

Supply Chain and Logistics English

Instructor guide for advanced ESL learners working in supply chain and logistics

Audience: supply-chain managers, planners, buyers, logistics coordinators, warehouse leaders, procurement teams, customs staff, and operations managers

Focus: A supply-chain English curriculum for forecasting, shortages, purchasing, inventory, warehouse operations, logistics delays, supplier performance, customs, risk, and crisis 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 supply-chain English curriculum for forecasting, shortages, purchasing, inventory, warehouse operations, logistics delays, supplier performance, customs, risk, and crisis 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 supply chain and logistics 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. Demand Planning and Forecast Bias (90 minutes)

Discuss forecast changes without treating estimates as promises.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: forecast, forecast bias, demand signal, S&OP.
- Explain the workplace tension: Forecast bias, lead time, capacity, and inventory exposure need review.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Increase production commitments immediately.
- Draft a usable demand-planning exception note with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Sales raises the forecast after a promotion begins.

Increase production commitments immediately.

Forecast bias, lead time, capacity, and inventory exposure 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 demand-planning exception note.

Module 2. Procurement and Supplier Performance (90 minutes)

Challenge supplier promises using evidence and contract language.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: purchase order, lead time, OTIF, allocation.
- Explain the workplace tension: Capacity, allocation, purchase order terms, and recovery evidence are unclear.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Accept the promise and update the plan.
- Draft a usable supplier recovery plan with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A supplier misses delivery but promises recovery next week.

Accept the promise and update the plan.

Capacity, allocation, purchase order terms, and recovery evidence are unclear.

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 supplier recovery plan.

Module 3. Inventory, Safety Stock, and Service Levels (90 minutes)

Explain inventory tradeoffs between service and cash.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: safety stock, stockout, service level, SKU.
- Explain the workplace tension: Demand variability, lead time, margin, service level, and stockout risk differ by item.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Cut safety stock by the same percentage.
- Draft a usable inventory segmentation memo with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Finance wants to reduce inventory across all SKUs.

Cut safety stock by the same percentage.

Demand variability, lead time, margin, service level, and stockout risk differ by item.

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 inventory segmentation memo.

Module 4. Warehousing and Fulfillment (90 minutes)

Report warehouse constraints and fulfillment risk.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: pick rate, slotting, cycle count, backlog.
- Explain the workplace tension: Slotting, labor, scanner data, training, and error types need diagnosis.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Add overtime until backlog clears.
- Draft a usable fulfillment recovery update with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Orders are late because pick accuracy is falling.

Add overtime until backlog clears.

Slotting, labor, scanner data, training, and error types need diagnosis.

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 fulfillment recovery update.

Module 5. Freight, Routing, and Carrier Delays (90 minutes)

Communicate transportation risk precisely.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: incoterms, carrier, expedite, ETA.
- Explain the workplace tension: Mode, route, cutoff time, expedite cost, and customer promise need a decision.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Blame the carrier and wait.
- Draft a usable freight escalation notice with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A carrier misses pickup before a major customer shipment.

Blame the carrier and wait.

Mode, route, cutoff time, expedite cost, and customer promise need a decision.

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 freight escalation notice.

Module 6. Customs, Trade Compliance, and Documentation (90 minutes)

Prevent shipment delays caused by incomplete documents.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: HS code, country of origin, commercial invoice, broker.
- Explain the workplace tension: Classification, country of origin, valuation, and document consistency matter.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Ask customs to release it anyway.
- Draft a usable customs hold response with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A shipment is held because the commercial invoice has inconsistent data.

Ask customs to release it anyway.

Classification, country of origin, valuation, and document consistency 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 customs hold response.

Module 7. Supply Risk and Business Continuity (90 minutes)

Discuss disruptions with contingency and prioritization language.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: business continuity, dual sourcing, allocation, constraint.
- Explain the workplace tension: Allocation, alternate sources, inventory position, and customer priority need governance.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Promise no customer impact.
- Draft a usable supply risk brief with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

A port strike threatens inbound components.

Promise no customer impact.

Allocation, alternate sources, inventory position, and customer priority need governance.

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 supply risk brief.

Module 8. Executive S&OP Decisions (90 minutes)

Turn cross-functional disagreement into decisions and assumptions.

Learners should be able to

- Use these terms accurately: S&OP, consensus plan, scenario, owner.
- Explain the workplace tension: The executive team must agree on assumptions, risk, upside, and owners.
- Respond professionally when a stakeholder says: Use the most optimistic demand view.
- Draft a usable S&OP decision summary with facts, caveats, owner, and next step.

Customized scenario

Workplace pressure

Sales, finance, and operations disagree on next quarter's plan.

Use the most optimistic demand view.

The executive team must agree on assumptions, risk, upside, and owners.

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 S&OP decision summary.

Nomenclature and Jargon

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

Demand Planning and Forecast Bias

Term	Working meaning
forecast	Forward-looking estimate based on assumptions, trends, constraints, and known risks.
forecast bias	Working supply chain and logistics term used in demand planning and forecast bias; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
demand signal	Working supply chain and logistics term used in demand planning and forecast bias; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
S&OP	Working supply chain and logistics term used in demand planning and forecast bias; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Procurement and Supplier Performance

Term	Working meaning
purchase order	Working supply chain and logistics term used in procurement and supplier performance; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Term	Working meaning
lead time	Working supply chain and logistics term used in procurement and supplier performance; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
OTIF	Working supply chain and logistics term used in procurement and supplier performance; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
allocation	Working supply chain and logistics term used in procurement and supplier performance; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Inventory, Safety Stock, and Service Levels

Term	Working meaning
safety stock	Working supply chain and logistics term used in inventory, safety stock, and service levels; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
stockout	Working supply chain and logistics term used in inventory, safety stock, and service levels; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
service level	Working supply chain and logistics term used in inventory, safety stock, and service levels; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
SKU	Working supply chain and logistics term used in inventory, safety stock, and service levels; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Warehousing and Fulfillment

Term	Working meaning
pick rate	Working supply chain and logistics term used in warehousing and fulfillment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
slotting	Working supply chain and logistics term used in warehousing and fulfillment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
cycle count	Working supply chain and logistics term used in warehousing and fulfillment; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
backlog	Ordered body of work waiting to be refined, prioritized, assigned, or completed.

Freight, Routing, and Carrier Delays

Term	Working meaning
incoterms	Working supply chain and logistics term used in freight, routing, and carrier delays; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
carrier	Working supply chain and logistics term used in freight, routing, and carrier delays; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
expedite	Working supply chain and logistics term used in freight, routing, and carrier delays; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
ETA	Working supply chain and logistics term used in freight, routing, and carrier delays; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Customs, Trade Compliance, and Documentation

Term	Working meaning
HS code	Working supply chain and logistics term used in customs, trade compliance, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Term	Working meaning
country of origin	Working supply chain and logistics term used in customs, trade compliance, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
commercial invoice	Working supply chain and logistics term used in customs, trade compliance, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
broker	Working supply chain and logistics term used in customs, trade compliance, and documentation; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Supply Risk and Business Continuity

Term	Working meaning
business continuity	Working supply chain and logistics term used in supply risk and business continuity; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
dual sourcing	Working supply chain and logistics term used in supply risk and business continuity; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
allocation	Working supply chain and logistics term used in supply risk and business continuity; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
constraint	Working supply chain and logistics term used in supply risk and business continuity; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.

Executive S&OP Decisions

Term	Working meaning
S&OP	Working supply chain and logistics term used in executive s&op decisions; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
consensus plan	Working supply chain and logistics term used in executive s&op decisions; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
scenario	Working supply chain and logistics term used in executive s&op decisions; define the owner, evidence source, governing document, risk, and decision impact before using it in a meeting.
owner	Named person or role accountable for a decision, action, deliverable, or risk.

Industry-Specific Meeting Moves

Situation	Useful language
Demand Planning and Forecast Bias	Before we commit, I want to confirm forecast, forecast bias, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If forecast bias, lead time, capacity, and inventory exposure need review., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Procurement and Supplier Performance	Before we commit, I want to confirm purchase order, lead time, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If capacity, allocation, purchase order terms, and recovery evidence are unclear., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Inventory, Safety Stock, and Service Levels	Before we commit, I want to confirm safety stock, stockout, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If demand variability, lead time, margin, service level, and stockout risk differ by item., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Warehousing and Fulfillment	Before we commit, I want to confirm pick rate, slotting, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If slotting, labor, scanner data, training, and error types need diagnosis., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.

Situation	Useful language
Freight, Routing, and Carrier Delays	Before we commit, I want to confirm incoterms, carrier, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If mode, route, cutoff time, expedite cost, and customer promise need a decision., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Customs, Trade Compliance, and Documentation	Before we commit, I want to confirm HS code, country of origin, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If classification, country of origin, valuation, and document consistency matter., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Supply Risk and Business Continuity	Before we commit, I want to confirm business continuity, dual sourcing, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If allocation, alternate sources, inventory position, and customer priority need governance., I recommend we document the risk and agree on the next step.
Executive S&OP Decisions	Before we commit, I want to confirm S&OP, consensus plan, the owner, and the evidence behind the decision. If the executive team must agree on assumptions, risk, upside, and owners., 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

- Supplier contracts and purchase terms.
- Trade compliance procedures and customs documentation rules.
- Company S&OP, inventory, and logistics policies.
- The learner's own company policies, SOPs, contracts, systems, templates, and approved communication standards.