

April Interviews

Interviewee: Soora
Capacity: Club Leader

Hi Soora, how are you today?

I'm good, thank you.

Ok, once again you are back for an interview, this time as the club leader of K-History Club. Could you start by giving us a brief introduction of the club, please?

Ok, so basically, K-History Club is a place where we talk about Korean History from the past to the present and we are focusing every 2 months on cultural aspects since there is no K-culture.

And...

[*thinking*]... definition..

What was that, sorry?

I don't know if that's a good definition.

I think it works. I think you're good. How long have you been the leader of K-History?

Almost a year? It's like, the club has been running for 2 years now. I was the leader since September 2021, so for more than a year.

Have you been the leader since the start of the club?

No, we had another leader, her name was Lizzy but she is no longer on the server. She was the leader, and I was the secretary with Cat. There was another secretary, but I forgot their name.

That's okay.

I will remember.



Okay. So what made you decide to become the leader?

I like history so I was fascinated because when I came to the server and I was discovering Korea, the Korean language. I was looking at its history and I was very intrigued by it because I didn't have a lot of knowledge so I was like "Oh I like this." At the time I was in the server, I was ending my bachelor degree in history so I was like "Oh that'd be nice" and that was how it began basically. Sorry, that was not very elegant.. but it's the truth

Truth's always better, you know?

Would you like to introduce the rest of your leadership team, as it is now?

It's only me and my secretary Beata. We have Ishanavi, but because of school she had to drop both the club and the server. She will be back in July, during the summer break. She is amazing. She is like my right hand. She takes care of the attendance and the homework. She is also the person who gives me ideas. The one who says "Oh this is good" or "No, maybe this." So I don't treat her differently cause you know we have the roles but we don't have a difference between us.

Being just the two of you, do you find it a bit stressful?

No, I don't think so. At least I don't, I don't know if she feels stressed but I always try to help her if I know it's close to the end of the month when she is at school. Also the time zones - we have to deliver the attendances and people that have done the homework; I complete that. So I would try to help her more in that case so I can double-check everything. We are very organized, I might say.

I can imagine. You kinda need to be when it is just the 2 of you, don't you?

Yeah, we have everything because she does the attendance so she always puts the attendance and I can double check if they were actually there. So it's a good balance between us.

Oh yeah definitely. What would you say is your favorite part of the club?

Hmm, my favorite part... when I see the members say that they liked a topic. It's very stressful being the history club cause we are the least fun club for learning. People usually don't want to join K-History Club cause they don't like it, so it's like, "How to make the members engage and not feel like it's just



a boring history class?” So when I see them enjoying it, that makes me very happy.

Would you say that differs from being part of the club leadership?

Mmm? Sorry, could you repeat?

So that's your favorite part of the club, but would you say that differs in terms of club leadership? Like what is your favorite part of being in club leadership? If that makes sense

I like doing research. So it is nice to see all the work we did behind the scenes and at the end of the month is when I usually ask how it was and they say, “Oh I did really enjoy that, it was fun!” and I’m like “Oh thank you.” It’s like a weight comes off of your shoulders.

Kind of rewarding I guess, knowing they are enjoying it...

Yeah because history is not always 'happy happy'. Sometimes there are very sad moments, and even in the sad moments they can learn that, “Ok this was the past, so now that we know the past we can prepare to prevent that from happening in the future”? It sounds really weird. I can't explain but it feels really good.

I get what you mean. Did you have knowledge about Korean history before you became the leader?

Ahh, very little, very very little. Only from K-Dramas but they are not always 100% truthful so... the club actually helped even more. I get surprised nowadays while doing research, and then because of North Korea's situation with the South, they appear a lot on Portuguese television. But since I've done the research, I'm like “Oh, but you know THIS, cause we studied the divisions, it's because of this and this and this” and they are like “Oh.” So I share my knowledge even with my friends now and they are like, “Oh did you know this?” So, it's very fun.

Are you interested in history in general or just Korean history?

General history as it comes with my Bachelor's degree as well. When I was choosing what I wanted to be, I was fascinated with Literature and History. I only knew Portuguese with a bit of English and a little, little Spanish and



when I got accepted for my degree I started learning more about history itself and I have been fascinated ever since.

Ok, so you did a Bachelor's [degree] in History, right? Have you always been interested in history before you went into your Bachelor's?

Yeah, my favorite subjects as far I can remember were History and English. I didn't have History during my high school years because I studied Science but I always loved History. I always had the most amazing History teachers and they made me like, "Oh, I like History." They were really good teachers.

How do you normally find resources for the club?

I do 2 things. I have 3 books, depending on which topic we are going to talk about. Culture is more videos because it is more current and there are more videos about culture nowadays on YouTube - like street interviews and it's more reliable because there are actually people answering. But regarding historical facts, I go through 3 main things: there is one book that is called "Korean History for International Citizenship" from the Korean government and it's not very long but it does explain very well. And then I try to go to old books of Korean history. There are a couple from the 80s that explain. And finally, scientific articles. So these are the main 3 ones.

Very thorough.

Okay, you previously mentioned that you are very organized, so how do you organize and keep track of K-History resources and materials?

We have one for the members and one for me. For the members we have a doc, where I put things. I try to update every two weeks with the Powerpoints and the homework, so we have the materials since the first month of the club till now. It's divided even for weeks, even for topics so I try to never repeat topics except if it's necessary or very similar so therefore I try not to use the same resources and always update resources. And then I have one for me, which is a notebook, like a physical notebook, where I put the week. If I ask questions in the meeting, I keep them in there so in the next meeting I could ask the same ones or I could change it a bit. And on my computer, I always have like little things saying "K-History Club: week one" and then all the materials, but it's mostly in the cloud.



So how do you and Beata delegate tasks between you? Cause as you were saying she is your right-hand person you know?

Since I have more free time, I do the research and prepare the PowerPoints, and Beata does the attendance, the homework, and any announcement that needs to be made regarding the attendance and so on. She double checks everything, like the PowerPoints. Since I'm always doing multiple things, mistakes can happen so she always checks on them. Usually I'm like "Can you see if everything is ok?" and she is like, "Ok, I'll check it". But yeah this is how we're divided - I do the research and she also gives ideas for the topics. So the topics come from both of us like "So what do we do?" or "Oh we should talk about this", "Mhm, [that] makes sense, okay."

Do members also give inputs regarding the topics they would like to see?

Yeah, every month I ask, "What would you love to see in the club?" It is usually [done] during the extra meeting as we have more people because of attendance. I always ask them "What do you guys want to do?" and they give good ideas. One of those is going to be this month. This came out of last month's questions, and we do "member choice awards" so it's what they choose, what they want to do and the anniversary of the club is also theirs - completely their choice. We are just like, "You guys choose."

Ok so you're part of K-Theatre and Gaming leadership as well, right, and a member of quite a lot of other clubs on top of that - how do you balance your K-History Club responsibilities with everything else?

It is easier because now... [laughs] okay, I don't wanna laugh cause this is quite complicated but I try to do everything before the beginning of the month. So for the next two weeks, I'm going to work on May's assignment and everything for May and then half of May and - maybe I'll do May and June in the next few weeks so then I can be focused on the other things. In the K-Theater and Gaming clubs I'm the secretary so I take care of hosting the meetings if I need to and sharing my screen. It is a lot of responsibility but it's not the same kind of responsibilities that I have in K-History, if that makes sense. It's a different type of responsibility but I treat them at the same level of responsibility. I never skip a meeting - any meeting actually. [I skip] only if I'm very tired. I go to every meeting, and for the clubs where I'm in the leadership I always try to be there, even if I'm in the street. I have my



headphones in and I'm in the meeting haha. Even if I cannot play for The Gaming Club, I'm always there. But in the other clubs I chose, I'm realizing now that they are only on the weekend - minus the clubs that are on pause of course - so that is when I can organize everything.

I'm glad it's working well.

Haha so far it is working well. I didn't come across the need to leave any club, but if there is a time I would prioritize the ones I'm in the leadership [of].

Ok, have you ever covered the same period or event more than once in the club?

Yes but that was different, I'll tell you why - it was when we did 'Member Choice Awards'. Usually since there are past topics that they want to see again, in the anniversary or in the months we call 'Member Choice Awards'.

Are there any YouTube channels you would recommend in particular for learning about Korean history?

Yes but I don't remember the name. Can I search for the name?

Sure.

So there is one that I really enjoy, and he does explain, he has a good voice, so it helps. I need to go to my other one, sorry!

It's okay, take your time.

I will put it here, cause I don't want to ruin the pronunciation. I really like his videos cause he explains it very well, in a very simplified manner and is one of the most popular. It is called *Loonytricky*. I really like this one. Another thing is that sometimes the Korean government provides a lot of information but most of their videos don't have subtitles or aren't dubbed. The ones that are subtitled or dubbed are very good, however.

So the club mostly uses presentations and YouTube videos, right? Have you found that one is more effective/more popular than the other?

Depends on the topic.

Could you explain?



Yes, of course. For example, if it is more theoretical, they like well-explained videos. For some topics, they like to have the words. Sometimes we work with quotes or descriptions so it's better to have it written. It really depends. It depends also on what time the meeting is as well, because if the meeting is later at night, like it used to be, at 10 pm it's more complicated to pay attention, so videos are always better. So I try to bounce the two of them: videos with presentations.

Yeah, sometimes it's definitely difficult.

Yeah because sometimes some videos explain the same amount and sometimes the language of the video referring to history is too complex and too hard. I try to decompose the complexity of the work. For example, one of the topics I use more videos for is 'comfort women'. It is a topic that we have seen a couple of times in the club, cause they really enjoy learning it. Most of them don't know what a 'comfort woman' is when they join the club. I like to put both videos and video interviews of comfort women and what happened, why it happened, etc. It's one of the saddest topics that we have seen. Hearts get broken every time we get to talk about it.

Yeah, I heard a little about that topic and it's really, really sad.

Yeah... 'comfort women' is actually one of the most requested topics in the club since we have new members every single month. When we talk about history or Women's History, we usually try to talk about comfort women though this month we didn't. We had an activity with K-Language. And for example one more thing we talked about are... cults. [laughs]

Yeah.

This is also one of the most known topics of K-History Club and also one of the most requested, I think in the "Clubs Choice Award" it was actually one of the topics. And I was like, "Oh no not again. How am I going to do this?" We did it with a K-Drama: "Cult save me" [where] we were literally analyzing the scenes. We actually had Meagan, Anime Club's leader, coming to one of the meetings because she told me [about] a situation and I was doing research for the meeting and I was like "OMG Meagan, you've almost been kidnapped by a religious cult!" So yeah, that's more videos. So yeah I talk about these two the most, and they also enjoy it.



It's definitely a good topic to enjoy.

It's a good topic to break the ice.

So you said how you change one of the timings for 10 pm. How long do K-History meetings usually last, then?

We try to do at least 2 hours

Two hours at least?

Why 2 hours? Because of movies and for us not to ask - this would happen, if we only had one hour the movies usually are longer so I would have to ask to not to leave the meeting, put the films in days we didn't have meetings, after the meetings so we changed it to 2 hours. So now we know we have those 2 hours for movies and if we want to extend it as in if we are talking about the subject so as not to be too stressful regarding time.

How has your experience as the leader of K-History Club been?

I would say it's the most fantastic thing that has happened to me.

Oh, that's really sweet. Have there been any challenges you have had to overcome as the club leader?

I'm very shy

Oh really?

Yeah it doesn't feel like that but it's true. I can't speak in public. I don't know why I can't do presentations in front of people. It comes like a body reaction and I start to shake a lot. However in the club, since I know you guys are there but I'm not seeing you I feel more comfortable. I did improve that and it made me actually question my life choices. I was like "Would I be a good teacher"? It's a self compliment - they would usually say "I don't like history but Soora makes it very fun"

I would argue you do.

So I'd be like, "Maybe I should try being a teacher again..." But no, I don't think so. [laughs]



Maybe in the future, who knows?

Who knows....

Do you have any nice or fun memories with the club or in club leadership with Beata?

Every meeting is fun with them. I think the members are the ones who make it fun. For example Tiny, Beata , Jay, Aina, Davida, Anna. I think I have good memories with all of them. I would say it's the experience of them learning and finding out stuff about Korea which is very fun. [silence] Maybe the times we cry together haha.

Haha.

Because we would really immerse ourselves in the movies so we all start crying.

Has K-History Club ever had any special events or collaborations?

Yes, we had one last month and we are going to have one in May and one in June.

And what clubs are they if you are able to say?

Yes, of course - K-Theatre in May and Song Analysis Club in June. Can I give spoilers?

Sure, if you'd like.

I can give spoilers. So in May, we are going to do something with the K-Theater Club called - this is the good thing about being in both clubs; it's easier to coordinate stuff - "True Events in Movies". That would be the topic in K-Theater Club and we are going to see a film based on an event that happened in 1987 which would be the first topic of next month. And since June is the month when Yoongi starts his tour, if the new album that is coming does not have something more historical, we'll see the history behind *Daechwita*.

Oh ok, very interesting.



Yeah, so they (K-Theatre Club) are going to talk about the lyrics and our club will talk about the history behind the song, the original song, and also the historical elements in *Daechwita*.

Ok so you said you did a collaboration before. What was it like?

It was very fun actually. The idea came from Griz - from K-language Club - and she was like, "We are going to see this film and since it's historical would you guys like to participate?" I was like "Yeah, we are actually talking about Women's History in K-History Club." and she was like, "Oh really?!" and yeah it was the perfect match.

Is there anything you wish you could improve about your own club?

[silence] I'd try not to be so dispersed because if they start talking and I'm reading to them, I'd start talking to them about what they are saying, so I want to be more focused. Because when they are talking, it's usually about our topic but then I'm like, "Yeah we need to go back to the presentation".
[laughs]

[laughs]

It's not a bad thing, but yeah maybe more focus.

What kinds of assignments does the K-History Club have?

We have four (4) types of assignments. We have artistic, which means more visual work, we have quizzes which can be a Kahoot, or Google form, or an exam style. I like to scare them with the exam, which is the easiest thing in the world but they get scared. Specifically the first time I said we were going to conduct an exam, they got scared.

I think I remember the first time you announced the exam

Yeah, it was like, "Exam? When? How?" I think it was quite easy actually.

I would say so but I think the form of an exam freaked anyone out

Yeah, the word 'exam'. [laughs] I said "exam" and everyone was like, "Ahh!" I was like, "Don't worry it's going to be in your free time and not during the meeting" and everyone was like "Thank you, thank you." So questions for the exam it's more... Questions usually are from one line to a paragraph so 4 lines



or more are good. It depends on how big you write. We also have articles, which means kind of a news article, which I love. All of the members are becoming better. [With] every task they do, they improve themselves, so I'm very happy. I have the most talented artistic works for the club and I'm very proud of my members for that. And I have opinions. Usually articles and opinions go hand in hand.

Do you have a personal favorite assignment that you've made so far?

Can I say the exam?

[both laugh]

I had fun preparing everything - it was a very pretty exam, visually I mean - and it made sense for that topic to be in the same style but I would say that's one of my favorites. I have 2 favorites, with the artistic.

Ok, how do you provide feedback for assignments?

So for exams, I correct every single one of them. I would usually go one by one and see how many they got wrong, what they got wrong and I would tell them during the meeting, or if they ask, in personal dm. For the artistic ones, the first meeting that we have after they send the assignment, I praise their work because they are so amazing- Oh I forgot one type of assignment. It's not really an assignment but sometimes we do "member presentations." This is where they do the presentation during the meeting and that's their homework. Ah, what was the question again, sorry?

Uh how do you provide feedback for assignments?

[laughs] So that is for visual assignments. For writing, I would say "You did a very good job" or "Very good don't worry." This is usually how I do feedback but it really depends on which type of assignment we do, so it's really different every time.

What's your favorite topic that has been covered thus far?

Favorite topic... Oh that's a difficult question... I would say I have two... One is "women's month". We did it in both years, with very good topics that I chose that I did not know. As for cultural aspects, one of the topics for a month last



year was regarding beauty stereotypes in Korea. In the cultural aspect, there is also the topic about cults which I really liked.

[laughs]

Okay, last question. You recently made the KSG Honors Society, congratulations!

Thank you!

Has K-History Club played a part in your Korean learning?

Definitely. I think K-History Club of course helped but I think that it was the combination of everything- K-Language Club, K-Theater Club, Gaming Club, and the Soundcheck courses: Beginner Korean 1 and Beginner Korean 2. I'm very proud of that. I think it was a bit of everything. But yes, K-History Club definitely. It's hard to say but I kinda don't see myself without K-History Club in my life, because it was so impactful.

It's a good thing, though.

Yeah, so hard, cause earlier in the interview we talked about leaving the club, like leaving the server and it's so sad to think about it. So yeah K-History Club is always going to be in my heart. Everyone that goes to our club and then has to leave for reasons - for school, health, personal reasons - they always make a little note in my heart, like, "Aw, good moments" so when I see them it's like... [aws]

[giggles]

That was our last question. Thank you so much for the interview, Soora, and for volunteering your time yet again. We hope K-History Club continues to grow and that you and the club have a lovely year!

Thank you! JOIN K-HISTORY CLUB, join us. [Join] our Gaming Club and K-Theater Club as well! Join all of us. And thank you Azzy and Ila for spending this time with me. Thank you!