The English Conversation Group: A Library-led Virtual Program for International Students

Shuzhen Zhao
Rong Luo
Christine Sabina
Karen Pillon
        University of Windsor

Abstract

Academic libraries play a key role in helping international students adjust to a new learning environment. The abrupt halt to in-person activities due to COVID-19 meant that many libraries had to find new and creative ways of utilizing technology to continue serving patrons. In fall 2020, the English Conversation Group (ECG) at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library pivoted to offering virtual sessions for the first time in the program's history due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The sessions have been successful in continuing to support international students and have allowed for students to engage with the university, the library, and each other despite being physically separated. The authors detail the process, challenges, and outcomes of hosting English Conversation Group using Blackboard Collaborate for international students. This case study provides limited empirical evidence for libraries who have an interest in offering a web-based English conversation program in order to support international students.

Keywords: academic library, English Conversation Group, COVID-19, international students, virtual program

Dr. Shuzhen Zhao (zhaoszf@uwindsor.ca) is the head of the Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services department at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library. She is also the liaison librarian for the University of Windsor's International Student Centre and teaches information literacy skills to students enrolled in the English Language Improvement Program (ELIP).

Dr. Rong Luo (rluo@uwindsor.ca) is a Learning Specialist and Statistical Consultant in the Academic Data Centre at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library. She is also one of moderators for Leddy Library's English Conversation Group program.

Ms. Christine Sabina (csabina@windsorpubliclibrary.com) is a Public Service Librarian at the Windsor Public Library. In her previous role at the University of Windsor, she contributed to the Leddy Library's English Conversation Group program.

Ms. Karen Pillon (karen@uwindsor.ca) is an Associate University Librarian at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library. Passionate about students and the services that can help them grow and learn, Karen has worked with a broad range of students at the Leddy Library, including international students.

Academic libraries play a key role in supporting the success of all students, including international students. As the number of international students enrolled in Canadian universities continues to grow (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 2018), academic libraries must be prepared to understand the unique challenges, experiences, and needs of international students in order to support them. Indeed, the proliferation of studies about international students and academic libraries in the last few decades indicates a recognition of the need to better serve international students (Click et al., 2017). Nonetheless, previous research has found that international students are underserved by academic libraries (Knight et al., 2010) and face library anxiety (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 2001). Through specific initiatives and programs, academic libraries have an opportunity to engage with and support the needs of their international student patrons. In doing so, academic libraries will better fulfil their mission of supporting the academic pursuits of the entire campus community.

The Leddy Library at the University of Windsor has offered a unique and valuable program for supporting international students since 2013: the English Conversation Group (ECG). For the last seven years, international students have gathered at the Leddy Library to practice speaking English, learn about life in Canada and the University of Windsor, and connect with others. The program occurs once a week during the fall and winter semesters and is organized and facilitated by the librarians. The sessions have a weekly topic relevant to student life in Canada and sometimes draw on the expertise of guest speakers from other campus departments and the wider community. Since its inception, the program has been an important means of supporting international students and creating connections between the Leddy Library and international students. When the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the shutdown of in-person library services at the University of Windsor, the English Conversation Group team had to change the delivery mode of the program from in-person to virtual. In fall 2020, the Leddy Library offered English Conversation Group remotely for the first time. While the process of transitioning to a virtual environment had some challenges, overall the program has been successful in continuing to support international students and has enabled students to engage with the university, the library, and each other despite being physically separated.

The purpose of this case study is to provide an overview of the web-based English Conversation Group for international students at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library. This program offers a low cost, low barrier to entry method for international students to practice and improve English language skills, while at the same time making use of the library's role as a hub for students' learning and engaging in university life. This case study will describe the format, outreach, logistics, and outcomes of the virtual program.

Literature Review

As the number of international students grows in universities across the world, academic libraries need to be attentive to the needs and experiences of their international student patrons. International students can face significant challenges in their new academic, social, and cultural environments (Pillon & Umetsubo, 2020). Language barriers, communication difficulties, dealing with cultural differences, and adapting to a new educational environment are all common issues faced by international students in higher education (Baron & Strout-Dapaz, 2001; Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Morrissey & Given, 2006; Zhai, 2004).

As academic and social hubs on campus, academic libraries are well-positioned to support the particular needs of international students. Many academic libraries are becoming increasingly aware of the need to better serve international students and have been implementing specific initiatives designed to support this student group. Instructional sessions about library research, academic skills, information literacy, English language learning, and related topics are a popular type of academic library program for supporting international students (Doucette, 2019; Evans, 2006; Gale, 2006; Herring, 2014; Liu & Pillon, 2016; Martin et al., 2012; Singer, 2005). The creation and provision of electronic and print materials, tools, and resources intended specifically for international students, such as online library instructional material, multilingual information, and language learning materials, are also common in academic libraries looking to better meet the needs of their international student patrons (Bordonaro, 2019; Buckner & French, 2007; Gale, 2006; Singer, 2005). Other approaches include staff training (Bordonaro, 2019; Singer, 2005) and asking international student patrons directly about their challenges, experiences, and needs in an attempt to improve library services (Doucette, 2019; He, 2019).

Outside of higher education, many public libraries offer programs specifically for newcomers and English language learners, including language programming and instruction, as part of public libraries' mandate of serving and strengthening the community (Scott, 2011). English conversation circles that provide a space for participants to improve English language skills and learn more about a new culture are common in public libraries in Canada and the United States (Elturk, 2000; James, 2003; Hill, 2013; Library Journal, 2017; Mabi, 2018; Storms, 2012). While many academic library initiatives are intended to help international students academically, public library programming geared towards non-native English speakers occurs in a more casual environment that emphasizes social and cultural factors as well as language learning. Conversation circles help participants improve their language skills, but they can have other benefits as well. In a study of a conversation-based public library program

for newcomers to Sweden, Johnston (2016) found that program participants improved their language skills, learned more about Swedish society and opportunities in Sweden, and connected with new people. In another study about public library language cafes in Norway, Johnston & Audunson (2019) contend that conversation-based programming can lead to public sphere participation and "political integration" for newcomers to Sweden (p. 229). Scott (2011) emphasizes the important role of public libraries in building and sustaining strong communities and suggests that libraries' provision of English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and resources is an important facet of that role (p. 204).

Although conversation groups are not common in academic libraries the way they are in public libraries, conversation-based programs have the potential to be successful in postsecondary library settings. Pillon & Umetsubo (2020) found that the in-person English Conversation Group at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library facilitated "transformative learning" through information literacy (p. 122). Moreover, the "Human Library" initiative at Brock University Libraries described by Bordonaro (2020) was, although not a conversation group, a program based around conversation that "showcas[ed] the library as a friendly environment in which people from different cultures could connect with each other personally" in addition to providing a space for participants to "practice speaking conversational English in a non-threatening environment" (p. 101).

Providing library services to support patrons became much more difficult starting in March 2020. All over the world, libraries all of types have increased and emphasized their provision of virtual resources and services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions., 2020). Pre-pandemic, many academic libraries offered some kind of remote service in the form of LibGuides, online instructional material, virtual reference services via email or online chat, and 24/7 access to electronic library collections off-campus. However, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 and the widespread shutdowns that followed, many academic libraries were forced to pivot to virtual library services on an unprecedented scale in order to keep meeting the information needs of patrons (Ontario Council of University Libraries, 2020; Ohler & Pitts, 2021). Kaur & Mahajan (2020) found that at Panjab University, India, academic libraries' online services were able to alleviate some of the stress that faculty members faced with the transition to online teaching during the pandemic. In a study of academic library responses to the pandemic in Pakistan, Rafiq et al. (2021) found that many libraries emphasized and improved their online services, collections, and presence during the pandemic in an attempt to keep serving library patrons while facing challenges related to the digital divide among users,

connectivity and online access issues, and staff workload.

While there are several studies documenting academic library initiatives to support international students as well as studies about conversation groups in public libraries, studies about English conversation-based programs in the academic library context are almost nonexistent. Moreover, no study discusses English conversation programming in a virtual setting or other virtual initiatives for supporting international students remotely. Our study will fill this gap in the literature by providing a description of a virtual, conversation-based, academic library-led program for supporting international students.

The Web-Based English Conversation Group at Leddy Library

Format

The English Conversation Group was set up as an "organization" in Blackboard, the web-based teaching software used by the University of Windsor. Since all students and faculty already have access to Blackboard through the university and the English Conversation Group organization page was set up by the university's IT department, there was no additional cost. English Conversation Group sessions were held every Thursday from 12:00 pm - 1:00 pm (Eastern Time) for the duration of the fall and winter semesters. The program had four or five moderators during each session. Before the semester started, the moderators met and discussed the topics and responsibilities of moderators in each session. The session topics, which were about the university, Canada, and other aspects of student life, ranged from "Canadian History" and "Job Interviews" to "Information Literacy" and "Public Speaking." Topics were selected based on their relevance to student life in Canada, participant feedback, and moderators' past experiences of popular topics. The detailed topics are shown in Table 1.

In addition to introducing Leddy Library services such as remote access to library resources, Live Chat virtual reference with information service professionals, and Academic Data Center Virtual Lab, guest speakers from other relevant areas on campus such as the International Student Centre and the St. Denis Athletic and Community Center were also invited to speak to students about campus life and fitness services.

Table 1: English Conversation Group –
Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 Topics

Date	2016
17-Sep-20	Introduction: Icebreakers and Library Services (Including Virtual Services)
24-Sep-20	Canadian History and Culture
01-Oct-20	Idioms and Expanding Vocabulary
08-Oct-20	Guest Speaker: Why Is English So Weird?
15-Oct-20	Job Interviews
22-Oct-20	Academic Data Centre
29-Oct-20	Holidays and Celebrations
05-Nov-20	Guest Speaker: Sharing Your Prevention Experience and Tips During COVID-19
12-Nov-20	Public Speaking (1)
19-Nov-20	Guest Speaker: Lancer Recreation
26-Nov-20	Games
14-Jan-21	Introduction/Icebreakers
21-Jan-21	Guest Speaker: How to Talk to Your Professors
28-Jan-21	How to Study More Efficiently
04-Feb-21	Local Language and English Slang
11-Feb-21	Valentine's Day
18-Feb-21	Learn about Windsor-Essex
25-Feb-21	Guest Speaker: Canadian Foods
04-Mar-21	Information Literacy
11-Mar-21	Statistics in Real Life
18-Mar-21	Education in Canada/Learn about the University of Windsor
25-Mar-21	Guest Speaker: How to Write an Introduction
01-Apr-21	Public Speaking (2)
08-Apr-21	Last Session: Games and Feedback

Each session was designed with three components:

1. The lead moderator for the session gave a presentation based on the topic to the students. This initial instructional portion allowed for students to learn about a topic relevant to their situation as students at the University of Windsor. Usually, the

presentation included an interactive part so that the students could use their voices as much as possible.

2. The students were encouraged to ask questions or discuss with the lead moderator or each other depending on the topic. If the presentation section did not allow for much conversation, students were then able to answer discussion questions or participate in another interactive activity. Depending on the number of people who joined the session, the lead moderator may have separated the participants into smaller groups so that all students had a chance to talk. If there was a need to separate the students into groups, the Blackboard breakout room function was used, and moderators were assigned to each group.

3. Before the session ended, the moderators encouraged students to come back next week and told them what the next topic will be. The moderators encouraged the students to bring any questions that may come up during the week (in relation to their academic or Canadian experiences) for the next session.

At the end of the session, a member of the English Conversation Group team (one of the moderators) produced a report for the session. The report included a record of how many people attended the session and how long people were engaged in conversation during the session.

Many of the presentations were made available to students in Blackboard after the session was over for future reference. During this time, some students joined the remote sessions from their home countries, and the time difference was sometimes prohibitive to students. For example, some overseas students in China had trouble making the sessions because they had a 12 to 13 hour time difference from Canada. Putting the presentation slides on Blackboard allowed students to at least access the knowledge presented even though they may not have been able to participate in real time. At the end of each semester, a feedback questionnaire was sent to regular participants through the Blackboard email system. It included questions about participants' experiences and opinions of English Conversation Group and provided a space for recommended future topics and suggestions for improvement.

Promotion

Several methods of outreach were employed to market the English Conversation Group. Weekly topics were promoted on the library's website and social media platforms. Emails were sent to regular users. Announcements were posted on the Blackboard English Conversation

Group organization site. Newsletters were sent biweekly by the university's International Student Centre. The library also set up a prize incentive for attendance, giving students a chance to win a $25 Amazon gift card if they frequently attended English Conversation Group sessions.

Outcomes

Since the fall 2020 semester, a total of 24 sessions were held and there were 461 student visits from all around the world, including countries such as India, China, Turkey, and the United States. One hundred thirty students were self-registered on the English Conversation Group site as regular users.

The minimum number of participants was 5 and the maximum was 103. The average staying time of students was 36.38 minutes with a standard deviation of 25.93 minutes. The minimum staying time of students was less than 1 minute, while the maximum staying time was 78 minutes.

Figure 1 shows that 261 (56.62%) students attended the activities for more than 30 minutes, and 127 (27.55%) students stayed less than 10 minutes.

The English Conversation Group program has received positive feedback (Appendices A and B) from participants, such as "thanks for providing us with this kind of platform to share and learn" (edited for clarity). Examples of the interactive portion of ECG sessions are shown in Appendix C. In the feedback form (Appendix A), respondents indicated that they liked the "informative" nature of the sessions, the opportunity to practice English, and the atmosphere or environment of the sessions; all respondents said that they would recommend English Conversation Group to a friend. This positive feedback indicates that the English Conversation Group has been recognized as an important means of supporting international students and providing valuable connection and engagement with Canadian academics, the University of Windsor, and the Leddy Library.

Discussion

English Conversation Group began as a way for international students to practice their English skills in a casual atmosphere and to connect with the library and library services. Before COVID-19, students met in a classroom at the library each week for an informational, conversation-based, one hour session about various topics relevant to student life in Canada. The virtual environment enabled ECG to continue serving international students despite the

Figure 1: Students' Participating Time Since 2020 Fall Semester
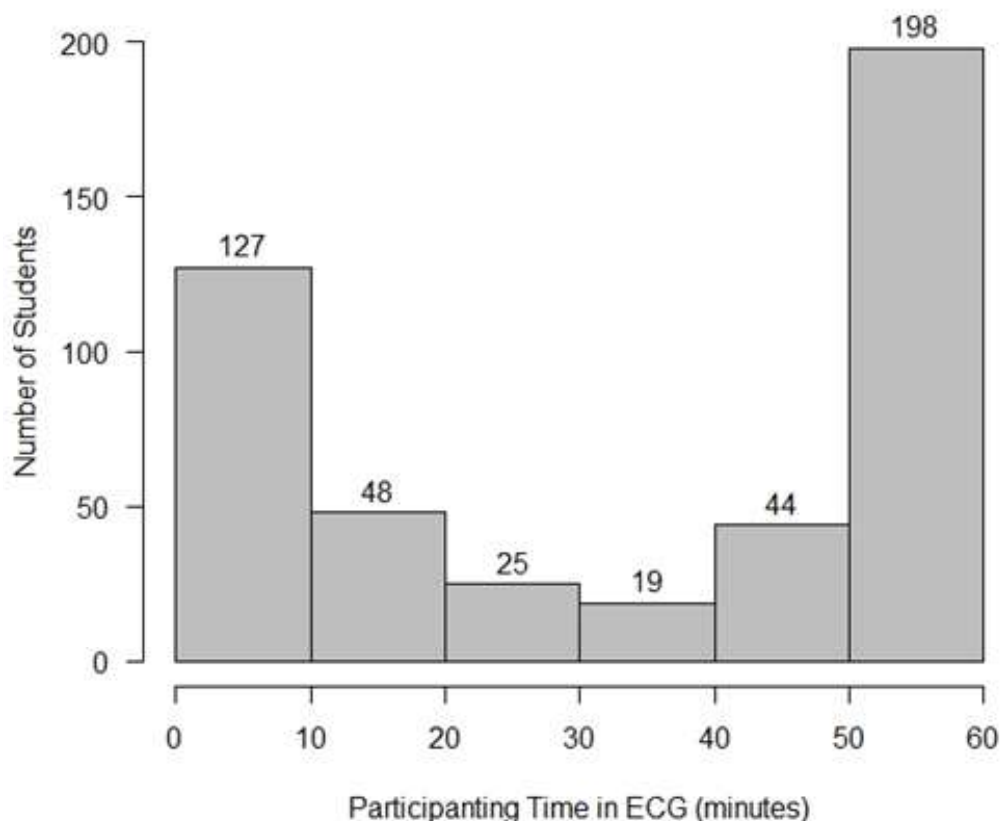
Note. Data resources: Blackboard Report. If student's participating time was greater than 60 minutes, it was considered 60 minutes.

barriers to in-person programming. The web-based English Conversation Group has offered a way for international students to practice their English skills in a fun, safe, and supportive atmosphere. Participants in general were enthusiastic about the experience and willing to foster discussion in the sessions.

English Conversation Group provided not only a means of practicing language skills and learning about university life in Canada, but also a space for connection and engagement. The social aspect of the group was important and went a long way in creating a welcoming, friendly environment. Participants had an opportunity to meet and engage with other international

students as well as with moderators and guest speakers, most of whom were affiliated with the library and the university. Many participants attended multiple sessions, and in doing so, group members became more familiar with one another in a way that differs from more common library program settings, such as the one-shot library instruction session. The English Conversation Group also provided an opportunity for the library to connect with international students and had the potential to act as a bridge to library services. By meeting and connecting with librarians in the English Conversation Group setting, international students could learn more about the library and became more comfortable in accessing library services and resources. The importance of developing a trusted relationship between librarians and students cannot be undervalued. As trust builds and students feel more comfortable asking more academic questions and telling their friends about ECG, librarians are able to make a lasting impact on the students' lives and are well-positioned to assist outside of the program (Pillon & Umetsubo, 2020).

Compared with the in-classroom ECG that was facilitated prior to COVID-19, the online ECG program saw slightly higher attendance numbers, despite potential barriers like different time zones and technical difficulties. Various reasons might account for this difference in attendance. It was possible that students were eager to connect during the COVID-19 pandemic when everything felt so abnormal. Another potential explanation was that the online ECG might have offered more flexibility for some participants who would have been unable to attend the entire one-hour session. In an in-person environment, students who did not have the time to attend the entirety of the session, in addition to the time to commute to and from the workshop, might not have attended at all. However, the virtual format enabled students to enter and exit the session when needed without creating any disruption. Also, students had more options to engage in the program. A variety of communication methods was available in our virtual ECG. Students had the ability to participate by using their microphone and camera or to ask questions and express opinions via chat. In a virtual classroom, students could also enable and disable their cameras as they pleased, as well as "raise their hand" if they'd like to ask a question. Sometimes the original contributor gave an answer to a question, and other times fellow students clarified or added on to what was being shared. Another advantage of online ECG was that virtual collaboration made data collection easier. Being able to follow up quickly with attendees after the session was important to enhancing students' experiences. Virtual ECG enabled quicker and more effective access to session data, streamlining the process of program

evaluation and improvement.

The major challenge of virtual English Conversation Group was to get a large enough group to attend consistently. We held the event with as few as five individuals attending, but the discussions tended to be better with a larger group. Unfortunately, to date, no good solution for this problem existed beyond continuing efforts to promote English Conversation Group and offering a prize incentive for attendance. Anecdotal observation indicated that certain times of the year and the week worked better than others, though the number of sessions held was small and the idiosyncrasies of planning had too many confounding factors to draw any meaningful conclusions or inferences. With that caveat in mind, it would appear to us that holding events at times of the year when students were less busy encouraged larger groups, although if it was "reading week" or break week when students did not have classes, it could be hard to fill the virtual classroom. This problem is further compounded in that many individuals are busy and would choose a more pressing work commitment over a non-required library event.

Tying promotion to a larger event also seemed to help, but in general, marketing of events was one of the major challenges that our library faced. The prize incentive for attendance offered students a chance to win a $25 Amazon gift card, but it was hard to say the impact this incentive had on attendance numbers. While experimentation in methods of promoting the English Conversation Group sessions is ongoing, to date no obvious solution has presented itself aside from trying to promote events widely and in multiple formats. These problems were not unique to the English Conversation Group and marketing and attendance can be a challenge in most online library workshop offerings.

While having low attendance numbers was far from ideal, on the other hand, having an extremely large number of participants could also bring challenges. During the first session of virtual English Conversation Group, we had over 60 participants. More participants meant that moderators had to monitor and cope with more technical issues. Also, having more than approximately 30 participants could make discussion and group interactive activities more challenging and provide less opportunity for all students to participate, but grouping students in smaller "breakout" rooms alleviated these problems at least somewhat. With large numbers of participants, we found that it was useful to designate one moderator to act as an "assistant" to the lead moderator by resolving technical issues, monitoring the chat, and assisting with any activities.

Another challenge was that 27.55% of students stayed in English Conversation Group for less than 10 minutes. Students might leave for any number of reasons, including personal

disinterest in the session, shyness, or poor internet connection. One significant reason could be that when the number of students was very large, there might not be an opportunity for some students to speak, even though we separated students into smaller groups. Since it was difficult to determine exactly why students left after only 10 minutes, there was no single, clear solution. Moderators could give an overview of the session right at the beginning, so students knew that they would have ample opportunity later on to interact and engage. Moderators could also encourage students to ask questions and bring up any concerns, and to participate as much as possible. For the prize incentive, students were only included if they stayed for a significant amount of the session. Reminding students of this rule could also result in students staying in the session for longer.

Unsurprisingly, technical problems also proved to be a challenge during the web-based English Conversation Group sessions from time to time. As with any virtual workshop, issues like poor internet connectivity, audio or video problems, the variety of participant hardware or software, and website or program capability could all hinder interaction and learning. In English Conversation Group, sometimes participants or moderators would have trouble with their microphones or would get disconnected and have to re-join the session. Sometimes moderators sharing their screen would experience screen freezing. The technical issues experienced in English Conversation Group were not unique; as so many classes have pivoted to an online format, many educators and students are now confronting the technological challenges of remote learning. In the context of English Conversation Group, technical challenges were somewhat exacerbated by the widespread dispersion of participants around the world and the fact that the nature of the program required real-time, synchronous interaction among participants. It could be helpful to designate a moderator to deal with technical issues as they come up. Learning how to work within the designated virtual learning or communication software was also a good solution. For instance, we discovered that on Blackboard, it was better to share slides using the "share content" option rather than sharing a screen in order to minimize freezing. Many platforms also have tutorials and help pages online. However, a major part of the solution to dealing with technical problems was patience. It was important to accept and understand that technical problems were likely to happen in any remote setting, but they were a small price to pay in exchange for continuing to offer programs that support students and facilitate connection in unusual and stressful times.

These challenges could be frustrating, but in general, the program was enjoyable and

the comments, both in our feedback forms and by individuals during the sessions, seemed to indicate that the English Conversation Group was successful in assisting international students to build up their confidence academically, socially, and culturally during COVID-19.

References

Baron, S., & Strout-Dapaz, A. (2001). Communicating with and empowering international students with a library skills set. *Reference Services Review*, *29*(4), 314-326. https://doi.org/10.1108/00907320110408447

Bordonaro, K. (2019). Forging multiple pathways: Integrating international students into a Canadian university library. In Y. Luckert & L. I. Carpenter (Eds.), *The globalized library: American academic libraries and international students, collections, and practices* (pp. 85-97). Association of College and Research Libraries.

Bordonaro, K. (2020). The Human Library: Reframing library work with international students. *Journal of Library Administration*, *60*(1), 97-108. https://doi.org/10.1080/01930826.2019.1685271

Buckner, T., & French, T. (2007). International students and the academic library: How one library is working to make its international students feel at home. *Kentucky Libraries*, *71*(2), 8-11.

Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE). (2018). *International students in Canada*. CBIE. http://cbie.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/International-Students-in-Canada-ENG.pdf

Click, A. B., Wiley, C. W., & Houlihan, M. (2017). The internationalization of the academic library: A systematic review of 25 years of literature on international students. *College & Research Libraries*, *78*(3), 328-358. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.78.3.328

Doucette, W. C. (2019). Culture matters: Three initiatives to understand international students' academic needs and expectations. *Tennessee Libraries*, *69*(1). https://www.tnla.org/page/69_1_Doucette

Elturk, G. (2000). Community and cultural outreach services at Boulder Public Library. *Colorado Libraries*, *26*(3), 13-15.

Evans, K. (2006). INTERLINK at Indiana State University: Adventures in library instruction for international students. *Indiana Libraries*, *25*(4), 8-10. http://hdl.handle.net/1805/1503

Gale, C. (2006). Serving them right? How libraries can enhance the learning experience of international students: A case study from the University of Exeter. *SCONUL Focus*, *39*, 36-39. http://hdl.handle.net/10036/13825

He, J. (2019). A comparative study of resource and service needs of international students at an academic library. *The Southeastern Librarian*, *67*(1), 3-14. https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln/vol67/iss1/3

Herring, D. N. (2014). A purposeful collaboration: Using a library course enhancement grant program to enrich ESL instruction. *The Reference Librarian*, *55*(2), 128-143. https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2014.880317

Hill, N. M. (2013). Adult literacy approaches in public libraries. *Public Libraries*, *52*(1), 18-22.

International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). (2020). *COVID-19 and the global library field*. IFLA.org. https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries

James, E. (2003). Small talk: A success. *Texas Library Journal*, *79*(1), 20-22.

Jiao, Q. G., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2001). Sources of library anxiety among international students. *Urban Library Journal*, *11*(1), 16-26. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015066180236

Johnson, L. R., & Sandhu, D. S. (2007). Isolation, adjustment, and acculturation issues of international students: Intervention strategies for counselors. In H. D. Singaravelu & M. Pope (Eds.), A handbook for counseling international students in the United States (p. 13–35). American Counseling Association.

Johnston, J. (2016). Conversation-based programming and newcomer integration: A case study of the Språkhörnan program at Malmö City Library. Library & Information Science Research, 38(1), 10-17. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2016.02.001

Johnston, J., & Audunson, R. (2019). Supporting immigrants' political integration through discussion and debate in public libraries. Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, 51(1), 228-242. https://doi.org/10.1177/0961000617709056

Kaur, H., & Mahajan, P. (2020). Library and information services of A.C. Joshi Library during COVID-19 pandemic: A study of faculty satisfaction. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1-20. https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/4464

Knight, L., Hight, M., & Polfer, L. (2010). Rethinking the library for the international student community. *Reference Services Review*, *38*(4), 581-605. https://doi.org/10.1108/00907321011090746

Library Journal. (2017, March 16). Global to local: Sophie Maier. *Library Journal*. https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=sophie-maier-movers-shakers-2017-change-agents

Liu, G., & Pillon, K. (2016). Enhancing international students' library and academic skills at the University of Windsor, Canada. *International Leads*, *30*(3), 7-8. http://www.ala.org/rt/sites/ala.org.rt/files/content/intlleads/leadsarchive/201609.pdf

Mabi, M. (2018). Public libraries serving immigrant communities in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science*, *42*(3-4), 192-207. https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/743052

Martin, J. A., Reaume, K. M., Reeves, E. M., & Wright, R. D. (2012). Relationship building with students and instructors of ESL: Bridging the gap for library instruction and services. *Reference Services Review*, *40*(3), 352-367. https://doi.org/10.1108/00907321211254634

Morrissey, R., & Given, L. M. (2006). International students and the academic library: A case study. *The Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science*, *30*(3/4), 221-239.

Ontario Council of University Libraries (OCUL). (2020). *Ontario university libraries respond to uncertain times*. OCUL. https://ocul.on.ca/ontario-university-libraries-respond

Ohler, L. A., & Pitts, J. (2021). From peril to promise: The academic library post-COVID-19. *College & Research Libraries News*, *82*(1), 41-44. https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.82.1.41

Pillon, K. M., & Umetsubo, Y. (2020). Fostering international students' academic transformation using information literacy programming. In S. Vong & M. Vrkljan (Eds.), *Learning beyond the classroom: Engaging students in information literacy through co-curricular activities* (pp. 111-121). Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/leddylibrarypub/56

Rafiq, M., Batool, S. H., Ali, A. F., & Ullah, M. (2021). University libraries response to COVID-19 pandemic: A developing country perspective. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, *47*(1). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2020.102280

Scott, R. (2011). The role of public libraries in community building. *Public Library Quarterly*, *30*(3), 191-227. https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2011.599283

Singer, H. (2005). Learning and information services support for international students at the University of Hertfordshire. *SCONUL Focus*, *35*, 63-67.

Storms, A. (2012). Talk Time for teens. *Alki: The Washington Library Association Journal*, *28*(2), 16-17. https://www.wla.org/assets/Alki/alk%20jul12%20final-low%20res.pdf

Zhai, L. (2004). Studying international students: Adjustment issues and social support. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/10.5191/JIAEE.2004.11111

Appendix A
Fall 2020 ECG feedback form

English Conversation Group Fall 2020: Feedback

Help us improve English Conversation Group by answering the following questions. Thank you!

Sign in to Google to save your progress. Learn more

What did you like most about English Conversation Group?

Your answer

What did you like least about English Conversation Group?

Your answer

What were your favourite topics?

Your answer

What topics should we include for next semester?

Your answer

Would you recommend English Conversation Group to a friend?

○ Yes

○ No

Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improvement?

Your answer

Submit   Clear form

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This form was created inside of University of Windsor. Report Abuse

Google Forms

Appendix B
Examples of informal feedback from participants via chat.
(The names of students had been blocked out).
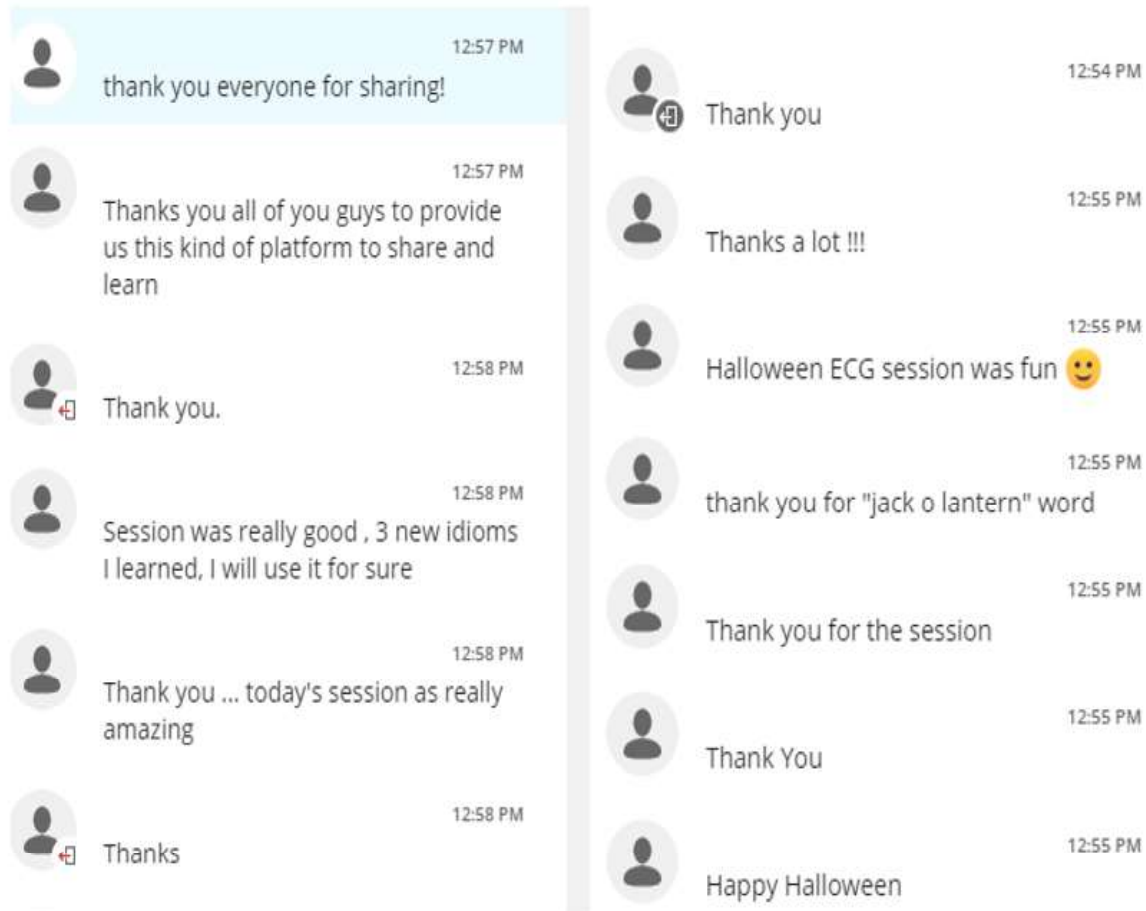
Appendix C
Examples of students' responses and questions for the topic "Happy Halloween!"

12:23 PM
Yes moon cake day is traditional in China

12:23 PM
Yes, we have a similar holiday in the Punjab region of India. We celebrate the harvest of the wheat crop.

12:24 PM
we have harvest festival known as 'Pongal"

12:24 PM
On 14th April every year

12:24 PM
Vaisakhi is also an ancient festival of Hindus, marking the Solar New Year and also celebrating the spring harvest. It is celebrated on April 13th or 14th. It is mostly celebrated in North India.

12:27 PM
Who responds to all those letters

12:27 PM
That's too good

12:27 PM
Ohhh.... Great

12:08 PM
Why pumpkin??

12:13 PM
will there be any celebration this time?

12:14 PM
I saw the decorations outside lots of house this time.

12:14 PM
In Ontario, they are not trick or treating. But spider web decoration near my house.

12:15 PM
do we celebrate in Windsor campus?

12:20 PM
I should mention that Halloween is not a statutory holiday...it's not an official holiday recognized by law

12:22 PM
no as far as i know

12:22 PM
Not celebrate thanksgiving in my county, but sometimes we may say thank you to my parents on that day

Appendix D
Example of interactive portion of ECG slide presentations for the topic "Learn about Windsor-Essex"

- What are your impressions of Windsor (whether you've been here or not)?

- What have you seen, read, or heard about Windsor?

- Tell us a bit about your hometown (or any other place that you've lived). What is it like?

- How does Windsor compare to your hometown or other cities in the world?

- What are the positives and negatives of living in Windsor? What about other places that you have lived or visited?