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PRAGMATICS IN THE WORKPLACE: THE JOB INTERVIEW

BY

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, a Project Report entitled “Pragmatics in the Workplace: The Job Interview” submitted by “Kerry Louw” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

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Abstract

To facilitate effective intercultural communication in the workplace – in this case, the high stakes discourse of the job interview – it is critical to understand the pragmatic difficulties that can occur. Using authentic questions, employment recruiters, native-speaker and non native-speaker candidates participated in video-taped mock job interviews. The interviews were examined for pragmatic difficulties, transcribed, and used to prepare candidates for follow-up video-taped interviews. Expert instructors watched the videos and rated the first and second interviews on an inventory of specific pragmatic skills. Their ratings were analyzed for the candidates' progress and patterns of pragmatic difficulties. The candidates showed marked improvement in their second interviews, demonstrating that the method used provided an opportunity for the development of pragmatic competence. Implications for ESL programs, instructors, TESL and EWP are discussed.

Pragmatics in the Workplace: the Job Interview

A growing body of research (Campbell & Roberts 2007; Kerekes 2007; Li 2001) has investigated how pragmatic competence (knowing what is culturally and contextually appropriate to say in a given situation) determines a second language (L2) learner's success in communicating with native speakers. Koester (2006) states that there is a practical application for this kind of research: "With the current emphasis on 'soft skills', i.e., on effective communication in the workplace, insights gained from a close analysis of workplace interactions are certainly of practical relevance to the practitioners themselves" (p. 162). Crandall and Basturkmen (2004) and Bardovi-Harlig (2001) emphasize that it is necessary for learners to *notice* these pragmatic factors first, enabling them to begin to improve their competence. However, there is a shortage of accurate and authentic material available to inform newcomers about what is appropriate in the workplace. The purpose of this study is to explore and document one approach to developing and evaluating a pragmatic resource based on the high-stakes discourse occurring in a job interview.

Literature Review

The review of the relevant literature is focussed on applied research in pragmatics that is likely of interest to English second language (ESL) practitioners, who will be the end users of the materials developed here. I will address the field of pragmatics; what L2 learners need to know to succeed in a job interview (pragmatic competence for successful communication); how practitioners can use this research; and the need for authentic pragmatic ESL materials.

Synopsis of Pragmatics

LoCastro's (2003) text introduces the complexities of pragmatics and provides an understanding of their importance in ESL communication by linking theory to practice. The author defines pragmatics as "the study of speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions that include linguistic and non-linguistic signals in the context of socioculturally

organized activities” (p. 15). LoCastro clearly and concisely defines pragmatic competence as the ability to use language to carry out functions in culturally appropriate ways (p. vii).

Koester (2006) examines how both linguistic and interactive devices are involved in accomplishing workplace tasks and building workplace relationships. The workplace context is described as distinct in three dimensions: *goal orientation* - giving discourse a task focus; *particular constraints* - giving discourse unique rules about what can be said or done; *inferential framework and procedures* - giving discourse consequences well beyond its sequence. It is this relational dimension of language that Koester finds so important and yet lacking in the field of English language training.

Sarangi and Roberts (1999) take an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing discourse and its role in creating practices and relationships in the workplace, in contexts including medical, legal and management settings. A section of the text contains a methodological debate which includes discussions on different analytical frameworks, problems involved in establishing context and contextualization, and issues of practical relevance in applied discourse studies.

Gumperz (1999) describes the historical development of the ideas of Garfinkel, who considered interaction as goal-oriented moves with an underlying, deeply internalized, un verbalized sense of social order. He also discusses the work of Grice, who described conversational cooperation as the precondition for understanding, focussing on implicature and Goffman, who defined interactions as intelligible in terms of prior experiences and interactional order, linking the verbal and the social in discourse.

Gumperz (1999) describes current conversational analysis (CA) as sequential turn taking analyzed through lexicalized content while excluding indirect inferences. He explains that interactional sociolinguistics (IS) picks up on this inferencing through context and culturally specific situations and then looks for ways, through CA, to see if these interpretations are shared

between interlocutors. The extent to which background knowledge is not shared will cause interpretations to differ: diversity affects interpretation. Thus, to paraphrase, Gumperz explains that communication misunderstandings are due in part to a lack of interpersonal learning opportunities provided to second language speakers which can be attributed to linguistic and cultural diversity. He points out that these differences, in terms of context-bound assumptions, are automatic and unconscious; thus participants are unaware of the reasons for misunderstandings.

Pragmatic misunderstandings are considered to be much more serious than lexical or grammatical mistakes because the latter two will be attributed by listeners to the speaker's attempt to learn the language, whereas the former create a subconscious negative reflection of the speaker. It is of particular importance in non-native speakers' (NNS) high stakes conversations to consider how different ways of speaking and understanding become judgments of character or ability. What is involved, for example, in interpreting a job candidate's failure to give specific examples as substantiation of an unmotivated or even unreliable personality?

Although the preceding authors afford a strong foundation for understanding the role of pragmatics in second language communication, many ESL instructors are unlikely to have the time to read their work. One alternative is to view *Crosstalk* (1979), a 30 minute film, developed by John Gumperz. It is a striking study of crosscultural communication, which illustrates the process of negotiation for meaning and the miscommunication that can occur when L2 speakers try to accomplish specific workplace goals through discourse. It is a starting point in understanding the difficult pragmatics involved in intercultural communication in the workplace.

This capping project draws some parallels with *Crosstalk* (1979). I have also used role play and simulation and I have attempted to produce scenes of convincing reality. A discourse is established between native and nonnative speakers of English, for reasons of demonstration,

understanding and consistency. The project also reveals the dynamics and complexities of intercultural communication, which include the speakers' agendas, style of organizing and presenting information, lexical confusion, stress and intonation patterns, volume and pitch, and inference.

Pragmatic Competence for Successful Communication

Campbell and Roberts (2007) illustrate how pragmatic competence determines L2 learners' success in communicating. Their research, based on video-recorded job interviews, addressed the interaction between institutional and personal discourses involved in competency-based interviews, and determined that international candidates are disadvantaged in interviews. From the interviews, the skills of the unsuccessful candidates, who were judged to be inconsistent, untrustworthy, and non-belongers by recruiters, were compared to those who were able to produce an acceptable persona and succeeded in the interview. Campbell and Roberts describe three ways of producing this acceptable persona: first, through personalized and particular language use to describe institutional procedures; second, with personal history and an analytic overview to show institutional values; and finally, by recasting difficult job experiences as challenging and thus institutionally acceptable. The authors stress the importance to learners of having access to both the language used in job interviews and the culturally specific information regarding both "organizational roles and personal life-worlds" (p. 117). Examples from extracts of successful and unsuccessful candidates accompanied by detailed analysis demonstrate the authors' thesis. While Campbell and Roberts' work is directly related to my research, the interviews they describe were for non-technical, mundane jobs and so present only some aspects of an interview and worker competencies. However their paper is instructive, given the interviewers' negative judgements of candidates whose unexpected behaviours led to judgements of a lack of professionalism and untrustworthiness.

Li (2007), in an ethnographic case study, examined the pragmatics of high-stakes social communication in the workplace and commented that this type of field research on L2 pragmatics is a new direction in Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages (TESOL). It establishes the importance of collecting authentic data over time where cultural and social differences are expected, of drawing on data from multiple sources, and also drawing on narrative accounts of those involved. Similarities can be drawn from Li's research to the current study, in which I conducted interviews and collected data from several sources including interviewees, expert facilitators and job candidates themselves. The goal of this study is to understand the nature of intercultural communication in the multicultural workplace setting, to document communication problems and illustrate areas of conflict for people with different social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Li's research provides an analysis of features of Chinese communication and culture which become internalized and transferred to L2 interactions -- background information which is helpful in understanding different communication styles. For example, Li illustrates one point of difference between the West where it is believed that "the squeaky wheel gets the grease", and the East where "the bird who sticks out its head gets shot at" (p. 61).

Kerekes (2007) studied job interviews as co-constructions of the interlocutors; she looked for patterns in failed and successful interviews. Difficulties due to differences in linguistic and cultural backgrounds were described not only in relation to speaking but also in how interlocutors interpreted and responded to each other. Success or failure could be credited to their shared interests and resulting positive rapport they co-constructed. It is interesting to consider that meaning can be created in part through interactional competence and not entirely through individual linguistic, discourse, pragmatic and strategic competences which have previously been thought to comprise communicative competence. In other words, individuals bring resources to the interaction and the outcome is jointly constructed by the interlocutors. So the question

becomes whether to focus on *personal characteristics* or *verbal interactions*? Kerekes addressed this by acknowledging that there are numerous factors and actions which determine the results in job interviews. This presents implications for job candidates and employers and also learners and facilitators. In summary, Kerekes reported that it is in a job candidate's best interest to learn how to make a favourable impression in an interview. However, she also stated that it would be more constructive if a style of interview were developed which actually allowed candidates to be questioned on significant factors with true predictive value so they could better understand how to represent themselves.

Practical Applications of Pragmatic Research

Spencer-Oatey (2005) reflected on the practical application of research for the development of ESL learners' pragmatic awareness and in particular explores components of rapport management judgements including behavioural expectations, face sensitivities, and interactional needs. Authentic discourse data were used to illustrate how interlocutors' thoughts about rapport can be 'unpacked' using these three components. She suggested that behavioural expectations can be contextually based, can exist across a range of domains, and can be classified into equity and association principles. Face sensitivities are understood to be of two fundamental types: situation-specific (or respectability face) and pan-specific (or identity face), the second of which is more vulnerable in interactional encounters. Interactional needs can be transactional or relational and are often interconnected. Spencer-Oatey used illustrations, for analysis of the theory, that unpacked Chinese - British interactions and thus provided useful information for this project, which explores interactions in job interviews that occur across Chinese - Canadian cultures and individuals.

Jensen (2004) described professional intercultural communication in multicultural societies by examining a case study with an untrained Danish interviewer and a Chinese candidate in an

English language interview. This study highlighted misunderstandings that can occur based on different assumptions and experiences, different styles of communication, and lack of intelligibility. A lack of intelligibility was reported to be present in both participants, which led Jensen to conclude that, “this leaves the professional job interviewer, who strives to work for cultural diversity, with an obligation to acquire a professional knowledge of intercultural awareness” (p. 5). Jensen questioned whether there is a theory which can “describe the complexity which exists within postmodern, multicultural societies” (p. 6) and suggested a cross-disciplinary approach to intercultural communications based on critical multiperspectivism. Critical multiperspectivism is defined as a “theoretical research framework based upon different approaches which could be compared to a triangulation of methods – each with its own strength” (p. 7). To gain a broader understanding of what is going on in the discourse of a job interview, for example, Jensen suggested that three perspectives be included: sociological, discursive theoretical, and social constructionist approaches. He sees the need for researchers to develop tools for analysis and for practitioners to use these to gain a more professional outlook in understanding intercultural communication in a multicultural society.

Scheuer (2001) presented data from authentic job interviews and analyzed their success using a cross disciplinary approach. He concluded that successful interviews may depend more on communicative styles than on technical competence.

The Need for Authentic Pragmatic ESL Material

The need for authentic pragmatic materials is outlined in Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin’s (2005) research on whether learners can recognize pragmatic violations and whether there are grounds for instruction in pragmatics. They reported on ESL learners’ pragmatic awareness and made a case for building on this awareness through instruction. They argued that pragmatic development emerges in stages and that therefore students would benefit from awareness raising

activities. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffen considered learners' pragmatic awareness and their ability to notice, and specifically learners' pragmatic mistakes and their ability to repair them when they can focus on listening (or input) instead of on speaking (or output). It is the obvious errors the authors indicated as more easily repaired - a fact which is important when analyzing pragmatic errors, considering material development or attempting to design a production activity.

Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin's (2005) idea is that for learners to develop target-like use of pragmatics, they must first notice how native speakers use these features through the observation of actual interactions that have been video-taped. This suggestion supports my goal of developing an authentic job interview resource and also validates the importance of providing native speaker examples. Furthermore, their class activity, which involves viewing and responding to a video, allows for observing a complete interview and noticing the pragmatic errors before practicing in role play and answering interview questions. The need for authentic material in activities is also the impetus for this capping project – to produce a useful resource for developing pragmatic ability in the high stakes discourse of job interviews.

At this point it is useful to remember the complexity of pragmatic development. Kasper (1997) reports that “several problems exist with adopting a native speaker standard for productive pragmatic ability, suggesting that communicative success is a matter of optimal rather than total convergence to native speaker action patterns...” (p. 131). Kerekes (2007) also acknowledges that it is a complex set of factors and actions which determines the results in interviews. Gumperz (1997) points out that these differences are automatic and unconscious, leaving the participants unaware of the reasons for misunderstandings.

Evaluating Pragmatic Materials

A method for evaluating materials is presented in Crandall and Basturkmen (2004). This easily accessible article has practical applications for ESL teachers. It describes the problems

associated with the conventional approach for improving pragmatic competence by learning expressions for various speech acts. Problems are created as a result of learners not becoming aware of cultural norms. This conventional approach is then contrasted with one where learners analyse samples of authentic conversation to learn how language is used appropriate to the context.

The researchers evaluated the method of using authentic discourse for effectiveness by asking three questions: could students do it, did they like it, and did they learn something. They concluded that discourse analysis-focussed instruction materials led to positive results. Learners' awareness of the target language was raised through guided analysis of authentic NS texts and through drawing comparisons of these pragmatic norms in the target culture to those in their own language and culture.

This method is similar to the coaching work I carried out in the current project (see details in Appendix I). It supports my use of video-taped interviews in awareness raising activities. As Kasper (1997) points out, "Student-centered activities should be based on authentic native speaker input, brought into the classroom through audio-visual media....Authentic discourse is crucial not because students should imitate native speakers' action patterns, but rather in order to build their own pragmatic knowledge of the L2 on the right kind of input" (p. 125).

The need for authentic material in activities was the impetus for this study: the purpose was to explore and document one approach to developing and evaluating a pragmatic resource based on the high-stakes discourse occurring in a job interview. The question was, does authentic NS discourse used in awareness raising activities allow NNSs the opportunity to better understand his/her own position in the context of the job interview?

Method

Participants

Three distinct groups of people participated in this study: ESL job candidates, interviewers or recruiters, and a panel of ESL instructors.

Four job candidates were recruited for the study (see Appendix A for the information letter for job candidates. The NS job candidate (C1) was a university student in her final year of geology. She had been preparing for job interviews in her field and had succeeded in being offered a position. The three NNS job candidates (C2, C3 and C4) were full time ESL students, who had tested at speaking level CLB 5. They met the criteria of being competent speakers and were referred by their instructors at a local college. From interviews of interested participants three candidates with the same L1 and profession were recruited. They were not, however, equally proficient speakers. C2 and C4 were at an advanced level of speaking and listening and C3 was at an intermediate level. Both C2 and C4 were taking extra pronunciation practice. They were all engineers from China who shared the same L1, Mandarin. C2 had been in Canada for 2 years, C3 for almost 3 years and C4 for 5 years. C2 had worked 15 years as a civil engineer, often as a project manager on major transportation projects in Shanghai, and had not worked in Canada; C3 had 20 years experience as an engineer in China, working as project manager on large jobs including the electrical system at the new Beijing airport and the US Embassy, and had worked for two years as a technical assistant in Canada; and C4 had worked four years on a chemical line in China, and five years in chemical engineering in Canada.

There were three volunteer job interviewers (I1, I2 and I3) who worked in panels of two (see Appendix B for the information letter for job interviewers). I1, who was a NNS when he immigrated to Canada twenty five years ago, was a retired engineer (MEng) with experience in recruiting and hiring and an interest in working in ESL. I2 was experienced in human resources

in the medical profession and was working towards a MED in TESL. I3 was a human resource manager in an oil-related business that hired international engineers. It was not possible, due to their schedules, to use the same interviewers for all interviews. I1 was used consistently but the initial interviews were conducted jointly by I1 and I2 and the follow-up interviews were conducted jointly by I1 and I3. The job candidates and the interviewers consented to be video-taped during the interviews knowing these would be compiled into a documentary film used for training in ESL and shown in classes and workshops (see Appendix C for consent form).

There was also a panel of expert instructors who assessed the candidates' skills in the initial and follow-up interviews. They were all recruited from local ESL colleges (see Appendix D). Two were intercultural communications facilitators with interest and experience in materials development and training L2 pragmatics in the workplace and the third was an English for Academic Purposes instructor.

Materials

The job description used in this research was based on one found in a local paper a month prior to the interviews (see Appendix E for the job advertisement). It was an engineering competition for design projects that specifically asked for highly energetic individuals with the desire to work in a fast-paced, technically demanding, operations-oriented company.

The sixteen interview questions were compiled using information from internet career sites, career counselling resources and government booklets (Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry; MonsterTRAK and Reed). Discussions were also held with a human resource administrator, a career counsellor and an engineer, in order to develop questions that represented an authentic interview (see Appendix F for detailed interview questions).

Data were collected through initial and follow-up mock job interviews that were conducted in a business office at a local college. Four job candidates and three interviewers

participated in mock job interviews. The NS participant was interviewed once and three NNS participants had initial and follow-up interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and covered the same sixteen questions. Video-recordings were made of all interviews: audio-recordings to later identify miscommunications in the interviews were made with the NNS candidates after interview one and with the panel of interviewers after interview one and two. Filming was done discreetly by a videographer (see Appendix G) who situated the camera to film the candidate's entry and exit, eye contact, body language and volume of speech. Initial and follow-up interviews were transferred from tapes to compact disks (CDs) a copy of which has been included as an appendix item (see Appendix H for CD of interviews).

Transcriptions were made of interviews and post-interview discussions. As a tool in the coaching process the NNS candidates were provided with CDs and transcriptions of the NS's and their own first interviews. CDs of first and follow-up interviews were also provided to the expert instructors. The panel of expert instructors were asked to assess the job candidates' skills using a five point Likert-type scale, (1= very weak, 2 = weak, 3 = adequate, 4 = good, and 5 = excellent), on twenty one specific categories. Pragmatic skill categories were grouped by a time frame of initial impressions, impressions throughout the interview and final impressions (see Appendix D for details). Categories judged initially included introductions, small talk, first question, content and rapport. After five minutes, categories included communicates carefully, appears enthusiastic, participates at the set tempo, content, positive perceptions and rapport. Throughout the interview categories included crosscultural misunderstandings, intelligibility, body language and nonverbal communication, technical expertise, workplace values and rapport. Categories judged as final impressions included appropriate ending, content, positive perceptions and rapport. All categories were further defined as assessment check points. For example, the first category, "responds to introductions" was defined as: introduces oneself appropriately, shakes

hands, waits for invitation to sit down and appears relaxed and natural. The category of “builds rapport” was defined as having similarities, establishing self as confident and assertive, showing cultural versatility, flexibility and resourcefulness.

Training materials used to coach the job candidates are described under the procedures section and can be found in detail in the appendix (see Appendix I for detailed coaching material).

Procedures

Initial mock job interviews were conducted by a panel of two recruiters (I1 and I2) using authentic questions with four job applicants (3 NNSs and 1 NS). The candidates were each video-recorded in 20 minute job interviews. Directly following each interview, an audio recording was made of the recruiters sitting with the researcher and analyzing the videotape of the interviews. The recruiters were asked to stop the video whenever they didn't understand the candidate's response, didn't get the expected response, or got an unwanted response. Post-interview impressions from each of the job candidates were also audio-recorded directly following the first interview, in the same manner. The NNS candidates were instructed to stop the video whenever they didn't understand the question, thought they gave an inappropriate answer, or got an unexpected response from the interviewers. This process allowed for the collection of both the interviewers' and the candidates' perceptions of pragmatic problems.

These miscommunications were then analyzed and the most common were used to coach the NNS candidates in preparation for being re-interviewed. The coaching was conducted over four hour and a half long sessions (see Appendix I for details of the training). In the first session, the job candidates watched the native speaker's interview on a screen and compared it to their own interview which they watched on individual computers. This allowed for direct comparison, question by question, of their interview with that of the native speaker – what researchers refer to

as a “microanalysis of the discourse” (Gumperz, 1999) and opportunities for “awareness” and “noticing” (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Schmidt, 1993). The second session involved examining the interview from the Canadian context, learning the reasons for the questions and the expected type of answers (Robinson, 1985). This process included briefly discussing the cultural work orientations of China and Canada (Kasper, 1997a). It also included discussing the direct communication style that is used in the Canadian workplace (Conversation Management, 2009). In the third session, the candidates practiced this direct style of speaking clearly and concisely by delivering a response in a linear manner and by learning and practicing sequencers and speech acts (Hanford, 2002). They also learned about common feedback cues used by Canadians. In the final session prior to the follow-up interviews, the candidates analyzed the specific questions that had been marked by the interviewers as being answered inappropriately, and discussed appropriate or expected responses as a framework for preparing their individual answers.

Subsequent to this training, follow-up interviews were conducted by the second panel of recruiters (I1 and I3). The candidates were again video-recorded in 20 minute job interviews. Directly following the interview, the recruiters were again audio-taped in a post-interview discussion regarding their impressions of the candidates’ misunderstandings and suitability for employment.

The panel of expert instructors were asked to view the videotapes and assess the job candidates’ pragmatic skills in both the pre and post training interviews, using a five point Likert-type scale. They did not know which interviews were carried out first. While watching, they responded to the check sheet and rated the candidates’ skills on specific categories after two minutes, five minutes, throughout the interview, and in closing (see Appendix D for details). Each member of the panel was asked to review and evaluate the complete first and second interviews of one candidate. They were also asked to review and evaluate the first impressions

(including the introduction, small talk and the first two questions) of first and follow-up interviews of the two other candidates.

Results and Discussion

Data Analysis of Pragmatic Skills

Figures 1 and 2 reveal some simple quantitative differences in the NNS candidates' pragmatic skills between the first and second interviews as rated by expert instructors. Candidates' general development from interview one to interview two is presented in Figure 1. The candidates' development from the first interview to the second was summarized in a comparison of their total ratings on a Likert-type scale (1 = very weak, 2 = weak, 3 = adequate, 4 = good and 5 = excellent). As indicated by a shift to the right in the second interview, each candidate's skills improved demonstrably the second time. For example, twelve out of twenty-one of the expert's ratings for candidate 2's pragmatic skills in the first interview were rated as very weak, whereas none of his skills were rated as weak in the second interview. He moved from a dominant rating of *very weak* in the first interview to a dominant rating of *adequate* in the second. Seven of out twenty-one of the expert's ratings for candidate 3's pragmatic skills in the first interview were rated as very weak whereas none of his skills were rated as very weak in the second interview. Two of the ratings were very weak and eleven were rated as weak out of twenty-one of the expert's ratings for candidate 4's pragmatic skills in the first interview whereas none of his skills were rated as very weak and only five were rated as weak in the second interview. He moved from a dominant rating of *weak* in the first interview to a dominant rating of *good* in the second. Figure 1 focuses on comparing the total numbers of ratings on the Likert-type scale whereas Figure 2 focuses on comparing skill development over twenty one skills.

The expert instructors' assessments of each of the pragmatic skills of the NNS candidates' in the first and second interviews are shown in Figure 2. For example, the rating of candidates 2's

skills in responding to introductions went from a 3 (adequate) in the first interview to a 4 (good) in the second. His skill in making and understanding small talk went from 1 (very weak) in the first interview to 4 (good) in the second. The categories were rated after two minutes, after five minutes, throughout the rest of the interview and in closing. This structure conformed to standard interview procedures (Scheuer, 2001). Content, rapport and positive perceptions were judged several times throughout the interview because as Kerekes found, “Differences in the outcomes of gatekeeping encounters (successful or failed) have been attributed in part to interlocutors’ abilities to develop a positive rapport with one another by establishing co-membership and thus an increased solidarity with one another” (p. 1943).

These results suggest that the approach used improved candidates’ pragmatic skills. All candidates improved in the second interview. Candidate 2, who moved from a dominant rating of *very weak* in the first interview to a dominant rating of *adequate* in the second interview, showed the most improvement over the twenty one skills. In the second interview he had 9 skills rated as very good and none lower than adequate. Candidate 4, who moved from a dominant rating of *weak* in the first interview to a dominant rating of *good* in the second interview, had the highest dominant rating. In the second interview he had 11 skills rated as very good, 5 as adequate, 5 as weak in the second interview.

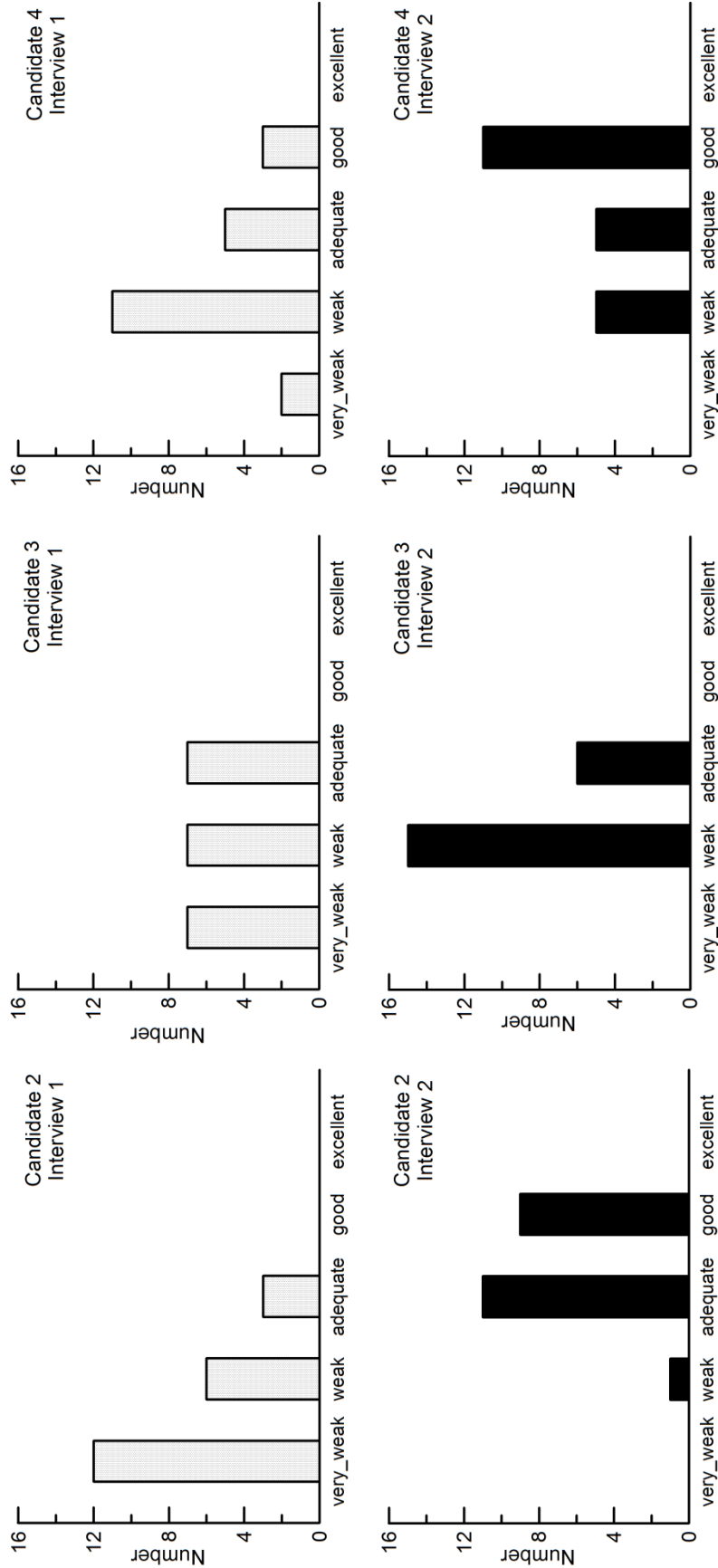


Figure 1. Comparison of candidates' sums of ratings from interview one to two

Pragmatic skills were categorized from very weak to excellent on a 5 point Likert-type scale. Pragmatic skill categories: 1 Introduction, 2 Small Talk, 3 First Question, 4 Content, 5 Rapport, 6 Communication, 7 Enthusiasm, 8 Tempo, 9 Content, 10 Positive Perception, 11 Rapport, 12 Crosscultural Misunderstanding, 13 Content, 14 Positive Perception, 15 Intelligibility, 16 Body Language, 17 Technical Expertise, 18 Workplace Values, 19 Rapport, 20 Closing, 21 Rapport.

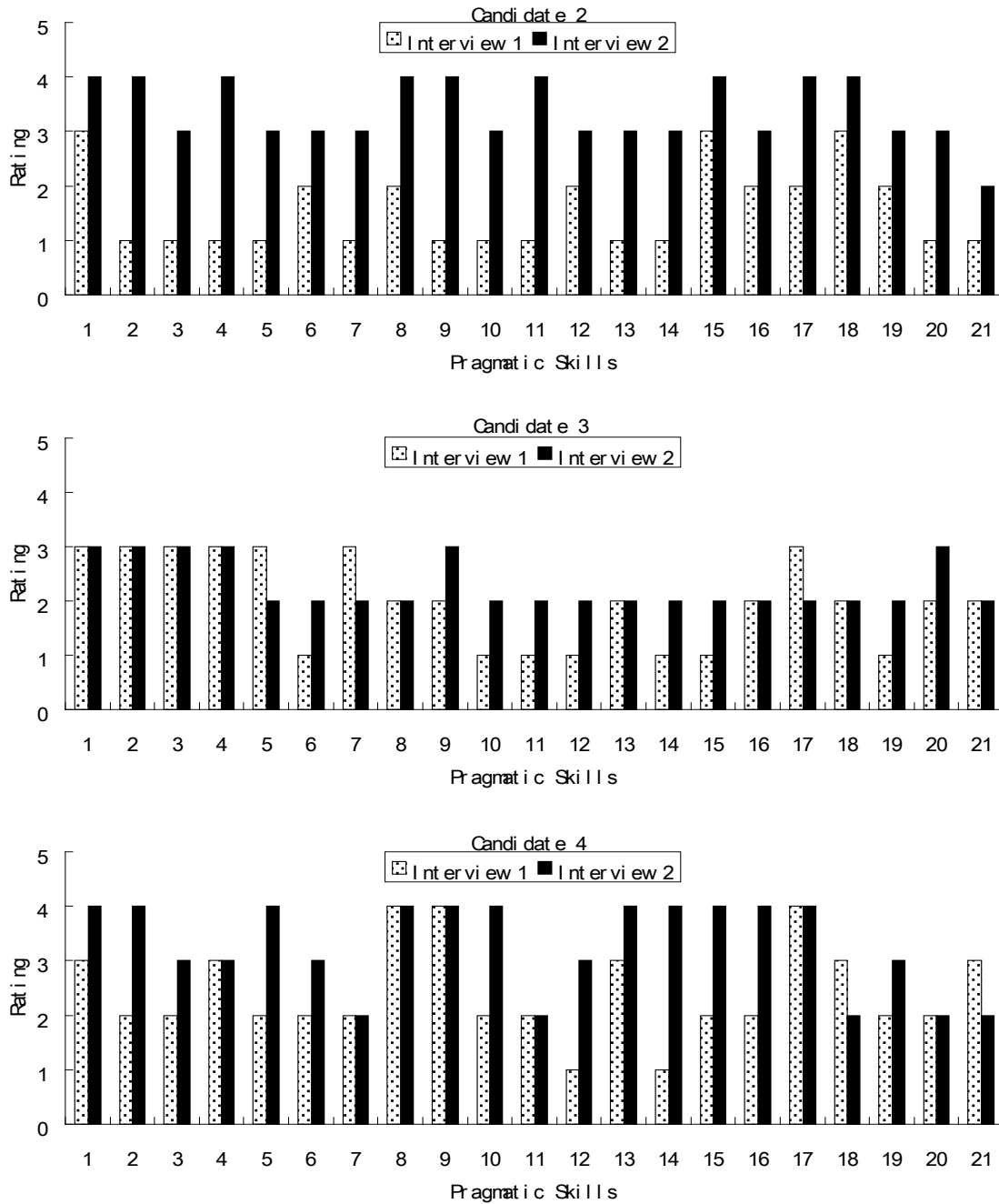


Figure 2. Comparison of candidates’ pragmatic skills from interview 1 to 2

Pragmatic Skill categories: 1 Introduction, 2 Small talk, 3 First Question, 4 Content, 5 Rapport, 6 Communication, 7 Enthusiasm, 8 Tempo, 9 Content, 10 Positive Perception, 11 Rapport, 12 Crosscultural Misunderstanding, 13 Content, 14 Positive Perception, 15 Intelligibility, 16 Body Language, 17 Technical Expertise, 18 Workplace Values, 19 Rapport, 20 Closing, 21 Rapport

Likert-type scale categories: 1= very weak, 2 = weak, 3 = adequate, 4 = good, and 5 = excellent.

Transcription Analysis

For reasons of anonymity all speakers are identified by ‘candidate (C) number’ only.

Company names are pseudonyms.

The following transcription conventions (adapted from Koester, 2006) were used:

I1 I2 I3	interviewer’s number
C1 C2 C3 C4	candidate’s number
NS	native speaker
R	researcher
...	pause
[]	overlap of talk at point of overlap
//	an interruption of one speaker
()	denotes an unknown utterance
/speculation/	words between slashes show uncertain transcription
YES	capital letters show emphatic stress
<i>Italics</i>	mispronounced
<u>paced</u> fast-paced	incorrect word underlined and corrected word follows
Heheheh	indicates laughter
{insert}	researcher’s notes and changes

Transcription Excerpts from Interviews

The following section includes the transcriptions of selected questions and answers categorized by first impressions, impressions throughout the interviews, and final impressions. These questions were chosen from the sixteen asked for reasons of brevity and for their clarity as examples of the types of misunderstandings and repair that occurred. For comparison purposes, the NS candidate’s (C1) response is followed by each NNS candidate’s (C2, C3 and C4) reply in

the initial and follow-up interviews. The candidates' responses are followed by excerpts from the post-interview discussions with interviewers: panel one (I1 and I2) in initial interviews and panel two (I1 and I3) in follow-up interviews, who expressed opinions on the candidates' interview skills. The expert instructors commented on the pragmatic skills of each candidate.

First Impressions - Introduction

The literature on job interviews emphasizes how important first impressions are to the outcome of an interview; however, "candidates and interviewers from different cultural backgrounds may have different expectations about what a job interview consists of" (Lipovsky, 2006, p. 1152). In response to the first interview question regarding the reason for choosing a career, the NS's answer below shows she will endeavour to reply accurately and she realizes it is important to elaborate on her answers, whereas the NNSs in their first interview are disadvantaged in the way they answer and lose the opportunity to make a good first impression. In preparation for their follow-up interviews the NNSs observed the NS's interview and were coached on the implication of the questions and expected answers.

Question 1. Why did you choose engineering/geology as a career?

Answer C1 (NS).

C1 Well, ah well ever since I've been a little kid I've always loved rocks and I can remember that from the beginning. I can remember being on beaches with my dad as a kid and being really fascinated with where all these different rocks came from and how they all got there. When I started my degree I really didn't quite know what I was getting into but the more I've gone with my courses and kind of discovered the science underneath it the more fascinated I've become with it so I just think it is one of those things I'm going to want to learn about for the rest of my life.

I1 Mm-hmm good.

Initial interview answer C2.

C2 Oh I, I think for me it's better to chose this positions because I was an engineer before I came to Canada and ah so I think I'm ah familiar with this position so I just want to apply, to apply for this positions...

I1 Ok, ok.

Follow-up interview answer C2.

C2 I chose engineering job because I really like engineering job because when I was a child, I saw many buildings was built by engineers and workers. I was so happy – so I just wanted to become a engineer. When I enjoy my university degree, I majored in civil engineering so after I graduated from university I just took a civil engineering job - so I just want to do this job.

I3 Ok, great, thank you.

Initial interview answer C3.

C3 Yeah, and because I study I graduated from university and after I finish my university course and then I go to my technical job. I have found my job in my country. First as an assistant engineer and a then I have worked four years and after 4 years I have a changed my position – as my engineering. So I go to emigrate in Canada and I want to keep my technical position so I want to work in Canada as an *engineering*. Much better I can show my technical, my ability because I *en* have 20 years I do technical job, so I think this much better to do. If I go to Canada do SIMPLE job DO LABOR JOB - I think it's not AVAILABLE for me. So I want to do technical job and I can show me ability. I can CREATE new things for or make new *INVENTION* for Canada.

I1 Good, good

Follow-up interview answer C3.

C3 Yes, my father, my parents are engineer in my country. When I children, my father told me how to engineering. He give my a lot of engineering books and ask me to read and then I have a interest in engineering. When I go to university I chose an engineering course and then I study a lot of engineering course, my teacher told me, encourage me to study engineering so after work I chose engineering career //ok// so..

I1 Ok, good

I3 Ok

I1 So, it was from the parents, then? It was the idea that..

C3 Yeah

I1 Ok, good

Initial interview answer C4.

C4 Eh, because I used, I was trained to be an engineer in China for four years for a degree and I work as an engineer for nine years up till now//

I1 Ok, nine years experience

C4 Yeah

I1 Ok, but WHY did you choose engineering, why didn't you choose medicine or teaching or whatever?

C4 Because the () in the beginning I was TRAINED to be in this field and so I am ABLE to do this job so I just continue my career.

I1 Ok, ok, good, that's fine, yeah

Follow-up interview answer C4.

C4 Because, while young, my father encouraged me to - my father told me it has an orientation in our *society* and I like to build some things. I have *tools* I have the *toolbox* to

make something like - that I like. I have chance so I try - that's why I want to be an engineer when I grow up.

I3 Ok, well thank you.

Discussion of initial interview answers - Panel 1 (I1 and I2).

I1 And then the first question, none of them seem to understand what you're looking for when you ask, WHY did you choose this?

I2 Because you are looking for the passion but they all talk about how they have come to apply for the job and it's a tough one for them.

I1 It may be a cultural thing that they don't talk about why they do things, I don't know.

I2 Or I wonder if somebody else decides for them that they will be engineers.

I1 Maybe in the school system, you know, somebody like a teacher or somebody says you'll be an engineer, you'll be a doctor, you know, whatever. I don't know, it would be interesting to know but it's a good question so... answer WHY.

Discussion of follow-up interview answers - Panel 2 (I1 and I3).

I3 It seemed strange that all of the candidates talked about their families, their fathers influencing them. It was almost like they had no control over it themselves.

Categorization of pragmatic skills - Expert Instructors.

In the initial interview although C2 was assessed as realizing the interviewer had moved from small talk into the formal questions, showing confidence, being attentive and sharing eye contact, he was still categorized as *very weak* because he didn't answer the question appropriately. He answered why he applied for the position not why he chose engineering as a career. By the second interview he was assessed with the same skills and was also able to understand and address the appropriate request and was therefore categorized as *adequate*.

C3 was quite successful in answering this question in interview one and was categorized

as *adequate*. He maintained this categorization in the second interview.

In the initial interview C4's skills were assessed as being very weak in realizing the interview had begun, weak in using hand gestures to support his message but adequate in being attentive and emotionally expressive and dynamic. He was assessed as being very good in showing confidence and excellent in shared eye contact. His overall categorization on the first question was rated *weak*.

By the follow up interview he was still assessed as being very weak in using hand gestures but successful in realizing the formal interview had begun. He was still adequate in being attentive and emotionally expressive and dynamic. He was assessed as being very good in eye contact. His overall categorization in the second interview however was *adequate*.

First Impressions – Summary of Observations

Enthusiasm and passion, according to Lipovsky (2008) for both the profession and the position at stake can be stated explicitly or a candidate can, “impart passion for his job through his non-verbal communication” (p. 422). Gumperz (1996) explained that phonological and grammatical structures cannot account solely for meaning in talk. He recognized the importance of context and shared conversational inferences. In discourse there are always social relationships involved in the interpretive process which relies on symbols, lexicons and background cues that are normally produced and interpreted without conscious consideration. It is this subconsciousness that makes L2 speakers vulnerable in a job interview as they try to make good impressions and convince their interviewers to hire them.

It is instructive to consider the NNSs' perceptions developing from the first interview to the second in a process along a difficult path towards pragmatic understanding. LoCastro (2003) describes this process as coming to know how speakers can mean more than they say and how listeners can understand them. For example, in answering why engineering was chosen as a

career, in the initial interview C2 replies that he was an engineer before he came to Canada and is familiar with the position. In the follow-up interview he talks of being interested in buildings as a child and of studying engineering and still wanting to pursue this career. Thus, he seems to have grasped the underlying meaning in the NS's answer and incorporated the understanding in his reply. C3 talks about his experience and ability in the initial interview and attempts to model the NS's meaning in the follow-up one but only includes the advice his parents gave him, which is interpreted neither as passion for the work nor an ongoing love of learning. The interviewers concluded that the parents were influential in his decision, which may even act as a barrier and prevent them from assuming *he* also likes the career. C4 moves from saying he is trained and able to do the job, in the first interview, to saying in the second that he was encouraged by his father to recognize it as a worthy profession and that he was given toys to stimulate his interest in engineering, but again not really transferring the appropriate meaning which includes a passion for the field and an ongoing interest in learning more about it.

Impressions Throughout - Introduction

As Kerekes (2007) indicated, "Two interlocutors who share the same native language (L1) and/or cultural background are more compatible, therefore more likely to achieve smooth communication and to avoid miscommunication, than are interlocutors with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (p. 1943).

Question 10. What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction, and why?

Answer C1 (NS).

C1 Academically, the one I'm most proud of is at university they run field schools and we do two mandatory schools in second year and third year and following the third year the university picks 6 students based on academic standing and field work to go on a field school in the NWT. I was chosen to be one of those 6 students so we were flown up there

with two professors and worked on the tundra for two weeks, mapping. It was definitely an experience that I will cherish for a very long time.

I1 Right, well good. Ok.

Initial interview answer C2.

Ok, to date what has been your *major* accomplishment in your career? What has been the major thing that you've accomplished? {I1 asked this slightly different question – inserting the word major twice and the word career once – which was misunderstood by C1 to mean his course concentration and prompted an answer about civil engineering. }

C2 Oh in my career I just *majored* in civil engineering field so ah...

I1 Ok?... good.. ehm...

Follow-up interview answer C2.

C2 From my past experience, I worked as a manager in my country, in my past company.

One time we took a project ah on to rebuild a building and at that time I have a meeting in our company. Our team worked on site. They didn't pay attention to underline electrical line, so caused some problem and we went to the construction site to solve this problem.

I3 Ok, thank you.

Initial interview answer C3.

C3 *complishment* and ah, and ah, I think, and ah, I have a lot of experiment experience in my country. I have a lot of technical job, and ah, on the field experiment experience, and ah, not in design, not in principle, not in the room work, I work in the field. Ah, I have a lot of real work on field and a how to fix, how to justing adjust, how to installation, install a device, and ah, how to slove solve problem. Not only talking and a design idea - I MUST be working by, by, by, my hand. Ah working by hand so I can use my hand. The idea to...

I1 Solve the problem, right?

- C3 To solve problem and ah and this my ac, aca, [ok now what about] competence accomplishment.
- I1 Ok
- Follow-up interview answer C3.*
- C3 confe...Pardon, again?
- I2 What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction?
- C3 accom...most satisfaction...and ah mmm and ah pardon me? What meaning - satisfaction?
- I2 So what job or task that's been successful – so a job or project that's been successful. What has given you the most satisfaction from that? What did you get from working on that project that was successful?
- C3 Yeh. I think, ah I think, oh I think, I have a lot of skill in my past years. I can work with my team together, together. I can, I have, I like a challenge. I *work* to () the team together to *solve* problem and discuss each other and to *share* information and everyday to discussing and everyday to chat in my job. I work ...I'm a responsible person. I work very, very detailed. I am kind person. I can, I can, I can follow my () I can follow my () how to finish this work at once.
- Initial interview answer C4.*
- C4 () accomplishment given me the most *satisfaction*?
- I2 What task or role has given you the most satisfaction and why?
- C4 Oh, yeah. The product finish the customer say, "Oh it's good. I like it." So when customer happy, I'm happy, *satisfied* with my jobs.
- I1 o...k...
- I2 o...k... thank you.

C4 You're welcome.

Follow-up interview answer C4.

C4 Yeah in the () after we...mmm ah...because we do a lot of - they challenge us - to improve our product line. After one year – one production line is speed up for one time. So the production is more than before and we save out of the resources.

I1 Ok. So how much did it speed up, by what percentage, how much?

C4 100

I1 One hundred percent increase, ok. With the same amount of quality and...?

C4 The quality, yes... the company make more money {everyone laughs} yes.

L1 GOOD, ok, ok. That's a good one and you were directly involved in that project?

C4 Yes it is my project, I in charge of that project{a little laughter here too}.

I1 Good okay. Excellent!

Discussion of initial interview answers - Panel 1 (I1 and I2).

I1 The question was not answered or they were too vague. They either don't understand the questions or they answered wrong. Either way this is a red flag to the employer because if they don't understand but think they do – it's a problem.

Discussion of follow-up interview answers - Panel 2 (I1 and I3).

I3 There were times when the candidates answered well but others they were quite vague.

I1 Yes a bit vague and they overused the same example too. They have to work on their stories and have several ready with detail. They need to talk about how much time or money or whatever. Put numbers to it.

Categorization of pragmatic skills - Expert Instructors.

Throughout the interview C2's skills improved in every category from the initial to the follow-up interview. The most dramatic improvements were seen in content and

rapport both of which moved from *very weak* to *good*. Considerable improvements were also made in appearing enthusiastic and participating at the interviewers' tempo. In the initial interview he didn't understand the interviewers' signals about when to stop. Also considerably improved were his ability to support evidence through use of sequencers, gambits and semantic formulas and his positive perceptions assessed through his knowing culture cues and drawing correct inferences.

Throughout the interview C3's skills improved in nine, stayed the same in nine and decreased in three categories from the initial to the follow up interview. His developments and his declines were all one point on the Likert-type scale. He was rated as less enthusiastic and less technically credible in the second interview. He maintained his skill level in substantiating content, body language and showing appropriate workplace standards of formality, humour and respect.

Throughout the interview C4's skills improved in twelve, stayed the same in seven and decreased in two categories from the initial to the follow up interview. The most dramatic improvement was seen in positive perception which moved from *very weak* to *good* because he better understood the culture cues and drew more correct inferences. Considerable improvements were also made in crosscultural understanding and although he was still a little too vague and didn't show reciprocity of conversation, he was direct and interpreted questions appropriately. His intelligibility also improved considerably and even though his volume was too low, his pace and articulation were much improved. His body language also improved two ratings on the scale. However, a decrease was found in workplace values because he showed no sense of humour and was weak in demonstrating workplace formality.

Impressions Throughout – Summary of Observations

Researchers (Lipovsky, 2003, 2008; Scheuer, 2001) point out that it is important for job candidates to give details in their answers – to provide enough information. Lipovsky (2008) writes that vagueness can negatively impact the interviewers' impressions of the candidate. In other research Lipovsky (2003) found that “successful candidates provide more information about their professional experience than their unsuccessful counterparts do” (p. 1155).

Final Impressions- Introduction

There is a “link between the candidates' specificity about their professional plans and the successful outcome of the interview” (Lipovsky, 2003, p. 1156).

Question 15. Why should we hire you?

Answer C1 (NS).

C1 I think that I would be a valuable contributor to your company. I think that I have the educational training and the skill set from university to compete but I also think that I'm a really good team player and really good people person and I'm ready to take on the challenge and I also think that your company would be a good fit for me as well.

I2 Excellent

Initial interview answer C2.

C 2 Ok. I like this question {everyone laughs} because as I said I think maybe you ah you ah looked some details from my resume. I am honest and I'm reliable and I'm dependable and I have excellent education background for most of all I have good experience for construction building maintenance of building tunnels so I think I most stronger application applicant this position.

I2 Ok, excellent.

Follow-up interview answer C2.

C2 Well, I guess as you know my resume, I'm honest person and I'm a people person, and I like challenge so I think I'm a trouble shooter. [mmhmm] So, this position is really fitted for me as well so I think I am a strongest candidate for this position.

I3 Ok, thank you

Initial interview answer C3.

C3 And ah because I think ah your position – I very like your position and your position, and I ah attract your position. In your company describe this position, I have read and it follow my experiment experience and then all it follow me. So I think I can follow my certificate in technical field – so I think I can got this, follow my experiment, experience, yeah.

I2 ...Ok?

Follow-up interview answer C3.

C2 Mm. I have been a, I have studied my country in a famous university. I have got a degree. I have worked in a very famous company ABD as technical support and I have a good team. I like challenge. Your company is a paced fast-paced environment can give me more challenge. I can work more so I like this work condition. So I can, if your company hire me, I have am a good person, I have am a team person. I have am a high technical...

I3 Good

Initial interview answer C4.

C4 Because () of peoples. Because I love hard works and I have experience and I know how to chose the material, how to set the machines, how to a set the pipe and ah make maximum use of the use something so... I know, just experience and a so a maybe I know designing process and I have the /cost/ how to take the /cost/ and I seen how to designing

these products. Just experience [great, good] [ok]..

I1 Thank you so much

Follow-up interview answer C4.

C4 Oh, because firstly, I have the training for the position. It is very similar and I have knowledge about the chemicals and I /know/ how to deal with problems and I am the /band-aid/ I like the hard worker with peoples /that/ I get along with them very well. I think I () for the company.

Discussion of initial interview answers – Panel (I1 and I2).

I1 In general some questions like, why should I hire you take a certain amount of thinking and you've got to have a certain personality to answer like some North Americans. Because if you DON'T then - you know - we're going to say, well ... it doesn't match. I think for these candidates they've got to say they have experience, and show they are willing to work hard and learn about the company and do the best work they can so that we won't regret hiring them. You know *vague* answers like that and they need to have a little repertoire of those that they can just pull up when they need them. So there would be no surprises in here and it's just a question of practicing, of getting these pragmatics down.

I2 Well, exactly - so they kind of feel comfortable with the questions. And they are not surprised by a question like, why should I hire you.

I1 They won't say, well I didn't expect them to ask me THAT.

Discussion of follow-up interview answers – Panel 2 (I1 and I2).

I2 The candidates could bring in something they have prepared ahead of time. A list of questions in case they are nervous.

I3 Yes, they all talked about doing research on the company but a good question to ask is,

are there opportunities to apply on other jobs {for advancement} and maybe even if they have heard about the company recently on the internet or in the news then mention it so the employer gets the idea of their interest and enthusiasm.

Categorization of pragmatic skills - Expert Instructors.

C2's skills were categorized as *very weak* in closing the interview initially and *adequate* in the follow-up. The main difference being in the second one he asked appropriate questions. He was able to increase his rapport from *very weak* to *weak* in the final interview.

C3's skills were categorized as *weak* in closing the interview and in building rapport in the first interview and *adequate* in closing the interview but still *weak* in building rapport in the second one. In the initial interview he asked about the company in general and seemed to know about it. In the follow-up interview he did not understand the salary question.

In the initial interview C4 had questions prepared that reflected research done about the company. However, he didn't ask about salary, thank the employer, reiterate his interest in the position or cite primary qualifications. The experts' initial categorization of closing the interview was *weak*. and rapport building was *adequate*. In the follow-up interview although he had good use of humour, asked good questions, including when he could expect to hear from the company, shook hands and thanked the employer he was judged as being "not quite there yet" and categorized as *weak* in both closing and rapport building.

Final Impressions – Summary of Observations

Lipovsky (2008) discusses the importance of candidates highlighting abilities which interviewers value, in order to negotiate solidarity. The NS understands what is expected and in her answer she mentions educational training, wanting to contribute to the company, being a team player and a people person who likes challenges and finds these 'opportunities' in the job. C2 also answers in the first interview that he has good experience and education and further

strengthens the solidarity in the second interview by adding that he too is a people person, likes challenges and is a trouble shooter – to which the interviewers immediately replied with support.

Mutual laughter is considered a sign of rapport and consensus (Kerekes, 2006). C2 negotiates this rapport by stating with a smile that he likes the question and is quickly rewarded by mutual laughter from both interviewers.

Transcription and Discussion of Candidate C2

The following section includes transcription excerpts chosen to provide insights into the process of developing pragmatic understanding. The information is categorized into sections regarding each NNS candidate (C2, C3 and C4). Within each section excerpts from the NNS's post-interview discussion are followed by excerpts from the interviewers' initial and follow-up post-interview discussions. Categorization from the expert teachers follow and finally, research notes relate the findings to the literature.

Candidate 2 - Response to Initial Interview

Question 3. Tell me a little bit about yourself.

C2 I think my answer is not very good. I had good information but the way I answered was not very good. I think I was a little nervous.

Question 6. Describe a time when you worked on a project as part of a team.

C2 Usually in China we work together. So first talked about how to finish a project and at this time I wanted to use 'organized' but I forgot and I want to say 'work together' but I don't know how to talk about this situation... make it stronger. I don't know how to describe it, so I just went around and around... I know the question is in the middle but I can't, ah I can't...

Question 9. Provide an example from your past that demonstrates the contribution you could make to our firm.

R Did you understand that question?

C2 Oh, I just understand maybe 50%. I just guess, maybe because I just give him one example - *how to make the company to be successful* - I just think about - I just 60% I understand and 40% I just guess.

R So in number nine you understood they wanted an example - but really, the question was – *provide an example from your past that demonstrates the contribution that you could make to our firm.*

C2 Yes, I just guessed...

Question 11. Cite another situation from your past that required you to respond to pressure. How did you deal with it?

C2 Oh, this question, I'm not sure what they wanted. Maybe they want to connect between my work position and from my habit to think about my work position. I think. ... I just wanted to connect to my work so added coworkers – in my free time I wanted to add workers.

Question 15. Why should I hire you?

C2 Body language is not comfortable. Sometimes I look nervous – feel nervous. Have best answer but answer just from my heart is not good, prepare can be better.

Question 16. Do you have any questions for us?

C2 Think looked a little nervous and felt a little nervous. Think a lot about if they like the answer. I just looked at ...engineer {I1} and he just looks at me so I think maybe he likes the question. Movement {in chair} I made showed I was uncomfortable – when I was thinking just moved chair...looked nervous but actually was thinking.

Candidate 2 - Response to Initial Interview - Panel 1 (I1 and I2)

I1 There were two things – weak handshake and poor eye contact. You see, when I asked the

question he was looking at me. When you asked the questions he was looking at you. You see, and that's not good – especially if there's three people in the panel it's even worse because the other two people feel left out and they're not impressed, you see.

I2 He also over talks – which made him seem nervous or lacking in understanding.

I1 He seemed to go off on a tangent at times but he needs to have specific answers ready, to plan them out in advance so he can name two or three accomplishments. He didn't talk about himself but as a Canadian employer I wanted to know what *he* did on the team. He's got to zero in and give us the specifics. If he is precise and to the point and we need more – we'll ask for it. He can think of the interview as a big commercial about himself.

I2 Yes, but at times his answers tended to be vague.

I1 He talked about using his free time with his co-workers to relieve stress but in the Canadian workplace it's not necessary to spend your weekends with your coworkers.

Candidate 2 - Response to Follow-up Interview - Panel 2 (I1 and I3)

I3 At times he started out answering the questions but sometimes it took him a bit of time to give an example and make it more concise.

I1 Especially number nine where it asks for an example from your past – he's got to have one or two up his sleeve and they have to have a focus on money - dollar signs on them. For example, I saved the company a hundred thousand dollars or we reduced the costs by so much. That's what people are looking for - an example of how they can take that accomplishment and transfer it to us.

I3 We wanted more specific questions instead of what's the size of the company – how about what is the size of the team and how they operate – interdisciplinary or structure.

I1 We'd probably say his overall rating was adequate to good.

Candidate 2 – Categorization of Pragmatic Skills - Expert Instructors

In the initial interview he answers, *yeah*, which is too informal and not an appropriate response. By smiling too much he lost rapport. Building rapport and positive perceptions were consistently marked *very weak* throughout the interview. In response to the first question, he answers why he applied for the position - not why he chose engineering as a career. His answers were inappropriately long and the frequent interjections of *ah/uh* became distracting. He had limited pitch range in his voice, which gives the impressions of being bored. He didn't recognize the signals to stop talking *now*. His body language was closed and not expressive, with little eye contact or hand gestures. Although he seemed serious and methodical his technical expertise score was weak because he appeared to lack confidence and was not specific: He didn't mention university or company names. He consistently doesn't answer the questions and seemed almost as though he had his own agenda he was following. He appears as though he is not listening.

By the follow-up interview every skill was categorized as improved. The greatest improvement was evident in small talk and appropriate content in answers. Rapport was built initially and throughout the interview but lessened in the closing minutes. Intelligibility, positive perceptions and nonverbal communication skills were also categorized as considerably improved. Throughout the interview C2 appeared more enthusiastic and energetic.

Candidate 2 – Summary of Observations

From the comments of even the most successful candidate, the one who was chosen as most likely to get the job, we can gain an understanding of how difficult the interviews were to navigate through. He recognized that he was not speaking in a direct way but has to speak in this manner to try to cover the uncertainty of his understanding. He was willing to live with guessing when his understanding was slightly over 50%. After being told that the question was not about

the *company's success* but about *his own success* he didn't acknowledge this as a misunderstanding. Jensen (2003) observed that in crosscultural job interviews neither the candidates nor the interviewers ever mentioned misunderstanding and preferred to just move on pretending they had understood. It seems a long leap to reach the success that Lipovsky (2006) describes when she states that, "The candidates who successfully negotiate their expertise volunteer sufficient information, give information that is both explicit and relevant, and use appropriate technical terms" (p. 1156).

This candidate, in fact all the candidates, expressed surprise that the 'good', 'very good' and even 'excellent' heard from the interviewers was not a comment on their ability to answer questions. They were not familiar with the use of these words as markers to set conversational closings in motion (Derwing, Diepenbroek & Foote, 2007).

Showing or expressing nervousness damages impressions in interviews and can be interpreted as a lack of confidence in skills (Lipovsky, 2008).

Transcription and Discussion of Candidate C3

Candidate 3 - Response to Initial Interview

Small talk. Did you have trouble finding our location?

C3 Waiting for questions: Why search job? What kind of job you like? Waiting for job description. But he first asked me "travel - locate". Waiting for serious question and think about how to answer. So now go into room - think about – "have trouble to locate" to suddenly change idea about question... suddenly change idea.

R Why was it hard?

C3 Think how to answer question. Think about "locate" and work back... "trouble"

R Is that word trouble or travel? {C3 didn't distinguish a difference.}

Question 1. Why did you choose engineering?

C3 I understood this question! What key point - do technical job and want to keep this.
Logically need to give good English answer...only speaking, speaking. Now in my mind
I'm searching key word - show technical ability.

R Could you tell me what you wanted to say – if you had another chance?

C3 I want to do /available/ job – inventive, creative. I want difficult job – difficult, technical,
intelligent job. Labour job has no value – only simple job – only uses hand – anybody can
do it.

Question 5. What are your greatest personal strengths?

C3 Confused – didn't understand word stress strength. What gives stress NOT strength.
Couldn't hear it!

Question 7. How do you determine or evaluate success on a task?

C3 No understand this question. How to elevator evaluate ...understand only half.

R So were you answering a question you didn't understand? It was how to show a task is
successful or what proves a task is successful.

C3 Only think, if finish job perfectly you are successful – only customer can certify this job,
so only understood 50%.

Question 8. What are your weaknesses?

C3 This I understand. Language is my biggest weakness: Worked many years only in
Mandarin. Communicate with American partner by email. ...speaking time is too long
time – only {need} short answer here!

*Question 11. Can you describe a major problem you have encountered at work and how
you handled it?*

C3 This I understand. Problem is China uses one code and Canada knows another code. Must

learn code in college, NOW. Must try to *memorize* all code.

C3 I think my English is very bad, language is very bad. I felt a lot of pressure. I remember - I have in my mind – I have interview in many companies. A lot of companies ask me to provide certificates in interview. Engineer and technical certificates are VERY important. I feel this is very important to spend one year and get a certificate...only after working one year I feel this certificate is very important. ... When I attend interview {in China} a lot of supervisors ask to solve technical questions. How to solve... I can answer technical questions better.

Candidate 3 - Response to Initial Interview - Panel 1 (I1 and I2)

I2 Pronunciations of some words were a definite barrier.

I1 He sounded angry when he was talking too loud

I2 Maybe passionate but it seemed angry. That wasn't good and was off putting to me an interviewer.

I1 His eye contact was terrible at times and seemed to be due to thinking about the language but he was looking over here and over there without trying to focus and sometimes looking straight down. It was a big concern.

I2 He also had vague answers.

I1 Even number 1 {Why did you choose engineering as a career?} When you asked him why, he kind of answered how.

I1 Don't say language is a weakness for number 8 {What are your weaknesses?} because we HEAR it - it's obvious.

I2 He talked about his strength as being a new immigrant and coming to a new culture and increasing his language but that's not a strength it's just an EXPECTATION we have.

I1 And the code. They don't understand that the employer will NOT ask them to memorize

the code. He's got to kind of understand that.

I2 Do you think that is an expectation in their country?

I1 I don't know but instead of saying they have to memorize the code he has to say, I've got to be familiar with the code – to know where to find it.

I2 He also needs language skills.

I1 He needs to be able to say the right thing and be able to work it in the right way. His questions for us were not good. He didn't seem to have researched our company. And asking how many people we are going to interview is TOO personal, because you know that is none of his business. To finish off like that means that he didn't come prepared. He didn't come with enough information.

Candidate 3 - Response to Follow-up Interview - Panel 2 (I1 and I3)

I1 He really has trouble getting into specifics – he's too vague.

I3 That's right, I'm not sure if it was language or comprehension or not understanding the questions.

I1 I don't think it is. I think it's cultural - for whatever reason – that they don't want to say, I did this or I did that. It's always this thing about WE did it.

I3 That's right. It was sort of the big picture.

I1 Even when asked specifically for an example there was none given.

I3 Well, he did give an example of what his weakness was.

I1 The technical codes...

I3 Yes, but also the English.

I1 But I think the English is NOT a good example...

I3 Well, he could mention it and also give another – and say that he's working on it. He appeared very nervous and he very rarely would make eye contact - looking between or

through us. He certainly was VERY nervous. He didn't seem to relax.

I1 Probably because the language is so much of an issue for him. But for me – he is still too loud.

I3 His tone and volume varied quite a bit – there was times when he seemed QUITE assertive and other times when it was a question he struggled with for an answer - he became much more quiet.

I3 I see him perhaps being technically ok but his personality didn't come through – he was almost very programmed and I'm wondering how he would work in a team environment, as well.

I1 Especially if he has this louder voice where he might put people off.

I3 But certainly, I think his overall weakness was that he wasn't providing examples and wasn't understanding or answering the questions.

I1 I think he was telling us what he thought we wanted to hear. It was almost very programmed. I guess, I don't know – and this is part of the team thing – how flexible he would be. He seemed to be a little bit rigid.

I3 I would concur with that.

I1 And if he is going to be on a team – especially as a new employee and an immigrant he's got to show some flexibility... Now overall I would say he is not even adequate.

I3 I do too...He is weak and I certainly would not hire him.

I1 Maybe on a probation thing... or as a technologist's assistant.

I3 But he was certainly the weaker of the two.

Candidate 3 – Categorization of Pragmatic Skills - Expert Instructors

In the initial interview he floundered around quite a bit, wandered. When asked to talk about himself he talked about work experience, not himself. He didn't pick up cues from the

interviewers when they indicated *enough*. He didn't understand the question about criteria to consider in creating a design and left no room for interviewers to interrupt and get him back on track. He also didn't seem to understand the question asking for his personal strengths. At the end of the interview he asks about the company in general and seems to know nothing about it. He has totally misunderstood the tenor of the interview.

In the follow-up interview he doesn't know when to stop and often seems to misunderstand what is required. When asked about his accomplishments he just repeated what he had said in an earlier answer. This interview is definitely not as frenetic as the first – this time is much calmer.

Candidate 3 – Summary of Observations

At times C3 did not have what Bardovi-Harlig (1999) describes as sufficient linguistic skills to fully interpret speech and this affected his ability to comprehend pragmatic meaning, especially given the unfamiliar context and situation of a job interview. Processing pragmatic meaning requires that he understands not only linguistic but also contextual information. However, his “bottom up processing of linguistic information and over reliance on linguistic cues” (Garcia, 2008, p. 4) resulted in frequent misunderstandings in the interview.

Interviewers' questions may be asked to learn how candidates perform (Lipovsky, 2006; Scheuer, 2001) and although he made substantial improvements in his pronunciation, including lowering the volume and reducing overly stressed words, and in his nonverbal language, by making eye contact more often, he was still not rated as more than *adequate*. In the first interview he was rated as being constantly too loud but in the second he was too loud at times and almost too quiet at others. To learn to perform these skills appropriately does not come easily and C3 was struggling to grasp many ideas in a very short time. He recognized that he had a lot to learn and tried very hard to incorporate the intended meaning of the native speaker's responses into his

own replies. However, in the second interview he was seen as stiff and inflexible, “almost programmed” in the words of the interviewer, who wondered how he would manage in the ongoing team environment of the workplace. As Gumperz (1996) explains, “communicative practices are actions” and “meaning comes from situated inferences” (p. 9). When we combine this with the knowledge that much of this understanding is unconscious and according to Gumperz in this example takes time to develop:

Although our backgrounds are about as different as they could be, we share certain communicative conventions and interpretive practices. It is long-term exposure to similar communicative experience in institutionalized networks of relationship and not language or community membership as such that lies at the root of shared culture and shared inferential practices. (p. 15)

It is understandable, given both the short time frame between the interviews and the large gap in pragmatic understanding that C3 had difficulty communicating appropriately and the interviewers couldn't recognize the intended meaning in some of his replies.

The interviewers and the expert teachers commented on C3 sounding “aggressive or almost angry” at times and mentioned that it seemed to occur when he was struggling with his linguistic skills. They also said that he did not know “when to stop” or to recognize the interviewers' attempts to “let them in.” “Asian English has a faster rate of utterance which recruiters describe as rolling and where one finds it difficult to get a word in. A listener responding to the marked consonants may perceive Asian's speech as staccato and somewhat aggressive” (Wong, 2003, p. 9). This is an example of what Gumperz (1999) called a pragmatic misunderstanding creating a subconscious negative reflection of the speaker. Another example occurs in I1's comments that, “He needs to be able to say the right thing and be able to work it in the right way.”

Lipovsky (2008) suggests that knowledge of the details of the position is crucial to the success of the interview. Contrast this with I1's statement regarding the first interview:

His questions for us were not good. He didn't seem to have researched our company. And asking how many people we are going to interview is TOO personal, because you know that is none of his business. To finish off like that means that he didn't come prepared. He didn't come with enough information.

Transcription and Discussion of Candidate C4

Candidate 4 - Response to Initial Interview

Question 1. Why did you choose engineering as a career?

C4 Why did they ask this question?

R What they expected was the reasons that you like engineering.

C4 *Oh, so I should say engineering is creative and I like that part! A misunderstanding.*

Question 3. Tell me a little about yourself.

C4 *Don't quite understand what to talk about in this answer. Answered technically but too long.*

Question 4. What are the criteria to consider for a successful engineering project?

{The actual written questions was, When creating a design to solve an engineering problem what are the main criteria to consider? The interviewer may have confused the job candidate with these changes (see Appendix F).}

C4 Wanted him to repeat the question so I started with 'engineer' and 'successful' but had difficulty. {laughed in interview} So just went on with 'good project'.

Question 6. Describe a time when you worked on a project as part of a team.

C4 I don't understand this question – describe a TIME when you worked on a project. Why they say describe a TIME? Like once upon a time?

R This just means to tell or describe...

C4 Ah – one case! I thought it means a time period... I felt I didn't answer right. I understand the question but don't know how to answer. Normally, they don't ask this question in China.

Question 11. Describe a major problem you have encountered at work and how you handled it.

C4 This one I have to manage my stories. I take the wrong example. It's not perfect – I didn't solve problem – maybe I involved but not the major, I didn't make a big contribution.

Question 12. Cite another situation from your past that required you to respond to pressure. How did you deal with it?

C4 If I speak too fast then it's not clear. I wanted to say, "when you have a problem try to solve it and when you do the pressure gets released". Then you can relax at home with entertainment. Didn't have a good answer because I'm nervous – could talk about playing soccer – too nervous.

Question 13. Where do you see yourself five years from now?

C4 I laughing with him... This one is right – so I could relax when answer. This question I've had before - so I know.

R Do you know that we often thank the interviewers at the end of an interview?

C4 Never thanked them before – never. Is this important in Canada? If in China want you - they want you - for technical background and experience is what they want. If right person - just want you right away.

Candidate 4 - Response to Initial Interview - Panel 1 (I1 and I2)

I1 His position at the table was too casual (elbows on the table) and he was in our space and he can't encroach on that.

- I2 He was good with small talk and was great with eye contact.
- I1 But he was almost too relaxed and that's a thing you have to be careful about. *It's a very fine line, you know.* He answered several questions well, for example 6, 7, 9, 10. He put NUMBERS to his examples and that's what we want to hear. But often couldn't be comprehended. He needs some pronunciation work. But you know, he did a good job. He's got some good attributes.

Candidate 4 - Response to Follow-up Interview - Panel 2 (I1 and I3)

- I3 I felt at times hard he was hard to understand. There were times when he gave good examples but other times when he was vague and didn't give good examples.
- I1 I had difficulty comprehending him so I didn't get the real examples - and he would have trouble communicating at work. The average co-worker won't listen that carefully and will just say, "I don't know what the heck he is talking about" and just walk away from it.
- I3 You know whichever candidate we choose will be working in a multicultural environment and they WILL need to communicate.
- I1 Eye contact good.
- I3 Seemed relaxed, attentive, not rigid...just have to go back to the difficulty in comprehension and understanding him. There were times when he spoke a bit fast but what I did like when he didn't understand he asked for clarification. I thought he was enthusiastic, had a sense of humour.
- I1 He said that he's been here 5 years so he should be better than the other two - who have been here shorter. His articulation brought down his rating.
- I3 Yes, I couldn't judge his technical expertise very well because I couldn't follow his example.
- I1 Why should I hire you? {question 15}

- I3 If we are comparing other candidates, I thought that he summed it up the best. He gave more examples.
- I1 Again, I'd say he's average...in my mind I'd say he's probably about the same as our first candidate...
- I3 So then, I guess the question is who would we hire?

Candidate 4 – Categorization of Pragmatic Skills - Expert Instructors

In the first interview he wasn't able to build rapport or positive perceptions: he didn't answer appropriately, relevantly or convincingly. He was too casual. He didn't use examples to substantiate his answers. He was weak in using direct speech and wasn't comprehensible or intelligible. He seemed too assertive and didn't recognize hierarchy. When asked a question about personal skills and strengths he used *must be* and *have to* which seemed too strong.

In the follow-up interview he responded to introductions and small talk well. He gave high content answers and used direct speech, made his point and then added details. He seemed to interpret the questions appropriately but sometimes was still vague. He established himself as self confident and versatile although more energy and volume would have been good. He checked for understanding in response to interviewers' signals. He seemed to have a better recognition of hierarchy but wasn't able to show similarity in workplace values. At the end of the interview, although he showed good use of humour and asked appropriate questions that reflected an understanding of the company, he lost the opportunity to build rapport.

Candidate 4 – Summary of Observations

The expert teachers and the interviewers both mentioned this candidate's casual behaviour in the initial interview: one interviewer pointed out that there is a fine line between being relaxed and being too casual. In this interview C4 is also described as too assertive and as not recognizing hierarchy by the expert teachers. Lipovsky (2006) addresses how interviewers assess the

politeness of the candidate they are interviewing: “In social encounters, interactants are expected to show deference to each other while maintaining demeanour” (p. 1153). For example as a way of developing a positive image (face) she mentions the importance of thanking the interviewer – a concept that surprised this candidate in his post-interview discussion. This cultural misunderstanding may be part of the reason the candidate lost rapport at the end of his interview. He was categorized as not being relevant or believable. He did not give examples. Lipovsky (2006) discusses a candidate who was judged as direct and relevant:

Detailed and comprehensive answers showed his appreciation of and deference to his interviewers as he did his best to fulfil their expectations of him; his full answer lessened the imposition on them to request further information, as an incomplete answer would have required another question. (p. 1160)

At one point in the post interview discussion the candidate explained why he was laughing. He began an answer by laughing and repeating two key words in an attempt to show the interviewers that he didn't understand the question. When they didn't pick up on his cue he just tried to figure out the question based on the literal meaning of the words he had grasped. This is another example of Jensen's (2003) observation that interlocutors in job interviews don't mention misunderstandings.

It seems a daunting task to fulfil the expectations of interviewers in a second language and new culture, especially when as Campbell and Roberts (2003) explain, “Foreign-born candidates often lack access to job interview English” (p. 243). They describe these candidates as doubly disadvantaged in that:

First, they are less likely to have exposure to the new work order demands of worker/self identity in which workers identify with the discourse of their workplace. So the ways in which members of this group combine personal and organizational discourses is more

likely to be perceived by interviewers as ‘jarring’, and so unconvincing. Second, this unconvincing talk feeds into widely circulating discourses of cultural nationalism and negatively ethnic stereotyping. (p. 245)

Transcription of Decision Making

The transcription of the interviewers (I1 and I3) in discussion after the follow-up interviews provides insights into the selection process of NNS job candidates. Following the transcription, a research summary that relates the discourse to the literature is provided.

Selection Discussion – Panel 2 (I1 and I3)

I3 So then I guess the question is which one is...

I1 Who would we hire?

I3 Who would we hire?

I3 But I guess - from your perspective because you are the department head. Which candidate would you see fitting in with that work team?

I1 That’s, part of it. You see, the other thing that I always look at is ah... my philosophy on interviews is very simple. My philosophy on interviews is that, we already know from their resume, what their experience is, their education../yeah/ you know, so what I’m looking at is the best personal suitability /right, right/

I3 You know, what’s going to fit in, you know the personality and /yeah, how they would fit in/ of the TEAM...

I1 And I have concerns about {C4} because if he’s been here 5 years, then his English is still a little bit hard to understand. He may have trouble fitting in.

I3 That’s right. I agree with you.

I1 So I would probably lean towards {C2}

I3 Ok. YES /a little more experience/ yes and I would agree too.

- I1 And also the fact that he's got the, ah the English is a little bit easier to understand.
- I3 That's right.
- I1 Because you see the other coworkers may.... So he's got to work a little bit more on his English /right/ and his communication./right, right/ because our job requires him to work as a team. Now if the job was strictly on a computer – AutoCAD in a corner and you never see any other people....
- I3 And he doesn't have to converse with /communicate with clients/ right, right
- I1 But if its out in the field then I'd say maybe {C4} might be suitable because he's a little younger and so on /right/ but he's got to work on his English I'd say /right/ Because he's ...whether it's opening his mouth a little bit more, whether he's got to maybe speak louder or whatever /right, right/ so I would say yeah,{C2} probably at this point of the three is the /strongest candidate/ yeah.
- I3 I guess, at this point, you'd feel that there is any others that you would, you know, that were maybe your 'B' candidates, that, you know, you would want to bring in for an interview? Or would you like to just perhaps bring {C2} in /yeah, well/ for another interview? Because maybe one of your leads for instance.../yeah/... um
- I1 Well of course we always have a, you know, a chance to try these guys out and with probation and stuff, you know.... So I would say we probably stick with {C2} /ok/ 'Cuz you know we've gone through a bunch of résumés and these were the three that we are interviewing so /right/ so of the three....

Selection Discussion – Summary of Observations

In making their choice, the interviewers discussed which candidate would fit in. They would select the one assessed with the best personal suitability: the one who would be part of the team. They considered that if he was hard to understand he may not integrate well into the

company. They would value experience only after considering ease of understanding. C3 wasn't considered for the job. After debating the merits of C2 and C4 as suitable candidates they decided, based first on intelligibility and then on experience, to select candidate two.

C2 was also categorized by the panel of expert instructors as the one with the most pragmatic improvements from the initial interview to the follow-up one. In the follow-up interview C2 had twenty of the twenty one skills assessed as adequate or good and one as weak compared with C4 who had sixteen assessed as adequate or good and 5 as weak. C3 had 6 skills rated as adequate and 15 as weak. Li (2000) found that, "As important as a strong work ethic and ambitious aspirations and ability may be, language is still a fundamental tool for realizing personal and professional goals, and being able to use language effectively ... may be crucial" (p. 60).

Implications

These findings illustrate that L2 learners can develop pragmatic skills by observing authentic discourse; becoming aware, with the help of explicit instruction, of what is and what is not considered appropriate in the given context; and practicing to put the new discourse strategies into use. Crandall and Basturkmen (2004) state that, "Learners not only enjoyed this type of instruction, but were able to learn from it" (p. 44). The participants in the current research were also very positive about this approach to understanding the job interview. The findings of this study illustrate the point made by several researchers (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin; Campbell & Roberts; Garcia; Gumperz; Kasper): pragmatic instruction should provide authentic language samples.

The tasks of facilitating and gaining pragmatic competence are difficult and seem overwhelming at times. One of the candidates described the process of understanding like being in a war. His communication breakdowns and lack of success in interviews were frustrating him.

This response points to the significance of including pragmatic skills in ESL training.

Misunderstandings in gatekeeping encounters can prevent technically qualified candidates from entering the workplace and getting on with their lives as productive community members.

L2 learners need opportunities to observe the discourse of native speakers. Much of pragmatic meaning is subconscious and only becomes apparent when input is noticed and analyzed. This analysis is especially useful when the NNS is challenged with understanding at the word and sentence structure levels too. At times the candidates couldn't think of appropriate answers because they were trying to decode one-time questions presented out of context. By comparing their answers with those of the NS, they were able to use the information to gain pragmatic awareness and develop skills. Misunderstandings could be analyzed and appropriate answers found. Understanding the intentions or inferences in one discourse can be generalized to other conversations.

Hanford (2002) explains that awareness-raising involves gaining cultural knowledge and background information. Newcomers don't always have the opportunities to observe the behaviour of "insiders" and so they benefit from authentic audio-visual material and explicit instruction. Realizing similarities in their L1 and L2 can help them gain pragmatic understanding of the L2.

To facilitate pragmatic competence in others, instructors need to learn about their own subconscious use of the language – so much of which is intuitive. This can be an intimidating task given the broad range of the language, contexts and purposes used in communication. However, by introducing a wide range of realistic situations and providing authentic samples of discourse, instructors can enable learners to raise their pragmatic understanding. They won't spend time on the unnecessary skills and miss what is important to the learners. They can help the learners "unpack" what happens in a situation, discuss how misunderstandings can be handled

and generalize to other situations. This is different from looking at short isolated examples of text and over simplifying the pragmatic content. It allows for compensatory strategies to be discussed and developed.

That being said, there is a lack of audio-visual recordings of naturally-occurring conversations available. My proposal here is that we, as instructors of intercultural communications, concentrate on developing and using authentic language samples. However, given the time constraints of ESL instructors, other possibilities have to be considered as well. It is beyond the scope of this paper to go into detail about teaching methods but Derwing, Diepenbrock and Foote (2007) identify several resources. They also support awareness-raising by exposure to and analysis of authentic discourse but make other suggestions including completion, reordering and problem analysis using TV and movies as well. The idea of having learners examine discourse to gain understanding about their own assumptions is further supported by the suggestion of surveying a population to gain necessary input on cultural understanding.

Explicit instruction can provide information to the learners about appropriate use of language for the context and register needed. For example, appropriate openers, sequencers and closings can be pointed out and practiced. This would provide the learner with an opportunity to understand the give and take of discourse and gain confidence in production.

The workplace context presents distinct aspects of interaction which are not common in casual conversations (Koester, 2004, p. 7). Explicit workplace instruction can be helpful to L2 speakers who benefit from information on specific goal orientations; constraints and inferential frameworks used in their workplace to avoid misunderstandings and to try to “fit in”. Gaining knowledge about each other’s cultures and ways of speaking can be instructive. Having opportunities to collect and unpack confusing discourse samples can lead to confidence and understanding in the workplace. Learning a more direct approach to presenting information and

the gambits that can soften a message can help avoid misunderstandings. The learning of pragmatics is an ongoing process; if both ESL instructors and individuals within the workplace have a better understanding of the communication challenges faced by newcomers, greater intercultural communication will result.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

To keep the project manageable in the short timeframe of this research, a small number of participants were interviewed. Fortunately they each presented different cases, resulting in useful data. Candidates presented differences in listening and speaking abilities, despite their similar CLB levels. They were from the same first language and profession and were given one type of interview. Research needs to be replicated with other ethnic groups, other interview types and other professions.

From the interviews it is evident that pronunciation was an important factor for two of the candidates; it affected their pragmatic ability and their assessment by the interviewers. Goals of the candidates prior to being interviewed should include enhancement of intelligibility and comprehensibility. Therefore, future research should focus on pragmatics and pronunciation together in job interviews. A follow-up workshop using this approach and material with evaluations of its usefulness by the learners would be another tool in assessing its instructional value.

Conclusion

This study has explored one approach to developing and evaluating a resource designed to teach pragmatic competence in a job interview situation. In the process it has also compared how L2 learners and NSs use language to convey messages. After the awareness raising activity of participating in initial mock interviews, NNSs were provided with a video-taped authentic NS interview: As Kasper (1997a) explained, “Authentic native speaker input is indispensable for

pragmatic learning” (p. 10). Information was provided on how to better meet the expectations of the interviewers by describing, explaining and discussing the pragmatic features involved.

Follow-up interviews offered another practice opportunity for the participants. Initial and follow-up interviews were assessed by a panel of expert teachers and their analysis of the candidates’ pragmatic skills allowed for an unbiased opinion on skill development.

This research demonstrated that L2 students’ pragmatic abilities improved through observing authentic NS discourse and being explicitly taught to notice the pragmatic meaning. The research also showed that the candidate who was rated as the most pragmatically skilled was the one selected as the best candidate for the job, indicating that pragmatic competence plays a substantial role in the success of L2 candidates in job interviews.

This study provided an interesting opportunity to develop authentic workplace materials and test their value as learning resources. Although pragmatic competence is complex and difficult to improve, as ESL instructors we owe it to our students to gain an understanding of intercultural language use and learn more about developing their awareness of pragmatics. We also should inform others in the community and workplaces about cross-cultural differences in pragmatics to improve the potential for communicative success.

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Appendix A

Information Letter for the Job Candidates

Date: December 1, 2008

Researcher: Kerry Louw, graduate student MEd in TESL, University of Alberta

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Before you consent to participate, please read the information below and ask questions to ensure that you understand your involvement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to learn more about the difficulties that non-native speakers (NNS) may experience in job interviews. Research findings will be used to improve learner training for the workplace.

Commitment for the Participant

As a participant in this study, you will be interviewed and video recorded in typical 20 minute job interview. The day following your interview, you will review the video with the researcher. You will be asked to stop the video whenever you don't understand the question, feel you give an inappropriate answer, or get an unexpected response from the interviewer and comment on the communication breakdown and its importance to the interview. The time commitment the post-interview discussion will be 30 minutes. You will take part in two training sessions for an hour each. You will be given job a second interview of 20 minutes. Your time commitment will be about 4 hours.

Potential Benefits

You may benefit directly from your participation in this study. It will provide accurate and authentic information on a typical job interview and coach you in useful skills. The project may lead to you to being more a more confident job applicant in the future.

Potential Risks

There are minimal risks in participating in this study. You may withdraw from the study at any time up until the interviews have been conducted and filmed at which point the researcher will be unable to remove your content. It is expected that the research will be compiled by February 15, 2009.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The researcher will ensure confidentiality in the following ways:

1. Your name will not appear in the study or the video
2. Your name will not appear in any report or presentation resulting from the study
3. Pseudonyms will be used in the interviews and reporting
4. No other identifying information will be disclosed.
5. All research assistants will sign confidentiality documents.

The research data, with identifying information removed will be kept for a period of 5 years and will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. However, it is important to know that the video produced may be used in ESL instruction and training.

Researchers will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm>
And other research personnel will sign confidentiality agreements.

Questions

If you have any questions about participating in this study please ask the researcher. If you have additional questions at a later date, please contact Kerry Louw at (780) 452-4951 or at louw@ualberta.ca or her supervisor, Dr. Tracey Derwing at (780) 492-3668 or tracey.derwing@ualberta.ca.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Appendix B

Information Letter for the Job Interviewers

Date: December 1, 2008

Researcher: Kerry Louw, graduate student MEd in TESL, University of Alberta

You are being asked to participate in a research project. Before you consent to participate, please read the information below and ask questions to ensure that you understand your involvement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to learn more about the difficulties that non-native speakers (NNS) may experience in job interviews. Research findings will be used to improve learner training for the workplace.

Commitment for the Participant

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to conduct and be video recorded interviewing four technically qualified volunteer candidates (3 NNS & 1 NS) using typical questions in 20 minute job interviews. Directly following each interview, you will review the video with the researcher. You will be asked to stop the video whenever you didn't understand the candidate's response, didn't get the expected response or got an unwanted response and comment on the communication breakdown and its importance to the interview.

You will conduct follow-up interviews with two or three of the NNS candidates a few weeks later, following their language coaching sessions. The process will be the same as the first set of interviews. The time commitment for the first series of interviews should be approximately 2.5 hours and for the second about 1.5 hours. The total time to participate is 4 hours which will be completed in two sessions.

Potential Benefits

You may not benefit directly from your participation in this study. However, the project may lead to you having more qualified job applicants in the future due to more efficient training in workplace communication.

Potential Risks

There are minimal risks in participating in this study. You may withdraw from the study at any time up until the interviews have been conducted and filmed at which point the researcher will be unable to remove your content. It is expected that the research will be compiled by February 15, 2009.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The researcher will ensure confidentiality in the following ways:

1. Your name will not appear in the study or the video
2. Your name will not appear in any report or presentation resulting from the study
3. Pseudonyms will be used in the interviews and reporting
4. No other identifying information will be disclosed.
5. All research assistants will sign confidentiality documents.

The research data, with identifying information removed will be kept for a period of 5 years and will be securely stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home office. However, it is important to know that the video produced may be used in ESL instruction and training.

Researchers will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm>
And other research personnel will sign confidentiality agreements.

Questions

If you have any questions about participating in this study please ask the researcher. If you have additional questions at a later date, please contact Kerry Louw at (780) 452-4951 or at louw@ualberta.ca or her supervisor, Dr. Tracey Derwing at (780) 492-3668 or tracey.derwing@ualberta.ca.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Appendix C

Consent Form

I have read the information about the study being conducted by Kerry Louw, a Graduate Student at the University of Alberta in the MEd TESL program. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have been given the satisfactory answers and details I wanted.

Job Interviews and Post-interviews

- I understand all interviews will be video taped to facilitate the collection of information.

- I understand the interviews will be compiled into a documentary film that may be used for training in ESL and may be shown in classes and workshops, with the understanding that pseudonyms will be used so that I will remain anonymous.

Withdrawal from Study

- I was informed that I can withdraw my consent at any time up to filming by advising the researcher.

Publication of Results

- I am aware that video recording and written excerpts from my participation in the research will be included in the publications that come from this research, with the understanding that pseudonyms will be used so that I will remain anonymous.

With full knowledge of all of the above, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Participant Name (please print)

Participant Signature

Witness Name (please print)

Witness Signature

Date: _____

Kerry Louw at (780) 452-4951
louw@ualberta.ca
Researcher

Dr. Tracey Derwing at (780) 492-3668
tracey.derwing@ualberta.ca
Supervisor

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

Appendix D

Pragmatics in the Workplace: The Job Interview

Panel of ESL Experts

The job candidates' progress from first to second interviews will be judged by a panel of ESL experts who:

- will not be told if the interview they are observing is the candidate's first or second
- will rate the candidates, on specified categories, using a 5 point Likert-type scale, and on a specified timeline, after two minutes, five minutes, through the rest of the interview and in closing
- will be provided with a checklist for consistency and guidance in assessing these categories

The experts will then be asked for their opinions of the training methods used in this research.

Assessment Checklist for the Panel of Expert Instructors

As a member of this panel you will be given a video and asked to observe and evaluate two interviews, one prior to and one after training, in random order, by three candidates. The first candidate's interviews will be presented in entirety while the following two candidates' interviews will be excerpts of approximately three minutes. A checklist is provided for each candidate's evaluation to assist in defining the parameters of each category. Your impressions of the candidate's ability, based on these categories, will be rated on the following scale:

1 very weak 2 weak 3 adequate 4 good 5 excellent

Throughout the interview, please record specific examples of the candidates interpreting questions different from the interviewer's intended meaning and thus giving either an unexpected or unwanted response. These could be a result of:

- Different cultural assumptions about situations (e.g., group or individual focus)
- Different ways of structuring information (e.g., direct or indirect)
- Different ways of speaking (e.g., too vague, too harsh)
- Different ways of interacting (e.g., reciprocity of conversation)

Please list the question number (Q#), video file number (VF#) and your brief comments in the following way:

Q 9 VF 2 The candidate did not give the expected answer. He was asked for a personal incident but only described his team.

After 2 minutes: (first impressions)

Responds to introductions

- ___ Introduces oneself appropriately
- ___ Shakes hands
- ___ Waits for invitation to sit down
- ___ Appears relaxed and natural

1 2 3 4 5

Makes small talk

- ___ Responds appropriately to small talk
- ___ Adds to the conversation, using gambits (strategies for speaking)

1 2 3 4 5

First question - Why did you choose engineering as a career?

- ___ Realizes the interview has begun and that the question is not an icebreaker
- ___ Shows confidence, doesn't flounder
- ___ Body position attentive
- ___ Emotionally expressive and dynamic
- ___ Eye contact shared
- ___ Hand gestures natural and supportive of message

1 2 3 4 5

First two questions - Why did you choose engineering as a career?
Why are you interested in this position?

Content

- ___ Answers appropriately
- ___ Impressive and substantiated, presents content and examples
- ___ Uses direct speech, gets directly to the point and then adds details
- ___ Speaks clearly and concisely

1 2 3 4 5

Builds rapport

- ___ Perceptions (views) match interviewers
- ___ Establishes self as confident and assertive
- ___ Shows cultural versatility (flexibility and resourcefulness)

1 2 3 4 5

After five minutes: (early impressions)

Communicates carefully

- Takes appropriate time to answer (not too lengthy or too brief)
- Speaks intelligibly
- Appropriate volume
- Appropriate speed
- Asks for clarification, if necessary
- Checks for understanding in response to interviewer's signals, if required

1 2 3 4 5

Appears enthusiastic

- Voice tone is emphatic and lively
- Demeanour is energetic
- Face is expressive

1 2 3 4 5

Participates at the set tempo

- Follows the interviewer's pace
- Finds space to make points
- Doesn't interrupt or dominate

1 2 3 4 5

Content

- Answers appropriately
- Uses gambits and sequencers, for clarity
- Impressive and substantiated with content and examples
- Provides supporting evidence and detail
- Uses direct speech, makes the point and then adds details
- Speaks clearly and concisely

1 2 3 4 5

Positive Perceptions

- Knows target culture cues and draws correct inferences
- Match between what is anticipated and what is perceived

1 2 3 4 5

Builds rapport

- Focuses on similarities
- Similarities present that promote rapport

1 2 3 4 5

Throughout the interview

Crosscultural Misunderstandings

- ___ Interprets questions appropriately
- ___ Similar cultural assumptions about situations (e.g. group or individual)
- ___ Similar ways of structuring information (e.g. direct, specific examples)
- ___ Similar ways of speaking (e.g. not too vague, not too assertive)
- ___ Similar ways of interacting (reciprocity of conversation)

1 2 3 4 5

Content

- ___ Answers appropriately
- ___ Uses gambits and sequencers, for clarity
- ___ Impressive and substantiated with content and examples
- ___ Provides supporting evidence and detail
- ___ Uses direct speech, makes the point and then adds details
- ___ Speaks clearly and concisely

1 2 3 4 5

Positive Perceptions

- ___ Knows target culture cues and draws correct inferences
- ___ Match between what is anticipated and what is perceived

1 2 3 4 5

Intelligibility

- ___ Volume
- ___ Pace
- ___ Articulation

1 2 3 4 5

Body Language / non verbal communication

- ___ Position of body
- ___ Eye contact
- ___ Personal space
- ___ Hand gestures

1 2 3 4 5

Technical expertise

- ___ Confident
- ___ Serious
- ___ Methodical
- ___ Credible and verifiable
- ___ Used personal examples

1 2 3 4 5

Workplace Values

- ___ Not too formal or serious
- ___ Not too respectful (doesn't seem insincere)
- ___ Has a sense of humour

1 2 3 4 5

Builds rapport

- ___ Focuses on similarities
- ___ Similarities present that promote rapport
- ___ Acts appropriate, relevant, convincing

1 2 3 4 5

At the end: Closing the interview

- ___ Asks questions, if appropriate
- ___ Has questions prepared that reflect research on the company
- ___ Doesn't ask about salary
- ___ Asks when he can expect to hear from the company
- ___ Shakes hands
- ___ Thanks the employer for the interview
- ___ Reiterates his interest in the position
- ___ Cites primary qualification, if appropriate
- ___ Asks for a business card, if appropriate

1 2 3 4 5

Builds rapport

- ___ Focuses on similarities
- ___ Presents similarities to promote rapport

1 2 3 4 5

Appendix E

Job Advertisement

Job Information

Job Title:

Design / Project Engineer

Employer:

Atlex Industries Inc.

Source:

Newspaper Ad

Location:

Edmonton, AB Canada

Date:

01-31-2009

Job Description

Description:

CANATEX

Industries Inc.,

Canatex Industries Inc., an industry leader in the design, manufacturing and servicing of heat transfer equipment, has an immediate opening for a Design/Project Engineer to join their expanding team of professionals. The successful candidate will have experience in design. Preference will be given to those with a Mechanical, Chemical, or Civil (process) Engineering Degree.

We are looking for a highly energetic individual with the desire to work in a fast paced, technically demanding, operations oriented company. Competitive salary and benefits are offered. If this is of interest to you, please submit your resume, along with covering letter to:

Canatex Industries Inc.

RE: Engineering Competition #09-001

Appendix F

Mock Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose engineering as a career?
2. Why are you interested in this position?
3. Tell me a little about yourself.
4. When creating a design to solve an engineering problem what are the main criteria to consider?
5. What are your greatest personal strengths?
6. Describe a time when you worked on a project as part of a team.
7. How do you determine or evaluate success on a task?
8. What are your weaknesses?
9. Provide an example from your past that demonstrates the contribution you could make to our firm.
10. What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction, and why?
11. Describe a major problem you have encountered at work and how you handled it.
12. Cite another situation from your past that required you to respond to pressure. How did you deal with it?
13. Where do you see yourself 5 years from now?
14. What level of salary are you expecting?
15. Why should I hire you?
16. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix G

Confidentiality Agreement

Project title – The Job Interview: Pragmatics in the Workplace

I, _____, the videographer, have been hired to record or edit the image or sound data on this project.

I agree to -

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

_____ (Print Name) _____ (Signature) _____ (Date)

Researcher

Kerry Louw _____ (Print Name) _____ (Signature) _____ (Date)

Supervisor

Dr. Tracey Derwing _____ (Print Name) _____ (Signature) _____ (Date)

Appendix H

Videotaped Interviews

Appendix I

Coaching Material: Lesson Two - Intercultural and Canadian Workplace Content

Cultural Building Blocks

Group oriented	Individualistic
Indirect communication style	Direct Communication Style
Risk Averse	Risk Tolerant
High Power Distance	Low Power Distance
External Control	Internal Control
Polychronic time	Monochronic time

Different Cultural Orientations

Data	Task comes first Individualistic Direct communication style
Listening	Group harmony comes first Indirect communication style
Dialogue	Discussion comes first Group oriented

In the Canadian workplace you may notice:

Personal space:

A little distant

Speakers use **direct answers to show:**

Confidence

Clarity

Conciseness (Avoiding wordiness; Get to the point)

Listeners:

Ask for ideas and opinions

Welcome feedback

Listen objectively

Listen without interrupting

People attempt to be:

Flexible when dealing with people or ideas

Approachable and open to encouragement and correction

Considerate of the feelings of others

Tactful and constructive

Composed in high stress situations

People improve by:

Admitting mistakes and learning from them

Accepting constructive criticism

Coaching Material: Lesson Three - Speaking Style

Giving Informal Presentations

How to keep you co-worker's attention?

How to deliver a message that will be remembered?

How to speak clearly and concisely?

Use the 3-Second, 10-Second, Linear Rule

Opening If you only had 3 seconds to talk what would you say?

- What is the one thing you want your audience to remember?
- This is a *Canadian workplace* way of giving essential information
- It is not considered too direct
- It gives a clear idea of what is to come

Main Points If you only had 10 seconds to talk what would you stress?

- What main points do you need your audience to understand?
- What must they know to reach your conclusion?
- This is a *map of how* to get to your destination.
- Use clear transition words e.g., first, second and last.

Details A straight line is the shortest route between two points.

- It follows the *Canadian workplace* linear communication style.
- Presentations should be specific, clear and concise.
- Consider your audience and what they need to hear.
- Remember that's all they need to hear.
- Offer to answer any questions if appropriate.

Informal Workplace Presentation Openers

- Well, let me start by saying...
- Right off the top let me say...
- As you may know...
- As I am sure you know...
- What I would like to say is...

Informal Workplace Presentation Sequencers

First	Second	And finally
To start	Next	And last
To begin	After that	To end
To begin with	My next point	And to end with
Let me start by saying	Now let's move on to	Last of all
As you may know	Now let's take a look at	Finally
As I am sure you know	Moving on to the next point	In closing
I'd like to talk about	And then move on to	And finally mention

Understanding Conversational Cues

How do you know that someone wants to talk to you?
 How do you let someone know that you agree with them?
 How do you know that someone understands what you are saying?

Feedback cues are signs we send the speaker. They show that:

- we are interested (or disinterested)
- we understand
- we agree (or disagree)

Nonverbal Cues

- Maintain eye contact
- Lean in
- Nod your head
- Smile

Conversational Cues

Interest	Tell me more, Right on, How about that ...,
Disinterest	Well I'd better get back to ..., Excuse me, I have to ..., I guess I should be going ..., Pardon me for interrupting but ...,
Agreement	Yes, it is ..., You're right ..., Exactly, Terrific, That's what I thought!
Disagreement	I don't really think so, Not quite, No..., Well not really ..., Even so... That's okay but ..., Hmm, maybe not ..., No way!
Understanding	I hear you, I'm with you, For sure ... , You know it
Confusion	Pardon: I didn't catch that, I didn't understand you, I don't get it ... Sorry: Could you repeat that please? I don't understand.
Rephrasing	So, you want to know..., is that right? You asked me about..., right? If I understand you correctly, you mean....

Maintaining a Conversation

How do you keep someone talking to you?

Remember many people enjoy talking about themselves.
Showing interest in them will encourage them to talk.

- Ask open ended questions: “Why did you choose engineering?”
“Why did you move to this area?”
- Reply with: “Really?” “That’s interesting. “That’s great!” “You did?”
“Oh no, that’s too bad.”
- Share your opinion or experiences but don’t dominate the conversation.
- Ask for feedback or advice.
- Choose topics that will lead to longer conversations.

Closing a Conversation

Closing a conversation politely is important for positive workplace relationships.
Abrupt endings can be considered rude.

First, you should let the person know that you need to end the conversation.

“Well, it’s been nice talking to you, but I have to....”
“Well, I better get back to work here...”
“Sorry, but I have to get going now...”
“Sorry, I’m kind of in a hurry. Can we chat a little later?”

People also just say: “Okay” or “Okay, okay”
“Good”
“Excellent”

Second, you can close the conversation.

“Have a good day. See you later”
“Take care.”
“Ok. Talk to you later.”

Coaching Material: Lesson Four - Appropriate Answers

7. How do you determine if the project was successful?
How do you evaluate your success on a task?

Examples of answers:

I accomplished the task I set out to do.

Our team met our goals.

We completed the job safely.

Furthermore, we did it on time and on budget.

So our customer was happy.

We worked as a strong team.

I learned something new for next time.

Your ideas:

8. What are your weaknesses?
What do you need to work on?

Examples of answers:

You can mention English but then talk about something else:

I am continuing to study ESL in my free time.

I know workplace vocabulary so I'm improving my pronunciation.

Examples of answers:

I have a different cultural background and it's sometimes confusing but I feel I am learning about the Canadian workplace. For example:

I know that decision making is often shared in Canada.

I ask when I don't understand small talk.

I know Canadian workers like to get right to the point.

I feel this is important for my success on the job.

I use to have problems (with a computer program or time management) but I worked on it for some time and now I am much better.

Your ideas:

9. Provide an example from your past that shows how you will help our company.
How do you think your experience in China will help you do a job in Canada?

Examples of answers:

Throughout my career I've learned to be responsible for my work. My last company was also fast paced and I worked on many complicated projects. For example, I was a team member on the electrical plans for the new international airport in Beijing, which meant that I dealt with many people. It was completed on time and \$100, 000 under budget. I can do the same for you.

I was team manager in my last company for 5 years. During that time we worked on many highly skilled projects. For example, my team completed the restructuring of a bridge in Harbin two years ago. I worked with an International team of engineers and we cooperated on the project which was completed before the deadline date. The project was on budget and we were awarded a certificate from the company for our safety standards.

My jobs both in China and in Canada required me to accept responsibility for my work. I know that part of this is personal responsibility to get my job done but it also means helping others to do theirs. I'm responsible and work hard to get the job done on time – even if it means some overtime hours. For example, on a project in 2007 in Canada my team was falling behind on our deadline. I met with the line to figure out the problem. I discovered that we could save an hour a day by switching (something) around. We put this into action and we saved 200 man hours a month and finished the job on time and under budget.

Your ideas:

10. What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction, and why?
What is something that you are really proud of in your working career?
What has been your MAJOR accomplishment to this point?

Examples of answers:

You have to be specific and give details about your success. For example:

What I'm most proud of is that I have the theory to design many projects but I also have the technical ability to do the job. I mean I can solve the problem but I can also complete the work with my own hands. I am very adaptable and skilled in this way. (Be prepared to talk specifically and clearly about one job. It was 2 years ago. We were working on nuclear power. I designed (something) and then I assembled (something). I received a certificate of merit from the company.

I was chosen to work as a team manager on my last job. As team manager I was in charge of (some) people and had to solve problems (like). Because I know how to work with people effectively, I can focus on getting a job done in a team environment.

In China, I was really challenged to improve our production line and after one month our line sped up by 50% and doubled our production. We accomplished this specifically (somehow).

Be specific and ready to discuss all the details if asked.

Your ideas:

11. Describe a major problem you had at work and how you solved it?

Examples of answers:

Yes, one time our production team was working with expensive materials. Specially, we were working with gold which was a product in our chemical process. And we were losing too much gold. We couldn't solve the problem in our team so we asked for our manager's help. We worked together and found out that some of the workers were actually stealing the gold from the line. They were removed from the plant and the problem was solved. I know that sometimes we have to ask for help and learn from the experience and knowledge of others.

One problem I had at work in Canada was that I wasn't used to the Canadian Code. It is different from China's. I am very familiar with that code because I have a lot of years using it. I am learning about the Canadian Code now on my own and feel that I am going to understand where to find things quickly in the code book on a job. This makes me feel more confident.

I supervised my team in my past job. In the beginning I use to just think about getting the task completed well and on time. But I learned that considering my team members was also important. If the workers are happy the job does get done right.

Your ideas:

12. Cite another situation from your past that required you to respond to pressure.

We all know that engineering jobs and jobs in general have a lot of pressure. What do you do to handle stress?

Examples of answers:

Yes, I have had a lot of stress in both my country and when I came to Canada. I reduced my stress by going to the park or talking with my family and friends. I go to church and talk there and so they share my problems and I feel better.

Yes. In China it is very important to just get the job done and so we try to fix the problems that give us stress at work. We must ask for ideas and share information. It is also important to work on solutions to problems at work here. It does reduce stress to find solutions and it's important for the company. But there is always stress at work so I learned to exercise with my kids at night to reduce my stress and enjoy my family at same time. My family is very important to me and when we play soccer at night it makes me happy and more relaxed.

I like to finish my projects before I relax and this was important in China. It is important here to do a great job too. But I have also learned to relax after work and enjoy my time off. I like to go places with my family, for example (some where specific) and I like to play badminton with my wife on Saturdays at (some where specific). We also watch (hockey on Saturday nights) on TV. This prepares me to come to work relaxed and ready to handle stress.

Your ideas: