

Human Resources English Dialogue Lab

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

Audience: HR business partners, recruiters, talent managers, people managers, employee-relations staff, learning teams, compensation analysts, and HR-adjacent leaders

Focus: A human-resources English curriculum for hiring, onboarding, performance feedback, employee relations, investigations, benefits, compensation, policy explanation, workplace conflict, and dignity-preserving directness.

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. Recruiting, Screening, and Candidate Experience

Setting

A hiring manager rejects candidates for not feeling like a fit.

Speaker	Line
Recruiter	Use the manager's intuition.
Hiring manager	Selection criteria, interview evidence, bias risk, and documentation need clarity.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm job requirement, structured interview, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Recruiter	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 candidate-debrief guide. 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: job requirement, structured interview.
- 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. Onboarding and Role Clarity

Setting

A new employee is confused about ownership after two weeks.

Speaker	Line
HR business partner	Tell them to be more proactive.
Team manager	Role scope, manager check-ins, training, and success measures may be unclear.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm role clarity, onboarding, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
HR business partner	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 onboarding reset plan. 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: role clarity, onboarding.
- 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. Performance Feedback and Documentation

Setting

A manager wants to put an employee on a warning after months of vague concerns.

Speaker	Line
HRBP	Issue the warning immediately.
Department manager	The employee may not have received clear expectations, examples, or support.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm performance gap, documentation, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
HRBP	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 performance feedback script. 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: performance gap, documentation.
- 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. Employee Relations and Investigations

Setting

An employee reports harassment by a high performer.

Speaker	Line
Employee-relations specialist	Resolve it quietly because the accused is important.
Senior manager	Investigation process, anti-retaliation, evidence, and confidentiality are critical.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm employee relations, harassment, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Employee-relations specialist	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 investigation intake summary. 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: employee relations, harassment.
- 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. Compensation, Benefits, and Equity

Setting

An employee says a peer is paid more for the same job.

Speaker	Line
Compensation analyst	Promise an immediate adjustment.
Employee	Pay bands, job leveling, equity review, budget, and communication process matter.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm pay band, job level, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
Compensation analyst	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 compensation 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: pay band, job level.
- 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. Policy Communication and Compliance

Setting

A manager wants to make an exception to leave policy.

Speaker	Line
HR operations lead	Approve it because the employee is valued.
Line manager	Consistency, accommodation, legal risk, and manager precedent need review.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm policy, accommodation, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
HR operations lead	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 policy exception review. 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: policy, accommodation.
- 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. Conflict Mediation and Manager Coaching

Setting

Two team leads accuse each other of blocking work.

Speaker	Line
HRBP	Move one of them to another team.
Functional leader	Shared expectations, facts, behavior, and operating agreements should be tested first.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm mediation, behavioral example, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
HRBP	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 mediation opening script. 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: mediation, behavioral example.
- 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. Restructuring and Sensitive Communication

Setting

Leadership plans a reorg but wants managers to hint at it early.

Speaker	Line
People leader	Give employees informal warnings.
Executive	Timing, confidentiality, legal review, messaging, and dignity are essential.
ESL learner	I understand the goal, but we need to separate urgency from control. For this decision, I need to confirm restructuring, position elimination, the owner, and the evidence standard before we commit.
People leader	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 reorg communication 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: restructuring, position elimination.
- 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?