
Professional Certificate in Teaching English Online in TEFL

Adapting Materials for the Online Classroom

Adaptive Design – Related terms: responsive layout, device-agnostic content.

Definition: A design approach that automatically modifies the presentation of teaching materials to suit the learner's device, screen size, and interaction mode.

Example: A reading passage that re-flows text, resizes images, and adjusts navigation controls when accessed from a smartphone versus a desktop computer.

Practical application: Use CSS media queries in PDFs converted to HTML, or employ platforms that offer built-in adaptive templates, ensuring that all learners can view the same content without manual resizing.

Challenges: Requires familiarity with web design principles, testing across multiple devices, and may increase preparation time if original materials are not digitally native.

Asynchronous Materials – Related terms: self-paced tasks, recorded lectures.

Definition: Learning resources that learners can access at any time, independent of live instructor presence.

Example: A video lesson on phrasal verbs uploaded to the LMS, accompanied by an interactive quiz that students complete before the next synchronous session.

Practical application: Schedule release dates, embed deadlines within the course calendar, and provide clear instructions for accessing each resource.

Challenges: Learners may procrastinate, leading to gaps in knowledge; instructors must create engaging content to maintain motivation without real-time feedback.

Audio-Visual Integration – Related terms: multimodal input, video-audio pairing.

Definition: The coordinated use of sound and image to reinforce language concepts, supporting varied learning styles.

Example: A short animation illustrating the sequence of events in a story, paired with a native-speaker narration that highlights target vocabulary.

Practical application: Align subtitles with spoken text, use captioning tools, and synchronize visual cues with audio pauses to emphasize grammatical structures.

Challenges: Producing high-quality AV content can be time-intensive; file size must be managed to avoid bandwidth issues for learners with limited internet access.

Bandwidth Considerations – Related terms: streaming quality, data compression.

Definition: The assessment of internet capacity required to deliver online teaching materials without interruption.

Example: Offering a 720p video as an optional download for low-bandwidth users while streaming at 1080p for those with faster connections.

Practical application: Provide multiple file formats, use adaptive streaming services, and inform learners of recommended connection speeds for each activity.

Challenges: Overlooking bandwidth can lead to frustration, dropout, or inequitable access, especially in regions with unstable networks.

Blended Learning – Related terms: hybrid instruction, flipped classroom.

Definition: An instructional model that combines online digital media with traditional face-to-face teaching, allowing flexibility in content delivery.

Example: Students complete an online grammar module at home, then practice speaking in a live virtual breakout room.

Practical application: Map curriculum objectives to online and synchronous components, ensuring that each mode reinforces the other.

Challenges: Coordinating schedules, maintaining consistency across modalities, and ensuring that online tasks are not merely add-ons but integral to learning.

Canvas (LMS) – Related terms: learning management system, course shell.

Definition: A cloud-based platform that hosts course materials, assessments, and communication tools for online English teaching.

Example: Uploading a set of interactive reading exercises to Canvas, linking them to a gradebook column, and setting automatic release dates.

Practical application: Use Canvas's built-in discussion boards for peer feedback, embed multimedia directly into pages, and employ analytics to monitor student progress.

Challenges: Requires training for both instructors and learners; some features may be limited by institutional licensing, and navigation can be confusing for novices.

Cognitive Load – Related terms: working memory, information processing.

Definition: The amount of mental effort required to understand and retain new information; in online materials, it must be managed to prevent overload.

Example: A slide deck that presents one grammar rule, a single example sentence, and a brief practice activity on each page rather than clustering multiple concepts.

Practical application: Chunk content into bite-sized units, use clear headings, and provide visual scaffolds such as icons or color coding to guide learners.

Challenges: Balancing sufficient challenge with simplicity; excessive simplification may under-stimulate advanced learners.

Copyright – Related terms: fair use, licensing.

Definition: Legal rights that protect creators of original works; educators must ensure they have permission to reproduce or adapt materials for online courses.

Example: Using an open-access article under a Creative Commons Attribution license to create a reading comprehension activity.

Practical application: Verify licensing terms before uploading, attribute sources correctly, and consider creating original content when existing resources are restricted.

Challenges: Navigating complex international copyright laws, especially when learners are in multiple jurisdictions, and avoiding inadvertent infringement.

Digital Storytelling – Related terms: narrative scaffolding, multimedia projects.

Definition: The process of creating a story using digital tools, integrating text, audio, images, and video to develop language skills.

Example: Learners produce a short video about a cultural festival, scripting dialogue, recording voice-overs, and adding subtitles.

Practical application: Provide templates, guide students through story arcs, and use peer review forums for feedback on narrative coherence and language accuracy.

Challenges: Requires access to editing software, may be time-consuming, and technical glitches can impede the creative process.

Engagement Strategies – Related terms: interactive polls, gamified tasks.

Definition: Techniques designed to capture and sustain learner interest and participation in an online environment.

Example: Incorporating a Kahoot! quiz after a grammar lesson to reinforce key points and promote competition.

Practical application: Alternate between passive (reading) and active (discussion) activities, use breakout rooms for small-group collaboration, and provide immediate feedback.

Challenges: Over-reliance on novelty can distract from learning goals; not all learners respond equally to competitive elements.

Flipped Classroom – Related terms: pre-class preparation, in-class application.

Definition: An instructional method where learners first encounter new material outside class, then apply knowledge during live sessions.

Example: Students watch a video on conditional sentences, complete an online worksheet, and then practice speaking in a synchronous role-play.

Practical application: Clearly outline expectations for pre-class work, embed formative checks, and design synchronous activities that require the prior knowledge.

Challenges: Monitoring completion of pre-class tasks, ensuring equity for learners with limited access, and preventing the “lecture-only” fallback.

Gamification – Related terms: badges, leaderboards.

Definition: The application of game design elements to non-game contexts to motivate learners and increase participation.

Example: Awarding a “Vocabulary Master” badge after a learner correctly uses 50 new words in written assignments.

Practical application: Set clear criteria for earning points, integrate progress bars into the LMS, and align game mechanics with learning objectives.

Challenges: Risk of focusing on extrinsic rewards, potential demotivation for lower-performing students, and the need to balance fun with academic rigor.

Hyperlinking – Related terms: embedded resources, cross-referencing.

Definition: Inserting clickable links within digital texts that direct learners to supplementary content or external sites.

Example: Embedding a link to an authentic news article within a reading comprehension task, allowing learners to explore related vocabulary.

Practical application: Use descriptive anchor text, ensure links open in new tabs, and regularly check for

broken URLs.

Challenges: Over-linking can overwhelm learners; reliance on external sites may introduce accessibility or copyright issues.

Inclusive Design – Related terms: accessibility, universal design.

Definition: Creating learning materials that accommodate diverse abilities, cultural backgrounds, and language proficiencies.

Example: Providing transcripts for all audio files, using high-contrast colors, and offering alternative text for images.

Practical application: Follow WCAG guidelines, conduct learner surveys to identify needs, and incorporate multiple representation modes (visual, auditory, kinesthetic).

Challenges: Additional development time, need for expertise in accessibility standards, and possible constraints of the chosen platform.

Interactive Whiteboard – Related terms: virtual canvas, collaborative annotation.

Definition: A digital space where instructors and learners can draw, write, and manipulate objects in real time during synchronous sessions.

Example: Using an interactive whiteboard to map out sentence structures, allowing students to annotate directly on the board.

Practical application: Choose a tool compatible with the LMS, set up shared access permissions, and record the board activity for later review.

Challenges: Bandwidth demands, learning curve for both teacher and students, and potential latency that can disrupt smooth collaboration.

Learning Management System – Related terms: course platform, e-learning hub.

Definition: Software that delivers, tracks, and manages educational content and learner interactions in an online setting.

Example: Moodle hosting weekly modules, quizzes, and discussion forums for an English for Academic Purposes course.

Practical application: Structure the course with clear navigation, use automated grading where appropriate, and leverage analytics to identify at-risk learners.

Challenges: System complexity, need for ongoing technical support, and ensuring that the LMS aligns with pedagogical goals rather than dictating them.

Multimedia Compression – Related terms: file optimization, bitrate reduction.

Definition: The process of reducing the size of audio, video, or image files while maintaining acceptable quality for online delivery.

Example: Converting a 500 MB lecture video to an MP4 with a 720p resolution and a 1 Mbps bitrate to facilitate smoother streaming.

Practical application: Use compression tools before uploading, test playback on various devices, and provide download-friendly versions for offline access.

Challenges: Excessive compression can degrade audio clarity, affecting pronunciation practice; balancing quality with file size is essential.

Pedagogical Alignment – Related terms: curriculum mapping, learning outcomes.

Definition: Ensuring that adapted online materials directly support the intended teaching objectives and assessment criteria.

Example: Selecting a digital story that targets the CEFR B2 level lexical range when the lesson goal is to develop advanced reading strategies.

Practical application: Conduct a gap analysis between original print resources and their online adaptations, adjusting activities to fill identified gaps.

Challenges: Time-intensive review process, risk of misalignment if adaptation focuses solely on format rather than content relevance.

Synchronous Sessions – Related terms: real-time instruction, live webinars.

Definition: Online classes that occur at a scheduled time, allowing immediate interaction between teacher and learners.

Example: A 60-minute Zoom class where students practice speaking through breakout-room role-plays.

Practical application: Prepare an agenda, use interactive tools (polls, chat), and record the session for those who cannot attend.

Challenges: Coordinating across time zones, managing technical disruptions, and ensuring all participants remain actively engaged.

Universal Design for Learning – Related terms: UDL, multiple means of representation.

Definition: A framework that provides flexible pathways for learners to perceive, process, and demonstrate knowledge.

Example: Offering text, audio, and video explanations for a grammar point, allowing learners to choose the mode that best suits their learning style.

Practical application: Embed options for captioning, provide downloadable transcripts, and design assessments that accept both oral and written responses.

Challenges: Requires thoughtful planning to create multiple representations without overwhelming the instructor, and may demand additional resources.

Video Captioning – Related terms: subtitles, closed captions.

Definition: Adding synchronized textual representations of spoken dialogue and relevant sounds to video content.

Example: Captioning a listening comprehension video so that learners can follow along while reading the spoken words.

Practical application: Use automated captioning tools, edit for accuracy, and embed captions directly into the video player for easy toggling.

Challenges: Automated captions often contain errors, especially with accented speech; manual correction is necessary to ensure linguistic accuracy.

Workflow Automation – Related terms: task sequencing, integration scripts.

Definition: Using software to streamline repetitive processes in material preparation and delivery, such as file conversion or grade posting.

Example: Setting up a Zapier workflow that automatically uploads a newly created PDF lesson to the LMS

and notifies the class via email.

Practical application: Identify routine tasks, select appropriate automation tools, and test the workflow before full implementation.

Challenges: Initial setup can be complex, and reliance on third-party services may pose security or compatibility concerns.

Zoom Breakout Rooms – Related terms: small-group collaboration, virtual tables.

Definition: A feature that splits a large synchronous meeting into separate, smaller sessions for focused interaction.

Example: Assigning pairs of students to practice dialogue using a target phrase, then rotating groups to ensure varied interaction.

Practical application: Pre-assign rooms based on proficiency levels, provide clear instructions, and monitor each room through the host view.

Challenges: Managing time efficiently, ensuring all groups remain on task, and handling technical issues when participants lose connection.

Accessibility Testing – Related terms: screen-reader compatibility, usability audit.

Definition: The systematic evaluation of online materials to confirm they are usable by learners with disabilities.

Example: Running a WCAG checklist on a lesson page to verify appropriate heading structure, alt text for images, and keyboard navigation.

Practical application: Involve learners with diverse needs in beta testing, document findings, and revise content accordingly.

Challenges: Requires specialized knowledge, may reveal extensive revisions, and must be repeated whenever new content is added.

Collaborative Annotation – Related terms: shared markup, peer feedback.

Definition: The process where multiple learners simultaneously add comments, highlights, or notes to a digital text.

Example: Using a Google Doc to collectively annotate a literary excerpt, each student marking unfamiliar idioms and suggesting definitions.

Practical application: Set clear guidelines for annotation symbols, assign roles (e.g., annotator, reviewer), and use the activity to foster discussion.

Challenges: Potential for overlapping edits, need for version control, and ensuring that annotations remain focused on learning objectives.

Digital Literacy – Related terms: tech-savviness, online navigation skills.

Definition: The competence to locate, evaluate, and create information using digital technologies, essential for effective online learning.

Example: Teaching students how to search for reputable language resources, evaluate source credibility, and cite them properly.

Practical application: Incorporate mini-workshops on platform navigation, file management, and safe internet practices at the start of the course.

Challenges: Varied baseline skills among learners, requiring differentiated support and ongoing reinforcement.

Feedback Loops – Related terms: formative assessment, iterative improvement.

Definition: Cyclical processes where learners receive timely information on performance, enabling them to adjust their learning strategies.

Example: After a speaking task, the teacher provides audio comments highlighting strengths and areas for improvement, and students submit a revised version.

Practical application: Use rubrics, audio-recorded feedback, and peer-review mechanisms to create multiple feedback channels.

Challenges: Managing the volume of feedback for large classes, ensuring feedback is specific and actionable, and preventing overload for learners.

Gamified Quiz Platforms – Related terms: interactive assessments, point systems.

Definition: Online tools that present quiz questions in a game-like environment, often featuring timers, scores, and visual rewards.

Example: A Kahoot! session where each correct answer earns points, and a leaderboard displays top performers after each round.

Practical application: Align quiz content with recent lessons, set time limits to increase challenge, and debrief results to reinforce learning.

Challenges: Overemphasis on competition can discourage some learners; technical glitches may affect fairness.

Metadata Tagging – Related terms: resource description, searchable content.

Definition: Adding descriptive data to digital materials (e.g., keywords, level, skill focus) to facilitate organization and retrieval.

Example: Tagging a listening activity with “B1”, “listening”, “environmental vocabulary”, and “audio”.

Practical application: Use LMS fields or external databases to input metadata, enabling learners to filter resources based on their needs.

Challenges: Consistency in tagging across multiple contributors, and the extra time required for thorough metadata entry.

Peer-Review Workshops – Related terms: collaborative editing, constructive criticism.

Definition: Structured sessions where learners evaluate each other’s work, offering feedback that supports language development.

Example: Students exchange draft essays, apply a checklist to comment on cohesion, grammar, and lexical range, then revise accordingly.

Practical application: Provide clear rubrics, model effective feedback, and allocate time for both giving and receiving comments.

Challenges: Ensuring feedback quality, managing interpersonal dynamics, and preventing plagiarism.

Scaffolded Tasks – Related terms: guided practice, progressive difficulty.

Definition: Learning activities designed with incremental support, gradually reducing assistance as competence increases.

Example: A writing assignment that starts with sentence frames, progresses to paragraph outlines, and culminates in a full essay without prompts.

Practical application: Map each scaffold to a specific skill, provide exemplars, and remove supports as learners demonstrate mastery.

Challenges: Determining the appropriate level of support for diverse learners, and avoiding over-scaffolding that limits autonomy.

Virtual Reality (VR) Simulations – Related terms: immersive environments, 3-D interaction.

Definition: Computer-generated, three-dimensional settings that learners can explore using headsets or web-based viewers to practice language in context.

Example: A VR market scene where students negotiate prices in English, practicing functional language for transactions.

Practical application: Integrate short VR experiences as optional enrichment, provide clear navigation instructions, and debrief with reflective discussions.

Challenges: High equipment cost, potential motion sickness, and the need for technical support to ensure smooth operation.

Webinar Recording Policies – Related terms: privacy guidelines, consent forms.

Definition: Institutional rules governing the capture, storage, and distribution of live online sessions.

Example: Obtaining explicit consent from participants before recording a class, and storing the file on a secure server for limited access.

Practical application: Communicate policies at the start of each session, provide alternatives for those who opt out, and ensure compliance with data protection regulations.

Challenges: Balancing transparency with the desire to reuse recordings for future learners, and managing consent across international jurisdictions.

Zoom Polling – Related terms: instant feedback, audience response.

Definition: A feature that allows the instructor to pose multiple-choice questions during a live session, collecting real-time responses.

Example: After teaching a new idiom, the teacher asks “Which sentence uses the idiom correctly?” and displays poll results instantly.

Practical application: Use polls to gauge comprehension, encourage participation, and adapt the lesson flow based on results.

Challenges: Limited question types, potential for technical delays, and ensuring that all learners can see and respond to the poll.

Learning Analytics Dashboard – Related terms: data visualization, performance metrics.

Definition: A graphical interface that presents aggregated data on learner activity, progress, and engagement, aiding instructional decision-making.

Example: A dashboard showing average quiz scores, time-on-task, and forum participation rates for each cohort.

Practical application: Monitor at-risk students, identify content that may need revision, and share insights with learners to promote self-regulation.

Challenges: Interpreting data accurately, protecting learner privacy, and avoiding over-reliance on quantitative metrics at the expense of qualitative insights.

Adaptive Assessment – Related terms: personalized testing, item-response theory.

Definition: An evaluation method that adjusts the difficulty of subsequent questions based on the learner's previous answers, providing a tailored measurement of ability.

Example: An online grammar test that presents increasingly complex sentences as the learner answers correctly, and simplifies when errors occur.

Practical application: Use platforms that support adaptive algorithms, set clear proficiency thresholds, and provide immediate feedback for each item.

Challenges: Requires robust question banks, potential bias if the algorithm is not calibrated for diverse language backgrounds, and the need for technical support.

Collaborative Writing Platforms – Related terms: real-time editing, cloud documents.

Definition: Online tools that enable multiple users to compose, edit, and comment on a text simultaneously.

Example: Students co-author a short story in Google Docs, each contributing a paragraph and providing peer comments.

Practical application: Assign roles (author, editor, proofreader), set version-control guidelines, and use comment threads for feedback.

Challenges: Managing overlapping edits, ensuring equitable contribution, and maintaining document security.

Pronunciation Software – Related terms: speech recognition, phonetic feedback.

Definition: Applications that analyze spoken input and provide corrective feedback on articulation, stress, and intonation.

Example: A tool that records a learner's reading of a passage, compares it to a native model, and highlights mismatched phonemes.

Practical application: Incorporate short pronunciation drills, assign self-assessment tasks, and use the software's analytics to track improvement.

Challenges: Accuracy may vary with accents, background noise can affect results, and learners may become overly dependent on the tool.

Resource Repository – Related terms: digital library, content bank.

Definition: A centralized collection of teaching materials, activities, and multimedia assets that can be accessed and reused across courses.

Example: An online folder containing printable worksheets, audio files, and video clips categorized by CEFR level and skill focus.

Practical application: Tag resources with metadata, provide search functionality, and encourage instructors to contribute new materials.

Challenges: Keeping the repository organized, preventing duplication, and ensuring that materials remain up-to-date and relevant.

Streaming Optimization – Related terms: adaptive bitrate, CDN.

Definition: Techniques that improve the delivery of live or on-demand video content to users with varying

internet speeds.

Example: Using a content delivery network that automatically switches between 360p and 720p streams based on the learner's connection quality.

Practical application: Choose platforms that support adaptive streaming, set appropriate default resolutions, and test performance across regions.

Challenges: Additional cost for CDN services, potential latency, and the need to monitor streaming metrics continuously.

Virtual Office Hours – Related terms: asynchronous support, one-on-one meetings.

Definition: Scheduled times when instructors are available online for individual or small-group consultations, often via video chat.

Example: A teacher holds a weekly 30-minute Zoom slot where students can drop in to discuss assignment feedback.

Practical application: Publish a shared calendar, provide a booking link, and set clear expectations for preparation and duration.

Challenges: Coordinating across time zones, managing multiple simultaneous requests, and ensuring equitable access for all learners.

Web Accessibility Standards – Related terms: WCAG, Section 508.

Definition: International guidelines that define how digital content should be designed to be usable by people with disabilities.

Example: Ensuring that all interactive buttons have descriptive ARIA labels so screen-reader users can understand their purpose.

Practical application: Conduct regular compliance audits, use automated testing tools, and train staff on accessibility best practices.

Challenges: Keeping up with evolving standards, balancing design aesthetics with functional requirements, and addressing legacy content that may not meet criteria.

Zoom Backgrounds for Pronunciation Practice – Related terms: visual cues, contextual immersion.

Definition: Using custom virtual backgrounds that depict relevant settings (e.g., a restaurant) to create situational context for speaking activities.

Example: Learners select a café background and role-play ordering food, using target vocabulary while the visual context reinforces meaning.

Practical application: Provide a library of themed backgrounds, instruct learners on how to activate them, and integrate the visual element into the activity rubric.

Challenges: Technical setup may vary across devices, and background quality can distract if not properly aligned with learning objectives.