Teaching Employability
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- What do we assume?
- How do our students flounder?
- How can we support them?
Culture and Employability

Workplace behaviours and attitudes are culturally specific.

Students may lack:
• awareness of the relevance of their current skills for the Australian labour market
• awareness of Australian employer expectations
• awareness of their basic rights at work and the Australian regulatory environment
Sook Kean (childcare)

**Issues**
- Lack of familiarity with public transport system
- Perception of unfriendliness, diffidence by co-workers
- Lack of understanding of value of small talk & coffee break chat for team building

**Interventions**
- Task based activities for using directories, timetables, etc
- Cultural discussion on supervisor/manager expectations re efficiency
- Practice in initiating conversation, giving feedback and offering
Phuong (Office Admin)

Issues

• Inappropriate form of address & inability to self-correct
• Inappropriate touch as a form of re-assurance
• Inappropriate way of getting attention
• Chewing gum

Interventions

• Insistence on first name for teacher/trainer
• Cultural discussion on respect – ways of greeting and approaching
• Role-play seeking attention, interrupting politely
Nuha (childcare)

Issues
- Inability to manage health and fitness levels – dozing off
- Passively awaited routine tasks to be assigned
- Lack of assertiveness
- Lack of self-reflective capacity

Intervention
- Discussion re self-management and OH&S
- Provide models of passive, assertive and aggressive language
- Role-play assertive language – making suggestions, giving a preference, refusing an unreasonable request politely
The Ahlan Sisters (customer service)

Issues
- Initially demanding and uncooperative
- Fashion dressing
- Headgear - the wrong signifier

Intervention
- Explicitly teach modality/softeners at all levels
- Explore cultural assumptions around dress code
- Hold a group interview and ask all students to come dressed as if for the workplace
Ravuth (forklift)

**Issues**
- Assumed immediate transfer of his skills to Australian work context
- Lack of understanding of WorkCover and licensing requirements
- Greater protection entails greater awareness and responsibility

**Intervention**
- Discuss workplace safety practices in countries of origin
- Forklift OH&S video and websites to inform & warn
- Carrying out an OH&S audit within college environment
- Completing accident report form & reading safety signs
Bushrah (customer service)

**Issues**
- Lack of boundary between work and personal life
- Over-friendliness, effusive language made her appear ingratiating
- Confusion of workplace email etiquette and mobile texting conventions

**Intervention**
- Cross-culture/gender discussion: giving a compliment
- Role-play: Giving and accepting compliments
- Make explicit work email conventions
- Model difference between work and personal email
- Develop skills in writing work emails
Orlando (forklift)

**Issues**
- Easy going and relaxed attitude inappropriate for work placement
- Reporting of absence to workmate instead of supervisor
- Lost casual work opportunity: deemed to be ‘unreliable’

**Interventions**
- Cross-cultural discussion: punctuality, absence and requests for time off
- Discussion: Planning and organising
- Role-play: Apologies, reporting lateness or absence, leaving messages
- Case studies to illustrate consequences
Reza (customer service)

**Issues**
- Inappropriate clothing for workplace OH&S
- Cultural reasons for not taking up work experience placement
- Lack of understanding of EEO principles

**Intervention**
- Discuss relationship between gender and specific occupational roles in different cultures
- Explain EEO policy as it relates to diversity in the Australian workplace
- Invite family to collaborate in selection of appropriate work experience placement
Rita (Office Admin)

**Issue**
- Religious harassment during work experience
- Lack of immediacy in dealing with the problem

**Intervention**
- Knowledge of Anti-Discriminations Act and of legal rights within the system
- Tactics for dealing with bullying or harassment
- Model and practise assertive language: expressing refusal to engage in a topic, changing topic, etc
Tran (forklift)

Issues
• Offered ‘further training’ following work experience
• Later employed on a cash in hand basis

Intervention
• Cross-cultural discussion re methods of payment for casual work
• Discussion about NSW IR laws and WorkCover protection
• Discuss risks of cash in hand work – illegality, fines, being ‘dobbed in’, work not officially recognised
• Brainstorm problem-solving for this situation
• Model and practise language for negotiation
Beatrice (Admin Assistant)

**Issue**
- Breach of confidentiality while archiving police records at a local command
- Severe consequence for breach within local community

**Intervention**
- Cross-cultural discussion re confidentiality: provide set of scenarios
- Problem-solving group work: narrative involving clash of loyalties - family duty v individual rights
Modelling Skills

How can we model employability skills in the classroom?

• Sign on attendance sheets
• Opportunities for self presentation
• Mobile phones, classroom OH&S
• Making teamwork explicit– group/pair work
• Assisting students to clarify and follow instructions
• Organisation of class folders and homework
• Networking: email distribution list
Making Cultural Expectations Explicit

- Coffee break/lunch in different cultures and different workplaces: sharing food, taboo topics, cleaning up, gossip etc
- OH&S in different cultures: Who is responsible? How is safety ensured? Are workers protected?
- Respect: attitudes to superiors, forms of address, forms of approach, humour as a form of respect
- Initiative: making suggestions to a superior, arguing a point at a meeting, offering to take on an additional duty
- Teamwork: assisting colleagues, acknowledging mistakes, requesting assistance
- Managing conflict: addressing co-workers directly
Employability and Learning English

Below is a list of activities that people often do when learning English. Go through the list with your teacher to check your understanding. Now work in a group to discuss four points. (Your teacher will tell you which numbers you should discuss).

- Which employability skill is needed for each of the activities? (You may think of more than one skill for each.)

Write down your answers and when you have finished, feed back to the rest of the class. Now discuss these questions.

- Which employability skills are most important for learning English in the classroom?
- Which employability skills are most important for learning English outside the classroom?
- Are they the same or different?
Employability skills when learning English

1. Calling to advise a teacher of your absence
2. Arriving on time for class each day
3. Completing a learning activity in a group
4. Learning how to save a Word document to the ‘student’ drive on a computer
5. Organising an appointment with the Employment Pathways Counsellor
6. Suggesting a destination for an excursion
7. Explaining vocabulary to another student from your country who cannot understand
8. Talking about a custom (e.g. ways people from different cultures greet one another)
9. Asking a teacher for a concession card
10. Writing down the date of an assessment so you do not forget to prepare
11. Sharing a photocopy when there are new students in the class
12. Using the ILC to develop a skill you are weak in e.g. writing, pronunciation
13. Practising your English conversation in the coffee break by chatting to classmates
14. Using a website to learn English at home (e.g. Virtual ILC)
15. Asking a classmate to collect copies when you are unable to attend class
16. Turning off your mobile phone before class
17. Recording your speaking on a cassette recorder in the ILC
18. Handing in a homework assignment on time
19. Giving a short presentation to your classmates
20. Asking a teacher to slow down their delivery or change course content
Employability Scenarios

• Read through the one of following scenarios in your group. (Your teacher will tell you which one to discuss.) Try to guess the meaning of the words in bold and talk about them before checking them in your dictionary. Then discuss:
  • What is the problem?
  • What could solve the problem? (You might have a number of different answers here).
  • Which employability skills are needed in each situation?
Halle

Halle is an office administration trainee from Turkey. She has been in Australia a year and has been learning English quickly because her husband was born in Australia. She is confident and outgoing. This morning the office manager asks her to make some photocopies for a training session that afternoon. The manager speaks quickly because he’s in a hurry.

“Halle, I’d like you to do 10 of the masters in this folder marked A and 30 of these ones in the folder marked B. I need them double-sided and stapled top left. Have you got that?”

“Um yeah, I think so...” says Halle, not wanting to look stupid.

“Good. And when you’ve finished, could you leave them on my desk and go and help Jane set up the meeting room.”

“OK”

Halle was not 100% sure of what her instructions were, but she thinks she can guess what she missed. She makes the copies single sided because she does not understand the meaning of ‘double sided’, and instead of 30 copies of B, she makes 13. The office manager is angry when he sees the copies. They are not right and need doing again. Halle has wasted not only paper, but time as well.
Cultural Understanding
Cultural Understanding

1. Do you enjoy meeting people from other cultures?
2. Have you ever interpreted for someone who speaks your language, but does not speak English very well?
3. Have you ever explained one of your customs to someone of another culture? (e.g. removing shoes before entering a home)
4. Have you ever compared aspects of your culture with another? (e.g. marriage customs, work culture)
5. Have you ever shared a traditional dish from your country with someone of another culture and explained how it is eaten or cooked?
6. Have you ever explained your opinion about an event to someone of a different culture?
7. Have you ever read a book or watched a movie that helped you to understand more about another culture?
8. Have you ever helped someone from your culture to understand something new about Australian culture?
9. Have you learnt something new about yourself by living in another culture?