EFSP Auxiliary ESL Curriculum

Construction and Architecture English

Instructor guide for advanced ESL learners working in construction and architecture

Audience: architects, construction managers, project engineers, site supervisors, estimators, owners' representatives, subcontractor coordinators, and design-build teams

Focus: A construction and architecture English curriculum for design intent, RFIs, change orders, site coordination, safety, schedule pressure, permitting, punch lists, claims, and client communication.

Designed for advanced ESL learners who already use professional English and need industry-specific terminology, realistic meetings, role-play pressure, careful pushback, and polished workplace outputs.

Teaching stance: this is language and workplace-communication training, not legal, medical, financial, safety, or regulatory advice. Instructors should connect every scenario to the learner's current company policies, local rules, and approved procedures.

Purpose and Course Logic

A construction and architecture English curriculum for design intent, RFIs, change orders, site coordination, safety, schedule pressure, permitting, punch lists, claims, and client communication.

Core language challenge

Advanced learners do not only need vocabulary. They need the ability to ask which standard applies, who owns the decision, what evidence is sufficient, what risk is being accepted, and how to disagree without sounding vague, defensive, or reckless.

Each module trains a realistic workplace pressure point with role-specific terms, decision language, pushback practice, and a written output learners can adapt to their own work.

Course objectives

- Use construction and architecture terminology accurately in meetings, written updates, handoffs, escalations, reviews, and client or stakeholder conversations.
- Turn vague requests into specific questions about evidence, owner, deadline, constraint, risk, and decision rights.
- Push back on unsafe, unsupported, noncompliant, unrealistic, or poorly scoped proposals while preserving professional trust.
- Handle realistic dialogues from the field, including conflict, uncertainty, documentation gaps, customer or stakeholder pressure, and cross-functional disagreement.
- Produce concise workplace outputs: briefing notes, escalation updates, meeting scripts, risk memos, decision records, and follow-up messages.

Instructor Module Plans

Module 1. Design Intent and Client Requirements (90 minutes)

Clarify aesthetic, functional, code, and budget constraints.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: design intent, program, constructability, scope.
- Explain the workplace tension: Scope, fee, schedule, code, and constructability implications need review.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Update the drawings immediately.
- Draft a usable design-change response with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A client requests a major design change late in design development.

Update the drawings immediately.

Scope, fee, schedule, code, and constructability implications need review.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.

4. Output lab: draft and revise a design-change response.

Module 2. Drawings, Specifications, and RFIs (90 minutes)

Resolve ambiguity without assigning blame.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: RFI, specification, drawing set, submittal.
- Explain the workplace tension: Contract documents, RFI process, schedule impact, and design response are needed.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Tell them to follow the drawings.
- Draft a usable RFI response summary with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A subcontractor says drawings conflict with specifications.

Tell them to follow the drawings.

Contract documents, RFI process, schedule impact, and design response are needed.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a RFI response summary.

Module 3. Change Orders and Cost Control (90 minutes)

Discuss changes using entitlement, impact, and documentation language.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: change order, allowance, contingency, notice.
- Explain the workplace tension: Contract terms, notice, evidence, schedule, and pricing must be reviewed.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Reject it because the budget is tight.
- Draft a usable change-order evaluation with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A subcontractor submits a change order for hidden conditions.

Reject it because the budget is tight.

Contract terms, notice, evidence, schedule, and pricing must be reviewed.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.

4. Output lab: draft and revise a change-order evaluation.

Module 4. Schedule, Sequencing, and Critical Path (90 minutes)

Explain delay risk with dependency language.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: critical path, float, lookahead schedule, resequencing.
- Explain the workplace tension: Critical path, float, resequencing, crew availability, and weather risk matter.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Ask all trades to recover the time.
- Draft a usable schedule impact update with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Steel delivery delay threatens enclosure work.

Ask all trades to recover the time.

Critical path, float, resequencing, crew availability, and weather risk matter.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a schedule impact update.

Module 5. Site Safety and Toolbox Talks (90 minutes)

Stop unsafe work and explain why.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: PPE, fall protection, toolbox talk, stop work.
- Explain the workplace tension: Safety requirements, stop-work authority, training, and documentation apply.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Remind them quickly and continue.
- Draft a usable toolbox safety talk with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A crew works at height without proper fall protection.

Remind them quickly and continue.

Safety requirements, stop-work authority, training, and documentation apply.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.

4. Output lab: draft and revise a toolbox safety talk.

Module 6. Permitting, Inspections, and Code Issues (90 minutes)

Communicate authority and compliance constraints.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: permit, inspection, code compliance, reinspection.
- Explain the workplace tension: Code interpretation, approved drawings, corrective work, and reinspection are required.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Ask the inspector to be flexible.
- Draft a usable inspection correction plan with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

An inspector rejects an installation detail.

Ask the inspector to be flexible.

Code interpretation, approved drawings, corrective work, and reinspection are required.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a inspection correction plan.

Module 7. Quality, Punch List, and Closeout (90 minutes)

Define completion and acceptance clearly.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: punch list, substantial completion, warranty, closeout.
- Explain the workplace tension: Life safety, substantial completion, warranties, and closeout documents need clarity.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Hand over the space anyway.
- Draft a usable punch-list closeout plan with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

The client wants occupancy while punch items remain.

Hand over the space anyway.

Life safety, substantial completion, warranties, and closeout documents need clarity.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.

3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a punch-list closeout plan.

Module 8. Claims, Disputes, and Documentation (90 minutes)

Preserve facts during conflict.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: claim, daily report, meeting minutes, entitlement.
- Explain the workplace tension: Daily reports, notices, photos, meeting minutes, and contract language matter.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Argue from memory.
- Draft a usable claim chronology with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A delay dispute emerges after months of informal changes.

Argue from memory.

Daily reports, notices, photos, meeting minutes, and contract language matter.

Classroom sequence

1. Terminology drill: define each term, then use it in one sentence from the learner's own role.
2. Risk map: identify the stakeholder, the decision, the evidence gap, the operating constraint, and the cost of being wrong.
3. Pushback ladder: move from clarifying question to evidence-based objection to consequence to decision request.
4. Output lab: draft and revise a claim chronology.

Nomenclature and Jargon

These are classroom working definitions. Learners should adapt wording to their organization's policies, systems, and local regulatory environment.

Design Intent and Client Requirements

Term	Working meaning
design intent	Working construction and architecture term used in design intent and client requirements; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
program	Working construction and architecture term used in design intent and client requirements; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
constructability	Working construction and architecture term used in design intent and client requirements; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
scope	Defined boundary of work, responsibility, deliverables, assumptions, and exclusions.

Drawings, Specifications, and RFIs

Term	Working meaning
RFI	Working construction and architecture term used in drawings, specifications, and rfis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Term	Working meaning
specification	Working construction and architecture term used in drawings, specifications, and rfis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
drawing set	Working construction and architecture term used in drawings, specifications, and rfis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
submittal	Working construction and architecture term used in drawings, specifications, and rfis; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Change Orders and Cost Control

Term	Working meaning
change order	Working construction and architecture term used in change orders and cost control; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
allowance	Working construction and architecture term used in change orders and cost control; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
contingency	Working construction and architecture term used in change orders and cost control; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
notice	Working construction and architecture term used in change orders and cost control; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Schedule, Sequencing, and Critical Path

Term	Working meaning
critical path	Sequence of dependent work that determines the shortest feasible timeline.
float	Working construction and architecture term used in schedule, sequencing, and critical path; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
lookahead schedule	Working construction and architecture term used in schedule, sequencing, and critical path; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
resequencing	Working construction and architecture term used in schedule, sequencing, and critical path; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Site Safety and Toolbox Talks

Term	Working meaning
PPE	Working construction and architecture term used in site safety and toolbox talks; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
fall protection	Working construction and architecture term used in site safety and toolbox talks; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
toolbox talk	Working construction and architecture term used in site safety and toolbox talks; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
stop work	Working construction and architecture term used in site safety and toolbox talks; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Permitting, Inspections, and Code Issues

Term	Working meaning
permit	Working construction and architecture term used in permitting, inspections, and code issues; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Term	Working meaning
inspection	Working construction and architecture term used in permitting, inspections, and code issues; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
code compliance	Working construction and architecture term used in permitting, inspections, and code issues; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
reinspection	Working construction and architecture term used in permitting, inspections, and code issues; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Quality, Punch List, and Closeout

Term	Working meaning
punch list	Working construction and architecture term used in quality, punch list, and closeout; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
substantial completion	Working construction and architecture term used in quality, punch list, and closeout; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
warranty	Working construction and architecture term used in quality, punch list, and closeout; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
closeout	Working construction and architecture term used in quality, punch list, and closeout; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Claims, Disputes, and Documentation

Term	Working meaning
claim	A statement that may need evidence, approval, qualification, or disclosure before it is used externally.
daily report	Working construction and architecture term used in claims, disputes, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
meeting minutes	Working construction and architecture term used in claims, disputes, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
entitlement	Working construction and architecture term used in claims, disputes, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Industry-Specific Meeting Moves

Situation	Useful language
Design Intent and Client Requirements	Before we commit, I want to confirm design intent, program, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If scope, fee, schedule, code, and constructability implications need review., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Drawings, Specifications, and RFIs	Before we commit, I want to confirm RFI, specification, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If contract documents, rfi process, schedule impact, and design response are needed., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Change Orders and Cost Control	Before we commit, I want to confirm change order, allowance, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If contract terms, notice, evidence, schedule, and pricing must be reviewed., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Schedule, Sequencing, and Critical Path	Before we commit, I want to confirm critical path, float, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If critical path, float, resequencing, crew availability, and weather risk matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.

Situation	Useful language
Site Safety and Toolbox Talks	Before we commit, I want to confirm PPE, fall protection, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If safety requirements, stop-work authority, training, and documentation apply., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Permitting, Inspections, and Code Issues	Before we commit, I want to confirm permit, inspection, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If code interpretation, approved drawings, corrective work, and reinspection are required., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Quality, Punch List, and Closeout	Before we commit, I want to confirm punch list, substantial completion, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If life safety, substantial completion, warranties, and closeout documents need clarity., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Claims, Disputes, and Documentation	Before we commit, I want to confirm claim, daily report, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If daily reports, notices, photos, meeting minutes, and contract language matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.

High-pressure pushback frames

- I understand the urgency. The risk is that we move faster than the evidence or process supports.
- I am not blocking the goal. I am naming the condition we need before the decision is safe and credible.
- If we accept this risk, we should name the owner, document the assumption, and define the trigger for escalation.
- That may be possible, but not under the current scope, timeline, or approval path.
- Let's separate what we know, what we assume, and what still needs confirmation.

Assessment and Coaching

Performance rubric

Skill	Developing	Proficient	Strong
Terminology	Recognizes terms but uses them loosely.	Uses field terms accurately in context.	Defines terms, connects them to evidence, and explains decision impact.
Pushback	Disagrees vaguely or avoids disagreement.	Names concern with evidence and next step.	Balances urgency, relationship, risk, owner, and decision rights.
Scenario judgment	Focuses on one stakeholder's preference.	Identifies constraint, risk, and process.	Guides the group toward a documented, realistic decision.
Written output	Writes general summaries.	Produces clear notes with facts and owner.	Creates concise, decision-ready workplace communication.

Source orientation

- Project contracts, drawings, specifications, and local codes.
- OSHA or local construction safety requirements.
- Permitting, inspection, and closeout procedures.
- The learner's own company policies, SOPs, contracts, systems, templates, and approved communication standards.