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The Impact of Attending Second Language Teaching Conferences

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Abstract

Attending a second language (L2) teaching conference is assumed to have a positive impact on teaching practice. Currently, however, there are very few studies that examine empirical evidence of such impacts. Given the substantial cost and effort involved in attending a conference, it is important to clarify the nature of conference impacts, so that both language teachers and conference administrators can reflect on how to best generate meaningful improvements in L2 teaching. Questionnaire and interview data were used to examine L2 teaching conference attendees' perceived impacts on their teaching practice and beliefs. Results reveal generally positive impacts, in the form of changes to L2 teaching approaches, teaching beliefs, motivation to learn more about teaching, and the expansion of professional networks. However, questionnaire data suggest that impacts on teaching practice were of a relatively small magnitude. Implications of these findings are discussed and recommendations for enhancing the impact of L2 teaching conferences are offered.

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Introduction

Conferences are one of the main venues for second language (L2) teacher professional development. L2 teachers attend conferences to learn about classroom activities and techniques, share their own ideas, and critically think about the current issues surrounding their profession. They attend conferences hoping that there will be a positive change to their teaching practice as a result. While it is intuitive that attending a teaching conference should result in some positive impact on teaching practice, there is a lack of empirical evidence in this area (Borg, 2015a). Specifically, little is known about the kinds of impacts that conference attendees frequently experience, and, perhaps more importantly, how strong and persistent these impacts are. Ideally, attending a teaching conference should result in concrete improvements to classroom practices. However, Richards (2008) explains that

individual and contextual factors can impede adoption of educational innovations, including the amount of risk involved, the communicability of the innovation, compatibility with existing practices, the number of gatekeepers involved, the perceived benefits of the innovation as well as the organizational, political, social and cultural context in which the change is being attempted. (p. 14)

Research suggests that L2 teacher self-efficacy and motivation can also complicate the relationship between professional learning and changes in L2 teaching practice (Sahin & Yildirim, 2015). To reiterate, the central concern is whether or not there is actually a beneficial impact after attending L2 teaching conferences. Given the substantial cost and effort involved in attending a conference, it is important to clarify the general nature of conference impacts, so that

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both teachers and conference administrators can reflect on how to best utilize them toward meaningful improvements in L2 teaching.

Literature Review

L2 Teaching Conference Impacts

Borg's (2015a) study on the impacts of attending L2 teaching conferences included the perspectives of 66 teachers and educational administrators from seven Gulf countries. It was found that attendees increased their knowledge of teaching techniques and perceived increased confidence, motivation, and knowledge of other teaching contexts as a result of networking with other professionals. Büyükyavuz (2016) also found evidence of increases in confidence, motivation, and knowledge of other teaching contexts in her study of 83 Turkish L2 education professionals who attended an international conference. Findings revealed teachers' intentions to change parts of their teaching as a direct result of attending the conference. These two studies on L2 teacher conference impacts (Borg, 2015a; Büyükyavuz, 2016) also illustrated how networking activities at conferences provided attendees with opportunities to exchange information and reflect dialogically on their own practice. These research findings on networking activities at conferences highlight a more social perspective on reflection and illustrate how conferences can impact not only individual teachers, but whole communities of educators as well. Paran (2016) confirmed that conferences have proven to be a space for initiating change within language teacher organizations.

The importance of interactions between attendees at conferences is also highlighted in research on teacher professional development outside of L2 teaching (Liao, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Karlin, Glazewski, & Brush, 2017; Navy, Maeng, & Bell, 2019; Sedgley, Waterfield, & Mueller-Winkler, 2017; West, 2019) and in research on adult and continuing education conferences

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(Cherrstrom, 2012). Conferences have been found to be beneficial for beginning secondary science teachers, as well as for veteran teachers (Navy et al., 2019). Research in the field of public health (Mata, Latham, & Ransome, 2010) suggests that attending conferences facilitates networking, skill-building, collaboration, and mentoring. In the context of online conferences, Moore, Fisher, and Baber (2016) illustrated the potential of online conferences for useful and meaningful professional development through discourse analysis of attendee participation and analysis of attendee feedback. Online conference impact is a particularly relevant issue at present due to the increased number of virtual conferences in response to COVID-19.

Collectively, this body of evidence concerning the impacts of L2 teaching conferences and conferences in other academic disciplines suggests that conferences have a generally positive impact on attendees. However, there is still a need for more empirical investigations regarding the nature of these impacts on L2 teaching. Firstly, there are very few empirical investigations in this area of L2 teaching conference impacts in general. Secondly, the majority of research thus far is limited to broad suggestions based on general impressions of conferences, giving no detailed insight into the nature of conference impacts. For example, what impacts are greater or lesser than others? What parts of the conference do these impacts come from? What kind of impacts are more likely to result in concrete changes in L2 classrooms? The lack of specific research in the field and lack of detail in our understanding of how L2 teaching conferences benefit attendees were the primary motivators for the current study. Borg (2015a) provided quantitative survey data illustrating that conference attendees enhanced their theoretical knowledge, but there were no further details about this particular category of impacts and what effect this theory learning had on attendees teaching practice. Salas's (2016) study revealed that some teachers at MEXTESOL began to notice a distinction between theory and their own

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teaching practices. However, while this is important in and of itself, more details are needed regarding the nature of this reflection and whether or not it led to actual changes in teaching practice.

Within L2 teaching conference impact research, there is currently a need to understand what specific aspects of conferences directly connect to concrete changes in the L2 classroom. In addition, it is also important to investigate the depth or magnitude of conference impacts. Ideally, conference attendees should be impacted in a variety of ways (e.g., evolving their theoretical understanding of L2 education, acquiring new teaching materials and techniques, and building teacher identities) and this impact should ideally be of a high magnitude and perceived as significant by attendees. At present, there are no studies on L2 conference impacts that focus on these two points. The current study contributes to this emerging body of research by exploring these points and providing additional evidence of L2 teaching conference impacts from two distinct contexts: a state-level TESOL conference and a regional L2 language teacher conference in the United States.

Research Questions

1. Do L2 teaching conference attendees perceive that there were impacts on their professional development?
2. What specific conference impacts directly connect to concrete changes in teaching practice?
3. What were the perceived magnitudes of these impacts?
4. How do attendees describe these impacts?

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Materials and Methods

Data for this study were collected through questionnaires and interviews and analyzed through descriptive statistics and qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012). This study received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Hawaii at Manoa Office of Research Compliance (CHS#23898). Informed consent was collected from all individual participants in the study, and at all stages participants were informed that all identifying information would be removed from the data. In addition, participants were informed of their right to withdraw their participation at any point in the research process.

Questionnaire

An online questionnaire was offered to the attendees of two L2 teaching conferences. The primary reason for collecting data from two conferences was to increase the total number of participants in this study for added dependability (Brown, 2004). For the specific purposes of this research, no differences were expected between the perspectives of attendees at the different conferences. However, as this was an exploratory study, care was taken to identify distinctions between the two sets of data. Questionnaire items inquired about what attendees did at the conference, the impacts the conference had on their beliefs, values, and teaching practice, and included five items from a prior study on conference impacts (Borg, 2015a). The questionnaire design was informed by research methods literature (Brown, 2001, 2005) and revised after a focus group discussion with five L2 education researchers and again after piloting it with L2 teachers who were enrolled in a graduate-level L2 education course. There were four major sections:

- biographical information
- specific parts of the conference attended

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- how the conference impacted the attendee
- application of knowledge gained at the conference.

The questionnaire was posted online on SurveyMonkey.com to be easily accessible for attendees. Attendees' email addresses were collected at the conference sites along with consent to contact them at a later date. Invitations to complete the survey were sent out one month after the conferences to allow time for attendees to implement what they learned. A total of 68 attendees completed the survey, 39 from the state conference and 29 from the regional conference. The survey ended with another consent form, asking for permission to conduct a follow-up interview regarding questionnaire answers.

Follow-up interviews

Following a semi-structured interview framework (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004), interviewers (four L2 education researchers, including the authors) were instructed to invite the attendees to speak freely about their questionnaire answers. Interviewers and attendees went over the questionnaire, stopping at items the attendees wished to elaborate on. If the attendee was unsure which items to elaborate on, interviewers asked them to elaborate first on the open-answer items and then on any Likert scale items on which attendees gave extreme high or low scores. In this way, the basic structure of the interview was kept consistent by only asking for elaboration. However, after the attendees offered elaboration on an answer, interviewers were instructed to proceed with a semi-structured line of questioning, focused on the goal of getting attendees to provide concrete examples from their experiences.

The interviews were audio recorded and lasted 25 minutes on average. In total, 30 interviews were conducted, 20 for state conference attendees, and 10 for regional conference attendees. The interview data were transcribed, analyzed, and coded utilizing qualitative content

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analysis (Schreier, 2012). Interview data were analyzed together with responses to open-ended questionnaire items to uncover categories of conference impacts.

Participants

The following are key points regarding the respondents for this study:

- 66.2 percent were female and 33.8 percent were male;
- 42.7 percent had more than 10 years of experience in teaching, 33.8 percent had between one and 10 years, and 23.5 percent had less than one year;
- 66.2 percent received financial support to attend the conference, and 33.28 percent did not;
- a doctorate was the highest degree obtained for 16.2 percent of respondents, for 66.2 percent it was a Masters degree, and for 17.6 percent it was a Bachelors;
- 79.4 percent taught adult learners and 20.6 were teachers in either high school or middle school.

For the most part, results from the biographical section of the questionnaire were similar across both conferences. All of the state conference respondents taught second languages to university and non-university adult learners, while for the regional conference attendees, just over half of the respondents were teaching second languages at the university level, and the rest taught in either high school or middle school.

Results and Discussion

Impacts of Attending the Conference

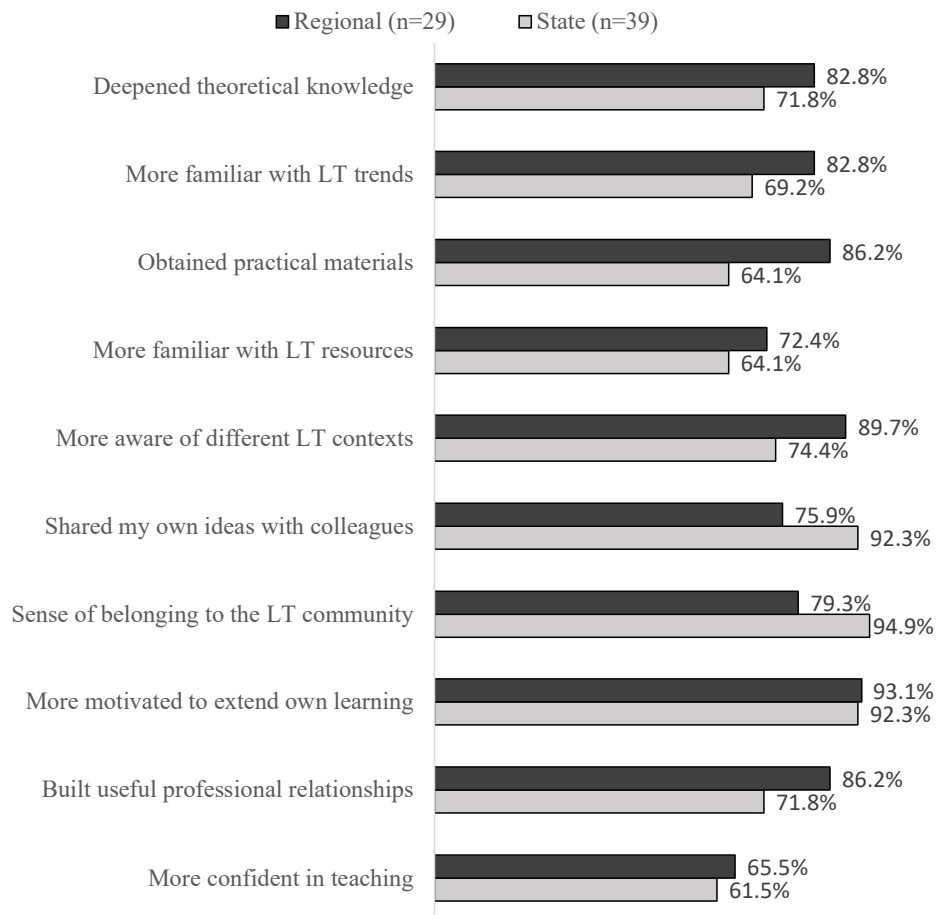
The questionnaire featured a list of questions inquiring about a range of impacts related to L2 teaching. The items asked respondents if they experienced a change as a result of attending the conference, with four response options: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly

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agree. Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents who agreed (selected “agree” or “strongly agree”) that attending the conference resulted in the specified changes. While the list of items naturally does not cover every possible impact of attending a conference, out of this list of 10 statements, every respondent agreed with at least three. In addition, 85 percent of respondents agreed with five or more statements, providing clear evidence that attendees perceived an impact on their professional development. The five items in the upper portion of Figure 1 were drawn from Borg’s (2015a) study on conferences. The results for these questionnaire items, for both the state and regional conferences, confirm Borg’s (2015a) findings, which also illustrated the generally positive impact of attending conferences. Although there was a noticeably lower percentage of agreement for the state conference compared with the regional conference on most of the items, the results nonetheless reveal a generally positive impact on attendees of both conferences. Finally, in contrast to Borg’s questionnaire, which focused primarily on impacts on motivation and knowledge awareness, the current study’s questionnaire also revealed evidence of positive impacts in the area of professional relationships and community. The majority of respondents reported that they built useful professional relationships and that the conference had an impact on their sense of belonging to the language teaching community. Collectively, these questionnaire data indicate that L2 teaching conference attendees perceived that there were several positive impacts on their professional development.

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Figure 1. Perceived impacts from attending the conference



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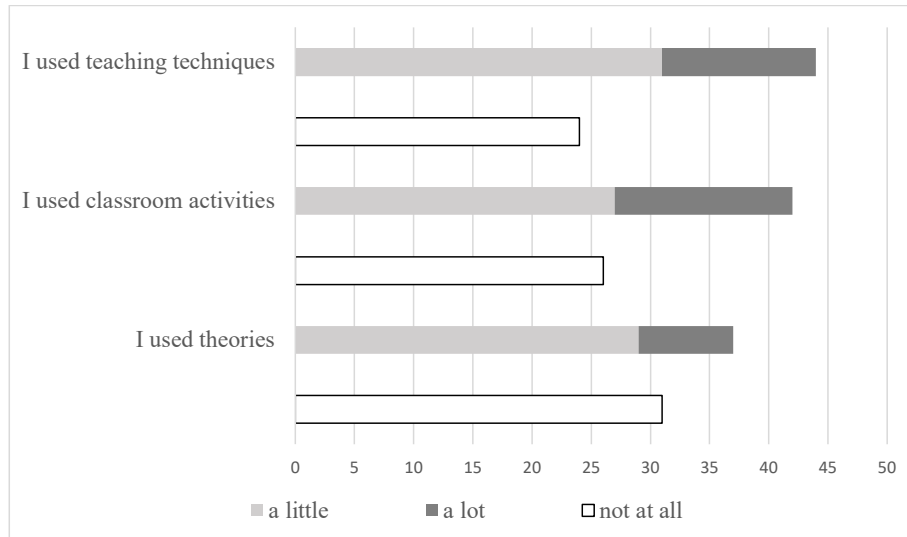
Direct Impacts on Teaching Practice

Borg's questionnaire (2015a) contained one item that asked attendees if there were any "immediate changes at work" as a result of attending the conference. In contrast, the current study featured a second section of the questionnaire that specifically asked about theories, classroom activities, and teaching techniques learned at the conference and if they were actually used later in the attendees' teaching. The intention of this section was to uncover direct connections between specific knowledge gained at the conference and changes to teaching practice. The results in Figure 2 reveal generally positive impacts. In all categories, more than half of respondents reported applying what they learned from the conference in their classrooms. However, the results also suggest a different perspective. Among respondents who applied what they learned at the conference, only 29 percent reported using the knowledge "a lot," versus 71 percent of respondents who reported using this knowledge "a little." It is also important to note that 23.5 percent of respondents answered "not at all" for all three categories. These data reveal that the magnitude of impact on attendee's teaching practices was relatively low. Given the resources devoted to conferences each year, this low impact is a cause for concern.

One plausible reason for this limited impact on teaching practice is the short length of conferences. Conferences only last a few days, and it is reasonable to assume that any serious impact on teaching practice would require engagement and learning over a longer period of time. Although the core event of the conference cannot reasonably be extended, it may be possible to extend the conference learning experience of the attendee. For example, by providing spaces and channels for continued communication between attendees after the conference, impacts that begin at conferences may later grow and evolve toward more substantial improvements to

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teaching. Online conferences during the pandemic have utilized social media applications that
could facilitate such a process.

Figure 2. Application of knowledge gained from the conference



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Four Major Themes of Impacts

Regarding the perceived impacts of the conferences on attendees, there were four major themes discovered in responses to open-ended questionnaire items and in interview data:

- Changed an aspect of their teaching
- Opened up to a different way of thinking about teaching
- Increased motivation to learn about their profession
- Built relationships and professional network

With regard to the questionnaire items and within interviews, respondents were free to elaborate on whatever impacts they wanted. Thus, the frequencies of these elaborations were not aligned with this study's quantitative data. However, the counts do provide some perspective as to the salience of each category. The following section features discussions of these themes alongside excerpts from the data, which offer more detailed insight regarding the nature of L2 teaching conference impacts.

Changed an aspect of their teaching (23 respondents out of 68)

The excerpts below show how teachers take away both specific and general teaching ideas from conferences to utilize them in their classrooms. Even if the specific materials or approaches are not a perfect fit, the concepts learned at conferences can give teachers new direction in their course planning. Such direct impacts on teaching practice are perhaps the clearest benefit for teachers attending L2 teaching conferences. Unsurprisingly, this has been shown to be the most commonly perceived benefit by language teaching conference attendees (Salas, 2016).

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[Conference presenter name] gave us, he did a paper on extended listening and he gave us some websites for things that the students have listened to. What I ended up doing was using TED talks for that class. I was looking for a specific kind of thing which was like a monologue without the transcript. But it gave me... I think what I learned at the conference gave me the idea of doing extensive listening, so I started giving extensive listening assignments in my advanced listening class without using those specific websites (state-level TESOL conference, teaching workshop)

I need to incorporate more culture and geography into my curriculum because even though you know we're teaching language, it's important to teach that and you know we just have so much curriculum that sometimes it's hard to find time for that. But, I think this is a nice way to segway [*sic*] into that, this place-based education component. (regional L2 teaching conference, teaching workshop)

It has been especially helpful as I started implementing a reading program last year when I noticed my students' needing to boost their comprehension and input. Learning more about comprehensible input and being able to purchase several teaching-proficiency-through-reading-and-storytelling novels was instrumental in my being able to further establish and diversify that aspect of my curriculum. (regional L2 teaching conference, research session)

This last excerpt regarding *comprehensible input* reveals that such takeaways are gained not only at practice-oriented teaching workshops, but at research-oriented sessions as well. Overall, interview and questionnaire data provided evidence of many teachers who took away

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 specific teaching materials, activities, language proficiency evaluation rubrics, and computer and mobile phone educational applications from the conferences and used them in their classes. Such practical impacts associated with direct pedagogical changes represent an important concrete benefit for teachers attending conferences.

Opened up to a different way of thinking about teaching (37 respondents)

Teachers arrive at conferences with their own set of beliefs about teaching, and experiences at conferences can potentially uproot those beliefs for reexamination. The excerpts below illustrate how attendees encountered information that ran contrary to their existing thoughts about teaching. Attending the conference helped them reflect on things that might have otherwise gone unexamined.

My belief about finishing a classroom task has changed. After attending the conference, I noticed that the value of pair work and group work is really in the process, the language practice that the students are getting by interacting with one another in a focused way. Most of the time, it does not matter if a group finishes or not, and if it does, they can finish individually for homework. (state-level TESOL conference, research session)

One particular poster on peer feedback, it talked about how peer feedback is done frequently but is not always the way to go because, as with all things, people's different experiences, opinions and skills, or rules on how to do things can affect receptions of what other people do. That's affected how I am going to have to deal with next semester because that's what I've got to do. I've got to do a lot of teaching on essays and that kind of academic writing, so that made me think about how I was going to approach the peer feedback thing. I was initially planning to sort of have Google docs with people chiming in left, right, and center, but that's

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possibly not a good idea and I'm going to scale it back a bit from that. (state-level TESOL conference, poster presentation)

Like for me it was all about comprehensible input. Like it has to be this way, input first and then output, which I still believe, but then I've opened up to the belief that, you know, other teachers like the “teachers of the year” teachers, that's not their approach but they were able to produce really good students you know. And you know it doesn't... just because I believe that, it doesn't mean that I should force it on anybody else, or even like look at them through a negative lens and say like, “Oh your approach is not the best approach to language acquisition.” It just kind of made me respect a lot more people and a lot more different types of— opened up to different styles more. (regional L2 teaching conference, networking)

These excerpts illustrate how experiences at conferences can cause changes in thoughts about teaching approaches or even core beliefs about L2 teaching. However, drawing from Farrell's (2012) work on the foundations of reflective practice (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983), these excerpts could also be seen as mere instances of isolated introspection, rather than illustrations of more systematic changes in approach to teaching. Although research in teacher cognition (Borg, 2015b) has highlighted evidence of the relationship between teacher behavior and beliefs, such changes in teacher thinking do not always have a direct or immediate impact on teaching practices. Reflective practice (Farrell, 2012, 2015b) is a much larger, cyclical process that involves the systematic collection of information and decision making. Nevertheless, reflection requires a starting point and these data provide evidence that conferences do indeed serve as spaces for starting the reflective process.

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Increased motivation to learn about their profession (15 respondents)

Another impact from attending the conferences was an increased motivation to learn more about L2 education. Again, many of the attendees who reported an increase in motivation did not necessarily state direct or immediate teaching changes resulting from increases in motivation. However, the motivation to learn more about one's own profession is one of the key elements of reflective practice (Farrell, 2015a).

By being a student again, I was able to see other teachers' teaching methods and activities, which helped me to reflect and improve upon my own. The conference also helped me to springboard more ideas for creating effective, engaging, creative, student-centered activities for my own class. The passion from all the presenters was contagious too. It was also highly affirming to get positive feedback during my session and to gain encouragement and support from other educators in my work. (state-level TESOL conference, teaching workshop)

I was always thinking about going back to college. You know, get my masters because I just have my bachelors. I'm like, I want to get my masters in foreign language or linguistics or something you know. It got me inspired to do more than what I'm doing right now, just to be at the conference. (regional L2 teaching conference, research session)

This increased motivation of teachers to learn about their profession can be connected to Farrell's (2014) work on the reflective dispositions of open-mindedness, responsibility, and whole-heartedness. The desire to learn more about the L2 teaching profession is strongly connected to the concept of open-mindedness, an inherent desire to learn more and to see things from different viewpoints. While it is true that an increase in motivation to learn more about

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teaching does not necessarily lead to concrete changes in the classroom, it is certainly a positive and desirable outcome of attending teaching conferences.

Built relationships and professional network (8 respondents)

Conference attendees also made connections with fellow L2 teachers and researchers, and this in and of itself was perceived as a desirable impact by attendees. Being part of a community of educators opened up new avenues for learning and sharing new teaching ideas.

I felt like networking and participating in TESOL as an organization will have far more benefits than just one conference. That being said, the conference is the springboard into establishing relationships and learning from others over time. (state-level TESOL conference, networking)

You might be working with your colleague next door and you might not talk about what they do but when you go to a conference, that's where the professional world converges in one point. (regional L2 conference, networking)

As the second attendee points out, the conference not only brings together people who might not otherwise come in contact, but also creates a space specifically for sharing knowledge about teaching. Such spaces for dialogically reflecting on ideas are often unavailable, even for teachers who work in the same educational institution together. Networking is an important element of conferences because the resulting professional relationships can continue to develop beyond the scope of the conference. As noted in the first attendee's comment, conferences are important as a starting point or "springboard" for relationship building and further learning. They also explicitly mention learning over time, and this connects with the previous discussion on increasing the

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magnitude of conference impacts. It is important to consider the potential of conferences to facilitate both new connections and continuing connections after the conference has ended.

In addition to these four main themes, a few respondents also elaborated on how attending the conference reinforced ideas about teaching that they already held prior to the conference. Although nothing substantial changed within their professional practice, they could feel reassured in how they were teaching currently. These qualitative data from interviews and open-ended questionnaire items confirm and elaborate on Borg's (2015a) findings about conferences enhancing networking opportunities, professional confidence, and motivation. The excerpts in this study provide a detailed sense of how attendees attained new knowledge, reflected on old knowledge, became more motivated, and connected with other professionals.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to contribute to the emerging body of research on the impact of L2 teaching conferences on teachers' practice and professional development through an exploration of attendee perceptions.

RQ#1 - Do L2 teaching conference attendees perceive that there were impacts on their professional development?

Findings indicated that there was a positive impact for the majority of attendees, across a variety of distinct areas. Certainly, the dependability (Brown, 2004) of the findings would have been improved with a larger sample size and perhaps additional data collection at other conferences. It is also important to note that the attendees who participated in this study may have been willing to do so because they had particularly positive conference experiences. In addition, the results of this study may have been affected by the type of conference participants (e.g. NS or NNS teachers), but such distinctions were not included within the scope of this study.

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Finally, although the short time span of one month allowed attendees to clearly recall their conference experiences, it may not have been long enough to allow for some teaching impacts to develop. Nonetheless, this study makes an important contribution of empirical evidence to the currently small, yet emerging, body of research showing the positive impact of attending L2 teaching conferences.

RQ#2 - What specific conference impacts directly connect to concrete changes in teaching practice?

For each of the three areas of teaching techniques, classroom activities, and theories learned at the conference, more than half of attendees reported some degree of actual use in their teaching practice. These data provide evidence that L2 teaching conference sessions that focus on teaching techniques, classroom activities, and theories do not only impact teacher cognition and teacher philosophy, but have direct impacts on classroom teaching practices. This direct connection is particularly important as a primary underlying goal of L2 teaching conferences is to facilitate improvements in the quality of L2 education.

RQ#3 - What were the perceived magnitudes of these impacts?

Although this study's data reveal an overall positive impact experienced by most conference attendees, the findings displayed in Figure 2 also indicate that the magnitude of conference impacts that directly connected to changes in teaching practice was limited for many attendees. One obvious reason for this could be the short length of conferences. In addition, an attendee may see only a few sessions that will pique their interest or be relevant to their specific teaching context, and even within those sessions there is limited time to engage in learning and reflection.

RQ#4 How do attendees describe these impacts?

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Similar to findings in previous research (Salas, 2016), the current study confirmed the obvious beneficial impact of acquiring new teaching materials and techniques. In addition, interview data revealed examples of how earnest self-reflection takes place at conferences, causing attendees to rethink their previous assumptions about teaching and increase their motivation to learn more about their profession. The increased motivation for attendees to learn new aspects of their profession was a theme that connected with findings in other studies (Borg, 2015a; Büyükyavuz, 2016; Sedgley et al., 2017). The findings of the current study suggest that motivation for further professional development may increase as a result of interacting with other attendees, or from even simply being at the conference as a space of learning. Finally, networking and the sharing of ideas was an important aspect in the findings across this study and previous ones (Borg, 2015a; Büyükyavuz, 2016; Mata et al., 2010; Navy et al., 2019).

Implications for Teacher Reflection and Suggestions for Research

To address the low magnitude of conference impacts revealed in this study, we recommend that both conference attendees and administrators should focus on continuing communication after the conference. As illustrated in attendee comments under the category of *Built relationships and professional network*, facilitating connections between attendees at conferences has benefits that extend beyond the few days of the event and has the potential to increase the magnitude of conference impacts. Professional relationships that continue after the conference can foster both community building and continued learning among L2 teachers, potentially enhancing impacts in all four themes analyzed in this study's qualitative data. Through continuing communication, attendees can pick up new teaching tools, boost their motivation, reflect on their teaching beliefs, and strengthen their professional connections over time, increasing the magnitude of impacts that begin at conferences. This notion is echoed in

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other studies on L2 teaching conference impacts (Borg, 2015a; Salas, 2016) and in studies on conference impacts in other disciplines (West, 2019), focusing on the extension of learning and motivation for learning that is initiated at conferences. Other studies have also examined the relationship between continuous dialogic reflection and motivation to engage in professional development (Mann, 2005; Wyatt & Ončevska Ager, 2017) and reflective practice (Farrell, 2015a). It is imperative that conference administrators, L2 school administrators, and teachers work together to build better communication systems that not only facilitate communication, but also encourage and empower L2 teachers to participate continuously in special interest groups and other communities to extend the learning that takes place at conferences.

More detailed suggestions can be drawn from Borg's (2011) work on language teacher education programs. He suggests that teachers should be given a space to explicitly reflect on their beliefs, either in writing or through dialog with peers. Based on this concept, conference organizers could build online communication systems or sites that go beyond simply providing separate chatrooms, toward engaging attendees in reflective practices. In addition, conference attendees should be made aware of the importance of examining their beliefs (Borg, 2011, p. 379) and why such reflection is needed after conferences. Finally, it is important to clarify that any system used to extend and enhance the impact of conferences must treat the concepts of *collaboration* and *community* as central (Mann & Walsh, 2013, 2017; Wyatt & Ončevska Ager, 2017). Reflection is a social action and efforts must be made to avoid conference attendees being "left on their own" to reflect on their conference experiences.

Collaborative, reflective practice over time has the potential to enhance the magnitude of conference impacts, leading to meaningful changes in the L2 classroom. In terms of research, more longitudinal studies in this area are needed to investigate the effectiveness of different

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approaches to promoting attendee communication after conferences, and to explore other ways to improve the experiences of L2 teaching conference attendees. In particular, we suggest future studies that focus on the potential of online communication tools integrated with conferences and other forms of continuing professional development.

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