, ESL program developer, teacher trainer, inspirational speaker, YouTuber, blogger, and others. Although I've long been in teaching and writing positions, I honestly believe that I can be best described as an avid EFL learner myself, which has led me to do so much work in TESOL with passion. I just wanted to keep learning and helping others.

**TEC:** Could you give us a sneak preview of your featured talk that you will be giving at KOTESOL IC 2019, and how will it be useful to the EFL teacher new to Korea as well as to the veteran practitioner?

**Dr. Lee:** I've always been keen on sharing success stories of EFL learners and teachers alike. I've wondered about their motivation and the driving force within them. My presentation this time will focus on the organic development of Korean young learners' peer-tutoring experience, and I will discuss the implications and the impact of this. The middle school students in the Daejeon area organize a tutoring group each year to share their positive English learning experiences, based mainly on communicative language learning. Such an outreach program is, in fact, quite a rarity in the Korean EFL setting, especially in private academies. With great pride, I would like to share this story and hope to discuss what can be learned and environments.



**TEC:** You will also be a panelist on our "Women in Leadership in Korea" panel. What aspects of this topic are you planning to touch on?

**Dr. Lee:** This will be deeply challenging for me to address, I'm sure, because there can be so many aspects that we can deal with concerning this issue. However, I am considering to approach the topic by recalling not only the challenges I had to face – sacrifices, unfair treatment, and other hard times where I had to prove myself like a pioneer in the field – but also those many blessings and the abundance of support I've received. Mostly, I think I would like to discuss the positive things that we should put more focus on for improvement.

**TEC:** Of all the ELT-related activities that you've been involved in, which of them provide you with the most satisfaction?

**Dr. Lee:** I'd have to say it's the talk I share with Korean EFL teachers. I've always tried to be open as much as possible about my own defects and shortcomings. I've wanted to share all the experiences, good and bad, and the lessons learned with my audience, and this has turned out to be more impactful than I'd imagined.

Being able to be open and talk about what you lack could be terrifying in some sense for many EFL teachers I know. However, I learned that it could actually be more than liberating and hugely inspiring, especially through Prof. Yeon-hee Choi of Ewha Womans University when she said that reading English texts was still challenging for her. I could never forget that one class when she was candidly talking about almost the same kind of hardships and difficulties that I was suffering from as an EFL learner, and saying that it was okay to be imperfect as long as we keep researching and pursuing ways to help our students.

**TEC:** You have been involved in some aspect of English language teaching in Korea all your adult life. What is your impression of the ELT scene here?

**Dr. Lee:** Just as with many other aspects of today's society in Korea, ELT is currently going through another major transitional period, yet this time with more significance. Generally, people are more interested in

improving their communicative skills as they aspire to move into the world to pursue diverse careers. The tendency has become stronger than ever that higher communicative skills are in demand these days. I would say such shifts of the main interest in ELT towards speaking and writing would require some profound changes and trials in teacher training programs.

**TEC:** If you could change anything about English language teaching in Korea – policy, practice, or just pet peeves – what would that be?

**Dr. Lee:** Great question! Actually, there aren't that many, since there have already been some positive changes happening. However, if I may, I would like to see the English teachers working in better working environments, where they could afford to receive more quality training, connect with peers to research and develop, and share diverse programs and ideas.

**TEC:** You are always eager to assist KOTESOL anytime you are asked. I wonder why that is – especially when someone is as busy as you are.

**Dr. Lee:** KOTESOL has been the place where I've been able to meet and learn from passionate and active teachers from in and out of the country. I still vividly remember when I was invited to become a keynote speaker many years ago. Although I was terrified the whole time and almost had a heart attack out of anxiety, I also felt very much welcomed and supported. It was fascinating to be able to share my ideas and thoughts with so many greatly talented teaching practitioners. KOTESOL seems to have its own good

vibes, full of positivity and friendliness. That's the kind of encouragement that almost all EFL teachers need in order to become more actively engaged in the field to make more contributions. KOTESOL has always been a wonderful friendly reminder for me to keep sharing.

**TEC:** What projects or plans might be materializing on the horizon for Lee Boyoung?

**Dr. Lee:** I'm interested in exploring some new and different ways of enriching the learning/teaching environment and methods. I've met and worked with some edu-tech experts on a few projects and find myself becoming more eager to learn and adapt new technology to conventional and traditional ways of teaching and learning. I'm planning to keep giving seminars for parents and teachers, writing books, and developing other types of materials. I'm open to new opportunities.

**TEC:** Would you share with us a little about your life outside of ELT?

**Dr. Lee:** Regular exercise has never been more important to me than now. Also, I try to stay positive by exposing myself to environments where I can feel good vibes, like casual gatherings with friends and the people who I truly adore and respect. They are all my great teachers. I'm also planning to learn other languages, and computer skills as well.

**TEC:** How do you plan to spend your time at KOTESOL IC 2019 – this year's conference?

**Dr. Lee:** This year, I'm planning to attend the evening gathering on the night before so that I can meet in person the greatly acclaimed scholars who will be present and hopefully have a chance to converse with them. Also, I'm excited about attending as many presentations as possible during the event. I'm sure it will be another exciting, eye-opening experience that I will surely be talking about for a very long time in the future.

**TEC:** Thank you for taking the time to do this interview with us. We are looking forward to seeing you at the conference in October.

**Dr. Lee:** My pleasure.



▲ Boyoung Lee and the EBS FM radio crew in early July celebrating the 7,000th episode of the show she created and has hosted for 10 years.