

What happen when training in job interview questions is implemented as part of the job search strategy for students of the Office Technology vocational program?

Action Plan Research Project

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Teaching Context

I teach Office Computer Applications at the Ysleta Community Learning Center, Ysleta Independent School District, El Paso, Texas. (Far West Great Center). The Office Computer Applications course is a vocational training funded by government and offered to workers that have lost their jobs due to the International Trade Agreement that caused El Paso manufacturing businesses to relocate to other countries.

Upon government approval, qualified students are admitted to this training in order to enhance their skills and make them more competitive to return to the labor market. Students receive economic incentives while attending this vocational training that introduces them to the Microsoft Office Suite and its applications in an office environment; students also receive typing training and learn to navigate the Internet and to communicate via electronic mail.

I have a full time teaching assignment with two groups scheduled as follows:
AM Class: 13 students scheduled from 8:00 am to 12:00 am for a total of 20 hours a week.
PM Class: 10 students scheduled from 12:45 pm to 2:45 pm for a total of 10 hours a week.

Problem: Students need to enhance their job search skills

One common characteristic to this group of students is that they were employed for a long time in their previous employment (an average of 14.4 years) and therefore did not had the need to develop a job search strategy for the same period of time. As part of their training, there is a need to provide them with the necessary tools for their new job search activity. In order to address this need, a component of this semester' program is to incorporate training in their job search strategies including preparation of a resume, cover letters, thank you letters, and interview techniques.

This action research project has allowed me not only to enhance my professional development but also to address students' need for interview techniques training, document their progress, and to incorporate this new strategy in my curriculum development.

Research Question: What happen when Job Interview techniques' training is implemented for students of the Office Technology program?

Although training in interview techniques includes components such as body language, dress etiquette, interview etiquette, cover letters and thank you letters, this action plan focus on a specific component of the training in interview techniques: the analysis of the most common questions and recommended answers in a job interview.

Action Learning Plan

Below is a description of each step taken to implement the action learning plan:

The first step was to design a data collection strategy to document both, the need for training and based on an analysis of collected data, to design a teaching strategy that better fulfills this need.

Timeline - Week: 12/04/06 - 12/08/06

First data collection activity: the first method to collect data was based on One-on-One interviews with former learners.

Based on conversations with former students, we concluded that the most challenging experience they had during their job search process after graduation was the interview process. They all agreed in two things: first that the interview was the most crucial of all steps in their job search and second, that present students will definitively benefit from a job search training with special emphasis in interview techniques.

Second data collection activity: the second method to collect data was to develop a survey with a total of 13 questions that required short answers from current learners. The table in next page shows an analysis of data collected in this survey.

Below is a synthesis of collected data:

Students' distribution by gender and average age:

Female	Male	Age - Average
17	6	45

Students' distribution by education level and average years attendance by program:

Average Education Level	ESL	SP-GED	Office Technology
7.8 Grade level	1.0 Years	1.0 Years	0.6 Years

Students distribution by average level in program:

Program: ESL	Program: GED	Program: Office Technology
2 ND LEVEL	2 ND LEVEL	Intermediate

Average seniority in last employment	14.4 Years
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Average years with no experience in Job Interview	13.6 Years
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Training Need Analysis	Need Training	Do Not Need Training
	22 Students	1 Student

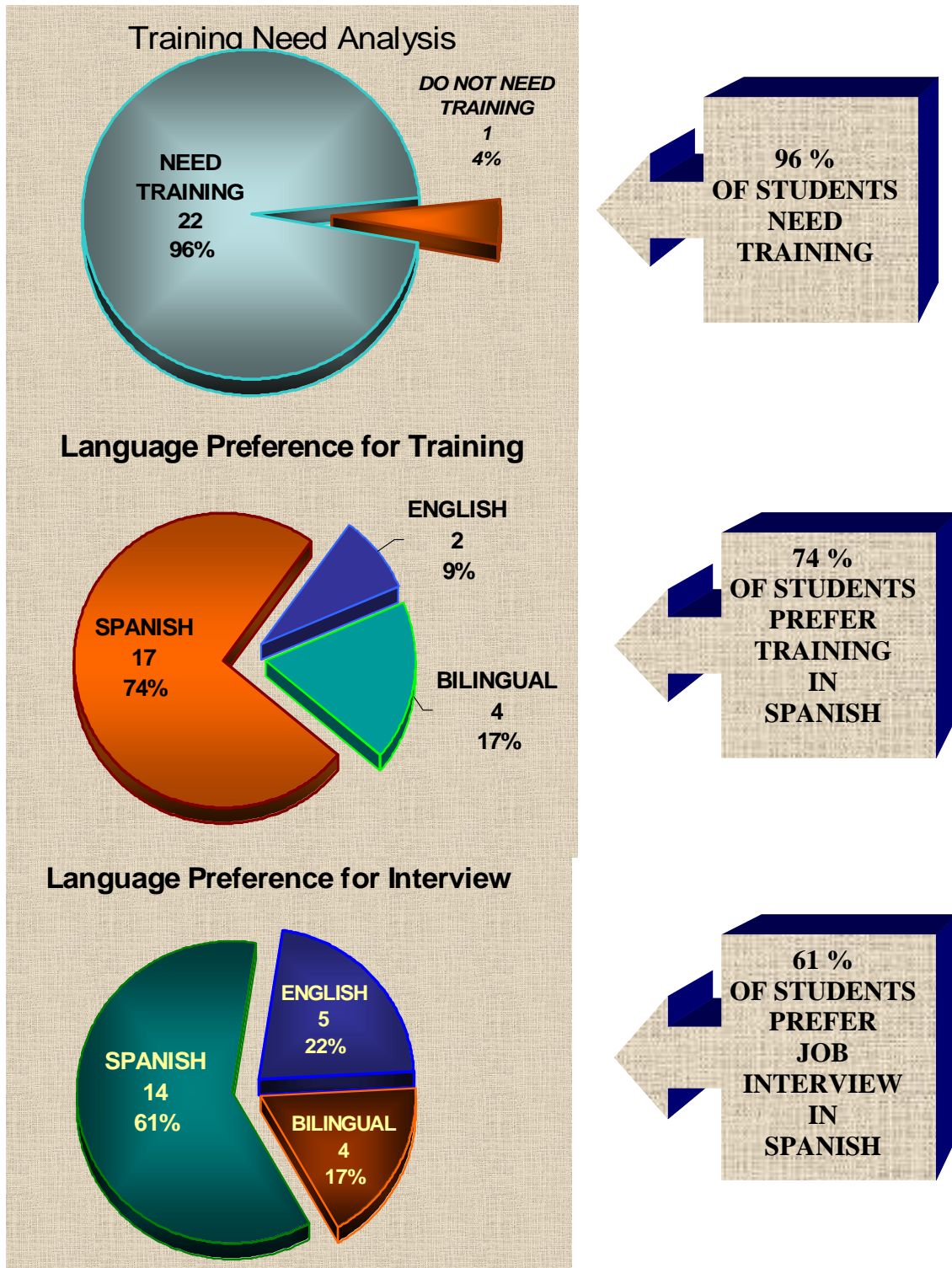
Language preference for Job Interview	Spanish	English	Bilingual
	22 Students	5 Students	4 Students

Language preference for Training	Spanish	English	Bilingual
	14 Students	5 Students	4 Students

Based on the analysis of collected information it was determined that there were three main factors to consider in the design of the action plan:

- 1) Data shows that 96% of students consider that they need training in interview techniques
- 2) Data shows that 74% of students prefer Spanish as the language of training.
- 3) Data shows that 61% of students prefer Spanish as the language for job interview.

Below is a graphical representation of students' preferences.



Design a Pretest/Posttest questionnaire

Timeline - Week: 12/11/06 - 12/15/06

Third data collection activity: Once established the need for job search training with emphasis in interview, the next step was to search for appropriate material to design a bilingual questionnaire with 23 of the most common interview questions. The aim of the questionnaire was to serve as an assessment tool to document students' answers before the intervention process and to reapply the same questionnaire after intervention in order to measure progress after the intervention process. Students answered questions individually during a range of 1 – 1.5 hours and turned in questionnaires to the instructor. Answers were filed until the end of the intervention process and then returned to students to be answered as a posttest. Below is a table with the 23 bilingual questions included in the pretest/posttest questionnaire. Source: Monster.com, from Random Interview Questions Web site: <http://tools.monster.com/virtualinterviews/random/>

1)	Why should we hire you? ¿Por que deberíamos de contratarlo a usted? ¿Qué le hace a usted mejor que el resto de candidatos?
2)	What did you like least about your last job? ¿Qué le gustaba menos o le disgustaba de su último trabajo?
3)	Are you married? ¿Está casado/a?
4)	What do you like to do? ¿Que trabajo le gustaría desempeñar en esta compañía?
5)	Tell me about yourself. Hábleme de usted. Platíqueme acerca de usted.
6)	Do you have plans to have children in the near future? ¿Tiene planes de embarazarse dentro de poco tiempo?
7)	If you were an animal, which one would you want to be? ¿Si usted fuera un animal, cual animal le gustaría ser?
8)	What do you do in your spare time? ¿Qué hace en su tiempo libre?
9)	What's your salary history? ¿Cuáles son sus expectativas económicas?
10)	Tell me about a time where you had to deal with conflict on the job. Describa una situacion problematica en su trabajo.
11)	What attracted you to this company? ¿Por qué quiere trabajar con nosotros?
12)	What do you think of your previous boss? ¿Qué opina usted de sus jefes (supervisores) anteriores?
13)	What salary are you seeking? ¿Cuáles son tus expectativas económicas?
14)	Why are you leaving your present job? ¿Por qué quiere cambiar de empresa?
15)	Do you have any questions for me? ¿Tiene alguna pregunta?
16)	What are your greatest strengths? ¿Cuáles son sus mayores cualidades?
17)	What are your greatest weaknesses? ¿Cuáles son sus mayores defectos?
18)	What are three positive things your last boss would say about you? ¿Cuáles serian 3 cosas positivas que su último supervisor diría de usted?
19)	Give me an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond the call of duty in your previous employment Déme algún ejemplo de alguna ocasión en que usted actuó o trabajo más alla (extra) de lo que eran sus responsabilidades.
20)	How would you go about establishing your credibility quickly with the team? ¿Qué haría usted para ganarse lo mas rápido posible la confianza de su nuevos compañeros de trabajo?
21)	Do you have children, and if so, how will you handle daycare? ¿Tiene usted hijos? ¿Tiene quien se los cuide durante las horas de trabajo?
22)	What are your lifelong dreams? ¿Cuáles han sido los sueños de su vida?
23)	How do you think I rate as an interviewer? ¿Que opina de mi como entrevistador?

Pretest – Data analysis

Quantitative analysis of pretest data

The table below shows a quantitative analysis of pretest data describes the percentage of answered questions by each of the students out of a total of 23 questions.

Students' are identified by an ID number for confidentiality purposes.

Student ID Number	Pretest Answered Questions	Language preference in answered questions	
		Spanish	English
1 AM	77%	100%	0%
2 AM	77%	100%	0%
3 AM	88%	100%	0%
4 AM	92%	100%	0%
5 AM	58%	100%	0%
6 AM	73%	100%	0%
7 AM	73%	100%	0%
8 AM	92%	100%	0%
9 AM	85%	100%	0%
10 AM	81%	100%	0%
11 AM	73%	100%	0%
12 AM	65%	100%	0%

Qualitative analysis of pretest data

The table below shows a qualitative analysis of pretest data that allowed me to document students' ability to express ideas with appropriate job interview' vocabulary that summarizes and relate the answers to their personal and work experience. Pretest data was also a tool to identify common areas of weakness that require instructional emphasis.

	Excellent - 4 points -	Good - 3 points -	Acceptable - 2 points -	Needs Improvement - 1 point -
Relevant Answers to Questions	Student can accurately answer all of the questions. Answers were expressed clearly, relevant to what the interviewer needs to know.	Student can accurately answer most questions. Answers were expressed clearly, and generally relevant to what the interviewer needs to know.	Student can accurately answer few questions. Few Answers were expressed clearly, and generally relevant to what the interviewer needs to know. 15 students	Student cannot accurately answer questions. Answers were not clearly expressed and irrelevant to what the interviewer needs to know. 8 students
Creative and Personalized Use of Language	Expresses several personal opinions and uses language creatively to support ideas	Expresses some personalized language in expressing opinions 6 students	Expresses few personal opinions 9 students	There is no expression of personal opinions. Answered questions with minimum expressions. 8 students
Knowledge Expressed	In-depth knowledge of job interview techniques	Significant and detailed knowledge of job interview techniques	Clear knowledge and understanding of basic aspects of job interview techniques.	Little knowledge and understanding of job interview techniques. 23 students

Intervention process: selection of material for the intervention process.

The next step was to search for materials to be used in the intervention process.

Four websites were selected as main sources of material for the intervention process:

- 1) Monster.com, from Random Interview Questions Web site:
<http://tools.monster.com/virtualinterviews/random/>
- 2) Prep for the Top 10 Interview Questions, from Prep for the Top 10 Interview Questions Web site:
<http://interview.monster.com/articles/iq/>
- 3) Laboris.net, from Las 11 preguntas más comprometidas en una entrevista de trabajo Web site:
http://www.laboris.net/static/ca_entrevista_preguntas-comprometidas.aspx
- 4) Job Hunters Guide, from Documento:QUINTO PASO ENTREVISTA Web site:
<http://www.cdr.state.tx.us/shared/PDFs/JHG-Express-Spanish.pdf>

Intervention process: lesson plan design.

Fourth data collection activity: The next step was to develop a lesson plan for the intervention process.

A set of 93 questions, 26 in Spanish and 67 in English, was selected to develop a questionnaire that instructor and students analyzed and answered as a group activity. Each of the questions was discussed and answered according to the structure and vocabulary recommended by authors of the questions. Students and instructor enriched this learning process by providing examples of real situations in the workplace that were directly related to the questions.

Job Interview Techniques Training

Timeline - Weeks: 1/16/07 - 1/19/07 and Weeks: 1/22/07 - 1/26/07

Intervention process: lesson plan – A set of 26 Interview questions in Spanish

1)	Háblame de ti.
2)	Que es lo que te motiva?
3)	Por que quieres trabajar en esta empresa?
4)	Cuales son tus metas a largo plazo?
5)	Que es lo que más te gustaba de tu trabajo anterior?
6)	Que es lo que mas te disgustaba de tu trabajo anterior?
7)	¿Cuáles son tus puntos fuertes y débiles?
8)	¿Cómo defines “puntualidad”?
9)	¿Cómo te describirías a ti mismo?
10)	Describe una vez en que hayas manejado exitosamente una situación estresante.
11)	Cuéntame sobre alguna vez en que hayas solucionado un problema.
12)	Dame un ejemplo de una situación en la que te fijaste y cumpliste una meta.
13)	¿Cómo resuelves los conflictos?
14)	Describe un momento en que hayas tenido que seguir una política con la cual no
15)	estabas de acuerdo.
16)	Describe una situación donde tu empleo requería que fueras “por encima y más allá de
17)	lo que era tu deber”
18)	Describe una situación reciente en que hayas tratado con un cliente o compañero
19)	disgustado.
20)	¿Por qué abandonaste tu puesto anterior?
21)	¿Por qué deseas trabajar para nuestra empresa?
22)	¿Dónde desearías estar dentro de cinco años?
23)	Tienes transportación confiable?
24)	Estas dispuesto a trabajar horas extras cuando se necesite hacerlo?
25)	Tienes dificultad para encontrar quien se haga cargo de tus hijos cuando tu estas trabajando?
26)	Que sueldo es el que pretendes ganar?

Intervention process: lesson plan – A set of 67 Interview questions in English

1) Was there a person in your career who really made a difference?
2) Why should we hire you?
3) Why is there fuzz on a tennis ball?
4) Why are you leaving your present job?
5) Who has most impacted you in your career and how?
6) When were you most satisfied in your job?
7) What's your ideal company?
8) What's the most important thing you've learned in school?
9) What's the last book you read?
10) What's your salary history?
11) What would you do if you won the lottery?
12) What would be your ideal working situation?
13) What will you miss about your present/last job?
14) What were the responsibilities of your last position?
15) What was the last project you headed up and what was the outcome of it?
16) What three character traits would your friends use to describe you?
17) What salary are you seeking?
18) What negative thing would your last boss say about you?
19) What magazines do you subscribe to?
20) What kind of car do you drive?
21) What is your greatest fear?
22) What is your greatest failure and what did you learn from it?
23) What is your greatest achievement outside of work?
24) What irritates you about other people and how do you deal with it?
25) What do you think of your previous boss?
26) What do you see yourself doing within the first 30 days of this job?
27) What do you look for in terms of culture -- structured or entrepreneurial?
28) What do you like to do?
29) What do you like to do for fun?
30) What do you know about this industry?
31) What do you know about our company?
32) What do you do in your spare time?
33) What did you like least about your last job?
34) What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
35) What attracted you to this company?
36) What are your lifelong dreams, what do you ultimately want to become?
37) What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
38) What are you most proud of?
39) What are you looking for in terms of career development?
40) What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?
41) There's no right or wrong answer, but if you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?
42) Tell me about yourself.

Intervention process: lesson plan – A set of 67 Interview questions in English (Continuation)

43) Tell me about a time where you had to deal with conflict on the job.
44) Tell me a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback. How did you handle it?
45) Sell me this pencil.
46) List five words that describe your character?
47) If you were interviewing someone for this position, what traits would you be looking for?
48) If you were an animal, which one would you want to be?
49) If I were your supervisor and asked you to do something that you disagreed with, what would you do?
50) If I were to give you this salary you requested, but let you write your job description for the next year, what would it say?
51) How would you go about establishing your credibility quickly with the team?
52) How would you feel working for someone who knows less than you?
53) How would you describe your work style?
54) How many quarters stacked one on top of another would it take to reach the moon?
55) How long will it take for you to make a significant contribution?
56) How do you think I rate as an interviewer?
57) How do you feel about taking no for an answer?
58) Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their own weight, and how did you handle the situation?
59) Give me an example of a time that you felt you went above and beyond the call of duty in your previous employment.
60) Give examples of ideas that you had or that you implemented.
61) Do you think a leader should be feared or liked?
62) Do you have plans to have children in the near future?
63) Do you have children, and if so, how will you handle daycare?
64) Do you have any questions for me?
65) Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?
66) Are you willing to relocate?
67) Are you married?

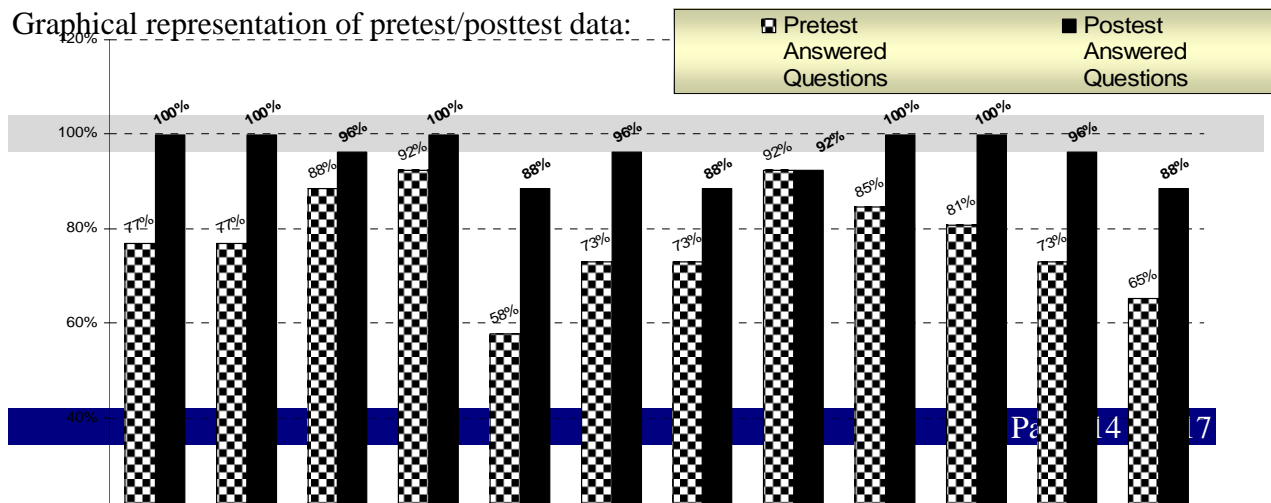
Data Analysis: Quantitative Analysis Pretest – Posttest.

After the intervention process the next step was to apply the Posttest to measure the impact of the intervention process in students’ performance.

Due to time constrain, at the time of this report was written, the project cycle was completed by 12 students attending the morning class, scheduled from 8:00 – 12:00 am; the table below summarizes quantitative analysis of performance comparing pretest and posttest data for this group of students:

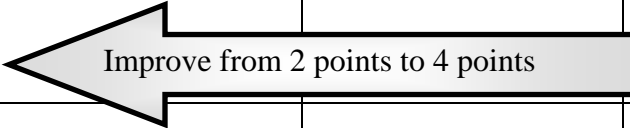
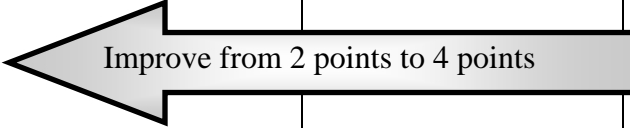
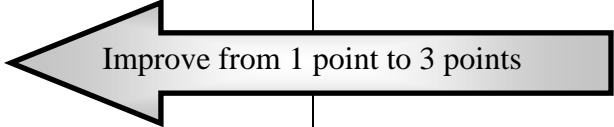
Student ID Number	Pretest Answered Questions	Posttest Answered Questions	Increase Percentage
1 AM	77%	100%	23%
2 AM	77%	100%	23%
3 AM	88%	96%	8%
4 AM	92%	100%	8%
5 AM	58%	88%	31%
6 AM	73%	96%	23%
7 AM	73%	88%	15%
8 AM	92%	92%	0%
9 AM	85%	100%	15%
10 AM	81%	100%	19%
11 AM	73%	96%	23%
12 AM	65%	88%	23%

Graphical representation of pretest/posttest data:



Data Analysis: Qualitative Analysis Pretest – Posttest.

The table below shows a qualitative analysis of posttest data that documents students’ progress in their ability to express ideas with appropriate job interview’ vocabulary that summarizes and relate the answers to their personal and work experience.

	Excellent - 4 points -	Good - 3 points -	Acceptable - 2 points -	Needs Improvement - 1 point -
Relevant Answers to Questions	<p>Student can accurately answer all of the questions. Answers were expressed clearly, relevant to what the interviewer needs to know.</p> <p>12 students</p>	<p>Student can accurately answer most questions. Answers were expressed clearly, and generally relevant to what the interviewer needs to know.</p>	<p>Student can accurately answer few questions. Few Answers were expressed clearly, and generally relevant to what the interviewer needs to know.</p>	<p>Student cannot accurately answer questions. Answers were not clearly expressed and irrelevant to what the interviewer needs to know.</p>
	 <p>Improve from 2 points to 4 points</p>			
Creative and Personalized Use of Language	<p>Expresses several personal opinions and uses language creatively to support ideas</p> <p>12 students</p>	<p>Expresses some personalized language in expressing opinions</p>	<p>Expresses few personal opinions</p>	<p>There is no expression of personal opinions. Answered questions with minimum expressions.</p>
	 <p>Improve from 2 points to 4 points</p>			
Knowledge Expressed	<p>In-depth knowledge of job interview techniques</p>	<p>Significant and detailed knowledge of job interview techniques</p> <p>12 students</p>	<p>Clear knowledge and understanding of basic aspects of job interview techniques.</p>	<p>Little knowledge and understanding of job interview techniques.</p>
	 <p>Improve from 1 point to 3 points</p>			

Findings and conclusion

Analyze the data, interpret the data, draw conclusions

Timeline - Week: 2/05/07 - 2/09/07

What happen when training in job interview questions is implemented?

Conclusion

From the analysis of documented data we concluded that during the implementation of this project students improved their ability to express their answers to job interview questions in a clearly manner and they also learned how to structure answers to make them relevant to what the interviewer needs to know.

Another qualitative outcome from the project was the improvement on students' ability to use creative and personalized use of language. Their answers to the set of most common interview questions included in the project, show evidence that students are now able to express several personal opinions and have improved the use of language creatively to support a positive message about their personal and work experience.

The most relevant contribution from this action research project is the positive impact on students' self confidence as a result of students' improvement in knowledge of job interview techniques. They are now aware that a successful interview is the result of preparation. This training provided them with the tools to understand why and what the interviewer needs to know and to deliver answers clearly, with energy and enthusiasm. They are now aware that preparation and practice will take them to reach their main goal in the interview: to convince the interviewer that they are the best candidate for the position.

As an instructor, following the cycle of an action research project: posing questions, gathering data, reflection, and deciding a course of action, has enhance my professional practice. Given the positive outcome of this project, I have decided to continue implementing it and integrate this new knowledge to my future curriculum development strategy.

The training in job interview techniques will be integrated to the curriculum in the Job Search course as a component of a personal portfolio that each student will develop to compile all components of a job search strategy such as: letter of introduction, resume, thank you letter, samples of students' work, and their set of most common questions and answers in a job interview.

Resources and References

- 1) Monster.com, from Random Interview Questions, Web site:
<http://tools.monster.com/virtualinterviews/random/>
- 2) Prep for the Top 10 Interview Questions, from Prep for the Top 10 Interview Questions, Web site:
<http://interview.monster.com/articles/iq/>
- 3) Laboris.net, from “Las 11 preguntas más comprometidas en una entrevista de trabajo” Web site:
http://www.laboris.net/static/ca_entrevista_preguntas-comprometidas.aspx
- 4) Job Hunters Guide, from “Quinto paso: la entrevista, Web site:
<http://www.cdr.state.tx.us/shared/PDFs/JHG-Express-Spanish.pdf>
- 5) *Action Research* by Eileen Ferrance – Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University, Web site:
http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/themes_ed/act_research.pdf