



Report 2020



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**The Mancunian take on Spanglish and Franglais:
An integrated look into community creation and
language use in diaspora Facebook groups in
Manchester**

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1 Introduction

This study investigates the language use of Spanish and French immigrant groups in Manchester on the social networking site Facebook. We will be observing the general language choice of the groups and examples of code-switching whilst also integrating the group members' attitudes towards the language by means of observation of their 'likes' and 'comments' and by conducting interviews with certain individuals. Using both the observations and the interviews, we will also examine the functions of these Facebook groups. This method of integrating observation and interviews to gain perspective on both members' views and their behaviour is something that has not previously been fully explored in research.

This study investigates Franglais and Spanglish because of a difference between the attitudes and habits of French and Spanish users of English. Franglais can be defined as the "incorrect mixture of two languages" (Bostina-Bratu, 2010, p. 97) when the author is lacking in complete knowledge of either English or French. Bostina-Bratu attributes the geographical proximity to the cause of the deeply embedded sharing of language. Despite the longstanding habits of such word choice there are also implications of ill feeling towards anglicisms in the French language. Indeed, the Tourbon Law was put in place in 1994 to restrict their use. This negative attitude towards the English language is interesting and relevant to our research as we can compare the historical opinions to the views of the Facebook group members.

A similar negative Spanish institutional attitude towards English has not been found in the literature. The relationship between Spanish and English and the resulting Spanglish has been widely researched in the United States. Martinez (2010, p. 125) defines the hybrid Spanglish as one's ability to "successfully communicate their thoughts and ideas using a combination of English and Spanish". This research did not investigate the students' feelings towards their language use and code-switching habits. Therefore, it will be interesting to analyse the variation in both language and attitudes between the French and Spanish Facebook groups.

Language choice and use has been widely researched and conclusions have been drawn for the motivation behind language use in certain domains. Warschauer et al. (2007) investigated language choice in Egyptian professionals using recipient and message format as a factor throughout (as cited in Lee, 2016, p. 120). They concluded that English was used as the leading language due to its mutual comprehensibility and "commonly accepted lingua franca status" (Lee, 2016, p. 120).

Another concept related to language choice is code-switching. Barasa's (2016) study into the difference between code-switching in spoken language and computer mediated conversations (CMC) among young Kenyan professionals and students highlighted the limitations of online communication. She concluded that author creativity was required to compensate (by use of code-switching) for the lack of prosody, gestures and intonation in CMC. Androutsopoulos (2007) carried out research, similar to this, into language use within Greek and Persian online forums, observing both code-switching and general language use. He determined that although German was dominant, individuals tended to code-switch to their home language to fulfil different discourse functions in a variety of contexts and topics (Androutsopoulos, 2007, p. 353).

Androutsopoulos (2010) has been the most useful model for this study thanks to his research into multilingualism on the social networking site Facebook, observing the language choice and code-switches used in a small Facebook group of German-Greek teenagers. However, our own research, by means of interviews and interaction with the groups, hopes to integrate the attitude of Facebook users towards different language choices within the online environment.

Research Questions

How and why do immigrant groups use diaspora Facebook groups and what patterns of multilingual language use can be observed? More specifically, we aim to understand to what extent diaspora Facebook groups are used for community creation in Manchester. Further sub-questions are: which patterns of language choice and code-switching can we find across groups and how do the groups differ from one another? What are group members' attitudes towards community creation and language use?

Summary of methods

As per our research plan in the proposal we have analysed the activity of immigrant Facebook groups in Manchester by means of topic and language choice data collection and code-switching screenshots. Through observation and interviews with volunteers we have analysed group functions and users' language attitudes. Due to varying levels of willingness to participate in our research we have had to refine our investigation to one French and one Spanish group. Both the groups Français à Manchester (FM) and Españoles en Manchester (EM) are active on a daily basis.

We observed all activity on both groups over the course of three weeks and created data tables pertaining to the topics and the language choice in posts; Spanish/French, English or a mixture of the two. Our quantitative data, based on 100 posts between 9/10/2019-5/11/2019 (FM) and 5/11/19-25/11/9 (EM) were used to adapt our interview prompts (see appendix). As we had little response from EM members to our enquiry for volunteer interviewees, we had to approach active members and administrators ourselves to secure interviews. Some members from FM were more enthusiastic and volunteered to participate. The layout of the interviews were varied due to the availability of participants: all took place via Facebook Messenger in either French or Spanish, however some were asked one question at a time whereas others received the whole list to answer in their own time because of their time constraints at the moment of interviewing.

Throughout the whole process we have recorded screenshots of relevant examples of code-switching and language choice used in the groups. These screenshots have been anonymized and used in our analysis. We recorded the reactions, in the form of likes and comments, to these posts to better understand the attitudes of group members towards this sort of language use.

2 Observational findings

The results of our quantitative study of language choice and topic are displayed in figures 1 and 2. In both the EM and FM participants used mostly Spanish or French to write their posts. FM contains more mixed-language posts than EM, which has more posts fully written in English.

As for topic distribution, only the category humour (one post in the French group) was observed in only one group, while all other categories have been found in both, despite their differing quantities. FM contains more posts about general advice, advice about living in the UK and meeting up with other group members.

EM, however, has more posts about job offers, social events and language classes.

Observations of individual language use in posts have shown interesting tendencies in code-switching. The most common code-switch types found in the mixed-language posts for both groups is a post largely written in either French or Spanish with only the greeting and parting phrase in English. Most of these messages are in French or Spanish but start with *hello* and end in *thanks* or *cheers* (see figure 3). Other words members tend to use in English rather than the French or Spanish equivalents are words that concern life in the UK, such as *pounds*, *bonfire night* and *UK breakfast*. There are no posts that are mostly written in English but contain code-switching to Spanish/French.

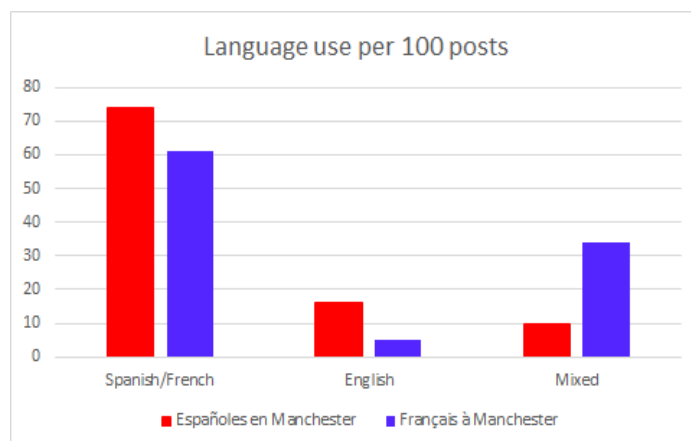


Fig. 1: language choice in EM and FM

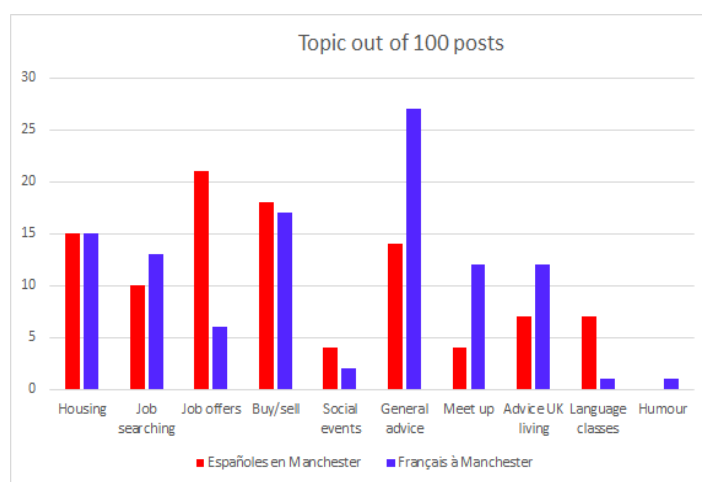


Fig. 2: topic distribution in EM and FM

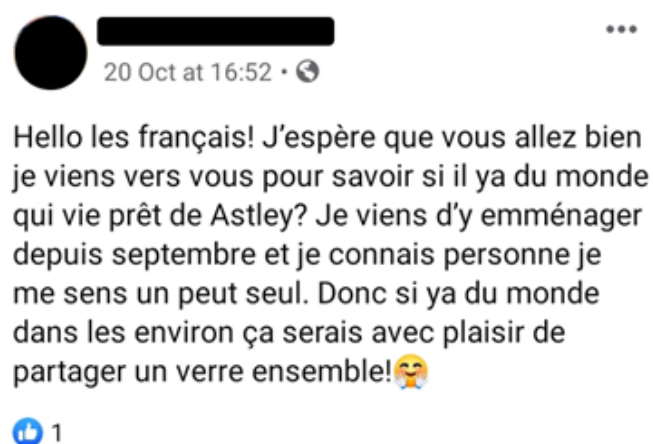


Fig. 3: example of an FM post written fully in French with a greeting in English.

3 Discussion of observational data

The quantitative data show that FM contains more mixed-language posts than EM. In most of these mixed-language posts the only English words were the opening or closing phrases. These words, like *hello*, *thanks* and *please* (to an extent), are phatic expressions that have a social function rather than a semantic one. The users may use them to indicate their involvement in the English community of Manchester as well as their own online community. These code-switches to English may be more recurrent among FM members than among EM members because, according to two of the authors' own experiences as native French and Spanish speakers, using English words like *hello* and *yes* in informal situations is common in French but not in Spanish. As reported in Matras (2009, p. 110), words that later become borrowed into a language often first start out as code-switches from bilingual speakers. Thus, the frequency of many French speakers using English phatic expressions could indicate that these words are in the process of being borrowed into French.

Other interesting differences between FM and EM are the differences in topics most spoken about in the groups. The more common topics in FM, namely different types of advice and opportunities to meet up with other members, have a stronger social function while topics that are more frequent EM, like language classes, job offers and social events, are more related to advertisements aimed at this community. This indicates the differences in group functions. FM may have a stronger social and community function than EM. For example, it is quite common in FM for a member to ask other members to meet up for a coffee to speak French together. Besides the social function, this also indicates a language or culture maintenance function for FM.

This function of cultural maintenance is not as apparent from the Spanish topic distribution. However Spanish community-aimed events like Flamenco nights and concerts by Spanish-speaking artists do receive more likes and comments than non-Spanish events, thus showing individual appreciation for Spanish culture.

By looking at the interaction for posts written in different languages we gain an interesting perspective. In both groups posts like job offers, English language classes and advertisements are often written in English. They tend to have fewer comments and likes than posts written in Spanish or French, even when the topic is controlled for. Posts advertising jobs and language classes in French or Spanish receive more likes and comments. Group members may regard posts in English as written by users from outside their native communities and are less inclined to interact with them. Another possibility is that users may not wish to make the effort to read posts in a foreign language.

4 Interview findings

In FM, all interviewees stated they use English in daily life in the UK and French with their French friends and family. They all find the group useful for various reasons: to seek advice, to create a sense of community for French people in Manchester, and to maintain their French. The language maintenance is important for the majority of the interviewees, but it is not primarily why they use the group. They mainly use French in the group, but they do not mind commenting in English on an English post. For example, one interviewee responded: *“Si la publication est en anglais, je répondrai en anglais. Si c’est en français, je répondrai en français!”* (Translation: If the post is in English, I would respond in English. If it’s in French, I would respond in French.) Only one of the interviewees admitted that they expected posts to be in French. When asked if they felt at home in Manchester, answers differed: one said the system and the food was too different from France, another said that they still felt on holiday because they had not found a job yet.

In EM, interviewees consider Spanish their first language and English their second. However, language choice depends mostly on the context. They will resort to Spanish in a familiar environment but use English when dealing with other situations such as work or non-domestic life. Interviewees do not regard the Facebook group with great importance as it is mainly used for advice about life in Manchester. Interestingly the interviewees stated that regarding their reasons for using EM, they do not consider the group helpful for language maintenance. Instead, their goal is to keep improving their English skills.

5 Discussion of interview data

Firstly, there is a clear similarity in French and Spanish attitudes towards the use of their respective mother tongue along with English. Most participants confirmed that the language they use most is English since it is the primary means of communication in daily life. Nonetheless, they still use their first language when communicating with relatives or close friends. Also, most Spanish interviewees immigrated to the UK to enhance their English, so they will seize every opportunity to improve their English rather than maintain their first language. In the same way, it would seem pointless for them to speak English with their friends or family when they share another first language.

On the contrary, we found variation in group function between the EM and FM based on the interview data. Whilst French responses mostly agreed that the FM could be utilised for language maintenance, the Spanish did not. According to personal experience of one of the authors, a native French speaker, French people tend to be very conservative about their language, and this could explain why it seems so essential for them to keep practising French whilst living in the UK. Our Spanish interviewees do not regard their language in the same way and therefore do not focus on its maintenance as much.

Another difference noticed in the function of the groups between the French and Spanish interviewees is community creation. While Spanish people do not primarily use EM for social purposes, many French interviewees said that wanting to meet people in Manchester and finding out about life in the French immigrant community was a reason for joining the group. This suggests that French people are more attached to their culture and want to feel closer to it even when abroad, just as has been observed regarding language; whereas the Spanish immigrants do not prioritise cultural maintenance when living in the UK. One of the reasons for this could be that the Facebook group does not help them feel at home.

Finally, despite these major differences, we still found some interesting similarities between the two communities. Both Spanish and French interviewees joined the groups expecting some degree of help when moving to Manchester (e.g. recommendations, advice, job offers, events or a guide). Life in Manchester is different from life in their home country, and there is a need to find people in similar situations upon their arrival.

6 General discussion

Multilingual language use

We've seen that there are differences in the use of French and Spanish in the diaspora Facebook groups. Even though in both groups the members' native language is dominant, French people use more English words than Spanish people. However, this mainly occurs in specific situations. These English words are used either in a social function (*hello, thanks, cheers*) or because they relate to a specific British concept that is most accurately described in English.

Difference between stated views and behaviours

Interestingly, this research has highlighted a contrast between what people say and their actions. Our interviewees said they would not react differently to posts written in English or in French/Spanish, which contradicts the earlier negative attitude towards English reflected in the French Tourbon Law. However, observations indicate that posts written fully in English have fewer likes and comments than mixed-language posts or posts written fully in French or Spanish. This suggests this could be a subconscious behaviour because of the challenges of reading in a foreign language.

Group Functions

Interview responses revealed a difference in the group functions of EM and FM. This contrast highlights how the French and the Spanish immigrant communities value the use of groups in their daily lives and how it might affect their time in Manchester. This could suggest that FM has a more social function than EM to the fact that the French are more concerned with the maintenance of their own culture. Both groups also have an important convenience function.

Relation to previous research

Contrary to Androutsopoulos (2007) the main language on the Facebook groups was always French/Spanish with some code-switches to English rather than the receiving country's language being the main language with tendencies towards the home language. Regarding code-switching, our findings do not follow Barasa's (2016) hypothesis that code-switches are used to minimize the number of characters used or to compensate for elements of spoken language that are missing in CMC. Our findings agree more with Androutsopoulos (2015). Language choice and code-switching seem to have a social function of identity performance, as people use French/Spanish to reaffirm their identity but code-switch to English in phatic expressions to also signify their adoption of English culture.

In accordance with Oiarzabal (2012) and our hypotheses, one of the central functions of the groups is cultural maintenance. The fact that the function of community creation could be observed for FM much more than EM is an unexpected contrast.

Limitations and future outlook

Through comparison between two (arguably culturally similar) migrant Facebook groups, numerous differences between French and Spanish members' linguistic behaviour and attitudes were found. In

future projects, care should be taken to emphasise that conclusions about one migrant group cannot readily be generalised to all migrant groups. Moreover, we advise future researchers to be conscious of the limitations of investigating social network sites; we experienced difficulties getting group administrators to agree to participate. Interviewees on chat services also have the possibility of simply leaving a conversation if they become disinterested in the project.

Conclusions

Our integration of interviews and observation helped us gain a better overview of both linguistic behaviour and people's attitudes. Despite the dominance of native language use in both Facebook groups, code switching to English was more frequent in FM. Furthermore, the interview section revealed a contrast between what users say and their actual behaviour. Although both groups are used to facilitate users' new lives in the UK, a stronger community creation function was found in FM, demonstrating the distinctions between different immigrant communities. Despite these differences, both migrant Facebook groups still help to establish stronger links with people from similar cultural backgrounds, thus enhancing their experience.

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8 Appendix A

Interview questions

1. What is your first language?
2. What language do you use the most?
3. In what situations would you use English rather than your native language and vice versa?
4. For how long have spoken English? When did you start learning?
5. Why did you join this group?
6. What does this group add to your life here in Manchester?
7. Do you feel at home here in Manchester? And does the group help with this? Is this group useful? How?
8. What do you use this group for?
9. Would you consider using this group for language maintenance? How important is language maintenance to you?
10. To what extent does your use of this group feel like “maintaining a connection with your home culture” to you? If it does how much does that factor into your use of the group? Why would you choose to use a certain language on this page?
11. Would you react differently to a post written in English rather than in French or Spanish? Do you feel that this group creates a sense of community for you and other speakers of your native language?

Appendix B

Examples of Facebook posts

EM posts

Monday at 13:13 · 🌐

Alguien tiene euros para cambiar please??

See Translation

Like Comment

Don't forget to coming 🔥🔥
Hot Thursday 🎧🎧
Latin party 🌎🌎

ERLOCO PRESENTS
THE NEW RELIGION
LATIN PARTY
TONIGHT

19 November at 16:52

Estoy buscando trabajo Full Time, ¿alguien sabe algo?
Thanks!
I'm looking for full time work, does anyone know anything

Thanks!
★ Rate this translation

7 comments

Like Share

Honest burger está buscando gente, también varios Stands en el Christmas market
Like · See translation · 4d

replied · 2 replies

Si tienes suficiente inglés es muy fácil, ahora están buscando trabajo sobre todo en burger king, KFC y Macdonald, si no tienes inglés es más para dentro de cocina
Like · See translation · 4d

replied · 3 replies

Hermes

Courier Drivers-Christmas Recruitment

UK

Following the success of working with DWP to fill Christmas vacancies last year, Hermes would like our support again this year and activity is starting now. They need to recruit an additional 7,000 couriers across the UK.

These vacancies would suit people with caring responsibilities as hours and days are flexible. Hermes also welcome applications from people returning to the labour market and older workers.

These are self-employed positions and applicants must have their own vehicle.

To find out more customers can visit the Hermes "be a courier" website.

<https://beacourier.co.uk/>

To apply customers should click on the "join us" button on this page.

BEACOURIER.CO.UK
Hermes - Self-employed Courier Jobs

Hola, voy a Manchester en diciembre y no quiero alquilar coche, hasta que hora funciona el transporte público?? Es peligroso salir de noche para volver a casa? Aún tengo que buscar habitación si alguien me alquila una, let's me know please. Thanks all

See Translation

3 14 comments

Like Share

View 1 more comment

Mp
Like · 1w

Alquilar un coche sí solo vas a venir a la ciudad es un suicidio. El tram funciona bien. Los buses mejor evitarlos, son la peste. Del resto puedes ir andando.
Like · See translation · 6d

replied · 10 replies

FM posts

 9 Oct at 11:20 • 🌐

Hi every one !
Je voudrai partir sur Manchester avril/mai
jusque fin août !
Que me conseillerez vous ?
Location ? Coloc ?
Budget par mois ? Pleaaseee
Je prends tout types de conseils 😊
Tks

5 comments

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

 heeft een evenement gedeeld.
11 uur


Join us this Saturday on our tour from Manchester to the historical & wonderful city of York, with a fantastic group of people! 🇬🇧



DEZE ZATERDAG OM 08:30
York Day Trip - From Manchester
Smile Adventures · Manchester

★ Geïnteresseerd

👍 Leuk ➦ Delen


 25 oktober om 13:15


Bonjour à tous!!!
J'envisage de démarrer une nouvelle vie à Manchester à partir du 23 novembre!!!
Et je suis à la recherche d'emploi ce serait pour savoir si certains connaîtraient certaines entreprises qui recruterait du personnel français!!!
Merci à tous et bonne fin de journée!!!


Vertaling bekijken


👍 3 6 opmerkingen

👍 Leuk ➦ Delen

 What kind of job you are looking for ?
Leuk · 1 w

 I am ready to work in any job style
Leuk · 1 w

 Apply for any kind of French telemarketing job.
Leuk · 1 w

 Call centre maybe? Pm me if interested 😊

 heeft een link gedeeld.
3 november om 08:33

Hello tout le monde !
Pour toutes celles et ceux qui n'ont pas l'intention de quitter le sol Britannique et qui veulent prendre les devants avant que l'accord du Brexit soit prononcé;
LA SOLUTION : Le SETTLED STATUS !!!
Dans cette vidéo je vous explique qu'est ce que le : PRE-SETTLED STATUS et le SETTLED STATUS et surtout comment candidater pour L'OBTENIR !
Bonne journée à tous !!

Vertaling bekijken



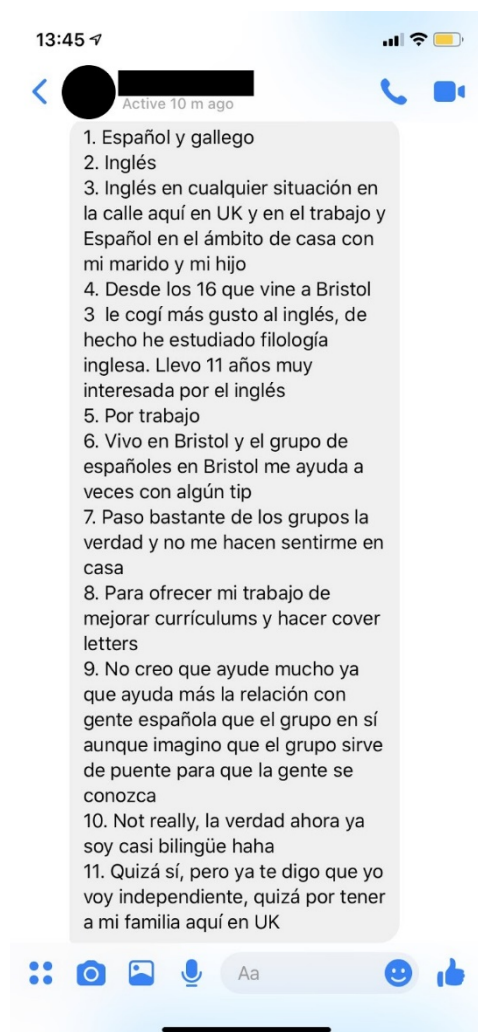
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Appendix C

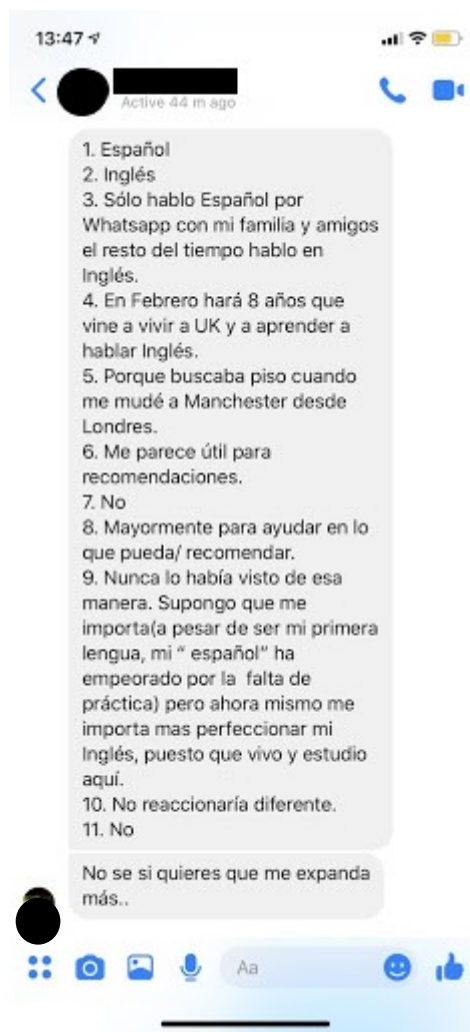
Interviews

Interviews with members of EM:

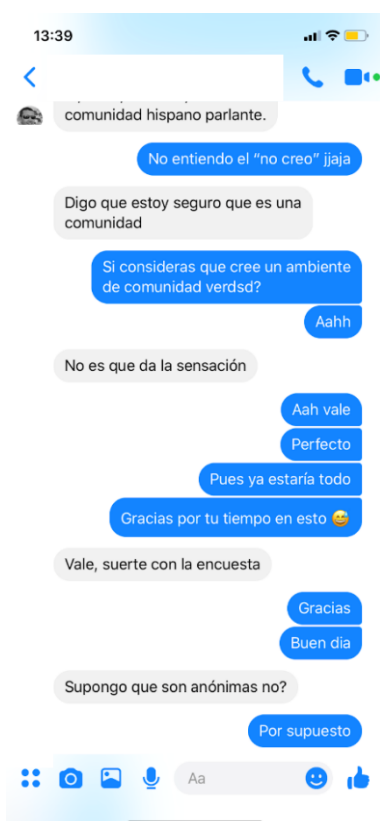
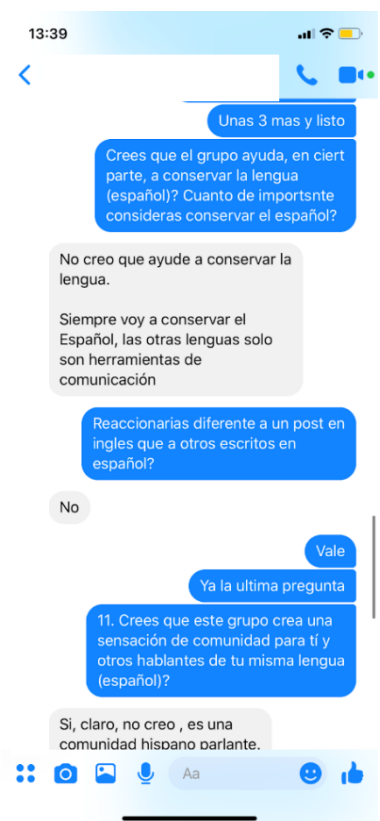
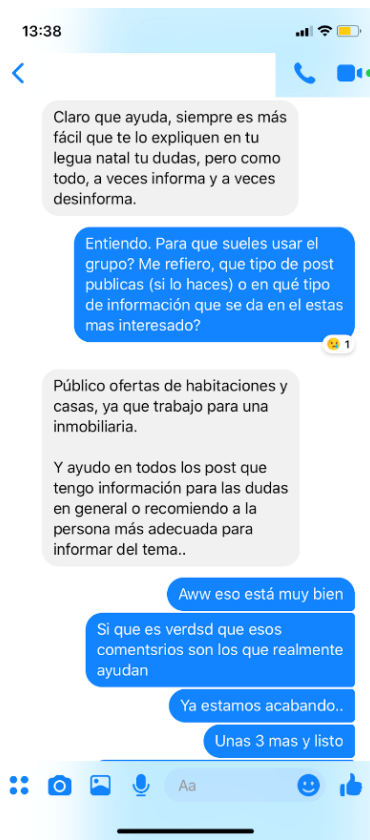
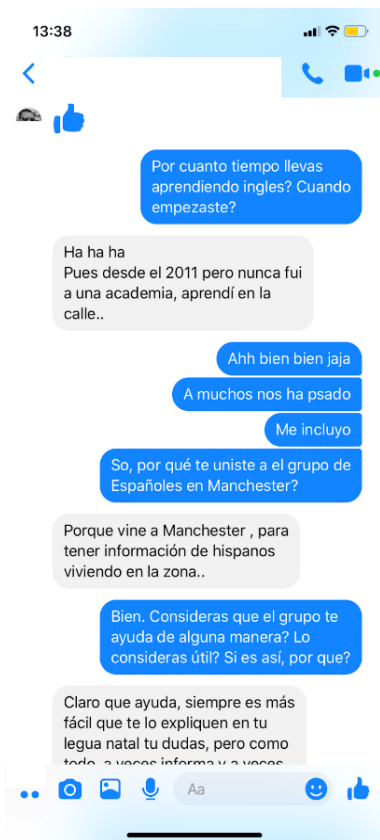
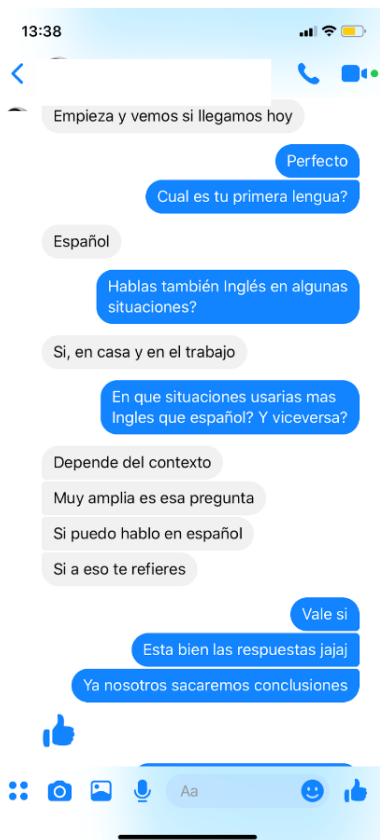
First interview:



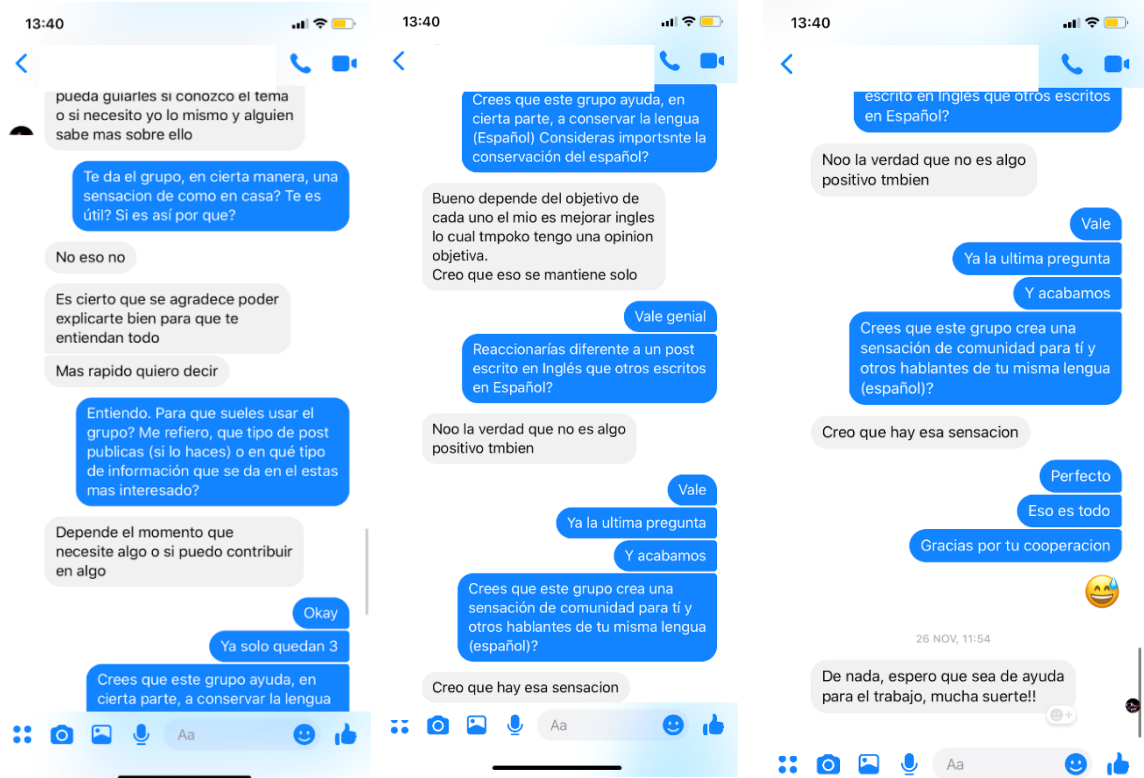
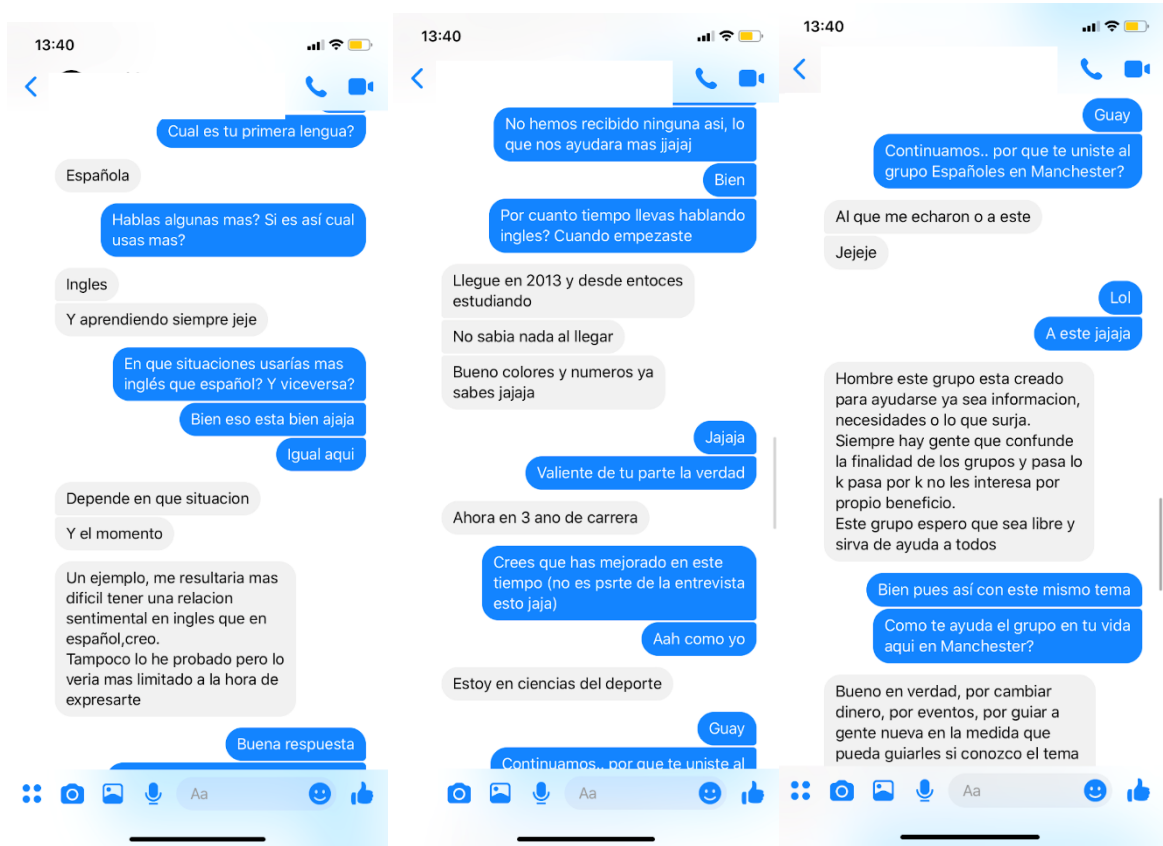
Second interview:



Third interview:

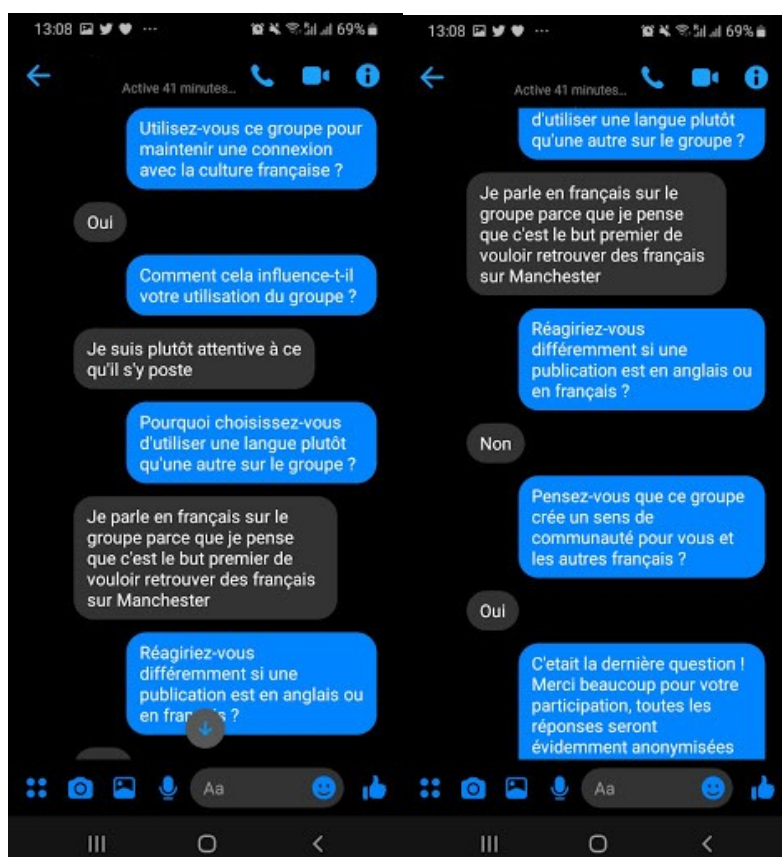
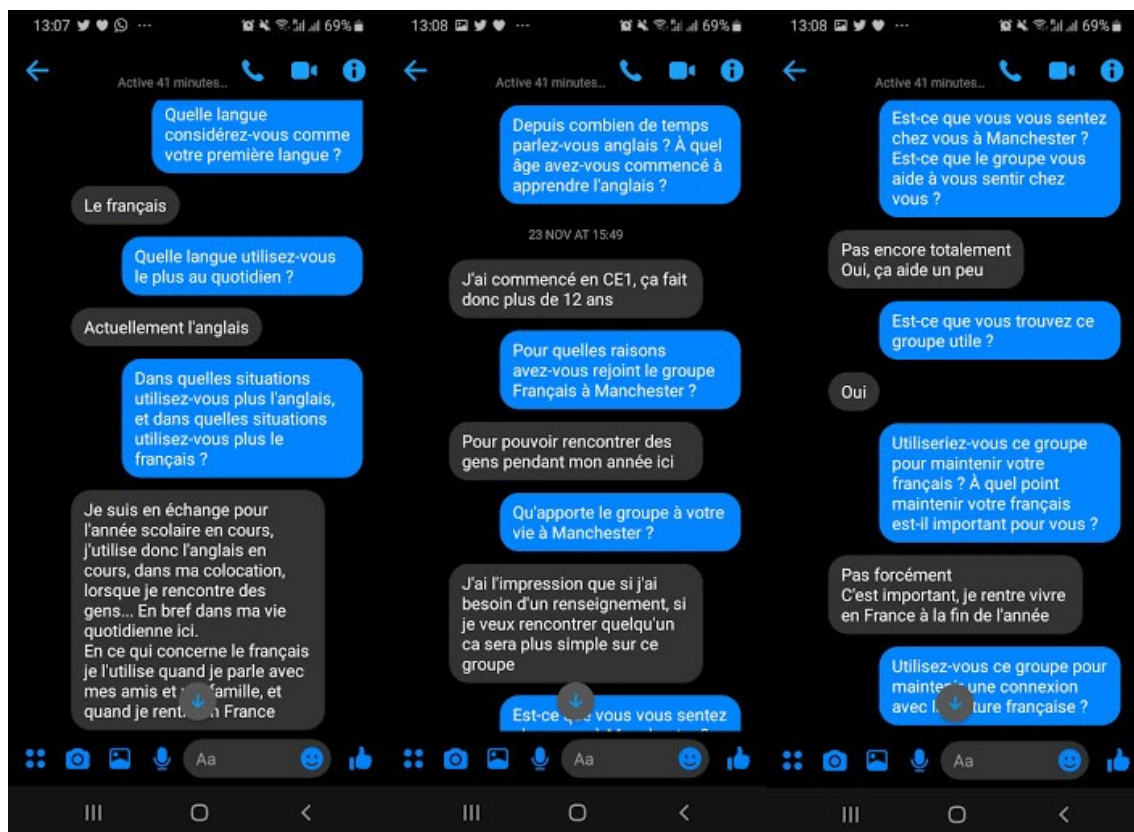


Fourth interview:

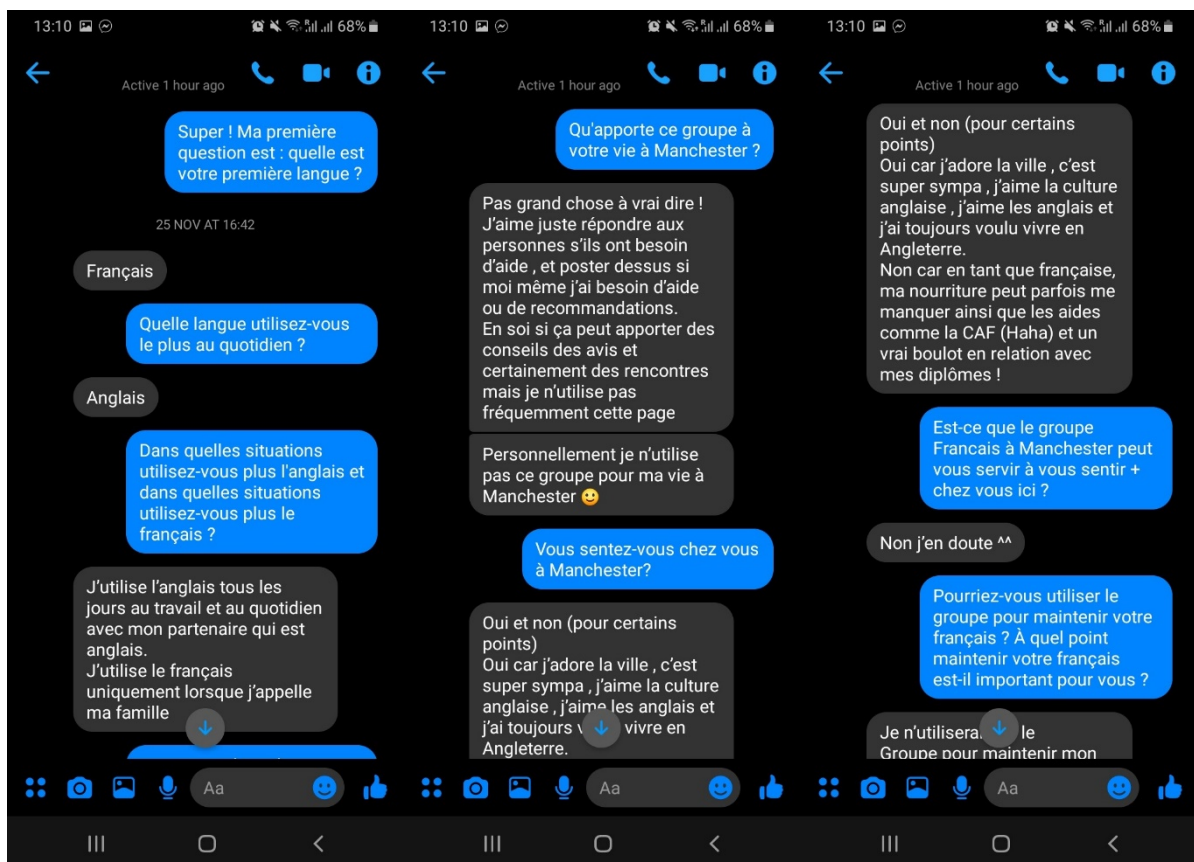


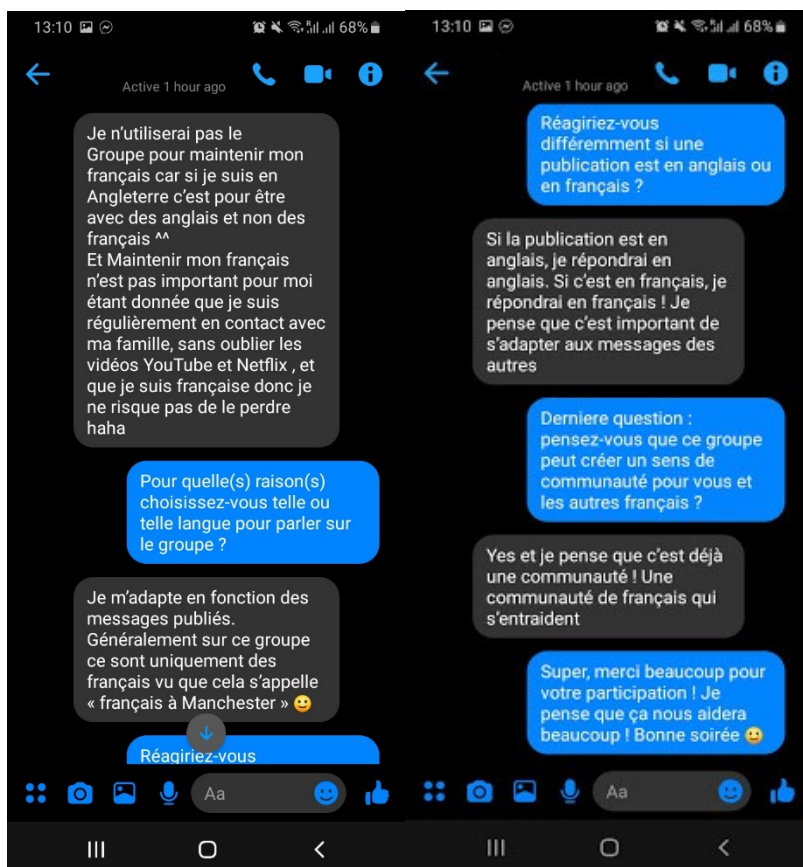
Interviews with members of FM:

First interview:

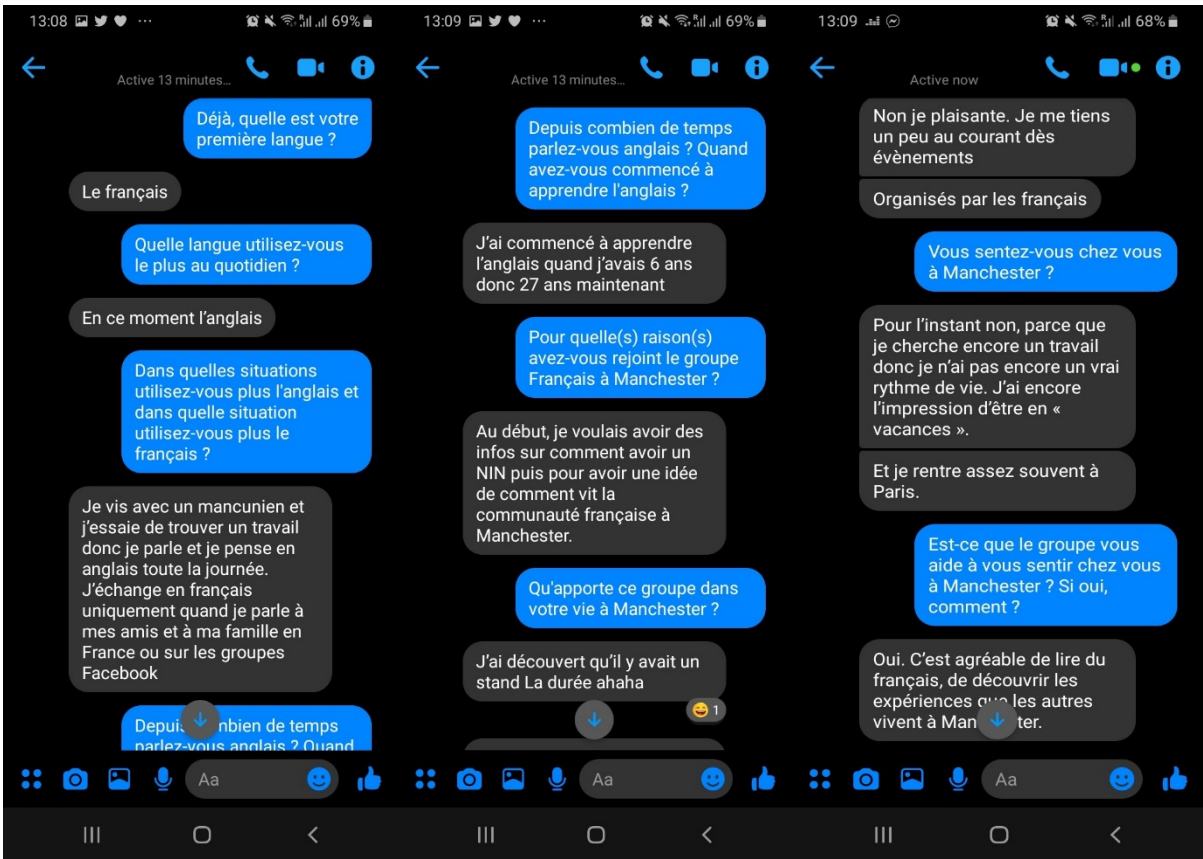


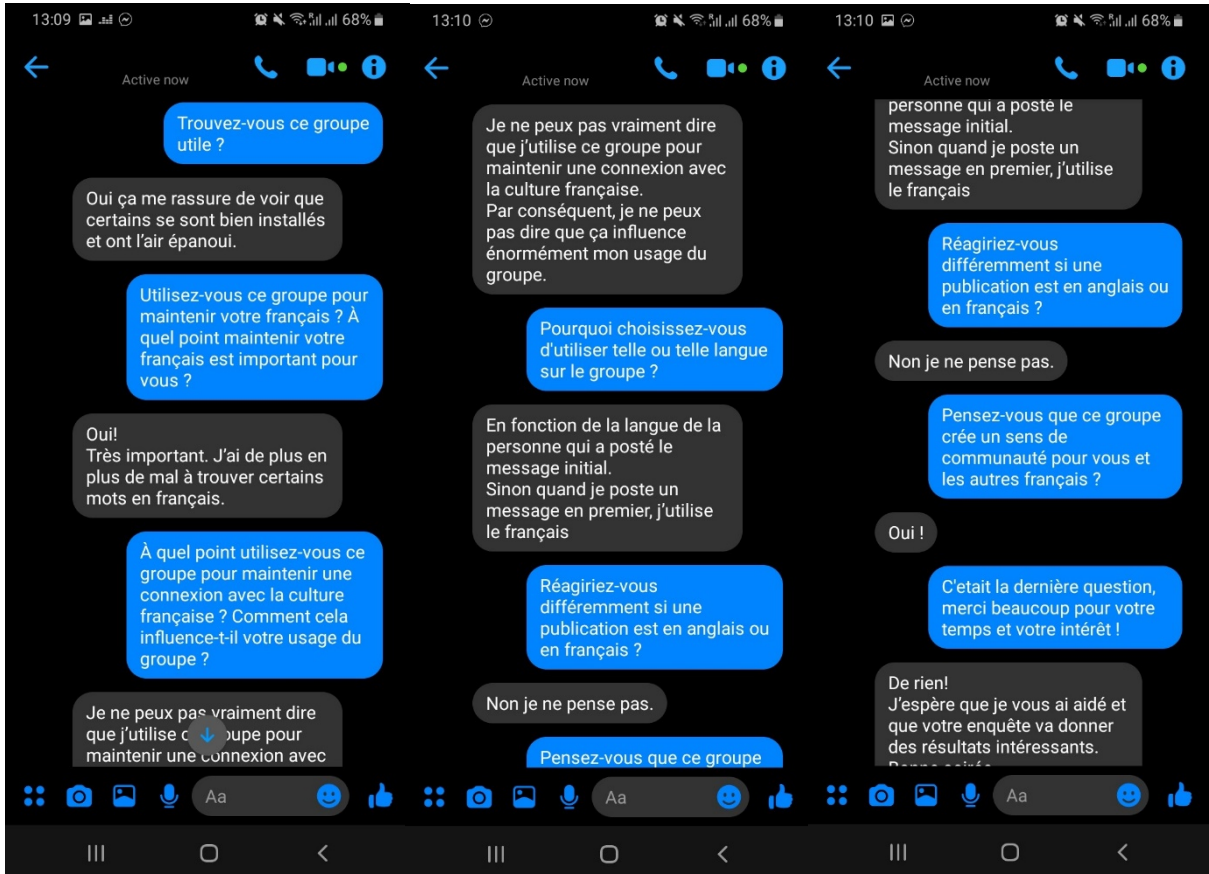
Second interview:





Third interview:





Fourth interview:



