

# The Value Of An English Conversation Group Only For Women



Ethnography in a Community Context (EPS 199):University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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## Overview

University of Illinois has the second largest population of international students in the US. This semester (Spring 2013), there are 4176 undergraduate and 4027 graduate students from around the world.

International students may encounter many difficulties when adapting to their new life in the university. English Corner is a registered students' organization which seeks to provide international students with the opportunity to practice their conversational English with American students, to form relationships, and to develop cross-cultural experiences.

Under the English Corner, there is a newly established conversation group which is only for woman. We want to find out the value of English Conversation Group only for women, especially for international students.

## Method

Participant Observation: participated in the activities held by English Conversation Group only for women

Questionnaire: delivered questionnaires to all the women who joined the English Corner (including 2 Caucasian, 12 Asian, 1 unclear)

Interviews with: an organizer of English conversation group only for women, an American student, two international students.

Based on what we did, we tried to figure out the following questions:

- What activities did English corner only for women hold?
- What are the values of English Conversation group only for women, especially for international students?
- Were these activities truly helpful to realize the values and in what aspects can we find it out?

## Findings

### Have fun

"In English Conversation Group only for women, we have some mutual interests and some specific topics to talk about, which is fun."

### Cultural Exchange

"I share an American perspective on things."

"Both the Conversation Group and English Corner are essential parts for a university. Especially for the international students here, they can offer a place or chance to meet friends from other countries and cultures."

### Adapt to U of I

"Sometimes it's not easy to get involved into the US society directly, maybe because of language difficulties and cultural differences. English conversation group is more inclusive and international students can gain more confidence and learn cultures of the US or even other countries more easily. It helps international students to get involved in the life here."

### Practice English

"It helps practice teaching English and helps me gain confidence when speaking with new people."

"My English can be improved through this English Conversation Group only for woman."

"We have more opportunities to speak English. We can choose a topic, which is more relaxing and we can learn more things."



## Emotion Needs: Love and Support

"I think this group is important because it creates friendships and helps people connect with others."

"I do not have many friends here in UIUC, and this conversation group offers me a good chance to make new friends."

"Most importantly, I met some lovely friends here."

## Recommendations

1. Corporate with other Registered Students Organizations and departments of University of Illinois. (Like ISSS)
2. Provide more choices of time for participants.
3. Promote it on the Quad Day and Activity Day in the public area.

Bibliography

<http://illinois.collegiatelink.net/organization/englishcorner/about>

<http://www.iss.illinois.edu/about/statistics.html>