

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

Level: Intermediate upwards

Timing: 90 minutes plus

Material needed: One copy of the student worksheets and Vocabulary record per student

Group size: Minimum of two students

Overview

This lesson plan for both pre-experience and in-work business students is based around an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* Issue 2/2010. The article deals with the moral dilemma faced by many job seekers when it comes to applying for a new job: whether to embellish the truth on their CVs/résumés. It looks at the difficulties faced by both human resources departments and applicants and the consequences that may result from lying (and not lying) on a CV/résumé.

The tasks in the student worksheets will encourage the students to not only learn and use new business vocabulary and related functional language but also to practise useful business skills, such as summarizing and asking and answering questions in written form.

The teacher's notes aim to provide suggestions for teaching and learning strategies as well as ideas on how to present the tasks in the classroom, any necessary answer keys, and extension tasks and lesson plans.

Introduction

Are lies permissible or should you only tell 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth' when it comes to applying for a new job? In the article, two experts offer their differing opinions, giving reasons and justification for their advice. For the purposes of the student tasks, the article has been split into two parts: A and B.

Warmer

Read through the question and the choices with the students in order to make sure they know what is being asked of them. Check they understand the vocabulary before completing the task. Once they have made their choices they should sit in pairs or small groups and discuss their answers, giving reasons and justifications whenever necessary. Tell students that they will be reading the opinions of two experts.

Business vocabulary

Before reading one of the articles, all the students should attempt to match the words from both articles A and B with their definitions. Allow them to work in pairs, groups and/or use a dictionary to help them.

Key:

| <i>Article A</i> | <i>Article B</i> |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. <i>d</i> | 1. <i>d</i> |
| 2. <i>e</i> | 2. <i>c</i> |
| 3. <i>b</i> | 3. <i>e</i> |
| 4. <i>f</i> | 4. <i>f</i> |
| 5. <i>a</i> | 5. <i>a</i> |
| 6. <i>c</i> | 6. <i>b</i> |

Summarizing and writing comprehension questions

Stage 1: Divide the group into two halves (it doesn't matter if there is an unequal number). Give one half of the group Article A (page 2 of the student worksheets), and the other half Article B (page 3 of the student worksheets). The students should not receive both articles! All the students should read through their article quietly. Once they have done so, they should discuss it with other students who have the same article.

Stage 2: Together with students who have read the same article (A or B), the students should summarize the article by saying what they understood and adding additional information to each other's comments.

Stage 3: Still working together in a group (with people who read the same article) – or, if the group is large, in smaller groups – the students should write six comprehension questions about the article. Explain that these questions will be given, along with the article, to the students who read the other article. Therefore the questions should be clear, legible and grammatically correct and the answers should be able to be found in the article (not from personal experience or general knowledge).

Teaching and learning strategy: Staging a task

Staging a task is not dissimilar to planning a complete lesson. A task is staged in order to divide it into manageable chunks which bring clarity and structure to the task for both the teacher and the learner.

Learners of Business English often find themselves not only having to deal with the new language but also with input regarding aspects of work life that they may not have time to think about outside the classroom. They may be using skills they haven't needed to use for a long time, and they will certainly want to give intelligent answers and input in front of their peers. A task is

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

guaranteed to fail if the students do not know what they should be doing and when. It is important that they know exactly what is expected of them and when they should do it. This can easily be achieved by dividing the task into stages.

Dividing a task into small, manageable stages will allow the students to concentrate on the task itself and not on trying to understand long and complicated instructions, therefore providing security and a stress-free atmosphere in which they can perform the task to the best of their abilities.

Many students may appreciate these stages being written on the board – you don't necessarily have to write out the whole instructions, key words will usually suffice. It is also likely to help both you and the students if you set a time limit for each stage and write this on the board too.

As in a lesson plan where the interaction patterns are noted, e.g. T-S (teacher-students) or S-S (student-student), each stage of the task can also contain interaction patterns. In task 4 for example, stage 1 would be A-B, and stage 2 would be A-A and B-B, and so on (see below).

Answering comprehension questions

Stage 1: A-B

The students should all find another student (A and B pairs) with whom they can exchange articles and comprehension questions. They should give their partner their paper containing the article and the comprehension questions.

Stage 2: A-A / B-B

The students should now all have a new sheet of paper containing the part of the article they haven't yet read plus six comprehension questions about the new text. Working alone, in pairs or in small groups, they should read the article and answer the questions about it.

Stage 3: A-A / B-B

The students should compare and discuss their answers, making any final corrections. They should then return the page, with the text plus questions and answers, to the students that set the questions.

Stage 4: A-A / B-B

The students should now read through the answers to the questions they set and decide whether the answers are correct and/or meet their requirements.

Stage 5: A-B

Allow time for corrections, discussion and feedback about the questions and answers.

Talking points

Now that they have read both parts of the article, the students can decide who they most agree with: Derek

or Norma. They should refer back to the answers they gave in the warmer task at the beginning of the lesson. Would they have answered differently if they had read the articles before they answered the warmer questions? Would they like to change any of their warmer answers now?

The second question allows the students to bring their own opinions to the task and also any experience they may have had (either their own or that of their colleagues) of being in the same situation.

Remind the students that the aim of these questions is not to find a right or wrong answer but to discuss the topic, provide their own input and offer their thoughts and opinions.

Webquest: Compare and contrast

In pairs or small groups, the students should look at the two websites mentioned in the article and find out what differing advice they give about writing resumes:

www.fakeresume.com

www.monster.com

Monster.com is available in many languages, so remind students to go to an English version of this international website – United Kingdom, North America or Australia.

This task can be set as home study if there is a lack of time or no internet access available in class.

Vocabulary record

Here, students should be encouraged to record all the new and useful vocabulary they have learned during the lesson, not only in the form presented in the article but also in related forms.

More on job interviews

For follow-up lessons on the same or related topics go to the following lesson plans in the ESP bank and the Business tasks series on onestopenglish:

Business tasks: Experience:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=59913&docid=155482>

Business tasks: Getting and losing jobs:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=59913&docid=156741>

ESP bank: Human resources: Job interviews:

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/section.asp?catid=58029&docid=155390>

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

to lie [verb]

to deliberately say something that is not true

Introduction

Are lies permissible or should you only tell 'the whole truth and nothing but the truth' when it comes to applying for a new job? In the article, two experts offer their differing opinions, giving reasons and justification for their advice. The article has been split into two parts: A and B.

1 Warmer

Which of these things is it OK to lie about on your *résumé*/CV?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> age | <input type="checkbox"/> previous places of employment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> family status | <input type="checkbox"/> reasons for leaving previous employment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> points on your driving licence | <input type="checkbox"/> relationship to former bosses or colleagues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> criminal record | <input type="checkbox"/> periods of unemployment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> other (please state) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> qualifications | |

2 Business vocabulary

Match the words on the left with the meanings on the right.

Article A

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 1. justify | a. to not consider something important, or to not pay any attention to it |
| 2. dropout | b. something you have done which required a lot of effort on your part |
| 3. achievement | c. a detail added to a story to make it more interesting, especially one that is not completely true |
| 4. <i>résumé</i> | d. to show that there is a good reason for something |
| 5. disregard | e. someone who leaves school or college without finishing their course of study |
| 6. embellishment | f. a document giving details of your qualifications and the jobs you have had in the past that you send to someone when you are applying for a job |

Article B

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 1. haunt | a. behaving according to the moral principles that you believe in, so that people respect and trust you |
| 2. get along with | b. people competing for a job |
| 3. promotion | c. to like someone, to be friendly with them |
| 4. skill | d. to continue to cause problems for a person for a long time |
| 5. integrity | e. a move to a higher level position in a company |
| 6. candidates | f. the ability to do something well, usually as a result of experience and training |

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

Article A

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

by Talitha Linehan



YES!

Yes, it's OK to lie in a job interview. Everyone lies. The last US administration lied to justify its attack on Iraq. Companies lie to employees. Politicians lie to the public. There's nothing wrong with lying to get a job you know you can do.

OK to lie about your qualifications if other people's futures or lives depend on your competence (for example, to get a job as a doctor, a lawyer, or an airline pilot). Lying in such professions is inexcusable.

If you're clever about the lies you tell, you will be OK. I get emails from people telling me that they landed six-figure jobs with blatant lies on their résumés. Employers expect people to lie in job interviews. Most hiring managers will disregard about a third of your résumé as embellishment, anyway. So imagine what would happen if you've only told the truth. I've heard that, because companies are cutting costs, they aren't as thorough in fact-checking résumés and doing background checks as they once were. Of course, companies that are well-known and want to avoid a negligent-hiring lawsuit are generally more careful.

People often tell kids that the only way to get ahead in the world is to get a college education. But there are many waiters and gardeners with college degrees. And some of the world's most successful people never finished college or even high school. Bill Gates is the richest man alive, and he's a college dropout.

In most cases, you're more likely to get a job by lying than you are by telling the truth. Most people lie in job interviews about things they think won't be checked: the length of time they spent at a job, their education, and achievements. And in the middle of a recession, you can count on people lying more than ever. It's got to the point where you're almost forced to lie. The only alternative is to remain unemployed. I think it's OK to lie in an interview if you're confident that you can do the job. It's OK to lie about your education up to a certain point. It's not

It's OK *not* to lie in a job interview if you've done a great job at other companies, and you already have a good reputation. If you don't have a reputation in the area you're trying to get hired in, it would probably be better to lie because you can be sure that your competitors will lie, too. My advice to job seekers is to get outside your comfort zone and do what your competitors won't do to get the job.

DEREK JOHNSON spent many years as an executive recruiter before leaving the corporate world in frustration over the way firms treat their employees. He is now self-employed. His website (www.fakeresume.com) helps people find work by any means.

© *Business Spotlight*, 2/2010, www.business-spotlight.de

3 Summarizing and writing comprehension questions

Summarize and discuss the article you have just read with other students who read the same article. Write six comprehension questions about the article.

4 Answering comprehension questions

Swap pages with a student who read Article B. Read the article and answer the questions about it.

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

Article B

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

by Talitha Linehan



NO!

No, it's really not OK to lie in a job interview. Your lies can stop you from getting the job you want and come back to haunt you. I know some people lie because they are nervous or because they really want the job. But it's never good to lie, although you don't have to tell the whole story.

For example, if you left your last job because you didn't get along with your boss, you don't have to say this, because it might not put you in the best light. So ask yourself why you didn't get along with your boss. Perhaps he refused to consider you for promotion. Then you could say that you left your last job because it didn't offer you an opportunity to develop your career.

I don't think employers expect people to lie or find it acceptable when they do, although they might expect some embellishment. But skilled employers will use an interview to find out the truth. And if they find out that you lied, they will probably give the job to someone else and keep a copy of your résumé with a note saying that you lied. This will likely prevent the firm from considering you for future positions. Also, if, after hiring you, an employer finds out that you lied, there's a good chance you will get fired. If you lied about a qualification you didn't have and caused any risk as a result, the company may also take legal action against you.

Instead of trying to find ways to lie at an interview, focus on finding a means to answer questions truthfully, but in such a way that it makes you look good. Find out about the firm and the position you want. Then, when you go for the interview, talk about your strengths and what you can bring to the company. If you are not right for a job, it's better to be honest about this than it is to lie and end up in trouble. Employers are likely to be impressed by your honesty and remember you in a favorable light. And if a job becomes available that matches your skills, they may offer it to you.

You may or may not get away with lying at a job interview, but it's never worth the risk. In this weak economy, there are more competitors than ever for every job. Employers are doing more thorough background checks and interviews to find the perfect employee. They are under a lot of pressure, because if they hire someone who lied about their qualifications, they could later be accused of negligent hiring and get in trouble. Some people say that everyone lies on a résumé. I don't believe this, but even if it were true, only one person can get the job. Companies value integrity. Clever candidates will use this to their advantage by telling the truth and landing the jobs they want.

NORMA GAFFIN is the director of content in North America for the employment website **Monster.com**, which has about 150 million résumés in its database. Gaffin has been writing for the site's Career Advice section for nine years.

© *Business Spotlight*, 2/2010, www.business-spotlight.de

3 Summarizing and writing comprehension questions

Summarize and discuss the article you have just read with other students who read the same article. Write six comprehension questions about the article.

4 Answering comprehension questions

Swap pages with a student who read Article A. Read the article and answer the questions about it.

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

5 Talking points

Who do you agree with more: Derek Johnson or Norma Gaffin? Refer back to the answers you gave during the warmer task.

What do you think an employer should do if he/she finds out that a new employee lied on their résumé/CV and/or during an interview in order to get the job?

6 Webquest: Compare and contrast

Look at the two websites mentioned in the article. What differing advice do they give about writing resumes?

www.fakeresume.com

www.monster.com

Make sure you go to an English version of Monster.com.

Is it ever OK to lie in a job interview?

Vocabulary record: Is it ever ok to lie in a job interview?

| verb | noun | adjective (+ opposite) | adverb (+ opposite) |
|-----------|-----------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| lie | | | |
| | | | justifiably |
| | interview | | |
| embellish | | | |
| | | skilled | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Vocabulary record

