



Bridging Pedagogy and Technology: Stress Triggers and Strategies Among English Language Teachers

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Abstract

This study investigates the stressors experienced by English language educators in formal educational settings, with a particular emphasis on identifying key sources of stress and the strategies employed to manage them. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations involving 32 purposively selected participants. The findings indicate that teachers encounter a diverse range of stress-inducing conditions, including insufficient classroom management support, lack of professional development opportunities, bureaucratic constraints, inadequate compensation, excessive workload, and limited institutional backing. These stressors negatively affect teachers' instructional performance, motivation, and psychological well-being. To address these challenges, educators implemented various coping mechanisms such as enhancing pedagogical and technological competencies, integrating digital tools into instruction, optimizing time management practices, and cultivating a more collaborative and supportive classroom climate. Moreover, participants demonstrated resilience by proactively mitigating stress within their professional scope. The study highlights the multifaceted nature of teacher stress and underscores the critical role of systemic support in alleviating its impact. It advocates for the formulation of institution-wide support frameworks designed to enhance the mental health and professional sustainability of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. A deeper understanding of these stress factors and coping strategies can enable stakeholders in the education sector to design more effective and enduring interventions that foster a healthier teaching environment.

Keywords: Pedagogy; Technology; Stress Trigger; Strategies; English Language Teachers.



1. Introduction

Occupational stress among English language teachers has become an increasingly urgent issue in contemporary education. The demands of teaching English in primary and secondary schools—ranging from meeting curriculum objectives to navigating diverse classroom dynamics—pose significant emotional and cognitive challenges. This study investigates the specific triggers of stress experienced by English language teachers, focusing on the interplay between pedagogical demands, emotional regulation, and the influence of technological integration in instructional settings.

The integration of educational technology, while offering opportunities for innovation, also presents new stressors for English language teachers, especially those lacking adequate digital competence (Fernández-Batanero et al., 2021). The growing expectation to adopt technology-enhanced methods intensifies the pressure to adapt, often without sufficient institutional support. Moreover, the diverse linguistic backgrounds of students require English language teachers to modify instructional strategies constantly, further compounding their workload. As the landscape of language education continues to evolve—driven by technological advancements and shifting pedagogical norms—many English language teachers report feelings of inadequacy and professional fatigue (Jeong, 2023). These conditions contribute to elevated levels of occupational stress, which in turn affect teaching quality and overall well-being (Jennings, 2015).

Previous studies have examined various aspects of teacher stress. (Garg & Rani, 2014; Singh & Kaur, 2010; Vats, 2020) provide a general overview of stress within the teaching profession, while Maphal (2014) highlights contributing factors such as curriculum reform, excessive workload, and interpersonal tensions. Navickienė et al. (2019) explore the psychological toll of stress on teachers' mental and emotional health. However, limited attention has been given to how digital competence—or the lack thereof—specifically contributes to stress among English language teachers. The current study addresses this gap by examining the dual role of technology as both a coping aid (e.g., digital tools for time management and self-regulation) and a potential source of additional stress (Navarro-Espinosa et al., 2021).

This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore how English language teachers experience and manage stress in relation to technological integration. Through in-depth interviews, the study uncovers nuanced insights into their coping strategies, both pedagogical and psychological. In doing so, it contributes to the scholarly discourse by clarifying the intersection between educational technology and occupational stress in English language instruction (Ferdous, 2021; Hsu & Goldsmith, 2021; Kebbi & Al-Hroub, 2018). By articulating practical implications for institutional policy and classroom practice, this study aims to support the development of more sustainable teaching environments that prioritize teacher resilience and professional well-being.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Participants

This research enlisted 32 English language teachers teaching at both elementary and junior high school levels. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, initially involving 12 teachers as the primary sample. Selection criteria included educational background and teaching experience, ensuring participants could offer insights relevant to the research objectives. This approach was intended to capture varied perspectives on the stressors and coping mechanisms within English language instruction at the primary and junior secondary levels.

Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals based on specific, pre-established criteria relevant to the research focus (Campbell et al., 2020). While this method enables depth and relevance, it is not without limitations. The potential for selection bias is notable, as the inclusion of participants is determined by the researcher, which may compromise objectivity. Additionally, the non-random nature of the sampling process limits the generalizability of the findings, as they may not represent the broader population of English language teachers. Without systematic attention to factors such as regional variation, institutional support, or school culture, the diversity of experiences may be underrepresented. To address these concerns and enhance the credibility of the study, triangulation through

multiple data sources and cross-validation strategies was employed alongside purposive sampling.

2.2 Data Collection

The data collection process began with informal conversations (small talk) with several English language teachers to identify potential stressors in the teaching context. Based on insights gained from these initial interactions, a semi-structured interview protocol and field note guidelines for lesson observation were developed. The semi-structured interviews were used to explore in depth the stress experiences and coping strategies of the participants, while classroom observations aimed to capture real-time dynamics between teachers and students and the general learning environment. In addition, a brief questionnaire was administered to collect demographic information such as participants' identity, teaching experience, and responses to several closed-ended questions. This multimethod approach enabled the researcher to obtain a holistic understanding of the teaching experience and the stressors involved, providing a richer and more nuanced data set.

2.3 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques as outlined by Miles et al. (2014). The process began with data reduction, filtering information to retain only those relevant to the research questions, thereby removing any extraneous data. This was followed by data display, in which the categorized data were organized and detailed based on the core themes emerging from the research. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting and summarizing the key findings from each category. This iterative and systematic process allowed the researcher to develop a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of the stressors experienced by English language teachers and the strategies they employed to cope with these challenges. The combination of in-depth interviews, observations, and questionnaire data also served as a triangulation mechanism, enhancing the trustworthiness of the analysis.

3. Results and Discussions

This research involved several teachers with teaching experience and appropriate educational backgrounds. The research began by conducting small interviews with several teachers to obtain preliminary information about their teaching experiences. the data obtained was documented and then purposively processed. The results of the data processing became the basis for the researchers to determine the number of informants who were eligible for further interviews and observations (based on research ethics, informants' data are presented anonymously).

The main data of this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. the data collection focused on several important categories consisting of teacher profiles, stress triggers, technology mastery, impact when stressed, and what they should change to improve the situation. the findings are described in more detail in this section

3.1. Informants Profile

Before delving into the findings of this study, discuss the profile of the informants involved, as detailed in the table below.

Table 1. Informant Profile

Informant Code	Gender	Teaching Experience (years)
I1_SR	Female	15
I2_RL	Male	9
I3_M	Male	12
I4_EP	Female	10
I5_IL	Male	8
I6_GW	Female	21
I7_FN	Female	8
I8_E	Female	19
I9_U	Male	5
I10_S	Male	18
I11_AS	Female	21
I12_M	Male	21

3.2 Stress experience and the triggers

From the analysis of the questionnaires, we found that all the informants in this study had experienced stress during the learning process. Next, we conducted interviews to explore the factors that trigger stress in learning. The results of the interviews show that there are several factors that cause stress, including income, facilities and infrastructure, competence, and additional responsibilities. More detailed information about these factors is explained in the table below:

Table 2. Stress Triggers

Informants Identity	Low students' ability	Lack of support for learning facilities	School or higher regulations or policies	Students lack discipline	Low income as a teacher	Additional school job	Low competence as a teacher
I1_SR							✓
I2_RL						✓	
I3_M							✓
I4_EP		✓					
I5_IL			✓			✓	
I6_GW	✓	✓					✓
I7_FN		✓				✓	
I8_E					✓		✓
I9_U	✓			✓	✓	✓	
I10_S						✓	
I11_AS	✓	✓					
I12_M	✓						✓

Based on the results of the research, several sources of stress emerged for the teachers during the teaching sessions. The interviews revealed that these stressors include different triggers. Firstly, when teachers encounter low levels of student proficiency:

“I feel very challenged when I encounter the low basic skills of students. Like when we teach procedural texts and they have very low vocabulary, so we have to start from scratch”. (expressed by I6-GW in line with I9_U, I11_AS and I12_M)

Other trigger faced by teachers deals on lack of support from learning facilities at school as stated by one of interviewees below:

“The constraint comes when I want to use the projector and the limited internet access, so the learning process has to revert to conventional styles”. (expressed by I7_FN in line with I4_EP, I6_GW and I11_M)

The abundance of extra tasks assigned to teachers outside the classroom is counted as other triggers of the stress as exposed by respondent:

“Sometimes we are suddenly given extra tasks while our teaching materials are not yet ready, so it can be quite difficult to make adjustments in the classroom”. (expressed by I2_RL and I1_IL in line with I9_U, I7_FN and I10-S)

Other informants indicated that low level of language proficiency and a desire to teach were contributing factors that led to stress in the learning process.

“The lack of language competence that I have sometimes becomes stressful, especially when I encounter students who ask a lot of questions; I sometimes struggle to accommodate these students”. (expressed by I1_SR and I6_GW in line with I3_M, I8_E and I12_M)

The first question revealed a multitude of stress triggers among English language educators in both primary and secondary educational contexts. These encompassed challenges such as low student proficiency levels, inadequate support from educational facilities, excessive workload demands, low language proficiency among instructors, student disciplinary issues, and insufficient teacher income (Decristan et al., 2015; Eyob Kenta, 2019; H & A, 2019; Jing & Jing, 2018; Lyimo, 2014; Vučinić et al., 2022). The limited English proficiency of students presents a challenge for teachers, causing stress during instruction. As noted by (Haron & Kasuma, 2022), students with low proficiency require additional support to improve their language skills. Furthermore, students may experience decreased motivation and participation in the classroom due to a gap in knowledge between themselves and their teachers regarding learning technology (Du, 2023). This can ultimately contribute to stress in the classroom where currently the mastery of pedagogical aspects must coincide with the mastery of learning technology (Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos et al., 2022; Wallace et al., 2023). Another finding have been found to

have low competence, particularly in mastering teaching materials. According to (Ahmed & Qasem, 2019) This is especially true for English teachers, who struggle with grammatical, lexical, and spoken competencies, hindering the learning process of English. Collectively, these findings suggest that stress during English language learning in the classroom can be triggered by several factors. These factors are multifactorial and involve teachers, students, and supporting facilities.

3.2 Technological proficiency and stress triggers

When exploring whether technological skills contribute to stress triggers in teaching, a significant proportion of participants (58.3%) confirmed that inadequate technological skills often lead to stress in the learning environment.

“concerns about feeling outdated compared to students’ superior technological skills, which causes stress in adapting teaching methods to students’ characteristics”. (expressed by I1_SR in line with I3_M and I4_EP)

“the challenge of adapting to the use of applications and videos in English language teaching by younger teachers, leading to feelings of inadequacy and embarrassment.” (expressed by I8_E in line with I11_AS)

“the importance of technology in effective teaching, but expressed discomfort and stress in making the transition from traditional teaching methods. (expressed by I10_S in line with I12_M)

Conversely, 41.6% of participants felt that inadequate technological skills did not cause stress in teaching.

“the acceptability of their teaching methods, even with simple media”, (expressed by I2_RL in line with I6_GW and I9_U)

“instances where students’ smartphone use disrupted learning, reflecting a nuanced perspective on the impact of technology on stress in the classroom”. (expressed by I5_IL in line with I7_FN)

These findings highlight the complex interplay between technological skills, teaching methods and student behavior in contributing to teachers’ stress levels. Significant proportion of participants perceive inadequate technological skills as a stressor, there are different perspectives among educators. Some teachers express

feelings of inadequacy and pressure to adapt to rapidly evolving technological landscapes, particularly when younger colleagues embrace digital tools with ease. The result in line with (Ahmad et al., 2022) research that there is a need to ensure that teachers improve their skills in mastering technology, especially in online learning, so that it also has an impact on their mental health. According to Hinojo-Lucena et al (2019), to encourage better learning, it is necessary to facilitate the adaptation of learning technology to the learning rhythm of each individual. Thus, interventions aimed at increasing teachers' confidence in using technology and fostering a supportive learning environment are essential to addressing stress triggers associated with technological integration. In some ways, students who are more adept at self-regulated learning can make the most of their digital learning environment and advance academically (Sutarni et al., 2021). Nevertheless, other findings indicate that educators who lack proficiency in technology may encounter challenges in effectively managing their classrooms (Nguyen et al., 2022).

3.3 Feelings and action taking when stress arises

The data showed that the feelings they felt were related to failure as a teacher, feeling that they were not where they should be, not getting support from people around them, feeling annoyed with students, feeling useless, and even some of them thought about quitting teaching.

“When I feel depressed and stressed, I feel that I have failed in teaching, I feel that I have failed to carry out my duties”. (Expressed by I10_S in line with I11_AS, I12_M I1_SR, I6_GW, I7_FN, I3_M and I4_EP)

“When I am stressed in class, sometimes I ask myself if I am in the right place? This happens repeatedly under the same conditions”. (expressed by I2_RL in line with I3_M, I5_IL, I12_M)

“When I am stressed, it seems that my view is all negative, I feel that I don't get support from other parties, I feel that people stay away from me, although I need support at such times”. (expressed I2_RL by in line with I7_FN)

“When I am stressed during teaching, my feelings are mixed, I start to get annoyed with students, feel useless and even think about quitting teaching”, (expressed by I9_U in line with I12_M and I8_E)

After finding out what they feel when stress arises in learning, the interview continued to find out what they do when stress arises. 83% of the informants said that they continue learning as a professional action.

“in such conditions I still continue learning as a responsibility, even though the spirit of teaching must have decreased”. (expressed by I6_GW in line with I4_EP)

There are also those who vent their anger on the students:

“usually I get angry with the students, sometimes I am silent and leave the class for a moment to wash my face or go to the teacher’s room, after that I re-enter in a better condition than before”. (expressed by I7_FN in line with I9_U and I11_AS)

The findings of this study highlight the emotional complexity that teachers experience when faced with stressful situations in the context of learning. The data obtained showed that the informants experienced a variety of emotions that were closely related to feelings of incompetence, self-doubt, and even a desire to leave the teaching profession. This is consistent with previous research highlighting the significant emotional impact of stress in educational contexts. For example, research by Smith and Smith (2019) found that feelings of incompetence and failure in the face of learning challenges can lead to stress and burnout among teachers. Similarly, research by Johnson et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of social support in coping with workplace stress, which may be relevant to the lack of support felt by some informants in this study. In addition, the findings indicating thoughts of leaving teaching also reflect findings from other studies that highlight the level of job satisfaction and motivation in the teaching profession. For example, a study by Hassan, Shah, & Abid (2018) found that low levels of job satisfaction and high levels of stress can increase the desire to leave the education profession. Overall, the findings of this study support the need for greater attention to teachers’ mental well-being and the implementation of more effective support strategies in the learning environment.

3.4 Strategy to Change

At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher posed a single query to the informants. The question pertained to the change strategies they had implemented to anticipate the factors that cause stress in learning. The informants were instructed to determine the change strategies towards stress triggers that they could control and overcome. Consequently, the responses yielded four categorizations of stress triggers, namely low student ability, low teacher competence, and low mastery of technology.

Table 3. Strategy to Change

Stress Triggers	Strategy to Change
Low students' ability	well-prepared lesson, self-reflection, and creating a fun and engaging learning environment
Low competence as a teacher	self-motivation and developing pedagogical knowledge
Low technological mastery	integrating innovative technology in learning

The interview results showed variations in the informants' responses, in line with the description presented earlier. Some informants expressed a desire to increase their self-motivation and develop their pedagogical knowledge to avoid stress in teaching, as expressed by I1_SR, I2_RL, and I7_FN. Meanwhile, a number of other informants were interested in integrating technology into learning to create more innovative learning experiences that meet students' needs, as expressed by I4_EP, I8_E, and I11_AS. In addition, some informants, such as I3_M, I6_GW, I9_U, I10_S, and I12_M, emphasized the importance of thorough lesson preparation, self-reflection, and creating a fun and engaging learning environment. A different point of view was taken by I5_IL, who highlighted the importance of effective time management and avoiding too much administrative work as strategies to reduce stress. The findings provide valuable insights into the different strategies teachers can use to manage stress in learning.

The table above provide a comprehensive picture of the different strategies used by teachers to cope with stress in the context of learning. From the interviews, it appears that teachers have different approaches to responding to stressful

situations. Some of them try to improve their knowledge and skills through higher professionalism approaches, while others focus more on using technology for learning innovation. There is also more emphasis on effective time management and reducing administrative workload as ways to reduce stress. Discussion of these findings provides a deeper understanding of the complexity of stressful experiences in the teaching profession and the importance of supporting teachers with a range of strategies appropriate to their needs and context.

4. Conclusion

This study highlights the multifaceted nature of stress experienced by English language teachers in primary and secondary educational settings. The findings reveal a complex interplay of factors contributing to teacher stress, including limited student competence and discipline, insufficient instructional resources, rigid institutional regulations, low salaries, high workload, and inadequate professional development. These stressors align with previous research emphasizing the structural and systemic dimensions of teacher stress (Maphal, 2014; Navickienė et al., 2019).

While some of these challenges—such as institutional policies, infrastructure, and compensation—lie beyond individual control, the study emphasizes the importance of enhancing teachers' agency through skill development and adaptive strategies. Participants identified specific measures that are within reach, such as improving digital literacy, fostering innovation in lesson planning, applying time management techniques, and incorporating technology to create engaging learning environments. These findings support the role of individual-level interventions in mitigating stress while acknowledging the structural limitations faced by teachers.

Importantly, the study also uncovered a lack of alignment between certain stress triggers and the coping strategies adopted by teachers. This dissonance suggests the need for targeted support systems that empower teachers to focus their efforts on areas where meaningful change is possible, while advocating for institutional reforms to address broader systemic issues. The findings carry several implications. For school administrators, the study underscores the importance of

providing accessible professional development opportunities and reducing non-instructional burdens. For policymakers, it signals the urgency of designing more teacher-centered policies that recognize and address the root causes of occupational stress. Teacher training institutions should also incorporate modules on stress management, resilience building, and technology integration to better prepare educators for the demands of contemporary classrooms.

Future research may further explore comparative studies across school types, regional differences, or the longitudinal impact of specific interventions. By adopting a holistic, multi-level perspective, stakeholders can better design support structures that enhance teacher well-being, instructional quality, and ultimately, student learning outcomes.

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