

CHALLENGES FACED BY ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS IN MODERN EDUCATION: A LITERATURE-BASED ANALYSIS

Muhammadiyah Halima Saidahmadovna

Associate Professor, Namangan State University, Uzbekistan

Sharipova Madinabonu Rustam kizi

Student, Namangan State University, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: This article examines the major challenges faced by English language teachers in modern education, with particular attention to technology-related distraction, mixed-proficiency classrooms, learner motivation, over-reliance on artificial intelligence tools, classroom management, and examination pressure. The study is designed as a theoretical review based on document analysis of relevant literature in English language teaching, educational technology, learner motivation, differentiated instruction, and digital inclusion. The analysis shows that contemporary English teachers are expected not only to teach grammar, vocabulary, and communicative skills, but also to manage digitally mediated learning environments, guide students in the responsible use of artificial intelligence, and adapt instruction to diverse learner needs. The paper argues that these challenges should not be interpreted only as obstacles; rather, they reveal the need for continuous professional development, flexible methodology, balanced technology integration, and learner-centred classroom practices. The article concludes with methodological recommendations for improving the quality of English language teaching in modern educational contexts.

Keywords: English language teaching; modern education; artificial intelligence; classroom management; learner motivation; mixed-proficiency classrooms; digital literacy

Introduction

English has become one of the most influential languages in global education, academic communication, professional mobility, science, technology, and international cooperation. As a result, the demand for competent English language teachers continues to increase. In contemporary education, however, the work of English teachers has become more complex than the traditional transmission of grammar rules and vocabulary items. Teachers are now expected to develop learners' communicative competence, digital literacy, critical thinking, intercultural awareness, and autonomous learning skills.

Modern English language classrooms are shaped by rapid technological change, diverse learner profiles, examination-oriented educational systems, and the growing presence of artificial intelligence. These factors create both opportunities and challenges. Digital tools can enrich language learning through authentic materials, online interaction, multimodal input, and immediate feedback. At the same time, they may distract learners, weaken attention, and encourage dependency on ready-made answers if they are not used pedagogically.

The relevance of this topic lies in the fact that English teachers increasingly have to balance several roles at once: language instructor, classroom manager, digital learning facilitator, motivator, assessor, and ethical guide in the use of online and AI-based tools. Therefore, identifying and analysing the main challenges faced by English teachers is necessary

for improving the effectiveness of English language teaching and for designing practical recommendations that respond to current classroom realities.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the key challenges faced by English language teachers in modern education and to suggest pedagogically sound ways of addressing them. The research questions guiding the article are as follows: What are the most common challenges experienced by English teachers today? How do technology, artificial intelligence, mixed-level classrooms, motivation, and assessment pressure affect teaching practice? What methodological responses can help teachers manage these challenges more effectively?

Literature Review

The role of the English language teacher has changed considerably in recent decades. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that effective language teaching requires teachers to make informed methodological decisions, organize classroom interaction, and respond flexibly to learners' needs. Similarly, Richards (2015) argues that contemporary language teaching involves not only linguistic knowledge but also curriculum awareness, assessment literacy, technology integration, and professional development.

The influence of digital technology on learners has also been widely discussed. Prensky (2001) introduced the concept of "digital natives" to describe learners who have grown up surrounded by digital technologies. Although the term has been debated, it remains useful for understanding how modern learners' habits, expectations, and attention patterns are influenced by digital environments. Warschauer (2003) further shows that technology should not be understood merely as access to devices; rather, meaningful digital inclusion depends on the ability to use technological resources for educational and social purposes.

Mixed-proficiency classrooms are another key issue in English language teaching. Ur (1996) notes that learner differences in ability, motivation, background knowledge, and learning style require teachers to use varied techniques and classroom arrangements. Tomlinson (2001) also argues that differentiated instruction helps teachers address learners' different readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles. In English language classrooms, this is especially important because students often enter the same class with very different levels of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and speaking confidence.

Learner motivation is central to successful language acquisition. Dörnyei (2001) explains that classroom motivation is influenced by teacher behaviour, learning environment, task design, learner confidence, and the perceived usefulness of the language. In many contexts, students learn English because it is a compulsory subject or because of examination requirements, which may limit genuine communicative interest. Therefore, teachers need to create a motivational classroom climate and connect English learning with students' real-life goals.

The emergence of artificial intelligence has added a new dimension to English language education. UNESCO (2023) stresses that generative AI should be introduced into education through a human-centred and ethically guided approach. AI tools can support language practice, writing feedback, translation, pronunciation training, and lesson preparation; however, excessive dependence on AI-generated answers may reduce learners' independent thinking and weaken authentic language production. This creates a new professional responsibility for English teachers: they need to teach students not only how to use AI, but also how to evaluate and use it critically.

Methodology

This article uses a qualitative literature-based research design. The study relies on document analysis of scholarly books, journal articles, and institutional reports related to

English language teaching, educational technology, classroom management, learner motivation, differentiated instruction, and artificial intelligence in education.

The selected sources were analysed thematically. First, key concepts related to modern English language teaching were identified. Second, recurring challenges in the literature were grouped into major categories: technological distraction, mixed-proficiency classrooms, AI dependence, motivation and classroom management, digital inequality, and examination pressure. Third, each challenge was interpreted in relation to practical English classroom conditions. Finally, methodological recommendations were developed on the basis of the reviewed literature. Since the article is theoretical and analytical in nature, no experimental data or human participants were involved.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the reviewed literature and classroom-related issues indicates that English teachers face several interconnected challenges. These challenges are not isolated; rather, they influence one another and affect the overall quality of teaching and learning. Table 1 summarizes the main challenges and their pedagogical implications.

Table 1. Major challenges and pedagogical implications for English teachers

Challenge	Classroom manifestation	Pedagogical implication
Technological distraction	Students may lose concentration because of social media, notifications, games, and short-form video content.	Teachers need clear digital-use rules, task-based technology integration, and active learning strategies.
Mixed-proficiency classrooms	Students in one group may have very different levels of grammar, vocabulary, speaking fluency, and confidence.	Differentiated instruction, flexible grouping, tiered tasks, and peer support are required.
Dependence on AI tools	Learners may use AI translators or chatbots to produce ready-made answers instead of developing their own language skills.	Teachers should develop AI literacy, academic honesty, process-based assessment, and guided use of AI.
Low motivation	Students may see English only as an exam subject rather than a practical communication skill.	Teachers should connect English with real-life goals, careers, media, travel, and intercultural communication.
Classroom management problems	Large classes, passive learners, and discipline issues can reduce participation and interaction.	Teachers need structured routines, clear instructions, collaborative tasks, and inclusive participation techniques.
Examination pressure	Lessons may focus too heavily on tests, grammar accuracy, and memorization.	Assessment should include communicative tasks, speaking performance, projects, and formative

feedback.

Technological Distraction and Learner Attention

One of the most visible challenges in modern English classrooms is the difficulty of maintaining learners' attention. Many students are accustomed to fast digital content, social media communication, and constant notifications. This can reduce their patience with longer reading texts, grammar explanations, or sustained speaking activities. The problem is not technology itself, but the absence of pedagogically meaningful technology use.

Teachers therefore need to transform digital tools from sources of distraction into learning resources. For example, mobile phones can be used for vocabulary quizzes, pronunciation recording, collaborative writing, or short research tasks. However, such use should be controlled by clear classroom rules. The teacher should explain when devices are allowed, what task they are used for, and how the results will be evaluated. In this way, technology becomes part of the learning process rather than an obstacle to it.

Mixed-Proficiency Classrooms

Mixed-proficiency classes create serious methodological difficulties for English teachers. In many classrooms, some students can communicate confidently and use digital resources independently, while others struggle with basic vocabulary, pronunciation, or sentence structure. If the teacher chooses materials that are too difficult, weaker students may lose confidence; if the materials are too simple, stronger students may become bored.

A practical response to this challenge is differentiated instruction. This means that the teacher keeps the same lesson aim but provides tasks at different levels of difficulty. For instance, in a speaking lesson, lower-level learners may describe pictures using sentence starters, intermediate learners may ask and answer questions, while advanced learners may discuss opinions or solve a communicative problem. Pair work and group work should also be organized carefully so that students support one another without making weaker learners dependent on stronger ones.

Dependence on Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence has become one of the most important new factors in English language education. AI-based tools can help learners translate unknown words, correct grammar, practise pronunciation, generate examples, and receive instant feedback. These advantages can make English learning more accessible and individualized. Nevertheless, uncontrolled use of AI may also create academic and pedagogical problems.

One danger is that students may submit AI-generated texts without understanding the language they contain. This weakens independent writing, critical thinking, and authentic language production. Another problem is that AI tools can produce inaccurate, culturally inappropriate, or overly formal language. Therefore, English teachers should not simply prohibit AI; instead, they should teach students to use it responsibly. For example, students may be asked to compare their own paragraph with an AI-improved version, identify the changes, explain why the changes were made, and rewrite the final version in their own words. Such tasks develop both language awareness and AI literacy.

Classroom Management and Learner Motivation

Classroom management remains a major challenge, particularly in large classes. When the number of students is high, it becomes difficult to monitor individual progress, provide feedback, and ensure that all learners participate. Passive students may hide behind more active classmates, while disruptive behaviour can reduce lesson effectiveness.

Motivation is closely connected with classroom management. If students do not understand why English is important, they may participate only formally. Teachers should therefore

connect lessons with meaningful contexts: future careers, international communication, travel, digital media, academic opportunities, and intercultural exchange. Communicative tasks, role plays, debates, project work, and real-life problem-solving activities can help students perceive English not only as a school subject but also as a practical tool.

Digital Inequality

Another challenge is unequal access to technology. Some students have personal laptops, stable internet, and experience with online learning platforms, while others rely on shared devices or limited connectivity. This inequality affects students' ability to complete digital homework, participate in online activities, and use authentic English resources.

Teachers should take this factor into account when designing technology-based tasks. Digital assignments should not assume that all students have the same level of access. Whenever possible, teachers may provide offline alternatives, allow group work, use low-bandwidth materials, or give students time to complete digital tasks in school facilities. This approach helps prevent technology integration from increasing educational inequality.

Examination Pressure and Communicative Competence

In many educational systems, English lessons are strongly influenced by examinations. As a result, grammar accuracy, translation, and test-taking strategies may receive more attention than speaking, listening, interaction, and creative language use. Although examinations are necessary for assessment, an excessive focus on them can narrow the purpose of language learning.

To address this problem, teachers should integrate exam preparation with communicative practice. For example, grammar exercises can be followed by speaking tasks in which students use the target structure in real communication. Reading comprehension can lead to discussion, summary writing, or presentation. Vocabulary tasks can be connected with role plays or problem-solving. In this way, students prepare for exams while also developing practical communication skills.

Methodological Recommendations

1. Use technology purposefully. Digital tools should be linked to clear learning objectives rather than used only for entertainment.
2. Establish classroom rules for device use. Students should know when and how mobile phones, tablets, or laptops may be used during the lesson.
3. Apply differentiated instruction. Teachers should design tiered tasks that allow students of different proficiency levels to work toward the same lesson aim.
4. Develop AI literacy. Students should be taught how to use AI tools ethically, critically, and as support rather than as a replacement for their own thinking.
5. Increase communicative practice. Even exam-oriented classes should include pair work, group discussion, problem-solving, role play, and project-based tasks.
6. Support teacher professional development. Schools and institutions should provide training in educational technology, AI use, classroom management, and modern assessment methods.

Conclusion

English language teachers in modern education face a wide range of challenges, including technological distraction, mixed-proficiency classrooms, learner demotivation, dependence on artificial intelligence, digital inequality, classroom management problems, and examination pressure. These challenges directly influence the quality of English language teaching and the level of student participation in the classroom.



At the same time, these challenges also create opportunities for methodological renewal. Teachers who use technology purposefully, differentiate instruction, guide students in responsible AI use, and combine examination preparation with communicative practice can make English lessons more effective and meaningful. Therefore, improving English education requires not only better learning materials, but also continuous teacher development, institutional support, and a balanced approach to modern educational technologies.

Future research may examine these challenges empirically through classroom observation, teacher interviews, student questionnaires, or experimental studies comparing different methodological interventions. Such research would provide more context-specific evidence for improving English language teaching in modern educational settings.

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