

Topic: Employment
(Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Overseas Processing Entity, Vienna)

Activity: Stressing Your Skills

Introduction	<p>Regardless of their ethnic, religious and social backgrounds, refugees almost universally underestimate their own accomplishments in the realm of work, and do not do justice to their skills and experience in a job interview situation. This is probably due to numerous factors, including the effects of long-term discrimination in their home countries and insecurity about their English, even among those clients who speak quite fluently. The refugees may also be unfamiliar with American job titles, which tend to be much more specific than those used in their countries of origin.</p> <p>Because the job search is the first and most important step toward the refugees' self-sufficiency, and because self-confidence and a positive attitude play a determining role in their success and general well-being, we conduct a self-presentation interview with each member of the class.</p> <p>With few exceptions, the majority of the refugees will not be able to get an initial job on a par with their qualifications and skills because of the language barrier. However, the language barrier makes it less likely that they will be turned down for a job because they are over-qualified. Good interview skills can only work to their advantage.</p> <p>The following are examples of self-presentation interviews. The five sample interviews reflect how our strategy accommodates a broad range of educational and work experience.</p>
Objectives	<p>The purpose of the self-presentation interview is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help participants learn a proactive approach to the job search which will help them obtain a job in the US regardless of the level of their English;• Stress the importance of making a good impression on a potential employer by presenting oneself positively and demonstrating an enthusiastic attitude toward work.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview Samples 1 through 5 (included)
Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Class reads sample interviews or teacher and participant act out roles. Class discusses difference between short answers and the longer, more confident answers.2. Participants prepare sample responses to typical interview questions. We respond with enthusiasm to the clients' individual depictions of their work in their home country and demonstrate that their initial responses to our questions do not adequately reflect their skills and experience. We then show each person how to present a clear, positive picture of her/his work and achievements.3. Role play interviews with personalized attention so that the interview process is more individualized.
Debrief	<p>In the context of the interviews we encourage the clients to learn or improve their English</p>

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as quickly as possible so that they can move from a lesser job into a job better suited to their skills and experience. We also stress the importance of training and education in achieving re-certification and/or a better standing in the job market

Employment – Handout for Interviewing Skills

Employment – Self-Presentation Interview

Sample One (Note: **T** = teacher and **C** = client)

T What work did you do in Iran?

C I'm a secretary.

T Good! As a secretary you have acquired many skills which you can use in different jobs, because of course to be a secretary in the U.S. you must speak fluent English. What kind of company did you work for?

C An import/export company.

T Was it a large company?

C Yes.

T Tell me – were you one of many secretaries, or were you the only one?

C I was the only one.

T Goodness! You ran the whole office yourself?

C *(Smiles shyly)* Yes, I did.

T You must make this clear! Say: "I was the administrative assistant to the director of a large, successful import/export company. I was in charge of the whole office."

(The teacher imparts this dramatically with beaming pride. The class laughs.)

T And smile when you say this! Show that you were proud of your responsibilities and really enjoyed your work. Now let's try this again.

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Employment – Self-Presentation Interview

Sample Two (Note: T = teacher and C = client)

T What work did you do in Iran?

C I'm an electrical engineer.

T Good! We need people with technical skills in the States! What kind of company did you work for?

C A large construction company.

T Tell me – were you a project manager or a group supervisor?

C Yes. Both.

T Yes? My goodness! You are not just a technician, you are a manager! How large was the team you supervised?

C Ten people.

T This is very impressive! It shows that your employers entrusted you with a lot of responsibility. This is what you must say: "I was a project manager and group supervisor of an electrical engineering team for a large construction company. I managed a number of major projects, and supervised ten people."

T And smile when you say this! Show that you were proud of your responsibilities and really enjoyed your work. Now let's try this again.

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Employment – Self-Presentation Interview

Sample Three (Note: **T** = teacher and **C** = client)

T What work did you do in Bosnia?

C *(Shakes head negatively.)* I did not work. I am a housewife.

T You did work! You had a very hard job! We do not say 'housewife'. You are a household manager! *(The class laughs, and the women nod their heads in agreement.)*

T People who manage a household have to do many different things at the same time, and they make excellent managers in the workplace. Have you developed special skills like sewing?

C Yes. I make the clothes for the family. And I do embroidery, too.

T Wonderful! It is important to show that in the little spare time you have as a household manager, you like to do creative work, and not just sit in front of the TV eating potato chips. *(The teacher stares blankly into space and stuffs imaginary snacks into her mouth while the translator translates. The class laughs.)*

T So, when a job interviewer asks you what work you do, you should smile with pride and say: "I am a household manager. I manage my family, the house and the budget. I also have experience tailoring and embroidering, and make the clothes for my family. My two children are very good students. I manage my husband, too, and he is a good worker." *(The class laughs.)*

T And smile when you say this! Show that you were proud of your responsibilities and really enjoyed your work. Now let's try this again.

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Employment – Self-Presentation Interview
Sample Four (Note: **T = teacher** and **C = client**)

T What work did you do in Iraq?

C I'm an auto mechanic.

T Good! You are moving to Detroit, the city of cars. What kind of cars did you work on?

C American cars.

T Wonderful! You must say: "I am an auto mechanic for American cars," and tell them what kinds of American cars you work on. Do you have a license or certificate?

C No.

T But you have a lot of experience, don't you? How many years of experience?

C 15 years.

T Terrific! There is a positive answer and a negative answer to every question. Always try and give a positive answer. Don't say: "No, I don't have a license or certificate." Instead, smile with pride and say: "I have 15 years' experience."

T You may still have to get certification in the U.S., but you should try to find the best job you can get in the car repair business with your English at its present level.

T And smile when you say this! Show that you were proud of your responsibilities and really enjoyed your work. Now let's try this again.

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Employment – Self-Presentation Interview

Sample Five (Note: **T** = teacher and **C** = client)

T What work did you do in Iran?

C I sold clothes in a boutique.

T Was it your own store?

C Yes.

T That is very impressive! You have been your own boss, and I know it is difficult to work for someone else. But!!! It is very important that you learn English and gain lots of experience before you think of opening your own business in the States. If you want to stay in retailing, you should try and get a job in that business. People will be interested in hiring you because you owned and managed your own shop. How many employees did you have?

C Two.

T Great. So you should smile with pride and say: "I owned and managed a small, exclusive clothing boutique. My business did so well that I was able to hire two employees."

T And smile when you say this! Show that you were proud of your responsibilities and really enjoyed your work. Now let's try this again.

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