
Professional Certificate in Teaching English Online in TEFL

Managing Learner Interaction and Community

Affective Filtering – The emotional barrier that can inhibit learner participation. Related terms: anxiety, motivation. Example: A student who feels embarrassed may avoid speaking in live chat. Instructor can lower the filter by creating a supportive tone and using low-stakes activities. Challenge: Balancing honest feedback with maintaining a safe environment.

Alignment of Objectives – Ensuring interaction activities match the lesson’s learning outcomes. Related terms: learning goals, assessment criteria. Example: If the objective is “use present perfect for experiences,” a discussion prompt should require that tense. Challenge: Over-designing tasks that drift from the core aim.

Asynchronous Interaction – Learner communication that does not occur in real time. Related terms: forum posts, email exchanges. Example: Students post video introductions on a discussion board and reply over several days. Challenge: Maintaining momentum and preventing disengagement.

Automated Feedback – Computer-generated responses that guide learners after an interaction. Related terms: rubrics, learning analytics. Example: A quiz auto-marks a peer-review checklist and highlights missing elements. Challenge: Ensuring feedback is pedagogically sound and not overly generic.

Back-Channel Communication – Auxiliary messages that support main interaction, such as emojis, quick polls, or chat notes. Related terms: micro-feedback, real-time cues. Example: During a live lesson, the teacher uses a reaction bar to signal “continue” or “repeat.” Challenge: Preventing distraction while encouraging expressive participation.

Blended Community Building – Combining synchronous and asynchronous methods to foster a sense of belonging. Related terms: hybrid forums, virtual office hours. Example: Weekly live breakout rooms are complemented by a weekly “show-and-tell” thread. Challenge: Coordinating schedules and ensuring equity for all learners.

Breakout Rooms – Small, temporary virtual spaces for focused interaction. Related terms: small-group work, collaborative tasks. Example: In a 30-minute class, learners discuss a case study in groups of three before reporting back. Challenge: Monitoring participation and providing timely support.

Community of Practice – A group of learners who share a common professional interest and develop expertise together. Related terms: peer learning, knowledge sharing. Example: A cohort of aspiring online teachers regularly exchanges lesson plans and critiques. Challenge: Sustaining active contribution beyond the formal course timeline.

Co-Construction of Knowledge – Learners jointly creating meaning through interaction. Related terms: dialogic learning, scaffolding. Example: A collaborative mind-map on idiomatic expressions is built by all participants. Challenge: Guiding contributions so misconceptions are not reinforced.

Collaborative Writing – Joint production of texts using shared digital tools. Related terms: Google Docs, peer editing. Example: Teams compose a blog post on cultural topics, each member adding paragraphs and comments. Challenge: Managing version control and equitable workload.

Communication Accommodation Theory – The idea that speakers adjust language to align with their interlocutor's style. Related terms: convergence, divergence. Example: A teacher mirrors a learner's level of formality to build rapport. Challenge: Avoiding over-accommodation that may hinder authentic language use.

Community Guidelines – Rules that define acceptable behaviour within an online learning space. Related terms: code of conduct, netiquette. Example: A guideline states "no profanity in discussion posts." Challenge: Enforcing rules consistently while respecting cultural differences.

Competency-Based Interaction – Designing tasks that develop specific language competencies (e.g., speaking, listening). Related terms: CEFR levels, skill integration. Example: A speaking task focuses on fluency by requiring a 2-minute oral summary. Challenge: Aligning tasks with diverse proficiency levels.

Contrastive Analysis – Comparing learners' first language structures with target language to anticipate interaction difficulties. Related terms: L1 interference, error analysis. Example: Spanish speakers may overuse the present perfect; the teacher plans corrective feedback accordingly. Challenge: Applying analysis without stereotyping.

Conversation Analysis – The systematic study of talk-in-interaction to uncover patterns such as turn-taking. Related terms: turn-taking, repair. Example: Teachers notice frequent gaps and introduce prompting phrases. Challenge: Translating analytic insights into practical classroom interventions.

Continuous Assessment – Ongoing evaluation of learner interaction, often through formative tasks. Related terms: formative feedback, learning portfolios. Example: Weekly peer-review assignments contribute to a final participation grade. Challenge: Balancing workload for both learners and instructors.

Cooperative Learning – Structured group activities where interdependence is required for success. Related terms: Jigsaw, think-pair-share. Example: Each member researches a grammar point, then teaches it to the group. Challenge: Preventing "social loafing" where some members contribute less.

Critical Incident Technique – Collecting detailed accounts of significant interaction events for analysis. Related terms: reflective journals, case studies. Example: Learners submit a write-up of a moment they felt confident speaking online. Challenge: Encouraging honest reporting without fear of judgment.

Cross-Cultural Communication – Interaction that involves learners from varied cultural backgrounds. Related terms: intercultural competence, cultural awareness. Example: A discussion on holiday traditions reveals differing norms about directness. Challenge: Navigating potential misunderstandings sensitively.

Digital Presence – The way a teacher or learner appears and engages in the virtual environment. Related terms: avatar, profile picture. Example: An instructor posts a weekly video greeting to humanize the course. Challenge: Maintaining authenticity while managing time constraints.

Distributed Cognition – The concept that knowledge is spread across people, tools, and artifacts. Related terms: shared documents, learning analytics dashboards. Example: A collaborative glossary evolves as learners add entries and definitions. Challenge: Ensuring the collective resource remains accurate and useful.

Discussion Board Etiquette – Norms governing respectful and productive forum interaction. Related terms: threading, citation. Example: Students are instructed to “acknowledge at least two peers before posting new ideas.” Challenge: Monitoring compliance without stifling spontaneity.

Discussion Prompt Design – Crafting open-ended questions that stimulate meaningful exchange. Related terms: critical thinking, scaffolded questioning. Example: “Describe a situation where you used the past perfect and explain why it was appropriate.” Challenge: Avoiding prompts that are too vague or too narrow.

Discourse Community – A group that shares a set of discourses, values, and communication practices. Related terms: genre conventions, shared terminology. Example: Learners in a TEFL course develop a common set of classroom management phrases. Challenge: Integrating newcomers into an established discourse.

Dynamic Grouping – Re-assigning learners to different groups based on evolving needs or performance. Related terms: heterogeneous groups, learning pathways. Example: After a diagnostic quiz, stronger writers are paired with emerging writers for peer editing. Challenge: Managing logistics and ensuring fairness.

E-Portfolio – A digital collection of learner work that showcases progress and interaction. Related terms: reflective practice, assessment artefacts. Example: Students upload recorded role-plays, peer feedback, and self-evaluations. Challenge: Providing consistent criteria for evaluation.

Engagement Analytics – Data that tracks learner participation, such as login frequency, post counts, or speaking time. Related terms: learning metrics, dashboards. Example: An instructor notices a drop-off in forum contributions and intervenes with a gamified challenge. Challenge: Interpreting data without over-generalizing.

Equity of Voice – Ensuring all learners have comparable opportunities to speak and be heard. Related terms: participation balance, inclusive pedagogy. Example: The teacher uses a “talking stick” rotation in breakout rooms. Challenge: Respecting cultural preferences for reticence while encouraging contribution.

Error Correction Strategies – Techniques for addressing mistakes during interaction. Related terms: recasting, delayed feedback. Example: After a live discussion, the teacher highlights recurring article errors in a summary post. Challenge: Choosing a method that maintains fluency and confidence.

Feedback Loops – Cyclical processes where learners receive input, adjust, and receive further input. Related terms: iterative improvement, peer review. Example: A student submits a draft, receives peer comments, revises, and resubmits for instructor feedback. Challenge: Keeping loops timely to sustain motivation.

Formative Peer Review – Structured student-to-student evaluation aimed at improvement rather than grading. Related terms: rubric, collaborative assessment. Example: Learners exchange lesson-plan drafts

using a checklist that includes clarity, timing, and interaction techniques. Challenge: Training students to give constructive, objective feedback.

Front-Channel Communication – The primary channel of interaction, such as spoken language in a live class. Related terms: audio stream, video feed. Example: A teacher leads a pronunciation drill via webcam. Challenge: Managing technical issues that can disrupt the main channel.

Gamified Interaction – Applying game elements (points, badges, leaderboards) to encourage participation. Related terms: badging, achievement system. Example: Students earn a “Discussion Dynamo” badge after posting five thoughtful comments. Challenge: Preventing competition from undermining collaborative spirit.

Group Cohesion – The sense of unity and mutual support within a learner group. Related terms: team spirit, social presence. Example: Ice-breaker activities and shared goals foster cohesion in a semester-long project team. Challenge: Rebuilding cohesion after members drop out or change time zones.

Ice-Breaker Activities – Low-stakes tasks designed to reduce anxiety and promote interaction. Related terms: getting-to-know-you, pair-share. Example: Learners exchange two true statements and one false statement about themselves, then guess the falsehood. Challenge: Selecting culturally appropriate prompts.

Identity Negotiation – The process by which learners present and adjust their self-concepts in an online environment. Related terms: self-presentation, digital identity. Example: A shy learner adopts a confident avatar, influencing how peers respond. Challenge: Supporting authentic identity development without encouraging deception.

Instructional Scaffolding – Temporary support structures that enable learners to accomplish tasks beyond their current ability. Related terms: modeling, guided practice. Example: The teacher provides sentence starters for a debate before students speak freely. Challenge: Fading scaffolds at the right moment to promote independence.

Interactional Competence – The ability to manage turn-taking, repair, and politeness in conversation. Related terms: pragmatics, discourse skills. Example: Learners practice requesting clarification using phrases like “Could you repeat that, please?” Challenge: Integrating competence development into content-focused tasks.

Interactive Whiteboard – A shared visual space where participants can draw, annotate, and manipulate content in real time. Related terms: virtual canvas, collaborative annotation. Example: Students collectively label parts of a diagram during a grammar lesson. Challenge: Ensuring all participants can access and control the tool.

Intercultural Sensitivity – Awareness of cultural differences that affect communication styles and expectations. Related terms: cultural humility, cross-cultural awareness. Example: A teacher explains that some cultures view direct eye contact as confrontational, influencing breakout-room dynamics. Challenge: Addressing sensitivity without reinforcing stereotypes.

Learning Community – A network of learners who support each other’s academic growth. Related terms: peer network, social learning. Example: A class forum where members share resources, ask questions, and celebrate milestones. Challenge: Sustaining activity after the formal course ends.

Learning Management System (LMS) – The platform that hosts course materials, communication tools, and assessment features. Related terms: Moodle, Canvas. Example: The LMS provides a discussion board, gradebook, and video conferencing integration. Challenge: Selecting an LMS that balances functionality with ease of use.

Live Chat Moderation – The act of overseeing real-time text communication to maintain focus and decorum. Related terms: moderator role, chat etiquette. Example: A teaching assistant monitors a live chat, redirects off-topic remarks, and highlights key points. Challenge: Keeping moderation unobtrusive while preventing disruptions.

Micro-learning Interactions – Short, focused activities that reinforce concepts in brief bursts. Related terms: nanolearning, spaced repetition. Example: A 2-minute pronunciation drill sent via mobile notification. Challenge: Designing micro-activities that genuinely add value without feeling fragmented.

Multimodal Interaction – Communication that combines several semiotic modes (text, audio, video, gestures). Related terms: visual aids, gesture integration. Example: Learners submit a video where they speak while displaying a relevant image. Challenge: Ensuring all modes are accessible to learners with differing bandwidth or disabilities.

Mutual Aid – Reciprocal support among learners, such as sharing resources or troubleshooting technical issues. Related terms: peer support, collaborative problem-solving. Example: A learner posts a tip for fixing a microphone echo that helps several classmates. Challenge: Recognizing and rewarding informal contributions.

Negotiated Meaning – The process by which interlocutors resolve misunderstandings and co-construct shared understanding. Related terms: repair sequence, clarification request. Example: A student asks “Do you mean ‘present perfect’ or ‘past perfect’?” and the partner clarifies. Challenge: Teaching learners to initiate repair without fear of embarrassment.

Online Office Hours – Scheduled virtual times when instructors are available for informal consultation. Related terms: virtual drop-in, consultation slots. Example: The teacher holds a weekly 30-minute Zoom session for questions about interaction strategies. Challenge: Accommodating learners across time zones.

Peer Coaching – Structured pairing where learners guide each other’s development. Related terms: mentor-mentee, reciprocal tutoring. Example: Two learners rotate roles as “coach” and “coachee” to practice giving constructive feedback on speaking fluency. Challenge: Providing training so coaching is effective and respectful.

Peer-Generated Content – Materials created by learners for the benefit of the community. Related terms: student-authored videos, crowdsourced quizzes. Example: A learner designs a Kahoot! quiz on phrasal verbs for classmates. Challenge: Maintaining quality control and alignment with curriculum standards.

Personal Learning Network (PLN) – An informal collection of contacts, resources, and tools a learner uses for ongoing development. Related terms: social media, professional community. Example: A teacher follows TEFL hashtags on Twitter and shares useful articles in the course forum. Challenge: Guiding learners to curate reputable sources.

Presence Theory – The idea that perceived availability of others influences interaction quality. Related terms: social presence, cognitive presence. Example: Instructors post weekly video updates, increasing students' sense of connection. Challenge: Balancing presence with workload sustainability.

Practice-Based Interaction – Activities that simulate real-world communication scenarios. Related terms: role-play, task-based learning. Example: Learners enact a virtual customer-service call, using scripted prompts and improvisation. Challenge: Designing realistic contexts that still fit time constraints.

Poll-Driven Discussion – Using live polls to generate topics or gauge opinions before group conversation. Related terms: instant polling, data-prompted debate. Example: A poll asks "Which idiom best describes teamwork?" and results shape the ensuing discussion. Challenge: Preventing poll results from dominating the conversation.

Positive Reinforcement – Providing rewards or praise to increase the likelihood of desired interaction behaviours. Related terms: affirmation, reward system. Example: The teacher highlights a student's well-structured argument in the chat. Challenge: Ensuring reinforcement is perceived as genuine and not manipulative.

Pre-Task Planning – Preparing learners with objectives, language, and strategies before an interactive activity. Related terms: task preparation, anticipatory set. Example: Students review useful phrases for agreeing or disagreeing before a debate. Challenge: Allocating sufficient time without over-loading learners.

Presence-Check Activities quick polls, check-in questions. Example: A teacher asks "What's one key point you just heard?" and learners type answers in chat. Challenge: Avoiding interruptions that break flow.

Prompted Peer Interaction – Structured cues that guide learners to engage with each other. Related terms: interaction prompts, guided discourse. Example: "After reading your partner's post, write one question that deepens the topic." Challenge: Designing prompts that are neither too prescriptive nor too vague.

Reflective Journaling – Writing where learners analyze their own interaction experiences. Related terms: self-assessment, metacognition. Example: After a live speaking task, a student notes feelings of confidence and identifies areas for improvement. Challenge: Encouraging honest reflection without excessive grading pressure.

Remote Collaboration Tools – Software that enables joint work across distances. Related terms: Slack, Microsoft Teams. Example: Teams use a shared channel to coordinate a group presentation, posting files and comments. Challenge: Selecting tools that are accessible, secure, and compatible with institutional policies.

Responsive Design – Creating interaction activities that adapt to different devices and screen sizes. Related terms: mobile-friendly, accessibility. Example: A discussion prompt displays correctly on both laptop and smartphone, preserving formatting. Challenge: Testing across multiple platforms to avoid broken layouts.

Rubric-Based Peer Review – Using a detailed scoring guide to standardize feedback. Related terms: evaluation criteria, assessment grid. Example: A rubric lists “use of target language,” “clarity,” and “interaction flow,” each rated on a 1-5 scale. Challenge: Training learners to apply the rubric consistently.

Scalable Interaction Models – Designs that allow the same activity to function with small or large groups. Related terms: massive open online courses (MOOCs), auto-grouping. Example: A forum thread can accommodate 10 learners or 200 by using sub-threads. Challenge: Maintaining meaningful interaction as numbers increase.

Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) – Learners’ ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own interaction practice. Related terms: metacognitive strategies, goal setting. Example: A student sets a weekly goal to initiate three speaking turns in live sessions. Challenge: Providing scaffolds that foster autonomy without abandoning support.

Social Presence – The degree to which learners feel personally connected to others in a virtual space. Related terms: affective engagement, online persona. Example: Teachers share personal anecdotes in introductions, increasing relatability. Challenge: Balancing personal disclosure with professionalism.

Synchronous Interaction – Real-time communication, such as live video, audio, or chat. Related terms: real-time discussion, instant feedback. Example: A live debate on environmental topics, with immediate spoken rebuttals. Challenge: Coordinating time zones and technical reliability.

Task-Based Interaction – Language activities organized around accomplishing a specific outcome. Related terms: information gap, problem-solving task. Example: Learners must negotiate a travel itinerary, using target language structures. Challenge: Ensuring the task is authentic yet manageable within class time.

Technology-Mediated Interaction (TMI) – Any learner communication facilitated by digital tools. Related terms: online chat, virtual whiteboard. Example: A forum discussion on idioms is mediated through the LMS. Challenge: Selecting technology that enhances rather than distracts from learning goals.

Threaded Discussion – Organized forum posts where replies are linked to specific messages. Related terms: nested replies, conversation hierarchy. Example: A student asks a question; peers reply, and the original poster adds a follow-up, forming a clear chain. Challenge: Preventing off-topic divergence that fragments the thread.

Time-Zone Sensitivity – Awareness of learners’ geographic locations when scheduling interactions. Related terms: global cohort, asynchronous alternatives. Example: Live sessions are recorded and posted for those who cannot attend due to night-time commitments. Challenge: Providing equitable participation options without over-burdening instructors.

Tool Literacy – The competence to effectively use digital platforms for interaction. Related terms: digital

fluency, software training. Example: A tutorial video shows how to embed a video in a discussion post. Challenge: Supporting learners with varying levels of prior experience.

Transactive Dialogue – Exchanges where participants build on each other’s contributions to co-construct meaning. Related terms: collaborative talk, joint meaning-making. Example: In a group chat, learners successively add clauses to create a complex sentence. Challenge: Encouraging depth rather than surface-level agreement.

Turn-Taking Protocol – Structured system that dictates the order of speaking. Related terms: floor management, speaker queue. Example: A digital “raise hand” button indicates who will speak next in a live session. Challenge: Preventing dominance by more confident speakers.

Virtual Classroom Management – Strategies for maintaining order, engagement, and learning outcomes in an online setting. Related terms: moderation, classroom norms. Example: The teacher sets a rule that microphones stay muted unless speaking, reducing background noise. Challenge: Enforcing rules while preserving a relaxed atmosphere.

Voice-Thread Integration – Using the VoiceThread platform to enable multi-modal commentary (audio, video, text). Related terms: multimedia feedback, asynchronous discussion. Example: Students upload a short video and comment on peers’ videos using audio notes. Challenge: Ensuring all participants have sufficient bandwidth.

Webinar-Based Interaction – Live, presentation-style sessions that incorporate Q&A and polling. Related terms: large-group lecture, interactive webcast. Example: A guest speaker delivers a talk on online pedagogy, followed by a breakout-room discussion. Challenge: Maintaining interaction in a format that can feel one-sided.

Web-Based Communities of Practice – Online spaces where professionals share resources, discuss challenges, and mentor each other. Related terms: online forums, professional learning networks. Example: A TEFL community on a dedicated platform exchanges lesson-plan templates. Challenge: Keeping the community active and relevant over time.

Wiki Collaboration – Collective authoring of a web page that aggregates knowledge. Related terms: crowdsourced content, knowledge base. Example: Learners co-create a wiki on “Common Mistakes in English Pronunciation.” Challenge: Monitoring edits to prevent misinformation.

Word-Count Constraints – Limits placed on written interaction to encourage concision. Related terms: brevity practice, lexical density. Example: A forum post must be between 150-200 words, prompting learners to edit ruthlessly. Challenge: Balancing brevity with the need for expressive depth.

Writing-to-Speak Transfer – Using written tasks to scaffold oral interaction skills. Related terms: pre-speaking writing, scripted dialogue. Example: Students draft a short script, then rehearse it orally in a breakout room. Challenge: Avoiding over-reliance on scripts that inhibit spontaneity.