Overview

Problem Statement

International students comprise roughly 1/5th of the student body population at The University of Michigan (Buhr, 2018). International students face many barriers as when they first come to a new place as there is a lot of demand placed on them which can be at times quite daunting. It has been found that 41% of international students experience substantial levels of stress resulting from communication (Wu, Garza, Gauzman, 2015) Language proficiency in a new environment is critical in developing relationships and regulating cognitive processes because effective communication measures a person's ability to conform socially, academically and professionally. International students are required to process a lot of information upon arrival to a new place and in coping with these new environments they are subjected to articulate and interpret to adapt to their new surroundings through their own subjective and preexisting experiences (Gatwiri, 2015). Because of their own interpretations they are faced with the challenges of developing their own personal meanings to make sense of the articulation process.

Target Audience

The primary audience for the purposes of this product design are international students within the University of Michigan community. They are individuals that want to be able to have insightful interactions and develop their English diction to make their social experiences in the U.S more meaningful. My secondary audience will be the set of people who use these apps to help the target audience. For example, international center staff will use the product to post interactive social activities and events that connect international students to members that coordinate and post social events. This product would enable target users to reach out and join events and learn a new non-native language. It will help secondary users to reach out to target users who would benefit from such events, language tools and workshops.

Target Solution

To implement a viable solution that enable international students within the U-M community to learn the local dialect and engage in various community social events, this app will be affiliated with the international center on campus. This tool will allow target users (international students) with an opportunity to practice local English and who might be on the lookout for better social interactions with people in the U.S. This will be a revolutionary one stop app that will help discover new social interactions and creative meet up groups as well as solutions and tools to better grasp the American everyday terminology through the app. This will save students time, improve their social wellbeing and interactions between international students and the U-M community.

Features
- The features of this app will allow students to interact with the U-M community to engage in social events with locals who want to help international students integrate within the U-M community
- Provide a pronunciation tool that will help in providing linguistic pronunciation features to *Americanize* their accents

- This tool will be affiliated with the international center and will provide the center with accountable resources to help maintain programs and coordinate events through data collection on the number of students signing up for certain events

Critical Feature

The critical feature this app aims to promote is a sense of belonging for international students within the U-M community. We are people and by our innate nature we need to feel a sense of belonging, this happens through interactions. This app will help connect students to resources such as tools in-built that will help them improve their pronunciation and vocabulary, it will enable them to find local events that are being hosted by the international center and their partners. Students can then sign up and engage in social activities which is the primary focus of this app. Currently, the international center has a mailing list-they email students to sign up and attend events through email. That could prove to be highly inefficient therefore this app will have all events and sign up in one space.

Feature Approaches

Approach 1

- Users can download and open the app directly. A disclosure stating that the app data analytic features will not collect or disburse data to outside parties, but only be shared with the international center and their staff in order to improve and continuously monitor events.
- This approach would simply have users look for events under dates, times and locations of when workshops, other events, or meetups are being held
- Once the user selects the event they are interested in, the app would prompt a drop box that would provide more information about the events such as how long the events are, where they will take place, point of contact if required to sign-up
- Once selected, they would figure out a way to reach to the event using apps such as Waze, Google Maps, Apple Maps- services that are in-built to the app.
- There are features that let you rate the event and thank guests that may have hosted events.

Design Rationale (Sketch 1)

- Due to the nature of the events being held, different people meeting up through the app, setting out events there needs to be a security feature in tow to help prevent users from getting information about others or app owners disbursing information to guests and hosts.
- One area where this feature has an added advantage is the lack of a login information section helps users save time and look for events in the locality. Although this could also mean that they lose their saved search which is a tradeoff.
- Knowing information about an event how long an event is and for how many days the sign-up is will help users with organizing their agendas and will prevent users from not being able to attend social events which they have signed up for.
- To get to these events people will use features such as Lyft, Uber and ride services and since people already have experience using these services it would be a useful extension to the tool.
- At the end, users will get to rate the event and send in recommendations that future students can use to see which event they want to participate in based on these recommendations. This further promotes events to international students

Approach 2

- Users will download and open the app. Once on the app, users will have the opportunity to read the disclosure and submit their credentials to login via creating a new account through the app.
- Once the users have established their account, they will be prompted with a set of questions. The questions to answer will set a profile up for the user. Once the user has a profile set up they will be able to select a list of events around them.
- The user can read descriptions once he selects an event or he can reject an event. In a panel box, the user can see history of events that they have rejected if they want to come back to it later.
- Each box has descriptions about the event such as how far it will be, whether it is hosted at someone's house, at a restaurant, or if they must attend a seminar before attending the main event being advertised.
- People can use interactive measures to communicate with other international students and give other them feedback on the events and recommendations through a circle of conversation tab

Design Rationale (Sketch 2)

- When user's login to the app, it allows them to save searches and share events with others. By doing this they can save a memory of places, or a collection of events that they would like to attend in the future. With additional preferences like this, it is easier to navigate and sign up for events based on categorizing and eliminating events that may not be preferential
- The user can reject events and place them in a history tab, it is a necessary function because users can then retrieve the necessary information later
- Users can see detailed descriptions about the event and the distance; this makes them more aware of the events to choose from and how far these gatherings maybe. It also gives them the added advantage of gaining further insight on how these events will be hosted/conducted.
- Features such as date, time and location will be used to filter out searches.
- Sharing feedback is a sought-after part of the tool because many times users rely on feedback from others who attended these gatherings and events. This word of mouth approach is an added benefit to this app because its fosters an inclusive environment where everyone can encourage others, interact, gain further insight on local things happening and make friends through the app.

Approach 3

- Using a social media app such as Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, or via E-mail for example, users will register using their information.
- They will be prompted to sign up for a tool extension that has weekly seminars on Fridays from 10am to 11am- this tool is an added perk for users that register. It is a platform that aims to help international students practice their English skills and brush up their *accents.*
- Once the user opts into the main page, they will have a calendar that pops up and outlines all of the locations where services such as meet ups, seminars and other hosted events such as *MEAL (weekly families hosting international students for dinner at their homes-sign up and attendance*

for a seminar are required before participating). All of this information will be on the calendar under the event.

- Once the user sets preferences, they will receive an automatic alert on more events that become available according to their preferences.

Design Rationale (Sketch 3)

- Using a social media app will enable users to login and is efficient because it allows users to import preferences and other information that helps users save time.
- Through registering in this approach, users will have an incentive. They will be able to use a language tool to sharpen their English skills. From an analytical standpoint, the app developer can use this to collect data, improve usability and get users to have loyalty towards the app.
- Enabling user interfaces that allow for setting locations and preferences to trigger a response to get alerts on different services on meetups and social events that cater to the user's preference. Ie. If they want to play sports-there would be a meetup for that, a karaoke night etc… this would maximize the use of the app.
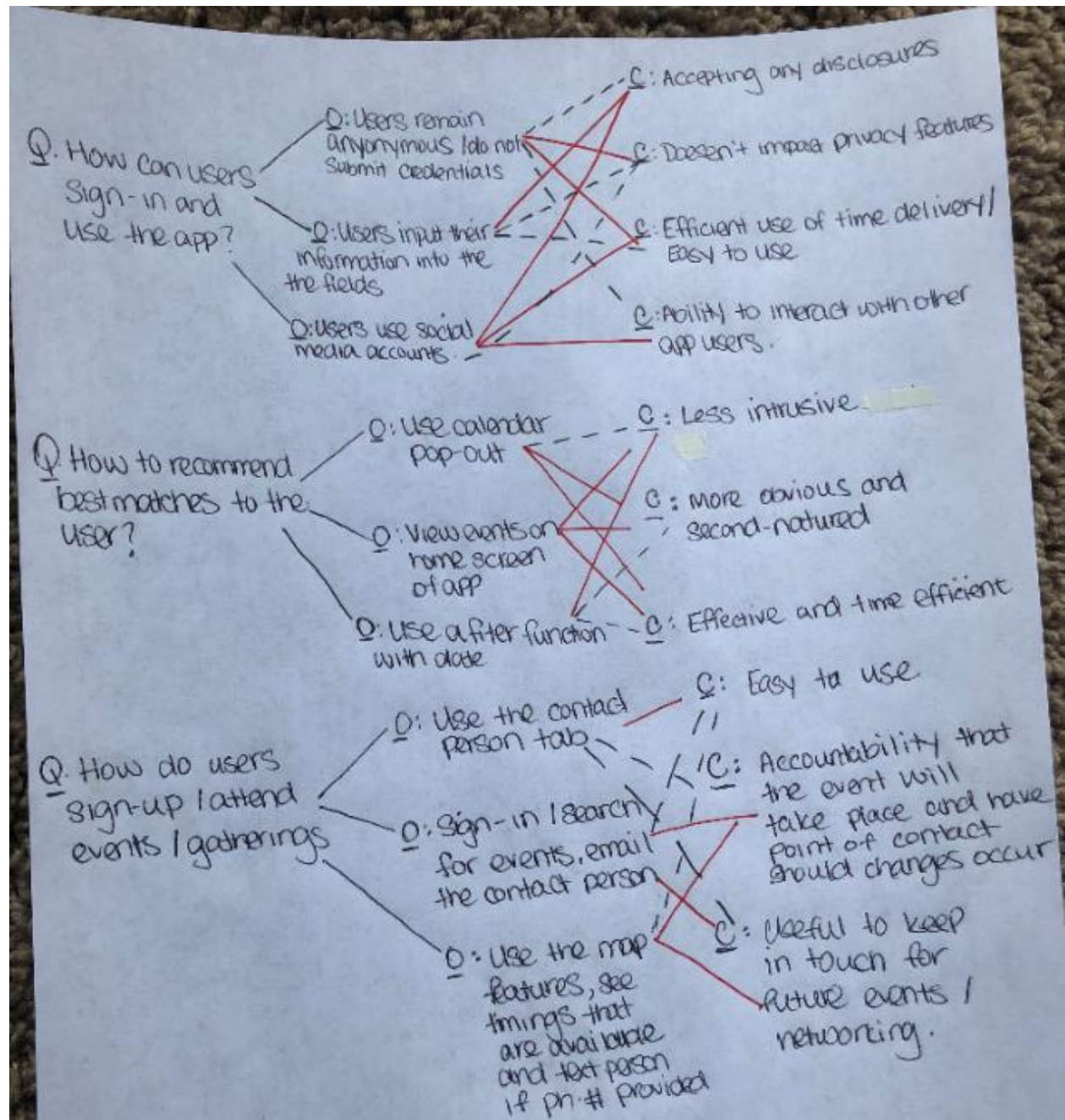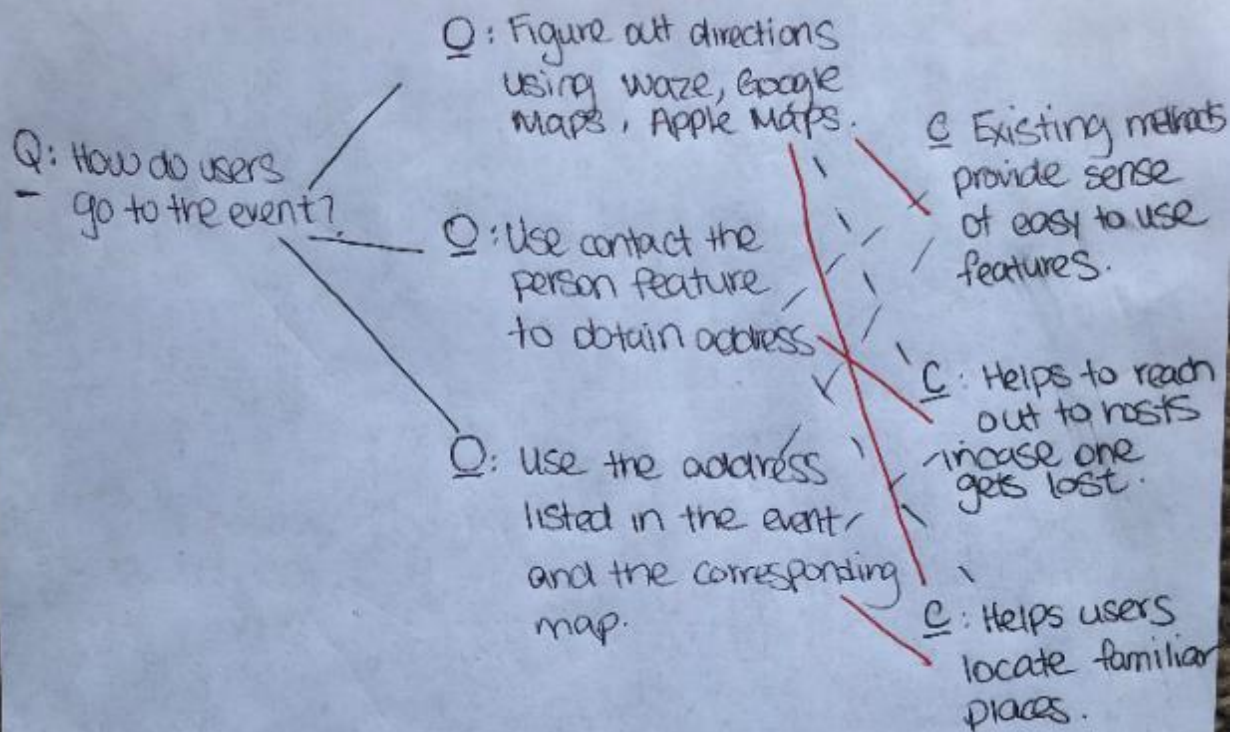
Design Defense: Explanation and Final Decision

Each approach here has its own pros and cons. From a design perspective it is hard to say subjectively which one is the best. Each has its own set of great features and then some tradeoffs. Let's take a deeper look into the analysis. In the first approach, users need not sign into the account and create a login registration. However, this can prove to be less useful for future interactions with the app because it does not enable the user to set preferences and come back to their history search function later. Whereas the good thing about the first approach is that it has an in-built tool that enables users to see how far the distance is to certain events and offers a tab where they can request a Lyft or Uber service as most international students rely on these methods of transportation. Users are familiar about these services and it reduces the time it takes to switch out between apps. In approach 2 we have the users input their information into the system. This is an added benefit because it allows us to keep tab on user preferences and alert them when new services come up. It allows users to browse through the history tab and reselect events that they may have rejected in the first instance. These functionalities such as searching based on time, location and preferences will also be used as additional features to help narrow down the user's needs. In the third approach, users have the same functions approach one and two have but there is also an in-built tool that allows users to learn and brush up their English skills. By asking the user to register on the app, they can keep track of their learning and register for events that interest them. In this approach, the feed of events enables users to maximize their app usage as it provides a visual image of all saved searches, and information about events which are useful in exploring the map to see how far certain events are, timing and other approaches.

Legend:

Good: ——————————

Bad: ------------------

Q. How can users Sign-in and Use the app?

- O: Users remain anonymous/do not submit credentials
- O: Users input their information into the the fields
- O: Users use social media accounts

- C: Accepting any disclosures
- C: Doesn't impact privacy features
- C: Efficient use of time delivery/ Easy to use
- C: Ability to interact with other app users.

Q How to recommend best matches to the user?

- O: Use calendar pop-out
- O: View events on home screen of app
- O: Use a filter function with date

- C: Less intrusive
- C: More obvious and second-natured
- C: Effective and time efficient

Q. How do users sign-up/attend events/gatherings

- O: Use the contact person tab
- O: Sign-in/search for events, email the contact person
- O: Use the map features, see timings that are available and text person if ph.# provided

- C: Easy to use
- C: Accountability that the event will take place and have point of contact should changes occur
- C: Useful to keep in touch for future events/ networking.

Q: Figure out directions using waze, Google Maps, Apple Maps.

C: Existing methods provide sense of easy to use features.

Q: How do users go to the event?

Q: Use contact the person feature to obtain address

C: Helps to reach out to hosts incase one gets lost.

Q: Use the address listed in the event, and the corresponding map.

C: Helps users locate familiar places.

SKETCH 1

1.

INTL SOCIAL
SERVICE MEET-UP

DISCLOSURE

☐ Accept
Disclosures

LOGIN / DISCLOSURE

2.

☰ Events

Social meet-ups:

X event 1
Date
Time
Contact

X event 2
Date
Time
contact

PAGE 1: EVENTS

3.

☰ X event 1

Get Directions
MAPS   ADDRESS

Uber | Lyft

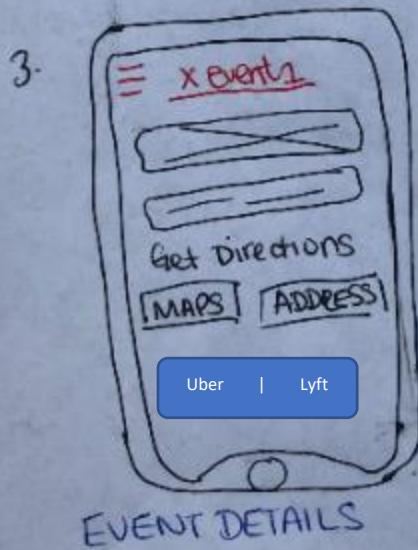EVENT DETAILS

4.

Rate your
experience

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LAST SCREEN AFTER
EVENT

SKETCH 2

1.
INTL SOCIAL
SERVICE MEET-
UP

DISCLOSURE

LOGIN :
USERNAME
PASSWORD

NEW USERS
(SIGN-UP)

3.
≡ Events

Event 1: INFO

ACCEPT ✓   REJECT X

Event 2: INFO

ACCEPT ✓   REJECT X

2.
FILTER.
DATE   TIME

LOCATION

TYPE OF EVENT

4.
HISTORY

Events ACCEPT

— ✓
— ✓
— ✓
— ✓✓
— ✓
— / REJECT
— ✓
— ✓

5.
DETAILS
ACCEPTED
EVENTS

☑ 〰〰

CONTACT

LOCATION

SKETCH 3

1.

INTL SOCIAL
SERVICE MEET-UP

DISCLOSURE

f Login

T Login

L Login

USERNAME
PASSWORDS

2.

SIGN-UP
FOR
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
VOCAB

3.

Events

CALENDAR

NOV 1 2 3 4 5
6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15

NOV 8: 〜〜

CONTACT TIME

MAP
↳ Google MAP
↳ APPLE MAP.

4.

GOOGLE MAP

5.

RATE YOUR
EXPERIENCE

SHARE FEED-
BACK

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