

## KOTESOL People: Rhea Metituk

**Rhea Metituk is currently the president of the Busan-Gyeongnam KOTESOL Chapter. *The English Connection* caught up with her to ask her about her time with KOTESOL and in Korea in general.**

**TEC: Where do you currently work, and how are you enjoying it?**

**Rhea Metituk:** I currently work at the University of Ulsan in the Language Education Department, and I love it. I teach freshman English conversation and other



classes that vary each semester, including World English (an immersion-style lecture course), Screen English, Business English Writing, TOEIC, and Topic Discussion and Writing in English immersion camps. I am piloting a class on a flipped-learning environment for which I have been awarded a small research grant. My

director and manager are wonderful people and were instrumental in the robust success of Busan-Gyeongnam KOTESOL Chapter's recent regional conference. I am looking forward to seeing what transpires next. It is a beautiful campus, and Ulsan has been treating me well since I moved here a year ago, with a theatre troupe, good camping in the nearby mountains, vegan potlucks, yoga classes, and trivia nights. The local community is warm and friendly, and a bonus too is that living here makes it easy to keep one foot in Busan on weekends, as it is so close.

**TEC: What is your current role within KOTESOL?**

**RM:** This year, I am chapter president of Busan-Gyeongnam KOTESOL. I have also recently been appointed Financial Affairs Committee chair on the National Council. I thoroughly enjoy all the meetings at my local chapter, as well as the Council meetings in Seoul. It is my goal to visit all the chapters this year, and I have made it to Daegu and Gwangju thus far. I have met great people who inspired me with excellent organizational management, and I got to know volunteers in their voluminously

active chapters. Since then, I have reached out to regional chapter officers and members of the National Council who generously assisted my chapter with manifesting our "Gamechangers in ELT" conference. We had 58 in attendance, which exceeded our expectations, and we continue to receive glowing reviews about the presenters and how well our volunteers managed the event. Hopefully we have revived an annual tradition that we can look forward to next year, in 2019.

**TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?**

**RM:** In Canada, while completing my BA in psychology at the University of Alberta, I was an active volunteer in NGOs during my student career, and paid the bills as a line cook making various cuisines, including French, German, Portuguese, Western gourmet, and vegan. I did my final research project with a professor of dream psychology and the psychology of aesthetics, Dr. Donald Kuiken, in a study on art therapy. Immediately after graduation, I left for Swaziland, where I volunteered as a health educator and liaison in a local Swazi HIV/AIDS organization through Canadian Crossroads International, and I also traveled around Southern Africa, including South Africa and Mozambique. I saw lions, cheetahs,



giraffes, monkeys, hippos, and rhinos up close on safari, got severe food poisoning from eating meat, and survived. I was inspired by the social and emotional intelligence of the culture I was immersed in, and from then on really understood how important it is to be a global citizen. After a short stint in an ESL school upon return to Canada, I jumped over to Asia into ELT, arriving in Korea on Valentine's Day, 2002, just in time for the World Cup. I joke that Korea is the love of my life. Our affair has had turbulent times, but we always work it out.

**TEC: How well have you adjusted to life in Korea, and what advice would you give to newcomers?**

**RM:** Follow your whims and take advantage of the opportunities here in our unique, dynamic expat community, and also be a good diplomat. Start learning Korean immediately and continue digging into the language earnestly so you can have close relationships and a deeper perspective of your life here. Keep nurturing your connections made through travel and experiences. Cultivate gratitude – be patient and compassionate to yourself and others.

I remember being overwhelmed by the crowds and the frantic pace, not always enamored with the food, and feeling at a loss when first starting to try to learn the language. Adjustment has come in waves, and reflection has helped this process. So do vacations. My hobbies and friends have always anchored me, and with persistence continued to define my place and identity as a member of our global house – a word I borrow from Han Biya.

While based in Korea, I have been fortunate enough to indulge in a lot of travel, including being one of the first on the Wonhyo pilgrimage, and to study kung fu, ki gong, hapkido, reiki, Korean music, and zendance. I have also completed advanced Raja yoga teacher certification and scuba diving certification, learned rock and ice climbing, took meditation courses, did temple stays, attended theater performances, played team handball and Gaelic football, and dabbled in learning more French and some Spanish while chipping away steadily at Korean.

Learning Korean is like banging your head against the wall. It is painful at first, or at least it was for me, but eventually though, once you can break through to fluency enough for conversations, it is the most satisfying language to have the privilege to know. To be swimming in another culture is having a lifelong learning opportunity around you all the time. This is the perfect environment for teachers, as the best teachers are lifelong learners themselves.

**TEC: Did learning Korean help you to better understand what your students are going through while trying to learn English?**

**RM:** Absolutely. It allowed me to have more empathy as an instructor, experiencing the vulnerability, excitement, and frustrations of the process of being a language learner. Being a learner in the L1 of your students also gives specific insight to L1 to L2 translation errors and differences in perceiving and expressing in the two languages. It is also a useful way to use oneself as a guinea pig to try to experiment with different learning methods. When is it best to sit down and memorize grammar and vocabulary? How much does it help to listen to movies and music? When is it best to stop worrying about being perfect and make yourself understood with persistent practice? I have tried many methods over the years, and I am still working on it.



For me, my best classroom experience was in the Sogang University Korean language program. This was when I was able to break through and have conversations, due to the high emphasis on practice and also how well-organized the program and instructors were. As I go beyond, self-study has become important, but creating my own need to use the language is always a priori. Currently, I am working on passing the KIIP level 5, and I am considering whether studying TOPIK would be useful or trying some immersion style methods through taking classes at a community center or university. So to answer your question, yes, it helped me to understand my students and reflect on a deeper level about the differences between Korean and English and on the best ways to learn different aspects of language. I try to remember and to remind my students of all the real-life marvels having language skills can give.

**TEC: How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

**RM:** KOTESOL is a word that had been imprinted in my psyche from some mysterious place. Everyone knows about it, but what is it? Upon recommendation by a friend who boasted about presenting at her local chapter in Gwangju, I decided to become a member, initially to update my specs while searching for a position in a post-secondary institution in Korea. From the first meeting, I was hooked, and also at my first meeting I was voted in as chapter secretary, uncontested as it was, and it has been a happy blur since then. I was impressed with

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the engaging discussions about teaching and positive attitudes of the attendees. I owe a lot to Jeannette Kranick and Ian Adkins, who were the Busan-Gyeongnam Chapter treasurer and president, respectively, as well as to Andrew MacIsaac, the current vice president, for a really great first year that made KOTESOL an important part of my life from the get-go.

**TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL?**

**RM:** The people, the people, the people. Feeling empowered by taking charge of your own personal development and working to take on challenges and improve your situation. “Gamechangers in ELT” was the name of our recent conference, and it is how I see KOTESOL. A game changer is a catalyst, a doer, and a creator. A game changer is also someone who is curious and has spark. KOTESOL members are looking at their careers and want to amp up their trajectory; KOTESOL members are people people and enjoy working together to reflect on where we are going. KOTESOL members are people who like to develop their reach insofar as what they can achieve as teachers, and they value making a strong professional network. KOTESOL people are nesting here, and they take their work seriously, or they want to have their specs solid before moving on to the next stage. KOTESOL members are theatrical and musical, as well as quiet and introspective. KOTESOL people are the perfect ambiverts, and they are usually quite comfortable in their own skin, except when they’re not, but they are not afraid to show their human side. It is all quite a lot of fun.

**TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

**RM:** Online developments and greater investment in tech. Plainly said, we need to upgrade our website. We need to support social justice SIGs and be as inclusive as possible, including encouraging people from all perspectives to be involved and give them influential roles in the organization. We also need to reexamine training and workshops and how we may be of service. The same-old-same-old is so 19th century, so we ought not get caught in that trap. Modern education is meant to equip students to face modern problems, so we have

to be on top of our game as language teachers and as any kind of people of influence. We will influence regardless, so we must work towards a more elevated consciousness and keep revising our strategies. Without a doubt, the developing Climate Change Education SIG could be the most important group we have in terms of the future. If Earth were 24 hours old, we have been here for three seconds, and we will

not last another second without drastically adapting our collective behavior. Without an inhabitable planet 25 years from now, there is not much else to say about that, is there? Researching problems, accountability, and prioritization are the work of a good academic, and so is the role of being a record keeper, which involves looking at the long-term story. If the house is burning down, the first priority is putting out the fire. Then we can teach students to write poetry about heroes.

**TEC: You mention the Climate Change SIG. Is there a fundamental connection between climate change and EFL learning, or is it more that we can use our positions to advance a good cause?**

**RM:** Good question. This is in part a recognition of valuing the lives and futures of my students and shepherding them towards making good choices, and developing critical thinking skills, and in part, working towards developing habits that help me contribute to all our futures in a responsible manner. I am an activist for the environment, as well as for human and animal rights, and I am also a teacher by profession, so naturally these concerns will be integrated in how I manifest as an EFL instructor. I would say it is our responsibility to advance not a good cause, but a necessary cause. Political leaders who don’t address this nowadays are considered irresponsible, and it is a movement that requires working together as a global community. I think inaction is irresponsible. We may not be able to include the big lessons in every little lesson, but I am always scouting for opportunities.



## KOTESOL People: Julie Hye Seung Ha

**The English Connection recently caught up with International Conference Committee member Julie Hye Seung Ha for a brief chat about her background and future plans. — Interview by Julian Warmington.**

### **TEC: Where did you grow up?**

**Julie:** I was born and raised in Seoul, Korea until high school. My family immigrated to Canada when I was a high school student. My life in Canada was very happy and exciting because I could achieve any goals for which I planned. But I always thought that I wanted to go back to Korea to teach English to Koreans because I had had a hard time learning English at first, and so I could understand what a Korean student might feel when they studied English. I wanted to teach and help students from my own experience. That's why I planned to come back to Korea and become an English teacher in 2003.



### **TEC: What did you do in your previous life before getting involved with KOTESOL?**

**Julie:** When I was a university student, I studied fine arts and accounting. After I graduated from university in Canada, I wanted to go to a graduate school in fine arts. I wanted to study painting, but life did not turn

out the way I wanted, so then I worked in a Korean company as an accounting manager, and later as a sales manager. Then, I became a Catholic church office manager.

### **TEC: What do you enjoy about life in Korea, and what do you do now?**

**Julie:** I enjoy teaching, traveling, and meeting people. When I was young and lived in Korea before my family immigrated to Canada, I did not have much time or

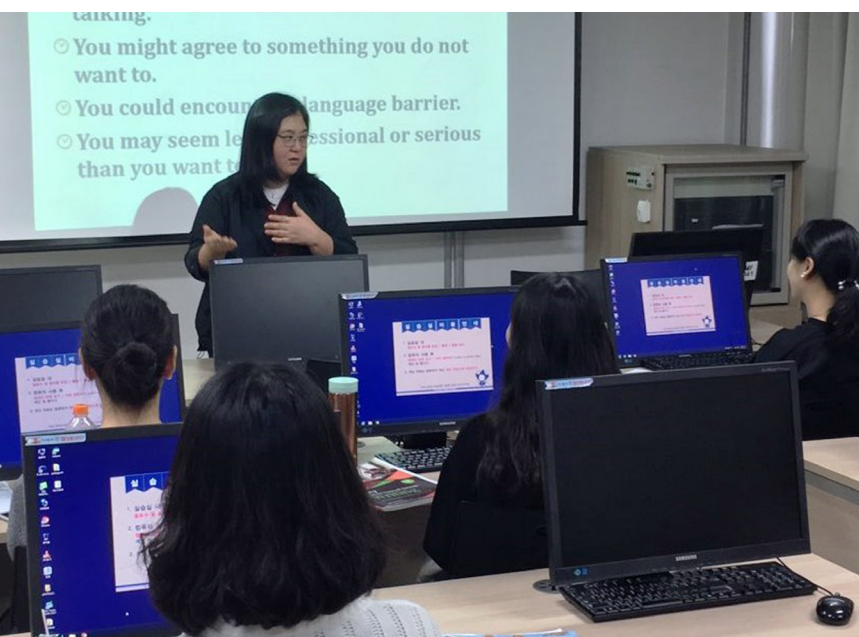
**“I hope more people join KOTESOL and build good networks to create a better English education environment for EFL students and teachers.”**

opportunities to travel around Korea. However, after I came back to Korea, I have been to many places, which I've enjoyed a lot. I especially fell in love with Jeju Island. As for my professional life, I used to teach from young children to teenagers at an English kindergarten and English institute. I also taught adults in a university continuing education program. Right now, I work at a university in Seoul where I teach general English to undergraduate students.

### **TEC: How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

**Julie:** After coming back to Korea, I studied in a TESOL certificate program and for an MA in TESOL. After my studies, I heard about KOTESOL and participated initially as an attendee. At first, I did not know I could participate within the International Conference Committee. However, one of my friends introduced me to the ICC, and so I joined and became a member because I like organizing things and meeting new people.

### **TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with**



**KOTESOL?**

**Julie:** It has been a good experience for me to be involved with KOTESOL because I met many good friends and participated in a variety of areas. I've been able to take advantage of new opportunities



such as learning about guest services, practicing communicating with many people, and organizing many conferences.

**TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

**Julie:** I've been happy to participate in KOTESOL as an ICC member: the communications coordinator and guest services manager.

**TEC: What has been the most difficult thing for you as the ICC communications coordinator, and what has been the most rewarding?**

**Julie:** As the ICC communications coordinator, I needed to communicate with many people and be in many places. These demands were pros and cons because I could learn new information and experience new cultures from those people I met. However, the most difficult thing for me was that I could not satisfy everyone's needs at once. To deal with this challenge, I always tried to plan ahead, make a checklist, and be ready for every job I needed to do.

**TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

**Julie:** I hope more people join KOTESOL and build good networks to create a better English education environment for EFL students and teachers.

**TEC: If you were KOTESOL president, what three things would you want to change about the organization first?**

**Julie:** I do not think we need to change things because our team is in good hands. Our team members interact very well and help each other to develop a better environment for everyone.

**TEC: What session are you most looking forward to attending, or which speaker are you most looking forward to hearing at this year's IC?**

**Julie:** I do not think I can attend any session during the conference because I need to be in the IC

office to communicate with and help others. Even though I might not be able to attend any of the presentations, I hope that every attendee at the conference enjoys our big event and improves their knowledge and shares their ideas for teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL).

*Editor's note: If there is a KOTESOL member that you would like to see highlighted in this feature, feel free to contact TEC at [tec@koreatesol.org](mailto:tec@koreatesol.org) with your nomination.*

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# KOTESOL People: Gordon West

*Gordon West has taught in Korea at the private academy and university level, and has been an active presenter at KOTESOL events. He recently gave a very well-received plenary address at the Seoul Chapter Conference. The English Connection then caught up with him for this interview. — Interview by Julian Warmington*

**TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?**

I majored in global studies in university with an emphasis on urban planning and geography, and after graduating in 2008, I found myself working as a cook because there were no jobs to be had anywhere. I was also active in working with activist groups like the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign. Just before coming to Korea, I was spending time in Arizona with border activists.

**TEC: What was your impression of Korea upon jumping off the plane?**

My first impression was that it was colder than I had expected! I arrived late at night, and when I was dropped at my apartment, no one showed me how to turn on the heat. I spent the night huddled in bed in all my clothes and winter gear thinking that Korean apartments were really cold. Seoul itself was fantastic. I had studied Seoul in my urban planning classes and was anxious to see in person what it was like. From an American perspective, it was a dream. The public transit system is superb, and it was a much more vibrant city than I ever could have expected.

**TEC: What have you enjoyed about life in Korea, and what do you do now?**

I might be in the minority of loving the business of Seoul. I always need to be moving, and I appreciate how fast things move here. I also really love teaching kids here. I've talked and written before about the

tensions of teaching at a *hagwon* and how conflicted I felt in my position in furthering the English divide, but the one thing *hagwons* did afford me was the chance to work for multiple years with the same group of students, and during that time, I got to know their families and feel like I had a bigger impact on their lives. Of course, my wish is for every teacher and student to be able to have that same connection, rather than opportunities being limited to a few students who can afford expensive academies and more opportunities for teachers who don't fit the blonde hair, blue-eyed, North American "native speaker" mold.



Currently I am making the transition back to the US. I'll be pursuing a PhD at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in their Second Language Acquisition program. For the past few years, I was working for the Sookmyung YL-TESOL program. I really enjoyed teaching there and couldn't ask for a better group of colleagues. I plan to remain active in Korea even after my move, continuing to do research, teach, and attend conferences every chance I get.

**TEC: How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

I was always looking for something more than punching the clock, and I got a bit tired of the standard, rather negative, teacher-room talk. I found a much more professional and positive atmosphere at KOTESOL. I started attending the International Conferences in 2010 and finally presented my own work in 2011 at the Daejeon-Chungcheong Thanksgiving Symposium. There, I met Michael Griffin, who introduced me to the Reflective Practice SIG. Finding the RP-SIG was a



turning point for me, and the group of people I met there in 2012 really helped me to find my passion in this field and focus on the potential future that teaching offered.

**TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL? Why should newbies to any sector within the Korean EFL scene get involved with KOTESOL?**

I think the biggest benefit for me has been finding a positive sense of community that encourages growth and development. Korea can be an isolating place to work, depending on your workplace environment. It helps to have a place to go when you feel overwhelmed

working in Korea. I tick almost every box of privilege for working in TESOL in Korea: white, male, North American, even blonde haired and blue-eyed to boot! It's important to understand our own positioning in this environment and to work to improve our field. I hope that I've helped people to reflect on this in some of my conference workshops, and also helped them to think about how they can practice in socially just ways, given their position here in Korea as teachers of EFL.

**TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

Building a bit on my last answer, I'd say that it would be great to have more focus on advocacy on social

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or frustrated, or even when you are just looking for a good group of colleagues to bounce ideas off of.

I would really recommend people who are looking at KOTESOL to also look at getting involved in a SIG. As I mentioned before, I really felt like I found a home in the RP-SIG, which I know is still active and has excellent people managing it. I have also more recently found the Social Justice SIG to be a great place to exchange ideas for those of us who care about and want to find ways to practice social justice in our professional lives. I'd encourage everyone interested to seek out their Facebook group, and I'd like to give a big thank-you to Jocelyn Wright for setting up the group and helping to make sure it remains a welcoming and active community.

**TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

I am not sure how much of a contribution I've made to the organization overall, but the main way I've tried to contribute to the community has been as a voice for social justice. I have been keenly aware of my own privilege while

justice issues in Korea related to TESOL. I think we've seen this a bit more at the international TESOL level, but I think that, as professionals, we have a duty to speak out to improve the educational environment for teachers and students in Korea. This would mean trying to do more to fight native-speakerism, racism in hiring, and unequal access to English language education that currently contributes to ever-deepening divisions in Korean society. It is great to focus on developing as professionals and improving our teaching, but as a group of professionals, it is also necessary to reflect on our position in society. In what ways are we helping to improve the lives of our students and our own positions, and in what ways could we do more to improve our field?



# KOTESOL People: Lizzie May

*Elizabeth (“Lizzie”) May is Vice President of the Seoul Chapter of KOTESOL and has been involved in organizing sessions at the International Conference. She answered some questions for The English Connection on her role in KOTESOL and her teaching career so far. — Interview by Julian Warmington*

**TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?**

Lizzie May (LM): I had been working in finance and had decided it wasn't for me. I completed a TESOL certificate and set out to have an adventure. It certainly delivered! I taught in the English program at the Princess High School in Thailand. My class sizes varied between ten and 60 students, which was an exciting challenge, especially for a brand new teacher fresh from her TESOL certificate program. I had some amazing experiences there; some were borderline surreal. If you catch me at a KOTESOL event, ask me about the hamsters, or the bamboo pole and craft knife!

I loved my experiences in Thailand but felt ready for a new challenge, so I decided to try a new country and start working towards making a career in TESOL. I had heard great things about teaching in Korea, and thanks to the rather limited TV options available in my Thailand apartment, I had also seen rather a lot of KBS World, so thought Korea would be a great place to try. That was five years ago, and I am still here and loving it.

**TEC: What was your impression of Korea upon jumping off the plane, and when was that?**

LM: I arrived on the coldest day of the winter in January 2011, so my first impression was mainly of the cold! However, as soon as I arrived, I found the director of the *hagwon* had arranged for one of my new co-workers to take me out for dinner. I was amazed at how caring all of the staff were; they really helped me feel at home.

Once I started work, I was amazed at the well-organized classes and how easy classroom management was. From 60 students to less than 10 was a huge difference in teaching style, especially as my previous role had involved no books.

**TEC: What do you enjoy about life in Korea, and what do you do now?**

LM: I love living in Korea. I love the people, the food, and the culture. I feel at home here. I love exploring all of the restaurants in Seoul; there is always something new to try. I run a book club, and each month we visit a different restaurant to try out some delicious food while we talk about the book we have read. I also organize a monthly meet-up group called “Seoul Sweet Toths,” where we meet to try out desserts at different cafés in Seoul. My partner is Korean, so I should probably also mention him. I enjoy traveling to the coast of Gangwon-do, where his family lives. It is great

to be able to travel to the seaside so easily and to spend time with his family.

Currently, I teach at Kongju National University, in Cheonan. My role is to deliver the Freshman English program, as well as optional conversation classes and writing workshops. I really enjoy my job as it offers me a very varied teaching experience, and I have a lot of freedom in how I





deliver the course. I have been able to complete research for my second master's degree, focusing on the implementation of a learner management system (LMS). I also present as much as I can on the role of technology in TESOL, in particular regarding LMS implementation.

**TEC: How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

LM: I first became involved in KOTESOL about two-and-a-half years ago. I had started studying for my first master's degree and was searching for ways to help break into the university teaching field. I found KOTESOL recommended on a blog to help with networking. I went to my first meeting and was hooked! I found a wonderful group of friendly professionals who were so willing to help a fledgling like myself to improve and grow in the field.



Since then, I have run for office with the Seoul Chapter and am currently serving

as Vice President. I have also had opportunities to present at workshops and conferences all over the country, which has been really exciting. When I first started attending workshops and conferences, I was in complete awe of the presenters. It is amazing to think, two years later, I am one of them!

**TEC: Why should newbies get involved with KOTESOL?**

LM: I have developed as a teacher in my classroom, as a presenter, as a researcher, and I have created a wonderful network of fellow educators whom I really enjoy spending time with, and who are a constant source of support.

As an educator, KOTESOL has exposed me to concepts, ideas, and classroom styles I wasn't aware of. At every single meeting or event I have attended, I have had at least one eureka moment!

Whenever I watched presenters before, I was always in awe of their knowledge and teaching ability. One of the first presenters I saw at my first conference was Scott Thornbury, who had come for the International Conference. I had just finished reading some of his work as part of a module for my postgraduate studies, so I was a little star-struck to meet him and listen to him speak. However, just two years later, I presented

at another conference, at which Scott was present. He later came to me and told me how interesting my idea was and that he was going to trial it in his classes as he had never considered it before. This made me realize how we are all learning, all of the time. It really broke down for me how no-one should be afraid to let their voices be heard at these events. I am so proud of myself each time I present because I am doing something I never thought I would.

However, for me the best part of KOTESOL is the people. Some of my closest friends in Korea are ones I have met through KOTESOL, and for that I am very thankful. I have met many truly inspiring educators, and I am very happy to be a member of the KOTESOL family.

**TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

LM: At last year's Seoul Chapter Conference, I was very proud to have been in charge of organizing the 10-minute take-away sessions. These sessions gave a chance for new speakers to present at a conference for the first time in a supportive environment. This is a cause close to my heart. When I first started attending

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KOTESOL events, I was in such awe of the presenters and never considered the possibility that one day I could be one of them. I am so proud to have been able to help others begin the same journey and to help in knocking down the mysticism surrounding presenters. The sessions were incredibly successful last year and are set to return again for this year's Seoul Chapter Conference.

During the last year and a half as Vice President for the Seoul Chapter, I am also really pleased to see how our group has become more sociable and cohesive. We have introduced a post-workshop coffee networking session each month, which has really offered a great opportunity for our chapter to bond further as a group. It has been a great space for networking, reflecting on the workshop, and brainstorming ideas as a group.

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**TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

LM: I think KOTESOL should continue working on embracing social media and the opportunities that the latest technologies allow for creating and developing a more cohesive community. I would like to see more of our members become more involved with, and invested in, the organization; it would be wonderful to see KOTESOL becoming more diverse and reflective of our members and of TESOL teachers across Korea. I would love to see KOTESOL reaching a wider number of teachers. One thing I hope to be able to work on with the Seoul Chapter is to increase membership and engagement. I am looking forward to an exciting future with KOTESOL.

## Dates for Your Diary: Upcoming Events in Korea

<b>March 11</b>	Gwangju-Jeonnam KOTESOL Annual Regional Conference 2017
<b>March 25</b>	The 13th Annual Seoul KOTESOL Conference
April 1	The 35th Korean Society of Bilingualism National Conference
April 7-9	ICLT 2017: The 3rd International Conference on Learning and Teaching
<b>May 13-14</b>	FAB11 & KOTESOL National Conference 2017
June 30 - July 1	The 2017 KATE International Conference
July 14	The 2017 MEESO International Conference
August 8	2017 KEES-ETAK Joint Conference
September 9	2017 ALAK International Conference
September 15-17	MMSEE 2017: KAMALL-STEM-KASEE Joint International Conference
September 23	2017 PKETA Conference
<b>October 21-22</b>	The 25th Annual KOTESOL International Conference & PAC 2017

For more details, including calls for proposals, locations, and individual websites, please visit <http://www.koreatesol.org/calendar>

# KOTESOL People: Kathleen Kelley

*Kathleen Kelley is Busan–Gyeongnam Chapter president and Publicity director for the 2016 International Conference. She answered some questions for The English Connection on her role in KOTESOL and her work with the IC. Since the interview, Kathleen has been elected as co-chair for IC 2017 and appointed as National Publicity Committee chair. — Interview by Julian Warmington*

**TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?**

Kathleen Kelley: Before coming to Korea, I was working as a commission salesperson at a retail furniture chain outside of Philadelphia. It was okay at first, but by the end, I hated it, and that's why I moved to Korea.



**TEC: When did you come to Korea and what was your first impression of it?**

When I moved to Korea in 2011, it felt a bit like I had entered the twilight zone. So many things were familiar, but just a little off. For example, the 7-Elevens in Korea look the same outside, but they don't sell Slurpees and hot dogs, or my favorite 7-Eleven snack, the taquito. Doritos and Cheetos come in unexpected flavors here.

**TEC: When you first came to Korea, how long did you expect to stay, how long have you been here now, and how long do you hope to stay going forward?**

When I first came to Korea, my husband and I only planned to stay for two years. Now it has been five and a half years, and we are not sure when we will return. Maybe in two years, but with all the recent tragedies in the news, the thought of returning to the US isn't that appealing.

**TEC: What do you enjoy about life in Korea?**

There are many things I like about my life in Korea: I like my job. I don't contemplate calling in sick every morning like I did when I worked at the furniture store. I also like having ample free time to explore other interests and hobbies. This is aided by the low-stress life I can enjoy as an expat. Of course, I

love the vacation time and the ease of travel. I also like that Korea has excellent public transportation and an affordable health care system.

**TEC: What do you enjoy most about teaching?**

I really enjoy interacting with students. I like watching their skills develop, and seeing them become more confident in their English ability. Especially the younger kids, they learn so fast, but even with university students, when I hear them use an idiom or expression I taught them, I feel a sense of accomplishment.

**TEC: What different levels/ages have you taught in your time here, and what changes have you had to make to your approach to teaching to adapt between the different needs of student groups?**

I taught at a public middle school, then at public elementary schools, and now I am halfway through my first year at Andong National University.

When I moved from middle school to elementary school, I had to learn to simplify everything, especially with the younger students. At the elementary school level, there was also a lot more focus on using songs and games to reinforce the sentence structure and





“Becoming involved with KOTESOL has allowed me to gain experience in non-teaching fields, like publicity and marketing.”

vocabulary being taught.

Now at the university level, I have to give my students more freedom and responsibility. Because I teach English conversation class, I think my job is to make sure the students understand the topics and to facilitate conversation between students.

**TEC: How, and why, did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

I first became involved in KOTESOL about three or four years ago. I was an EPIK teacher at a middle school, and EPIK was cutting the middle school program. That’s when I decided it was time to be proactive and start networking, so I became a member and started attending workshops in Busan.

**TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL?**

I benefit from KOTESOL in two ways. Firstly, the things I study and pick up at workshops and conferences motivate me to try new things in the classroom, and it keeps me from falling into a teaching rut. Secondly, becoming involved with KOTESOL as a chapter officer and at the national level has allowed me to gain

experience in non-teaching fields, like publicity and marketing.

**TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

This year, I did the poster design for the International Conference, and I am very excited about that. I am also happy to be working on publicity for the IC. The other thing I am really pleased with is the Busan Chapter’s email newsletter that I implemented just over a year ago.

**TEC: Do you have any favorite practical tips or lesson techniques you picked up at a KOTESOL session and used in class?**

I have learned tons of things from KOTESOL events. I saw an excellent presentation on the “flipped classroom” last winter, which really inspired me. Now I do a hybrid version of the flipped classroom. If I need my students to read or write something or to study vocabulary, it is given as homework, so class time is focused on speaking. I think that it has allowed my students and me to make the most of class time.



**TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

In the future, I think KOTESOL will need to be more active online, especially on social media. KOTESOL’s social media accounts are now under-utilized, but they could be a good way to spread awareness and engage with English teachers throughout Korea.



# KOTESOL People: Ian Done Ramos

Hailing from the Philippines, Ian Done Ramos has been president of the KOTESOL Seoul Chapter for a year. In that time he has overseen a continuation of the already existing professional development opportunities for KOTESOL teachers. As an active member of the KOTESOL community, Ian Done Ramos has been busy, but *TEC* managed to catch up with him for a chat.



*Ian Done Ramos*

## **TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?**

In the Philippines, I worked as an English language instructor in the Languages Department of the College of Arts and Sciences at Cebu Doctors' University. For four years I taught academic courses such as critical thought, basic research methods, advanced grammar and composition, Philippine literature, and world literature; I also worked as a research mentor for graduate students. Before landing a job at the university, I was the academic coordinator and an ESL instructor at a language institute where I taught mainly Korean students for four years; this is where I was first introduced to Korean language and culture.

## **TEC: What was your first impression of Korea upon jumping off the plane, and when was that?**

Coming from a tropical country with what I imagined to be a vastly different way of life than what I would experience in Korea, I was not sure what to expect when I arrived in the spring of 2009. I was immediately struck by the apparent richness of the country. I experienced this feeling in different ways; for one, I could not help but notice that everywhere seemed to have central air conditioning, which was a new experience for things; for example, while walking to a bus stop one day, I saw a great many things that were aesthetically pleasing. Things as simple as the flowers, the trees, and the interesting architecture all seemed really great!

## **TEC: What do you enjoy about life in Korea and what do you do now?**

There are several things I enjoy about my life here, for example, my teaching hours; I only teach 12 hours a week, and the rest of my time is spent reading and preparing class materials. I find this to be relaxing and far less stressful than my life before Korea. All of my classrooms have computers and whiteboards; the free availability of technology has also motivated me to create my own website for learners to use. Speaking of technology, I cannot say enough great things about internet connectivity here. It's amazing!

Most importantly, though, are the people that I have built strong and lasting relationships with during my time here. One of my close friends (a Korean I met in the Philippines) and his family have taken really good care of me here. They treat me as if I were a member of their family, and on special occasions, they often invite me to join them and celebrate Korean culture.

I spend as much of my free time as possible exploring Korea. However, the rest of my time is spent thinking about my teaching practice and being involved with the KOTESOL community.

## **TEC: How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

In 2013, the University of Suwon invited me to join the Department of English Language and Literature. I was asked to teach content courses for graduate and undergraduate programs, and so I prepared materials and started teaching. However, I felt that something was missing on my part: I lacked a method for the effective implementation of sociocultural approaches in my classes. In my attempt to find a way to remedy the situation, I found out about KOTESOL.

In February of 2013, I attended a KOTESOL workshop run by Stafford Lumsden. It was amazing because it was my first time attending a workshop with primarily native speakers from diverse cultures. The topic was error correction, which was one of the areas of study for my MA

thesis in the Philippines. From that day on, I started sharing my ideas while attending monthly workshops; these efforts have proved to be invaluable.

**TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL, and why should newbies to any sector within the Korean EFL scene get involved with KOTESOL?**

With KOTESOL I have come to realize that teaching is not only my job, it also involves the building of community, which helps me to attain greater personal and professional growth. During the three years that I have been working within the KOTESOL community, I have developed a deep passion for my work. I have learned that a great deal of perseverance is necessary for the work that we do as teachers to show positive results. I am now a more humble, more dedicated, and more determined teacher, and it is the KOTESOL community that I would like to thank for helping me to develop my practice in this way. It is this mindset that has helped me to reshape my attitudes and behaviors towards my work and life.

I strongly encourage newcomers to get involved with KOTESOL. The activities that KOTESOL supports will provide them with alternative ways to help students develop their emotional, intellectual, and social awareness, and to help them create the knowledge to face life's challenges with confidence. For example, becoming a KOTESOL member can help novice teachers to develop a sense of importance of their new roles by helping them create practical models for their students. These models will help learners to develop their social consciousness, a deeper sense of responsibility, and a direction in both their studies and their lives. Attending workshops and socializing with other KOTESOL members can also have a positive and lasting effect, which will benefit new and experienced teachers, their students, and their institutions.

**TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

I think that I am happiest about the work I have done to organize the annual conference for KOTESOL as well as monthly workshops at Sookmyung Women's University. Apart from being the current president of Seoul KOTESOL and a member of the research committee, I have also started contributing articles to *The English Connection*. Helping people and sharing my

expertise in the field of language education with both members and non-members of KOTESOL are two things that make me very happy.

**TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

As KOTESOL grows, I believe it should offer more opportunities for teachers to experience evidence-based knowledge and techniques which may contribute to their professional development. This can be accomplished by providing increasingly relevant, interesting, and research-based workshops. It should try to instill in its members the relevance of KOTESOL and the value in continuing with their memberships; to demonstrate to non-members that membership can be seen as a tool for sharpening their classroom experiences; and to help members and non-members alike to build on their practices in ways that produce positive results in their classrooms and in their students' lives.



I would also really like to see a continuation and strengthening of support for the professional and academic community so that KOTESOL can increasingly act as a catalyst for change. This can be done by creating a variety of new opportunities to ignite members' critical responsibility, commitment, and passion. Moreover, to increase our total exposure to current members and the greater academic community, including both domestic and visiting educators and academics, I think that KOTESOL should look into producing an indexed bi-annual journal publication. I believe that the addition of a professional publication such as this will improve conditions for learners and educators, while also contributing to the knowledge pool of the field of language education in general.



# KOTESOL People Interview: Michael Free

Michael Free was born and raised in Scarborough, Canada, spent a few years in Montréal, and is now based in Gangneung, where he is a visiting professor at Gangneung-Wonju National University. He was recently approved as the 2016 National Conference Chair, and he's just been re-elected for the second time as Gangwon Chapter President. Who is this capable Canadian and how is he coping so far away from moose and poutine? TEC caught up with him via Skype to investigate the secrets to his success.

## **TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?**

My initial training was in music. My undergraduate degree was in piano performance at the University of Western Ontario in London, and my first master's degree was in music criticism at McMaster University in Hamilton. This led to a move to Montréal, where I spent a few years at McGill studying and finding that my real passion was teaching.

## **TEC: What was your impression of Korea upon jumping off the plane and when was that?**

In 2006, after a couple of years of "treading water" as I euphemistically put it, I was tired of having jobs but no career, and seemingly getting nowhere paying off student debt. So, I got a

quick TESOL certificate, posted my resumé on Dave's ESL Cafe, sold everything I owned, and got on a plane. Then another plane. Then a bus. Then another bus. It was on the last bus that I got my first real impressions of where I was headed. By the time I came over

the mountains on the east coast, I knew my life had changed; but it was only after I had spent a couple of months in my new town, Geojin, that I began to realize the extent to which it had changed.

## **TEC: What do you enjoy about life in Korea, and what do you do now?**

If we're putting teaching aside for this question, I'd say the people and the food. I've met so many fascinating people whose lives and experiences have been so different from my own. As for the food, from goat stew in the winter to spicy raw fish soup in the summer – it's amazing. The beer could use a little work, though. What do I do now? Since I've finished my second master's degree with the University of Birmingham, I've been playing a lot of video games and watching Korean movies. Plus, I get to occasionally hang out with my wife, Soo-young, who is an award-winning kindergarten teacher.

## **TEC: How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

It was shortly after I arrived that I first became aware of KOTESOL. The then-president of Gangwon Chapter lived in Sokcho, just to the south of me, and invited me to a meeting. It gave me a way to meet other teachers, as I was the only one in my town at that time, but more importantly it connected me to a source of professional development in my new field. This was crucial because even though I had teaching experience, I was new to ELT.

## **TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL?**

Living in a sparsely populated area, the ability to make connections with professionals and immensely talented people in other parts of the country has been a really important benefit. Being involved with the executive committee for a few years now has also afforded me the opportunity to give a little back as well. In the end, though, the central benefit has been the opportunity to learn things. Whether it is the refinement of a technique or being introduced to an entirely new area of teaching, ultimately the point of KOTESOL is to learn.



**TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

I don't usually think of my work with KOTESOL in terms of happiness, but let's give it a shot. If I had to pick, I'd say that it's been my part in giving the Gangwon KOTESOL chapter more presence in the past couple of years. The teachers out here have, I think, a greater awareness that we're there to help them. There's a lot of room for improvement, but the progress the executive team has made makes me satisfied.

**TEC: Why should newbies to any sector within the Korean EFL scene get involved with KOTESOL?**

If you want to become a better teacher, KOTESOL is one road you can take to achieve that goal. Your organization may not offer you quality opportunities for professional development, and

**TEC: Congratulations on winning a second term as Gangwon Chapter President! What progress have you seen in the time you've been there, and what do you want to achieve in the next year?**

Gangwon is a real challenge, and we've had to be realistic in what we can accomplish. It's such a large province, with a relatively small membership. I think, in the past few years, we've solidified our modest schedule and had some really successful meetings. We've also been getting more involved with professional development for public school teachers, which is a positive. We're experimenting as well with different types of speakers and meetings; the results so far have been a bit mixed. I'd like to reach out to hagwon teachers a bit more in the coming year, but the big project for us is going to be our hosting of the National Conference in May.



some don't offer them at all. KOTESOL events are also places where you can get real feedback and advice about your context from teachers who have (most likely) been in similar situations. Also, if you want a better job, having KOTESOL membership on your resume can't hurt.

**TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

That's a really tough question to answer. There's a lot of pressure to do a lot of things online. This is understandable; I think we can use technology to bring the membership closer together. It would be especially good for those of us out here in Gangwon, where travel times often meet or exceed the actual meeting time of a regular event. That said, while an online presence is important, I think KOTESOL needs to retain meetings and events that bring people together in real time and space. Otherwise, we miss out on those moments – the post-session coffees and conference-hallway chats – where the real magic happens.

**TEC: What grand plans or secret goals do you have for the national conference this year?**

We're still in a relatively early stage of organizing things. I would like to see the 2016 National Conference be an opportunity to foster a sense of national community as well as really responding to what the membership wants. As you may know, we put out a pre-conference survey, and we're working to include as much of what people have asked for as possible. Theron Muller from Toyama University in Japan is going to be our plenary speaker, and I'm very excited about that.

If there's a goal I have, it's to prepare at least a few sessions where teachers can really dig in to an area or topic. To spend a couple of hours with other interested teachers along with a knowledgeable facilitator and really learn some things and get inspired about the work they're doing! As for secret goals, I'll paraphrase William Hjortsberg's detective Harry Angel: "Sometimes secrets...should stay secret."

# KOTESOL People Interview: Josette LeBlanc

Josette LeBlanc, from Nova Scotia and “francophone Canadian by birth,” has been an integral part of the Daegu KOTESOL network. In particular, she has also been leading monthly reflective practice workshop sessions the last few years. She has carved a challenging and fulfilling professional niche for herself in the southeastern corner of the country. Working quietly and consistently with others to develop the practice of reflection in professional development, she recently took on a higher profile role when she co-hosted a seminar with plenary speaker Chuck Sandy at the 2015 International Conference. Who is this quiet powerhouse, working so diligently at raising educational standards in Daegu? TEC shared a Skype session to find out more about Josette LeBlanc.

and so I came to Korea to both travel and explore teaching a little bit more.

## **TEC: What do you enjoy about life in Korea, and what do you do now?**

In my first year, I was teaching freshman conversation classes at Keimyung University, and I was working on both my master's and becoming a TESL-certified trainer through SIT [School for International Training, now the SIT Graduate Institute] in Vermont. Now I teach English to English education majors in the English Education Department. Just before that, I taught for five years in an in-service teacher training program, and when that was cut, I was able to transition into the new program.

I'd say the reason I'm still here after eleven years is just the connections I've made – Koreans and everyone I've met. Other things: the safety, the nature, and everything here. It sounds cliché, but the four seasons and the urban life is a nice mixture for me. I always grew up rural, which I love, but it's nice to have both now. I also write my blog, and read, and meet people in my profession online.

## **TEC: How did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

When I first moved here in 2005, I met Steve Garrigues, who was heading the Daegu KOTESOL Chapter. I was invited to the National Conference in Daegu. As a newbie to Korea and teaching English, it was just so exciting to be among people talking about ideas, and I could take those ideas into class. It was inspiring, and I felt so supported because, before that, it was just the teachers in my hagwon [that I had for support], and I just felt alone. Also at that conference, I met the person who recommended I look into teacher training through SIT, and so that's how I got my MA – from meeting that person on that day.

## **TEC: What have been the biggest benefits to you since becoming involved with KOTESOL?**

It's a mixture: I can take practical, useful ideas into the classroom, but the biggest benefit is the people who are not afraid of sharing their ideas – they're celebrating their ideas instead of hoarding, and so it's give and take, like breathing. It's the inspiration of being among people who share the same passion – it's the community. And it's that you can go to a conference – whether international, national, or local chapter – and really find your own niche. There's something for everyone, and that's what I like.



**Above:** Josette introduces a newly developed course to current part-time elementary school teachers.

## **TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea? Why did you come to Korea?**

I was working in environmental education ... it basically involved going into schools and teaching students about new recycling programs that were going on in Nova Scotia. Prior to that, I was working as a legal assistant and trying to find work that matched my degree in criminology and sociology, but I didn't find it so interesting, so that's why I moved into education. I did some general substitute teaching in Nova Scotia for the French school board there – science and math – not topics I studied in my university days, but I still really enjoyed the job. That's when I found out about Korea being an option,



**TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

The reflective practice group started in May 2012, and it's still going strong, with consistent members and a tight community. I know that I can come to this meeting with any challenges I'm facing and share in a very open and personal way with a supportive group. Because it's a small group, everyone has a chance to share, and it's very life-enriching.

We meet once a month, and it's not just "come and talk"; we generally have a topic to talk about and discuss based around reflection, and so keeping that up has been challenging when I've wanted to take a break. I was the main coordinator for about a year and a half on my own, but now I have two other people sharing the load. Everyone steps up; maybe six times a year someone from the community will be facilitating, so it's not necessarily us.

**TEC: At the International Conference last fall, you ran a session with Chuck Sandy. How did that come about?**

Actually, it was thanks to KOTESOL! In 2011, I saw Chuck talk at the international conference. He was talking about finding leaders in the community. After his presentation, I asked if we could talk. I told him I had some ideas for running a website or forming an online community of teachers, and he said, "Don't worry about that. We're doing it already!" He was talking about iTDi, the International Teaching Development Institute, which was just starting at that time. Now, I have the great privilege of being part of iTDi, and have met, and worked with, inspiring teachers from all around the world.

This year, he was invited to speak at our international conference by David Shaffer. Chuck suggested that he and I do a presentation together, and I was happy to participate and honored to be invited. It was about tuning into your strengths and awareness of what it is you want to do in your life, so "Listen to the Teacher Within (and Unleash Your Superpowers)" was the title. We believe that by understanding our passions we also begin to understand our identities as teachers. Our passion may be connected to teaching, but we didn't want to just leave it at that, either. Many individuals in the workshop talked about how their dream was to write a novel. So we kind of went off the mark in terms of English language teaching, but we wanted to talk to the spirit of the teacher.

**TEC: Why should newbies to any sector within the Korean EFL scene get involved with KOTESOL?**

I think KOTESOL offers those new to the profession a chance to explore what it is all about. It's easy to find blogs that "diss" the Korean EFL scene, but I don't think they paint a fair picture. Within KOTESOL, you

will find individuals who volunteer their time because they value the sense of community and growth that an organization like this offers. This growth isn't necessarily monetary. It's a sense of inner growth and expansion that is offered by the volunteers that want to share their practical experience



**Above:** Josette (5th from left) and new friends at an in-service teacher training course.

**TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

I would like to see KOTESOL celebrating women in ELT more. I'm talking mostly about the invited speakers. I think there is an imbalance. There are some great women involved: Diane Larsen Freeman, Penny Ur, Kathleen Graves; why aren't they here? Just look to IATEFL for inspiration.

I'd also like to see more involvement from Korean teachers of English. I know many Korean teachers of English: They're the majority of those I've met and taught and know are teaching, but they're not all KOTESOL members. Kim MiKyoung, for one example. She is one of those "super teachers"; she's a mentor and does great work for her community.

I am always shocked by the low number of women and Koreans involved. I think KOTESOL could do a great service to its community to find out why there seems to be a gap here.

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**Follow Josette on Twitter at:** @josettelb

**Follow Josette's project at:**  
redthumbforlove.wordpress.com

**And follow Josette's blog at:**  
throwingbacktokens.wordpress.com

Josette recommends learning more about Kim MiKyoung at: <https://lizzieserene.wordpress.com/2015/08/29/korea-reflective-practice-special-interest-group-korea-rpsig-day-of-reflection-august-22-2015/> – Blog courtesy of Anne Hendler.

# KOTESOL People Interview: Mike Peacock

One of the oft-seen faces at KOTESOL meetings around the country is that of Mike Peacock, especially at Daejeon-Chungcheong Chapter meetings, where he has been president for two years now and was active in the chapter executive before that. This year he is also KOTESOL's International Outreach Committee (IOC) Chair. In addition, he has served on the International Conference Committee for four years now; this year he is serving again as ICC Support Services Chair. Mike kindly took time out from his family vacation abroad to share a bit on his views and life in KOTESOL and beyond.

**TEC:** Tell us a bit about your life prior to arriving in Korea.

**Mike Peacock:** I received my Bachelor's in Education (BEd) and had planned on teaching in an elementary school. I went to a few interviews but didn't have any luck. I had a friend who was heading over to Korea and suggested that I go as well. That was twelve-and-a-half years ago.



**What were your first impressions?**

I soon became well aware that I stood out amongst the shorter, smaller Koreans. I was also impressed at how much Koreans would go out of their way to introduce me to Korean history and culture. I was told that Buddhism was the main religion here; I was thus very surprised to see all the red crosses glowing at night.

**What do you do now?**

I've been teaching English conversation at Woosong University since 2007, and Woosong Culinary College since 2009.

**How and why did you first get involved with KOTESOL?**

I was doing my MA in TESOL when Eric Reynolds (Woosong TESOL-MALL) suggested I get involved. I started out by being Daejeon-Chungcheong's Daejeon 2nd VP. I loved networking with other English teachers outside of my university.

**You currently wear many hats within your local KOTESOL chapter and in the national organization. What have been your most fulfilling, or interesting, roles or tasks?**

I think the most fulfilling role I've had was being the chair of our 2014 Symposium and Thanksgiving Dinner. We had Dave Sperling as our plenary, with Pete DeMarco, Son Hyunwoo, and Steve Revere as invited speakers. It was an awesome experience to meet such great individuals in our field.

**What have you gained from your involvement with KOTESOL over the years?**

I've gained some great friendships from within my chapter and at the national level as well.

**What is a contribution to KOTESOL you have made of which you think others are the least aware?**

I'm the webeditor of the Daejeon-Chungcheong Chapter page as well as our Facebook page administrator. I also create our Spring and Fall newsletter.

**What advice would you give to an English teacher new to South Korea?**

I would suggest they create a diverse network of friends. Do you really want to spend all of your time with colleagues? KOTESOL is a great way to get to know like-minded people from around the country. Are you tired of living in your city? Hit up



your friend in Busan or Gwangju and ask about any job openings. Need to get out of the city? Facebook your friend from Jeonju and hang out there for the weekend. Having a wide group of friends is very beneficial when living in Korea.

**What changes are you glad to have seen in KOTESOL?**



I love what the Membership Committee is doing. Membership cards, mugs, USBs, pens, notebooks, and more! I remember mugs being available a long time ago, but it's only been within the last year or so that we've seen

KOTESOL-branded merchandise. It's a great idea.

**What changes would you like to see in KOTESOL in the future?**

I would love to be able to pay for my membership

and conferences with a credit card.

**What is the teaching philosophy that you follow?**

I believe motivation is the key to learning any language. I feel my greatest task is to motivate each student to speak English in class. With each student I try to find some tidbit of information I can use to engage in small talk with them. For instance, there was one student who had good writing and reading skills but would not speak to me in English. I eventually found out that she was interested in movies, and I used this topic whenever I met her in the hall. Since this discovery, she is the one that comes to me wanting to talk about the newest film in theaters. Do you have a low-level student? Find out what interests them and use that as your topic of conversation.

**Do you have any anecdotes about teaching EFL in Korea that you can share with us?**

Don't let lower-level students get you down. Motivate them to enjoy English! Find something that your student likes and use it to your advantage. Authentic materials are also great for your students. My student who's into figure skating immerses herself in the English magazines I bring her from Canada. Don't talk down to your students. Every one of them has potential - you just have to find a way for them to achieve it.





# Interview: Lindsay Herron

By Julian Warmington

Lindsay Herron is KOTESOL National Membership Committee Chair, KOTESOL National First Vice-President, and Treasurer for the Gwangju-Jeollanam Chapter, and has presented locally and nationally.



**TEC: What did you do in your previous life before coming to Korea?**

**Lindsay Herron:** I actually used to work at Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing in New York City, but during my second year in the

city, I attended a Tsui Hark retrospective at the Anthology Film Archives. I had never seen a Hong Kong film before, and I found them absolutely mind-blowing. I started attending all the Asian film festivals I could, and I soon discovered Korean movies, which led me to enroll in Korean lessons. I eventually quit my job so I could pursue a master's in cinema studies at New York University.

At the time, no one was really talking about Korean cinema; in fact, I could find only three books in English on the topic. When I finished my master's, I resolved to go to Korea for a year, learn about the culture, master the language, and return to the U.S. to get a doctorate in film and become the foremost North American expert on Korean cinema. Great plan, right?

Obviously, that didn't happen. I walked into my first classroom at Seogwipo High School in Jeju-do, and I fell completely in love. I haven't looked back!

**TEC: When did you first come to Korea, and what were your first impressions?**

**LH:** It was very positive, even from my first moments. I arrived at Incheon International Airport in July 2005 and joined other Fulbright ETAs for the bus trip to Chuncheon for Orientation. I remember being disappointed by the dreary high-rises along the highway leading out of Seoul, but as soon as the bus left the city behind, I was delighted by everything: the houses, the landscape, my companions, even the rest stop.

**TEC: What do you do now?**

**LH:** I teach budding elementary school teachers at Gwangju National University of Education in Gwangju, Jeollanam-do.

**TEC: How did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

**LH:** When I arrived in Korea, I had no teaching experience, and I desperately wanted to provide the best possible experience for my students. I sought professional development wherever I could, but at the time, there was no KOTESOL chapter in Jeju-do. I attended a couple of KOTESOL conferences in the mainland, but I didn't become a regular participant until I moved to Gwangju in 2008.

For my first few years in Gwangju, I was kind of a KOTESOL lurker – always on the periphery, attending events and then leaving, not getting involved or even talking to anyone, but thoroughly enjoying the workshops and conferences. The turning point for my involvement was the National Conference in Busan in 2012. On a whim, I bought a last-second ticket to the post-conference dinner, and that's where I discovered how wonderful and welcoming KOTESOL people are! Soon after that, David Shaffer invited me to write a review of the conference for *TEC News*, and then he suggested I join the International Conference Committee (ConComm), and it just grew from there.

**TEC: What have been the biggest benefits for you since becoming involved with**

## KOTESOL?

**LH:** You mean besides making new friends and getting great teaching ideas? I've actually had to develop new tech skills for my various KOTESOL roles. For example, it took me a while to master the membership card printer. I've become quite competent at using formulas in Google Sheets. Having handled registration for the International



Prof. David Shaffer awards a festive Lindsay Herron for her service to KOTESOL. (All images courtesy of Lindsay Herron.)

Conference, I've had to work out efficient ways to format and print conference p a s s e s , manage online registration, and create forms using Drupal. My Korean skills have also improved. I now feel quite confident about ordering branded items and brochures from Korean vendors.

## **TEC: What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

**LH:** I'm pretty pleased with our new membership cards and branded items and the way they're being handled now. I'm also excited about our new group membership package, which we'll be pilot testing this year. I think it has the potential to draw in a lot of institutions that have been hesitant to purchase memberships for their employees. And I'm pretty proud of KOTESOL News.

## **TEC: Why should newbies to any sector within the Korean EFL scene get involved with KOTESOL?**

**LH:** I think our new unofficial motto sums it up nicely: "Learn, share, succeed." With KOTESOL, you can discover new activities and approaches and the theoretical underpinnings that justify them, bounce ideas off experienced teachers, pick up tips and techniques by observing another teacher's class, and keep abreast of developments in English education through our workshops and

publications.

You can learn how to do research, apply for research grants, and publish your work; improve your public-speaking and presentation skills; and develop personal and professional interests and skills. You can make connections that could improve your career prospects, and you can enhance your resume by adding a professional affiliation and service experience.

Perhaps most rewarding of all, you can explore new ideas and possibilities with like-minded individuals who are as passionate about teaching as you are, who will support and encourage you as you hone your skills, who are excellent resources (and a great cheering section) if you decide to pursue a graduate degree in education, and who will brighten your day every time you see them.

## **TEC: In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

**LH:** First, I'd like to see KOTESOL make even greater inroads in providing presenters for teacher-training workshops throughout Korea, helping to increase our member base as well as national recognition of KOTESOL.

In addition, IOC Chair Mike Peacock has begun cultivating a closer relationship with our PAC partners [PAC = Pan Asian Consortium of Asian members - Ed.]. I'd love to see these ties flourish, as it could not only help us notice and act on



trends and successful initiatives by our partners, but also help our members become more aware of conference and other opportunities overseas.



# Interview: Leonie Overbeek

By Julian Warmington

In this, the second interview in a series introducing key figures within the KOTESOL scene, TEC meets Leonie Overbeek. Born and raised in South Africa,



Leonie is a teacher, a presenter, and a KOTESOL member. Leonie has participated at several levels within KOTESOL and made active contributions to both the group itself and to the field of language education.

**TEC: What did you do in your previous life, before coming to Korea?**

**L.O.:** I did research on problems of mineral extraction in mining, helped people start up small businesses, and did some amateur acting for various drama groups. I was a science major with a hefty helping of arts on the side.

**What do you do now?**

I try to stay ahead of Korean kids and their English ability: I teach English in public schools.

**What's been the biggest adjustment to local life since coming to Korea?**

Having to make my own *biltong*, a type of beef jerky, and not using Marmite too lavishly.

**How and why did you first become involved in KOTESOL?**

I joined the Suwon Chapter of KOTESOL in order to take part in the conferences. I've always been a conference-goer and organizer in the science field, so it came naturally to me. At first, I was only a presenter locally, but then started submitting ideas at the national and international level before becoming involved with the Suwon Chapter conference. Finally, I was asked to be

National Secretary, which I was for three years.

**What have been the biggest benefits to you since you first became involved with KOTESOL?**

The people I've met and the ideas I've picked up about making my teaching more effective. There are many ideas I've used in the classroom that have led to my co-teachers heaping lavish praise on me and have helped my students study more effectively.

For instance, the idea of challenging students to read as fast as possible for one minute, *sotto voce*, and then repeating the same passage again to try and beat their own time, which I picked up from Frederika Stoller, really works, and the students enjoy it; it's probably one of my favorite activities to use.

Also, Peadar Callaghan's suggestions about using comics for writing, Stephen Krashen's discussion





on exactly how to use extensive reading effectively, Marc Helgesen's tips on bringing emotion into the material and adapting curriculum material to students' needs have all been helpful.

**What has been the most difficult thing or the greatest challenge you've found yourself**



**working on within KOTESOL?**

Somehow coping with the tendency that there is in all large organizations to become a collection of separate interest groups or cliques, and then spending time and energy fighting each other rather than developing the organization; in

other words, having to put energy into being a diplomatic conflict resolver rather than a creative problem solver.

**What contributions have you made to KOTESOL that you are the happiest about?**

I think I am proudest of the fact that many people have said that an idea I shared with them in a presentation has proven useful to them in their classes or inspired them.

**Can you give us an example of one of those ideas, or types of ideas (or was it the same one idea for many people...)?**

The idea that seems to have spread the widest is the idea I had about using worksheets in Excel to present the L1 word, a picture, and then a puzzle where students have to follow those clues to get the L2 word and the L2 definition, thereby creating their own picture/bilingual dictionary for their vocabulary work.

Also, I know what I had to say about the place of fun in the classroom made many people think about their practice.

**What is one contribution you've made that you think people are least aware of?**

Difficult to say. Probably the changes I was able to make to the National Council meetings together with Peadar Callaghan. From long and drawn out talks with endless debate about a single point, we managed to have people talk things out

informally, then have a short formal debate before voting on an issue.

**Why should newbies to any sector within the Korean EFL scene get involved with KOTESOL?**

It's one of the few places where teachers and co-teachers can talk about what they do. It's a place where you will be inspired by the likes of Krashen, Helgesen, and Kelly, to name but a few International Conference speakers. It provides you with a network of professionals to connect with, opportunities to present your ideas, and a chance to grow and develop as an educator or educational professional.



**How has KOTESOL changed as an organisation since you first became involved?**

There is much greater transparency on the part of leadership than before, and, I believe, a greater sense of community overall.

**In what directions do you think KOTESOL should move in the future?**

We need to think of how we will enable native-speaking English teachers to gain the most from their time in Korea in terms of their development as teachers and how to best allow ideas to be spread to a wider audience.



**What other roles would you like to play, or contributions would you like to make, within KOTESOL?**

I'll probably be writing more than before, and I'll get involved with one of the conferences soon.

Photos courtesy of Leonie Overbeek and friends.

# KOTESOL People: Presenting Roger Fusselman

By Julian Warmington

**Across cultural borders and national boundaries, one common fear is that of public speaking, yet Roger Fusselman seems to have completely mastered the art, using humor to maintain audience attention and making a name for himself on the KOTESOL scene. TEC introduces the first in a new series profiling KOTESOL people.**



The voice that answers the phone is an interesting mix of calm and energetic. Roger Fusselman explains happily he has recently been “crazy busy,” although the word around KOTESOL

is this is no new development; “busy” is his lifestyle.

Asked whether keeping busy and maintaining a prominent place in KOTESOL circles are signs of being a victim of his own success, Fusselman answers, “No, I enjoy what I’m doing. It’s just hard to keep juggling commitments and making choices about what I can and can’t do.” And he can do a lot.

Recognised on the KOTESOL scene as an ace presenter, courtesy of a string of memorable conference appearances over recent years, Fusselman has, as it turns out, done more than just hold a couple of decent talks. While he lists presentations among his favorite contributions, he also enjoyed being the “problem desk guy” at the international conference one year, writing a regular column for one KOTESOL publication and contributing to others as well. Most recently, he lent informal support to the KOTESOL president as promotional advisor. Fusselman acknowledges though, “There are a lot of people in KOTESOL who work behind the scenes. A lot of my work has been more glamorous, and other people have had to vet my abstracts for me to get accepted to present.”

His most memorable recent “glamorous” moment was when an unexpected break in proceedings at the national conference this year left a gap for an extra pecha kucha, a very brief talk accompanied by slides. According to one witness, Fusselman asked the audience for three or four conference-related topics. When he stood to speak for the set time, Roger was able to relate the random slides he

had on hand to the topics chosen by the audience, and had the delighted crowd in stitches with laughter. Indeed, at the international conference months later, at the mention of the name Fusselman, another audience member simply smiled and exclaimed, “Oh, that pecha kucha guy!”

When asked how he did it that day at the national conference, he replies,

“That talk was the most thrilling for me because it brought together all my interests in six minutes. I don’t know whether the audience learned anything, but I hope so. I was trying to be useful and not just talk off the top of my head, but it was totally improvised based on audience requests, and based on [performance] improvisation techniques, TESOL knowledge, and my Toastmasters experience.”

In fact, Fusselman has extensive experience both delivering public speeches and training others to do so, including two years as a member of Yeouido Toastmasters, four years with Seoul City Improv theatre, and the writing of seven comedy scripts over five years for performances in and around Seoul. Clearly, he has practiced the craft of delivering funny lines, and also has the academic background to support his message.

With a degree in English with a view to writing graphic novels, Roger’s interests diversified into the philosophy of language being for thinking even before communication, and the implications this raises both in terms of English epistemology and cognitive science. He incorporates such threads into talks on his experiences teaching vocabulary to young learners.

Asked about his biggest challenge during his time with KOTESOL, Roger replies that the first few presentations were the hardest, simply from the lack of knowing “how they’d be received.” He adds, “Now I feel more comfortable in understanding the subject matter of teaching; when I first started I was drawing off my own



experience. It can be very challenging if you don't feel like you know what works. Sometimes chances work, sometimes not."

Having been in and around the KOTESOL scene for



more than a decade, Fusselman has seen changes in the professional development volunteer organization.

"KOTESOL has had to deal with major challenges within the organization in recent years. Outside of the organization, I'm never too sure how well it's growing in the outside public's view, but I think they've diversified to include new kinds of teachers. For example, when I first came to KOTESOL, it wasn't very open to teachers of young learners; it eventually became stronger in that and for helping prospective teachers, and I think there's a greater variety of people involved now. Before, it might have been predominantly North Americans; it feels more pluralistic now, and I think they've had to grow a little more because of that."

More generally, within Korea outside of KOTESOL, Roger has seen further evidence of change on the peninsula. "The quality of teachers has improved, and the expectations of them, too. There's a lot more regulation around certain aspects of the job that doesn't need to be there; some of it may be, some probably not. And I think now you have more people that seriously consider Korea as a long-term career option in teaching. Each year, I think it gets better and better for meeting people that enjoy teaching, and better and better for meeting other people that share common values: It's much easier for finding kindred spirits."

Roger continues to encourage kindred spirits enthusiastic

***"The quality of teachers has improved, and the expectations of them too."***

about English education in Korea to share what works best for them, saying KOTESOL "should be more open to people who have found something they do that works in

class but [some teachers] are too quiet about sharing it."

Asked about advice for first-time presenters considering sharing favorite practical classroom techniques in their local chapter meetings, Roger offers a collection of ideas.

"Ask yourself how much is specific to your context, and how genuinely helpful it was for your students. Did they really achieve or grow because of that? The test is not "Was it cool-looking?" but "Was it helpful?" That's the bottom line. Also, others may not have your class context: You really should conceptualize your experience; ask yourself broad questions about it, and that will prepare you for your presentation."

***"That talk was the most thrilling for me because it brought together all my interests in six minutes ... it was totally improvised based on audience requests, and based on [performance] improvisation techniques, TESOL knowledge, and my Toastmasters experience."***

Roger distinguishes between a presentation and an old-fashioned speech. "You should make sure your presentation is not a strict monologue, and it should integrate ideas and application, rather than the usual theory and practise." He finishes by explaining how some presenters cite more academic research, and others include audience interaction, and both aspects are important and useful.

Roger Fusselman and other speakers, both experienced and new to presenting, will be available to watch and learn from at your local chapter meetings, and at national conferences in the coming months.

#### **The Author**

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