

The Pilates Korean Cultural Explosion

There's a new Pilates trend in the USA. It has nothing to do with equipment or exercise selection and everything to do with the US-based Korean community's interest in Pilates. Over the last five years, Peak Pilates has seen a rise in Korean participation at our studios and a corresponding increase in registrants in the Peak Pilates Comprehensive Certification program. What is driving this interest? According to the *Pilates & Yoga Studios Market Outlook-2025*, the increased interest in Pilates in the Asian Pacific is mainly driven by the rise in consumer spending on health.

In the USA, we notice a rise in Korean students coming into studios to capitalize on health benefits, who also want to learn to teach. We also see Koreans coming to the USA to receive their instructor training. Our Senior MI Team has traveled to Korea to Mentor MI's, lead courses, and present CECs at studios and conventions. Peak Pilates has a large presence in Seoul with three busy Education Centers, some with multiple locations. In the USA, we just opened our first Korean-focused Peak Pilates Education Center in Plano, Texas. Recently I sat down to chat with the co-owner of Pilates Foundations of Texas and Peak Pilates Master Instructor,

Jessica Lim to gain more insight.

Zoey: What led you to Pilates?

Jessica: I was originally on the path to becoming a musician (flutist), though developed debilitating and chronic pain in my neck, wrists, back, and hips from long hours of practice and performance. After unsuccessfully trying various forms of therapy, I decided to give Pilates a try. The classical work helped me regain strength and find balance mentally and physically. Just like many transformed by Pilates, I was totally mesmerized. So I became certified by Peak Pilates, opened a studio in Georgia, another in Plano, and next applied to become an Education Center and Master Instructor!

I have also seen how difficult it is for Koreans to truly understand Pilates without the benefit of their native language. So, I aim to not only help students, but to take a broader role in assisting other teachers. Today, my husband, KJ, and I operate an Educational Center dedicated to the Korean market. We are aided by Senior Mentor and Leadership Team member, Cherry Herzog.

Zoey: Jessica, tell us about your first PPC course.

Jessica: I had four trainees in my first course. One trainee was fluent in English, two trainees had basic language understanding, and the fourth had just come from Korea with only basic speaking skills. As I was preparing to deliver the course, I wanted to set the right expectations with the language barrier in particular, as Pilates is a new language on its own! I emphasized the importance of trusting the Peak Pilates Education process and using inner strength to defeat obstacles.

Thankfully, their work ethic was unbelievable! They were willing to prepare and practice, take private sessions consistently, and study so as to truly understand the classical system. They really worked together and helped each

other. They came to the studio to practice on a weekly basis. I was thrilled when all of them tested out (in English!), believing this would give them more opportunities in the vast Pilates world. I have eight trainees registered for my next course and I'm excited to shepherd another group through. It's also great that this interest expands our facility.

Zoey: Is there anything you want prospective students to know?

Jessica: As an immigrant, I have always limited myself because I felt like I didn't fit in or that there were too many barriers. When I was competing in the Miss Korea Pageant (Seoul, 2006) I felt like a stranger. That experience made me realize that it is not where you live or what language you speak that defines you, but it is the attitude you cultivate that can change how you think about who you are.

As the first Korean-American Master Instructor, I strive to be approachable to the Korean population regardless of language or cultural barrier. I try to impart confidence in those who limit themselves for whatever reason. Our goal is to develop as many bilingual instructors within the Peak Pilates system as possible—to help make “Pilates” a worldwide language.

Jessica has been a role model, ambassador, and emerging force at Peak Pilates. She frequently gets asked what languages she speaks and proudly replies, “Korean, English and Pilates.” So for those unable to travel to Seoul and study at Anne Pilates, One Pilates, or Heim Pilates, take heart you have a great US-based guide to help you learn or teach Pilates. And for those of you from Korea wishing to come to America, know that you will receive a warm and wonderful welcome from a very special studio and Master Instructor! You can reach Jessica at jhl1013@gmail.com or visit their Facebook page at [pilatesfoundationsoftexas](https://www.facebook.com/pilatesfoundationsoftexas).