Creating a Culture of Learning

Increasing Teacher Engagement with Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Research

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Recommendations & Assumptions
- Project Overview
  - Establishing the Pilot
  - Teacher Interests Survey
  - Pilot Teacher Group: Pre-Project Beliefs
  - Testimonial: A teacher's experience from start to finish
- Survey Results and Feedback: Workshop Leaders
- Survey Results and Feedback: Workshop Participants
- Implications for program administrators
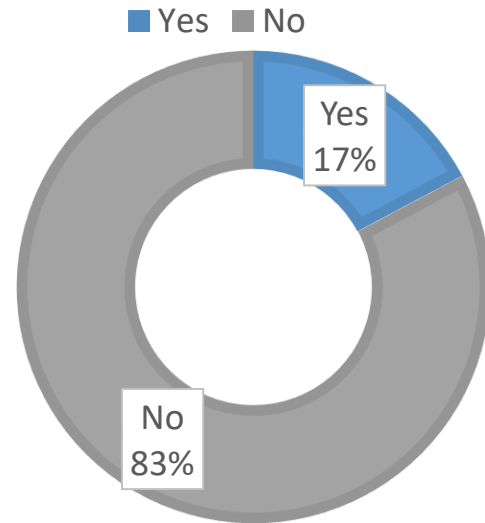- What are we doing differently in 2019?
- Questions

Introduction

"English as a Second Language (ESL) instructors who engage with current research through ongoing professional development (PD) are better prepared to meet the educational goals and needs of diverse learner populations [...] Quality PD opportunities allow ESL instructors to access, reflect on, experiment with, and evaluate evidence-informed techniques, assisting them in implementing more effective practices."

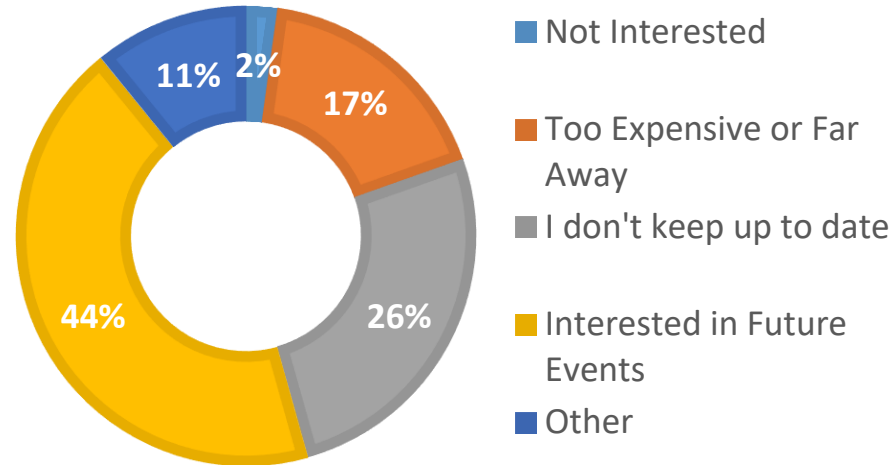*Promoting Engagement with Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles in Adult ESL Programs*
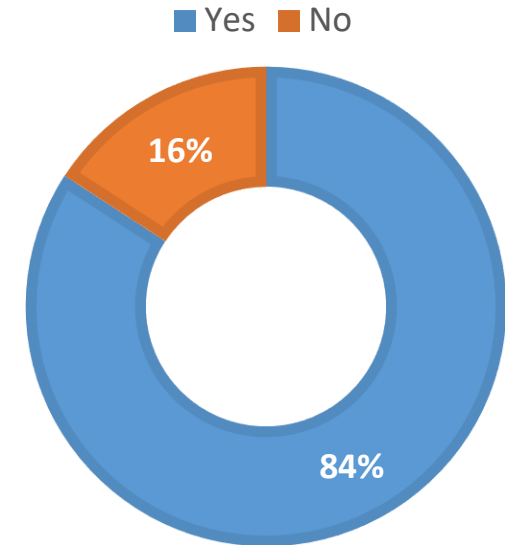-Marilyn L Abbott, Marian J. Rossiter, & Sarvenaz Hatami

Introduction

HAVE ATTENDED EXTERNAL PD/CONFERENCES IN CANADA

- Yes
- No

Yes 17%

No 83%

WHY NOT?

- Not Interested
- Too Expensive or Far Away
- I don't keep up to date
- Interested in Future Events
- Other

2%
17%
26%
44%
11%

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT SLA RESEARCH?
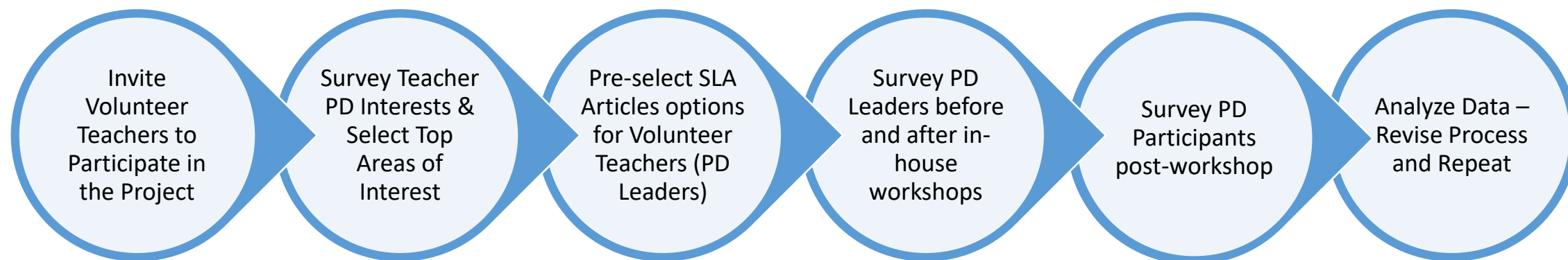
- Yes
- No

16%
84%

Recommendations

- **Instructors** and **program managers** both play a **key role**

- **One barrier** to address is ESL instructors **lack of familiarity** with research

- There is a need to **reduce the gap** between research and its practical applications ("clear language, relevance, and practicality")

- **Allow for collaborative** identification of articles and **create opportunities** for instructors to read and share research

- **Gap in research:** Current published studies are carried out in LINC or college programs. ILAC represents a different setting

Assumptions

1. Most language teachers (ESL) do not engage with research after completion of their training program(s).

2. In-house, peer-led workshops can effectively connect a broader group of teachers to SLA research.

3. In-house/peer-led (synthesized) presentation of research allows teachers' more input, or allows more local customizability than external or other PD opportunities.

Project Overview

Invite Volunteer Teachers to Participate in the Project → Survey Teacher PD Interests & Select Top Areas of Interest → Pre-select SLA Articles options for Volunteer Teachers (PD Leaders) → Survey PD Leaders before and after in-house workshops → Survey PD Participants post-workshop → Analyze Data – Revise Process and Repeat
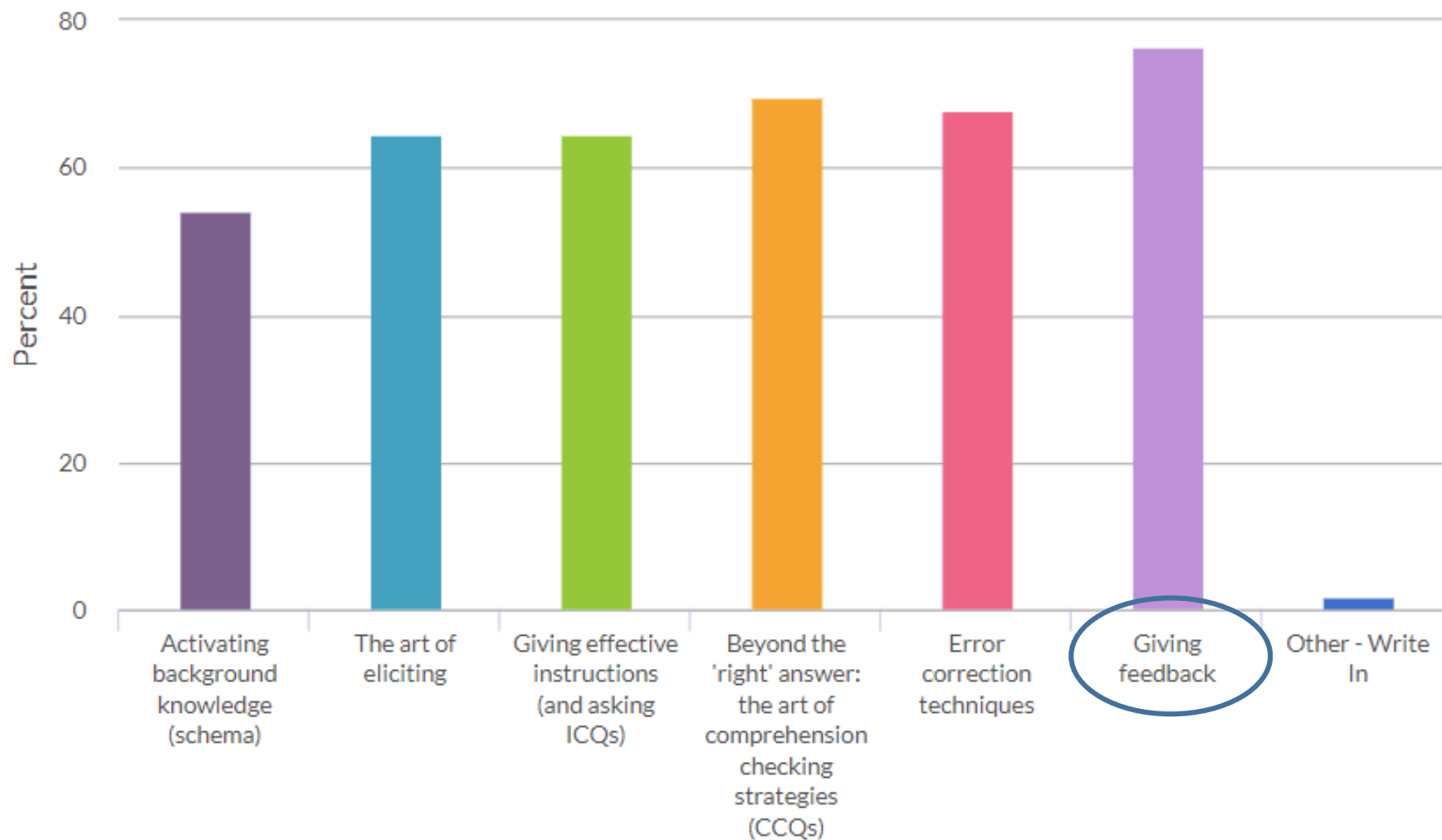
Project Overview

PROJECT AIMS	PARTICIPANT REQUIREMENTS
To determine how academic research can be integrated into ILAC's PD scheme	Finalized topics provided must be used
To determine how academic research can be applied to practical classroom scenarios	Research articles provided must be used in the PD (choose from or supplement what is provided)
How well-received research is in PD form - how do peers react to/engage with/apply PD-delivered research	All questionnaires must be completed & Consent must be given to participate in the project

10. Are you interested in attending a workshop on topics related to the essential teaching techniques, such as:
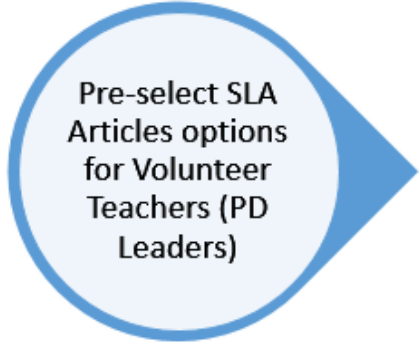
Project Overview

TOP 10 areas of Interest of surveyed ILAC Teachers

1. Diagnostic Tools
2. Learner Variables: from beginner to Advanced
3. Error correction techniques and giving feedback
4. Learner-centered instruction and task-based learning
5. Real world application – Functions, Notions & Discourse
6. Learner English: Predicting and addressing student errors
7. Classroom activities for informal assessment
8. Developing oral fluency
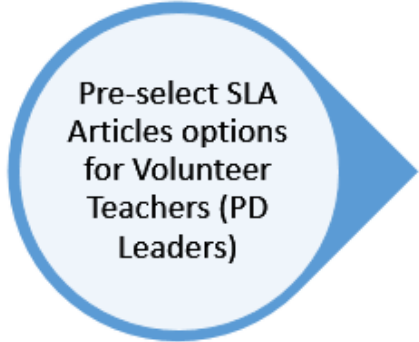9. Listening comprehension strategies
10. How to exploit a text

Pre-select SLA Articles options for Volunteer Teachers (PD Leaders)

Project Overview

Modified Research Topics

1. Needs analysis
2. Learner variables
3. Error correction
4. Task-based learning
5. Learner English
6. Variables in L2 pronunciation
7. Developing oral fluency
8. Listening comprehension strategies
9. Assessment of Learning
10. Authentic materials in the classroom

All participants given articles on 'Reading and Reporting on Research'

Pre-select SLA Articles options for Volunteer Teachers (PD Leaders)

Project Overview

- 10 Volunteers/PD leaders signed up

- 3-5 articles for each content area were pre-selected

- PDs were scheduled over 10 months

- Administrators to met with each leader to guide the process

- Both PD leaders and participants were surveyed

Pre-Project Teacher Beliefs

SD	D	N	A	SA
Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neither A/D**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**

Implications of in-house PD (RQ 1)	SD	D	N	A	SA
Teachers need PD to bridge the gap (TESOL to expertise)				60%	40%
Peer-led PD is more approachable than reading SLA research			10%	50%	40%
Collaborative digestions of SLA research leads to higher implementation of SLA research				40%	60%
Teachers are only motivated to attend PDs if it is applicable to their own classroom practice		30%	10%	30%	30%
PD leaders should have a minimum level of qualification, such as a BA, TESL Certification		10%	50%		40%
Leading PD workshops for peers is an important PD movement				40%	60%
I feel that leading peer-led PD workshops is intimidating	10%	20%	10%	60%	
Engaging in Research (RQ2)	SD	D	N	A	SA
I am interested in SLA research in the classroom				30%	70%

Invite Volunteer Teachers to Participate in the Project

Pre-Project Teacher Beliefs

Research Implementation in the Classroom (RQ 3)	SD	D	N	A	SA
I integrate SLA research in the classroom	10%			50%	40%
I consult methodology books (like Scrivener, Harmer)		10%		40%	50%
I know how to apply findings in the classroom			30%	50%	20%
I feel my students expect me to keep up with research and methodologies		20%	40%	40%	
SLA research/findings is seen as legitimate in the eyes of my students		10%	50%	30%	10%
I actively set time in my schedule to consult research	10%	30%	20%	20%	20%
I am interested in conducting and/or publishing research		10%	10%	50%	30%
I know how to access SLA research	10%	10%	70%	10%	
I know how to critique SLA research	10%		70%	10%	10%
I have attended or would like to attend external PD in my field				50%	50%
I talk to my colleagues about SLA research	10%	10%	30%	40%	10%

Invite Volunteer Teachers to Participate in the Project

Testimonial – See Handout

This experience was extremely beneficial for my teaching practice. I learned to creatively address my students' needs within the context of the curriculum, and how important these types of check-ins are - not only for me, but also for the students! They were happier that their needs were being addressed consistently, and more aware of what was actually going on in the classroom because they were reflecting so frequently. I have always been interested in engaging with research to adjust my classroom practice; what this project provided was the opportunity to increase my confidence about doing so.

-Rebecca Y

Post PD Surveys - Leaders

| Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement…. (5 = strongly agree)					
I understood the article(s) well	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoyed reading the article(s)	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoyed presenting the article(s) to my peers	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoyed discussing the article(s) with my peers	1	2	3	4	5
I learned from this session	1	2	3	4	5
I believe my peers learned from this session	1	2	3	4	5
I am motivated to engage with more research after this session	1	2	3	4	5
I believe my peers are motivated to engage with more research after this session	1	2	3	4	5
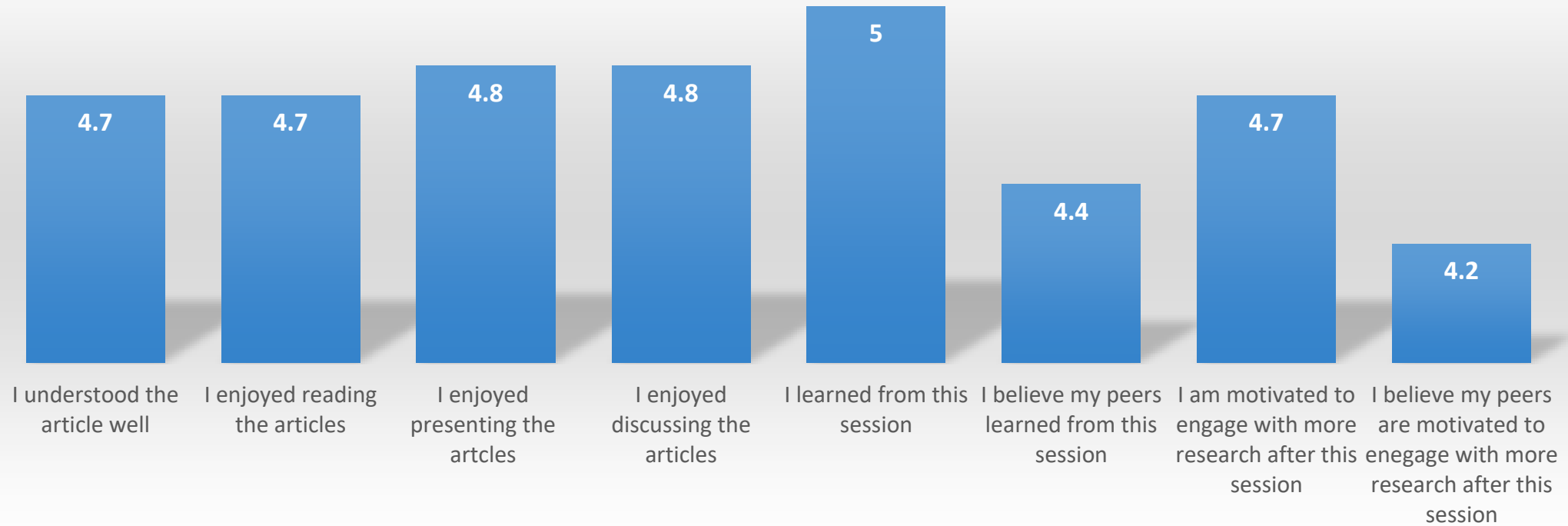
Survey PD Participants post-workshop

PD Leader Feedback

What was Effective?

- **Sharing** experience with peers. **Talking** about techniques of correction and terminology

- Getting teachers to share different lesson planning **techniques**. Providing suitable **activities**

- We had a lot of different pieces to our PD, and so it felt fairly fast-paced.

- People had a lot to talk about ; I've heard only **positive feedback**

- The [content] brought up **interesting questions** and **opened** more topics for **discussion** and sharing

PD Leader Feedback

What would you do differently?

- Do **more demos** of the different types of techniques

- Getting teachers to **perform** some examples of the **techniques**

- I would use **better examples** since teachers were a bit confused with the ones in the article – it was a very interesting article when you take time to read it and understand it

- I might have cut the discussion time down a bit and given **more time for the demo lesson**

- I think I would **focus more specifically** on dynamic assessment and not try to bring other assessment styles into the conversation
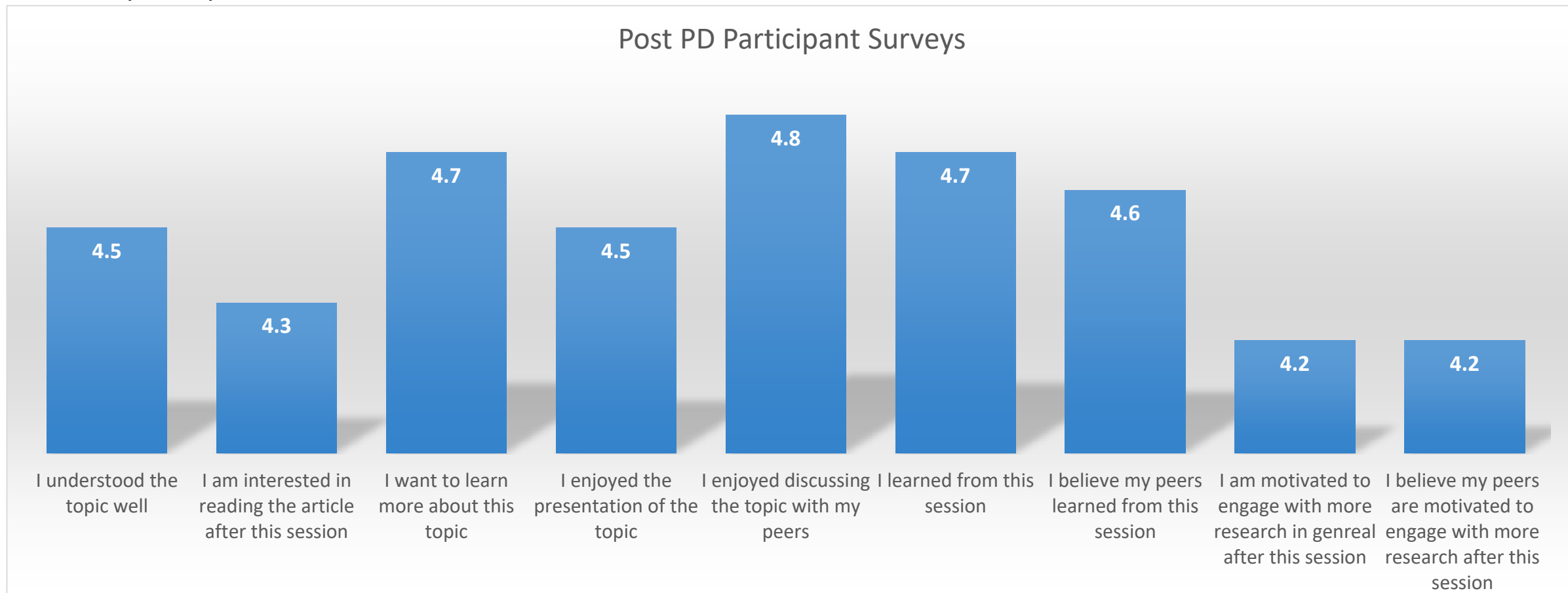
Toronto // Vancouver

Post PD Surveys - Participants

Indicate to what extent you agree with the statement…. (5 = strongly agree)					
I understood the topic well	1	2	3	4	5
I am interested in reading the article(s) after this session	1	2	3	4	5
I want to learn more about this topic	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoyed the presentation of the topic	1	2	3	4	5
I enjoyed discussing the topic with my peers	1	2	3	4	5
I learned from this session	1	2	3	4	5
I believe my peers learned from this session	1	2	3	4	5
I am motivated to engage with more research in general after this session	1	2	3	4	5
I believe my peers are motivated to engage with more research after this session	1	2	3	4	5

Survey PD Participants post-workshop

Participant Feedback

Analyze Data – Revise Process and Repeat

What was effective?

I came out with a **greater understanding** under the topic and **new** tasks and **ways to teach** the topic

The provided **lessons and ideas** were really useful

The materials were engaging and not too wordy. **Good examples** for tasks. Great time management

Each stage was **interactive** and well-planned. Thank you!

We **discussed** possible **problematic methods** and how to avoid them; looked at **real needs analysis** as done by PD host

Participant Feedback

Analyze Data –
Revise Process
and Repeat

What would you do differently?

More references to research, although this was definitely achieved in the PD. There is always room for more.

Have **more activities** for sharing and practicing in class.

More techniques for our classes, how to apply. Thank you!

All was perfect! Just a little **more time**!!

Share **more experience** from other teachers.

Participant Feedback

Analyze Data – Revise Process and Repeat

What would you do differently?

More references to research, although this was definitely achieved in the PD. There is always room for more.

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Implications for Administrators

Discussion Questions

- Could engagement with SLA research be increased in your institution? How?

- What are the challenges you might face (time, resources, distance, knowledge etc…)?

    - Can you think of any ways around the challenges above?

- Besides engagement with SLA research, how does your organization keep it's instructors up to date?

2019: What are *we* doing differently?

ELT Conversations

- All teachers are given the SLA article or other academic/theoretical reading and invited to discuss
  - Most read part/all of the article
  - Some read/finish after the workshop

- A follow up PD/workshop with practical classroom application is scheduled

Next steps for SLA PD cycle

- PD leaders can champion more volunteers!

- Add an interview component before and after

- Add a classroom observation to enhance the value for SLA PD leaders

ELT Conversations

"Thank you for the excellently organized ELT Conversation this Friday!"

"I really like how you facilitated the "book club" by simplified way of exchanging groups and questions with minimum interruptions. "

"I can't wait for the next gathering with hope that next topic will be as interesting as this one."

"This was a really interesting change from what I'm used to! It was nice to share in that kind of environment."

"I LOVED the different groupings and the topic overall. I could talk about this for ever!"

Limitations/Implications for Research

- Number of participants and nature of data collection for pilot doesn't allow for statistical analysis

- Using the work of Abbot & Rossiter (2013), Rossiter, Abbot, & Hatami (2011, 2015) as a basis for selecting features of the program, results of the pilot seem to be in-line with current research

- Positive response to program indicates further study is worthwhile

Conclusion

- **Help** teachers **select SLA** material

- **Create time** for teachers to read and share

- **Guide teachers** toward classroom application

- Facilitate **peer-led** discussions/workshops

- **Any questions?**

Thank you!

References

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