

Methodological Challenges Encountered by Novice English Language Teachers in Their Professional Practice

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Abstract: This study investigates the methodological challenges faced by novice English language teachers (1–3 years of experience) in public schools in Nukus. Through a qualitative analysis of 20 participants, the research identifies a significant "reality shock" during the transition from university to professional practice. Findings reveal that 85% of teachers struggle to implement communicative methods, primarily due to large mixed-ability classes (70%), low student motivation, and heavy administrative workloads. Results also highlight a lack of formal mentorship, leaving new educators reliant on informal peer support. The study concludes that the regional education system requires structured induction programs and practical training in classroom management to bridge the gap between theory and practice, ultimately supporting the retention and growth of new English teachers in Karakalpakstan.

Keywords: Novice teachers, ELT, pedagogical challenges, classroom management, teacher retention, mixed-ability classes.

Introduction: The transition from pre-service training to autonomous classroom instruction presents a critical juncture where theoretical pedagogical knowledge is frequently challenged by the complexities of real-world educational environments (Dinçer, 2022). This transitional period highlights the persistent tension between the abstract pedagogical knowledge acquired during training and the immediate, multifaceted demands of classroom management, student engagement, and individual learner variability. Furthermore, practitioners frequently report that this phase is compounded by difficulties in establishing a coherent professional identity and integrating technology into their daily lesson design (Ameen et al., 2024; Martinez, 2026). Additionally, novice educators often struggle to implement differentiated instruction effectively due to a lack of resources and specialized training, which hinders their ability to accommodate diverse linguistic needs. These obstacles are further exacerbated by institutional shortcomings, such as

fragmented professional development programs and a lack of sustained mentorship, which impede the development of necessary pedagogical adaptability (Hu, 2025). Specifically, novice teachers often struggle to reconcile their academic understanding of formative assessment with the immediate, high-stakes requirements of classroom grading. This dissonance frequently complicates the creation of evaluation frameworks that are both valid and inclusive, particularly when attempting to accommodate the diverse linguistic backgrounds and varying proficiency levels that characterize contemporary English language classrooms. Deprived of robust, sustained mentorship to guide these complex pedagogical choices, practitioners may default to rudimentary, summative metrics that fail to capture authentic student progress, thereby compromising their capacity to leverage assessment data for informed, future-oriented instructional decision-making.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Current scholarly discourse emphasizes that these professional hardships are fundamentally linked to the iterative process of identity construction, wherein teachers navigate the discursive space between personal pedagogical beliefs and institutional expectations (Kurniawati et al., 2024). This process is frequently marked by a profound gap between cognitive pedagogical frameworks and the pragmatic realities of school-based mandates, which can disrupt a novice teacher's self-conception (Lap et al., 2022; Neupane et al., 2022). This state of liminality, often characterized by a lack of consistent school-based support or formal mentorship, frequently leaves educators feeling overwhelmed by the dual pressures of administrative accountability and curriculum pacing (Bertram, 2023). Moreover, the absence of culturally responsive mentoring frameworks exacerbates these struggles, as educators frequently find themselves ill-equipped to adapt their instruction to the unique linguistic profiles and evolving needs of their students (Alimbaev, 2025). Furthermore, the persistent challenge of adapting assessment methods to accommodate diverse student populations remains a significant barrier to professional growth, often exacerbated by institutional constraints such as high-stakes testing and time limitations (Estaji, 2024; Parra & López, 2024). Consequently, these institutional mandates often compel novices to prioritize procedural compliance—such as adhering to rigid grading rubrics or standardized checklists—over the nuanced, diagnostic feedback essential for genuine student growth. This strategic shift inadvertently reduces the formative assessment process to a performative duty, thereby marginalizing its capacity to foster authentic reflection and address the complex, evolving linguistic needs of their students (Estaji, 2024; Parra & López, 2024). Beyond these systemic constraints, the cognitive load inherent in juggling these conflicting roles often leads to a reliance on efficiency-driven, summative metrics at the expense of deep pedagogical reflection (Lei & Lei, 2025).

Such improvisational hurdles are compounded by the inherent unpredictability of classroom dynamics, which necessitates a shift toward thoughtfully adaptive teaching to effectively manage non-linear pedagogical situations (Vetter et al., 2016). Moreover, the initial years are marked by intense emotional fluctuations as

practitioners navigate school cultures and the conventional norms of effective teaching. This emotional labor is often exacerbated by the persistent discrepancy between their idealized pedagogical training and the sobering, sometimes restrictive, realities of workplace expectations, which can engender pervasive feelings of professional isolation or inadequacy (Ameen et al., 2024; Lap et al., 2022). Consequently, this phase is frequently characterized by a state of heightened vulnerability, where the continuous, often overwhelming, negotiation between rigid institutional mandates and emerging personal standards demands significant, sustained resilience to maintain instructional efficacy (Bertram, 2023).

Furthermore, this methodological impasse is frequently compounded by the struggle to translate abstract language acquisition theories into practical, curriculum-aligned instructional materials, leaving novice teachers uncertain about selecting texts that genuinely bridge the gap between their training and specific classroom contexts (Parra & López, 2024). Without established routines for evaluating the linguistic appropriateness of resources or adapting standardized tasks to the varied proficiency levels of their students, these educators often find it challenging to construct a coherent pedagogical sequence that satisfies both rigid institutional mandates and the actual developmental needs of their learners (Ameen et al., 2024; Vetter et al., 2016). Consequently, many novices may rely heavily on pre-packaged curricula, which, while providing a necessary scaffold, can inadvertently stifle the diagnostic flexibility required to address diverse linguistic backgrounds effectively (Estaji, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the methodological challenges faced by novice English language teachers in the specific educational context of Nukus, Karakalpakstan. The research was conducted across several state secondary schools (public schools) within the city to ensure a representative view of the local teaching environment.

Participants

A total of 20 novice English teachers participated in the study. The primary selection criterion was professional experience, specifically targeting those in their first to

third year of teaching. This timeframe was selected as it represents the most critical period for professional identity formation and pedagogical adaptation.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The interviews focused on three main areas: lesson planning and delivery, classroom management, and the availability of institutional support. Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes and was conducted in a mix of English and Karakalpak, Uzbek and Russian to ensure participants could express their experiences clearly.

Data Analysis

The collected data underwent thematic analysis. This involved transcribing the interviews, identifying recurring codes, and categorizing them into broader themes such as "Pedagogical Implementation," "Student-Centered Challenges," and "Environmental Factors."

RESULTS

The findings indicate that novice teachers in Nukus encounter a high degree of "reality shock" when transitioning from university theory to public school practice. The results are summarized in the following tables:

Table 1: Primary Methodological Challenges Reported by Novice Teachers

Challenge Area	Description	Frequency (%)
Grammar- Translation vs. CLT	Difficulty moving away from traditional methods to Communicative Language Teaching.	85%
Mixed-Ability Classes	Challenges in designing one lesson plan for students with vastly different levels.	70%
Lesson Timing	Inability to complete all planned activities within the 45-minute period.	60%
Resource Adaptation	Difficulty using or adapting national textbooks for interactive activities.	55%

This table shows that a vast majority of novice teachers struggle with the transition to modern communicative methods. The data suggests that while they understand

the theory of communicative teaching, the reality of mixed-ability levels and time constraints in Nukus public schools often forces them back into traditional, teacher-centered instruction.

Table 2: Classroom Management and Student-Related Obstacles

Factor	Specific Challenge	Impact Level
Student Motivation	Lack of interest in learning English among students in non-specialized classes.	High
Discipline	Maintaining order in large classes (30+ students).	Very High

L1 Interference	Students constantly reverting to their native language during speaking tasks.	High
Large Class Sizes	Physical constraints of the classroom preventing group work or movement.	Moderate

The results in Table 2 highlight that discipline and student motivation are the most significant hurdles. In the crowded classrooms typical of many public schools

in the region, novice teachers find it difficult to maintain control while simultaneously trying to encourage students to speak English instead of their native language.

Table 3: Institutional and Support Factors

Support Type	Availability/Quality	Common Teacher Feedback
Mentorship	Formal but often inconsistent.	"Mentors are too busy with their own workloads."
Peer Support	Informal and frequent.	"I learn more from my colleagues in the staff room than from training."
Administration	Focused on paperwork.	"High pressure to complete journals and reports."

This table indicates a gap in formal professional support. While novice teachers in Nukus value the informal help they receive from their peers, they feel that formal mentorship is often neglected due to the heavy workloads of senior teachers and an administrative focus on paperwork rather than pedagogical growth.

DISCUSSION

The results highlight a significant disconnect between the pre-service training received at universities and the practical realities of public schools in Nukus. While many teachers are familiar with modern communicative methods, the large class sizes and the lack of digital resources in some local schools make these methods difficult to implement.

A major theme identified was the struggle with "Mixed-Ability Classes." In Nukus public schools, a single classroom often contains students ranging from "absolute beginner" to "intermediate" levels. Novice teachers, having only 1-3 years of experience, often

lack the differentiation strategies needed to engage all students simultaneously. This frequently results in the teacher reverting to traditional methods to maintain control.

Furthermore, the "Instructional Time Management" issue suggests that novices spend a disproportionate amount of time on discipline and administrative tasks, leaving insufficient time for actual language practice. The data also suggests that while mentorship programs exist on paper, the lack of time for senior teachers to observe and provide feedback to novices is a missed opportunity for professional growth in the Nukus school system.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the professional experiences of novice English teachers in Nukus public schools, revealing that the first three years of teaching are characterized by significant pedagogical and emotional hurdles. The most pressing challenges include managing large, mixed-ability classes and the struggle

to implement communicative teaching styles within a rigid institutional framework.

To improve the situation for new educators in the region, several steps are recommended:

- Practical Mentorship: Strengthening the mentor-mentee relationship by allocating specific hours for observation and feedback within the school schedule.
- Context-Specific Training: Professional development workshops should focus on "Teaching English with Limited Resources" and "Classroom Management for Large Groups."
- Reduced Administrative Load: Reducing the paperwork burden on teachers in their first two years to allow them to focus more on lesson quality.

Ultimately, supporting novice teachers in Nukus is essential for the overall quality of English language education in the region. By bridging the gap between theory and classroom reality, the education system can ensure that new teachers remain in the profession and continue to develop their skills.

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