

## **TESOL SPAIN 41st Annual Convention.**

### **Convention Feedback Madrid, 2018.**

Dear TESOL-SPAIN Members,

It was a great pleasure to welcome you again to our 41st TESOL-SPAIN Annual National Convention, “**The Heart in the art of teaching; weaving language, culture and communities**”, which invited us to reflect on the interrelationship between language learning and culture and the dynamic and complex nature of the community of classroom and school contexts. In this National Convention we had over 500 participants from all over the world and 105 different presentations which dealt with multiculturalism, special educational needs, creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, cooperation, learning to learn approaches, literacy and bilingual education.

After the initial technical issues, the convention ran smoothly with a very good atmosphere and a wonderful team. A big thank you to all, particularly to the brilliant volunteers who came to help us from different educational contexts, ranging from primary, secondary, tertiary to adult education: Without your help and support the convention would not be possible!

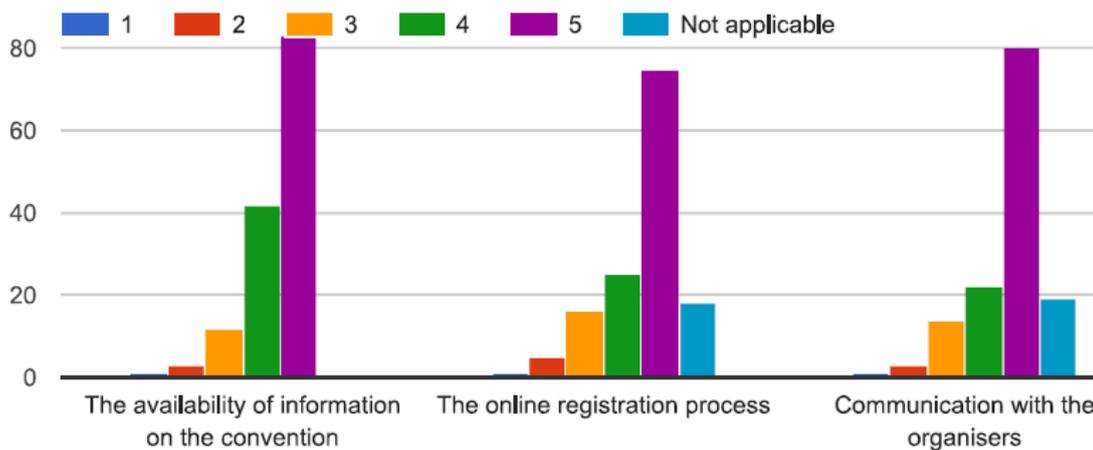
#### **GENERAL COMMENTS FROM OUR PARTICIPANTS.**

**141** online convention feedback forms were submitted from the total of **500+ conference participants**.

Below, you will find a breakdown of your answers from the convention feedback forms, with a few comments from the organisers alongside. Please note that when percentages do not add up to 100%, it means we have received questionnaires where some questions are unanswered, or some answers are ambiguous.

**1.- Please, rate your pre-convention experience on a scale of 1 (very unsatisfactory) to 5 (excellent):**

The availability of the information on the convention, the online registration process along with the communication with the organisers were rated as some of the most positive aspects of the pre-convention experience.



Some of the comments on the pre-registration experience were:

*“Excellent. The organizers are so helpful that the whole procedure becomes a lot easier than expected.”*

*“I found the pre-convention correspondence with conference organizers to be timely, helpful, thoughtful and thoroughly professional”.*

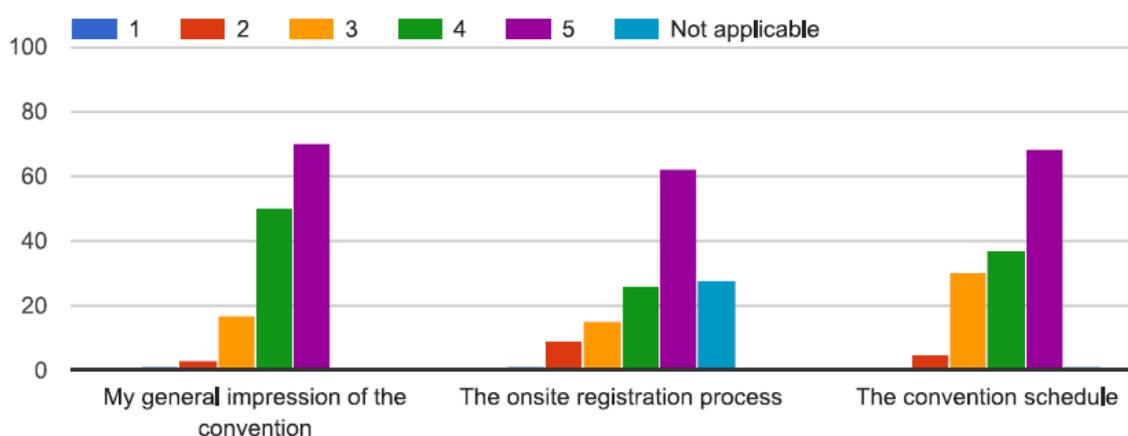
As Convention Coordinators we are of course delighted with these results, as they reflect the special effort we made to communicate fluently before the Convention, especially regarding details such as railway discounts and dinner tickets. However, as there is always room for improvement, one of the suggestions participants made was to offer the option of paying by credit card rather than direct deposit.

*“You should offer the option to pay by credit card rather than just direct deposit or check”.*

*“Couldn’t pay from abroad which was frustrating”.*

In this respect, we'd like to clarify that TESOL-SPAIN is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting teaching English, operating mainly at national level. TESOL-Spain entirely survives through donations and memberships subscriptions. Therefore, in our opinion the cost of having a credit card option for the 4 or 5 participants who request them, clearly does not compensate the association economically.

**2.- On a scale of 1 (extremely unsatisfactory) to 5 (excellent) rate your experience during the convention:**



Participants gave positive feedback regarding their general impression, the onsite registration process and the overall schedule of the convention. However, they considered that the quality of the plenary sessions and very particularly the venue could be improved.

Below is a selection of text comments on the weak points of the convention:

*“The venue was very disappointing. Too hot, far from the city center, old, cramped sessions and things breaking down”.*

*“Awful technology”.*

*“Streaming was an unfortunate disaster. The Uni is not easy to get around”.*

*“The plenaries as they are open to everybody they should be able to be understood by a majority of the attendees, not only a of scholars”.*

As convention coordinators, we'd like to take this opportunity to add our own comments: *“We select venues according to size of convention, city we'd like to be in and cost of the venue. For 2018, after having been in other parts of Spain in the 2 previous conventions, we felt it was necessary to come back to Madrid, which after all is the geographical center of Spain. However, while other cities*

*often offer their conference centers for free in order to attract events, in Madrid all venues charge considerable sums for their use, so we need to find an affordable venue at a prestigious and centrally located institution with an auditorium holding a minimum of 300 participants. This is an extremely difficult conundrum to solve.”*

We feel the mixed feedback on the plenaries might possibly be a reaction to the technical problems that occurred during the opening plenary, which was clearly not at all any of the speakers' fault. In fact, Dr. Thomas Strasser arrived 2 hours early to do the sound and IT checks in the Aula Magna and everything was working correctly.

On the positive side, we received enthusiastic feedback on the variety of talks, the dedication of the volunteers and the organisation. Here is a selection:

*“I loved the variety of topics and also the fact that all educational levels are contemplated. Outstanding speakers and immaculate organization”.*

*“The organizers and volunteers were wonderful”.*

*“I simply want to thank you all the organisers for the great job they do, regardless of the problems that arise, which is inevitable. Thank you very much for helping as much as you can possibly can”.*

Several other suggestions were received which we shall pass on to Lourdes Molejón, next year's convention coordinator:

- providing information on the timetable and speakers earlier on
- making plenaries and keynotes available online
- offering shorter, 30 or 40 minutes slots
- and many more

Thank you all for your constructive feedback. We hope you'll join us again in Oviedo in 2019 and maybe you'd even like to collaborate with us? Every volunteer counts in an association that does not have one single employee and where we all dedicate evenings and weekends to what we feel is a worthy cause: providing a forum for exchange of good practice for teachers from all areas, making international applied research accessible and offering an open, collaborative and highly practical training event at an affordable fee, so as to not leave anyone out.

*Ana Elena Martínez, M<sup>a</sup> Antonia Castro and Birgit Strotmann*