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ABSTRACT

These instructor and student manuals contain the content for a course on getting a job for students of English as a Second Language. The course emphasizes the cultural values and nuances of U.S. culture that students may expect to encounter during the job search and job interviews. Topics covered include exploring cultural assumptions, culture shock and stress, cultural behaviors, and language. The manuals are related to videotapes described in the bibliography. The instructor's manual contains teaching hints along with the content, case studies, a presentation checklist for job interviews, a glossary of cultural terms, and an annotated bibliography of 26 items. The student workbook includes an "exploring cultural values" test, a brainstorming worksheet, a worksheet for documenting the job search, a script for telephone contacts, sample job interview questions, a critique sheet for practicing job interviews, and a glossary. (KC)

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Job Interviewing Skills for ESL Students with a Cross-Cultural Emphasis

Instructor's Manual

Prepared by

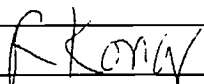
Alice Gosak and Patricia Nguyen

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Alice Gosak and Pat Nguyen

THE SAN JOSE CITY COLLEGE GET-A-JOB COURSE

The following outline may be of help to those who offer the course in setting up their sessions.

- I. Exploring Cultural Assumptions
 - A. What your background may have taught you
 - B. Expectations of the American employer

- II. Culture Shock and Stress
(**VIDEO: TIPS FROM THOSE WHO HIRE, PT. 3 “How You Should Conduct Yourself”, 5 min.**)

- III. Cultural Behaviors
 - A. Appearance
 1. The Sweet Smell of Success
 2. Dressing for success
 - a. Men
 - b. Women
 3. Projecting attitudes through body language
 - a. Gestures
 - b. Posture
 - c. Facial Expressions
 - d. Eye Contact
 - e. Handshake
 4. Proxemics

B. Finding your American voice

(**VIDEO: YOU'RE HIRED**, 30 min.)

C. Applying time values

1. Planning

a. the job search

b. setting up your home base

c. preparing your resume and other paperwork

2. Promptness

3. Response time to questions

4. Deadlines

5. Follow-up

(**VIDEO: TIPS FROM THOSE WHO HIRE, PT. 1, "How applicants Should Prepare"**, 6 min.)

IV. Language

A. Before the interview

1. Writing to get an interview
 - a. resume
 - b. cover letter
 - c. forms
2. Speaking on the telephone
 - a. calling about a job
 - b. responding to an interviewer's call
 - c. training others to take messages
3. Researching the company
4. Getting to the Interview

(VIDEO: TIPS FROM THOSE WHO HIRE, PTS. 2 & 4, "What Skills Are Helpful" & "Tips for Non -Native Speakers", 10 min.)

B. During the interview

1. Making a. small talk
2. Using hesitation devices
3. Asking for a restatement
4. Answering questions
 - a. the most commonly asked questions
5. Asking your own questions
 - a.. negotiating
 - b.. clarification
6. Concluding the interview
7. Recognizing and handling illegal questions

(VIDEO: SJSU Interview Film, 28 min.)

D. After the interview

Writing a thank-you letter

E. What if...?

1. If you are hired

2. If you are not hired

3. If you decide to turn down a job

V. Videotape practice and critique of student interviews.

THE GET-A-JOB COURSE INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

The Get-a-Job course came into being in response to an important need. A high percentage of Asian students graduating from San Jose City College or seeking jobs were not getting hired. Often these job seekers had good grades. Language was a problem for some of them, but beyond that culture was a problem.

The course that we have prepared relies upon lecture, video presentation, student interaction, and demonstration of techniques that are discussed in the class. It is designed to be offered to a group of 20 advanced students as a sixteen-hour module. The course has been offered in two-hour blocs two nights a week as well as in four-hour blocs over four consecutive days. It culminates in a videotaped mock interview of each student with the teacher, other vocational teachers or community volunteers acting as interviewers. Other students critique their peer who, under the best of circumstances, will be able to review the critique sheets and repeat the interview during the next session.

The lecture might begin with the information below:

Knowing your way around a culture can be a problem even if you are fluent in a language. I think of Dr. W., an Ethiopian, who has "hit the glass ceiling" in the pharmaceutical company in which he works. Dr. W. at first thought that his problem was caused by racism. When he discussed it with an American friend, he began to see that the gentle, uncomplaining ways he had been taught by his culture led him to be passed over by more aggressive colleagues.

Helen, who was brought up and educated in the Philippines, also had a similar problem. She worked as an accountant in a large company. Her work was excellent, but she sat through meetings like any good Filipina--she never made eye contact with her colleagues and never spoke up. Yet she had some very good suggestions. When Helen learned to offer those suggestions and participate in meetings actively, her star began to rise. She was promoted, but not before she became aware that her acceptable Filipina behavior was not translating in the American workplace.

Both of the examples that we have given you are of people who already had jobs. Looking for a job is the first step and becoming aware of your cultural style and how it fits into the American workplace is important preparation. The job market now is very competitive. We hope that this course will "give you an edge" in finding that job.

Before we go further with our exploration of our cultures, it would be useful to know about you. Think for one minute about yourself, what you have studied, where you are from, what kind of job you are looking for, and what has motivated you to take this course. Then, we will take time to introduce ourselves to the class.

(Have class members address the group and tell about themselves. This may be a point at which they would like to tell of previous successes/failures in the job search. Ask them to think about experiences they have had in looking for a job in the United States. What happened? Were they successful? What problems did they have?)

Be advised that the issue may be a sensitive one and some members of the group may not be willing to share at this point in the class).

CULTURAL DIVERSITY INDEX

For the purpose of this course, we are going to refer to the world of work in the United States as having white Anglo-American values. These are the values of the group that dominate the corporate world. For the most part, they are white men from English-speaking backgrounds. Their values and the assumptions underlying those values came from Northern Europe/England and were modified over the centuries of American history. You may share some of those values and assumptions, but then again, you may not.

Here is a checklist of Cultural Assumptions. Look it over, but don't think too much about the answers. The first one that comes into your head may be the appropriate one. Just go with it now and have fun!

The statements below represent two contrasting values that people may hold. It is an inventory, rather than a test. Read through it and circle the choice that reflects the way you think or feel. **(Allow about five minutes for class members to check off information that appears in the list below and in the student handbook. At the end of this exercise, have students compare their answers.)**

1. Follow procedures/orders. Do as you're told.
2. Question authority. It's fun to bend the rules.
3. People are out to get you.
4. People are basically good.
5. It's what you know and how you work that gets things done.
6. It's who you know that gets things done.
7. Time is a river.

8. Time is money.
9. Watch what I do. (Learn by demonstration).
 10. Do as I say. (Learn by following instructions).
11. How well can you do it?.
 12. How fast can you do it?
13. Let's solve this problem together.
 14. I can figure this out by myself.
15. How else can I help you?
 16. It's not my job.
17. Work starts when I get there.
 18. Work starts at 9:00 a.m. sharp!
19. Slow change is best.
 20. A quick fix will take care of it.
21. Get closer so we can talk.
 22. Can we have a little breathing room between us?
23. Talking can be an art if you follow the rules and have style...
 24. Talking is an information exchange.
25. Some things should not be said because feelings can be hurt.
 26. Let's get this all out in the open.
27. I'll take full responsibility.
 28. It's not my fault.
29. The facts don't mean anything without the background information.
 30. Leave out the history. Just give me the facts.

As you can see, there are many ways to look at time, relationships, life and work. Sometimes our differences will be influenced by our professions--an engineer may see things differently than a writer; often women and men think differently from each other; people from other cultures probably have value systems that are surprisingly different in some ways and surprisingly similar in others.

So there are no right answers to this quiz. Rather all the answers can be right at one time or another, or in different places at different times.

Many times what we think of as miscommunications are really different assumptions that come from having a different value system. Let's look at some of them.

VALUES IN THE WORLD OF WORK IN WHITE ANGLO-AMERICA AND IN OTHER CULTURES

When we look at values in the white Anglo-American system, we find that these things are **true most of the time:**

- Time has many of the same qualities as money and some of the same verbs are applied when talking about it--time can be spent, saved or wasted Arriving at appointments and at work promptly is expected. Doing things promptly and efficiently is important. Almost everything can be planned in terms of time--education, career paths, and even having children.

•People in the United States tend to live in the future rather than the fullness of the present or the value of the past. They are constantly thinking of what their next move will be, what they will be doing tonight, tomorrow, next week, often instead of enjoying the present.

•Your worth as a person, your self-esteem, depends a lot more on what you DO rather than who you are or what good qualities you may have. Moving up in your job and social contacts is thought of as more important than inner spiritual growth. The first question a stranger often asks you is what kind of work you do.

•Americans prefer to be responsible for themselves and for their own work rather than for any kind of group effort. There is a lot of competition between individuals. There is also much more emphasis on personal effort and “what’s in it for me” (the individual) than any kind of group work or group responsibility.

•Americans believe that almost all problems can be solved with the help of more research, more technology or more money.

•”The customer is always right” is an old saying in service industries. The good worker goes out of the way to anticipate the customers need. In a hotel situation, for example, this means that the customer is the most important person in the hotel, not the general manager.

In contrast, other cultures may see things differently. Here are some contrasting values:

- Time is not so specific. It is more like water or air. Events and situations flow “in good time” and don’t necessarily have to be planned for.

- The traditions of the past are still strong and have value. The present is influenced by the past. Family relations are important in this way. Have you ever heard a statement made about a person because of the past action of someone in his family (i.e., “His grandfather had bad character. I’m not surprised that John turned out that way, too.”)

- Responsibility and thoughts are directed toward the group. Your actions reflect on family members and family has strong (sometimes total) impact on your life decision.

- Other cultures may have a more realistic acceptance of the inevitable in life-- sickness, accidents, old age, death, loss, etc. With few resources of the technological kind, other cultures have had to face life’s unpleasantness at a younger age and with more frequency. (Note that in the United States, the average 20-year-old will probably not have experience with the death of a relative until he/she is in his/her fifties). In other cultures, having to face life without being shielded from it has led people to a deeper level of understanding, different responses, maturation and a kind of natural dignity.

While it is best to view values from a neutral standpoint, it helps to be aware of them as we make our way through the world of work. Let’s look now at some of the specific values that may underlie the way we think about some important facets of life.

Adherence to cultural norms and movement away from them (adaptation to another culture) vary with individuals, the length of time they have been exposed to the new culture, and their attitude toward it. Here, in the broadest terms, are some cultural descriptions that may be of value to the instructor. They may also be shared with students to make them aware of how their values may differ from those of the dominant group.

THE FAMILY

ASIANS: Family is more important than individual. Individual follows family's decision.

HISPANICS: Family is more important than individual.

ANGLO-AMERICANS: Individual is more important than family. An adult will make decisions and then inform parents about them.

TIME

ASIANS: Time is not always specific.

HISPANICS: Time is vague/relative.

ANGLO-AMERICANS: Time is precise.

RELATIONSHIPS

ASIANS: Work and study for honor of family, company, class or society

HISPANICS: Relationships are more important than how the task is done.

ANGLO-AMERICANS: Work for personal emotional/material rewards.

EMOTIONS

ASIANS: Emotions are subdued so that the good group atmosphere will be preserved.

HISPANICS: Emotional expression is important.

ANGLO-AMERICANS: Certain emotions are not acceptable for each gender. In other words, men shouldn't be tender or sad, women shouldn't show anger.

AUTHORITY

ASIANS: Authority is obeyed and respected.

HISPANICS: Authority is respected and seldom challenged.

ANGLO-AMERICANS: Question authority! Work around it if you have to! Sometimes, however, it is unavoidable.

(Note: Groups that have lived under totalitarian systems in Vietnam or Eastern Europe may exhibit an attitude of trying to outwit governmental authorities which sometimes may be inappropriate in the American context.)

THE GOOD TIMES (MUSIC, FOOD, FAMILY)

ASIANS: Music, family members, and food are only part of the work environment under certain work conditions.

HISPANICS: Music, family members, and food are preferred or welcome additions to the work environment.

ANGLO-AMERICANS: Music, family members, and food do not usually mix with the work environment.

Now that you are aware of some of these underlying values, let us take a look at some case studies to see what response you feel is appropriate. (Students quietly read the case studies and make their choices. Then they discuss their choices in small groups. Afterward, the instructor comments on what the Anglo-American response typically would be.)

CULTURAL VALUES * CASE STUDIES

With your group, read the problems and decide the best solution for an American and for a person from your culture.

Case Study One: Peter is a young engineer. He lives with his wife, two pre-school children and his parents. He has interviewed for a better job. It will require him to be gone four days of every week. Should he accept the job?

Explanation: If Peter were interested in job advancement, he would discuss this arrangement with his wife. He should try to negotiate a finite period of time within which he would be on the road with his employer or he could do this work in the interest of advancing himself until the opportunity to move to another company came up.

Case Study Two: Joseph has been offered a job that will eventually lead to a manager's position. The job will require a lot of overtime and comes with greater responsibility. Should he accept it?

Explanation: If Joseph is indeed interested in advancing himself he should accept the job with overtime and greater responsibility.

Case Study Three: Christine and her fiancé are both accountants in different companies. She has now been offered a promotion that will lead to a managerial position. It will require more overtime, but it is a good opportunity. Christine will be making more money than her fiancé. Should she accept the job?

Explanation: In the U.S., women frequently make more money than their fiancés or spouses. In other cases, they are the breadwinners. Christine would be thought of as too self-sacrificing (and almost foolish) if she let this opportunity slip away.

Case Study Four: Minh and Bob work on the same assembly. Minh comes to work on time, goes to his station and works quietly. Bob occasionally comes to work a few minutes late and sometimes falls asleep at his station. However, he is talkative and friendly with his supervisor. When it came time to review wages and performance, Bob got a larger raise than Minh. What should Minh do?

Explanation: Minh may have to learn an expensive lesson for the next time salaries are reviewed. Learning to talk about sports and to generally make small talk are considered acceptable ways to prove yourself “one of the guys” in an American firm. Being one of the guys give supervisors and colleagues a comfortable feeling that they would be able to successfully work with a person. Staying at your work station and doing a good job is often not enough. Becoming sufficiently acculturated to give the impression that you are part of the team will advance your career.

Case Study Five: Jenny has a young son who became sick as she was getting ready to go to work. She called to tell her supervisor that she would be late. After taking her son to the doctor and to the babysitter, she showed up at work two hours late. Should she get paid for the two hours of work she missed?

Explanation: If it is company policy that Jenny would be docked for the time that she missed because of lateness, she will not be paid no matter how good, humane, or family-oriented her excuse. Be familiar with your company's policy regarding sick leave, etc.

Case Study Six: Mr. Vu was a high-ranking officer in his country. After he came to the United States with his family of five children, he was laid off from several jobs. Now he has been offered a permanent job with benefits as a custodian. Should he take the job?

Explanation: Mr. Vu now faces the twin difficulties of supporting his family while starting over. It would be advisable for him to accept the job regardless of his former position. It would give him "a position of strength" from which to later look for other work. It is always better to be a job seeker who has a job and an income than it is to be a job seeker who can not be particular because he/she has no income.

Case Study Seven: Thanh applied for a position as an accountant three years ago. On his application, he stated that he had finished his B.A. in accounting when in fact he had not completed the course work. Recently his employer found out the truth and demanded that he finish the degree if he wanted to continue working for the company. What should Thanh do?

Explanation: American employers do not think highly of individuals who fake their credentials. Thanh is lucky to be given this chance. He should do whatever it takes to finish his degree and thank his lucky stars that he was not dismissed from the job.

A WORD ABOUT STRESS AND CULTURE SHOCK

In the past three decades, social scientists have identified and explored the phenomenon of culture shock. They have identified a W-shaped curve that all individuals going to live in another culture follow. The stages that are important to us represent half of that W. They are

THE HONEYMOON. This is the initial period in which the individual is in a new culture. Everything is great. The individual wants to adopt the fashions, foods, the slang and all other aspects of the new culture. This eagerness can sometimes be misinterpreted by the natives as being too "pushy".

"THIS COUNTRY IS LOUSY". During the second stage, the individual experiences complete rejection of the values of the new country. This is dealing with reality. The individual is tired of the daily battle of cultural values and experiences feelings of hostility, anger, frustration, depression.

SETTLING IN. At this point, the individual adjusts to the new culture and makes an accommodation between original values and those of the new culture. The feeling is one of satisfaction and relaxation.

STRESS ON THE JOB

Often you will have experiences on the job that will be hard to deal with but which are not unknown to newcomers. Being aware of them will help you to put your experience in a context and to judge whether it is one of the phases of culture shock. Some of those phases are

- Not really being able to relax and feel “at home” in the U.S. after a long time.
- Being highly educated or of high socio-economic status and having to start over in the U.S. where nobody knows of or appreciates your former situation.
- Facing the dual pressure of having to function in English all day long and trying to do well on the job. Hearing a new language and trying to understand it for 8 hours or more a day can be exhausting, stressful and almost overwhelming.
- Trying to understand the extra-linguistic elements of culture such as tone of voice, gestures, joking behavior directed toward you, the physical distance between people, customs and behavior concerning food or drink, behavior such as levels of formality with supervisors, older employees, and members of the opposite sex can be perplexing. Many communication problems are a result of newcomers not understanding things that members of the culture take for granted.

If you are experiencing problems in this area, remember that you are not alone. If you are fortunate, you will make the acquaintance of a “cultural mentor”, a person who will take the time to explain language expressions and the actions of others to you.

CULTURAL BEHAVIORS

Now that we have looked at some of the cultural assumptions and values underlying American culture, it is time to look at some specifics as they apply to the job interview situation. The first thing we will examine are those things pertaining to the senses of sight, sound, and smell. We call this part

THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS

If you have ever contrasted an American supermarket with the marketplaces of your home country, one of the most striking contrasts probably eluded you. It has to do with your sense of smell. If you were to go through the marketplace of your home country blindfolded, you could probably guess what was being sold in a particular area by the rich scents that reached your nose. Here is the place where the spices are sold; here is the place where baskets are made; here is where the leather workers have their wares; here is the place of the butchers.

You would not be able to tell one part of the American supermarket from another with a blindfold on because the American institution is devoid of smells. This phenomenon provides a clue to how Americans regard natural smells--they want them masked, lightly perfumed, or eliminated. Let us investigate the "rules of smell" as they apply to job-seekers.

1. The natural smell of hair puts Americans off. When you go on a job interview, wash your hair with shampoo and rinse it thoroughly. Hair should be trimmed, neat and shiny.
2. Body smells are likewise frowned upon.
 - a. While some of us believe in the healthy properties of garlic, Americans, even if they do hold this belief, do not think that a person should smell of garlic. The best rule here is to avoid foods with garlic for forty-eight hours before your scheduled interview.
 - b. Any kind of natural body odor is also regarded as offensive. Shower thoroughly and use deodorant before your job interview.
 - c. Bad breath also is very offensive. Clean your body inside and out to avoid it. Before your interview, brush your teeth and use mouthwash.
 - d. The smell of cigarette smoke has become increasingly unpleasant to Americans as many of them are no longer smokers. If you must smoke before the interview, take breath mints or chew gum to kill the smell. **DO NOT CHEW GUM DURING THE INTERVIEW.** Be aware that more workplaces are becoming smoke-free environments.
3. Clothes should not smell musty or like food. If your clothes have been in mothballs, take them out and air them twenty-four hours before the interview.
4. Wear clean shoes, socks and underwear.
5. Do not use overpowering cologne or perfume.

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

MEN

1. Now that you're in your clean shoes, socks, and underwear, don't put on your jeans. Wear trousers that are not too long or too short. They should be a neutral color such as black, brown, grey, navy blue or beige. If they have a pattern, it should have small checks, not a large plaid or big stripes.

A long-sleeved dress shirt in a solid or a narrow stripe in conservative colors (white or pastels) is acceptable. Do not wear a tee-shirt or any other piece of clothing with words on it.

Do not wear a white belt, white shoes, white socks or sneakers.

2. Depending on the job that you are applying for, a tie is a good finishing touch but it is not always necessary. In winter, wear a sweater that is conservative in style or a jacket over your shirt. If you own a suit, it is preferred over trousers or a sweater. If you borrow a suit, make sure that it fits.

3. Do not wear hats or caps on a job interview (or, for that matter, indoors at any time unless it is for religious purposes).

4. If it is your habit to wear an earring, leave it at home when you go for an interview.

5. If you know you will be looking for a job, adopt a conservative hair style. A Mohawk or even modified punk styles are not acceptable.

6. Fingernails should be trimmed. A long fingernail on your little finger may have been an acceptable fashion in your country, but it will cause a distraction during the interview and lead to speculation about your work habits.

7. Long hairs growing out of moles will not bring you good luck at an interview. Cut the hair on your mole before you go for an interview.

WOMEN

1. Hair should not only be clean, it should not cover any part of your face. If your hair tends to fall in your face, hold it back with a hairpin or a clip. Pushing your hair back is a distracting mannerism.
2. Wear your hair in a conservative style rather than a party style. Do not wear hair ornaments that sparkle or have gold.
3. Use moderation in the amount and style of your jewelry. Do not wear dangling earrings or more than two bracelets.
4. Makeup should not be obvious. Colors should resemble natural skin color and should be blended not blotched.
5. If you wear perfume, apply it very lightly on the day of the interview.
6. Wear a dress or skirt and blouse or suit in a conservative style and color (grey, black, brown, burgundy, navy, or beige. Green is not considered a good color). Red is considered a "power" color for women. Do not wear low necklines, sleeveless clothing or slacks. Do not wear tight, thin or transparent fabrics. If you wear separates, make sure they match in color and pattern.
7. Skirt length should not be shorter than above the knee nor longer than below the knee.
8. Wear flesh-colored non-shiny pantyhose regardless of the weather.
9. Wear shoes with backs, toes and heels that are no higher than 3 inches. They should not be scuffed or excessively decorated.
10. Fingernails should be cleaned and manicured. Avoid bright colored polish and nail art.
11. A small purse, a folder containing your papers, or a briefcase are acceptable.

BODY LANGUAGE

Your gestures, your posture, your facial expressions, your eye contact, and your handshake convey important information about you to the interviewer. Be conscious of the impression you make.

Gestures

Americans tend to gesture more during conversations than Asians. Rather than affect gestures that you might not naturally make, it is best to know which ones to avoid. Pointing, scratching, clearing your throat noisily, or making any other bodily sound are considered inappropriate. Be aware of any particular nervous mannerisms you might have.

Refrain from touching the individual you are talking to.

Posture

Keeping an erect posture is desirable when you sit, stand, or walk. It denotes confidence. When you sit in a chair, lean against the back of the chair and resist the temptation to relax by slouching, removing your shoes, or shaking your knees. Keep both feet firmly on the ground. It is permissible for women to cross their knees or their ankles.

Keep your hands in a relaxed position in your lap. While crossing your arms is a gesture of respect in some cultures, it is somewhat defiant in American culture.

Facial Expressions

In Asian cultures, there is a tendency to smile when you are nervous or in disagreement and to nod in agreement to everything. While Americans are also smilers, the occasions on which they smile are different.

When there is small talk at the beginning of an interview, it is appropriate to smile. In the interview itself, smiling is less frequent as the subject is serious. Negative answers are rarely accompanied by a smile.

If a question is difficult or embarrassing, sticking out the tip of the tongue is not appropriate.

Eye Contact

Acceptable eye contact in the American context is something that should be practiced because Americans tend to form opinions about an individual's character based on whether he/she "looks them in the eye."

During the interview, maintain eye contact for two seconds at a time, looking away from the interviewer's eyes then returning. Avoid staring, looking at the ceiling or the floor while speaking to the interviewer.

Handshake

The handshake is the most important part of an introduction in the Western world. Strength of character is often judged by the handshake, so always shake hands firmly.

As you approach the interviewer, wait for him or her to extend his/her hand. Grasp the other's hand with authority, being careful not to squeeze it painfully. Shake the hand once or twice; do not pump it vigorously. As you shake the hand, you should say:

"How do you do. It is nice to meet you."

If you are a woman being interviewed by a man, extend your hand to initiate the handshake.

Proxemics

Always maintain an arm's length distance from anyone you are speaking to. How close individuals stand to each other varies across cultures.

FINDING YOUR AMERICAN VOICE

While demure voices are cultivated in some societies, they can be construed as weak or annoying in American society. In this context, speak in a firm and assertive voice.

Practice saying the answers to questions and taping them in your home before the interview. Play the tape back to yourself and to your friends to evaluate voice quality.

When speaking on the telephone, make certain that your voice sounds light and pleasant. Monosyllabic answers and long pauses give your telephone conversation an uninviting tone.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

FINDING A JOB IN THE UNITED STATES by Joan E. Friedenbergl and Curtis H. Bradley (Lincolnwood, IL: Passport Books, 1988), Chapters 4 and 5.

APPLYING TIME VALUES

READING ASSIGNMENT:

FINDING A JOB IN THE UNITED STATES by Joan E. Friedenbergl and Curtis H. Bradley (Lincolnwood, IL: Passport Books, 1988), Chapters 6 and 7

Planning: Although your culture may have taught you to be spontaneous and to cope with things as they come up, the job search is a process that requires pre-planning.

Sources of Jobs:

1. the want ads
2. Job placement center at your college
3. Employment Development Department
4. friends (word-of-mouth)
5. paid agencies

WANT ADS

In the San Jose Area, the SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS carries extensive advertisements by employers in its Sunday and Wednesday editions. In difficult employment markets, however, an ad may receive 1,000 responses. The best advice is to respond to a classified advertisement only when you closely fit the job requirements .

Make certain that you know whether you are supposed to respond to the ad by letter and resume, by telephone or in person. Letters and resumes should go out promptly--by the day after the ad's appearance at the latest. Have the wording of your letter and resume checked by a friend who knows English very well.

Gather transcripts, certificates, grade reports, your working permit, and social security number. It is also wise to commit your social security number to memory as you will be using it for the duration of your life in the United States.

Be sure to notify all your potential references that you are starting a job search and would like permission to use their names. Tell them they may be contacted within the next few weeks. Ask your references where and when it is best to contact them whether at home or work, and be prepared to provide information to employers. Also write out your complete work history for the past 10 years, the time you've been out of high school, or the time you've been in the U. S. Include all information you would put on an application (company name, job title, dates of employment, duties, supervisor's name, reason for leaving). Start with the most recent job and work backwards in time, accounting for all gaps over 2 months.

Cut out want ads and save them.

Activity: Have students bring in want ads that they are interested in or bring in some that you have selected. Teach students to read the language of abbreviations and develop their awareness of implied messages in ads.

SETTING UP YOUR HOME BASE

Anticipate where job-related calls will come to you. If you have access to an answering machine, make sure the message is clear and audible in stating your telephone number. ("This is 992-1234. Please leave your message at the sound of the tone."). Be sure to have a neutral, professional message that states your name clearly and has no background noise or personal remarks. You can change your message again after you get a job.

If you will only be available at certain hours, indicate the times in your letter to the interviewer.

If you live with a friend or relative, instruct adults to take messages. It might be helpful to write out a script of questions that should be asked (what is your name? your company's name? telephone number and extension? what time should he/she call?). If this is impossible because of household members' lack of English, fall back on having potential employers call during hours when you will be there. If you allow children to take messages, the message may not get to you.

Keep a pen and a pad of paper next to the telephone at all times during the job search. If it is possible, set up a table or a separate work area for paperwork that is not disturbed.

Promptness is important in responding to job ads as well as appearing at interviews. It is unforgivable to be late for an interview. Allow yourself travel time and time to gain your composure before the actual interview.

Response time to questions: Pay attention to the amount of time that elapses before you answer a question in English. If you understand the questions, do not let more than five seconds elapse before you begin the response. If you don't understand the question, ask the interviewer to repeat it and rephrase it. Be aware that if you use this device too many times, the interviewer will doubt your ability to understand English.

Deadlines: If additional time is needed to get paperwork in to the interviewer or if an application must be received by a certain date, observe that date strictly even if it involves your delivering the information to the company in person.

Follow-up: After you have made an initial contact by resume or application, you must keep track of all follow-up contacts. For an application, you should contact the company to inquire about interviewing if you haven't heard from them in 7 business days; for a resume, you may wait for 10 days. Thereafter, contact the company every 2-3 days until you are notified of an interview appointment or that you're no longer being considered. After you have had an interview, wait 2-3 days before calling them, or the amount of time specified by the interviewer during the interview. Thereafter, contact them weekly until you receive notification of hire, a second interview, or that you are no longer being considered.

THE RESUME

The subject of language used in the resume, cover letter, and application forms are extensively covered in a number of publications. (SEE: FINDING A JOB IN THE UNITED STATES, Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11). Basically, they cover the differences in format and language of chronological and functional resumes. Although this passage is short in this manual, it will take time for students to create an acceptable resume. Job objectives, skills, and page layout are among the points to be considered and reviewed with students.

Brainstorming is a technique that is effective in getting students to arrive at the work they have done on jobs. For each job, have students think of and list all the duties they performed. Next, assist them in putting verbs in parallel grammatical structures, making certain to vary the opening verb on each entry. (Student workbook contains a brainstorming sheet to help students with this exercise).

An even more fundamental problem is lack of experience. Work-study experience and community volunteer work could be counted. Organizational and social participation in school can also be counted. Gaps of more than two months in employment history must be accounted for on the resumes of students with experience.

Older students may have extensive overseas experience. This experience can be summarized in a brief entry at the end of a functional or reverse chronological resume. Those who have been political detainees may explain the time gap in their work experience by a simple, politically neutral sentence in their cover letter.

Language ability and computer literacy should be listed as special skills.

THE COVER LETTER

Cover letters are a standard business practice and they should accompany resumes. To focus students in preparing a cover letter, have them select an ad from a newspaper and prepare a cover letter to accompany their resume in response to it. This activity may evolve in several drafts, which can be prepared outside the class and which can be submitted to the instructor for review.

To make the resume and cover letter distinctive, the student may choose buff, light grey, ivory, or light blue paper instead of white. Use regular bond typing paper or bond printer paper; do not use onion skin or xerox paper or perforated continuous printer paper.

Be aware that FAX machines are being used with increasing frequency. An employer may ask you to FAX a resume to him. If you are not working through a career placement center, you can send FAXes through Kinko's or other commercial copy centers. **A draft of the resume and cover letter are due at the next class meeting.**

APPLICATION FORMS

Note to teacher: Many books contain application forms that students may work with. The student booklet contains some forms from local companies. If at all possible, obtain forms from major employees in your area. Students also need to learn alternate forms of similar questions in order to anticipate and recognize different wordings.

If you have applied in person to a company or if the qualifications stated in your resume have been found acceptable, you will be asked to fill out an application form. These forms should be printed neatly in ink. Provide complete information, particularly first and last names of references and former supervisors as well as telephone numbers. Avoid uncommon abbreviations, such as VN (Vietnam).

It is not necessary to include overseas experience that cannot be verified unless you have no other experience to state. If, however, you have worked in a refugee camp for someone who is now in the United States and can provide a reference, include information about that person. State N/A (not applicable) for salary if overseas salaries are not comparable to those in the United States. (NOTE: Rather than leave blanks on your application, state N/A)

Student booklet and transparencies should be provided to demonstrate correct and incorrect ways of completing applications.

TELEPHONE CONTACT

READING ASSIGNMENT: FINDING A JOB IN THE UNITED STATES,

Chapters 10 and 11

DRAFT OF RESUME AND COVER LETTER DUE

CALLING ABOUT A JOB

In preparation for any job-related call, have a pen and a piece of paper by the telephone. Note whether you are to call an extension number, a name of an individual, or a department. It is not customary to use a title (Mr., Mrs. Ms.) when only a first name is given.

If no name is given, ask the first person who answers to let you speak to the person in charge of hiring for your position. Also quickly ask what his name is and be prepared to write down the pronunciation immediately. If possible, ask the spelling as well.

Often the first person you speak to will be a receptionist. Come to the point and state your reason for calling.

“I’m calling about the job as a technician that was advertised in Sunday’s
MERCURY NEWS. Is the job still open?”

“I’m calling about Job 205. Is the job still available?”

Ask for the person directly if you have a name or, as above, ask for the person involved with hiring for the position. If, however, you have simply been given instructions to send a resume or apply in person, be prepared to get an address and directions.

If you are told that the job has been filled, simply say “thank you” and hang up. Remember that interviewers receive many calls in response to ads and they do not want to be tied up unnecessarily in conversation.

If you have the name of a person to contact and you are told that the person is out, busy or not taking calls, immediately ask what time you can call back. Keep calling every hour or two until you are connect or are given other instructions.

If you receive a recorded message in response to your call, briefly state your purpose, name, phone number and the time of your call.

“This is Tam Tran. I’m calling about the job as an accountant advertised in the MERCURY NEWS on May 25th. My number is 279-8139. I will be here until 4 p.m. It is 9:30 on Monday.”

Often your telephone call is a way to screen you. First, they are listening for your accent. Having an accent is acceptable as long as they are able to understand you. Working on your accent goes beyond this workshop. What you are striving for is not perfection, but a stress and intonation pattern that makes your speech understandable!

Activity: Practice calls in response to the ads students have cut out of the newspapers. Other class members critique whether the student has given and taken all the appropriate information.

Here are responses from the students’ workbook that may be used.

CALLING ABOUT A JOB

“I’m calling about the job as a technician that was advertised in Sunday’s MERCURY NEWS. Is the job still open?”

(To a recorded message)

“This is Tam Tran. I’m calling about the job as an accountant advertised in the MERCURY NEWS. My number is 279-8139. It is 9:30 on Monday.”

RESPONDING TO THE INTERVIEWER'S CALL

(QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED)

- a. What kind of experience do you have?
- b. Where have you worked before?
- c. When can you come in for an interview?

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK:

- a. Where are you located?
- b. What's the best way to get there?
- c. Who should I ask for (when I get there)?

ENDING THE CONVERSATION:

“Thank you. I'll see you _____”

RESPONDING TO THE INTERVIEWER'S CALL

If an interviewer returns your call or if you are connected with the person scheduling interviews and the position is still open, be prepared to answer questions and to ask questions.

In fact, you may have a complete short interview on the phone. Be prepared as you would be for a personal interview. Often the person wants to know about basic qualifications and is listening to your accent. Speak more slowly and carefully than you would in person. Do not give one-word answers; if possible, try to use complete sentences.

Often the individual may not ask you your name until you have satisfactorily answered these questions.

You may suggest a time for an interview. Other questions you may ask:

1. Where are you located?
2. What's the best way to get there?
3. Who should I ask for (when I get there)?
4. What kind of documentation should I bring?

Repeat the time and date of the interview after the speaker so that they can correct you if you are wrong in numbers, etc.

Once again, if non-English speaking household members or children answer the phone, it is important that they recognize your name even if it is mispronounced and call you to the phone in a courteous manner and in a well-modulated voice.

Example: This is Mary Martin of EFG Company calling. May I speak to Anh Nguyen (INCORRECTLY PRONOUNCED: Nujen)?

Answerer: Just a minute please. I'll call him.

This is preferable to dropping the phone and just calling someone.

RESEARCHING THE JOB

Before your interview, it is helpful to learn as much as you can about the company. Your first source is friends or acquaintances who work for the company. Next, go to the public library or your college career planning center to review employer literature, annual reports, or brochures on many companies and industries. In addition, it is helpful to read the business section of your local paper, the SAN JOSE BUSINESS JOURNAL or national publications such as THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, FORTUNE magazine, FORBES, BUSINESS WEEK or the FORBES ANNUAL REPORT ON AMERICAN INDUSTRY.

Analyze the job description and prepare to relate the training and background you have to the qualifications necessary or desirable for the job. If the job description you have is limited, research similar jobs in other companies and look up the definition of the job title in the DIRECTORY OF OCCUPATION TITLES. Again, this is a useful point at which to pick the brains of friends who work for the company.

(ASSIGNMENT: Pick a classified ad that interests you. Follow the steps in researching the position and the company. Write up the results of your research and present them to your instructor).

THE INTERVIEW

GETTING TO THE INTERVIEW

Allow sufficient time to get to the interview on time with minutes to spare. Do not bring a friend or children. If you are unavoidably delayed in traffic or by an accident for more than 15 minutes, get to a phone. Call the interviewer. Apologize once and explain the problem. Ask if you should try to reschedule the interview or just come late.

Probably the first person you will meet is the receptionist. Tell her the name of the person you have come to see, the time of your interview and your name before taking a seat. Sit quietly. Don't fidget or act impatient. Remember, they are probably watching your behavior. If you wait more than 30 minutes, it is acceptable to check with the receptionist again. And, yes, you can ask to use the bathroom.

DURING THE INTERVIEW *SMALL TALK

During the first few minutes of the interview, the interviewer generally engages in small talk. The purpose of this activity is to put the applicant at ease. It is your chance to make a good first impression.

Some small talk openers include:

- Did you have any difficulty finding the place?
- Is it still hot (cold) outside? (Or some other question about the weather)
- So you're from (your country)?
- I see you went to City College. Did you ever know (name of instructor)?
- How do you pronounce your first name?
- Have you ever done this work before?
- How long have you been in San Jose?
- Do you have a car?
- Tell me about yourself. (Be sure to focus on job-related issues only).

Activity: Practice answering these questions with your instructor.

Remember to answer with a positive expression. Don't answer in monosyllables and don't give too lengthy an answer. Make sure you can be heard and, if you are concerned about your accent, speak slowly and clearly.

(NOTE: Interview roleplay is critical in this class. After students have looked at tapes of model interviews, practice interviewing with them and videotape it for them to review later. The teacher may serve as the interviewer which will necessitate the use of a third person as camera operator. Audiotapes of telephone situations and 50-100 frequent interview questions may be provided for further student practice in the language laboratory or at home.

HESITATION DEVICES

Hesitation devices differ from culture to culture. In some cultures, silence is acceptable as an interviewee ponders a question. The hesitation device that seems to be frequent among Hispanic respondents is a sigh, which, unfortunately, can be misinterpreted by the English-speaking interviewer as such sighs are usually associated with being given an onerous or boring task.

The best preparation for an interview is to anticipate and practice questions in advance. However, you may need to “buy time”--to take a few seconds to organize your ideas or to put your reply together. There are a number of useful expressions for this purpose, such as the ones below, that are acceptable in the English-speaking environment:

- Let me see about that...
- I'll have to think about that.
- Well, let's see (now...)
- Where should I start?
- Well, let me think...
- That's a good question...
- The best way I can answer that is...
- Let's put it this way...

Activity: The teacher, speaking at normal native-speaker speed, or an interview panel of two or three students interview another student. That student answers their questions, practicing the hesitation devices and the restatement devices on the following page. These exercises can be videotaped and critiqued by non-participating classmates using the critique sheet found in the student workbook.

CONCERNING THE FORMER JOB

1. Take the worst problem you ran into on your last job and tell us how you handled it.
2. Why are you interested in leaving your present job?
3. Describe the work you're most proud of.

CONCERNING YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AND ABILITIES

4. Why do you feel you're qualified for this position?
5. Do you feel that your background is strong enough for the position you are applying for?
6. Do you feel that you can work well with different types of people?

CONCERNING VARIOUS WORK SITUATIONS

7. What kind of person would you like to work for?
8. Suppose you are working with a team and you have some disagreement with the rest of the team about an important issue. What would you do?
9. Suppose that you are unable to meet the deadline on a project for good reasons. Your supervisor reports you as a "slow worker" to his boss. How would you respond to this situation?

CONCERNING YOUR PLANS AND PRIVATE LIFE

10. What do you plan to be doing two and ten years from now?
11. Why do you really want this job?
12. How does this job fit into your career plans?

Ask additional questions on each aspect of the resume.

ASKING FOR A RESTATEMENT

If you don't understand the question, you can use one of these expressions:

“Let me make sure I understand the question.” (Then repeat the question in your own words.)

Another device is simply to state

“I'm not quite sure I understand the question. Could you put it in other words?”

Be aware that these questions, while acceptable in transactions dealing with new information on the job, may lose points for you on the interview.

If you are asked a question that you cannot answer, you might say

“Let me think about that and come back to it later.”

Then do not forget the question even if you have to say

“There was a question I hadn't answered. Could we go back to it?”

Remember to answer the questions directly without a long, elaborate opening. It is also important to acknowledge a question promptly with body language and by a verbal signal. This means you should look up at the interviewer to make eye contact and give a short response such as “yes”, “um”, “well”, or one of the hesitation devices mentioned.

Ask for clarification if necessary. Don't try to answer a question you have no idea about.

MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

READING: FINDING A JOB IN THE U.S., CHAPTERS 8 AND 9

The purpose of this section is to allow students to practice the most commonly asked questions, using answers they have had time to think about and employing hesitation and restatement devices as needed. A list of other questions appears in **FINDING A JOB IN THE U.S.**

Panels of students can be used as in the earlier exercise or an instructor from the discipline can also be used. Practice without a camera. Then videotape and have the non-participating students use rating sheets. Play back and then discuss the feedback students came up with on their rating sheets. Finally, give individuals an opportunity to be videotaped again.

Here are some additional questions that may be difficult to answer:

- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What makes you angry?
- How do you feel about your English?
- What do you expect to be doing 5 years from now?
- Why should I hire you?

Remember that in this culture, you need to come forward and speak about your skills and accomplishments positively!

Note these illegal questions:

- What nationality are you?
- What is your religion?
- How old are you?
- Are you married?
- Do you have a (green)card?

(An employer may ask you this question later for verification)

- How tall are you?
- How much do you weigh?
- Who takes care of your children while you work?

If you are asked an illegal question, it is acceptable to reply

- I'd rather not say.
- That's really not relevant.
- I would prefer not to answer that question.

ASKING APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

Before your interview, review your resume for your strongest points (skills, chief employment experiences, etc.). Be prepared to discuss why you should be hired; what you have to offer the employer; reasons you are interested in the position; and questions you want to ask the interviewer. You can list these items on a sheet of paper and take it to the interview, but you should try to work from memory.

Always be prepared with several questions to show you can speak English, that you can initiate questions, and that you have been attentive. Questions about job duties, your place in the structure of the company, and opportunities for education or advancement are acceptable ones for this part of the interview. After all, it is a two-way street and you are evaluating the company, too. Your questions might include:

- Does your company have performance reviews?
- Is there any difficulty parking around here?
- Where do employees take breaks or go on lunch hour?
- Do you have any kind of bonus or incentive plan?
- Does your company offer any kind of tuition assistance for upgrading employees' education?
- What kind of hiring has your company done in the past year?
- Is it possible to transfer to different areas or locations of your company?

Your questions should reflect how you can benefit the company. They should not present you as greedy, self-centered and interested in money. Here are some examples of unacceptable questions:

- How much do I make? (But it is fair to ask "what is the salary range for this position?" if things look good)
- When do I get a vacation?
- Do I have to work overtime?
- When can I go on days? (If you are hired for nights).
- How often do you give raises?
- When can I find out about the job?
- Do I have the job?

Some questions are acceptable if they are politely reworded. Practice rewording these:

- When can I start? (Reworded: When do you plan to fill the position?).
- Are there any benefits? (Reworded: Could you explain to me about the benefits?)
- Is there any training?
- How often do you give raises? (Reworded: How frequently are employees reviewed?)

It is possible that the interviewer will ask you some of these questions. You might also be able to fit your items into the conversation, but it takes skill to do so. At the end of the interview when the interviewer asks if you have further questions or if you have anything else to say, you can address items such as your strong points or questions you may have.

Remember that in the United States, it is perfectly appropriate to try to “sell” yourself for a job, to highlight your strengths and accomplishments. This is your last opportunity to emphasize your abilities or show what you know.

NEGOTIATING

Americans are very indirect about money even in a work-related situation. Frequently the word “money” does not come up in an interview. Instead, the interviewer will raise the question of salary toward the end of the interview if he is considering hiring you. Or he may have asked the question in a telephone interview. In many cases, here is how the question is stated:

“What kind of salary are you looking for?”

While you may have marked “Open” on your application, your research should include knowledge of the salary ranges for that type of position. Do not be exorbitant in your request, but look the interviewer in the eye and name a figure toward the top of the range.

The interviewer may try to negotiate with you. In good economic times, when you are certain that they are interested in you, you do not need to adjust your initial figure downward too much. However, in bad times, you must decide to what extent you will place yourself at the employer's mercy. This is truly bargaining, but it is not the same as the bargaining you do at the flea market. You may not engage in theatrical gestures or bluffs. It is short but serious business.

You must also decide before you go to the interview realistically what your bottom limit is, below which you would not accept the position. Remember, negotiating is a two way street.

(NOTE: Obtain a list of job titles and salary ranges in your area from the local Employment Development Department)

CLARIFICATION

At the conclusion of the interview, make certain that you know your next step. If the employer does not definitely offer you a job or tell you when you will hear about it, ask when you may call to learn the decision and do it.

If the employer asks you to call or to return for another interview, make a written note of the time, date and place.

LEAVE TAKING

Rise, shake hands, and thank the employer at the end of the interview. Do not linger and take too much of his/her time.

Sample closer: "Thank you for your time."

"I really appreciate your time."

THANK-YOU LETTER

Follow up your interview with a thank-you letter. (SEE: FINDING A JOB IN THE U.S., Chapter 9).

IF YOU'RE HIRED

You will be informed of the time when you will have to report to work and also when to come to the personnel office to complete all the necessary forms. You will be asked to provide documentation for an I-9 form, probably your driver's license, and social security card.

IF YOU'RE NOT HIRED

If you don't hear from the interviewer after one week, call and identify yourself as someone who has interviewed for the job. Ask to be connected to the interviewer. Find out if a decision has been made about the job, when it will be made and/or when to call back again.

It is very possible that you will not get a direct answer at this point. If no decision has been made, you will be told to call again. Ask exactly when to call. On the other hand, the position may have been filled, but the person is unwilling or embarrassed to tell you directly. Instead he will try to put you off. If he tells you to call back, do so, and the second time the receptionist may say the position is filled. Or he may be unavailable to speak to you on several occasions. In this case, you may assume the position is filled.

If you learn that you did not get the job or if you can only speak to a secretary who tells you that the position has been filled, it is acceptable to ask why not in a calm and polite manner. The purpose of this is to get feedback that will allow you to succeed in future interviews.

SAMPLE: "It would help me if I knew how I came across in the interview. Could you tell me what I could do to improve?"

"Can you think of any ways I could improve my qualifications?"

Do not ask too many questions and politely thank the person for his/her time.

Calling for feedback is also appropriate if you receive a letter thanking you and telling you that you have not gotten the job.

IF YOU DECIDE YOU DON'T WANT THE JOB

After your interview or after a job offer, you may decide that you're not interested in the position for a variety of reasons. The salary may be too low, the location too far away, the hours unsuitable, or the position too difficult or dangerous. In this case, call the interviewer immediately and explain this briefly. If you are unable to contact him, write a short letter. Remember it is possible to turn down a job offer or decide against a job. If you think you may not be interested when you are offered a job, it is appropriate to ask for 24 hours to consider the offer. Then respond yes or no. You may not want a job that will make you absolutely miserable.

PRESENTATION CHECKLIST (Appears in student workbook)

You will be asked to pay attention to aspects of your classmate's appearance for this interview. Check off acceptable/unacceptable under each category. Note your comments.

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE _____

MEN

DETECTABLE SMELLS: **YES** **NO**

COMMENTS

ACCEPTABLE UNACCEPTABLE

COMMENTS

General Appearance

Hair

Color combinations/patterns

Appropriateness of clothing

Fit of clothing

Accessories

Fingernails

Other

WOMEN

DETECTABLE SMELLS: YES NO

COMMENTS

ACCEPTABLE UNACCEPTABLE

COMMENTS

General appearance

Hair

Make-up

Fingernails

Color combinations/patterns

Appropriateness of clothing

Fit of clothing

Accessories

Footwear

CRITIQUE SHEET (Found in student workbook)

You will be asked to pay attention to certain aspects of your classmate's interview presentation. As the interview progresses, check yes or no as appropriate

NAME OF PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED _____

BODY LANGUAGE

YES NO

- A. Makes eye contact
- B. Sits properly in chair
- C. Makes nervous gestures with hands
- D. Makes nervous gestures with rest of body
- E. Uses inappropriate facial expressions

VERBAL PRESENTATION**YES****NO**

1. Speaks audibly
2. Speaks too loud
3. Speaks too softly
4. Pauses too long before answering
5. Shows understanding of question
6. Uses hesitation/repetition device effectively
7. Uses hesitation/repetition devices too much
8. Answers with appropriate information
9. Uses acceptable grammar
10. Uses appropriate stress and intonation
11. Spends too much time on answers
12. Answers completely
13. Answers a difficult question well
14. Asks interviewer questions.
15. Asks appropriate questions.
16. Thanks interviewer at end.

GLOSSARY

acculturated--(adj.) able to function comfortable and successfully in a culture.

aggressive--(adj.) forceful.

be passed over --(idiom)not to be regarded for a promotion while others around you are.

blotched--(adj.) color spread in an irregular pattern

brainstorm--(v.) to think of all possible ideas and plans in no fixed order in order to find the best one.

breadwinner--(n.) the major wage earner in a family

buff--(adj.) a color between beige and very light brown

commit to memory--(idiom) memorize

composure--(n.) calm, dignified behavior

construe--(v.) interpret an action

credentials--(n. pl.) documents that show qualification

critique--(v.) to offer advice

cultural mentor--(n.) a person who explains a culture to you and helps you adjust to it.

dangling earrings--(n.) hanging earrings

defiant--(adj.) in bold opposition

demure--(adj.) deliberately shy

distracting mannerism--(n.) a habit that makes those watching nervous or annoyed.

dock--(v.) to have money taken out of your pay check, usually for absence or a misuse of time.(Used in the passive: He was docked for missing two days of work).

elude--(v.)to get away from

evolve--(v.)change through time

exorbitant--(adj.) excessive

eye contact--(n.) to look at someone directly.

fall back on--(idiom) depend on a second plan if your first plan does not work out.

feedback--(n.) information that was given about an event

fidget--(v) to move around restlessly while standing or sitting.

frown upon--(idiom) to disapprove of something.

gestures--(n. pl.) movements made with hands or face.

give you an edge over someone--(idiom) give you an advantage.

habit--(n.) unconscious practice

hit the glass ceiling--(idiom) to stop moving up in a company for reasons that are not stated and that are unknown to you.

humane--(adj.) for the good of humanity

inevitable--(adj.) something that will happen no matter what you do to prevent it.
Something unavoidable.

lose points--(idiom) cause to be less highly regarded

lousy--(slang adj.) no good

maturation--(n.) growing up and growing old

musty--(adj.) smelling of storage in a damp place for a long time.

negotiate--(v.) to reach an agreement through discussion and adjustment of demands and terms

one of the guys--(slang idiom) accepted by one's peer group

pick the brains of someone--(idiom) to find out all the information that someone knows.

plaid--(adj. or noun) a design of crossed vertical and horizontal lines.

political detainees--(n. pl.) people kept in prison for political reasons

pushy--(adj.) aggressive; forceful in getting your needs met.

put off- (idiom) ("The smell of fish puts me off".) to repulse, to make you want to avoid something because of its unpleasantness.

refrain--(v.) do not do

reimburse--(v.) give back money

resist temptation--(idiom) stay away from the desire to do something

scuffed (shoes)--(adj.) marked from excessive wear or rubbing together

self-esteem--(n.) your personal opinion of your own value.

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Job Interviewing Skills for ESL Students with a Cross-Cultural Emphasis

Student Workbook

Prepared by

Alice Gosak and Patricia Nguyen

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California Community Colleges
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EXPLORING CULTURAL VALUES

The statements below represent two contrasting values that people may hold. It is an inventory, rather than a test. Read through it and circle the choice that reflects the way you think or feel.

1. Follow procedures/orders. Do as you're told.
 2. Question authority. It's fun to bend the rules.
3. People are out to get you.
 4. People are basically good.
5. It's what you know and how you work that gets things done.
 6. It's who you know that gets things done.
7. Time is a river.
 8. Time is money.
9. Watch what I do. (Learn by demonstration).
 10. Do as I say. (Learn by following instructions).
11. How well can you do it?.
 12. How fast can you do it?.
13. Let's solve this problem together..
 14. I can figure this out by myself.
15. How else can I help you?.
 16. It's not my job.

17. Work starts when I get there.

18. Work starts at 9:00 a.m. sharp!.

19. Slow change is best..

20. A quick fix will take care of it.

21. Get closer so we can talk.

22. Can we have a little breathing room between us?

23. Talking can be an art if you follow the rules and have style...

24. Talking is an information exchange.

25. Some things should not be said because feelings can be hurt.

26. Let's get this all out in the open.

27. I'll take fully responsibility.

28. It's not my fault.

29. The facts don't mean anything without the background information.

30. Leave out the history. Just give me the facts.

CULTURAL VALUES * CASE STUDIES

With your group, read the problems and decide the best solution for an American and for a person from your culture.

Case Study One: Peter is a young engineer. He lives with his wife, two pre-school children and his parents. He has interviewed for a better job. It will require him to be gone four days of every week.

Should he accept the job?

Case Study Two: Joseph has been offered a job that will eventually lead to a manager's position. The job will require a lot of overtime and comes with greater responsibility. Should he accept it?

Case Study Three: Christine and her fiance are both accountants in different companies. She has now been offered a promotion that will lead to a managerial position. It will require more overtime, but it is a good opportunity. Christine will be making more money than her fiance. Should she accept the job?

Case Study Four: Minh and Bob work on the same assembly. Minh comes to work on time, goes to his station and works quietly. Bob occasionally comes to work a few minutes late and sometimes falls asleep at his station. However, he is talkative and friendly with his supervisor. When it came time to review wages and performance, Bob got a larger raise than Minh. What should Minh do?

Case Study Five: Jenny has a young son who became sick as she was getting ready to go to work. She called to tell her supervisor that she would be late. After taking her son to the doctor and to the babysitter, she showed up at work two hours late. Should she get paid for the two hours of work she missed?

Case Study Six: Mr. Vu was a high-ranking officer in his country. After he came to the United States with his family of five children, he was laid off from several jobs. Now he has been offered a permanent job with benefits as a custodian. Should he take the job?

Case Study Seven: Thanh applied for a position as an accountant three years ago. On his application, he stated that he had finished his B.A. in accounting when in fact he had not completed the course work. Recently his employer found out the truth and demanded that he finish the degree if he wanted to continue working for the company. What should Thanh do?

RESUME BRAINSTORM SHEET

1. JOB TITLE: _____

Duties: _____

Dates: _____ Company: _____

2. JOB TITLE: _____

Duties: _____

Dates: _____ Company: _____

3. JOB TITLE: _____

Duties: _____

Dates: _____ Company: _____

4. JOB TITLE: _____

Duties: _____

Dates: _____ Company: _____

RESUME BRAINSTORM SHEET

EDUCATION:

Institution: _____ Dates: _____

Degree/Diploma/Certificate: _____

Institution: _____ Dates: _____

Degree/Diploma/Certificate: _____

Institution: _____ Dates: _____

Degree/Diploma/Certificate: _____

Institution: _____ Dates: _____

Degree/Diploma/Certificate: _____

Skills (including languages, computer literacy):.....

.....
.....
.....

Knowledge: _____



DOCUMENTING YOUR JOB SEARCH

You must keep track of what you do for each job lead from the first moment you hear of it, whether you heard it from a friend or saw it in the newspaper. If you plan to respond, you should keep the written advertisement or announcement, or write down the information obtained from your personal lead. This must include the day the ad first appeared, or you first noticed or heard about it. After you hear about a job you are interested in, you should respond immediately, as indicated (whether by resume or in person) and note when you applied. Then you will know exactly how long it has been if you get no response, so you can call the company and tell them exactly what day you applied. Wait no more than one week after an application or ten days after a resume to check on your status, if you have not heard from the company. If the job is already filled, mark it off your records. If not, note the date you checked (by phone or in person) so that you know how long it has been until you hear from the company or check again (if you don't hear within another two-three days). Continue this procedure until the job is filled or you are called for an interview. Be sure to note the exact date and time of any interview scheduled, even if it occurs spontaneously in the course of a personal re-visit to the company.

After the interview, wait the stated amount of time to check back, or no more than two-four days. Again, record each contact, who you spoke to, the time and their statements, until you are notified that the job is filled or you are hired. Record all names mentioned to you so that you know who to ask for to get valid information.

FIRST NOTICE		FIRST FOLLOWUP	SECOND FOLLOWUP	INTERVIEW
Co. Name	Date/Application	Date	Date	Date
Address	Job Title	Contact Person	Contact Person	Time
Phone	Contact Person	Results	Results	Followup
Co. Name	Date/Application	Date	Date	Date
Address	Job Title	Contact Person	Contact Person	Time
Phone	Contact Person	Results	Results	Followup
Co. Name	Date/Application	Date	Date	Date
Address	Job Title	Contact Person	Contact Person	Time
Phone	Contact Person	Results	Results	Followup

Co. Name	Date/Application	Date	Date	Date
Address	Job Title	Contact Person	Contact Person	Time
Phone	Contact Person	Results	Results	Followup
Co. Name	Date/Application	Date	Date	Date
Address	Job Title	Contact Person	Contact Person	Time
Phone	Contact Person	Results	Results	Followup
Co. Name	Date/Application	Date	Date	Date
Address	Job Title	Contact Person	Contact Person	Time
Phone	Contact Person	Results	Results	Followup

TELEPHONE CONTACT

CALLING ABOUT A JOB

"I'm calling about the job as a technician that was advertised in Sunday's
MERCURY NEWS. Is the job still open?"

(To a recorded message)

"This is Tam Tran. I'm calling about the job as an accountant advertised in the
NEWS. My number is 279-8139. It is 9:30 on Monday." MERCURY

RESPONDING TO THE INTERVIEWER'S CALL (QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED)

- a. What kind of experience do you have?
- b. Where have you worked before?
- c. When can you come in for an interview?

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT ASK:

- a. Where are you located?
- b. What's the best way to get there?
- c. Who should I ask for (when I get there)?
- d. What kind of documentation should I bring?

ENDING THE CONVERSATION:

"Thank you. I'll see you _____"

ADDITIONAL TIPS

- Make certain to repeat information on times, dates and locations. It is one way to allow the other person to correct you if you are wrong.
- Get the name of the contact person when you make your follow-up call.

PRESENTATION CHECKLIST

You will be asked to pay attention to aspects of your classmate's appearance for this interview. Check off acceptable/unacceptable under each category. Note your comments.

NAME OF INTERVIEWEE _____

MEN

DETECTABLE SMELLS:	YES	NO	COMMENTS		
			ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE	COMMENTS
General Appearance					
Hair					
Color combinations/patterns					
Appropriateness of clothing					
Fit of clothing					
Accessories					
Fingernails					
Other					

WOMEN

DETECTABLE SMELLS:	YES	NO	COMMENTS		
			ACCEPTABLE	UNACCEPTABLE	COMMENTS
General Appearance					
Hair					
Fingernails					
Color combinations/patterns					
Appropriateness/fit of clothing					
Accessories					
Footwear					

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

FINDING A JOB IN THE UNITED STATES, p. 68, has an excellent list of questions you might be asked on the interview. In addition, here are others you should be prepared to answer:

- What are your strengths?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What makes you angry?
- How do you feel about your English?
- What do you expect to be doing 5 years from now? (Your answer should be job-related).

The following questions, however, are **illegal**:

- What nationality are you?
- What is your religion?
- How old are you?
- Are you married?
- Do you have a (green)card? (An employer may ask you this questions for verification after you have been offered the job.)
- How tall are you?
- How much do you weigh?
- Who takes care of your children while you work?

Here are examples of **unacceptable** questions the job applicant may ask:

- How much do I make?
- When do I get a vacation?
- Do I have to work overtime?
- When can I go on days? (If you are hired for nights).
- How often do you give raises?
- When can I find out about the job?
- Do I have the job?

Some questions are acceptable if they are politely reworded. Practice rewording these:

1. What about overtime?
2. When can I start?
3. Are there any benefits?
4. Is there any training?
5. How often do you give raises?
6. Will you pay me if I go take classes?

HESITATION DEVICES

Below are a list of useful expressions that you can use to “buy time” before answering a question:

- Let me see about that...
- I'll have to think about that.
- Well, let's see (now)...
- Where should I start? (This is an introduction to a long, complicated story).
- Well, let me think...
- That's a good question...
- The best way I can answer that is...
- Let's put it this way...

ASKING FOR A RESTATEMENT

If you don't understand the question, you can use one of these expressions:

- Let me make sure I understand the question. (Then repeat the questions in your own words).
 - I'm not quite sure I understand the question. Could you put it in other words?
 - Let me think about that and come back to it later.
- (If you use this one, don't forget to come back to the question even if you have to say
- There was a question I hadn't answered. Could we go back to it?

ACTIVITY: Your instructor or a panel of your classmates will ask you questions similar to those that might be asked during an interview. Answer their questions, using hesitation devices and restatement devices in order to practice them. Your other classmates will listen for your answers and critique them.

HESITATION DEVICES/RESTATEMENT

Activity: Two or three students will interview another student. That student answers their questions, practicing hesitation devices and restatement devices. These exercises may be videotaped and critiqued by non-participating classmates using a critique sheet.

SET ONE: CONCERNING THE FORMER JOB

1. Take the worst problem you ran into on your last job and tell us how you handled it.
2. Why are you interested in leaving your present job?
3. Describe the work you're most proud of.

SET TWO: CONCERNING YOUR QUALIFICATIONS AND ABILITIES

4. Why do you feel you're qualified for this position?
5. Do you feel that your background is strong enough for the position you are applying for?
6. Do you feel that you can work well with different types of people?

SET THREE: CONCERNING VARIOUS WORK SITUATIONS

7. What kind of person would you like to work for?
8. Suppose you are working with a team and you have some disagreement with the rest of the team about an important issue. What would you do? Your supervisor reports you as a "slow worker" to his boss. How would you respond to this situation?

SET FOUR: CONCERNING YOUR PLANS AND PRIVATE LIFE

10. What do you plan to be doing two and ten years from now?
11. Why do you really want this job?
12. How does this job fit into your career plans?

CRITIQUE SHEET You will be asked to pay attention to certain aspects of your classmate's interview presentation. As the interview progresses, check yes or no as appropriate

NAME OF PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED _____
BODY LANGUAGE

	YES	NO	Comments
A. Makes eye contact			
B. Sits properly in chair			
C. Makes nervous gestures with hands			
D. Makes nervous gestures with rest of body			
E. Uses inappropriate facial expressions			
VERBAL PRESENTATION	YES	NO	
1. Speaks audibly			
2. Speaks too loud			
3. Speaks too softly			
4. Pauses too long before answering			
5. Shows understanding of question			
6. Uses hesitation/repetition device effectively			
7. Uses hesitation/repetition devices too much			
8. Answers with appropriate information			
9. Uses acceptable grammar			
10. Uses appropriate stress and intonation			
11. Spends too much time on answers			
12. Answers completely			
13. Answers a difficult question well			
14. Asks interviewer questions.			
15. Asks appropriate questions.			
16. Thanks interviewer at end.			

GLOSSARY

acculturated--(adj.) able to function comfortable and successfully in a culture.

aggressive--(adj.) forceful.

be passed over --(idiom)not to be regarded for a promotion while others around you are.

blotched--(adj.) color spread in an irregular pattern

brainstorm--(v.) to think of all possible ideas and plans in no fixed order in order to find the best one.

breadwinner--(n.) the major wage earner in a family

buff--(adj.) a color between beige and very light brown

commit to memory--(idiom) memorize

composure--(n.) calm, dignified behavior

construe--(v.) interpret an action

credentials--(n. pl.) documents that show qualification

critique--(v.) to offer advice

cultural mentor--(n.) a person who explains a culture to you and helps you adjust to it.

dangling earrings--(n.) hanging earrings

defiant--(adj.) in bold opposition

demure--(adj.) deliberately shy

distracting mannerism--(n.) a habit that makes those watching nervous or annoyed.

dock--(v.) to have money taken out of your pay check, usually for absence or a misuse of time.(Used in the passive: He was docked for missing two days of work).

elude--(v.)to get away from

evolve--(v.)change through time

exorbitant--(adj.) excessive

eye contact--(n.) to look at someone directly.

fall back on--(idiom) depend on a second plan if your first plan does not work out.

feedback--(n.) information that was given about an event

fidget--(v) to move around restlessly while standing or sitting.

frown upon--(idiom) to disapprove of something.

gestures--(n. pl.) movements made with hands or face.

give you an edge over someone--(idiom) give you an advantage.

habit--(n.) unconscious practice

hit the glass ceiling--(idiom) to stop moving up in a company for reasons that are not stated and that are unknown to you.

humane--(adj.) for the good of humanity

inevitable--(adj.) something that will happen no matter what you do to prevent it.
Something unavoidable.

lose points--(idiom) cause to be less highly regarded

lousy--(slang adj.) no good

maturation--(n.) growing up and growing old

musty--(adj.) smelling of storage in a damp place for a long time.

negotiate--(v.) to reach an agreement through discussion and adjustment of demands and terms

one of the guys--(slang idiom) accepted by one's peer group

pick the brains of someone--(idiom) to find out all the information that someone knows.

plaid--(adj. or noun) a design of crossed vertical and horizontal lines.

political detainees--(n. pl.) people kept in prison for political reasons

pushy--(adj.) aggressive; forceful in getting your needs met.

put off- (idiom) ("The smell of fish puts me off".) to repulse, to make you want to avoid something because of its unpleasantness.

refrain--(v.) do not do

reimburse--(v.) give back money

resist temptation--(idiom) stay away from the desire to do something

scuffed (shoes)--(adj.) marked from excessive wear or rubbing together

self-esteem--(n.) your personal opinion of your own value.

self-sacrificing--(adj.) giving up pleasure, comfort, or personal desires for the benefit of others.

settling in--(idiom) becoming comfortable and established.

shielded from--(idiom) protected from

slouch--(v.) not to sit or stand straight

speculation--(n.) expressing guesses about something or someone observed

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take for granted--(idiom) to unconsciously assume that something or someone will always be there

thank his lucky stars--(idiom) be grateful for something that prevented a disaster

tie up--(idiom) detain

turn down--(idiom) to refuse

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what's in it for me?--(idiom) of what advantage is a situation for me as an individual?