

Integrating Workplace Soft Skills in all Levels of ESL Instruction: A Handy Guide
Ronna Magy and Donna Price May 2023

Organized

1. One-word Selfie: a one-word personal description. The word can be a personal quality such as, “happy,” or, a transferable soft skill word such as, “good listener,” or “organized.”

- **Synchronous/Online:** Students select and post one word to introduce themselves and explain to the class/their group why they chose that word. *I am organized.* They find another classmate with whom they have that characteristic in common and discuss commonalities.
- **Asynchronous Homework:** Students write one paragraph about their background and one paragraph about why they chose the specific word that describes them. Written paragraphs can be read aloud in the next class session.
- **Assessment:** Students submit their written assignment to the teacher.
- In **Beginning level classes**, teachers may **scaffold** the activity by providing students with a list of five words to choose from in describing themselves. For example: friendly, helpful, cooperative, on time, organized. Students write one or two sentences about why they selected that word to describe themselves using a written paragraph frame.

I selected _____ to describe myself because _____.

~Adapted from Katie Welch, TESOL 2020: Differentiating instruction in online classrooms

2. Conversation Cards: a set of theme-related (daily routine, work, family, etc.), or grammar based (*Do you? What are? What time? Where? etc.*) conversation questions which students ask and answer.

- **Synchronous/Online:** Students select one question from a question list and ask each other the question. *Do you like to work alone or with other people?*
- **Assessment:** Students report back on what they heard a classmate say.
 T-*What did Maria say about _____? Who remembers?*
 S-*She said that she _____.*
- **Asynchronous Homework:** Students practice the questions and answers orally at home.
- **Asynchronous Homework:** Students write out their answers to questions and submit them to the teacher.

*What are
two things
you like to
do at
work?*

3. Useful Language Phrases: Students practice functional language phrases associated with asking for information, making requests, providing explanations, making amends when something goes wrong, discussing problems or leaving politely.

- **Synchronous/Online:** Teacher posts several phrases in the chat box. When students practice in breakout rooms, they use the phrases when appropriate.
It was nice talking to you.
Thanks for your help.
See you later.
- **Assessment:** Teacher goes in and out of breakout rooms to check if students are using the phrases.

*It was
nice
talking to
you.*

One of the advantages of _____ is _____.

4. Oral Language Frames: a single question, or series of questions followed by language response frames. Language response frames are scaffolds that help students use a **higher level of language/academic language** than they might have used on their own. After practicing with frames, students acquire the language to use the new structures independently.

- **Synchronous/Online:** Students practice asking and answering questions with their partners. Students fill in the language response frames with their own information.

A. *What time did you get up this morning?*

B. *I got up at _____ because _____.*

A. *What is an advantage of getting enough sleep?*

B. *One of the advantages of _____ is _____.*

- **Asynchronous Homework:** Students write a paragraph about the advantages of their work shift, or students write a paragraph about their work hours and work skills. They share their written paragraphs in the next class session with classmates.
- **Assessment:** Students turn their paragraphs in to their teacher for assessment.

5. Written Language Frames: a sentence or paragraph missing key information which is filled in by the writer. These written language frames guide students as they acquire a **higher level of language/academic language** than they might have used on their own.

- **Synchronous/Online:** Students fill in a series of sentence frames which ask for their job history and job skills. After filling in the sentence frames, students use the same sentences to compose a single paragraph job resume.

1. *I came to this country in _____.*

2. *In my home country, I worked as a _____.*

3. *I'm looking for a job as a _____.*

4. *My skills are: I can _____, _____, and _____.*

- **Asynchronous Homework:** Outside of class, using an order of importance paragraph frame (first, second, third, next), students compose a paragraph about the three important events in their life, and their plans for the coming year. In class, in breakout rooms, students share their paragraphs with classmates.
- **Assessment:** Students post their homework paragraphs on the "assignments page" for teacher assessment.

*I'm looking for a job as a _____.
I have many skills. I can ____,
____, ____.*

6. Problem Solving: a theme-based (work, family, community, etc.) problem situation is introduced orally, or through reading a text. In face-to-face classes, students are encouraged to write down problems they are having at work or in the community and put them in a problem box (anonymously). In online classes, students can email the teacher a problem he/she would like help with or write the teacher a problem in the chat box and address it privately to just the teacher. In collaborative groups, working with a team leader, recorder/reporter and timekeeper, students meet and discuss possible solutions and consider the consequences of taking those actions. Groups determine the best solution and report their

I think he should ____ because _____

findings to the whole class. A class poll can be taken and tabulated by the teacher to see which is the most agreed upon solution.

- **Synchronous/Online:** Student groups meet and discuss a problem situation aided by the scaffolding of language frames. Each group selects a leader to guide the discussion.

Ask for an opinion

What do you think she/he should do?

Provide a possible problem solution

I think he/she should _____ because _____.

Consider the consequences of taking an action

If she/he does _____, then _____ might happen.

- **Synchronous/Online:** Group reporters share findings with the class using language frames.
 - *Our group thinks he/she should _____ because _____.*
 - *Some of the people in our group think that she/he should _____ because _____.*
- **Assessment:** The teacher takes a poll to determine the views of class members. The teacher uses language frames to summarize class information.
 - *Our class thinks that he/she should _____ because _____.*
 - *Some of the people in our class think that she/he should _____ because _____.*
 - *Others think that he/she should _____.*
- **Jamboard:** Using the Jamboard feature on Google, students/group reporters brainstorm and post ideas on how to solve the problem. *She/he should _____ because _____.*
https://jamboard.google.com/d/1i064nin8vJJEbDGdbIT1HAmWxHQ_JAEDCi147K6CjU4/viewer?f=0

7. Classroom Jobs: Jobs in both face-to face and online classes which provide students opportunities to learn transferable work skills in practical ways while they are learning English. These jobs boost student engagement while providing teacher support.

- **Synchronous/Online:** Students apply for or are assigned a classroom job for a specific amount of time (a day, a week). Some of the jobs are trainers, news anchor, historian, celebration coordinator, and more. (See charts on p. 5 & 6 of this handout.)
- **Assessment:** Teacher observes how students are doing their jobs and provides individual support as necessary.

8. Exit Tickets: a brief summarizing and evaluative activity conducted at the end of a class.

- **Synchronous/Online:** Students respond to a question about what they learned in class.
 - What workplace skills did you practice today?*
 - What academic skills did you practice today?*
 - What do you want to practice more?*
 - What did you learn today?*
- **Assessment:** Based on student responses, the teacher determines what needs to be reviewed during the next class meeting.
- **Padlet:** Students post their exit comments on Padlet. Both teacher and other class members review the comments. Teachers use the postings to evaluate what students learned, where they need additional instruction, and what they want to know more about.

~Adapted from Sarah Lynn and Susan Reade COABE 2020

*Trainer:
How can I
help you?*

*I want to
learn more
about
writing
emails.*

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Useful Conversational Phrases

<p><u>Bringing in other people</u> What do you think, (person's name)? What's your opinion, " " ? Don't you agree with us, " " ? You're quiet today, " " . What are you thinking, " " ?</p>	<p><u>Responding to criticism</u> Please accept my apology. It won't happen again. I apologize. Please forgive me.</p>
<p><u>Checking another person's understanding</u> Do you follow me? Have you got it? Are you with me? Be sure to ask if you have any questions.</p>	<p><u>Starting a conversation</u> Hi, my name is _____ Excuse me, can I talk to you for a minute? Can I ask you something? Can I talk to you for a minute?</p>
<p><u>Asking for repetition/clarification</u> I didn't catch that. I didn't hear you. I missed that. I'm not following you. Sorry, I don't see what you mean. Would you mind saying that again?</p>	<p><u>Ending a conversation</u> Thanks for your time. Sorry, but I think I should be going now. Well, I don't want to take up any more of your time. I've got to go now. It was nice talking to you.</p>
<p><u>Showing understanding</u> Now I've got it. I understand. I'm with you. Uh-huh. Um-hmm.</p>	<p><u>Saying goodbye</u> It was nice talking to you. Thanks for the information. Talk to you soon. Take care. Take it easy. See you later.</p>
<p><u>Giving advice/suggestions</u> If I were you, I'd ... I suggest that you... I think you should _____ because.... Why don't you... I recommend that you... I think you'd better...</p>	<p><u>Citing evidence</u> According to... The author states that... In the text, _____states that... _____indicated that... _____concluded that...</p>

Kinsella; Zwiers

Student Jobs in the Virtual Classroom		
JOB	JOB DUTIES	LANGUAGE FOR THAT JOB
Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates for other students who need assistance how to do something on a learning platform, either through a “screen share,” or in a breakout room. • Using the chat box, students needing assistance communicate with the trainer asking for help. • May stay after a Zoom class and assist students needing help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What can I help you with?</i> • <i>Let’s meet on Zoom later.</i> <p><i>Digital language:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Click on the arrow.</i> • <i>Scroll down.</i> • <i>Drag and drop, delete, Etc..</i>
Athletic Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a timer. Leads the class in a stretch break for 1-2 minutes in the middle of class time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stand up, stretch, reach, look left and right.</i>
Meteorologist News Anchor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a 1-minute summary of the weather for the day/ week or an important news event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Today the weather is going to be clear, cold, cloudy, windy, etc.</i> • <i>I’m going to share some important news with you.</i>
Zoologist Family Reporter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranges for class members to present for 2 minutes highlighting interesting things about their children or pets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I want to introduce you to my _____.</i> • <i>He/she’s ___ years old. His/her name is ____.</i>
Celebration Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrates holidays and students’ birthdays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Today we celebrate ____</i> • <i>These people have birthdays this month:</i>
Chat Moderator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the teacher is presenting, lets the teacher know if there are questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Excuse me, teacher (Ms. __, Mr. __) ___ has a question.</i> • <i>Sorry to interrupt, but there are a few questions.</i>
Historian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides historical information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>On this day in history ___ happened.</i>
Motivational Speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes a quote/concept explaining why the quote/<i>concept</i> is inspiring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This quote/story is by ____</i> • <i>It inspired me because __</i>

Essential Student Jobs for the Classroom of Tomorrow, by Thom Gibson
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbkRanR1rNU&ab_channel=NewEdTechClassroom

Student Jobs in the Face-to-Face Classroom		
JOB	JOB DUTIES	LANGUAGE FOR THAT JOB
Trainer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help new students. Ask them to sit with you. Introduce yourself. • Show the new students where to sign in. Show them where the materials are. • Help the students feel comfortable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hi. Welcome to the class. My name is ____ What's your name?</i> • <i>Every day you sign this sheet when you come in. When you leave, you sign out. (Show the student the sign-in sheet).</i> • <i>The books and materials are over there in the cabinet. (Show the student).</i> • <i>If you have any questions, please ask me. I can help you.</i>
Materials Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass out papers for the teacher. • Distribute and collect books. • Be sure the cabinet is neat before you leave. • Be sure all materials (dictionaries, books, etc.,) are put away before you leave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Did everyone get a handout?</i> • <i>Here you are. Here you go.</i> • <i>Who needs one?</i> • <i>There is one book missing.</i> • <i>Who forgot to put back the...</i>
Cell Phone Monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politely remind students to turn their cell phones to vibrate or turn them off. Make this announcement about 10 minutes after class starts. • If a cell phone rings during class, politely remind students that it is distracting to hear cell phones in class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Excuse me, I have an announcement.</i> • <i>Please turn your cell phone to vibrate.</i> • <i>Please turn your cell phone off.</i> • <i>It's distracting to hear your cell phone. Please remember to turn it to vibrate.</i>

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Conversation Question Resources:

- 1) Conversation Cards in Collaborative activities in Ventures' online resources:
www.cambridgeone.org
- 2) Conversation Questions for the ESL/EFL Classroom from the Internet TESOL Journal
<http://iteslj.org/questions/>
- 3) *Future: English for Work Life and Academic Success, Multilevel Communicative Activities, Second Edition* (2020). <https://www.pearson.com/english/catalogue/general-english/future-second-edition.html>
- 4) Kathy's Cards by Cathy Jo Seitchik Diaz
- 5) ESL Partyland: <http://eslpartytown.com/>