

## Job Interviews for Engineers

This activity was created for Japanese learners of English in Japan, learning how to get a job in an English speaking country, such as the U.S. or Canada. However, it can be used or adapted to fit other contexts. These interview skills and pertinent cultural knowledge to job interviews can be applied to almost any job interview in any field. Interviews are an advanced skill requiring critical thinking and advanced vocabulary and grammar, so this lesson is for an advanced-low, intermediate-high level group of students. These are university students, preparing for interviews for English speaking jobs before they travel abroad for more college or for careers. There are about 25 students, age 20-22, all with Japanese as their L1, and the class is mostly an Oral Skills focus elective for the students who wish to work on their spoken English. The course covers topics such as giving speeches and presentations, debate and discussion techniques, and other academic and workplace related listening and speaking skills.

Kereke states that “it is in a job candidate’s best interests to learn how to develop positive rapport with an interviewer” (p. 741, as cited from Louw, et al, 2010). In other words, any job candidate is expected to show some level of solidarity and common ground between themselves and the interviewer, yet this can be incredibly difficult to a foreigner. In the student handout provided is a list of desirable interview behavior (for any candidate, native speakers as well) gathered from real interviewers and employers from the Louw, Derwig and Abbott study (2010). They are arranged in chronological order as these behaviors would become observable over the course of an interview. I’ve also added some brief descriptions after some of the features to help those who are unfamiliar with the context understand what potential employers are looking for.

### Procedure

#### Part I. Observation – 10 minutes

1. Students will watch the sample job interview dialogue performed by the teacher and another “native speaker” for the class.
2. Students will take notes while listening to the dialogue, noting:
  - o flow of turn taking
  - o body language
  - o topic of questions
3. Students are given the transcription of the dialogue that was just performed. The whole interview dialogue is performed again.
4. Students will follow along with the dialogue as they listen a second time, taking any more notes as they see fit.



5. Teacher will ask students as a class to say what they observed as they listened and watched this “mock interview,” introduce the term. Teacher will draw student’s attention to the questions being asked, and how they are answered.

#### Part II. Analysis – 30 minutes

1. Teacher gives students a handout with a list of questions used in real interviews (included). The students will read the questions in groups of three, T assigns different sets (1-4, 5-8, etc.) of questions to different groups. Each group tries to figure out what the “right” kind of answer to each question is: What do they want you to say in response? What characteristics of yours are they looking for with each question?
2. Class as a whole will share the answers to each question, the teacher gives brief examples of the kinds of answers each question is looking for, correcting student answers where needed.
3. Also, the back of the handout should have the list from above of behaviors desired in candidates for them to see what else is important to an interviewer. Use examples from the modeled interview to illustrate these components.

#### Part III. Extension – 20 minutes

1. With a partner, students will write a short interview dialogue of a candidate being interviewed for a job by a manager. Pick any job or career you want, but make sure that you can talk about your experience in that field.
2. After writing it, practice it aloud, each taking a turn to read both roles.

#### Part IV. Assessment and Further Extension

1. For homework, you and your partner together will write a dialogue for each of you that is for a job you would want; it could be a real job or a somewhat “dream job” but you need to be able to give substantive answers.
2. After writing your dialogues, you and your partner will record yourselves performing these mock interviews on video, with your partner interviewing you for the job you want.
3. Teacher will look at the videos and assess them based on how well they answered the questions as intended by the interviewer. Teacher will also use them as baseline to work on other aspects of interview etiquette, like body language, tone of voice, facial expression, etc. but they will not be graded on this skill yet.
4. This activity and assignment will give the teacher a good idea of where the students lack pragmatic knowledge of the English-speaking interview context and where they already excel. Two or three more days on this topic would likely be sufficient to cover basic pragmatic knowledge of job interviews.



**References:**

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