UNIVERSITÉ DE SHERBROOKE

Interventions pédagogiques pour diminuer le niveau d'appréhension en entrevues en
formation technique au Cégep
Pedagogical Interventions to Overcome Communication Apprehension in
Employment Interviews among Career Students

par

Paule Gaudet

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SUMMARY

Career programs in the Cegep system base their training on various learning activities, which are followed by a practicum. The objective is to achieve a certain number of competencies, deemed necessary by the Ministry of Education, for entry-level occupations in to the workforce. The Graphic Communications program offered at Champlain College Saint-Lambert is a three-year career program that leads to employment in the field of graphics. Many students have part-time jobs during their schooling period but most of those jobs do not relate to their field of study. Several graduates stated they were unable to persuade employers to hire them for an externship or *stage* at the end of their program. While jobs are important for their general skills, since they are not directly related to the field, these jobs may not have given the students a suitable model for the conduct of an employment interview. Practice interviews may be one of many successful training methods to lower communication apprehension (CA) levels. CA is defined as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons."

This paper examines the literature on CA and employment interviews and evaluates whether pedagogical interventions, including monitored phone calls to employers and practice-videotaped interviews, allow students to feel more confident about interviewing for a future job. A qualitative tool was used to gather scientific measurements of the participants' levels of CA both at the beginning and at the end of the Career Planning course. Open-ended reflective journals gathered quantitative data on the impact specific instructional strategies had on the participants.

The pedagogical interventions that were examined and tested were as follows: preparation of scripts, monitored phone calls, videotaped practice interviews, and in-class access to professional assistance. Results indicate that all

interventions had a positive impact on lowering levels of CA. It is clear that positive conclusions were drawn by the students as to the usefulness of these activities. Overall, participants who responded to the reflective journal questions felt positive about the contribution of this preparatory career course to their CA levels. The results of the quantitative tool were consistent with previous research and the analysis of the reflective journals gave additional support to the usefulness of the interventions on students' confidence levels.

Recommendations for improvements to the curriculum include the need for students to be taught formally about metacognition and how to monitor it. Students need to be exposed to videotaped interviews more often. They should be better prepared for unexpected interview questions, and they should experience formal rehearsals with one of their instructors before the actual practice interview. Some of these recommendations have already been successfully implemented in the program's curriculum.

ABSTRACT

Le but de ce travail était de vérifier si certaines activités pédagogiques sont efficaces pour faire baisser le niveau d'anxiété lié à la communication orale lors de leurs entrevues d'embauche. L'objectif des programmes techniques au Québec est de fournir aux étudiants un certain nombre de compétences définies par le ministère de l'Éducation, des Loisirs et du Sport afin que ces derniers puissent fournir des services de techniciens spécialisés aux entreprises. Le programme nommé *Office Systems Technology (412)* du collège Champlain de Saint-Lambert, a choisi la voie de la spécialisation en microédition et hypermédia en 1999 et a changé son nom pour *Graphic Communications* en 2005. Les programmes techniques au Cégep incluent un stage en milieu de travail à la fin d'un programme de trois ans et par le fait même, une entrevue pour obtenir un stage en entreprise.

La compétence visée par cette étude est l'intégration au marché du travail et le cheminement professionnel des étudiants. Lors d'enquêtes informelles, plusieurs étudiants du programme ont fait part de leurs difficultés à trouver un stage en fin d'études. Certains auteurs suggèrent que ces étudiants n'ont pas de modèles appropriés lors de la tenue d'une entrevue d'emploi. Ils proposent de diminuer le niveau d'anxiété lié à la communication orale lors d'entrevues d'embauche en offrant des pratiques d'entrevue aux étudiants.

Cette recherche a examiné la littérature au sujet de l'anxiété de communication, plus précisément lors d'entrevues. Elle avait pour mandat d'évaluer si les activités pédagogiques d'un cours de préparation à la carrière ont été efficaces pour faire baisser les taux d'anxiété en communication orale lors d'entrevues. En plus, une conseillère à l'emploi fut invitée à plusieurs reprises afin de fournir un support professionnel en classe, étant donné que les étudiants ne prennent pas nécessairement le temps de consulter des professionnels en raison de leurs activités personnelles trop nombreuses.

Le type d'enseignement évalué est considéré comme stratégique, étant donné qu'il agit au niveau cognitif et métacognitif de l'étudiant. Le cours de préparation à l'emploi débute par la vérification des acquis antérieurs des étudiants et il tient compte de leur motivation scolaire et professionnelle. De plus, il est axé sur la construction du savoir en proposant des activités de plus en plus complexes, débutant par la rédaction de textes à utiliser lors d'appels aux employeurs, en passant par la préparation et la pratique d'appels et se terminant par des entrevues d'emploi qui serviront de modèle à perfectionner par chaque étudiant. Ces entrevues se font avec des employeurs qui ont déjà embauché des étudiants du programme de *Graphic Communications* au collège Champlain de Saint-Lambert et sont enregistrées sur bande vidéo afin de permettre une visualisation ultérieure et cohérente avec les objectifs visés.

La méthodologie de cette recherche inclut deux outils, un quantitatif et un qualitatif. L'outil quantitatif permet de mesurer scientifiquement les taux d'appréhension en communication des étudiants au début et à la fin du cours de préparation à l'emploi. Cet outil est la fusion de deux outils, le *Personal Report of Communication Apprehension* ou PRCA-24, qui fut développé par McCroskey (1984), en tandem avec celui de Wongprasert & Ayres (2000), qui lui met l'accent sur les entrevues d'emploi. Les réponses à cet outil combiné sont évaluées sur une échelle Likert de cinq points. L'outil qualitatif est une série de questions auxquelles les étudiants ont répondu quatre fois lors de la session. Les réponses à ces questions ont été analysées et les commentaires des étudiants évalués. Il découle de cette analyse que les niveaux d'anxiété des étudiants qui ont participé (14) étaient définitivement à la baisse en fin de cours.

La pratique téléphonique structurée, dans un laboratoire avec les téléphones, a été très révélatrice pour les étudiants. Ils ont appris comment utiliser un script comme piste de départ pour un appel et qu'il était possible de contourner certains obstacles de façon professionnelle. Ensuite, lors d'une visite d'une compagnie de graphisme, ils ont pu observer divers modèles d'emploi. Ils ont eu la possibilité de poser des questions sur le fonctionnement et les besoins de l'entreprise. Ceci facilita la rédaction de leur curriculum vitae en leur permettant de mieux décrire leurs acquis en fonction d'emplois recherchés. Par la suite, ils se sont préparés pour une pratique d'entrevue, filmée. Les interviewers avaient déjà travaillé avec le collège et avaient déjà embauché certains étudiants de ce programme, donc ils connaissaient leur potentiel. Une liste de questions possibles fut suggérée mais il n'en restait pas moins que les interviewers pouvaient les modifier, ceci étant représentatif du marché de l'emploi. Même si le collège fournit un enseignement en anglais, un des intervieweurs donna ses entrevues en français. Trois étudiants se sont portés volontaires, mais deux ont constaté qu'ils auraient dû pratiquer leur script en français avant l'entrevue pour mieux diminuer leur niveau d'anxiété. Finalement, les étudiants durent visionner leur segment d'entrevue : ceci leur a permis de voir si leur attitude non-verbale concordait avec ce qu'ils ressentaient en entrevue et d'emmener les correctifs appropriés. Les taux d'anxiété furent vérifiés une deuxième fois en fin de session et les résultats ont démontré une baisse des taux d'appréhension.

Les résultats de cette étude concordent donc avec ceux trouvés dans la littérature et donnent de bonnes pistes pour l'amélioration de ce cours de préparation à la carrière. L'auteur recommande d'enseigner la métacognition de façon formelle et ainsi de faciliter la prise de conscience des apprentissages que les étudiants effectuent. De plus, les étudiants devraient être filmés en studio au moins une fois par année pour diminuer le facteur de stress causé par les caméras et finalement ils pourraient certainement bénéficier de pratiques formelles d'entrevue avec un instructeur avant l'entrevue filmée. L'augmentation des pratiques a déjà été mise en œuvre dans le programme et des résultats positifs se sont ensuivis.

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INTRODUCTION

The Graphic Communications program offered at Champlain College Saint-Lambert is a three-year career program that leads to employment in the field of graphics. Several past graduates stated they were unable to persuade employers to hire them for a *stage* or non-paid period of training. Although many students have part-time jobs during their schooling period, most of those jobs do not relate to their field of study and the interviews they have experienced may not have given them a suitable interview model. Wongprasert & Ayres (2000, p 13) suggest that the students "lack an appropriate model for the conduct of an employment interview." The authors consider that practice interviews may be one of many successful training methods to lower communication apprehension (CA) levels.

This paper examines the literature on CA and employment interviews and evaluates whether a pedagogical intervention composed of specific instructional strategies, including monitored phone calls to employers and practice-videotaped interviews, reduces levels of CA, allowing students to feel more confident about interviewing for a future job. Recommendations for improvements of the curriculum, as well as further studies, are presented in the conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The curriculum for career programs in the CEGEP (Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel) system in Québec is based on various learning activities followed by practice, with the goal of achieving competencies deemed necessary by the Ministère de l'Éducation du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) for entry level jobs in the workforce. These competencies are based on the knowledge and expertise associated with given occupations. In addition to the acquisition of competencies, students in technical programs in the CEGEP system must complete externships or *stages* to graduate. These *stages* can vary in structure and length and serve as a form of apprenticeship or on-the-job training.

At Champlain Saint-Lambert, the 412 Office Systems Technology program was officially revised by MELS (then the MEQ or Ministry of Education of Québec) in 1999. At the time, the colleges that were offering the 412 program felt it was not reflective of the realities of the workforce (Evaluation Report, May 2009, p. 6). With the advent of digital printing, desktop publishing does not rely on traditional file preparation anymore and competencies like changing typewriter ribbon no longer apply. Therefore, the 412 department's faculty, together with members of the college's administration and with the help of an Advisory Board composed of industry leaders and education professionals, made the program more in sync with the needs of a rapidly changing industry. Consequently, new technologies and Web instruction was added to the program in 1999.

In response to students, graduates, and externship employer's feedback, the three-year career program underwent another major reassessment in 2005. Also at this time, the name changed to Graphic Communications. This change was considered an important marketing strategy to improve the perception of

both potential students and employers and ensure the survival of this program, as there had been low enrolment a few years in a row.

The Graphic Communications program offered at Champlain College Saint-Lambert leads to employment in the field of graphics. This program focuses on print design, web site interface design, and multimedia presentation design. Graduates of this program work in technology related jobs such as production artists, desktop publishers, and print technicians. Some graduates also continue their studies in university programs leading to careers in advertizing, communications, and graphic design. The courses in Graphic Communications are sequenced over three years and integrate theoretical with practical knowledge. They begin with basic technical skills and evolve into the acquisition of more complex, in-depth abilities in the third year. The sequencing and content of these courses are constantly being reviewed by the teachers of the program and reassessments are done every year according to student and employer feedback in order to ensure the acquisition of the competencies provided by the MELS. In the last year of this three-year program, students focus on career preparation skills such as running a graphic communication business and applying for employment in the industry. They also prepare for an externship or *stage*.

In the Graphic Communications program at Champlain Saint-Lambert, the *stage* is now established at eight weeks in length at the end of the three-year program. Usually, students are expected to find their own *stages* and in order to better prepare them, a Career Planning course is offered in the fifth semester. This course is 75 hours in length, which translates into 5 hours a week over 15 weeks. The course description, as presented in the Champlain Saint-Lambert Academic Calendar, is as follows:

> This course provides students with the necessary job and career management tools they need to reach their full career potential. Self-assessment exercises, company research, networking, job

search strategies, letters of application, resumes, videotaped professional interviews, and follow-up techniques will ensure students have the knowledge, the skills, and the strengths to begin their professional career. (Champlain St-Lambert (Collège), Calendar 2007, p. 104)

In order to be accepted in a *stage*, interviews are necessary, a requirement which often creates high levels of CA (McCroskey, 1976) in students. McCroskey defines CA as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 39). The problem is not within the classroom where students know and trust their teachers and peers, but outside the classroom where they have to "sell" their skills to strangers who have no emotional connection to them.

Since 1999, the graduates of this program are followed closely and it was found that some graduates have had difficulties in finding employment after graduation. When polled informally, by email, for the reasons of such difficulties, several mentioned they feared rejection because they thought they did not have the necessary skills while others responded they simply could not obtain interviews for positions in their field. They reported that they called very few companies and when they did call, they were often told by the receptionist that no jobs were available. In one case, a student, who graduated with honours from the program, was still working, a full year later, as a sales clerk for the retail outlet she had worked for prior to graduation (Evaluation Report, May 2009, p. 16). Communication apprehension seems to be a major factor preventing these graduates from actively seeking interviews.

This project examines whether a pedagogical intervention composed of specific instructional strategies, including monitored phone calls to employers and practice-videotaped interviews, would reduce levels of CA, allowing students to feel more confident about interviewing for a future job.

Typically, these students are from 19 to 22 years of age and have just spent at least fourteen or more years of their life in school. Although several have part-time jobs during their schooling period, most of those jobs do not relate to their field of study and the interviews they have experienced may not have given them an appropriate interview model. Students are strongly encouraged to find placement on their own to further strengthen their skill set but, if necessary, the teacher in charge of externship will place the students who cannot find a *stage* by themselves. The department has a bank of potential companies that have accepted such students in the past. The negative side of such placement is that these students, not having successfully found placement on their own, experience difficulties in finding employment upon graduation. These difficulties often have repercussions on the student's self-esteem as they then doubt their ability to find work in their chosen field. The department has observed that some of these students will continue working in unrelated jobs in which they have acquired experience during their school years because high levels of CA undermine their confidence.

Wongprasert & Ayres (2000, p 13) suggest that the students "lack an appropriate model for the conduct of an employment interview." The authors consider that practice interviews may be one of many successful training methods to lower CA levels.

In order to provide such a framework for employment interviews, the fifth semester Career Planning course was taught in a modular format, as each section of the course builds upon the last one; this is also known as curricular scaffolding. Students were given time to prepare and rehearse making phone calls and having practice interviews. This educational approach was meant to provide a model such as the one suggested by Wongprasert & Ayres (2000) and to facilitate the transfer of the student's skills to the specialized industry requirements (Driscoll, 2000).

1.   THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING

This research fits within the context of the scholarship of teaching and learning at the college level since the content matter was not the only important factor in this project. Instructional strategies took into consideration the cognitive and affective processes and aptitudes of the learner (Wittrock, 1978). These strategies were monitored, documented, and reflected upon by both the researcher and the students, and their feedback was analysed and used to understand the impact these instructional approaches had on the students' levels of CA. The Graphic Communications Department is committed to providing a pedagogical approach to learning and teaching by revising, every year, the sequencing of the courses, and the materials presented in each course as improvement of the curriculum enhances the chances of promoting student success. Conclusions from this research will provide useful information to all career programs that include a stage at the end of their career program, and it will allow future reassessments of the Graphic Communications curriculum to be evidence-based.

This inquiry of a specific pedagogical approach within a framework of scientific research in education is part of the scholarship of teaching. This research project examines if participants who are exposed to classroom interventions in the Career Preparation course will, at the end of the semester, have lower levels of communication apprehension about employment interviews compared to their levels at the beginning of the semester. Furthermore, results of this study will be made public, allowing for peer review of these pedagogical and instructional strategies.

The following chapter will summarize previous findings in the literature on CA and other factors such as student success and employment interviews.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of the literature on communication apprehension is pertinent to an understanding of the problem, its various dimensions, its variables and their operationalization and, to an analysis of the problem. It also casts light on possible causes and on methods to measure and overcome CA. Major databases, such as ERIC, EBSCO Host, Inforoute (MELS) and the Centre de Documentation collégiale where Parea documents are available, were consulted for literature on CA and for instructional strategies to counter CA in employment interview situations. The scholarly journals, articles and reports consulted and retained are summarized in this chapter.

CA is considered a causal factor in student success and specifically in employment interviews (Wongprasert & Ayres, 2000). Extensive educational research has been done over the last half century showing relationships between communication apprehension and other factors. The factors that were examined in this study were personality traits (McCroskey, 1983), academic performance (Butler, Prior & Marti, 2004), cultural variance (Pryor, Butler & Boehringer, 2005), social desirability (Chen, 1993), student success (Everett, 1999; Webb 2006) and coping mechanisms (Kuo, Hagie and Miller, 2004), among others.

2.   COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

Students with high CA levels do poorly in employment interviews because of their fear of communicating (Ayres & Crosby, 1995 as cited in Buxton, 1997). They search for employment that requires less communication (Daly & al., 1979, as cited in Wongprasert & Ayres, 2000) and are less likely to obtain the jobs they seek. They focus on negative thoughts (Ayres & al., 1998, as cited in Buxton, 1997) and since they believe they have less chance of success,

they spend less time preparing for interviews (Daly & al. 1979, as cited in Wongprasert & al, 2000).

2.1.   Cultural background

Students who were participants in this study are from different cultural backgrounds, cultural factors must be considered as well. Pryor, Butler & Boehringer (2005) compared communication apprehension levels between American and Japanese participants. An instrument called the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), a leading self-report tool to measure CA created by McCroskey (1982), was translated into Japanese and administered to 200 undergraduates at three Japanese universities. The English version of the PRCA-24 was administered to 122 undergraduates at a large university in Florida. The results showed significantly higher levels of CA in the Japanese sample and were discussed with reference to cultural implications. Numerous characteristics seem to be common to specific cultural groups. For example, the Japanese tend to value group harmony over individual assertiveness.

2.2.   Academic achievement

Some students afflicted with CA often seek the highest possible academic achievement. Butler, Prior & Marti (2004) studied whether there was a difference in CA levels between honours and non-honours students. The authors studied whether communication apprehension would correlate with high academic achievement. The PRCA-24 was used on a sample of 134 students from both achievement categories enrolled in public speaking courses. These authors confirmed that honours students have a significantly higher level of CA than the non-honours ones.

2.3. Social desirability

Social desirability, a tendency to be perceived by others in a better light, is also a factor that influences CA (Chen, 1993, p. 435). Chen found that when social desirability is considered an independent variable as a personality trait or "an indicator of a characteristic reaction pattern of an individual in certain situations" (p.433), rather than an interfering variable that should be controlled (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964, as cited in Chen, 1993), individuals who scored high in the social desirability scale showed more apprehension and were more reluctant to communicate. In cases where students experience high levels of CA, they may choose not to apply for jobs where they might not be perceived well by employers.

2.4. Student success

Many career programs accept a significant number of students who have a high school average below the median, and a number of these programs, including the Graphic Communications program at Champlain, have no specific math requirement. In order to promote student retention, colleges encourage teachers to develop strategies to improve overall student retention. Everett, (1999) studied the relationships between communication apprehension and student success with community college students. To measure student success Everett used grade point averages (GPA), class completion, and persistence to enrol in the subsequent semester. McCroskey's Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) was administered to a sample of 171 students. Other variables included age and gender. Everett did not find noteworthy relationships between communication apprehension and any of the academic (GPA) and demographic variables. This was unanticipated because the author expected that, since in previous studies students with high CA had experienced poor academic performance, they would also be more likely to drop

classes. A possible explanation might be that previous research was done on university students and students from community colleges might have different expectations. Everett did find that the completion ratio (number of hours completed by a student divided by the numbers of hours attempted), GPA and age were major influences on student success but recommended more research to be done on communication apprehension specifically, considering the different approaches to student success by each institution.

2.5. Motivation

The degree of student motivation is often measured by the decisions students make about how many hours to work outside of school and whether or not to use the support services offered by their institution. The current trend is that students are employed while studying. Roy et al. (2003) have found that the number of CEGEP students who have part time work while studying has increased from 20% in the 1970' to 60% at the beginning of this century. This may lead them to make decisions about the amount of energy and effort they put into their studies and how they resolve academic and personal problems. Students often decide not to use the services offered on campus, such as tutors, guidance in finding employment or student counselling, because they feel their time is better-spent working or following personal interests. Kuo, Hagie and Miller (2004) examined how students enrolled in an urban research university in the western United States defined their study skills, and how they coped with the study and life challenges they faced. Their research was directed at giving insight to develop more effective ways to support student success in the future and to show that students do not use the resources available to them in academic settings on their own time. They encourage colleges to look at other ways to enhance student success by modifying problem-solving approaches for today's emerging adult.

Webb (2006) reported that the use of a Student Success Skills program, developed in a southern United States University, can be tied to improved student outcomes. This classroom intervention program is based on the principle that certain core skills, including self-confidence, can be learned. The techniques outlined are directed at improving academic and social outcomes. They include a variety of "tell-show-do" activities, goal setting, repetition, and positive feedback that increase levels of self-assurance in a safe and supportive classroom environment. This implementation was carried out by counsellors, showing positive results and advocating a continuation in the use of research-supported programs.

This research brings professional counsellors into the classroom to assess if, in so doing, levels of CA are lowered.

2.6.   Strategies: Dangers

Buxton (1997) looked at ways to overcome CA in a public speaking environment and cautions that not all strategies are useful. He suggests that insisting that a student speak in front of an audience is not only ineffective to overcome CA, but that it can be detrimental to individuals with high levels of CA. Other forms of behaviourism have used systematic desensitization (McCroskey, 1972 as cited in Buxton), which involves relaxation techniques, visualization (Ayres & Hopf, 1985; 1993, as cited in Buxton) and speech preparation techniques (Ayres, 1996, as cited in Buxton). A combination of these preparation strategies provided outcomes that influenced student success by lowering levels of CA and increased student retention.

2.7.   Strategies: Performance Visualization

Wongprasert & Ayres (2000) studied the effect of performance visualization on levels of CA in students in a mid-size western university in the

United States. Performance visualization contained three components: education, which explained the exercise and the reasons for it, visualization that proposed listening to a script and then modelling of the visualization. The sample consisted of 93 students ranging from 17 to 30 years of age. Several instruments were used to measure the levels of communication apprehension in employment interviews, the levels of positive or negative thoughts in mock interviews, and the levels of trust and attraction. The authors found that individuals with high CA levels have negative thoughts about their success in interviews, and they lack trust in self-disclosure. These attitudes, combined with low attraction levels, would not promote adequate performance in an interview situation. Even though no statistical significance was found, the authors raise the possibility that experience in previous job interviews would reduce levels of CA. In support of this, they suggest that individuals become skilful and competent through rehearsals and recommend the use of interpersonal interaction factors as opposed to viewing a static video for visualization purposes. They conclude by reiterating that practice in formal interviews may yield positive results.

The objective of this research was to assess whether instructional strategies based on cognitive psychology (Tardif, 1997) will better prepare students and thus allow them to lower their levels of communication apprehension while interviewing for an externship.

3.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The pedagogical interventions that were included in the Career Preparation course were based on a cognitive paradigm. Educational cognitive psychology adopts the standpoint that knowledge is constructed (Mayer, 1991; Tardif, 1997; Wittrock, 1978.) Tardif (1997) believes students already have an acquired knowledge base they draw from. Furthermore, Richardson (2003) stresses there are five characteristics of a constructivist approach to pedagogy: it

must be student centered, and it must allow students to explore their existing knowledge in groups to develop a deeper understanding of the topic. For Richardson the acquisition of knowledge related to a student's field of study is sometimes planned but it can also be spontaneous. Situations where students can accept or refute such knowledge must be provided and lastly students must be made aware of their learning process. Providing instructional strategies that encompass these five points encourages students to achieve a meta awareness or metacognition. The learning activities in the Career Preparation course are planned to create scaffolding for the students so they can build, practice and reflect on their own knowledge about employment interviewing on their own and in groups. The way students process new information is considered and specific instructional strategies are used to enhance this acquisition of knowledge and to enable a conscious transfer of such knowledge to unknown situations (Driscoll, 2000) such as employment interviews. The instructional strategies are based on affective, cognitive, and metacognitive factors and are very explicit and repetitive for optimal development of students' knowledge. Several approaches are used and students are made aware of the metacognitive connections that could potentially take place. Tardif (1997) insists that the learner is responsible for taking an active role in his learning, and that can only take place in an explicit environment.

Certain conditions must be met to provoke conscious reuse or transfer of acquired knowledge (Tardif, 1997, p. 278) from one context to another. When a student is able to consciously evaluate different strategies that can be used to achieve success and assess their outcome, then metacognition is achieved (Slavin, 1994). In order for new learning to become deeper, the teacher is accountable as a facilitator. The teacher is responsible to create an environment conducive to assist and stimulate knowledge acquisition while promoting active learning. It is also essential that the teacher constantly check that students are drawing correct conclusions in order to provide immediate corrective measures should the wrong

conclusions be drawn; planning and coordinating learning activities to efficiently meet the objectives are key. Original and new solutions must be sought; otherwise, no new learning will take place, and old solutions will be reapplied. Lastly, efforts must be made to make evaluations coherent with desired outcomes.

The next chapter develops in detail the methodology guiding the data collection and analysis of the results as well as the instructional strategies used in classroom interventions.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

The previous review of the literature shows that interviews are a significant cause of communication apprehension in students and, therefore, closely related to student success. A proposal for this research was submitted to the Ethics Committee of Champlain St-Lambert CEGEP. The committee was concerned about the dual role of the teacher/researcher and how their concerns were addressed is explained more fully in this chapter. It is important to note this research is rooted in classroom intervention; therefore, the methodology described in this chapter also covers particular instructional strategies. This chapter will also describe the sample and methods used in this research. Two different methods were used to collect data for this research: the PRCA/EI survey as a quantitative method to monitor CA levels, and reflective journal entries as a qualitative method to monitor the effects of chosen instructional strategies. The combination of both approaches provides different ways to operationalize and measure the effects of CA on the participants. The quantitative approach is statistically reliable and allows for accuracy of results while avoiding personal bias, while the qualitative approach provides for more in-depth feedback specifically exploring the attitudes and experiences of the participants. The size of the sample and the open-ended questions in the reflective journals make it challenging to make systematic comparisons in both approaches, but this combination was meant to overcome weaknesses of both methods.

1.   SAMPLE

A saturation sample was used: the whole third year cohort was solicited in Fall 2007. The sample consisted of 14 students, 7 females, and 7 males. Their ages ranged from 19 to 23 years. Only two of these students had never had a job interview. All others had been exposed to at least one interview for a summer or

part-time job. The participants were given the Explanatory Statement (Appendix A), signed consent forms (Appendix B) and were assured that their names and other personal information would be kept confidential and not used in the research report. No marks were attached to any of the activities regarding the research (filling the questionnaire and answering the journals) and time was given in class to fill out forms and journals. Participants were able to withdraw any time during the research process without any consequences.

2.   ETHICS COMMITTEE

The initial research proposal was submitted to Champlain's Ethics Committee in May 2007. The committee was concerned about the dual role of the teacher/researcher and requested more information about the planned curriculum. Additional detailed information on the curriculum was provided to address these concerns and, to further protect the students, a change was made in the collection of the qualitative data. The reflective journals would be sent to a third, unrelated party for removal of all personal information instead of going directly to the researcher; they would be coded, cross-referenced with the quantitative data, and kept by this third party, until marks were submitted. The committee was reassured that all efforts were made to protect student confidentiality and freedom of choice in their participation in this research. The committee also requested a few changes be made in the consent form.

Approval for this research was granted in August 2007 (Appendix C). An explanatory statement (Appendix A) was given to each participant and an informed consent form (Appendix B) was signed by all participants.

3.   INSTRUMENTS OF DATA COLLECTION

3.1.   PRCA/EI

This research aimed to measure the students' levels of communication apprehension (CA) at the beginning (week 1) and at the end of the course (week 16). The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24) created by McCroskey (1982) (Appendix D) in tandem with the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension in Employment Interviews (PRCA/EI) as found in Wongprasert & Ayres (2000) was used in this study (Appendix E).

The PRCA-24 is based on four perspectives: public speaking, speaking in small groups, speaking in meetings and speaking in dyads. Each perspective is represented by six items. These are representative of the most common communication situations (McCroskey, Richmond, 1980). This instrument (PRCA-24) provides results on a 5 point Likert scale on which students state the degree to which the statement applies to their personal situation (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree) and yields a total score ranging from 24 to 120, as well as subscales in each context. A score of 80 or more represents high CA. There is substantial evidence to support the reliability and validity of the instrument and internal consistency is estimated at .94 (McCroskey, 1996, as cited in Nimocks, Mittie, Bromley, Parsons, Enright & Gates, 2001).

Wongprasert & Ayres (2000) developed the PRCA/EI by adding five questions that were integrated as a fifth subscale in the PRCA questionnaire used to measure student's levels of CA and were processed separately but in the same scoring schemes as the PRCA-24 (Appendix D). This fifth sub-scale was on the levels of CA in Employment Interviews.

3.2.   Journals

Qualitative data was collected via a series of reflective journals (Appendix F), throughout the semester, to verify the impact of this course on the student's levels of CA. The intent of these journals was to monitor the effects of the planned strategies on the students' levels of CA and contained open-ended questions. The journals were filled out in electronic format and emailed to an unrelated member of the college's staff to remove all personal information and to be cross-referenced with the quantitative data, and results were given to the researcher the following semester, to comply with the Ethics committee's request.

Journal 1 was requested immediately after obtaining the score of the PRCA questionnaire, asking the respondents how they perceived the questionnaire and whether they thought the results obtained were a fair representation of how they see themselves. Three other journals were requested immediately after specific classroom activities; journal 2 followed the supervised telephone calls to request an informational interview with a large company, journal 3 followed the practice-videotaped job interview describing how they felt physically and psychologically during their practice interview and journal 4 followed the phone calls to request an externship interview. Finally, journal 5 was requested at the end of the semester to ask how the students perceived the impact of the class activities on their levels of CA.

4.   CURRICULUM - INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The following table summarizes the Career Planning course curriculum:

Table 1
Timeline, Career Preparation Fall 2007

Week	Topic	Class work / Assignment	PRCA/EI - Journals
1	Introduction Self Assessment and promotion	Assignment 1 – Self-Assessment	PRCA/EI (pre)
2 – 3	Marketing strategies and techniques	Assignment 2 – Industry Information Interview (assigned now but to be done after Assignment 3)	Journal 1: After receiving their PRCA/EI results
4 – 5	Interview techniques (preparation of scripts and practice) Guest speaker from HR company in the industry	Assignment 3 – Telephone interviews (in call centre) (meeting objections on the phone)	Journal 2: After the telephone interview for an information meeting request
6 – 7	Resumes and References Career Correspondence and Applications	Assignment 4 – Resume and Identity Kit Assignment 5 – Cover letters	
8 – 10	Before, during and after the interview	Assignment 6 – *Stage* interview preparation Phone calls for *stage* interviews	
11	Preparation for the practice videotaped interviews	Assignment 7 – Videotaped interviews	Journal 3: After their videotaped interview
12 – 13	After the offer	Assignment 8 – Thank you letters	Journal 4: After the telephone call for a *stage* request
13 – 14	What to Do and Know Career Success Skills	Assignment 9 – Job Search Plan (due on last day of class)	PRCA / EI (post)
15 – 16		Presentation of Job Search Plan	Journal 5: After finding *stage* placement and receiving the results of the second PRCA/EI

4.1.   Self-Assessment

Students wrote a self-assessment of their acquired abilities, skills, work values and life preferences using questionnaires and checklists; this allowed them to create an inventory of their personality traits and transferable skills and verbalize their perceived strengths and weaknesses. During a group discussion (Richardson, 2003) in class, parallels were made to show how a skill learned in a different context could be used in the professional field and emphasis was put on lateral transfer of skills. This exercise in metacognition (being aware of one's learning process) was explained to the students in order to facilitate future transfer of knowledge (Driscoll, 2000, Slavin, 1994, Tardif, 1997). During the group discussion each was asked to present their perceived strongest skill; then, another participant was to volunteer what he believed this participant's best skill was. It was interesting and valuable to see how others' perception differed from a student's self-perception.

4.2.   Informational Interview

Students then studied personal marketing strategies and telephone techniques in the employment world. Research techniques were reviewed and lists of industry leaders were made using both traditional print directories and the Web. The students were encouraged to search for large companies that usually require several years of experience when they hire. An informational interview provides the students the chance to gather information and to make contacts, and since companies are receptive to giving out information, students were encouraged to get a glimpse of what a real work environment looks like. This strategy also provides practice in the development of interpersonal skills (Webb, 2006). The lists of companies were then sorted by the students' preferences and they each produced three lists (A, B, and C). This step helped them prioritize the

environments they felt suited them best. These lists became the basis for the phone calls students had to make in the weeks to come.

Students learned telephone techniques, specifically how to make a cold call and how to meet objections. Scripts were written and rehearsed until students were fluent and comfortable for the telephone call to request an informational interview.

A campus professional counsellor was invited to the classroom to help with the preparation of phone calls. This step was devised to counter the possibility of the students not seeking professional help on their own time as advocated by Kuo, Hagie and Miller (2004) and to introduce them to the benefits of such help. The counsellor actually visited the class several times and helped with the writing of the script and role-playing with the students, giving plausible answers to individual student's requests for an interview.

Previous study of the literature demonstrated that a variety of activities like "tell-show-do", goal setting, repetition and positive feedback will increase levels of self-assurance in a safe and supportive classroom environment (Webb, 2006, Wongprasert & Ayres, 2000). A special lab (Call Centre), where each station was set up with a phone and a personal computer, was used to make a first round of calls to industry leaders in the Graphic Communications field in order to obtain an information interview. The students were connected to the Internet and they were able to research the company they were calling prior to each call. They used the ABC lists of potential companies they had created by researching current magazines and the Web as a starting point. As students obtained interviews, their names went on the board. This technique was requested by the students as a form of stimulation or encouragement.

Journal 2 was requested of them at this point to discuss their levels of anxiety during this exercise and to verify the impact of this strategy.

The following class was used for students to prepare possible questions to use during the interviews; the interviews happened the following week. This informational interview allowed for a first practice in calling the companies they had chosen and in semi-structured interviewing. In this case, the student was leading the interview as opposed to being interviewed. They each learned about different companies and about potential positions. As a result of these interviews, they saw firsthand what the work environment looks like and they experienced how the atmosphere feels. At this point, they were also able to get advice and information on the skills and aptitudes required in positions in this company.

Results from this informational interview were then reported to the class. At this point, the students had a better idea of what they would be facing in a real interview. This interview also allowed the students to get a glimpse of what a typical job in their chosen field looked like. This experience helped them use the data they had come up with in their self-assessment and identify the transferable skills they had acquired so far, in order to better "sell" their specific skills set later.

During the next couple of weeks, resumes and other pertinent correspondence such as "cover" and "thank you" letters were created; samples were provided to further use the "tell-show-do" strategy advocated by Webb (2006). The students wrote letters to carefully pre-selected interviewers from the industry to request a practice interview for an externship. These interviewers were also potential employers in the field of Graphic Communications that have provided *stage*s to some of this department's students in the past. At this point, the counsellor came back to the class to help students refine their requests and use adequate language. Once again, this strategy was used to reinforce the

validity of professional external advice since students have been shown not to seek such help (Kuo, Hagie and Miller, 2004). The letters and resumes were then sent to their assigned interviewers.

4.3. The Videotaped Interview

Employment interviews were covered in theory. Interview questions were proposed to both employers and students (Appendix G). Responses to these questions were practiced with role-playing in class and on a voluntary basis outside of class. Practice interviews with the pre-selected industry interviewers were scheduled.

Three interviewers were solicited and each assigned four to five students. These interviewers, all professionals in the Graphic Communications field, had all volunteered in previous years to conduct such interviews. They were all familiar with the type of students they were to interview and hiring was one of their responsibilities in their jobs. They all had experience with the videotaped interview format. These interviews were videotaped as unobtrusively as possible in a TV studio on campus and lasted about ten minutes each. The interviewers gave an additional five minute feedback session to each student immediately after the interview. This feedback session was also taped. It is important to note these students had also experienced videotaped interviews in their first semester of the program, and so this was their second time in the TV studio.

The third journal entry was requested of the students, immediately after the interview, to gather data on their state of mind during this interview.

The students then had access to the tapes, in a private viewing room in the library, to review their videotaped interview to further visualize and analyse their performance. A comprehensive written analysis was requested as part of the curriculum. This activity counted for marks and therefore the objectivity of the

content of this activity is questionable and has not been included in this research. Interview follow-up techniques were covered. Thank you letters were written, corrected, and sent to the interviewers. Emphasis was put on the feedback received during the practice interview as another reinforcement exercise in metacognition.

In the next step, the students were asked to contact potential employers to request a *stage*. The original ABC lists and telephone scripts were reviewed and adapted for this step. More practice and role-playing was done. Then, students were asked to make the calls to actually request an externship or *stage*. These calls were made on the students' own time since the special lab (Call Centre), equipped with phones and personal computers was unavailable, and in any case the call center was inappropriate as they often had to wait for responses to messages they left and they could not receive calls in this lab. Their letters and résumés were then reviewed and corrected according to the feedback they had received previously from their interviewer.

The fourth journal was asked of the participants to describe their levels of apprehension as the phone calls were made.

As a final assignment, the students were to produce a job search plan, summarising the whole process undergone in this course. The PRCA/EI was administered on the last day of class, and then the fifth and final journal was requested to comment on the participant's levels of CA at the end of the semester.

It was entirely possible the levels of CA would lower just by the nature of the Career Preparation course. However, the fifth scale and the reflective journals students were asked to write was designed to show whether the levels of CA would diminish more in the interview's category. The ultimate objective was for these students to find placement at the end of March in an eight-week *stage*.

By participating in this study, participants should show lower levels of CA by the end of the semester, and, they should have less difficulty in eventually interviewing for a more permanent job by the end of May.

The research data was collected during the 2007/2008 academic year. The quantitative and qualitative data was comprised of the results of the PRCA/EI and the reflective journals. The results obtained through the use of these methods are described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The methodology described in the previous chapter resulted in two major categories of findings; this chapter will describe the quantitative and qualitative results obtained in this study.

1.   QUANTITATIVE DATA – PRCA/EI

The PRCA/EI was used to measure the student's levels of communication apprehension (CA) at the beginning (week 1) and at the end of the course (week 16). The PRCA/EI is based on five perspectives: public speaking, speaking in small groups, speaking in meetings, speaking in dyads and speaking in employment interviews. Each perspective is represented by six items, except for the employment interview subscale, which was represented by five items. This instrument (PRCA/EI) provides results on a 5 point Likert scale on which students state the degree to which the statement applies to their personal situation (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree) and yields a total score ranging from 26 to 142, as well as subscales in each context. In this study, scores from the sample selected ranged from a low 36 to a high 106 (see Table 2). All the data from this instrument was analysed using Microsoft Excel; since the measures were done on the same individuals and there were pre and post measures, paired samples t-tests were chosen.

Repeated measures t-tests were carried out on the results of the PRCA/EI to determine whether significant shifts had occurred between the pre and post intervention subscale scores. T-tests were run on the scores for each sub-category and on the PRCA-24 and the PRCA/EI. For the two combined scores (PRCA-24 and the PRCA/EI), the difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$)

However this statistical significance was not achieved in most of the sub-categories.

Table 2
PRCA/EI results

	Means		
	Pre-Intervention (week 1)	Post-Intervention (week 16)	T-test value (p)
Group Discussion	13.43	12.57	0.11
Meetings	15.71	14.29	0.08
Interpersonal	13.36	12.79	0.26
Public Speaking	19.00	17.57	0.03
Interview	10.93	9.93	0.12
PRCA 24	61.5	57.2	0.01
PRCA /EI	72.43	67.14	0.01

Examination of the means in the previous table shows that for all categories, there is a reduction in scores in the post intervention, but in several subcategories, it was not sufficient to achieve statistical significance.
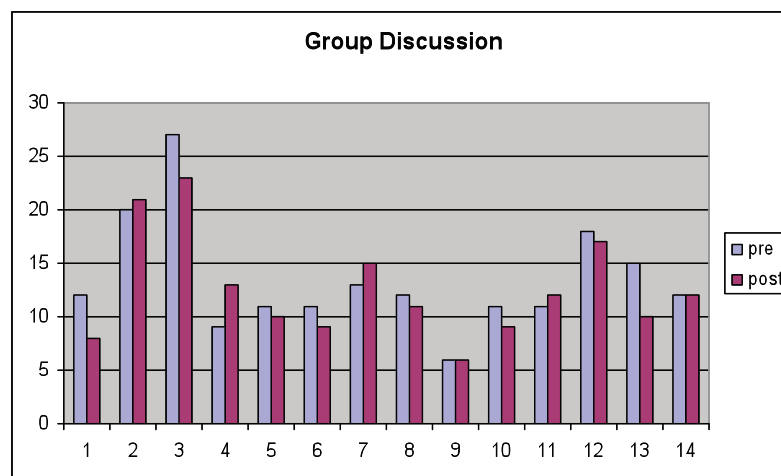
The bar chart shown below demonstrates the consistently lower means in the sub-categories of the scale.

Figure 1
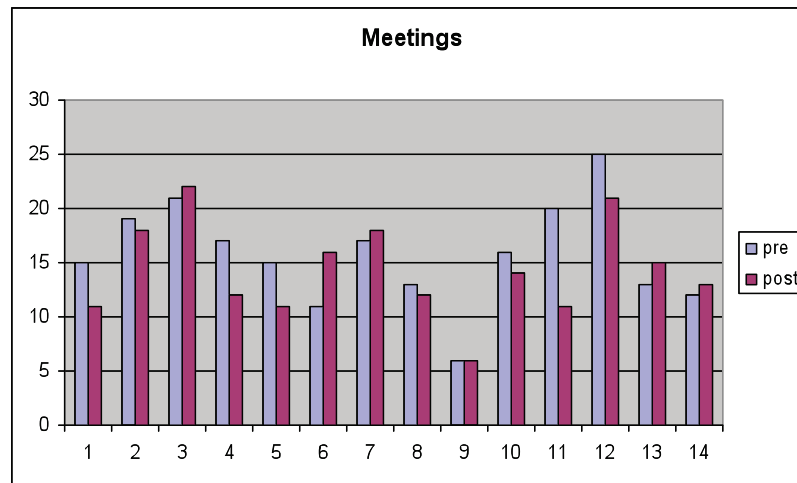Comparison of Pre and Post Means
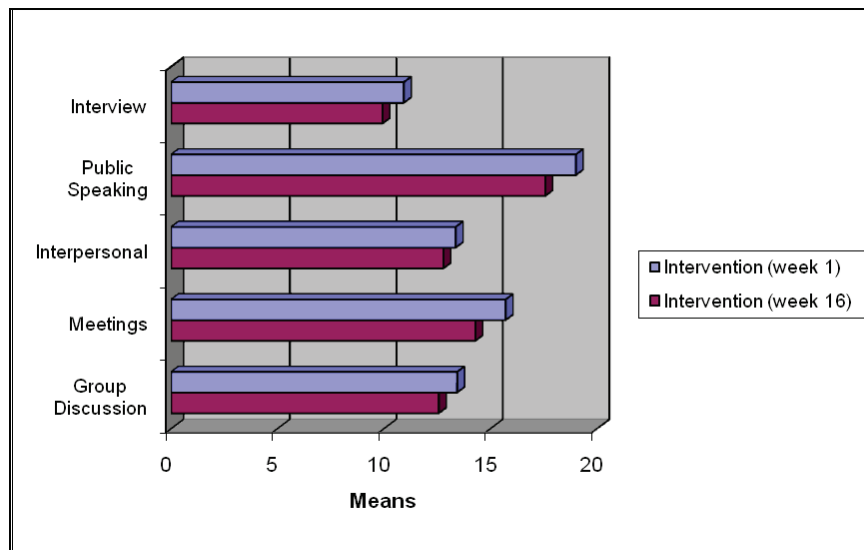
If we look at the questions separately, we find there are specific areas where levels of CA were definitely altered.

Figure 2
Group Discussion sub-scale

In the Group Discussion subcategory four participants scored higher in the post-intervention test, one stayed the same and nine scored lower.

Figure 3
Meetings sub-scale

In the Meetings subscale, five participants scored higher CA levels in the post-test while nine scored lower or stayed the same.

Figure 4
Interpersonal sub-scale
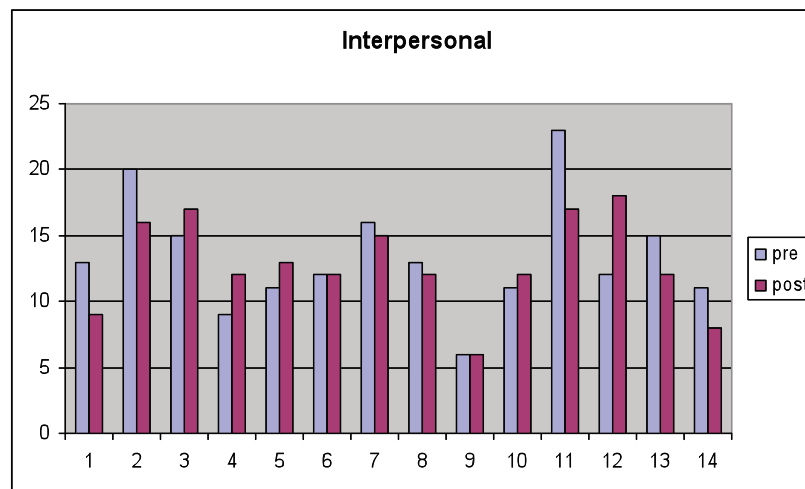
In the Interpersonal subcategory, five students scored higher in the post-test while the others scored lower or stayed the same.

Figure 5
Public Speaking sub-scale
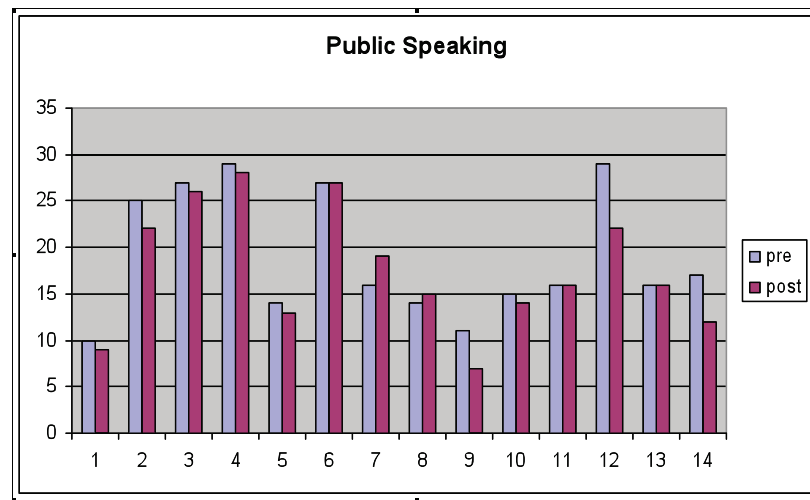
In the Public speaking category, two participants scored higher in the post-test, two scored the same and the remaining ten scored lower.

Figure 6
Interview sub-scale
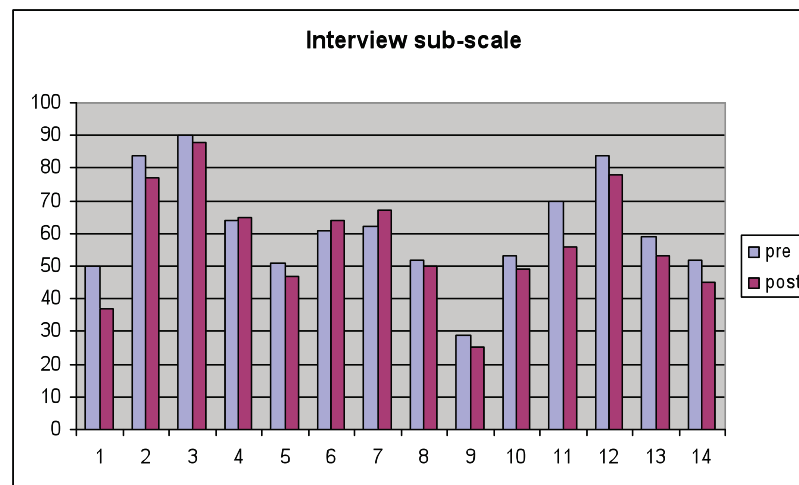
For the last subscale, the Interview, three scored higher in the post-test and eleven scored lower.

2.   QUALITATIVE DATA – JOURNALS

The open-ended journals describe the student's feedback about their perceived levels of CA and about the effectiveness of major instructional strategies in this course in more detail. The questions asked covered the preparation for phone calls as well as their state of mind during and after the calls. The questions also covered the practice interviews and their preparation levels for this interview and finally, they covered the overall effectiveness of the instructional strategies during the whole course. Thirteen participants answered journal 1, 7 participants answered journal 2, 9 participants answered journal 3, none answered journal 4 and 9 participants answered journal 5.

Please note that all the journal entries were submitted electronically and are reported verbatim.

2.1.   Self-perception – levels of CA at the beginning of the course

Journal 1 was requested on week 2 and asked:

You have obtained your score from the questionnaire PRCAEI.
About the questionnaire: how did you perceive the
questionnaire?
About the results: Are the results an accurate or inaccurate
representation of the way you perceive yourself?
How would you describe your communication apprehension
levels?
With your friends?
With strangers?
With your boss?
Do you have any comments?

This journal was about comparing their perceived levels of CA to the results of the questionnaire (PRCA/EI); thirteen participants responded. Most participants (10) perceived the results of the PRCA as being accurate in

describing their perceived levels of CA; two found the results very accurate and one did not answer.

Student 1 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded:

It felt like a self-evaluation on my self-personality and my level of anxiety. I find it closely accurate to how I feel about my own anxiety. They're some moments when I can feel the pressure of anxiety rising like in moments of speeches but other moments such as in group discussion I'm more at ease of expressing my self. My level of communication skills with other is pretty good and I always say what I have to say except for the moments when I'm being pressured to communicate well such as speeches.

Student 2 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded: "The questionnaire had tested me well. The results were accurate enough for me to understand where I am and that I need to work harder. I am in an average level and in order to obtain a higher level, I must fix and learn from my mistakes."

Student 3 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded: "Id say it is accurate. I don't have a problem with communicating with other people. As long as I am in my comfort zone, then I will do just fine."

Student 4 scored high on the PRCA/EI and responded:

I think it is pretty accurate because I do not like to speak in front of a lot of people. I know this and have been able to change a few things that will help me feel less stressed but even though I feel a little bit more comfortable, I still do not like it. I would say they (results of CA level) are high because I hate speaking in front of a large group of people, when it is people I know it is not as bad but when I am talking to a group of strangers I do not feel comfortable. I am very comfortable in one on one conversations with anyone but 3 and more I become shy or uncomfortable and will talk as little as possible.

Student 5 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded:

Yes, I believe that I am a relatively comfortable person when it comes to communicating. Certain situations do make me feel more nervous than others, but generally I do not lose sleep over meeting up with someone the next day whether it be my boss, a teacher, a friend or a future potential employer. I am not a normally stressed out individual in the first place which I think helps with feeling at ease with many situations. The only situations, in which I can picture myself being uneasy in, are around strangers and in important situations. During leisure activities I am less shy but the worst scenario I can picture would be meeting with an important businessperson stranger who needed to discuss something serious and negative with me!

Student 6 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded:

Well in my opinion, I think the result support to be a bit lower. Well speaking and communicating with people (languages) isn't a big issue but for personal preference being a shy person is hard to have more communications if needed. Most of the time, I don't really know how to starts. Most of the situation depends on the environments and moods.

Student 7 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded:

I think they're pretty accurate. I tend to consider myself to be a bit shy, although my communication apprehension levels pretty much depends on to whom I'm talking to. I'm perfectly comfortable with people I know, and am alright with giving a speach to crowd, but as soon as I have to talk one-on-one with a stranger, I feel really nervous, especially when it's on the phone. Even telling someone "hello, can I speak to so-and-so" on the phone stresses me out a lot.

Student 8 scored high on the PRCA/EI and responded: "Yes, I belive they are accurate because I am very stressed out by communicating professionally with known superiors, and the test results mirror this."

Student 9 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded: "The results are fairly accurate. I was rated as average."

Student 10 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded:

I would say it is slightly accurate but higher then I expected. I do not have a problem talking to people nor confronting them, but as long as the conversation is in my own language, and also depending to whom I am talking. I try to remain calm and relaxed when I talk to people. I do not feel pressured to answer questions or ask question. If I feel something I say it, although, if I am talking to someone who is not my first language, then I become shyer. I know that I do not judge people but not everyone is like that. I had a bad experience one time speaking in French so I very rarely do it.

Student 11 scored low on the PRCA/EI and responded:

I found the results to be quite accurate. I wasn't entirely sure what to expect. For the most part, I know that I am not a very anxious person by nature; however, I do get quite nervous when dealing with job-related situations, such as interviews or work meetings, or at least before such situations actually come to pass—once I am in such a situation, I tend to relax. That being said, I expected to be somewhere in the middle, maybe leaning towards the less-anxious side, and my results reflect that quite accurately.

Student 12 scored average on the PRCA/EI and responded: "I find the results of the survey are fairly accurate. I dont get anxious when speaking to others, but like alot of people, i get nervous when i have to speak infront of a large crowd. I hear myself talking, and i get my words all jumbled sometimes."

Student 13 scored low on the PRCA/EI and responded:

I find that the results were an accurate representation of how I perceive myself. The results showed that I had low communication apprehension, which means that I feel

comfortable while speaking. I do perceive myself with having
an easiness to speak to others, especially my surrounding.

All of them felt comfortable communicating with their friends (12 very low CA, 1 average) mainly because they can say what they think without fear of repercussions: "No problem at all expressing my self with friends because we understand each other in a deeper level with slang's and expressions. And the fear of saying something wrong or with a bad pronunciation is inexistent"; and, they are not afraid of being misunderstood: "I am myself when I am with friends. I let it all out and say what is on my mind. We always understand each other because we always say what we think of each other or others"; "Communicating with friends (known) is almost free to speak out anything that we interested. Most of the time, I was trying not to be left out of the conversations"; "I am very open with my friend and speak my mind. I am not shy and say what I want to."

They are aware that friends allow them to be themselves as this student states:

With my fiends I hardly have any anxiety at all. I think that it's
because I know them and I know that they are aware of how I
am and my way speaking and acting, therefore I am not afraid to
speak up like I always do. I can be somewhat loud at time and
some of the things I say can be offensive but the people that
know me are aware of that so when I speak it doesn't cross my
mind that I might have been a little offensive or loud.

"My communication apprehension levels with my friends are very good. I am able to understand and communicated with comfort and ease with them. They are also ok with my communications." Some of the participants are absolutely at ease communicating with friends: "With my friends, I feel no stress at all. In fact, I sometimes talk too much"; "I have no problems communicating with them no matter where or when"; "I dont feel any anxiety when i am only talking with my friends. I feel comfortable and at ease".

A few mention a little apprehension when in larger groups or with unknown "friends of friends": "I'm pretty comfortable communicating with my friends. If I'm with a large group of friends, I tend to listen in on the conversation rather than talking, but I still try to put my word in once in a while" or as this student describes:

> I always feel very comfortable with my friends. I have a small group of friends, so we're all very close, and I consider them all like family. Sometimes I'm a little apprehensive when meeting friends of friends, but simply because I wonder whether our personalities will clash or not. Once I meet them in person, I normally feel comfortable around anyone.

"With my friends I am always comfortable even if there is a larger group, though they have to be friends that I have known for a while to be really comfortable."

This student summarizes the general feeling of safety they all felt with their friends: "I am extremely comfortable with my friends, after all that is why we call them friends in the first place. Communicating with my family and friends is the easiest and simplest because I know them very well and they, me."

Communicating with strangers seems to bring out higher levels of CA (1 low CA, 8 average levels of CA and 4 high levels of CA): "When speaking to strangers, I am usually calmer and open-minded. I listen in great detail and try to be a polite as possible"; and "I usually have no problem talking to strangers because there people who can judge you at the moment but its quickly forgotten and strangers have almost no impact on how I feel." The following also show little apprehension even if not totally comfortable because they have an expectation of friendliness unless proven otherwise:

> I generally don't have a problem communicating with strangers. When I am introduced to someone new I am not completely shy and will want to run away. I am comfortable with introducing myself, shaking hands and making small talk. I don't

particularly love chatting with someone I do not know, however, it does not make me feel uneasy;

Depends on the environment and situation. If asking for help from a service, there's always an expectation of being friendly. If it's a stranger on the street ask or to talk to, well first off maybe saying hi and struggle a bit to understand him or her. If it is a person being introduced by a friend or known person, it's always friendly to start off easily;

When meeting friends of friends, there's always a little wonder whether we'll get along well or not, but knowing the taste of your friends already gives you a certain type of comfort. Meeting complete strangers can cause a little more anxiety; after all, you never know what kind of person you may run into. For the most part though, everyone is quite friendly, you just have to take the time to speak with them.

Although I still don't find it hard for me to speak with strangers I have slightly more anxiety with them because they don't know how I usually am and unlike my friend they don't know I can be offensive or loud at time, therefore I restrict myself and I am usually more shy with strangers.

Addressing people in a public speaking situation creates a certain tension as this participant describes:

I dont really feel nervous when i speak to strangers, maybe i am not as comfortable as i would be when i am talking to friends or family, but im not really shy. Im not shy when it comes to speaking to others, but when i have to speak infront of the class, i get alittle bit shaky, even though ive known my classmates for 2 years now. Theres just something about being the only one standing up and addressing a whole classroome that makes me feel anxious.

In addition, language can create slightly higher levels of CA:

With strangers I am sort of ok communicating with them because I need to speak in French to communicate with strangers, when I am more comfortable talking in English. My

communication apprehension level with strangers is still pretty
good, since I do have jobs in public areas.

The last four participants have definitely higher levels of CA with strangers: "I am more quiet with strangers, maybe a little shy. I am not myself when I am talking with someone I don't know. I am very secluded, just because I am not comfortable", or more than one stranger: "With strangers I am comfortable if they are 1 or two but more than that and I start to be uncomfortable"; in one case there's a definite apprehension caused by hierarchy: "With strangers, I am a bit apprehensive, but as long as they don't outrank me, I am relatively calm."

The last two entries definitely show high levels of CA: "This is the part where I have most trouble with. I tend not to be the first one to talk to a person that I don't know. I try, but many times it just doesn't come out so therefore I stay silent until the person or someone else starts a conversation" and:

> As soon as I have to talk one-on-one with a stranger, I feel really
> nervous, especially when it's on the phone. Even telling
> someone "hello, can I speak to so-and-so" on the phone stresses
> me out a lot. and sometimes I try to avoid having to talk to them,
> either by making one of my friends talk to them for me, or
> avoiding situations where I have to talk to someone I don't
> know;

With their boss, five participants state they have no problems communicating at a professional level: "I don't have a problem with my boss," "With my boss I am extremely comfortable," "With my boss it is ok," "I have absolutely no problem communicating with (my boss)," "For the most part, I feel very much at ease in almost any situation."

Several (5) make a mention of discomfort or anxiety in certain professional situations: "With the big boss that I don't really know, I am a little bit intimidated," "Unless I am on very good terms with the boss, I am extremely

apprehensive," and the hierarchy issue is apparent in the following statements: "I might have a slight retreat if it would come to salary or position topics," "I treat (my boss) like my friends but with more respect, otherwise I am very professional. I try to enhance my vocabulary when I talk to someone of higher rank," "I do get a little stressed of anxious when dealing with superiors, but I think that I simply worry of what they will think of my work."

> I feel a little anxious when it comes to talking to my boss because i feel as if i cannot make any mistakes and when i feel that way, i automatically make some, so it makes me nervous sometimes. My boss always seems in a rush as well, so it makes me feel as if i need to speak fast, and i guess that doesn't put me in a calm state of mind.

2.2.   Informational interview – Phone Calls

Journal 2 was requested on week 3 after the telephone calls and asked:

> You have just called industry leaders in your field to obtain an information meeting.
> Describe the phone call(s):
> How did you feel during the call? (Please describe your emotions)
> Were you prepared?
> How was the practice done before hand helpful?
> What was missing?
> Please give details on your state of mind during the call(s) and after you obtained the meeting.
> Do you have any comments?

Journal 2 was requested after the phone calls to ask for an information interview were made; seven students responded. When asked to give details on their state of mind before and during the call(s); half (4) participants responded they felt either very low or low levels of CA: "I had felt confident during the phone calls. I was relaxed and certain that I would get a meeting during the calling process," "I felt somewhat nervous before dialing but once the phone rang

everything disappeared," " I felt a little bit nervous to be honest." Three felt very high levels of CA when making the phone calls: "I was very nervous and scared before calling; I did not want to go through it because of possible rejection. It took me 30 minutes before I reached for that phone," "During the call, I was anxious and worry if the company accept my interview," "The first call I did I felt REALLY nervous, and my heart was pounding really fast," and "VERY NERVOUS. I don't like to talk to complete strangers that I can only hear."

The following question asked whether they felt prepared for the telephone calls. One of the participants felt unprepared: "Absolutely not! I was too nervous and scared", but most felt prepared (6) for the phone calls: "To be honest, I was prepared to start the conversation and to convince the respondent that I was just calling to find information, but I was not prepared to answer or respond to the respondent's or company's questions. The reason behind this is… I am more comfortable and relaxed with just "going with the flow." If I was prepare a whole conversation, I know that I was either going to "choke" or be incredibly nervous", "Of course I prepared. We had written down what to say once the phone call was answered. I also mentally prepared by thinking of different situations and how I was going to reply to them.", "Yes I was fairly prepared. I had my opening sentence, however I did not prepare a specific speech for the whole conversation because that would not sound natural, I rather improvise a bit, and not every person had the same reaction so you have to adjust to them I find."

When asked if they had practiced and whether the practice had been helpful, four said yes: "I did practice and I had practiced with a friend. I felt my friend needed help…We tried to come up with as many options as possible;" "It helped me with knowing what to say when would get on the phone;" "Very helpful. The day where (the counsellor) came to help us out and afterwards when we wrote everything down; situations, how to introduce and ask for an

interview;" and lastly "Practicing the opening line beforehand helped because I found it made me feel more at ease… and made me sound more sure …more organized." Two participants said no: "I didn't really practice" and "I did not practice because it is not the same when it is for real. You never know what the other person on the other line will say, so to me it's useless to practice." One participant did not answer.

In addition, after the call, a general feeling of relief and pride was apparent: "Once I had obtained the approval for the meeting, I was relieved and exited to go visit the company and conduct an information interview…it was a great experience to talk to major and local design companies over the phone;" "After I got the interview, I was so confident in myself that I kept calling people and none rejected me;" "After the call, it was all relax and happy to hear they accepted it;" "I was elated. After calling about 40 companies, when you get the interview, you feel GOOD;" "I felt a rush…It kind of felt like a competition when others were starting to get interviews. All I wanted was to get my name on the board basically. It felt like such an accomplishment when I finally got an interview."

2.3.   Practice interviews

Journal 3 was requested on week 11 and asked:

You have just experienced a mock interview with an interviewer
from the industry.
How did you feel during the interview?
Were you prepared?
Was the practice you did before helpful?
Describe your confidence level:
Do you have any comments?

Journal 3 was requested immediately after the taped practice interview; nine participants responded. When asked how they felt during the interview two

mentioned the fact they were being filmed as a stress factor: "During the interview I felt a little uncomfortable...the interview was being recorded and watched, which is not usually the case at a regular interview, at least no one is watching the interview;" "I was a little nervous at first, but then that was because I was getting filmed and marked on." A few felt somewhat nervous at first (3) then relaxed to some extent: "At first I was nervous but after meeting (the interviewer) I started to feel much more comfortable, I did not feel intimidated … at all;" "I felt pretty nervous… (my interviewer) made me feel very relaxed;" and "I was stressed out the entire morning but as soon as I shaked hands with the interviewer, all of my stress disappeared and confidence took over." Three participants felt quite confident: "I felt surprisingly well. I was very relaxed and felt quite at ease during the greater part of the interview;" "I felt quite calm actually. I thought I'd be more nervous than that;" "I felt calm, relaxed, at ease, and confident (not over-confident!)"

Four participants mention other stress factors; the first one was the language "...because the interview was in french, I kept searching words in my mind, because I was thinking in english and it wasn't going well in that area." The second stress factor was the fact the interviewer asked a question not on the list they had been provided with: "I did not expect to be asked a personal question as my first question. That actually made me feel uncomfortable." The third stress factor was the expectation of the interviewer to potentially hire one of the students for a *stage* as well as the language factor: <<Very nervous, >> In my case, I knew the guy might actually be interested in hiring me, even though it was just a mock interview. Also, since the interview was mostly in French, it kind of threw me, since my French isn't as good as my English." The last factor had to do with the environment: "I felt pretty nervous. It wasn't because I wasn't prepared, but because I was focussing mainly on sounding very professional and not messing up. It was also very warm in the tv studio, so that didn't help. (My interviewer) made me feel very relaxed."

As far as being prepared for the practice interview, four felt unprepared: "I believe that I could have been better prepared"; "No I was not, I don't believe in preparing for interviews… I find it fake… I go with the flow;" "Not really, I always felt like missing something;" "More or less. I did prepare my list of question, and I practiced them;" "In reality I was, in my head probably not. I practiced the questions and scenarios over and over again." Overall, the participants felt prepared: "Yes I was fairly prepared. I practiced my questions;" "I was pretty much prepared;" "I was very well prepared, which helped a lot;" and "Yes, I had practiced the preparation questions."

When asked if the practice had been helpful, five students felt it was, one somewhat and three did not: "Yes it was helpful, when the guest speaker came and talked to us about what to do and what not to do in an interview;" "Yes it was very helpful… our class we spend with (the counsellor) also helped, we received more questions and scenarios from (the counsellor);" "Yes, it helps me a lot;" "Answering the questions out-loud was a big help in preparing me and making me feel comfortable at the actual interview;" "Yes, a bit. It helped me anticipate some of the interviewer's questions and relieved me a bit of my nervousness." In one case a respondent felt unprepared because the interviewer asked a few spontaneous questions: "Well in this situation not really because my interviewer's questions were not very conventional, … did not ask any of the questions I had practiced;" and a couple did not feel they had practiced: "What practice?" and "We did not really practice exactly in the format of a regular interview."

2.4. *Stage* **request – Phone Calls**

Journal 4 was requested on week 12 and asked:

This time your telephone requests for interviews were to obtain a *stage*.

Describe the phone call(s):
How did you feel during the call? (please describe your
emotions)
Were you prepared?
How was the practice done before hand helpful?
What was missing?
How were these calls different from the request for an
information meeting?
Please give details on your state of mind during your
conversation(s).
Do you have any comments?

Journal 4 was requested after the students had finished the practice
interview process. This journal was to follow their phone calls to request a real
stage interview. None of the participants chose to answer it. A possible
explanation is that they did them on their own time and not in a structured fashion
as with the calls for the information interview. In addition, these calls were made
during a very busy moment of the semester where many assignments were due.
The participants often had to leave messages and had to wait for the call back; the
use of the call center was inappropriate at this point and because of this timing
issue, that journal was not completed.

2.5.   Self perception – Levels of CA at the end of the course

Journal 5 was requested on week 16 and asked:

You have just obtained the results of the second PRCA and a
stage position (hopefully!).
Considering that 80 is an average level of communication
apprehension and that 120 is a very high level of CA:
How do you feel about your communication apprehension levels
now?
How were the activities done in this class helpful to you?
If your levels of CA went up, how do you explain it? Which
activity made you more apprehensive?
Do you have any comments on the activities we did during the
semester?

Journal 5 was requested on the last day of the semester; nine participants responded. When asked how they felt about their CA levels now, they were mostly satisfied: "I feel really confident and comfortable with my communication apprehension levels at the moment. I feel like this because of the amount of practices / activities we did in class, which helped us become better." "I feel they're a bit lower than at first, The prospect of an interview doesn't freak me out anymore;" "Well they're better than they were before and that's good. I'm actually quite surprised on how they improved, as I still consider myself to be a bit shy." And the last one: "I don't know...I guess ok."

> They were asked how the activities done in this class were helpful to them: "The activities helped us understand which comfort level we were at and slowly we all build ourselves in the way were we would be most confident;" "They helped because we got tips on how to be more comfortable and we got to practice and watch ourselves so this helpe a lot;"

> Practicing interviews, phonecalls, etc was very hands on. We felt comfortable with our classmates which got us used to communicating with a certain business vocabulary. When it was time to complete tasks (find a stage, call up emplyers) we were well prepared. All the activities were good practice … Calling companies to have an informational interview made it easier the second time around to call and inquire for a stage.

"Well all the activities I've done in class helped me to show where exactly I am… (and) helped getting me more confortable with things that I don't do often;"

> They helped me confront my fears in terms of communications, especially the information interview because it really was about contacting people that I didn't know or anything, and it helped me see that talking on the phone isn't so scary afterall.

"The hands on kind of training helpe me realize that interviews aren't as scary as I always thought. It helped build my confidence a lot. The prospect of an interview doesn't freak me out anymore;"

> Activities in the class were very helpful …because many of the activities were hands on practice, which helped me put what we learned into practice. Theory is good, but practice makes better. the general fact that we practiced a lot helped me because when it was time to evaluate or a real life situation, I was a lot better prepared.

When asked to comment on their final PRCA/EI scores and which activity made them more apprehensive a couple of the participants seemed to misunderstand the numbers but gave interesting answers nevertheless:

> My level of CA did go up and because of a lot of practice I am now really relaxed speaking during an interview. The activity that made me more apprehensive would be the Video interview... At the end of the interview (my interviewer) mentioned to me the errors that I had made during the interviews and the fact that I should avoid them, such as to elaborate myself much more. Meaning, I should have explained my work much more. (this student's actual CA went down by a couple of points)

> All the activities were good practice and clearly contributed to the fact that my score increased. Calling companies to have an informational interview made it easier the second time around to call and inquire for a stage. (this student's actual CA scores went down by a couple of points)

> I dont remember the exact activities that made my CA levels go up, but the general fact that we practiced a lot helped me because when it was time to evaluate or a real life situation, I was a lot better prepared. (this student's CA also went down by a couple of points)

The last respondent had average CA at the beginning and low CA in the end: "I guess the activities we did helped getting me more comfortable with things that I don't do often."

Only a few students provided additional comments: "Only comments would be that students with more difficulty or with a lower (he meant higher) CA score to get more practice time or help/guidelines with the teachers" and finally: "I believe that we should have done a practice interview before doing the actual video interview. The video interview was tense according to me. We should have at least practiced in class with our instructor."

This chapter has presented the findings from the PRCA/EI questionnaire, and the reflective journals. The significance of these findings and their possible implications are discussed further in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to assess whether instructional strategies based on cognitive psychology (Tardif, 1997) would reduce their levels of CA while interviewing for a *stage*. The instructional strategies that were examined and tested in this project were the following: preparation of scripts, monitoring phone calls and videotaping practice interviews as well as providing in-class access to professional assistance. The PRCA/EI (McCroskey, 1984, Wongprasert, 2000) was used to gather scientific measurements of the participants' levels of CA both at the beginning and at the end of the Career Planning course. Open-ended reflective journals gathered data on the impact specific instructional strategies had on the participants. The results of the PRCA/EI were consistent with previous research and there was a positive impact on the participants since levels of CA were reduced; the analysis of the reflective journals gave additional information on the students' confidence levels.

There was significant statistical difference for the pre and post PRCA/EI with a p value of 0.01 (<0.05). Therefore, as Wongprasert & Ayres (2000) predicted, an in-person approach (p. 31) was effective overall and the participants became more competent and confident through rehearsal. The primary question of this study suggested that the shift might be larger for the interview apprehension subscale since the instructional strategies used focussed on interviews. This was not the case, as seen in Figure 6, since levels of CA were not reduced more dramatically in the Interview sub-scale than in any of the other sub-scales. Descriptively, some difference was apparent in all the subscales and more importantly, the differences in every category were all in the same direction, lower. The fact that these differences were not statistically significant in each subscale may be a result of the small sample size. A larger sample might have resulted in lower probability values.

Relationships between sub-scales results show no correlation since overall, one participant scored higher in four of the subcategories of the post-test, one scored higher in three of the subcategories of the post-test and one scored higher in two of the subcategories of the post-test. The participant who scored higher in two sub-categories never completed the course, attended less than 50% of the classes, and chose not to answer any of the journals.

In the next section, the reflective journals have been analysed with respect to the main instructional strategies used in this course.

Tardif (1997) states the teacher is responsible for providing a stimulating environment that is conducive to assist and motivate knowledge acquisition while promoting active learning. This was done by using a variety of different activities in different environments. Sometimes there would be group discussions. Other times there would be quiet moments where they could reflect. A call centre was used for the phone calls, and role-playing and simulations were done with and without a counsellor. More importantly, by recording their performance in the TV studio, students could further visualize their performance then realize and correct some of their weaknesses. The instructional strategies that were chosen in this course were very explicit and repetitive and designed to build student confidence in their skills during the interview process. To further encourage the students to take responsibility for their own learning, some activities were followed by group meetings that involved discussing new knowledge and how this new knowledge could apply to possible real-life, industry-related needs. Reflective open-ended journals assessed whether participants were drawing the correct conclusions as recommended by Tardif (1997). Content analysis of these reflective journals provided specific information on the impact of selected instructional strategies on the levels of CA of the respondents. The following section will discuss the effects of these strategies on the participants.

We accept that these participants already have a knowledge base they are drawing upon (Mayer, 1991; Tardif, 1997; Wittrock, 1978), and parallels were made to show how a skill learned in a different context could be used in the professional field, so that emphasis was put on metacognition (Slavin, 1994, Tardif, 1997). For example, a student who pays attention to detail in their file organization for school could easily transfer that skill to the workplace. Few of the participants believed they had skills that could be useful at first. A group discussion followed the inventory of their skills in the first week of class and each was asked to tell the group what they considered their best professional skill. Then, others from the group were asked to describe how this skill could be transferred to the professional field. During this discussion, students were often amazed when others made links between their skills and how useful those could be in the workforce; others always had a different perspective of their strengths. This group exercise facilitated the skills inventory assignment. Students became more secure about their acquired skills and when encouraged to identify the knowledge they had acquired, they were able to make transfers as anticipated by Driscoll (2000).

When asked, participants felt their levels of CA obtained in the PRCA/EI were an accurate representation of how they perceived themselves at the beginning of the semester and their reflective journal entries provide detailed information. Most participants perceived the results of the PRCA/EI as being accurate in describing their perceived levels of CA. These results show a consistency between the PRCA/EI results and the perceptions the participants have of their own levels of CA.

All of the students felt less apprehension communicating with their friends than with strangers but several mention a slight pause when meeting unknown "friends of friends." Communicating with strangers seemed to bring out higher levels of CA even if there could be an expectation of friendliness or

helpfulness in some cases. When communicating with their bosses, most participants stated they had no problems communicating at a professional level even if they made an effort to be well perceived (Chen, 1993) in their attitudes and in their speech. Several make a mention of discomfort or anxiety in certain professional situations and this anxiety was linked to the hierarchy relationship.

Preparing to make calls to industry leaders in order to get an information interview was a major teaching strategy that participants gave feedback on. Again, it was anticipated that the experience acquired during this information interview would transfer to *stage* interviews and would later be reapplied in employment interviews. At this point, a campus guidance counsellor, specialized in employment strategies, was invited in the classroom (Webb, 2006). This strategy was devised to counter the fact students are reluctant to use available resources on campus (Kuo, Hagie and Miller, 2004) and an alternative was effectively provided in the classroom. The visit was well received by both the students and the counsellor who appreciated this informal contact with the students. Scripts were written, and then rehearsed. As Ayres found (Ayres & al., 1998, as cited in Buxton, 1997), a few students with high CA levels did not compete well in employment interviews due to their fear of communicating. Since they believed they had less chance of success, they spent less time preparing for interviews (Daly & al., 1979, as cited in Wongprasert & al., 2000). A few participants saw no value in the rehearsal because they did not feel it was "real," but overall the rehearsal gave them more confidence.

On the day the calls were made, anxiety was high overall. A few minutes were spent doing breathing exercises before touching the phones, and the exercises had a calming effect (Ayres & Hopf, 1985; 1993, as cited in Buxton, 1997). Nevertheless, the students that were the most nervous were quite vocal about it and they created tension in the classroom. It was interesting to see how other students would either block them out or try to help soothe their fears; the

peer support was not anticipated. Several students were fearful of being rejected and the informational interview strategy was devised to allow students to experience a less threatening situation. This strategy was a first step in the scaffolding process since industry leaders were more receptive to giving information than employment interviews. When students would get an interview, they would get up and write the name of the company on the board. The participants wanted the slight competitive feeling to motivate them and the whole class agreed.

After they obtained the informational interview, a general feeling of relief and pride was apparent. The participants felt very positive and they used words like "relieved and exited", "all relax [sic] and happy", "elated", "I felt a rush" and finally, "I was so confident in myself" to describe their emotional state after obtaining the interview. This success encouraged them to feel more competent and helped lower the levels of CA. The perception the participants had concerning their levels of preparation varied. A few felt unprepared and refused to rehearse; it was interesting to note that when in high CA mode, participants indeed spent less time preparing as Daly & al. (1979), (cited in Wongprasert & al, 2000) found in their study. However, the majority of the participants found value in writing down scripts and rehearsing before making the calls.

There were many strategies involved in the preparation of the informational interview. Not only did the students get to practice making "cold calls," which was very stressful to several of them, but also they visited companies that provide graphic communication services. They all saw different environments in a non-threatening fashion (Webb, 2006) since those companies were very receptive to giving information about their services. By conducting the informational interview some of the anxiety that is normally associated with talking to strangers (Driscoll, 2000) was also removed. "If asking for help from a service, there's always an expectation of being friendly [sic]." Once again, the

repetition helped strengthen the acquisition of knowledge (Tardif, 1997) and lower their levels of CA.

The next major strategy was the practice interview. Wongprasert & Ayres (2000) specifically mentioned that the visualization of a taped interview did not seem to lower CA. They raised the possibility that experiencing formal interviews would provide skills and competencies and thus lower their levels of CA. It was the intention of this research to assess this. For this, students prepared for several weeks; more specifically, they rehearsed answers to a list of questions that was provided to them and to preselected employers/interviewers, and they researched the company of their assigned interviewer. They also spent time analysing previous graduates' *stage* reports for background information. They wrote and sent a letter requesting an interview and attached their resumes, as in real life. They went through the interview and sent a thank you letter to their interviewer. Not only was the practice interview organized as a rehearsal, but the whole process, from researching the company, writing a request letter including all pertinent documents, going through the interview process and the thank you letter afterwards was all carefully planned and executed. The participants took an active role in their learning, as Tardif (1997) advocates.

When asked how they felt during the interview, two participants mentioned the fact they were being filmed as a stress factor. This was expected and to counter this stress level, students were exposed to a videotaped interview in their first semester of the program. Two years later, in their fifth semester, they seemed to have forgotten that experience. A few students felt somewhat nervous at first, and then relaxed to some extent. Others felt more confident and they mentioned in their journals that it was due to their preparation level. A couple of students had refused to rehearse and their lack of preparation was their own choice (Daly & al., 1979, as cited in Wongprasert & Ayres, 2000).

An unexpected factor during the practice interviews was the fact some interviewers asked questions that were not on the list. Students had been forewarned of this and it was valuable to them since this reflected real life situations. Another factor that surprised a few of them was that one of the interviewers chose to do the interviews in French. Students were notified about this and asked to volunteer for the French interviews but it caused some stress nevertheless.

The literature on educational research that was reviewed for this study brought forth several avenues of inquiry. Aspects that were not conclusive include cultural variance (Pryor, Butler & Boehringer, 2005) and academic performance (Everett, 1999). Cultural factors could not be assessed because only two of the participants were of Asian descent; the CA levels of one of these participants did not vary in the pre and post results of the PRCA/EI and the second participant dropped out of the course during the semester and didn't answer any journals. These results were therefore not representative and perhaps the level of integration of these students in our westernized society should be taken into consideration. As far as academic performance was concerned, the participants' grade point average was not measured against the levels of CA.

Metacognition was achieved at several levels. Student 1 definitely identified the scaffolding in place in this course (Tardif, 1997) when he wrote: "The activities helped us understand which comfort level we were at and slowly we all build ourselves in the way were we would be most confident." Several students described in their own words the transfers (Slavin, 1994) they experienced. They were able to verbalize how practising scripts and visualizing their performance reinforced the acquisition of skills and made it easier subsequently.

Buxton (1997) suggested a combination of strategies to overcome CA. In this case, the informational interview allowed for a non-threatening practice of the process of calling up employers and experiencing an interview. The practice interview also provided experience in the whole process of employment research. Coping mechanisms (Kuo, Hagie and Miller, 2004) were successfully addressed by inviting a professional counsellor in class and participants' feedback showed improved student outcomes (Webb, 2006).

Overall, all participants who responded to the reflective journal questions felt positive about the contribution of this preparatory career course to their CA levels. Conclusions and recommendations are further explained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The objectives of this research were to assess whether the instructional strategies offered in this course would lower communication apprehension levels in participants and also to further ongoing investigation in career programs in Quebec so that decisions on curriculum can be evidence-based.

The nature of the pedagogical instructional strategies had a positive impact on lowering levels of CA overall. Positive conclusions were drawn by the students as to the usefulness of these activities. It is also clear from this research that the levels of CA were lowered. Were the levels of CA lowered more by the nature of the course or more by the effort to raise their levels of consciousness about their learning? Probably a mixture of both although the instruments used were not devised to detect such facts. As recommended by Tardif (1997), the teacher in this project made available appropriate environments by providing access to a professional counsellor, the call centre, the TV studio, and the private room to view the tapes. The teacher also selected stimulating activities and constantly checked whether the correct conclusions were drawn. Corrective measures were immediate whether taken within groups or in private with each student.

Aspects that were not conclusive include cultural variance (Pryor, Butler & Boehringer, 2005) and perhaps this is because of the level of integration of these students in our westernized society, and academic performance (Everett, 1999); their grade point average was not measured against the levels of CA.

This study was limited by the small sample size, such as which could not be helped in this case but could be avoided in a larger scale investigation, and the effects of self-reports are possibly biased due to the free writing style adopted for

the journal entries. It was also weakened by the fact that not all students completed all of the questions and in one case, a student decided not to answer any of the requested journals. To further improve the response rate from the participants perhaps a short period could be formally reserved in the classroom to allow for the writing of journals.

Another major weakness in this research was that students were not taught formally about metacognition or how to monitor it. They were informally introduced to the concept but it was not carried through to the end of the semester. Richardson's (2003) recommendations regarding the five characteristics of a constructivist approach to pedagogy could be more rigorously applied, particularly the last one where he recommends that students should be made aware of their learning process.

Recommendations on further studies would be to better align the content requested in the reflective journals with the tool to measure CA. For example, in this case public speaking was not covered by the curriculum while it was a sub-category of the PRCA24. Measuring academic performance against levels of CA might be an interesting indicator to use in light of the student success factor with a larger sample.

Results of this study show support to previous research but to get a clearer picture at Champlain Saint-Lambert, a larger scale study combining quantitative and qualitative methods needs to be pursued. With access to student grades and other data, this larger study could perhaps point towards elements that may be implemented to promote student success and might help identify some students who are more at risk of failing. Investigating how the perception of other's perception differs from self-perception might also be of interest in an effort to lower CA levels.

Program specific recommendations include that students be exposed to videotaped interviews more often, perhaps once a year in this three-year program. Getting them used to being filmed might help lower CA caused by the filming process. Students should be better prepared for unexpected questions during interviews since it seems to be more reflective of real life situations and there should be a better scaffolding of rehearsals. Varied approaches starting from informal practice with their peers, followed by formal rehearsals with one of their instructors could prove valuable before the actual practice interview. Lastly, more integration of the process should be done in the French curriculum. Perhaps running a rehearsal in French for each of the students would be beneficial to their overall levels of preparation for the employment market in Quebec. Following the graduates formally for a couple of years in their search for employment might also yield interesting elements to integrate in the curriculum and make it evidence-based.

Some of these recommendations have already been implemented in the Career Preparation course; for example, students are now asked to prepare for unexpected questions and are required to practice the answers to preparation questions with their peers. In conclusion, the pedagogy used in this course benefited the students and increased their sense of preparedness for when they leave the college and begin their careers.

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EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

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APPENDIX F
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