



CULTURCRATE

CONVERSATION GROUPS & THE INTERSECTIONS OF LANGUAGE & CULTURE

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December 12, 2018



CAJA DE CULTURA

ABSTRACT

This project explores the research question, “What strategies do adults prefer to use in immersive conversation groups to learn non-native languages within cultural contexts?” In our attempt to answer this question, team members conducted observations, surveys, and semi-structured interviews involving current and past adult members of conversation groups whose goal is to acquire and/or maintain proficiency in a non-native language. For the purposes of this project, a conversation group consists of at least two people who meet regularly (in any number of formats, including face-to-face, virtually, and/or via phone) to practice a non-native language. Our findings revealed numerous innovative approaches to language learning in social contexts that informed our CulturCrate design intervention. Specifically, language learners’ need to experience the cultures they’re studying is significant. Even more important are the ways in which they effectively recreate those cultures locally and/or digitally to accommodate their own preferences and constraints. Conversation groups in their various formats give learners a chance to use language as a tool of social interaction (Gee, 2015). Participants learn by experiencing and then by talking about their experiences in the target language. CulturCrate offers language learners numerous tailored opportunities to explore the world together, regardless of where they actually are.

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RESEARCH TEAM

Throughout the design research process, team members both contributed individually and collaborated collectively, participating in ten virtual team meetings and staying in constant contact via text, email, and phone. This report represents a cohesive group effort.



Amanda Dean is interested in the current strategies adult conversation groups use to learn non-native languages in order to gather best practices and/or discover opportunities to enhance the learning outcomes of conversation groups. She observed the American Sign Language Meetup at the Starbucks 9th and South Street location in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on two occasions by actively participating in the conversation group. She observed a Spanish Language Meetup at Travel Bug in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on one occasion by actively participating in the conversation group. She invited friends, family, and coworkers to participate in the study via an online survey and one-on-one interviews. She led two separate semi-structured interviews: one of a past conversation group participant, and the other of a current conversation group participant. Amanda transcribed, coded, and analyzed her own data and then collaborated with team members (Karen Mauk and Kim Huffman) to analyze group findings, determine overarching design research themes, and design an intervention. Amanda is currently pursuing her Master of Fine Arts in Experience Design at Miami University. She works for the Historical Society of Pennsylvania where she collaborates across department lines to provide systems solutions, build efficiencies, and develop engaging experiences. Amanda recently served on the Committee of the 2018 Visitor Experience Conference as Sponsorship Co-Chair. Her background is visitor experience, special events, and fundraising.



Kim Huffman is interested in immersing herself in language and culture to gain a better understanding of non-native languages. She has studied Iraqi Arabic and American Sign Language for several years. To learn more about different conversation groups, she observed a Spanish Language Meetup at a location called Travel Bug when she attended a course trip in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She also led one semi-structured interview of a past conversation group participant and invited colleagues, friends, and family to participate in an online survey. Kim collaborated with her team (Karen Mauk and Amanda Dean) via email, phone, text, and web throughout the project. Kim works for Miami Regionals E-Campus as a Digital Media Specialist and aims to recruit and retain online students through design.



Karen Mauk is fascinated by the intersections of language and culture. Her background is in German language, literature, and film, and she studied German language and culture in both Hamburg and Munich. She has also participated in two German conversation groups over the past decade. One group met weekly for several years in Traverse City, Michigan, and the other is the ongoing Kaffee im King group that meets weekly in King Cafe at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Karen attended Kaffee im King a few years ago to practice German and then again on two separate occasions for this project as a participant observer. She also interviewed the group leader at Oxford Coffee Company in Oxford, Ohio. Additionally, Karen conducted a phone interview with a current member of a German conversation group in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She also observed a Spanish Language Meetup at Travel Bug, a coffee shop and travel store, along with her teammates, Amanda Dean and Kim Huffman. And she invited friends, family members, and their acquaintances to participate in an online survey about conversation group preferences. Karen coded and analyzed her data and then collaborated with team members to analyze group findings, determine overarching design research themes, and propose a design solution. Karen has owned and operated her small editorial business for more than a decade, pursuing her love of language in her daily work.

INTRODUCTION

A strong interest in the field of **sociolinguistics** led us to consider the **research question**, “What strategies do adults prefer to use in immersive conversation groups to learn non-native languages within cultural contexts?” Our **research population** consists of a range of current and past adult members of conversation groups whose goal is to acquire and/or maintain proficiency in a non-native language. For the purposes of this project, a conversation group consists of at least two people who meet regularly (in any number of formats, including face-to-face, virtually, and/or via phone) to practice a non-native language. We applied a **social interactionist theoretical lens** to this project, which has uncovered some of the preferred methods language learners use to acquire and practice non-native languages in social contexts. Each of us has studied one or more non-native languages in social settings, whether we’ve traveled abroad or participated in conversation groups close to home. We’re fascinated by the varied ways learners construct their own cultural contexts within which to experience new languages. The discussion strategies they use and the objects they bring to group settings are particularly revealing. This project gave us the opportunity to develop our knowledge by observing and listening directly to other language learners whose experiences may differ from our own. Throughout the design research process, we approached our research question with fresh eyes and ears. In some cases, we attended groups whose languages we didn’t speak very well or at all. This beginner perspective was key to understanding some of the hurdles that learners face as they get started with a new group and decide whether or not to return.

We set out to answer the following additional **questions** in our research:

1. How do conversation group members establish a culture within which to learn a non-native language?
2. How do group members characterize the culture they have established?
3. How does this culture make group members feel?
4. What tools do group members prefer when facilitating discussions and maintaining group cohesion?
5. What challenges do group members face in attending regular group discussions?
6. Why do group members participate? What are their expectations for the group to which they belong?
7. What roles do members perform while participating in their group?
8. How do members support one another in their group?
9. What, if anything, do group members wish could be different about their group experience?
10. What advice would group members give others thinking about joining a conversation group?

In an attempt to gather rich data around these questions, we involved **three conversation groups** directly in our primary research:

1. A German conversation group (Kaffee im King) that meets weekly in King Cafe at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio
2. A Spanish conversation group (Meetup) that meets weekly at the Travel Bug cafe and store in Santa Fe, New Mexico
3. An American Sign Language (ASL) conversation group (Meetup) that meets weekly at the Starbucks 9th and South Street location in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Karen attended the German group on two separate occasions (and she was previously a member of this group), and Amanda attended the ASL group on two separate occasions as well. All three group members attended the Spanish group once while in Santa Fe together. Amanda participated in the group discussion while Karen and Kim observed. Amanda is proficient in Spanish, Kim has a working knowledge of the language, and Karen is a complete beginner. We were fortunate to be part of a research team with such a diverse language skill set. We brought our different abilities to the conversation groups we studied and gained a range of insights from our unique perspectives and our valuable interactions with other language learners.

We approach this project as perpetual learners. We wish to share our findings with others who might benefit from the strategies language learners prefer to use in conversation groups around the country. To this end, we developed our CulturCrate design solution, which facilitates learning by packaging cultural experiences for a range of language learners. We want to share the amazing experiences we've had in the groups we've attended. We want to bring those experiences to other language learners, regardless of their locations, time constraints, or abilities. We want to help people learn in ways that are fun and engaging for them, in ways that keep them coming back for more.



LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Substantial research (including Fortune, 2012) supports the idea that language immersion benefits young learners and helps develop both cognitive ability and cultural awareness as people mature and expand their social networks. However, less research exists on the advantages of immersive conversation groups for adult learners of non-native languages. A relevant older source (Genesee, 1994) considers the social and cognitive benefits of immersive approaches to language learning, especially those that are academically oriented. In a survey of the most relevant literature pertaining to our topic, we discovered several themes that we set out to explore in our study. First, Gee (2015) establishes a sociocultural approach to literacy and language learning that formed the backbone of our investigation. Specifically, he examines how people shape their own social contexts (and, for that matter, their own social identities within those contexts) to use language as a tool of social interaction. Similarly, both Matsuoka and Evans (2004) and Harare (2016) examine the significance of the social and cultural contexts in which people learn languages. In a discussion forum titled “Revisiting the Role of Culture in the Foreign Language Curriculum” (Byrnes, 2010), scholars consider the inextricable link between language and culture in the context of language learning. And Rampton (2017) applies a social interactionist lens to linguistic ethnography, seeking to understand the discursive tools and technologies people use to communicate in social environments. This is the same theoretical framework that we have applied to our project.

We designed our study to uncover the strategies adult learners have found effective in practicing non-native languages. One theme we discovered relates to the time and location constraints that prevent learners from regularly practicing languages in social contexts. Conein (2011) argues that by connecting people who are otherwise physically distanced, language expands our social networks. But learners still need to devise their own methods for getting together and talking on a regular basis. And, as we discovered in our research, those methods need to be fun and engaging to motivate learners to return repeatedly and participate over time.

Some design researchers have explored possible interventions to facilitate immersive language learning opportunities for a range of learners in various contexts. For example, Witteveen (2015) considers software solutions that some libraries offer patrons who want to connect with other language learners. Wang and colleagues (2017) discovered benefits to immersion approaches within 3D virtual worlds, especially those that make use of chat-bot and time machine technologies. We’re particularly interested in how learners interact in social settings to explore new languages and cultures. In our research, we came to better understand participants’ preferred ways of practicing non-native languages within the social and cultural contexts they nurture and shape.

METHODOLOGY

When approaching the research question, “What strategies do adults prefer to use in immersive conversation groups to learn non-native languages within cultural contexts?” we took the perspective of the participant and therefore designed our research instruments to be as neutral as possible, by not assuming the participants are/were having good or bad experiences in the conversation groups or that the groups are/were not meeting their needs. Instead, we provided the participants with a platform to communicate what their experience is/was. Our research population consisted of a range of current and past adult members of conversation groups whose goal is to acquire and/or maintain proficiency in a non-native language. For the purposes of this project, a conversation group consists of at least two people who meet regularly (in any number of formats, including face-to-face, virtually, and/or via phone) to practice a non-native language. We customized pre-existing consent and participant information forms. In addition to the pre-existing forms, we designed an online survey, a semi-structured interview schedule, and a digital consent form via SurveyMonkey to document consent of those participating in interviews that were not able to be physically present.

The questions we asked were meant to establish whether the participants were still actively participating in a conversation group, for how long, where and when the group met/meets, and how the participant discovered the group initially. If someone stopped participating, we asked why. The questions ranged from individual study methods to group study methods, group dynamics, language and culture, challenges, positive takeaways, and recommendations to someone attending a conversation group for the first time. There was intentional overlap with the questions across both instruments: the interview schedule allowed for more deep conversation and the survey allowed for more quantifiable information gathering. All survey participants could also take part in an interview. Utilizing the resources we had available, we emailed work colleagues, family, and friends, inviting them to take the survey and if possible participate in an interview. We also used additional means like Facebook to promote participation in our study. These methods resulted in a combination of convenience and random sampling, as we started out with people we knew, but since we did not put restrictions on the survey, the people we know could have shared the survey link with people beyond our immediate social networks.

The third method used was observation. We actively observed conversation groups through participation, as we wanted to note the newcomer experience and/or a new language group experience. We were also interested in the overall group function, methodologies, and dynamics. As all three researchers had experience in a non-native language, we were able to secure spots in conversation groups to specifically meet the goals of this study and not rely upon past experiences. In addition, we sought the opportunity to join groups as new learners. Methods used during participant observations include conversation, mimicking, photography, sketching, note-taking, video feedback, and team observations, in which one researcher converses with the conversation group while the other researchers observe. This last method allowed for the researchers to gain a 360 view of the experience.

In summary, our research team made five participant observations, conducted five semi-structured interviews, and designed and implemented one survey which uncovered multiple strategies adults use in immersive conversation groups to learn non-native languages as well as pain points impacting their learning outcomes.

OBSERVATIONS

Five observations were conducted by 3 researchers. The observations took place at conversation group meetings in Philadelphia, PA, Santa Fe, NM, and Oxford, OH, and lasted between 75 and 120 minutes each. Traditional ethnography tools were used, including sketching, note-taking, photography, and interacting with the environments.

SURVEY

The survey was designed and implemented in SurveyMonkey. The survey had a total of 22 questions including the digital consent signoff. The survey used various question formats to gather a range of quantitative, qualitative, and demographic data. The survey was open for 5 days and had a total of 21 participants.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Five semi-structured interviews were conducted by 3 researchers to understand what strategies adult language learners prefer to use in conversation groups. The participants were chosen because they are either past or current conversation group members. These participants comprised a convenience sample, as they're people the researchers already knew. The interview schedule consisted of 13 questions. The researchers used a variety of technology to record the interviews as all but one were remotely recorded. Some of the interviews were also initially transcribed with transcription software and then further transcribed and coded by the researchers.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

*Are you currently a member of a conversation group or are you a past member?
(If a past member): When and where did you belong to a conversation group? Why did you stop participating?*

Have you tried other language learning methods? Are you still using them? Why or why not?

Why did you join this group? Or, if you're the group founder, why did you start it?

How does your group meet?

Where, when, and how often?

Are the format, time, and location convenient for you?

What tools or resources does your group use to facilitate discussion and enhance the educational experience?

Does your group practice a language by incorporating culture into the discussion? For example, do you talk about cultural traditions, art and literature, history, or current events related to the language you're practicing?

Does your group recommend or require additional study methods between sessions? What are they?

How would you describe your role in the group?

How would you describe the culture and dynamics of your group?

How does this culture impact your learning experience?

How has this culture impacted your social life outside the group?

How does your participation in a group environment versus an independent learning environment meet your learning objectives?

What positive takeaways do you have from participating in this group?

What challenges, if any, have you experienced in this group?

What recommendations would you give someone considering joining a conversation group for the first time?

METHODOLOGY

RAW DATA

OBSERVATIONS

OBSERVATIONS 1–2: KING CAFE, MIAMI UNIVERSITY, OXFORD, OH

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 4:15–5:30 P.M.

Karen attended Miami University's German conversation group several years ago and was already acquainted with the group leader, whom she recently emailed about her current research project and interest in attending the group again. After receiving an open invitation to rejoin the group, she planned to attend on two consecutive Mondays. Attending the first group session after not speaking German for several months required a few minutes of reacclimation. But she found the group very welcoming and accommodating to a range of German proficiency levels. Most group members spoke in German, although some members occasionally switched between German and English. Two students in particular were fluent, while others demonstrated a range of speaking abilities. This particular group session was very well attended, and the group leader later told me it was the largest group she's seen. Although people came and went over the duration, an average of 20 participants were present until about 5:00 p.m., when the total number dropped to 8 participants. Throughout the session, subgroups frequently broke off to allow for smaller, more intimate discussions. Karen both participated in small group discussions and took extensive field notes pertaining to the broader social context. The group leader handed out discussion questions for those who wished to use them (and most students did use them), and several students were passing around snacks that the leader had brought. Karen also noticed that some students were using their phones to look up photos of Germany and German websites to discuss. She also saw two bobbleheads at the center of the table: one of Freud and the other of Einstein. Karen took 7 photos of the group and of the King Cafe exterior, and she recorded 3 brief audio clips of the group discussions. One of the students also volunteered to take a panoramic group photo on Karen's phone, which Karen later emailed to the group leader at her request.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 4:15–5:30 P.M.

The second group session Karen attended was smaller and more intimate with 10 participants in attendance. Karen took 3 exterior photos before entering King Cafe and then took a panoramic group photo once the group fully assembled, which she again emailed to the group leader later that evening. She also took a photo of the bobbleheads and snacks on the table (which were all eaten by the end of the session). Karen participated in a few small group discussions: one was mostly in English with a Miami faculty member and beginning German speaker about different language learning strategies, and the others were mostly in German with students and the group leader about some of the discussion prompts that the group leader handed out at the start of the session (a different set from the previous week). During these discussions, the group leader looked up a German word on her phone and praised the Duolingo app, and other students were looking at horse racing photos on their phones, which they discussed in near-fluent German. Karen took extensive field notes, including an audio recording of the group discussions.



King Cafe, German Conversation Group

OBSERVATION 3: TRAVEL BUG, SANTA FE, NM

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 12:00–1:30 P.M.

Kim discovered the Spanish Language Meetup group, and as a member of Meetup, Amanda reached out to the group ahead of time to secure permission to attend, noting she may have two classmates with her who did not speak Spanish. Amanda, Karen, and Kim entered Travel Bug together early, in order to observe the shop. Amanda assessed which group was the Spanish group, as there were multiple groups assembled, and secured a seat, and then she ordered drink. Karen and Kim secured a high-top table close to the group for observation.

AMANDA'S PARTICIPATION/OBSERVATION: When someone sat down they would ask in Spanish, "May I speak Spanish with you?" The participants were intermediate to conversational and only used English out of necessity. Amanda spoke briefly with one person and then went to retrieve her beverage. Then the group broke into two smaller groups that were at her table. Amanda spoke to a gentleman and a woman; both seemed to be in their 60s and lived in Santa Fe. They discussed travel, where they were from originally and Santa Fe, and Amanda told them about graduate school.

KIM'S OBSERVATION: Kim entered Travel Bug on Saturday afternoon and was immediately drawn to the additional language learning meetings that were taking place there, including a French class meeting during the same time. Travel Bug sold food, beverages, books, and a large variety of travel gear. The place was small but very busy on that day. Not fluent in Spanish, Kim took a seat on a high table to observe the Spanish Language Meetup group. During the start of the meeting there was one table of 5 participants speaking Spanish back and forth. As time went by, more participants started joining and forming more groups at different tables. From her observations, Kim noticed one of the groups using a tablet to share something in which they were speaking Spanish to communicate that information. Kim took field notes, photos of the interior before, during, and after the Meetup, as well as video of the groups while they were speaking in Spanish.

KAREN'S OBSERVATION: Karen was struck by the cultural context that Travel Bug had created: books, maps, flags, stickers, patches, journals, and travel supplies lined the walls, ceilings, and shelves of this unique store and cafe. The place was packed and the cafe was bustling on this particular Saturday afternoon. Because Karen doesn't speak Spanish, she ordered a beverage and salad and opted to observe the group from a nearby table and later from different positions around the store. She took extensive field notes, including 61 photos of the interior and exterior of Travel Bug as well as 6 audio recordings and one brief video recording of group discussions. Karen noticed one female participant sharing something on her phone with a couple of group members; she later shared a pamphlet with the same group members, which they also discussed in Spanish. Karen also discovered a French class with 4 participants who were talking in French in the back corner of the store at the same time of the Spanish group session.



Travel Bug, Spanish Language Meetup

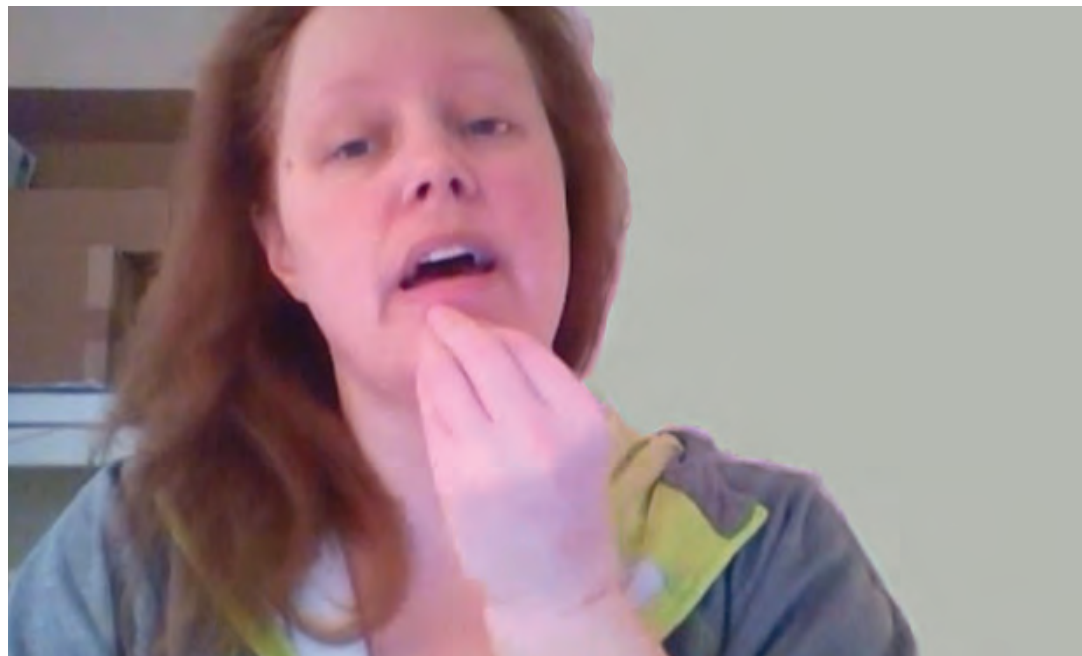
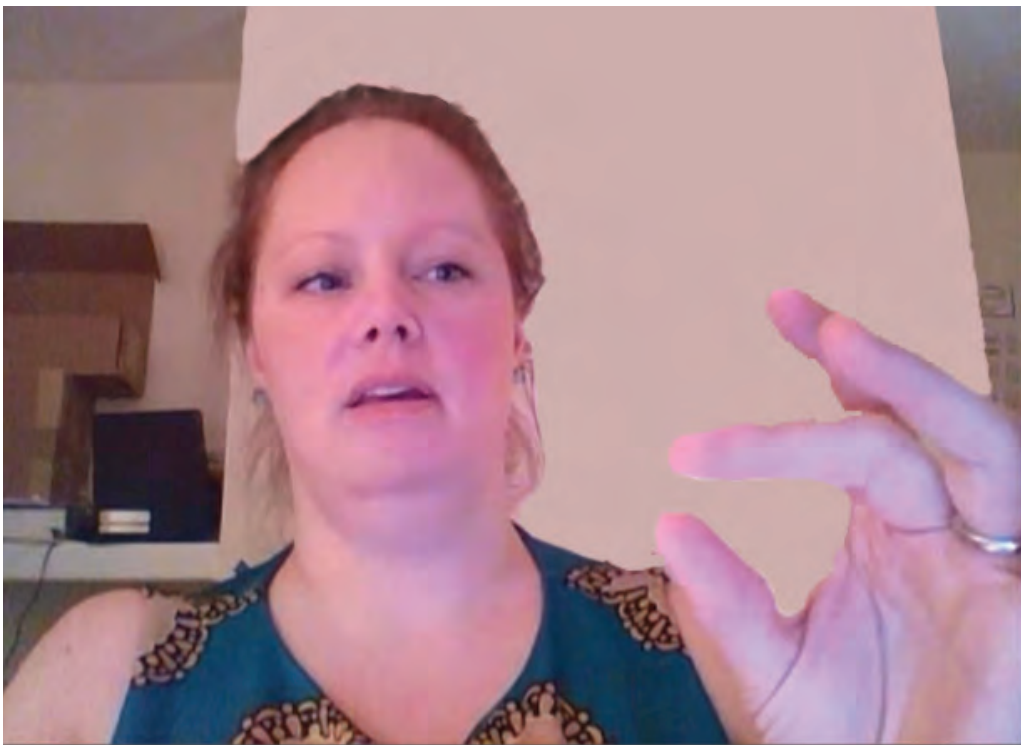
OBSERVATIONS 4–5: STARBUCKS, 9TH AND SOUTH ST., PHILADELPHIA, PA

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 6:30–8:30 P.M.

Amanda entered the Starbucks and immediately identified the ASL group. She looked for eye contact to gain entrance, but received no immediate invitation, so she opted to get a drink and then reapproach. It was very daunting, as if entering a private club. She felt like she was being intrusive and was very nervous. She noticed that everyone was conversational and that it was quiet. She pulled up a chair and expressed that she was new, and someone befriended her. She watched for a while. Group members took turns teaching her different things. One gentleman wanted to communicate with her, so the woman next to her, Ingrid, told her what he was finger spelling. Ingrid showed her how to finger spell back. In the exchange, Amanda and the gentleman, Dominic, told each other their names, ages, and where they lived. Amanda felt Dominic was deaf, and observed that approximately 20–30% of the 14 attendees were deaf or had some hearing loss. In another conversation, with a hearing person, Amanda explained that she was traveling to Santa Fe for school to study a museum and design a service for it. The woman then taught Amanda how to sign, “improve museums.” Amanda observed that the hearing attendees tended to mouth the words as they signed, while the deaf or hearing-impaired attendees would try to speak the words. One gentleman, whom Amanda overheard say had lost his hearing, was very easy to understand when he spoke. Ingrid told Amanda that the group enjoys having new attendees and liked to teach. She met one other new person who showed her an app on her phone that she uses to aid her learning. She also engaged in conversation with a woman who is an in-classroom aide at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, and she spoke about setting up school trips to the Historical Society where she worked. The session lasted the full two hours with a few people coming late but most staying the whole time. Amanda was overwhelmed by the generosity and kindness of the group members.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 6:20–8:15 P.M.

Amanda approached the building early with the intention of taking pictures of the ASL meeting place; however, one of the attendees was approaching from the adjacent corner, so she opted to forget the photos. This session, Amanda was a much more active participant and noticed 17–19 participants throughout the evening. They did not all come at once but instead trickled in, and Amanda herself left at 8:15 p.m. due to exhaustion. Amanda sat next to Nia, who worked at the PA School for the Deaf. Amanda had prepared to speak to the older gentleman, Mark, to tell him that her father’s name was Marc, but with a “C” not with a “K.” It was difficult at first, but Mark finally understood and showed her how to sign the communication. He explained his name was with a “K” because he is French Canadian. Mark then worked with Amanda on her finger spelling and told her she should practice in front of a mirror. Amanda then engaged Nia in conversation, and observed that Nia was very cognizant to sign everything she spoke to Amanda, in order to teach Amanda, but also to keep the group in the loop as to their conversation. They discussed that they were both tired, one from work, the other from studying. Amanda explained that she was afraid to learn ASL from videos, because she feared that she would learn the signs incorrectly. However, Nia told her the signs mean the same thing on both hands. She further explained that people sign with their dominant hand. Nia then showed Amanda how signing once with a word like “food” once means the verb “to eat,” but signing twice in a row means the noun “food.” Nia talked about the deaf community and about how many people come to learn from the deaf community and then leave when they get certified, etc.; that is, they don’t give back. At one point a group of new people came in, and there was quiet debate among the experts as to who was going to take them aside and teach them. Amanda observed that there were no gimmicks, no instruments used in the group, just signing. The members drank Starbucks or snuck in their own drinks or Dunkin’ Donuts, and it was clear the staff were familiar with the group and kind to them.



ASL Conversation Meetup

INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW 1 BY KAREN MAUK

SUBJECT: A male current conversation group member aged 50+ who lives in southwestern Michigan

The interview was on November 11, 2018, and lasted from 10:15–10:30 a.m. and from 10:57 a.m.–11:10 a.m. It took place on speaker phone (the interviewer was in her home office and the interviewee was driving to the airport during the first segment of the interview and then waiting at the gate during the second segment). The interview was voice recorded via Screencast-O-Matic, and Karen later transcribed the entire interview (the two transcription apps Karen tried to use were unable to pick up the interviewee's voice from the recording). The subject was relaxed and offered candid feedback about his experiences. Overarching themes from the interview include the tight-knit social context of his German group that meets biweekly in Kalamazoo, Michigan; the value of developing relationships with fellow language learners; the importance of interaction among group members in the target language; the need for group members to establish language-learning objectives; and the hard work and amount of time it takes to learn a new language.

INTERVIEW 2 BY KAREN MAUK

SUBJECT: A female current conversation group member and leader aged 50+ who lives in southwestern Ohio

The interview was on November 13, 2018, and lasted from 11:15–11:56 a.m. It took place at Oxford Coffee Company in Oxford, Ohio, and was voice recorded via Karen's phone, and Karen later transcribed the entire interview (the two transcription apps Karen tried to use were unable to pick up the conversation from the recording). The subject was relaxed and very talkative, and she offered candid feedback about her experiences. Overarching themes from the interview include the challenges and rewards of assembling conversation groups on college campuses; the types of discussion prompts, food, and objects that tend to generate good conversation; preferred strategies for engaging learners who span different abilities; and the need for group members to want to learn the language as opposed to attending the conversation group simply for course credit.

INTERVIEW 3 BY AMANDA DEAN

SUBJECT: A female past conversation group participant aged 30+ who lives in Williamsport, Pennsylvania

The interview was recorded via mobile phone through Screencast-O-Matic technology. The participant was not physically present for the interview. The participant is a friend of the researcher, they had made an appointment for 8:00 p.m. However due to changes in the other interviewee's schedule, the interview started at 8:13 p.m. and lasted 12 minutes and 59 seconds. It was recorded on November 11, 2018, in the researcher's home of Collingswood, NJ. The interviewee had experience working with a Japanese student who wanted to learn English, while the interviewee wanted to learn Japanese. They would sit and talk; it was informal. They met Friday evenings for 1–2 hours for 8 months, until the Japanese student went back to Japan. They became friends, socialized, and stayed in touch. She noted that the meetings were motivating; however, they both struggled at times because they couldn't say what they wanted to say. The interviewee noted that, individually, she had tried other language learning methods, including taking classes, studying on her own, reading, watching movies, and studying abroad (immersion). Due to the poor quality of the recording, the researcher had to hand transcribe the transcript.

INTERVIEW 4 BY AMANDA DEAN

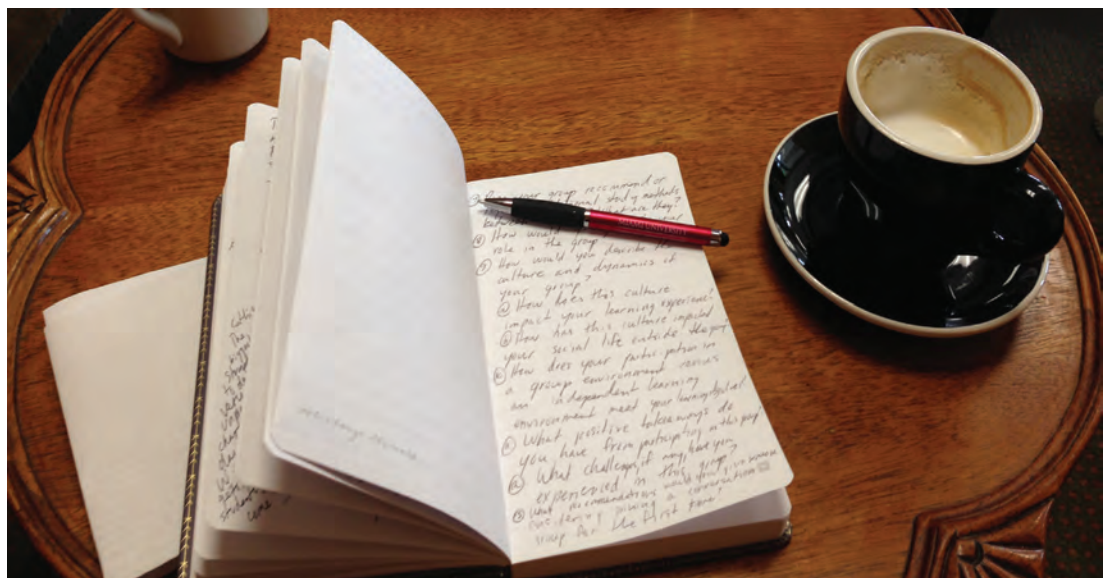
SUBJECT: A female current conversation group participant aged 60+ who lives in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The interview was recorded via mobile phone through Screencast-O-Matic technology. The participant was not physically present for the interview. The interview started at 8:51 p.m. and lasted 22 minutes and 52 seconds. It was recorded on November 11, 2018, in the researcher's home of Collingswood, NJ. The participant is an acquaintance from a film discussion group the researcher participates in and had agreed to be interviewed at some point over the weekend. The free trial version of Screencast-O-Matic was problematic in this case, because it cut her off at the limit and had to save before it began recording again. She indicated that language learning had been a lifelong endeavor. Currently she was in a French conversation group that met once a week on Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. to noon. She said students apply and have to be chosen for the class. It runs in the spring and the fall for 10 weeks; however, it is not always available in the summer. She noted the instructor brought cultural aspects in, telling stories of family and happenings in France. They would incorporate French TV series as a learning tool to watch and discuss. She wished that the instructor would slow down when speaking and translate into English more, as it would be beneficial to some class members. She said that there was a portion of the class that were advanced or had a French background and the instructor catered to them. When discussing her experience in the Spanish group, she noticed there was more participation, and that there was less of a gap in the language ability of the students. Due to the poor quality of the recording, the researcher had to hand transcribe the transcript.

INTERVIEW 5 BY KIM HUFFMAN

SUBJECT: A female past conversation group member age 20+ who lives in southwestern Ohio

The interview was on November 8, 2018, and lasted from 4:30–5:05 p.m. It took place in a meeting room at Miami University, Hamilton campus, and was recording on a laptop using QuickTime audio recording. The participant is a colleague who has a strong interest in learning a non-native language. During the interview the participant was excited to talk but generally at ease. She provided great insight on different ways to explore a non-native language and provided helpful feedback when discussing her experiences. The interview focused on learning a non-native language and the participant discussed her experiences joining an American Sign Language group from a local church and how that positively and negatively affected her learning experience. She had been actively participating in the group for over a year and they would meet every Wednesday from 7 p.m.–8 p.m. The ASL language learning group she participated in is no longer a group.



RESULTS & FINDINGS

Our goal for this project has been to discover the preferred strategies among conversation group members for immersing themselves in cultural contexts to learn non-native languages. We wanted to know what works and what doesn't, what's been proposed and what's been tried. We wanted to learn the specific ways in which interaction in social contexts helps learners practice languages and what that interaction looks like. In our research, we also uncovered several challenges that prevent learners from fully engaging with their groups. These challenges shed light on the unique needs of conversation group members and how those needs are or aren't being met by current methods. Several important **themes** emerged in our research, including the following:

- Participants often struggle to find enough time to practice a non-native language regularly with others.
- Participants are often surprised at the work involved in learning a new language.
- Participants who are self-motivated tend to enjoy their conversation group experiences.
- Conversation groups that develop and implement engagement strategies tend to benefit from higher participant retention rates and increased learning outcomes over time.
- Participants are often unaware of the need to define their language-learning objectives before engaging in a conversation group.
- Members who establish language-learning objectives tend to get more from participating in their groups.
- Tight-knit relationships as well as welcoming and casual social contexts within which to build those relationships tend to foster increased engagement levels and higher participant retention rates.
- High levels of interaction among group members in the target language facilitate learning, retention, and enjoyment.
- Assembling and maintaining conversation groups are difficult but necessary and often rewarding tasks for group leaders.
- Conversation groups tend to endure and foster richer experiences over time when they accommodate a range of abilities and proficiency levels.
- Thoughtful choices pertaining to discussion prompts as well as the food and objects that are shared during group sessions can generate good conversation and help put group members at ease.

All of these themes deepen our understanding of the ways conversation group members interact in social settings to practice new languages. We considered each theme as we developed our CulturCrate design intervention, which was designed explicitly to accommodate a range of preferences, abilities, and circumstances. As we shifted to the design solution stage of this project, our goal shifted as well: we hope our findings and design intervention make conversation group experiences more impactful and accessible to a broader population of adult learners.

Our research **limitations** primarily involve our short time frame within which to conduct observations, surveys, and semi-structured interviews. We would have liked to conduct a focus group as well, but our research population consisted of frequent travelers, and finding a convenient time for everyone to meet proved impossible (so we converted these willing participants into interviewees instead). We hope that the themes our project uncovered will prompt **future research projects** that further investigate this important topic. These projects would likely benefit from more time and more research of different conversation groups around the country. More direct observations of current members interacting in the context of their group would also be helpful. While many groups have clearly discovered a format and flow that benefits the groups as a whole, some members may still seek a higher level of engagement in the social settings they use to learn languages. A deeper understanding of group member expectations and needs would potentially contribute to an improved overall language learning experience.



DESIGN

INTERVENTION

The data strongly suggests that the majority of our participants meet once a week, in person, and have been doing so or previously attended conversation groups for 6 months or more. However, the group learning methods are inconsistent or lacking in variety. Primary observations only confirmed that gap in format and engaging experiences. Most participants coupled their group activity with self-study methods. Barriers to learning ranged from not enough time to insufficient access to native speakers. The desire for authentic connections to language and culture was a pain point in the data that could not be ignored.

Considering what options could meet both individual and group needs in an authentic manner, the concept of a multi-layered product/service developed. It would consist of a platform that can serve as an introduction to a group as well as a product that can provide engaging and authentic multidisciplinary learning experiences while enhancing a group experience or serving as an individual experience for those with time constraints.

THEME: Conversation groups that develop and implement engagement strategies tend to benefit from higher participant retention rates and increased learning outcomes over time.

INTERVENING QUESTION: In what ways might conversation groups be made more inviting to newcomers and encourage participants to return?

ACTIONABLE STATEMENT: We will design a curated collection of multi-sensory tools and resources that individuals and groups can use to enhance their language-learning experience.

DESIGN CONCEPT DESCRIPTION: CulturCrate is an innovative subscription service that curates and delivers a variety of items related to the language learner's target culture. Whether or not they already belong to a conversation group, adult learners can customize their own crates à la carte or they can order one of several prepackaged crates focused on a particular language (like Spanish, German, Italian, French, Japanese, and American Sign Language). Crate items span a wide range of sensory formats and offer a both fun and educational experience. Examples include journals, stickers, patches, pins, temporary tattoos, books, posters, novelties, curios, mascots, art supplies, cooking supplies, food items, recipes, games, and audio/video streaming suggestions. Users complete a brief survey prior to ordering and get crate suggestions according to their preferences. Users can also sign up for a monthly, three-month, six-month, or annual plan. Additionally, CulturCrate includes a social-networking option that connects users based on shared language interests.

The CulturCrate design was developed to evoke an old world feel with the branded language of the crate and the use of historic map textures and colors throughout. The experience is meant to start the moment you see and handle the crate. The design unites the old with the new through accessible font choices and clean layout designs on both the interior crate cards and the website. The personality of each crate will shine with the unique culture and contents it boasts.

CULTURCRATE

Explore a subscription crate...



MY ACCOUNT



MY CART



GOOGLE TRANSLATE

HOW IT WORKS

FIND A GROUP

PICK A CRATE

WHAT'S INSIDE

CUSTOMIZE

COMMUNITY

GIFT

XABIA BEACH CRATE

CulturCrate Spanish Selection

SUBSCRIBE



Maps

Explore Spain



Food

Enjoy Spanish food



Culture

Experience the culture of Spain

CHOOSE YOUR ITEMS



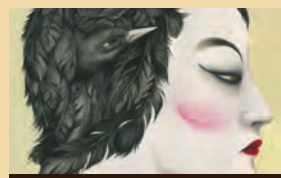
SAND FROM THE BEACH



AUTHENTIC TAPAS



SPANISH CANDY



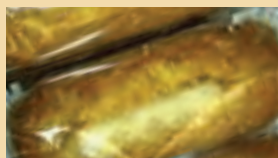
BOOKS



BEACH TOWEL



MUSIC



BREAKFAST TREATS



GUITAR LESSONS

XABIA BEACH CRATE CARDS





XABIA BEACH CRATE CARDS

EXPERIENCE MAPS







Our experience maps each chart out the journey of one of three different CulturCrate users (current conversation group leader, current conversation group member, and prospective conversation group member). These maps illustrate the likely paths different types of language learners might take when they encounter and use our CulturCrate design solution.

CULTURCRATE EXPERIENCE MAP CURRENT CONVERSATION GROUP LEADER









CONVERSATION GROUPS & THE INTERSECTIONS OF LANGUAGE & CULTURE

CULTURCRATE EXPERIENCE MAP PROSPECTIVE CONVERSATION GROUP MEMBER

GUIDING STEPS	FIND AND JOIN A GROUP	REGISTER	EXPLORE YOUR THEME	CUSTOMIZE AND/OR BUY A PREPACKAGED CULTURCRATE	EXPERIENCE	DISCUSS
DETAILED JOURNEY	MEMBERS LOCATE A GROUP ON CULTURCRATE.COM THAT THEY WANT TO JOIN.	MEMBERS SET UP AN ACCOUNT, CREATE A PROFILE, AND LINK THEIR ACCOUNT TO A GROUP ACCOUNT.	MEMBERS ACCESS GROUP THEMES AND BROWSE CULTURCRATE ITEMS.	GROUP MEMBERS HAVE THE OPTION TO CHOOSE ALL OR JUST SOME OF THE ITEMS IN THEIR CRATES.	GROUP MEMBERS RECEIVE THEIR CRATES AND PARTICIPATE IN THE EXPERIENCES INSIDE.	MEMBERS ATTEND THEIR CONVERSATION GROUPS AND DISCUSS THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE USING THE PROVIDED VOCAB AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS.
DOING	GO TO CULTURCRATE.COM AND SEARCH FOR A GROUP. MESSAGE THE GROUP LEADER FOR AN INVITE.	ACCEPT THE GROUP INVITE AND ENTER YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND PROFILE DETAILS (OPTIONAL).	BROWSE CRATE ITEMS AND/OR TAKE A QUICK SURVEY TO PERSONALIZE YOUR SELECTIONS.	MAKE IT EASY AND PICK A PREPACKAGED CRATE. ADD ANY EXTRA ITEMS YOU WANT.	RECEIVE YOUR CULTURCRATE AND EXPLORE! DO THE ACTIVITIES AND USE THE OBJECTS INCLUDED IN YOUR CRATE.	GO TO YOUR GROUP (PHYSICALLY OR VIRTUALLY) AND DISCUSS YOUR EXPERIENCES. REFER TO THE CARDS INCLUDED IN THE CRATE FOR KEY VOCAB AND TOPICS TO TALK ABOUT.
THINKING	WHICH GROUP IS FOR ME?	I NEED TO ENTER SOME DATA INTO THIS FORM.	WHAT EXPERIENCES DO I WANT TO HAVE?	I'M NOT SURE WHAT I WANT. I COULD USE SOME HELP.	WOAH! LOOK AT ALL THAT STUFF! TIME TO GET STARTED	HERE'S WHAT I DISCOVERED.
FEELING	I'M EXCITED TO JOIN A GROUP USING CULTURCRATE!	I'M GLAD CULTURCRATE DOESN'T REQUIRE A LOT OF INFO.	WOW! I'M STUNNED BY ALL THESE OPTIONS!	I'M FEELING OVERWHELMED BY ALL THE OPTIONS.	HOW DELIGHTFUL AND AMAZING!	IFEEL ENERGIZED AND MOTIVATED TO SHARE MY EXPERIENCES.
EXPERIENCE						

CULTURCRATE EXPERIENCE MAP CURRENT CONVERSATION GROUP MEMBER

GUIDING STEPS	FIND YOUR GROUP	REGISTER	EXPLORE YOUR THEME	CUSTOMIZE AND/OR BUY A PREPACKAGED CULTURCRATE	EXPERIENCE	DISCUSS
DETAILED JOURNEY	MEMBERS LOCATE A GROUP ON CULTURCRATE.COM THAT THEY ALREADY BELONG TO.	MEMBERS SET UP AN ACCOUNT, CREATE A PROFILE, AND LINK THEIR ACCOUNT TO A GROUP ACCOUNT.	MEMBERS ACCESS GROUP THEMES AND BROWSE CULTURCRATE ITEMS.	GROUP MEMBERS HAVE THE OPTION TO CHOOSE ALL OR JUST SOME OF THE ITEMS IN THEIR CRATES.	GROUP MEMBERS RECEIVE THEIR CRATES AND PARTICIPATE IN THE EXPERIENCES INSIDE.	MEMBERS ATTEND THEIR CONVERSATION GROUPS AND DISCUSS THEIR EXPERIENCES IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE USING THE PROVIDED VOCAB AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS.
DOING	GO TO CULTURCRATE.COM AND SEARCH FOR A GROUP.	ENTER YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND PROFILE DETAILS (OPTIONAL) AND LINK TO YOUR GROUP.	BROWSE CRATE ITEMS AND/OR TAKE A QUICK SURVEY TO PERSONALIZE YOUR SELECTIONS.	MAKE IT EASY AND PICK A PREPACKAGED CRATE. ADD ANY EXTRA ITEMS YOU WANT.	RECEIVE YOUR CULTURCRATE AND EXPLORE! DO THE ACTIVITIES AND USE THE OBJECTS INCLUDED IN YOUR CRATE.	GO TO YOUR GROUP (PHYSICALLY OR VIRTUALLY) AND DISCUSS YOUR EXPERIENCES. REFER TO THE CARDS INCLUDED IN THE CRATE FOR KEY VOCAB AND TOPICS TO TALK ABOUT.
THINKING	WHERE'S MY GROUP?	I NEED TO ENTER SOME DATA INTO THIS FORM.	WHAT EXPERIENCES DO I WANT TO HAVE?	I'M NOT SURE WHAT I WANT. I COULD USE SOME HELP.	WOAH! LOOK AT ALL THAT STUFF! TIME TO GET STARTED	HERE'S WHAT I DISCOVERED.
FEELING	I'M EXCITED TO JOIN A GROUP USING CULTURCRATE!	I'M GLAD CULTURCRATE DOESN'T REQUIRE A LOT OF INFO.	WOW! I'M STUNNED BY ALL THESE OPTIONS!	I'M FEELING OVERWHELMED BY ALL THE OPTIONS.	HOW DELIGHTFUL AND AMAZING!	IFEEL ENERGIZED AND MOTIVATED TO SHARE MY EXPERIENCES.
EXPERIENCE						

DESIGN RESEARCH

CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION

As previously stated, the data strongly suggests that the majority of our participants meet once a week, in person, and have been doing so or previously attended conversation groups for 6 months or more. Barriers to learning ranged from not enough time to insufficient access to native speakers. The desire for authentic connections to language and culture was a significant pain point that was addressed with the design intervention CulturCrate.

CulturCrate's next step is test marketing and the development of a business plan. CulturCrate is a prototype, an untested concept that needs to be test marketed on a small number of conversation groups and individuals to discover whether it works, and what its unintended design consequences are. Participants need to be surveyed before and after the use of the product/service to assess CulturCrate's impact on individual and group learning. The survey data from the test market will give an indication of whether the product/service works; however, the bigger question is whether the product/service will sell, and what the demand will be. A SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) needs to be performed, along with research into the costs, logistics, and other components that will make up CulturCrate's business plan.

A topic that may impact CulturCrate's future is the psychology of group dynamics. CulturCrate's developers could study group dynamics to better understand the adoption or lack of adoption of their crates in group settings. Additionally, though not the majority, some language learners stay in conversation groups whether they are progressing or not. A future research project could be to dive deeper into the world of psychology and then re-approach this population with a study on feelings, motivations, social networks, and learning outcomes of group attendees to discover how to provide design interventions to this other segment of the population.

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APPENDIX A

[Survey](#)

[Digital participant consent form](#)

Participant consent form

Participant information sheet



**Conversation Group Project
Participant Consent**

This study examines conversation groups learning non-native languages across the country. A conversation group consists of at least two people and meets regularly in some format to practice a language. You are not required to participate in this study; it is entirely voluntary. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate. If you decline to participate in the study, it will not affect you in any way.

If you choose to participate, here are some important things to know about your involvement in the study:

- The researchers will request to meet with you either (1) for an interview lasting no more than one hour OR (2) in a focus group setting for a discussion lasting no more than 45 minutes. Both the interview and the focus group will occur at a place of your choosing and will be audio-recorded. Additionally, you may be invited to participate in a survey that will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete via the online tool SurveyMonkey or a printed form.
- The researchers will request basic demographic information about you, but your confidentiality is protected. The researchers will not use any identifying information about you in their report about the study.
- You are free to decline to be interviewed or to end your participation in the interview or focus group at any time.

You have rights as a participant in this study. If you have questions about the study, please contact any of the team researchers by phone or email:

Amanda Dean, 908-894-8057, deanaj5@miamioh.edu
Kim Huffman, 812-655-7606, huffmak2@miamioh.edu
Karen Mauk, 231-944-9463, maukkkr@miamioh.edu

For questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Research Compliance Office at Miami University: 513-529-3600 or humansubjects@miamioh.edu.

I agree to participate in this study for the purposes outlined above. I give my permission to be interviewed or to be included in a focus group and for the interview or focus group to be audio-recorded.

Initial here _____

Date _____



**Conversation Group Project
Participant Information Sheet**

Greetings! We are graduate students at Miami University in the Experience Design MFA program. Our faculty advisor for this research project is Dennis Cheatham. Thank you for choosing to participate in the conversation group study. Below is some important information about this project.

Who is doing the study?

This study is being done by Miami University researchers—Amanda Dean, Kim Huffman, and Karen Mauk—who are interested in learning more about conversation groups across the country.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to more clearly understand the strategies adults prefer to use in immersive conversation groups to learn non-native languages within cultural contexts. A conversation group consists of at least two people and meets regularly in some format to practice a language.

Why am I being asked to participate?

You are being asked to participate because you indicated you are or were a member of a conversation group.

What kinds of questions will be asked?

Questions will be about your perspective and insights on learning a non-native language in an immersive conversation group. There are no wrong answers. We want to learn about your unique experiences and viewpoint.

Do I have to participate?

Participation in the study is voluntary. In particular, we anticipate your participation will have no effect at all on your daily activities. If you decline to participate in the study, it will not affect you in any way.

How long will it take?

An interviewer may ask to meet with you for an interview that will take no more than one hour. Alternatively, you may be invited to participate in a focus group that will take no more than 45 minutes. We can conduct the interview or focus group wherever is most comfortable for you to meet. Additionally, you may be invited to participate in a survey that will take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete via the online tool SurveyMonkey or a printed form. You may decline to answer any questions for any reason.

How will my answers be used?

The study results will be written into a report which will be shared with other researchers. The results will also be shared with those who participated in the study. We believe the results of this study will provide important information that will help people have better language learning experiences in immersive conversation groups.

Are my answers confidential?

Yes. Your answers will never be used in any way that would identify you. They will be combined with answers from other people who participate in the study to make a report.

APPENDIX B

Coded survey page

Coded interview pages

Coded images

Coded survey

Q3 If you're a past member of a conversation group, why did you stop participating? Please use this space to explain:

Answered: 14 Skipped: 7

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Graduated college	11/8/2018 2:36 PM
2	-TIME I have to work on the day the group meets	11/8/2018 12:36 PM
3	LOC Moved out of country	11/8/2018 8:09 AM
4	Lived in Japan and occasionally used group study to try to learn the language and written characters.	11/7/2018 5:35 PM
5	LOC Lived in Japan and sometimes studied with others to learn basic conversation and written characters. After leaving Japan I discontinued the effort. -ABLTY	11/7/2018 5:27 PM
6	-ABLTY I could not keep up with the lessons and began falling behind. I also was not good at learning the language.	11/7/2018 4:01 PM
7	NTV It was hard to find a native speaker	11/7/2018 11:49 AM
8	-TIME I chose not to commit the time to learn the language	11/7/2018 10:21 AM
9	PRAC No practical use in daily life, currently.	11/7/2018 8:34 AM
10	-TIME Time commitments.	11/6/2018 8:46 PM
11	-TIME Got off track due to time but want to get back on a regular schedule.	11/6/2018 8:27 PM
12	-TIME unfortunately too many other life commitments forced me to stop	11/6/2018 2:46 PM
13	LOC Moved away. Job.	11/5/2018 5:59 PM
14	I was a conversation partner for a Saudi student in college. It ended when I graduated, though we did stay in touch on social media for a while.	11/5/2018 5:24 PM

Karen: Yup, okay. How does your participation in a group environment versus an independent learning environment meet your learning objectives?

Participant: Um, well, it's, it, it, it, it does so because if you're gonna speak a foreign language, you're, you gotta talk to people, you gotta hear dynamic conversations going on. So, you know, you, if your **OBJ** objective is just to read it or just to be able to understand it, you know, you could potentially get by with **OBJ** reading online newspapers and listening to podcasts. But, uh, but if your objective is to, uh, is to really be able to go and operate in that language, then you've, you've really gotta be in conversation in that language, and the group gives that to you.

Karen: That makes sense. What positive takeaways do you have from participating in this group?

Participant: Um [sighs]. Probably just, you know, just improving in the language, would be one. Um, just understanding, you know, how you, cause I have made some friends in there, just understanding how, **FRND** just understanding late in life, you know, how to make new friends. That, that's been a good positive takeaway. So I would say those two.

Karen: Okay. And what challenges, if any, have you experienced in the group?

Participant: Uh, well, probably the biggest challenge would be, just, uh, just the standard melding yourself into a new set of people.

Karen: Okay, yup. What recommendations would you give someone considering joining a conversation group for the first time?

Participant: Um, what I would say is [sighs] I would say try 'em, try 'em all out and, you know, go more than once. Give it a, give each possibility a good chance, would be one thing. And then a second thing would be, is if you've decided to, to learn another language, I think that you'd want to establish, you **OBJ** know, what exactly is your goal in that other language. Is it, are you, are you, are you going on a trip and you just wanna be able to order meals and just do basic stuff in that language? You know, that's, that's **OBJ** one objective, whereas, you know, if you wanna get to where you can go to a foreign country and blend or come as close as you can to blending, you know, that's, you know, that's another goal with, you **OBJ** know, with a different, uh, with different requirements. So mesh, you know, what the group can give to, **OBJ** you know, what your goal is. And, uh, but I, I think the most important thing is to just go to 'em and, and see what works.

Karen: Okay. Is there anything else that you want to mention or say that we haven't touched on in the interview?

Participant: Uh [sighs]. What I would, what I would say is, is that, a lot of Europe, one of, one of the challenges about work and trying to work in German, and I think it's this way in most of the other, in French and Spanish, is when you go around a lot of people, of speakers, of native speakers in that

NTV

Interviewer: Ok, so are you currently a member of a conversation group or are you a past member?

Participant: Past member. **PstMem**

Interviewer: Past member, OK. And, a when did you belong to a conversation group, and when do you stop participating?

ConPart

StuDur

Participant: It started with a conversation partner. I can't give you an exact year, I think it would have been around 2006. And she was my conversation partner for about 8 months. And then I don't know if this would count but I was teaching English in Spain where it was one on one in groups, where I was having a conversation with them.

Interviewer: How long did you do that for?

Participant: Two years. **StuDur**

StuDur

Interviewer: Um the conversation partner you had, you said you did that for eight months. Why did you stop doing that?

MtgLoc-

Participant: Because she went back to her home country of Japan.

Interviewer: Alright, have you tried other language learning methods, um are you still using them, why or why not?

Participant: Um am I still using the other language learning methods is that the question?

Interviewer: Yes, what other methods have you used?

StuMeth

StuMeth

StuMeth

StuMeth

StuMeth

Participant: Taking a class, studying on my own, reading, watching movies, and studying abroad (immersion). And am I still doing any of those, a little bit of reading here and there. Why am I not doing the others, because I am doing other things? And I don't feel that I am actively learning the language currently.

Emo-

Interviewer: When you were in the group, um when you were learning Japanese with your partner, how often did you meet, where, when, that kind of thing?

MtgTim

MtgTim

MtgDur

MtgLoc

Participant: We met once a week every Friday. And we meet at the UPenn campus in a student building in a lounge. We met for an hour to two hours. A couple of times after we got to know each other, we went out did some things in the city.

SocImp+

Interviewer: Ok, so you would end up getting social, hanging out.

Participant: Yeah, we would speak both languages

MtgLoc+

MtgTim+

Interviewer: And was that convenient for you, meeting there at that time?

Participant: Yes, yes very.

Interviewer: Um, Ok, what tools or resources did your group use to facilitate the discussion and enhance the educational experience?

REL
 representation in that club. It was more of just going to an all girls Catholic high school. We had the typical demographic of same socioeconomic group same GRP
 DEAF ability. None of us had deaf or had any disabilities or had Deaf culture experience. DEAF
 We just want to learn American Sign Language together. So in that group GRP
 experience we would watch youtube tutorials on how basic American sign language sign such as the alphabet or how to say hello. Have very basic conversations just LEARN
 enough to get by when you're meeting someone who's deaf for the first time. It was DEAF
 DEAF really just to learn more about deaf culture and just for fun and camaraderie in high school. Another method that I did was the course at Miami University Oxford which DEAF
 was an online course which was interesting to take a very physical language like sign language to actually take that in a class environment that was paid for by my staff tuition waiver. That's the reason I took it which was great. I learned so much LEARN
 from that course. The instructor was a interpreter a hearing interpreter so she taught sign language just because she was interested in it. So it was nice to connect to that a.

Kim: [00:03:56] Great. So you may of answered that.

Kim: [00:04:04] Actually I can reiterate. Well yeah I mean I'm just read the questions and even. Why did you join this group, the past group that you were in.

GRP GRP
Participant: [00:04:16] I joined the Say it with Sign group because I heard from a co-worker at Miami Kim Huffman that it was being offered her one of her student workers at the time who is now a staff member. Marcus he was actually very REL
 involved in the church and he knew the instructor and Kim went with him to learn LEARN
 more about it because we want to be able to communicate with our staff member DEAF
 who was deaf in the campus department, Pruthvi and I found is not only an opportunity to make friends with the E-Campus department to learn more about deaf culture but then also to continue that basic knowledge I had of American Sign Language I was really rusty at that point I was so excited to find not only a group GRP
 with friends that was nearby and then also it was totally free. So it was great.

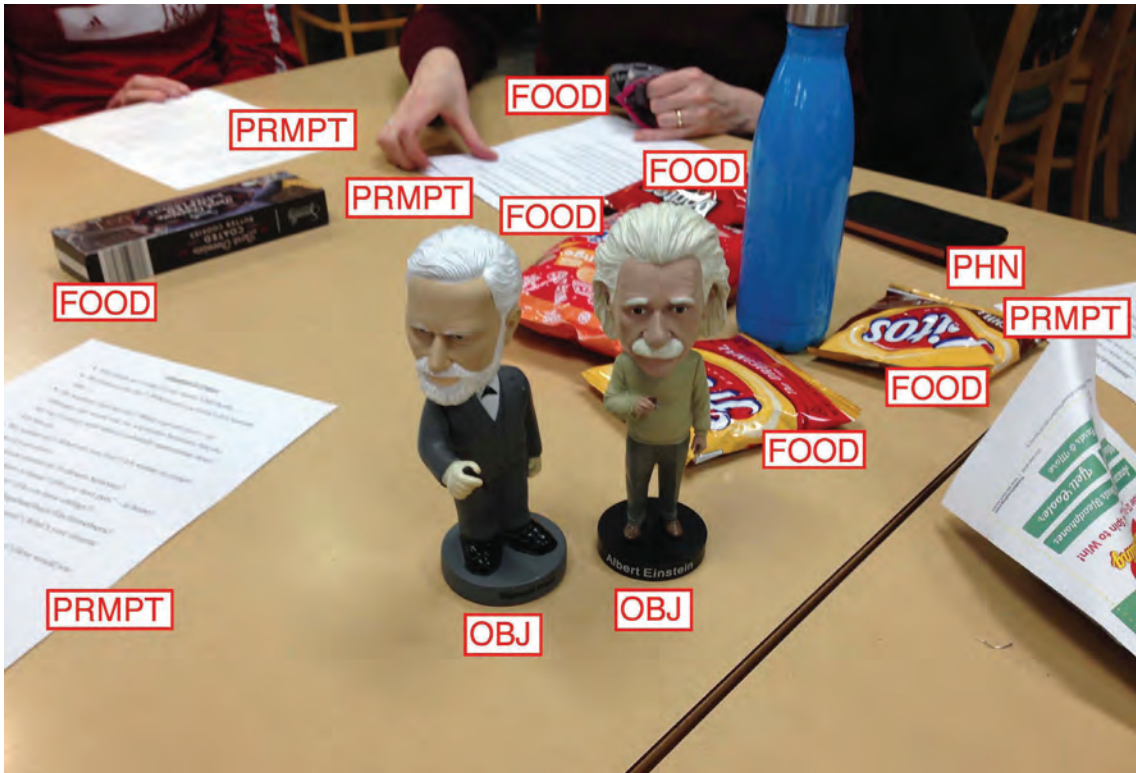
Kim: [00:05:03] I remember. All right.

GRP
Kim: [00:05:06] So how does your group meet? When, where and how often?

REL GRP
Participant: [00:05:13] When you did meet our say sign group met weekly on Tuesdays every week we would be in their church like they actually not only or their REL
 church but they also have an educational center because they do teach. I believe it's preschool through high school or something like that so they do have educational rooms there. Francis would whole class in one of those educational centers on Tuesday nights weekly. Occasionally though this was my favorite part is when we left that educational setting and we actually started going to Cracker Barrel on Tuesday nights so we would order our meals in sign language. That was DEAF
 probably my favorite thing to do because it really tested my skills. Even though our LEARN
 server was not deaf necessarily it was great to just have a fluid conversation now with someone from my group. GRP

Kim: [00:06:11] That's actually really cool. Cracker Barrel.

Kim: [00:06:14] Absolutely. Are the format time the format time and location



APPENDIX C

[Karen's interview transcript 1](#)

[Karen's interview transcript 2](#)

[Amanda's interview transcript 1](#)

[Kim's interview transcript](#)

APPENDIX D

[Sketches](#) of sample crate items (first draft), Spanish beach vacation CulturCrate

[Sample intro card](#) (first draft), Spanish beach vacation CulturCrate

[Sample itinerary card](#) (first draft), Spanish beach vacation CulturCrate

[Sample itinerary card](#) (revised), Spanish beach vacation CulturCrate

[Sample web page mockup](#) (first draft), Spanish beach vacation CulturCrate

[Exterior mood board](#) (first draft)

[Exterior mood board](#) (revised)

[Interior mood board](#) (first draft), Spanish beach vacation CulturCrate

[Experience map](#) (first draft)

[Experience maps](#) (revised)

CONVERSATION GROUPS & THE INTERSECTIONS OF LANGUAGE & CULTURE

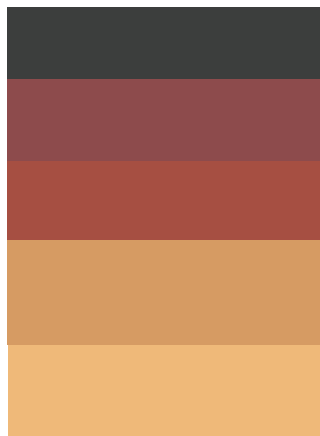
EXTERIOR & INTERIOR MOOD BOARDS

CULTURCRATE MOOD BOARD

PHOTOGRAPHY



COLOR



TYPOGRAPHY

BRIM NARROW
CULTUR
CRATE

FIRA SANS
HEADER
PARAGRAPH

TEXTURES



SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS, DIAGRAMS, RULES



CULTURCRATE MOOD BOARD - XABIA, ESPANIA BEACH INTERIOR

PHOTOGRAPHY



COLOR



TYPOGRAPHY

BRIM NARROW FONT
CULTURCRATE
CAJA DE CULTURA

Fira Sans Font
CulturCrate
Caja de Cultura

ITINERARY CARD

1. Breakfast | Desayuno
2. Hike to overlook | Camipara pasar por alto

SPOT ILLUSTRATIONS, DIAGRAMS, RULES



TEXTURES

