

Re-envisioning ELT Altogether, All Together

The 28th Korea TESOL International Conference

February 19 — February 28th, 2021

Envisioning was originally the main theme of this conference, before COVID-19 turned our conference plans upside-down. It seems long ago and far away when we wrote: “*Envision* is a marvelous word. It makes the mind imagine not just positive directions in which one could hypothetically move, but also set future goals one can strive to make a reality. We believe that this is something that our profession, and indeed our world, could do with a bit more of...” Envisioning is still essential to our theme, but in a different way. We are not just ‘envisioning’ — we’re *re-envisioning*.

We in ELT are intimately familiar with the ‘*re-*’ prefix: students review and repeat; teachers revise and re-mark; administrators reschedule and reorganize; businesses rebrand and relocate. Now, though, we are doing considerably more of the above, and have expanded our quotidian vocabularies: we’re rebooting Zoom, redesigning lessons and curricula for online delivery, and there’s a *lot* of re-budgeting of both money and time happening. That, however, is not all. A great many of us are re-thinking and re-evaluating our profession on a much deeper level.

Many important discussions in ELT have been prompted by Covid-19: For instance, how can we teach language online, especially without enough appropriate training? Also, certain realities of our profession have been viscerally driven home, including the increasingly precarious nature of teaching jobs and businesses that are built around the “in-person classroom”. Could what happened to International House in Spain, where a storied institution suddenly dissolved and seemingly left its staff to fend for themselves, happen here in Korea? This situation may not even be a hypothetical, given how saturated the market has become with educational institutions of all sorts.

But that’s not all. For there seems to be a strong desire in many areas of our profession to rethink ELT in fundamental ways. This was in the air even before Covid-19: Reconsiderations of the place of English, or more appropriately Englishes, in an increasingly multilingual and multimodal world; The revisiting of the question of who is qualified to teach the English language; The concerted effort among teachers to make classrooms more hospitable places for everyone, to recognize and at least attempt to remedy the inequities of the past as well as present, and to tap into the enormous potential that having students who aren’t all the same brings to our schools, our communities, and the world at large. All of the above coalesce in the “Native speaker” vs. “Non-native speaker” debate, which our profession really must resolve. This will be the topic of this year’s Conference Chair’s Panel.

If we in ELT are really to ‘re-envision’ the profession from the ground up, we must make a commitment to doing so. Both the task and the obligation are substantial, and are expressed in the second part of the conference theme: “altogether, all together.” If we are to be successful, we will have to cast our nets far and wide, revisiting the past, scrutinizing the present, and contemplating our shared, impending future with as much perspicacity as we can muster. Not only within our profession, but beyond it.

The 28th Korea TESOL International Conference will provide a space for this, and more. And so, we invite you to join us in re-envisioning ELT: altogether, and all together.