Discussion activity developed in Japan for foreign language teaching


Job Interview Project
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Quick guide

Keywords: job interview, project, role play, performance

Learner English level: Lower intermediate or above

Learner maturity: University or vocational

Preparation time: None

Activity time: 120-150 minutes over three classes

Materials: Grading sheet or seating chart

A simulated job interview motivates students by appealing to their desire to enter the job market. A project performed in front of the class provides various communication indicators to evaluate. At most foreign language levels in Japan, a rehearsed job interview fits students’ expectations that the performance is fully prepared. Yet rather than a ‘bowling’ presentation communication style, this role play assures frequent interaction, more like tennis (Shaules & Abe, 2007, p. 12). In this activity, students need to assert their communication skills positively, preparing them for actual job interviews.

Preparation

Step 1: Adjust these suggestions to your class and grading criteria. At higher levels, for instance, presentations could be less rehearsed.

Step 2: On the presentation day, arrange chairs in front of the room so that students face toward each other and the audience.
Procedure

**Step 1:** In the first class, explain the activity. In groups of about four, one student will be the interviewer representing a company or organization with a certain open position, perhaps for international work, while the rest of the students are job applicants. Each student should speak at least two minutes in total, so the performance should span about 10 minutes for four students.

**Step 2:** Pre-teach some interview language patterns. For example, interviews should start with greetings and conclude with the interviewer saying that the applicants will be contacted later about the results. Some key phrases to model might include, “Please introduce yourself,” and “Let me introduce myself.” Students should also learn that real interviewers will ask for questions about the organization or position, which can make the difference in getting hired.

**Step 3:** In groups, students decide their real or fictional organization, a specific job opening, and their roles. Encourage students to visualize or investigate details that might be important in an interview situation.

**Step 4:** Students brainstorm interview questions to elicit self-introductions, knowledge about the organization, ability to do the job best, and free questions.

**Step 5:** The interviewer introduces the organization, open position, and works with the interviewees to formulate questions. The job seekers prepare self-introductions and answers, showing knowledge of the organization and their suitability for the position. Homework is to get more information and plan what they will say.

**Step 6:** In the second class, give tips on oral and physical delivery. For example, looking up with their face visible to the audience when speaking is vital for intelligibility and evaluating individual speakers.

**Step 7:** Allow some class time for students to prepare and practice their interviews together. Monitor to make sure they are on task, asking each group about the organization, job opening, and their roles. Encourage any language or pronunciation questions. Homework is refining and practicing what they will say.

**Step 8:** On the third day, each group takes turns entering the ‘interview room,’ exchanging greetings, and taking their positions. Then they enact their interviews, as prepared in the steps above.

**Step 9:** When the groups are finished, give general feedback on weak and strong points. Praise students for overcoming traditional reserve, as positive self-expression in job interviews will actually increase their chances for career success.
Conclusion

In this engaging activity, students practiced preparing for international job hunting, receiving interview tips and feedback. They could gain confidence in L2 communication through a realistic scaffolding with frequent turn-taking and a topic they are interested in.

References


The author’s foreign language teaching

Steve McCarty has taught English in Japanese higher education since 1985, and was a full professor for 22 years. He founded the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Matsuyama Chapter and the Ehime Summer Seminar as a volunteer for secondary school in-service training. He was President of two JALT regional chapters and the Bilingualism Special Interest Group (SIG). He was also the sole representative of all SIG research groups on the JALT Executive Committee. He has published many articles in publications of JALT and the UK-based International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). His previous JALT article was:

McCarty, S. (2017). Setting up an effective Google Scholar profile. *The Language Teacher, 41*(2), 31-34. [https://dx.doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT41.2](https://dx.doi.org/10.37546/JALTTLT41.2)