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TITULO	Case study: Spanish Meet-Up Group, how speaking Spanish helps to shape identity and to what extent language hinders or facilitates intercultural relationships/ Meet- Up de Español, cómo hablar español ayuda a moldear la identidad y hasta que punto el lenguaje impide o facilita las relaciones interculturales.		
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	Identity		Globalization
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RESUMEN DEL CONTENIDO (Mínimo 80 máximo 120 palabras)	<p>Sharing experiences with different people and culture around the world is becoming easier thanks to globalization. This is the reason why, in today's society intercultural communication has become one of the most relevant theories in social sciences for the study of the concept of identity. One of the ways to build and shape identities is creating intercultural spaces, in which communication plays a main role as permitting the exchange between cultures. The Meet- Up Groups are one of those spaces that allows communication to hinder or facilitate the development of human relationships. This study was based on a Spanish Meet- Up Group to identify how language is a key factor to shape identity, decrease the effects of culture shock and allows the existence of different phenomenon' as hybridity.</p>		

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Abstract

Sharing experiences with different people and culture around the world is becoming easier thanks to globalization. This is the reason why, in today's society intercultural communication has become one of the most relevant theories in social sciences for the study of the concept of identity. One of the ways to build and shape identities is creating intercultural spaces, in which communication plays a main role as permitting the exchange between cultures. The Meet- Up Groups are one of those spaces that allows communication to hinder or facilitate the development of human relationships. This study was based on a Spanish Meet- Up Group to identify how language is a key factor to shape identity, decrease the effects of culture shock and allows the existence of different phenomenon' as hybridity.

Key concepts: intercultural communication, identity, culture shock, globalization, glocalization and hybridity.

Resumen

Compartir experiencias con diferentes personas y culturas alrededor del mundo se está haciendo cada vez más fácil gracias a la globalización. Por esto, hoy en día la comunicación intercultural se ha vuelto una de las teorías más relevantes en las ciencias sociales para el estudio del concepto de identidad. Una de las formas de construir y moldear identidad es la creación de espacios interculturales, donde la comunicación juega un papel primordial al permitir el intercambio de culturas. Los Meet- Up Groups, es uno de aquellos espacios interculturales que permiten identificar cómo la comunicación ayuda a facilitar o impedir el desarrollo de relaciones humanas. Este estudio se concentró en un Meet-Up de español para identificar cómo el lenguaje es un factor fundamental para moldear identidades, disminuir el choque cultural e, incluso, permitir el desarrollo de fenómenos como la hibridación.

Conceptos clave: comunicación intercultural, identidad, choque cultural, globalización, glocalización e hibridación.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Most of the fundamental ideas of science are essentially simple, and may, as rule, be expressed in a language comprehensible to everyone”- Albert Einstein-.

Sharing an identity with people from different places around the world is becoming easier every day. To find someone who speaks your own language, likes the same music you do, has seen the same films or has visited your home town is not longer a rarity in a world of globalized media, work and study.

As the author of this case study, I'm a result of such globalization. For more than five years I have been building friendships with people from different parts of the world, traveling around different countries and interested in meeting different cultures and languages. For this reason, while I was doing my masters course in Australia I decided to investigate the intercultural impact of a Spanish Meet-Up Group, a social event where people in Sydney come together to speak Spanish with each other.

The Spanish Meet-Up Group is organized via online site. People interested in speaking Spanish must register and create a profile detailing basic information about why they want to learn Spanish and/or what their relationship is to Spanish culture. Information is sent out concerning the next Meet- Up Group and members must register if they are attending. The Meet- Up Groups take place around Sydney, and indeed all over the world as 'meet-up' is a global phenomenon¹. The Spanish- English Exchange Meet- Up (SEEM) takes place once a week in St. James Hotel in Sydney City Centre. It is one of the most popular Meet- Up Groups, attracting around 40 participants each week.

¹ Meet-Up is a registered organization that began in the US in 2001. It's originator wanted to connect local communities using the Internet. There are now thousands of Meet-Up groups around the world converging many different topics and interests.

At the beginning I was not 100% attracted to the idea of attending a Spanish Meet-Up Group. It sounded absolutely boring even though I was curious about it. I was teaching Spanish in Sydney and I love people that want to learn my language, but the idea of the Meet-Up was a little tedious for me being a native speaker. I was imagining a classroom in which people would sit in front of each other, change seats after a few minutes and then someone would give “interesting topics” to discuss about. At the same time, it was exciting for me to watch people learning Spanish as I did with English. I know how embarrassing that situation it can be, to be learning a new language, how frustrating it is when people cannot understand what you are saying and how difficult it is to find the specific words to express your feelings and emotions. At the end, the research results were surprising to me.

Having said that, it is important to highlight that the main objectives of my research were to discover how speaking Spanish helps to shape identity and to examine the extent to which language hinders or facilitates intercultural relationships. Because of this, this report will start by exposing the literature, concepts and theories that would be used for this case study. Then, this paper will explain the methodology and tools that were used during the research. Thirdly, would be present the results of the Meet-Up followed by the respective discussion about them. Then, the author of this report will give her conclusions and implications for further similar studies. Finally, will be the references of the case study, which were made with the Harvard Referencing Style due to that is the referencing style use at Macquarie University.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Intercultural Communication

There are many theories that incorporate culture into communication. Culture is used to represent people and society is made of cultural diversity, which means they have become multicultural and is difficult to refer to a unique culture (Gopinath 2008, p. 62; Lewis 2003, p. 229). The integration of this concept of culture with communication can help to describe and explain how communication works across cultures and how people from different cultures communicate (Gudykunst 2005, p. 4). The concept of intercultural communication is taking more importance in social studies due to the growth of different communities, with different cultures, interacting with each other (Arasaratnam & Doerfel 2005, p.137).

Gudykunst (p. 179) refers to intercultural communication as communication “between people from different national cultures and many scholars limit it to face-to-face communication”. However, this is not the only concept or theory around the concept of intercultural communication due to its complexity it has been studied for more than 50 years (Arasaratnam & Doerfel 2005, p.138).

For the purposes of this paper some of the concepts that will be used in the study of the Spanish Meet- Up case are:

2.1 Identity

To understand identity as a fundamental feature of intercultural communication, it is necessary to start by explaining the importance of culture in communication and vice versa. For the purpose of this paper, one of the definitions that will be used is Philipsen’s. It can be summarized as “the function of communication in cultural communication is to maintain a healthy balance between the forces of individualism and community, to provide a sense of shared identity which nonetheless preserves individual dignity, freedom and creativity” (1981, p. 7, cited in Gudykunst, Lee & Nishida 2005).

Identity also refers to an emotional attachment that a person has to a particular group, whether personal, social or professional. If people find them self in uncomfortable situations, are more likely to hide behind their cultural identities, which they cling on to in defensive way (Barker 2004, p. 93). People can have more than one identity, depending on the environment where they are and where they develop. Identity is not a single concept and becomes increasingly more confusing because of globalization processes (Hall 1997, p. 22; Heath 2005; Barker 2004, p. 93). According to Gudykunst, Lee and Nishida (2005), identity can be defined as:

- a. Cultural identity: According to Collier & Thomas (p. 17), cultural identities depends on cultural interactions, which consist in a negotiation of common meanings, codes, rules and positive outcomes between different people that wants to involve with a different culture and gain acceptance into a group.
- b. Identity management: According to Cupach & Imahori (p. 17), cultural identity provides the way people behave and predict the motivations of people to act. “Intercultural communication occurs when interlocutors have different cultural identities and intracultural communication occurs when interlocutors share cultural identities”.
- c. Identity negotiation: Intercultural communication is the “the effective identity negotiation process between two interactans in a communication novel episode” (p. 73). Ting-Toomey identifies a process in which affective, cognitive and behavioural components mediate for an effective identity negotiation (cited in Arasaratnam & Doerfel 2005, p.142).
- d. A communication theory of identity: Hecht (p. 19) argues that identity comes from a “communication process”, in which identity is

fundamental part of all messages, even not all of them are about identity.

Madan (1994, p. 94) stated that the sense of finding an identity is usually the feeling that migrants are looking for when they cross the borders and they need to feel at home. He considered that the main issue is trying to define what people understands by home, which is usually related to the feeling of stability, but it changes depending on each person. Because of this feeling of *home sickness* migrants start communication processes to balance that feeling of hostility and they are successful when they find their 'roots' in the new community, the new identity.

Migrants usually find their roots when they feel comfortable in new cultures. When people find themselves in comfortable intercultural spaces, it facilitates the development of identity, due to the fact that when both cultures want to learn from each other, it creates a feeling of happiness that opens spaces where individuals develop their own identities (Mumford 1998, p. 149).

This process of finding identity is a result of a globalized world, which lead us to the next concepts: globalization and glocalization.

2.2 Communication in globalization processes

Communication in a globalized world gives us three key factor or theories for this case study: globalization, glocalization- the new buzzword in social studies-, and cross- cultural communication.

Firstly, during the 80's the term of globalization spread all around the world as a tsunami and between 1990 and 2004, the references of globalization increased more than a 50% in social journals (Smith 2006, p. 4). According to Hirts and Thompson (1999), "globalization has become a fashionable concept in the social sciences, a core dictum in the prescriptions of management gurus, and a catch phrase for journalist and politicians of every stripe".

Globalization is mostly defined in economic and capitalistic terms. It can be understood as a process of interaction and integration between people, groups, societies and nations in social, cultural political and/or economic issues (Smith 2006, p. 6; McGrew 2011 p. 18). In this capitalistic way, one of the most known writers about globalization is Chomsky, who state that “globalization happened to be geared to the interests of private power, manufacturing corporations and financial institutions, closely linked to powerful states (Chomsky 2000, para. 6)”.The issue here is that globalization goes beyond this concept and it can involve history, geography, sociology, communication and even more.

According to Claudio Baraldi (2006, p. 53), communication legitimizes the cultural interpretation of globalization. This is the reason why Baraldi defines globalization as a process that creates interdependence between different cultures and societies that for any cause were moved together (p.54). Globalization brings with itself cultural exchanges: it allows people to have new opportunities for dialogue, traditions can be threatened but at the same time pluralism may survive and it may promote a dialogue between all actors involved. All these are the results of the interdependence and intensity of relations, which are, according to Baraldi, the backbone of globalization.

The problem is that in cultural studies globalization has a more complex interpretation due to the difficulty of thinking about a standardization of culture and the existence of the phenomenon of glocalization (Lewis 2003, p. 229; Hall 1997, p. 19). Glocalization is initially a term used in marketing and it “has been deployed to express the global production of the local and the localization of the global” (Barker 2004, p. 77). This means that the two concepts (the global and the local) are inclusive and complementary in the process of globalization. According to Robertson (cited in Ritzer 2004, p. 77), the world is becoming increasingly pluralistic; individuals and local groups are having the empowerment to be located in the global arena and innovate as ‘creative agents’. Within this process of glocalization, *hybridity* is an important term. It refers to the mixture of the global

and the local, which will leads and homogenization of the culture, which is an ideal of globalization that will never be absolutely or complete, there is not a fully formed 'global mass culture' (Ritzer 2004, p. 78; Hall 1997, p. 28).

Is important to go further the term of *hybridity* because the mix of identities helps to understand the relations of power in this process of globalization and examine how media affects these cultural relations. According to García, Canclini (cited in Kraidy 2010, pp. 446) the phenomenon of hybridity change all the concepts of power due to it makes people think about the possibility that everybody can be empower and not just some. Which means that any culture may influence another in cultural dynamics and the environments would be create because of the identities, practices and people that developed them (Kraidy 2010, pp. 446). In today's society communication is more than a process of exchanging messages, is also a way of globalization that helps people integrate meanings and create different cultures. Uribe refers to hybridity as: (Uribe-Jongbloed (forthcoming), p. 51):

This process involves a negotiation that is rarely carried out on even grounds and may lead to 'rough adaptations of the local cultures to the hegemonic and transnational cultural paradigms' (Roveda Hoyos, 2008: 62). They are uneven spaces, because imported cultural goods, or those elaborated by a majority culture, have the quality standards and supposed superiority granted to them by the hegemonic economic and structural advantage of the cultural industries where they were originally produced.

2. 3 Anxiety/ Uncertainty Management theory

Gudykunst (1995) theory is based on the interaction of individuals with strangers and how they behave in front of a. The Anxiety and Uncertainty Management theory (AUM) tries to explain what happened with strangers when they communicate in a new culture. Especially because there is usually always a society that generates feelings of anxiety and uncertainty over the new culture. The feeling of anxiety and uncertainty helps to understand and even predict the behaviour of strangers interacting with individuals. Gudykunst states that (1994, pp. 70):

The only bases we have for communicating with strangers are their group memberships and our stereotypes about the group. Stranger' communication may be based on any (or more) of their social identities. To communicate effectively, we need to understand which social identities are influencing strangers' behaviour and how they define themselves with respect to these identities.

AUM theory can be explained as the following chart:

Anxiety	Uncertainty
<u>Too high</u> : stranger communicate on 'automatic pilot', which means that interpret host behaviour with their own cultural codes. Also, it limits the capacity of strangers to interpret messages.	<u>Too high</u> : strangers cannot interpret messages or predict host behaviour.
<u>Too Low</u> : is not easy for strangers to find motivation to communicate.	<u>Too Low</u> : stranger become overconfident.
When anxiety and uncertainty are <u>too high</u> strangers find difficult to communicate with the host.	

Source: Gudykunst 1995 cited in Gudykunst, Lee & Nishida 2005, pp.23.

2.4 Culture Shock

Migration can be a stressful process that affects the mental health and emotions of migrants. The emotional & psychological processes of migrating are discussed through culture shock theory (Pantelidou & Craig 2006, pp. 777). According to Brealy (2001, pp.1-2):

Culture shock is the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment. This psychological construct of culture shock has been used to describe the adjustment process in its emotional, psychological, behavioural, cognitive and physiological impact on individuals. The term of culture shock was first introduced by Kalvero Oberg to describe the anxiety resulting from not knowing what to do in a new culture.

According to Mumford (1998, p. 149), impotence is one of the main aspects of cultural shock and it creates anxiety when trying to integrate into a new culture. Also, according to Brealy, the symptoms more often found in people that experience culture shock are:

1. Feeling isolated
2. Anxiety and worry
3. Reduction in job performance
4. High energy
5. Helplessness

These symptoms are the reason why culture shock is familiar for travellers, due to it helps to understand the feelings and process that a person have when arrives to a new culture (Marx 2001, p.5).

For this case study, this will be one of the theories most relevant for the discussion of results. It is expected that the Meet-Up is a space that allows decrease feelings of culture shock. Identity will be another key concept, because it expects people to join to create new identities, even to overcome barriers that may arise between host and immigrant culture. As the author of this research is going to be part of the sample group, her perceptions will be taken into account in the discussion of results as a researcher and as a participant.

2.5 State of the art

Rundstrom's (2005) research focus was "to identify and measure one possible outcome of study abroad: the improvement of intercultural communication skills" due to the author wanted to discover if now a days is necessary to develop some special communication skills to study abroad. He used some of the writers used in this case study for the theory as Gudykunst, Kim and Ting Toomey.

He used two groups of students: the abroad group' students of fall 2002 semester, 44 in total, and the campus group students, 48. He sent the survey via email and got returned just 52, which were the ones that he used at the end for the analysis. With this survey he measures the exposure of the students with other cultures and how that will increase intercultural skills.

The results of Rundstrom's study showed that study abroad students have more contact with other cultures than campus students and this helps to develop more intercultural communication skills. Also, the author of this case discover how the ones that exposure to other cultures help to give better predictions about intercultural communication, than those that do not share with other cultures. One of the factors that more influenced the results was the location of the previous semester of students, gender, culture, religion, ethnicity and age.

The case gives data sample and analysis of a small part of the students due to survey was sent via email. Also, they did not show dramatic difference because the small size of the tested group.

Joan F. Fee is another researcher that has talk about the topic used in this case study. Fee's research was about Latino immigrants and guest bilingual teachers, what are the issues that they face when arrive to teach bilingual classes, especially in Midwestern urban school district (2010, p.392).

The sample group he used was consisted of 31 bilingual immigrant and guest teachers from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Colombia and Spain. He used 90 minutes

focus groups sessions with the bilingual teachers, five with the master's students and five with their mentors. He helped him with the first focus groups to guide the questions of next groups.

In the results, Fee showed some relevant answers that he got from the focus groups and realize that all immigrants he interviewed face some kind of obstacle are being foreign teachers. The results also showed that the help of mentors given by the schools is not a big factor that helps them to balance this feeling of hostility into the new culture. For the group sample the cohorts where more helpful for them.

As a critic of this study, it is recommended to analyse further the results and try to find better indicators to discuss them due to in some parts of the discussion gives the impression that is given an opinion and not so a deep analysis.

3. METHODOLOGY: Sampling and data collection

This research was made by quantitative method, even it used qualitative method at the moment the researchers gave their pre conceptions to the creation of the survey applied. Quantitative method was choose because it facilitates to identify a sample and populations, collect data, analyzing and interpretate results in a consistent and faster way (Cresswel 2009, p. xxiv).

For the purposes of this case, they were two researchers that at the same time acted as participants of the Spanish Meet- Up Group. The researchers used a self-reflection approach that consisted on by explaining their bases and pre-conceptions. After that, it was create a survey that was applied during the Meet-Up.

At the beginning of the questionnaire was create questions that would help to get general information about the attendants to the Meet- Up Group. This was done for two reasons: firstly, to identify if they were more men or women in the event and their nationality, this would help to identify if they were host, immigrants or sojourns. Secondly, taking into account the discussion of María Catalina and Charlotte, was necessary to identify if they have lived in a Spanish speaking country or not, why and for how long, to identify some influences of Latin culture before they have lived in Australia.

After that were developed 10 questions that helped to identify the reasons for attending to the Spanish Meet- Up Group, how often members attended or if it was the first time, if they usually go to another intercultural events, how do they feel about this intercultural group, how much they learn about a new culture, how important is language for them and what influences their identity to attend this kind of events (Annex 1: Intercultural Sydney Questionnaire).

The questionnaire was hand out to members of the Meet- Up Group on October 19th 2011, St. James Hotel, 114 Casterlreagh Street, Sydney, Australia.

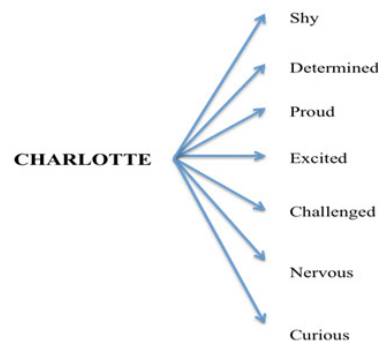
These were the self reflection made by the researchers:

Thoughts of Charlotte Green (British citizen, native Spanish speaker, never had attended to a Meet-Up Group before)

I am 100% attracted to the ides of attending a Spanish Meet-Up Group because it provides me with an opportunity to practice my Spanish. Having lived for 6 months in Spain and 2 years in Mexico, I am keen at any moment to develop my language skills, particularly whilst living in a non-Spanish speaking country. Language practice is perhaps the most important motive for me as I now see it as an important career attribute. Secondary, to practicing the language, the event allows me to reconnect with the Latin culture. I find the Latin culture to be very lively, friendly, colorful and liberating. I enjoy meeting Spanish speakers because it reminds me of the time I spent in Spain and Mexico. Whilst I am happy and interested in talking to any Spanish speaker, I am immediately drawn to and excited by people from either Spain or Mexico. This is because I am able to connect with them on a deeper level, by talking about places, food and nuances of their culture that I am aware of and have personally experienced. This connection is more of a 'personal reconnection' with my own memories and experiences. By speaking Spanish someone from Spain or Mexico, I am highlighting a small part of my own identity that was shaped during my time in those countries. While I do not identify myself as Mexican or Spanish, my identity as a

foreigner in Spain or Mexico does become more important than my British identity in this type of intercultural situation.

How do you feel about attending a Spanish Meet- Up Group?

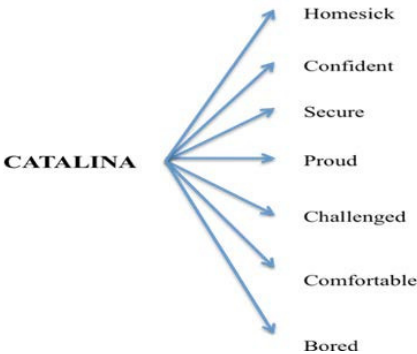


Thoughts of María Catalina (Colombian citizen, native Spanish speaker, never had attended to a Meet-Up Group before)

The idea of attending a Meet-up sounds absolutely boring to me. However, it is exciting for me to see how many people want to learn Spanish. For me it has been a challenge to learn English and I love to help people learning my own language. I know how embarrassing can you feel when you are trying to say something and people do not understand you or when you do not find the specific words to express your feelings. The problem is that I do not think there are going to be many native Spanish speakers so it would be frustrating for some members who will not be able to practice their language with native speakers. I think there are going to be people that are interested not just in the language but in the culture because they have some kind of Latin or Spanish influence. It makes me feel proud how important the Spanish language has become in the world and how easy it is for me to travel and communicate with many people, in English or Spanish. I would

like to see if the Meet-up really helps people to improve their relationships here and identify with other people. For me it was really hard to find friends when I arrived in Sydney and I would like to see how other people manage these kinds of feelings, especially with language.

How do you feel about attending a Spanish Meet- Up Group?



4. RESULTS

To this specific Spanish Meet- Up Group attended about 50 people, which is an approximation due to the informality of the event that allows people enter and leave the bar constantly. Not all the results would be expose due to this research was done in Australia and the author living now in Colombia has digitalized only the results that were thought as relevant for the case study. The results of some questions were divided between native and non- native English speakers because of the influence of the language talked in Australia.

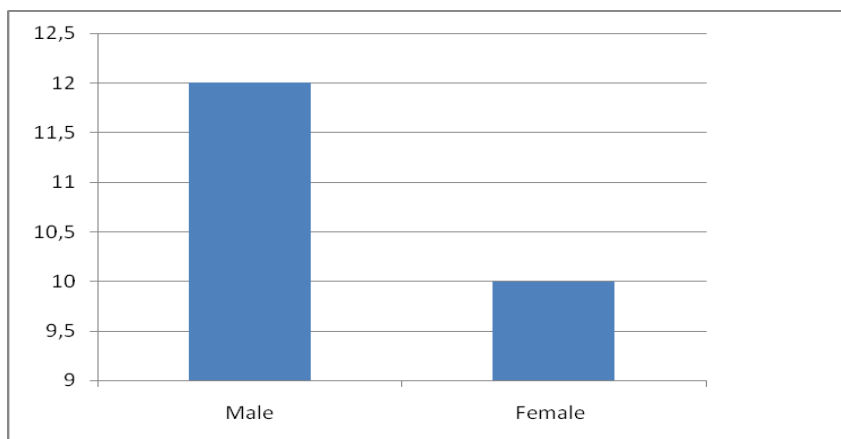
General Information

In this section were omitted the results of the following questions due to they generated confusion among participants and most of them did not respond, specially because most of them were Australian:

- How long have you been in Australia?
- How long will you be in Australia?
- Why did you come to Australia?
- work / study /holiday / personal relationship / family / other

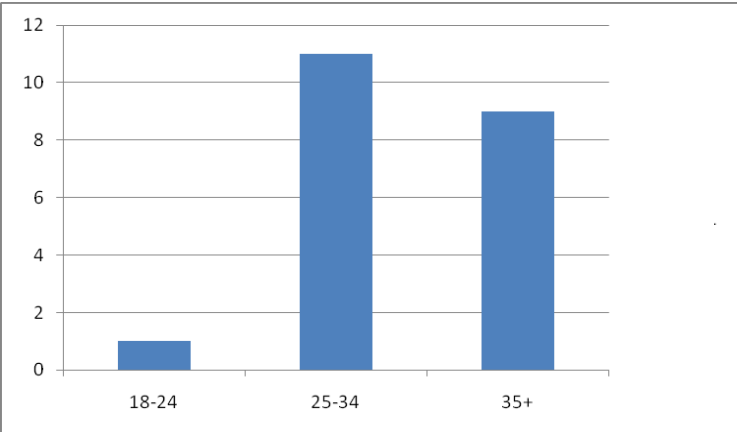
Gender

To this Spanish Meet- Up Group attended 12 men and 10 women.



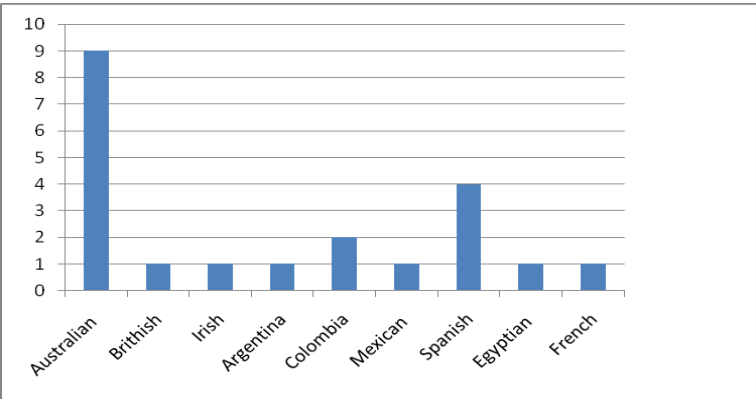
Age

Most people who attended the Meet- Up was between 25- 34 years old.



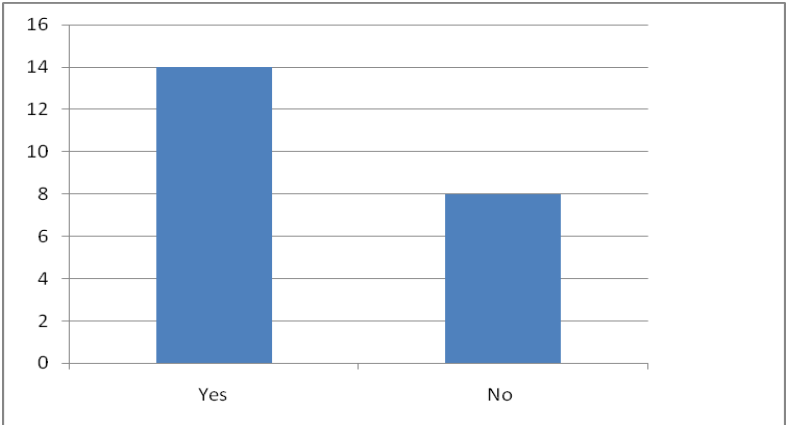
Nationality

9 of the attendants were Australian followed by 4 Spanish.



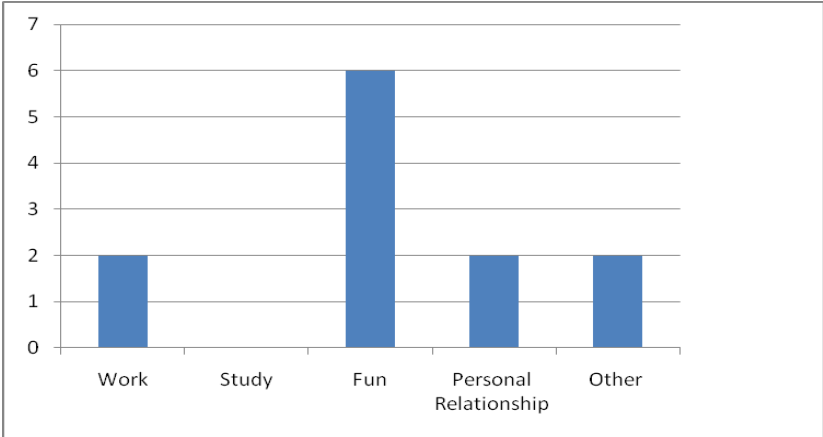
Have you ever lived in a Spanish speaking country?

14 of the respondents answered they have lived in a Spanish speaking country.



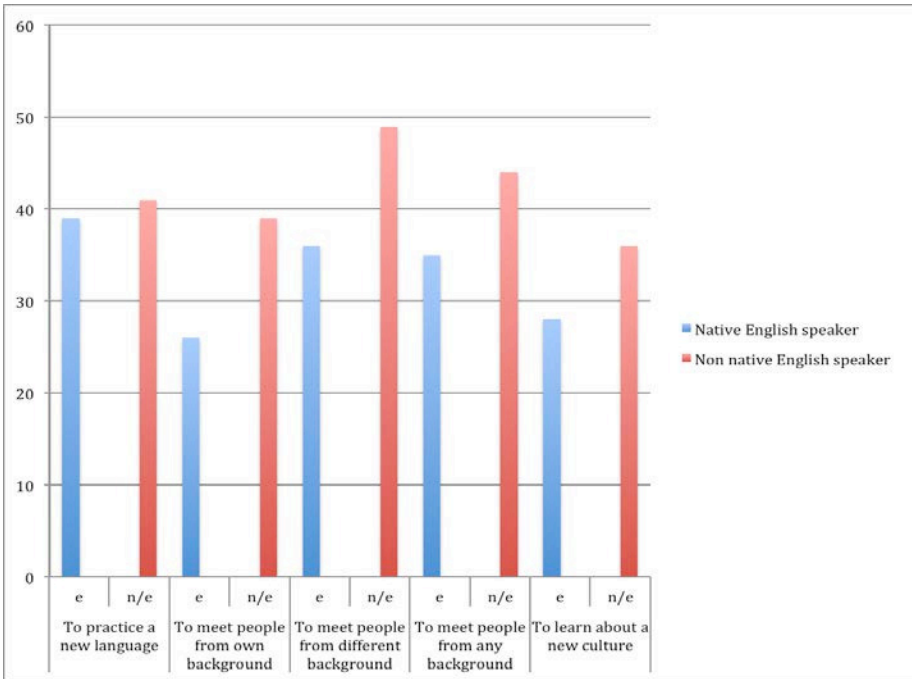
Why are you interested in learning Spanish?

Most of the participants responded they want to learn Spanish for fun. This question was respond only by non native Spanish speakers.



Questions

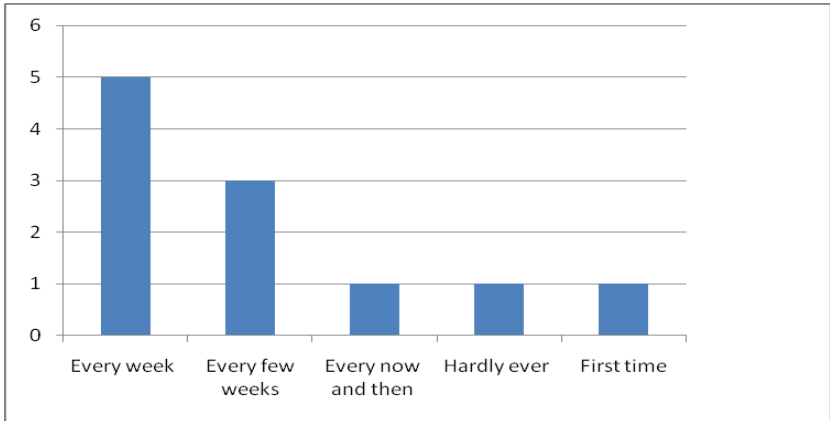
Question #1: Rate from one to five the importance of the following reasons for coming to the Spanish Meet- Up Group (1 means least important- 5 is most important). (Annex 2: Rate from one to five the importance of the following reasons for coming to the Spanish Meet-Up Group).



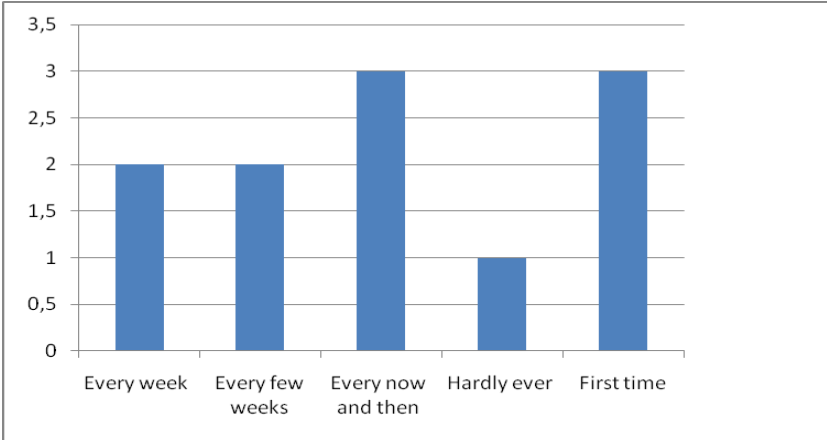
Question #2: How often do you come to the Spanish Meet- Up Group?

In this question was not given the option of first time attending, it had to be added due to the responses of some of the participants.

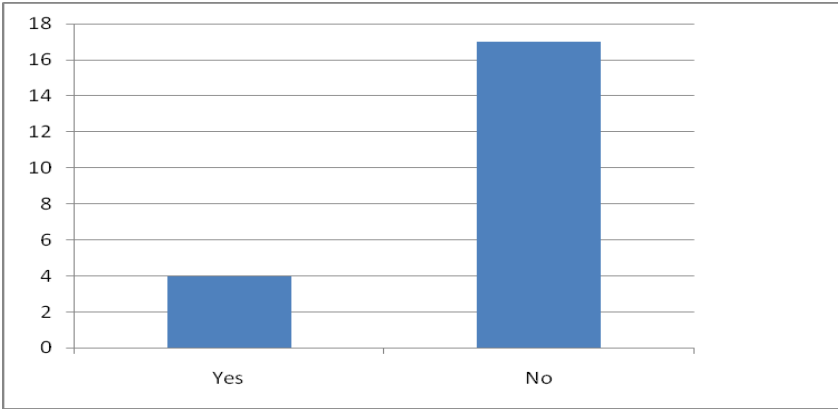
Native English speakers



Non- native English speakers



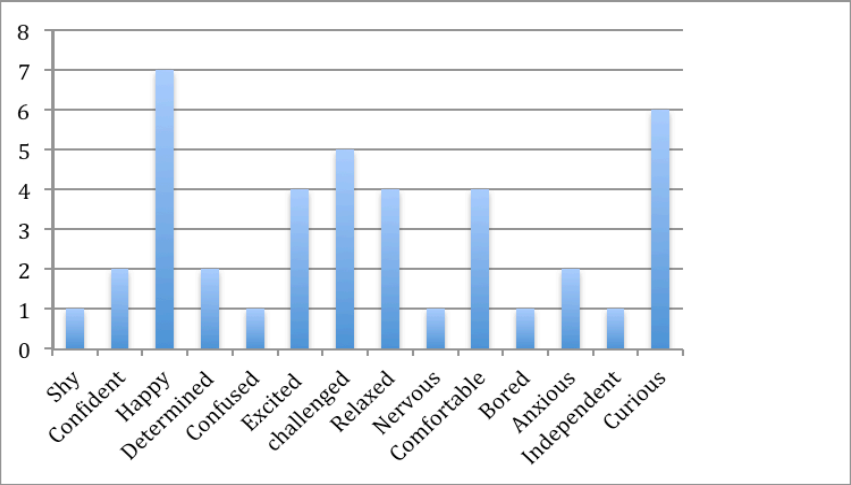
Question #3: Do you go to any other intercultural groups or events?



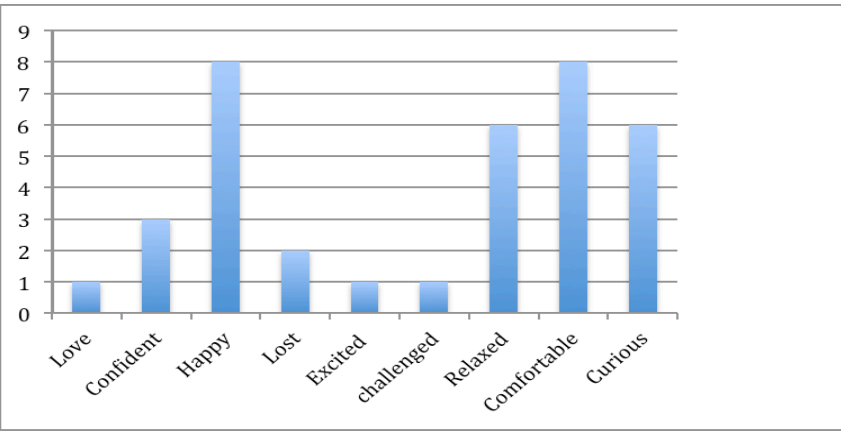
Question 4: How do you feel when you come to the Meet-Up Group?

Happiness was the common and most relevant feeling between participants.

Native English speakers

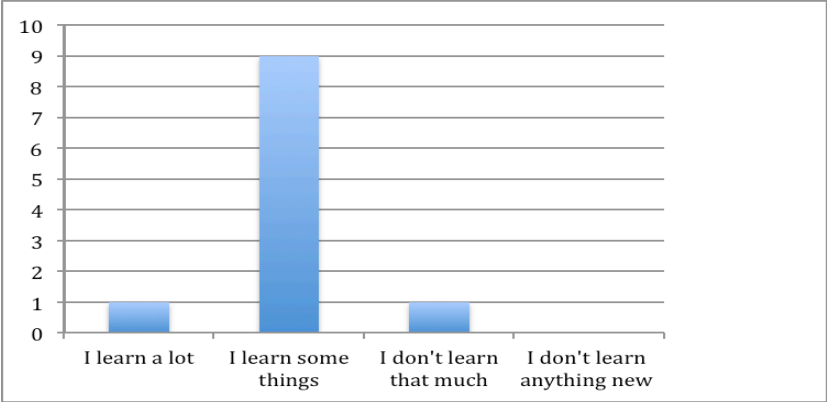


Non- native English speakers

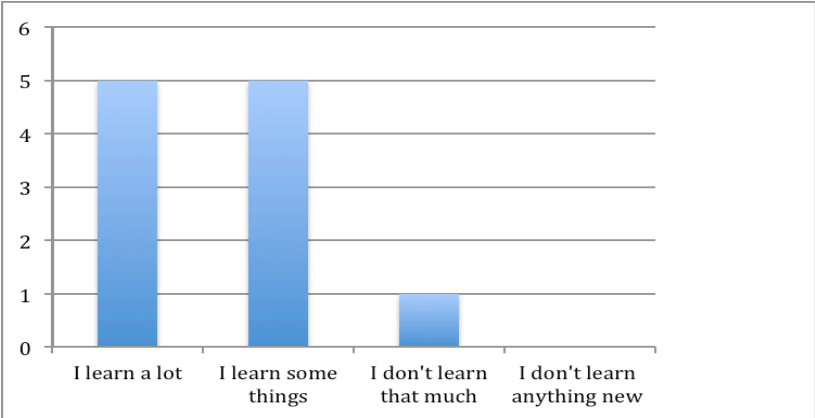


Question #5: How much do you learn about a new culture when you attend the Meet- Up Group?

Native English speakers

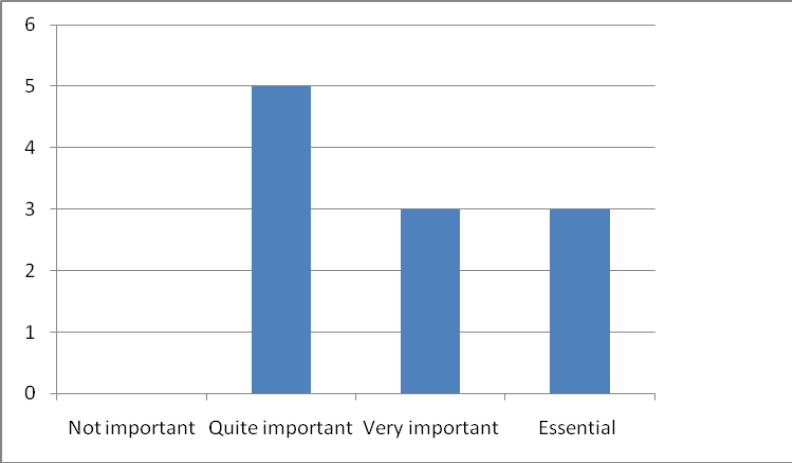


Non- native English speakers

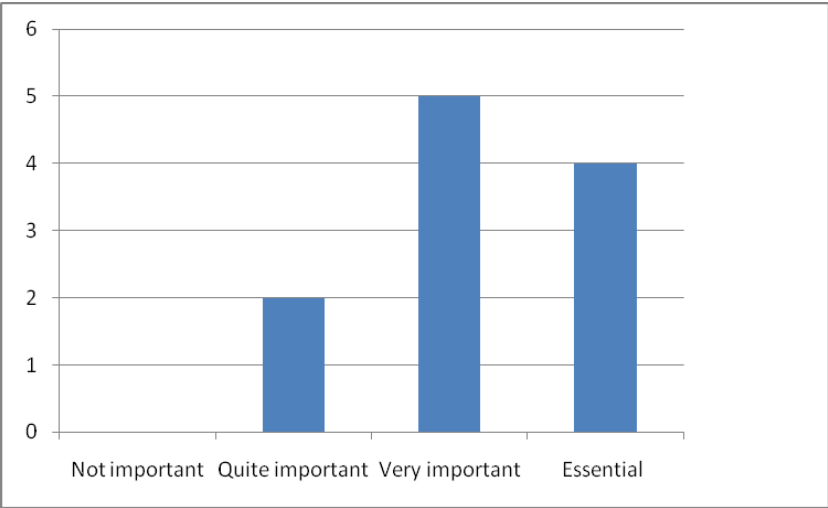


Question#6: How important is language to you in terms of feeling part of a culture?

Native English speakers



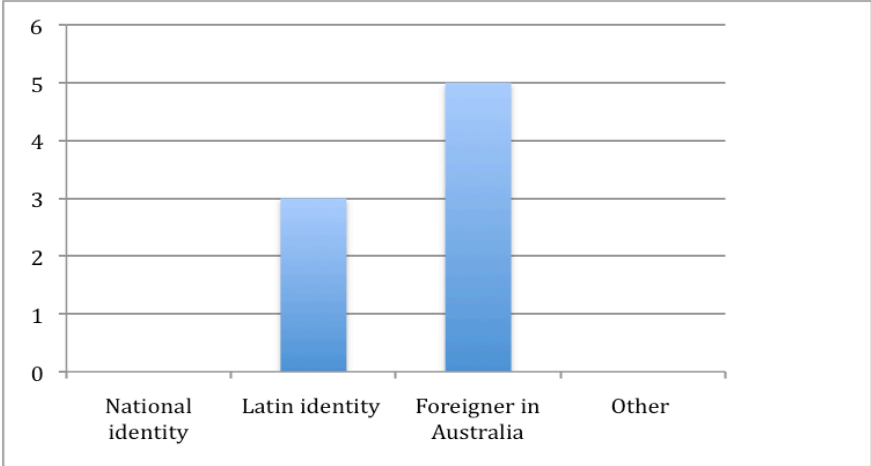
Non- native English speakers



Questions from 7 to 9 were omitted due to created confusion between participants, but the answers for question 10 were relevant to the purposes of this case study.

Question #10: When you are at the Spanish Meet- Up Group, which of the following identities is strongest for you?

Due to the confusion of this question, just native Spanish speakers answered.



5. DISCUSSION

The results helped to show that for native English speakers the main motive for attending the Meet-up is to learn Spanish whilst the most important reason for non-native English speakers is to meet people from different backgrounds. This reflects the desire of the immigrants or visitors to want to integrate with members of the host culture, which helps to decrease culture shock effects. The responses for this question show that for non-Australians, in order to feel comfortable in a new cultural environment, making new friends is more important or helpful than simply having a better knowledge of the English.

This is matched by the findings in question 5 that asked to what extent the participants use the Meet-Up Group to learn about a new culture and showed that the event is used by non-native English speakers as a way to learn about a new culture. Most non-native English speakers believed that they learn a lot about the host culture during the Spanish meet-up, whereas native English speakers, do not feel they learn a lot about the Spanish culture. This is somewhat ironic given that the Meet-up event is mostly held in Spanish.

Looking at the results of question 5 we can assume that the event is viewed by non-native speakers as an opportunity to integrate culturally into the host nation by learning about the host culture. This is one of the actions that immigrants can take to decrease impotence, anxiety and uncertainty feeling that present at being with a host culture, specially this Meet-Up that was full of Australians. The Meet-Up groups help non-native English speakers to 'break the ice' and merge into a new cultural environment by talking in their own language, thereby taking away an element of 'impotence'. It allows them to mix within a new culture in a setting that is comfortable and gain first hand knowledge of Australian social customs. On the other hand, the Meet-Up does not allow for English speakers to learn about Spanish speaking cultures to the same extent.

My own observation of the night shows that the event was much more 'Australian' than Latin or Spanish in style. The meeting was in a bar, there was more drinking than eating and the body language was very Anglo- Saxon style (less touching than in Latin cultures and people sat at acceptable distances). It was a Spanish-speaking event that took place in an Australian cultural setting.

The intention of question 4 was to identify people's feelings and attitudes towards the Meet-Up event. It feels pleasant to have found out that overwhelmingly in both cultures, people were 'happy' to attend. This shows us that overall the Spanish meet-up is a positive intercultural event that takes place in Sydney, one that people are happy to be a part of.

Comfort was another one of the central emotions selected by the two groups. Comfort is important in intercultural situations because it allows identities to flow. In uncomfortable situations, people are more likely to hide behind their cultural identities, which they cling to in a defensive way. A more obvious 'them' and 'us' becomes apparent in uncomfortable situations.

This result agrees with Hall (1997), Heath (2005) and Barker (2004) theories which argue that people can have more than one identity due to globalization. This is why a comfortable intercultural space facilitates the development of identity, through interaction and integration of people. Even for English speakers whose main purpose is to learn Spanish, identity is being created through this process. They identify with other Spanish learners or with Spanish speakers who show interest in the host culture. The general understanding that both cultures want to learn from and about each other creates a comfortable space that permits participants to show their own personal identity. This shows how communication and language are not only part of personal identity, but help to create new identities and even new cultures. This evokes hybridity concept due to it can be prove that there is not one focus of power and all participants are empowered by language, creating a new identity.

The results on question 10 show that during the Meet-Up group, Latin identity and identity as a foreigner in Australia are more relevant to Spanish speakers than national identity. Even the identity as 'other' outweighs the cultural identity of being Latino. This shows that in intercultural situations, identity is not just about accumulating the identity of the host culture or feeling more 'Australian'. Rather identity is about feeling as 'other' and playing a role in the host culture, being foreigner but still feeling comfortable playing that role. Perhaps feeling like a foreigner in Australia is more comfortable than feeling Mexican in Australia, for example, because the latter is more out of place. It is the feeling of being in the correct place, without being surrounded by family and close friends.

6. CONCLUSION

It became apparent through the research and analysis that intercultural events are rarely asymmetrical between the different cultures involved. The motives for attending the event differed between the migrants and the host nationals. For the latter, it was an opportunity to practice a new language. For the former, it was a chance to meet new people in their new setting and to learn about the host culture. Both of these are important for migrants to work through their culture shock.

It was clear however that on both sides, a new culture and new identity was emerging. Spanish and English speakers were talking to each other in a mix of language and finding common interests with each other. English speakers identified with their Spanish experiences and Spanish speakers began to conform to Australian social customs. And essential to this was a comfortable space, a place where both cultures were able to get together with the accepted intention of integrating culturally through language.

The final observation on the project was how surprised I was by the amount of Australians so keen to take part in a Spanish meet-up. While Australia claims to be a very multicultural country, it still remains separated from the rest of the world geographically and does not have a very long history of cultural migration. Nevertheless, it was inspiring to see so many Australians taking a real interest in a new language and culture so far from its own, and being welcoming to migrants whether they were visiting, studying or working. The Spanish Meet- Up Group, in my opinion, was a true advocate for an intercultural Sydney.

The survey did not have qualitative questions that permit to identify and explore more emotions and feelings of the tested groups. Also, there were many Australians in the Meet-Up and the survey was not prepared for them, there were a lot of questions about how long they were living in Sydney and clearly those did not apply for citizens.

For further studies I recommend to do the same process with the survey, which means ask person by person the questionnaire due to that way people respond everything or you are able to get better answers for some questions that are not so clear or do not apply for all the tested group. Also, I recommend to give the opportunity to give opinions about the event because some feelings could be missing in the questionnaire and will give better results.

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Annex 1: Intercultural Sydney Questionnaire
The Sydney Spanish Language Group, St. James Hotel
Wednesday 19th October

GENERAL INFORMATION

Male / Female Age: 18 – 25 / 25 – 35 / 35+

Nationality _____

Profession _____

How long have you been in Australia? _____

How long will you be in Australia? _____

Why did you come to Australia?
work / study / holiday / personal relationship / family / other: _____

Have you ever lived in a Spanish speaking country? Yes / No
If yes, when and for how long? _____

Why are you interested in learning Spanish?
work / study / fun / personal relationship / other: _____

ALL MEMBERS

1. Rate from one to five the importance of the following reasons for coming to the Spanish Meet-Up Group. (1 means least important – 5 is most important)

- a. To practice a new language. _____
- b. To meet people from your own cultural background _____
- c. To meet people from a different cultural background _____
- d. To meet new people from any cultural background _____
- e. To learn about a new culture. _____

2. How often do you come to the Spanish Meet Up group?

Every week Every few weeks Every now and then Hardly ever

3. Do you go to any other intercultural groups or events?

Yes / No If yes, which ones? _____

4. How do you feel when you come to the meet up group?

(circle all that apply)

homesick	love	shy	confident	happy	sad	lonely	lost
insecure	protected	secure		determined	focused		
dependent							
confused	proud	excited	challenged	relaxed	nervous		
comfortable	emotional	bored	anxious	independent	curious		

5. How much do you learn about a new culture when you attend the Meet Up Group?

I learn a lot

I learn some things

I don't learn that much

I don't learn anything new.

6. How important is language to you in terms of feeling part of a culture?

Not important Quite important Very important Essential

NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

7. How much do you learn about your *own* culture when you attend the Spanish Meet up group?

I learn a lot.

I learn some things.

I don't learn that much.

I don't learn anything new.

8. To what extent do you learn about cultural differences between Spanish speaking countries at the Spanish Meet Up Group?

I learn a lot.

I learn some things.

I don't learn that much.

I don't learn anything new.

NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS

9. How important has the Spanish Meet Up Group been in helping you settle into Australian society?

Not important Quite important Very important Essential

10. When you are at the Spanish Meet-up Group, which of the following identities is strongest for you?

National identity

Latin identity

Foreigner in Australia

Other:

Annex 2: Rate from one to five the importance of the following reasons for coming to the Spanish Meet-Up Group

Rating Ops	To practice a new language		Meet people from own background		Meet people from different background		meet people from any background		learn about a new culture	
	ENG	NON- ENG	ENG	NON- ENG	ENG	NON- ENG	ENG	NON- ENG	ENG	NON- ENG
1	5		2		3		4		1	
2	5		1		5		1		5	
3	5		2		4		4		4	
4	5		2		4		4		2	
5	5		2		3		4		1	
6	5		1		4		3		2	
7	1				2		3			
8	1		5		3		2		4	
9	1		5		2		4		3	
10	5		1		4		3		2	
11	1		5		2		3		4	
12		3		5		4		1		2
13		5		5		5		5		4
14		2		3		4		4		4
15		5		3		5		5		5
16		4		3		5		5		5
17		5		5		5		4		3
18		1		3		4		5		2
19		5		1		4		3		2
20		5		5		4		4		3
21		1		5		5		5		4
22		5		1		4		3		2
SUBTOTAL	39	41	26	39	36	49	35	44	28	36
TOTAL	80		65		85		79		64	