

Job interviews: Part 3

by Jamie Keddie

Level: Intermediate and above

Time: 60 minutes

Objectives:

For students to examine how positive body language can contribute to success in job interviews. The lesson examines standard principles of body language, some of which will be universal and other which will be rooted in western culture.

Necessary materials:

Accompanying worksheet

Procedure

- 1 Tell your students that you have a riddle for them. Write the following passage (adapted from www.wikipedia.org) on the blackboard:

Although it is highly variable and difficult to measure accurately, the best estimates place it at about 60 centimetres (24.5 inches) on either side, 70 centimetres (27.5 inches) in front and 40 centimetres (15.75 inches) behind for an average westerner.

Ask your students if they can guess what the passage is referring to (*answer = personal space*).

- 2 When your students have given up or worked out the answer, show them the personal space diagrams.
- 3 Make sure your students understand that the figures given in step 1 are very rough. Tell them that an individual's personal space at any given time will depend on a number of factors including their cultural background. Find out if there are any differences in perceptions of personal space in your classroom.
- 4 Tell your learners that awareness of cultural perceptions of personal space may be important when attending a job interview. Ask your students if they can think of any other aspects of body language that they should be aware of (for example if they were to attend an interview in London). Elicit as many ideas as possible and write them on the board.

- 5 Play 'Simon Says' with the following actions:

Cross your arms
Lean towards the door
Look interested
Make eye contact with (a neighbour)
Nod your head
Rub the back of your head
Rub your neck
Shake your foot
Sit up straight
Slouch
Smile
Stare at the floor
Touch your nose

NB: For a good explanation of the rules to this game, go to the following link: <http://www.onestopenglish.com/community/lesson-share/extras/energizers/energizers-more-complex-simon-says/145248.article>

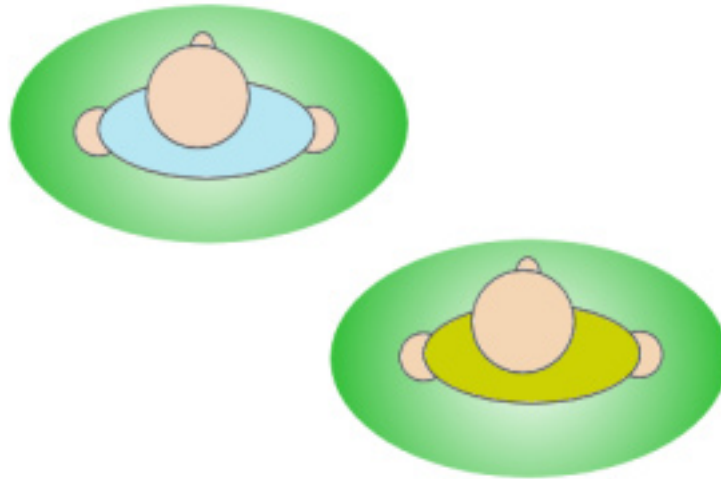
- 6 Elicit all the actions that were involved in the game and write them on the board (just as they are written above).
- 7 Have your students complete the worksheet (Interview body language).
- 8 Let your students compare their answers with each other.

Acknowledgement

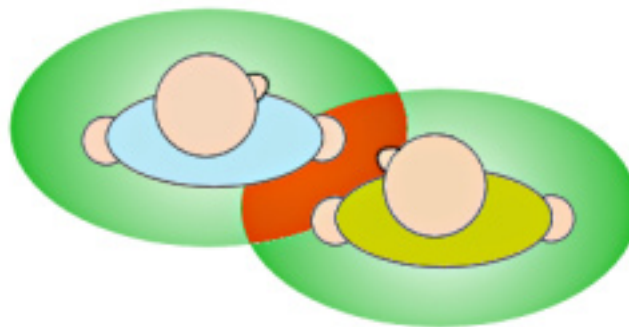
Most of the information for this lesson comes from an article from the following website:
<http://www.cnn.com/>

The diagram and information on personal space were taken from www.wikipedia.org

Diagrams for personal space



Two people not affecting each other's personal space



Reaction of two people whose personal space is in conflict

These images are in the public domain and can be found on the following page:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_space

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Interview body language

Fill in the spaces with the words/phrases that are written on the board.

Posture (the way in which you sit or stand)

Establish a comfortable distance between you and your interviewer. If the distance is too large, he or she may feel that you are being unnecessarily cold or communicating fear. On the other hand, if the distance is too small, you may be in danger of invading body space.

Don't sit back and _____ in your chair. This can make you look disinterested or indifferent. Demonstrate to the interviewer that you are an intelligent, organised and efficient worker by reflecting these qualities in your body language: _____ and look alert. By mirroring your interviewer's body position, you will project interest, interaction and agreement. Avoid fidgeting (making repetitive nervous movements) as this is distracting and will make you seem uncomfortable. For example, don't bite your nails, play with your hair and, if you have your legs crossed, don't _____. Finally, unless you want to give the impression that you are in a hurry to leave, try not to _____.

Hands and arms

Hands and arms can become unnecessary accessories when we are in the spotlight and this can result in fidgeting (see above) or other detrimental gestures. For example, if you repeatedly _____ or _____, you may appear to be disinterested. _____ while talking and your interviewer may suspect that you are not being completely honest. And while we are on the subject of the nose, don't ever pick it. If you don't feel comfortable using your hands to express yourself, the best thing to do may be to keep them still (rest them on your knees for example) but don't _____. This can look defensive and unfriendly.

Face

Your eyes are the windows to your soul and it is important that your new potential employer can see them. _____ your interviewer (or interviewers) and don't _____. _____ and _____ whenever appropriate. In order to demonstrate enthusiasm when listening, _____ and make other positive gestures (sparingly of course). Interruptions happen. If the phone rings do not stare at your interviewer while he or she attends to the call.

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Answers:

Posture (the way in which you sit or stand)

Establish a comfortable distance between you and your interviewer. If the distance is too large, he or she may feel that you are being unnecessarily cold or communicating fear. On the other hand, if the distance is too small, you may be in danger of invading body space.

Don't sit back and **slouch** in your chair. This can make you look disinterested or indifferent. Demonstrate to the interviewer that you are an intelligent, organised and efficient worker by reflecting these qualities in your body language: **sit up straight** and look alert. By mirroring your interviewer's body position, you will project interest, interaction and agreement. Avoid fidgeting (making repetitive nervous movements) as this is distracting and will make you seem uncomfortable. For example, don't bite your nails, play with your hair and if you have your legs crossed, don't **shake your foot**. Finally, unless you want to give the impression that you are in a hurry to leave, try not to **lean towards the door**.

Hands and arms

Hands and arms can become unnecessary accessories when we are in the spotlight and this can result in fidgeting (see above) or other detrimental gestures. For example, if you repeatedly **rub the back of your head** or **rub your neck**, you may appear to be disinterested. **Touch your nose** while talking and your interviewer may suspect that you are not being completely honest. And while we are on the subject of the nose, don't ever pick it. If you don't feel comfortable using your hands to express yourself, the best thing to do may be to keep them still (rest them on your knees for example) but don't **cross your arms**. This can look defensive and unfriendly.

Face

Your eyes are the windows to your soul and it is important that your new potential employer can see them. **Make eye contact with** your interviewer (or interviewers) and don't **stare at the floor**. **Look interested** and **smile** whenever appropriate. In order to demonstrate enthusiasm when listening, **nod your head** and make other positive gestures (sparingly of course). Interruptions happen. If the phone rings do not stare at your interviewer while he or she attends to the call.