

Results of the 2013 SLaTE questionnaire

Martin Russell, Helmer Strik, Maxine Eskenazi, Carrie Cai

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Responses to the questions	2
2.1	What is your country of residence?	2
2.2	Factors that impact the decision to submit papers/demos to SLaTE?	2
2.3	Factors that impact the decision to attend SLaTE?	4
2.4	Location.....	6
2.5	Co-location with other conferences	7
2.6	How often should SLaTE workshops be held?	8
2.7	If SLaTE were to be held every year, would you have material to submit every year?.....	9
2.8	What is your opinion of SLaTE's paper acceptance rate?	10
2.9	If SLaTE were to be held every year, would you attend every year?.....	11
2.10	How many days should a SLaTE workshop last?.....	12
2.11	SLaTE workshops should include posters describing work in progress	12
2.12	Other topics	13
2.13	Final Comments	14
3	Discussion and Conclusions	14

1 Introduction

SLaTe (Speech and Language Technology for Education) is a special interest group (SIG) of ISCA (the International Speech Communication Association). It's purpose is to promote interest in the use of speech and natural language processing for education; provide members of ISCA with a special interest in speech and language technology in education with a means of exchanging news of recent research developments and other matters of interest in Speech and Language Technology in Education; sponsor meetings and workshops on that subject that appear to be timely and worthwhile, operating within the framework of ISCA's by-laws for SIGs; provide and make available resources relevant to speech and language technology in education, including text and speech corpora, analysis tools, analysis and generation software, research papers and generated data. For more information see the [SLaTE web pages](#).

At the 2013 SLaTE workshop in Grenoble there was a discussion about the future of SLaTE. It was intended that the main topics of discussion would be the locations of the SLaTE workshops (at

present SLaTE is biennial and collocated with Interspeech, and consequently always takes place in Europe) and the scope of SLaTE. However, the discussion broadened. Hence it was decided to consult the wider SLaTE membership through an online survey.

The survey was conceived as an online questionnaire using Google Docs. The initial design was done by Carrie Cai from MIT at the Grenoble SLaTE workshop. The questions were refined through email exchanges after the workshop.

A link to the survey was sent to everyone on the SLaTE email list, and a total of 34 people completed the questionnaire. This report summarises the results of the survey.

2 Responses to the questions

2.1 What is your country of residence?

Respondents were asked to specify their country of residence. The results are shown in figures 1a and 1b.

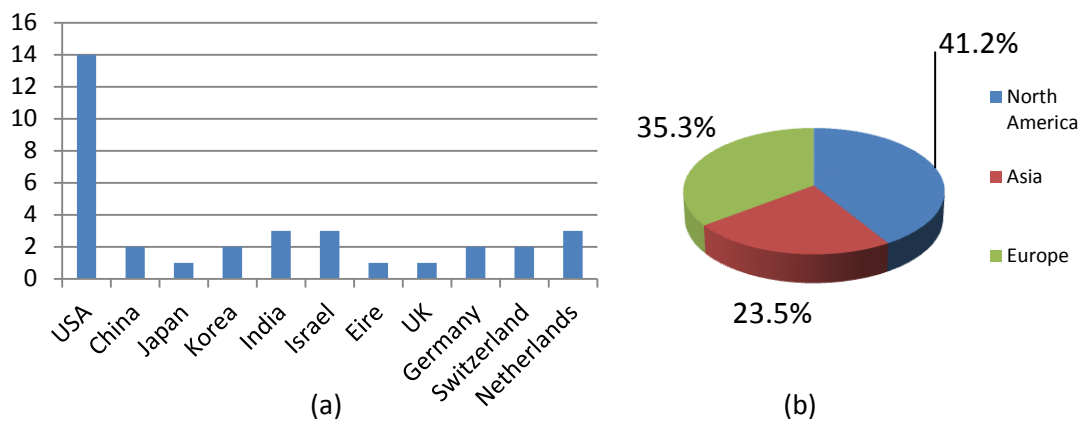


Table 1: Countries of residence of the 34 people who responded to the SLaTE questionnaire. Figure (a) shows the country of residence and (b) shows the continent.

Discussion

A large number of respondents are from the USA (probably a greater proportion than for attendance at a typical SLaTE workshop in Europe).

2.2 Factors that impact the decision to submit papers/demos to SLaTE?

People were asked how the following factors influenced their decision to submit a paper or demos to a SLaTE workshop:

1. Cost of travel
2. Distance of travel (regardless of cost)
3. "Awesomeness" of location
4. Timing in relation to work/school schedules
5. Co-location with another conference

6. The status of the SLaTE workshop
7. Publication of selected papers in book/journal special issue

For each questions, people were asked to choose one from:

- “not at all”,
- “slightly”,
- “moderately” or
- “extremely”.

The results are shown in figures 3.1 to 3.7 below. Figure 3.8 shows the average response for each question, where “Not at all” = 1 and “Extremely” = 5.

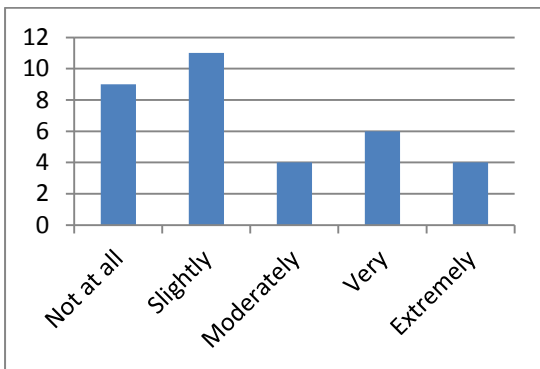


Figure 3.1: Cost of travel

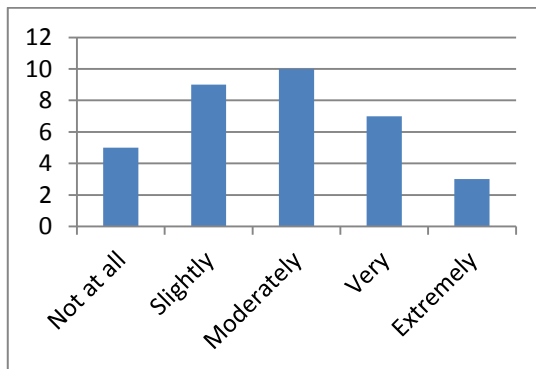


Figure 3.2: Distance of travel (regardless of cost)

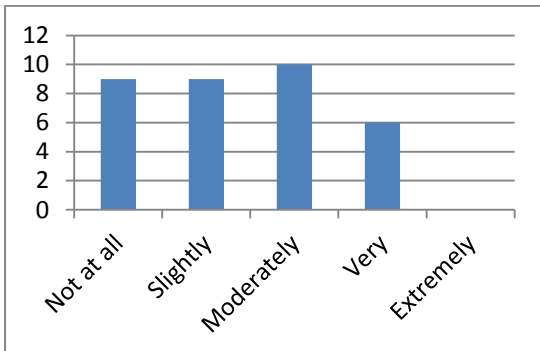


Figure 3.3: “Awesomeness” of location

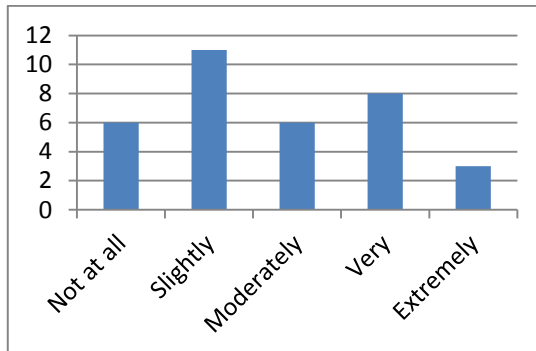


Figure 3.4: Timing in relation to work/school schedules

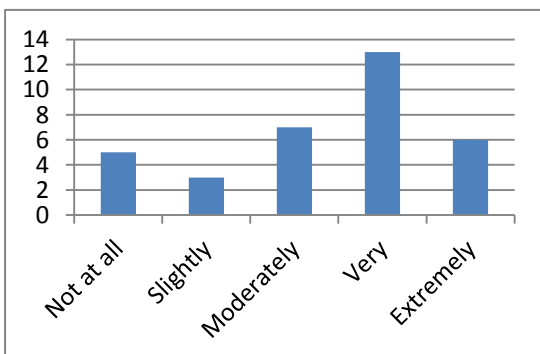


Figure 3.5: Co-location with another conference

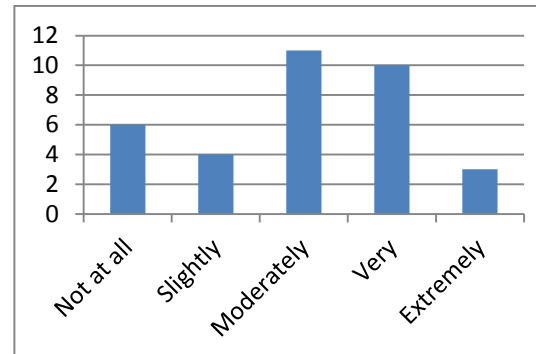


Figure 3.6: The status of the SLaTE workshop

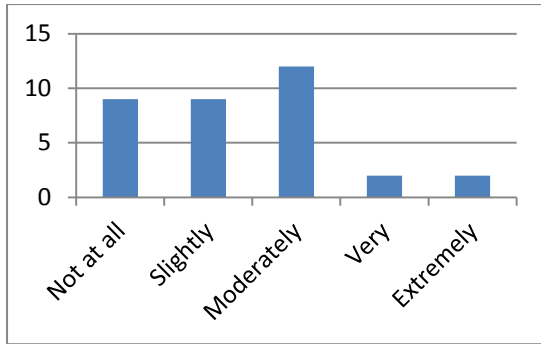


Figure: 3.7: Publication of selected papers in book/journal special issue

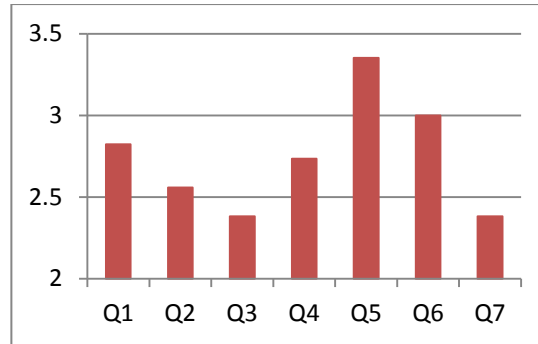


Figure: 3.8: Average response for each question (1="not at all" – 5="extremely")

Discussion

According to the results, the “awesomeness” of the location (Q3) and publication of selected papers in a book or special issue of a journal (Q7) have the least effect on people’s decision to submit a paper or demonstration to a SLaTE workshop. The most important factors are, firstly, co-location with another conference (Q5), and, secondly, the status of the SLaTE workshop (Q6). Distance of travel (Q2) is more important factor than the cost of travel (Q1), suggesting that time is a more important factor than cost in the decision to submit.

2.3 Factors that impact the decision to attend SLaTE?

People were asked how the following factors influenced their decision to submit a paper or demos to a SLaTE workshop:

1. Cost of travel.
2. Distance of travel (regardless of cost).
3. “Awesomeness” of location.
4. Timing in relation to work/school schedules.
5. Co-location with another conference.
6. The status of the SLaTE workshop.
7. Publication of selected papers in book/journal special issue.
8. Paper/demo/abstract accepted.

For each questions, people were asked to choose one from: “not at all”, “slightly”, “moderately” or “extremely” using buttons. The results are shown in figures 4.1 to 4.8 below. Figure 4.0 shows the average response for each question, where “Not at all” = 1 and “Extremely” = 5.

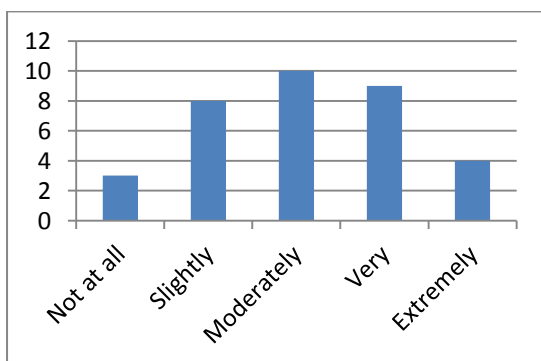


Figure: 4.1: Cost of travel

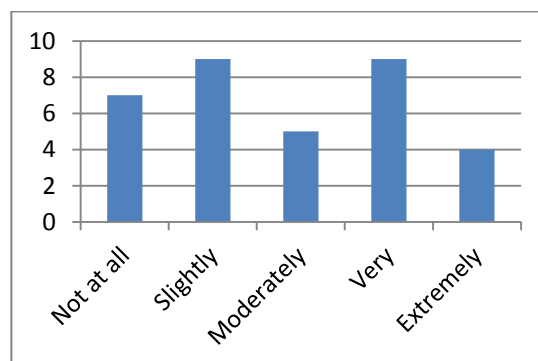


Figure: 4.2: Distance of travel (regardless of cost)

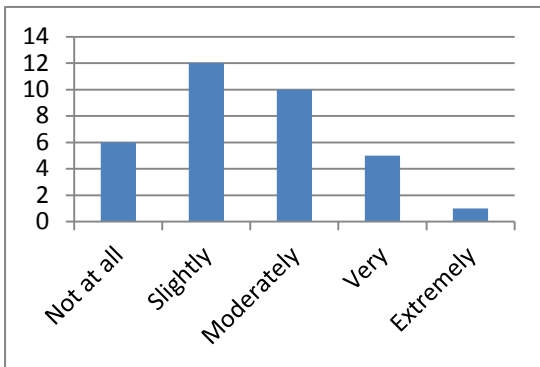


Figure 4.3: "Awesomeness" of location

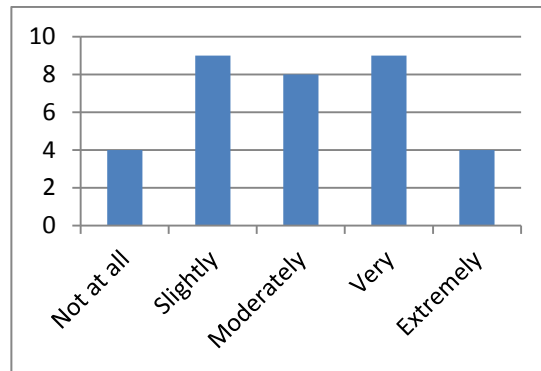


Figure 4.4: Timing in relation to work/school schedules

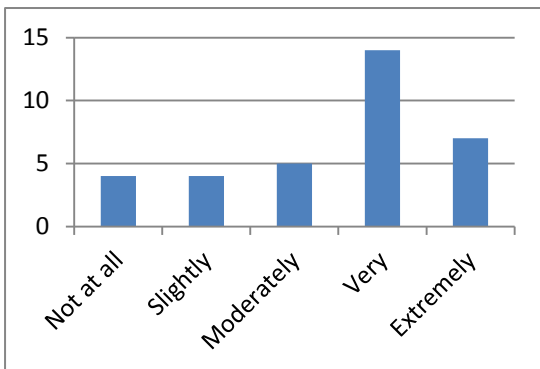


Figure 4.5: Co-location with another conference

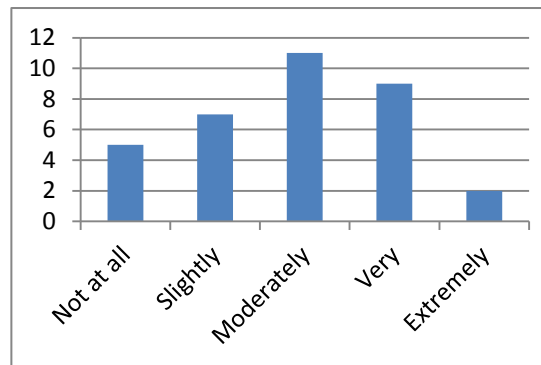


Figure 4.6: The standing of the SLaTE workshop in the community

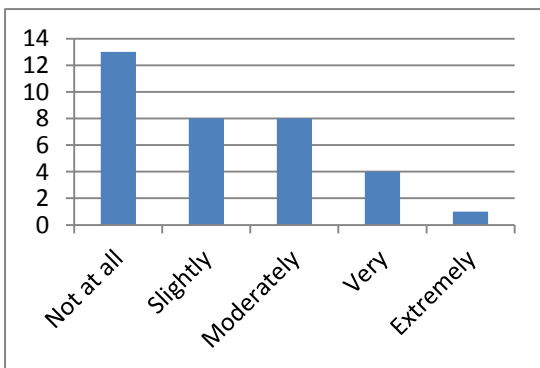


Figure 4.7: Publication of selected papers in a book or journal special issue

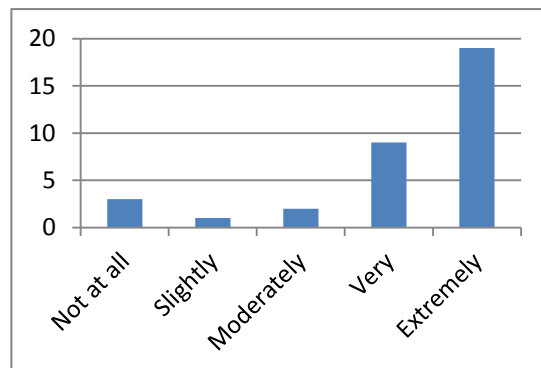


Figure 4.8: Paper/demo/abstract accepted

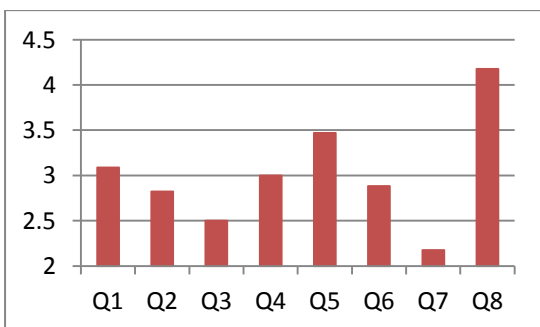


Figure 4.9: Average response for each question (1="not at all" – 5="extremely")

Discussion

Unsurprisingly, the most significant factor influencing a person to attend a SLaTE workshop is having a paper, demo or abstract accepted for the workshop (Q8). As with question 1 (what influences you to submit a paper to a SLaTE workshop) the “awesomeness” of the location (Q3) and the fact that selected papers will be published in a book or special issue of a journal (Q7) are the least significant factors. Co-location with another conference (Q5) is again important. Compared with question 3, cost (Q1) is slightly more important than distance (Q2) in the decision to actually attend the workshop.

2.4 Location

People were asked the following question: Up until now, SLaTE has been held every two years as a satellite workshop of Interspeech, and thus always in European locations. What is your opinion regarding expanding SLaTE venues to include non-European locations as well? People were asked to choose from:

1. Strongly disagree (keep Euro-only locations).
2. Slightly disagree.
3. Neither agree nor disagree.
4. Slightly agree.
5. Strongly agree (expand to include non-Euro locations).

The results are shown in figure 4.1.

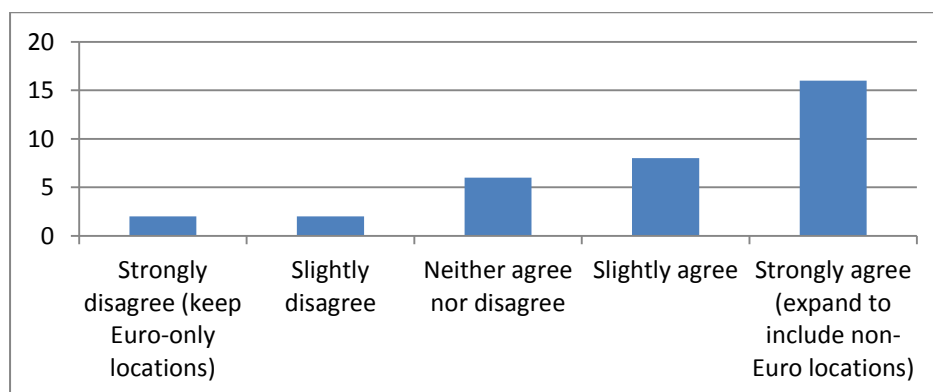


Figure 4.1: Summary of responses to the question “what is your opinion regarding expanding SLaTE venues to include non-European locations?”

Discussion

There is a clear majority in favour of expanding SLaTE venues to include non-European locations.

Comments

People were asked to comment on their response to question 4. The following comments were made:

- I go to most Interspeech conferences, esp. the ones in Eur., because if it is very distant, expensive the chances of going are a bit smaller. Therefore, Eur. is ok for me, but in order to give others the possibility to attend it might also be good to have it outside Eur.
- We need to get people from all over the world to SLaTE and travel makes it hard for them to do so.
- Expanding would probably give more people the chance to attend.
- Being selfish, it's easier for me to attend a European conference.
- Participation has been higher from the continent in which the event is held. If SLaTE is to be truly international it has to be held on different continents.
- Fairness.
- Unless there is any specific reason to keep it to a specific geo. I think the venue should be so that less people have to travel longish distance ;-). Then overall the workshop will be green.
- I'm an American with strong attachments to Grenoble. (Salut, les amis !) I'm strongly in favor of meetings with both American and world, especially European, researchers. I try to get to France as often as possible, but this happened not to be a good year for me.
- Slate in Japan was a success.
- I would be much more likely to attend (answered: Strongly agree (expand to include non-Euro locations)).
- There are plenty of non-Europeans who attend - why not make it easier for everyone to attend from time to time?
- It was nice in Japan. California or Canada or NY is nice. Leaving the 2 year schedule is hard to figure out. Joining to an applied linguistics meeting would be a mistake (bad conferences).
- I'm surprised by this question, as the one time I attended a Slate workshop it was in Pittsburgh. Interspeech also occurs outside Europe (2012 was in Oregon). I would think that Slate should move around with Interspeech.
- Please note that INTERSPEECH has not always been held only in Europe. (Eurospeech was held in Europe, though.) Thus, SLaTE should expand to other countries than Europe accordingly.
- It would be fairer for those attending from outside Europe and may increase the membership but would impact on costs for European participants.
- if SLaTE is held more internationally, it will also see a broader variety of submissions and attendees which would benefit the field.
- As indicated below, I think that SLaTE should be held every year, since this would enable the researchers in the community to form closer connections. Also, I would advocate for reducing the length of the workshop from 3 days to 2 days (this could address some concerns about a shortage of high-quality material on an annual basis).
- The "bi-annual rhythm" is fully ok given the fact that there is an abundance of competing events. If SLATE continues to be a satellite of IS (I'm in favour of that) then it either has to be Euro-only or non-Euro-only. WOCCI, for instance, is non-Euro only, so why not keep this alternation?

2.5 Co-location with other conferences

In the future, if SLaTE holds special sessions or co-locates with other conferences (aside from Interspeech), which of the following conferences would you be interested in? Suggestions are welcome. Options were:

1. IAIED (Artificial Intelligence in Education)
2. ACL (Association for Computational Linnguistics)
3. SigDial
4. UIST (User Interface Software and Technology)
5. CHI (Computer-Human Interaction)
6. Interspeech only
7. Other (please specify)

The results are shown in figure 5.1.

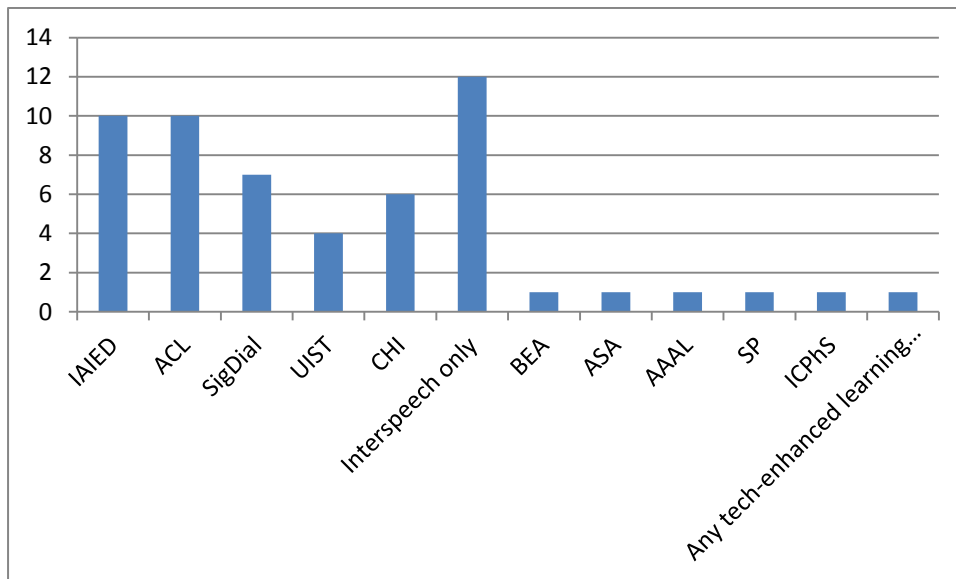


Figure 5.1: Summary of responses to Question 5, “which conferences should SLaTE co-locate with?”

Discussion

The biggest single vote is for “Interspeech only”. Taken with the previous question, where there is clear support for holding SLaTE workshops outside Europe, this suggests that the workshops could be held every year as a satellite of Interspeech. However, see the next question.

2.6 How often should SLaTE workshops be held?

People were asked how often would they prefer SLaTE workshops to be held? People were asked to choose from:

1. Less frequently than every two years
2. Every two years (as it is now)
3. Every year
4. I don’t care

The results are shown in figure 6.1.

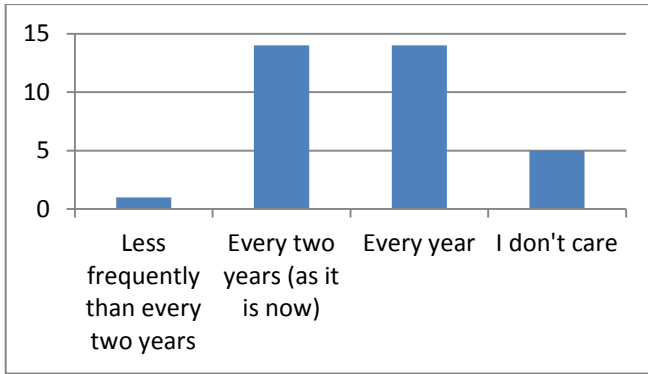


Figure 6.1: Summary of responses to Question 6, “how often should SLaTE workshops be held?”

Discussion

It seems that most people think that SLaTE workshops should continue to be held every two years (as at present) or every year. However, see the responses to questions 7 (if SLaTE were to be held every year, would you have material to submit every year?) and 9 (if SLaTE were to be held every year, would you attend every year?).

2.7 If SLaTE were to be held every year, would you have material to submit every year?

People were asked the question “if SLaTE were to be held every year, would you have material to submit every year?”. People were asked to choose from:

1. Almost certainly not
2. Probably not
3. Probably yes
4. Almost certainly yes

The results are shown in figure 7.1.

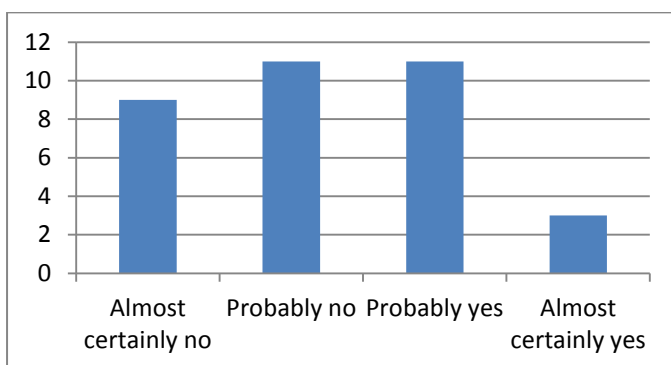


Figure 7.1: Summary of responses to Question 7: “if SLaTE were held every year would you have material to submit?”

Discussion

There is a sort of consistency here. Roughly half of the people who responded think that SLaTE workshops should happen every year (ignoring those who “don’t care”), and roughly half (41%) of the people who responded think they would probably have material to present every year. However, see question 9.

2.8 What is your opinion of SLaTE's paper acceptance rate?

People were asked **their opinion of SLaTE's paper acceptance rate**. They were asked to choose from:

- **Too high.**
- **Just right.**
- **Too low.**

The results are shown in figure 8.1

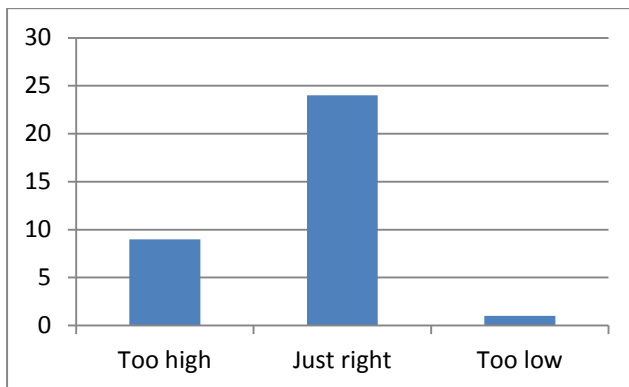


Figure 8.1: Summary of responses to Question 8, “what is your opinion of SLaTE’s paper acceptance rate?”

Comments

People were asked to comment on their choice. The comments are groups according to the response to the question.

Too high

- Few people want to submit to a *workshop* that has a higher acceptance rate than, say, Interspeech...
- Slightly lower wouldn't hurt.
- High acceptance rates do not encourage good papers and do not encourage participation from well-known and respected researchers.
- e.g. the review of the child ASR bibliography...

Just right

- it should be possible to present also 'work in progress'

- Actually, I don't know the paper acceptance rate. It would've been better if you mentioned the rate.
- I really don't know how to answer this: don't know submission/acceptance rates.
- I have not looked at the acceptance rate ;-)
- For a workshop it seems right. If you want to make it more prestigious it should become a conference but I don't think it is ready for that.
- I have no opinion, but the question is starred as obligatory.
- what is the current acceptance rate...
- as a workshop of a young field it is important that many papers can be presented, even if they are in a preliminary status and/or miss some of the rigor expected e.g. for more established venues such as ACL
- Some of the submissions are still half-baked or works in progress, but I view that as OK for a workshop. Reducing the duration from three days to two days could help limit the number of less well-developed presentations.
- The quality seems to be ok so far. SLATE should not imitate events with a too low acceptance rate but on the other hand, it should not accept everything.

Too low

- (The person who responded “too low” did not comment).

Discussion

It seems that there is some consensus here, with 70% of people who responded believing that the current acceptance rate is OK.

2.9 If SLaTE were to be held every year, would you attend every year?

People were asked to choose from:

1. Almost certainly no
2. Probably no
3. Probably yes
4. Almost certainly yes

The results are shown in figure 9.1.

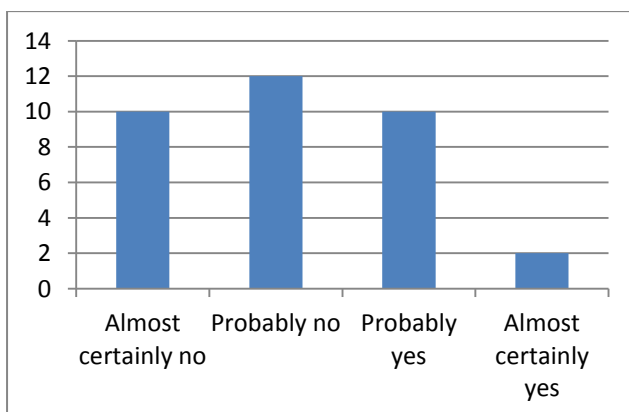


Figure 9.1: Summary of responses to Question 9, “if SLaTE were held every year would you attend every year?”

Discussion

This is complicated. It seems that just under 50% of the people who care think that SLaTE workshops should take place every year (Question 6) and about 40% of people think they would have enough material to submit papers every year (Question 7), but 65% of people would probably not attend SLaTE workshops every year. Taken together I think that these questions indicate that there is a risk associated with holding a SLaTE workshop every year.

2.10 How many days should a SLaTE workshop last?

People were asked how many days a SLaTE workshop should last. They were asked to choose from:

1. Two days
2. Three days.

The results are shown in figure 10.1.

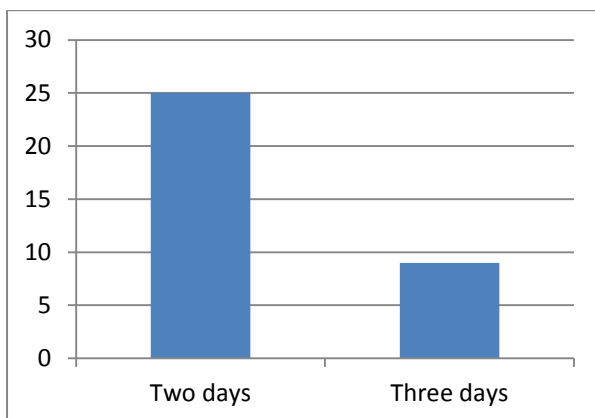


Figure 10.1: Summary of responses to Question 10, “how many days should a SLaTE workshop last?”

Discussion

This seems pretty clear. People are in favour of the current two-day format.

2.11 SLaTE workshops should include posters describing work in progress

People were asked whether SLaTE workshops should include posters describing work in progress. They were asked to choose from:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Slightly disagree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Slightly agree
5. Strongly agree

The results are shown in figure 11.1.

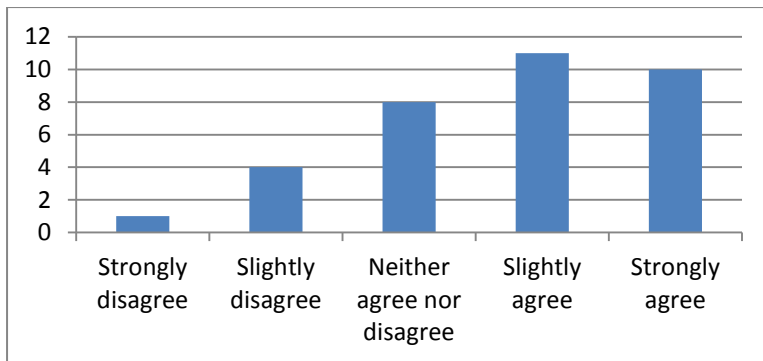


Figure 11: Summary of responses to Question 11, “should SLaTE workshops include poster sessions?”

Discussion

There is clear support for including a poster session in SLaTE workshops, with 61% of people who responded either slightly or strongly agreeing with this proposal.

2.12 Other topics

Currently the majority of the submissions at SLaTE workshops are related to speech technology and language learning. We could try to stimulate other topics, which fit into the scope of SLaTE. Which of the following topics are appealing to you?

1. Communicative difficulties, pathology.
2. Children’s speech
3. Speech and language technology for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)

The results are shown in figure 12.1.

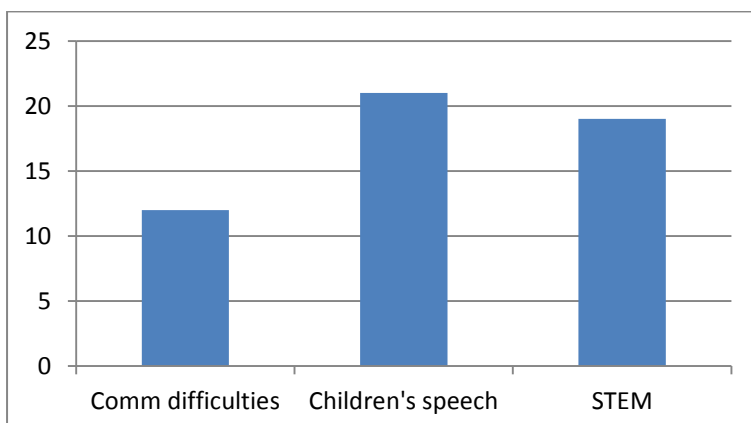


Figure 12.1: Summary of responses to Question 12.

Other topics

People were asked to suggest other topics that could fit into the scope of SLaTE. The following were suggested,

- Tutorial dialogue
- Dialogue systems, spoken language understanding, NLP
- Most of the submissions are from speech technologists, which may keep away from those who are involved in teaching pronunciation and language education in humanities.

Discussion

The most popular topic is children's speech, but there is good support for all three options. In fact we already have papers on this topic at SLaTE workshops. We need to avoid conflict with WOCCI, though.

2.13 Final Comments

People were asked to make any additional comments and suggestions:

- This could be the way to get better acceptance rates while letting others show their work. A student poster session for work in progress would also be a way to describe it
- One problem with SLaTE is that it is not actually co-located with Interspeech. From my experience a satellite workshop is a good opportunity to attend the main conference if you don't have a paper there. Paying for both events is quite expensive and in my University you are not financially supported for events that you do not have a paper. Also many workshops put their submission deadline just after the notification deadline of the main conference. We can attract rejected papers from the main conference which are still in a good level. This would also increase our rejection rate as more papers are submitted.
- Am not particularly active in this area of research at the moment, but haven't lost interest in the area. I would weight my answers less than others.
- These survey questions are not all equally important, nor equally engaging to the responders. They shouldn't all be obligatory.
- Posters are really a good way for people to interact! This is good for student work, early work, and work of great interest to a few but not the majority of attendees.
- Knowing about others' work in progress keeps you up to date, and getting feedback about your own work in progress can be very helpful. It sounds like a good idea. Maybe such posters could be in a separate section?

3 Discussion and Conclusions

What to conclude? It seems that co-location with another conference is an important consideration when people decide to either submit a paper to a SLaTE workshop or to attend a workshop (though, once someone's paper has been accepted this is the major factor influencing attendance).

There is clear support for holding SLaTE workshops outside Europe. However, the preferred mechanism to achieve this is less clear. The most popular conference to co-locate with is Interspeech. To continue to collocate with Interspeech and to move outside Europe we would need either to skip a year and then continue biennially, hold workshops on consecutive years and then continue biennially, or make the workshop an annual event. There is support for the latter, but it is not clear that people would have sufficient material to make annual workshops viable, or if sufficient people would attend every year.

Most people are happy with the current two-day format and the current paper acceptance rate. There is also support for poster sessions. So, if SLaTE gets bigger one option would be to keep a two-day meeting every other year, but accommodate more papers by having poster sessions.

There is general support for expanding the scope of SLaTE to include speech communication disorders, children's speech and speech and language technology for STEM education. It can be argued that the second two topics are already included in SLaTE (there have certainly been related papers at previous workshops). Some other areas were also suggested.

In summary, the main priority seems to be to move a proportion of SLaTE workshops outside Europe. Since most respondents favour keeping SLaTE workshops as a satellite of Interspeech, this could be achieved by holding a SLaTE workshop as a satellite of every Interspeech. However, the responses to the questions about whether people would have sufficient material to present at an annual workshop, and whether they would attend annually, cast some doubt on the viability of an annual workshop.

Holding a SLaTE workshop as a satellite of Interspeech 2016 (San Francisco) is a possible way forward. Given the proportion of responses from the USA and the level of attendance at SLaTE 2007, a US SLaTE workshop seems to be the least risky option. Holding a 'standard format' workshop the year after SLaTE 2015 would give a better feel for the viability of annual workshops. By SLaTE 2015 we will need to decide the organiser and venue for SLaTE 2017, so we will be committed to three consecutive annual workshops.