

# Higher Education and Research English Dialogue Lab

Realistic field-specific dialogues, role-play variations, and observer checklists

**Audience: faculty, postdoctoral researchers, graduate students, lab managers, research administrators, grant staff, ethics-board coordinators, and academic program leaders**

Focus: A higher education and research English curriculum for grant proposals, lab meetings, peer review, research ethics, authorship, data management, academic presentations, and institutional collaboration.

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.

# Dialogue Practice Method

Read each exchange once for meaning, once for tone, and once for decision structure. Then replace the ESL learner line with a version from the learner's own workplace.

## 1. Research Questions and Study Design

### Setting

A lab wants to describe an exploratory study as definitive.

Speaker	Line
Principal investigator	Use stronger language to attract attention.
Postdoc	Hypothesis, design, sample, limitations, and inference must be aligned.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm research question, hypothesis, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Principal investigator	What would let us move forward without slowing everything down?
ESL learner	Let's document the assumption, define the risk trigger, and create a short study-design caveat. Then we can decide whether to proceed, escalate, or revise the plan.

### Language notes

- The learner names the field-specific control point instead of giving a vague no: research question, hypothesis.
- The response preserves the business goal while adding evidence, owner, and next-step discipline.

### Role-play variation

### Observer checklist

- Did the learner name the decision and the risk?
- Did the learner use at least two industry terms accurately?
- Did the learner give a concrete next step without overpromising?

## 2. Grant Proposals and Specific Aims

### Setting

A proposal includes too many objectives for the budget.

Speaker	Line
Grant writer	Keep every aim to look comprehensive.
Principal investigator	Feasibility, significance, innovation, approach, and milestones need balance.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm specific aims, significance, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Grant writer	What would let us move forward without slowing everything down?

Speaker	Line
ESL learner	Let's document the assumption, define the risk trigger, and create a short specific-aims revision. Then we can decide whether to proceed, escalate, or revise the plan.

**Language notes**

- The learner names the field-specific control point instead of giving a vague no: specific aims, significance.
- The response preserves the business goal while adding evidence, owner, and next-step discipline.

**Role-play variation**

**Observer checklist**

- Did the learner name the decision and the risk?
- Did the learner use at least two industry terms accurately?
- Did the learner give a concrete next step without overpromising?

**3. Lab Meetings and Data Challenges**

**Setting**  
 A student presents inconsistent results.

Speaker	Line
Lab manager	Say the data are bad.
Graduate student	Controls, replication, protocol drift, and analysis assumptions need review.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm control, replication, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Lab manager	What would let us move forward without slowing everything down?
ESL learner	Let's document the assumption, define the risk trigger, and create a short lab-meeting question set. Then we can decide whether to proceed, escalate, or revise the plan.

**Language notes**

- The learner names the field-specific control point instead of giving a vague no: control, replication.
- The response preserves the business goal while adding evidence, owner, and next-step discipline.

**Role-play variation**

**Observer checklist**

- Did the learner name the decision and the risk?
- Did the learner use at least two industry terms accurately?
- Did the learner give a concrete next step without overpromising?

## 4. Research Ethics and Human Subjects

### Setting

A researcher wants to use data for a new question outside the approved protocol.

Speaker	Line
Research administrator	Analyze it because the data already exist.
Faculty member	Consent, IRB approval, privacy, and secondary-use rules may apply.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm IRB, informed consent, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Research administrator	What would let us move forward without slowing everything down?
ESL learner	Let's document the assumption, define the risk trigger, and create a short ethics consultation note. Then we can decide whether to proceed, escalate, or revise the plan.

### Language notes

- The learner names the field-specific control point instead of giving a vague no: IRB, informed consent.
- The response preserves the business goal while adding evidence, owner, and next-step discipline.

### Role-play variation

### Observer checklist

- Did the learner name the decision and the risk?
- Did the learner use at least two industry terms accurately?
- Did the learner give a concrete next step without overpromising?

## 5. Authorship, Collaboration, and Credit

### Setting

A collaborator expects authorship after a small advisory role.

Speaker	Line
Postdoc	Agree to avoid conflict.
External collaborator	Contribution, criteria, order, acknowledgments, and publication norms must be explicit.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm authorship, contribution, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Postdoc	What would let us move forward without slowing everything down?
ESL learner	Let's document the assumption, define the risk trigger, and create a short authorship agreement draft. Then we can decide whether to proceed, escalate, or revise the plan.

### Language notes

- The learner names the field-specific control point instead of giving a vague no: authorship, contribution.
- The response preserves the business goal while adding evidence, owner, and next-step discipline.

## Role-play variation

### Observer checklist

- Did the learner name the decision and the risk?
- Did the learner use at least two industry terms accurately?
- Did the learner give a concrete next step without overpromising?

## 6. Peer Review and Revision Responses

### Setting

Reviewers ask for additional analyses outside the original scope.

Speaker	Line
Journal editor	Reject the comment sharply.
Author	Tone, evidence, scope, feasibility, and transparent limitations matter.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm peer review, major revision, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Journal editor	What would let us move forward without slowing everything down?
ESL learner	Let's document the assumption, define the risk trigger, and create a short reviewer-response paragraph. Then we can decide whether to proceed, escalate, or revise the plan.

### Language notes

- The learner names the field-specific control point instead of giving a vague no: peer review, major revision.
- The response preserves the business goal while adding evidence, owner, and next-step discipline.

## Role-play variation

### Observer checklist

- Did the learner name the decision and the risk?
- Did the learner use at least two industry terms accurately?
- Did the learner give a concrete next step without overpromising?

## 7. Data Management and Reproducibility

### Setting

A dataset lacks clear metadata before publication.

Speaker	Line
Data steward	Upload it anyway.

Speaker	Line
Research team	Metadata, code, provenance, privacy, and repository requirements need attention.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm metadata, repository, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Data steward	What would let us move forward without slowing everything down?
ESL learner	Let's document the assumption, define the risk trigger, and create a short data-management checklist. Then we can decide whether to proceed, escalate, or revise the plan.

### Language notes

- The learner names the field-specific control point instead of giving a vague no: metadata, repository.
- The response preserves the business goal while adding evidence, owner, and next-step discipline.

### Role-play variation

### Observer checklist

- Did the learner name the decision and the risk?
- Did the learner use at least two industry terms accurately?
- Did the learner give a concrete next step without overpromising?

## 8. Academic Presentations and Conferences

### Setting

A conference audience challenges the study's generalizability.

Speaker	Line
Conference attendee	Defend every conclusion.
Presenter	Population, context, method, and future work should be addressed calmly.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm generalizability, limitation, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Conference attendee	What would let us move forward without slowing everything down?
ESL learner	Let's document the assumption, define the risk trigger, and create a short conference Q&A response. Then we can decide whether to proceed, escalate, or revise the plan.

### Language notes

- The learner names the field-specific control point instead of giving a vague no: generalizability, limitation.
- The response preserves the business goal while adding evidence, owner, and next-step discipline.

### Role-play variation

### **Observer checklist**

- Did the learner name the decision and the risk?
- Did the learner use at least two industry terms accurately?
- Did the learner give a concrete next step without overpromising?