

Through the Looking Glass of Critical Incidents: Examining Reflective Practices of Experienced and Novice TESOL Teachers

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Abstract

Drawing on almost a century of scholarship on reflective practices in education, this study employs the critical incident technique (CIT) as a tool for reflection to explore current challenges faced by Russian TESOL educators and to uncover their coping strategies. Using qualitative content analysis as the primary method, the data collected for this study are narratives about 20 critical incidents, elicited from both experienced (n=10) and novice (n=10) English language teachers. Constant comparison coding was used to identify reasons for incidents, problematic areas, teachers' strategies, and reflective outcomes. The findings reveal various challenges faced by Russian TESOL educators, with classroom disruptions being the most frequently cited issue. Both experienced TESOL teachers and novice instructors employ a similar repertoire of coping mechanisms, yet they differ in their preferred coping strategies. Experienced teachers engage in critical reflection by linking personal experiences to social issues and effectively combine in-action, on-action, and for-action reflection to refine their practices, while novice teachers primarily reflect conceptually and engage in in-action reflection. Both groups report favorable outcomes from their critical incidents and acknowledge the necessity for ongoing professional growth. The findings support integrating the CIT into teacher training programs to enhance reflective practices among pre-service teachers.

Keywords: teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), reflective practice, critical incidents, experienced teacher, novice teacher, TESOL challenges, coping strategies.

Reflective Practice

The exploration of reflection can be traced back to ancient philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, who recognized reflection as a vital source of knowledge and a mechanism for organizing and interpreting accumulated experiences. Within the field of education, John Dewey (1933) is often considered a pioneer of reflective practice. He defined reflection as “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends” (Dewey, 1933, p. 6). Building upon Dewey’s foundational ideas, his follower Donald Schön (1983) distinguished between two forms of reflection: ‘reflection-in-action,’ which occurs during an activity and involves situational analysis, decision-making, and immediate action; and ‘reflection-on-action,’ which takes place after an action has been completed and focuses on a retrospective examination aimed at enhancing future practices.

Critiquing Schön’s framework, Michael Eraut (1995) introduced a third category: ‘reflection-for-action,’ which emphasizes a forward-looking perspective on reflective practice. In the educational context, Grushka, McLeod, and Reynolds (2005) further elaborate on this concept and also differentiate between ‘reflection-on-action,’ ‘reflection-in-action,’ and ‘reflection-for-action.’ Their research culminates in a set of categorized questions, which include technical, practical, and critical, designed to facilitate educators’ reflections at various levels (on-, in- and for- action), thereby underscoring the multidimensional nature of reflective practice and enhancing teachers’ ability to manage their roles as reflective practitioners.

There is a consensus among scholars (Brookfield, 1994; Farrell, 2024a; Grushka et al., 2005; Larrivee, 2008; Fook, 2010; Zeichner & Liston, 2013) regarding the presence of multiple levels of reflection within the educational context. Research indicates that these levels can be conceptualized as distinct stages (Larrivee, 2008; Zeichner & Liston, 2013) and teachers are expected to enhance their reflective abilities as they progress through each stage. Barbara Larrivee (2008) defines four levels of reflection such as pre-reflection, surface reflection, pedagogical reflection, and critical reflection. Conversely, Kenneth Zeichner and Daniel Liston (2013) propose five levels of reflection that may occur during teaching: rapid reflection, repair, review, research, and reformulating. Building on the ideas of Hatton and Smith (Hatton & Smith, 1995), Thomas S. C. Farrell (2024a) points out that teachers can reflect at three different levels: descriptive (the main focus is on the observable teaching behavior and its description), conceptual (teachers are supposed to analyze the theory behind classroom practices), and critical (it encourages teachers to reflect within the broader context of society). Although the aforementioned levels of reflection are seen as hierarchical, scholars argue against a strictly linear interpretation of the reflection process; teachers may engage in reflection at various levels simultaneously, depending on different facets of their professional activities (Farrell, 2024a; Larrivee, 2008).

Acknowledging the significant contributions of Dewey and Schön to the evolution of reflective practice, Farrell (2024a) suggests that their approach is predominantly oriented towards problem-solving. He argues that this focus overlooks broader social, moral, and political implications of teaching practices. Farrell cautions against the tendency to “routinize” reflection, emphasizing the necessity of viewing the teacher as a holistic individual rather than merely a facilitator of knowledge. He posits that reflective practice is inherently multidimensional and should transcend mere retrospective analysis aimed at addressing problems. Instead, it must incorporate considerations of the educator’s identity and the ethical, social, and moral ramifications of their actions.

The present study adopts a multidimensional approach, which incorporates personal and ethical dimensions of teaching, to address how both experienced and novice TESOL teachers in Russia

participate in reflective practice across multiple levels and how they make sense of their experiences within the broader social context. Because a teacher's identity is inherently linked to their teaching practices and experiences, in our analysis we triangulate our teacher participants' critical incident narratives and their responses to questionnaire items with relevant background information such as their teaching experience, educational background, position within the educational institution, goals of the language courses they teach, and geographical location of their institution.

Reflective Practice in the Russian Context

Although reflection skills are widely recognized as essential for teachers' professional development (Devyatova, 2017) and the overall effectiveness of the educational process, research on teachers' reflective practice in Russia remains limited. Indeed, the term 'reflective practice' is rarely employed in Russian educational discourse and is often substituted with other concepts such as 'reflection,' 'critical reflection,' 'professional reflection,' and 'reflective culture.' When examining the concept of 'reflection' and its associated terminology, Russian scholars frequently draw upon the foundational theories of John Dewey and his intellectual successors (Bazaeva, 2021; Lasarev, 2015; Markina, Laryushkin & Menshchikova, 2021). They emphasize that reflection is intrinsically linked to three fundamental categories within psychology: consciousness, personality, and activity. The interpretations of reflection found in the works of Russian education and psychology researchers (Chupina & Fedorenko, 2019; Fedorenko, 2016; Shelkunova, 2011; Shvydkaya, 2006; Zaretskiy, 2013) resonate closely with the views of Dewey and Schön, particularly concerning the active, systematic, and intentional nature of reflective practice. This convergence highlights a shared conceptualization of reflection as a dynamic process that is vital for fostering personal and professional development across diverse educational contexts.

As might be expected, the theoretical framework for many Russian studies on pedagogical reflection is grounded in the work by Vygotsky (1996), who posited that reflection serves as a mirror of an individual's cognitive processes. This reflective capacity signifies a transition to a new developmental stage, characterized by the mastery of internal regulation over mental processes and behaviors.

Based on Vygotsky's interpretation of reflection, some Russian scholars, including Shvydkaya (2006) and Shelkunova (2011), have explored the notion of 'reflective culture of the educator.' They define it as the readiness to be aware of, reconsider, and creatively transform one's personal and professional experiences. This reflective culture enables educators to flexibly and constructively integrate innovations derived from reflective processes into their teaching practices, ultimately enhancing their effectiveness and fostering self-development. These scholars highlight that the formation of educators' reflective culture is cyclical and nonlinear, typically encompassing the following steps: "activity – difficulty in activity – reflection – corrected activity." While this process may not be explicitly labeled as 'reflective practice,' its characteristics allow for a discussion regarding its alignment with the essence and procedures of reflective practice.

Other Russian education scholars Markina, Laryushkin, and Menshchikova (2021), who are actively engaged in research focusing on various dimensions of teachers' professional development, define reflection as an active analysis and understanding of consciousness, activity, and communication. This definition implies that passive reflection does not exist; however, it can manifest as spontaneous and unsystematic when not purposefully organized. In contrast, "ordered" and "organized" reflection can be exemplified by professional reflection. This understanding allows for a meaningful correlation between the concept of reflective practice and professional reflection. Another term frequently encountered in discussions about

reflective teaching is ‘critical reflection.’ In her research, Fedorenko (2016) uses this term interchangeably with ‘reflective practice’ but does not expound on its essence or clarify its relationship with the broader concept of reflection.

Although educational scholars in Russia – as elsewhere – have conceptualized the notion of ‘reflection’ in various and multiple ways, there exists a scarcity of empirical research focused on the actual reflective practices employed by TESOL teachers within Russian education institutions. This study seeks to address this gap. It aims to elucidate how reflective practice can be operationalized to analyze current challenges faced by both novice and experienced TESOL educators in Russia, along with their coping strategies.

The Critical Incident Technique as a Research Framework

‘Critical incidents’ have been identified as situations or events that are vividly recalled and hold particular significance for the individual reflecting on them (Brookfield, 1990). Richards and Farrell (2005) expand on this concept, emphasizing that incidents become critical only when subjected to conscious reflection. They argue that when language teachers formally analyze these critical incidents, they can uncover new insights into their teaching practices. Furthermore, reflecting on critical incidents can benefit teachers in multiple ways by creating a space for self-reflection, helping to identify and resolve challenges, highlighting effective practices, fostering professional awareness, encouraging the sharing of experiences, and building collegial relationships. Reflective practice involving critical incidents typically encompasses two main phases: the description phase and the explanation phase (Tripp, 1993). During the description phase, an issue is observed and documented; subsequently, the teacher explains its meaning, value, or role within their specific context.

Recent years have seen increasing attention given to the exploration of critical incidents in the English Language Teaching (ELT) literature (Kebede & Dubi, 2022; Lengeling & Mora Pablo, 2016; Lithoxidou & Papadopoulou, 2024; Megawati et al., 2020; Wijaya & Kuswando, 2018). These studies primarily focus on evaluating the effectiveness of reflection through the critical incident technique (CIT) framework as a tool for teachers’ professional development across diverse TESOL contexts. One of the significant and consistent findings across these studies is that the application of the CIT, when integrated within a reflective practice framework, substantially enhances the professional growth of both in-service and prospective TESOL educators. This enhancement occurs as a result of equipping them with valuable insights into their teaching practices and facilitating critical reflection on their underlying values, beliefs, and theoretical orientations.

Furthermore, research indicates that the CIT serves as an effective data-gathering tool, enabling the identification of specific challenges encountered by TESOL practitioners and the strategies they employ to address these challenges. For example, Nejadghanbar, Hu, and Mohammadi (2024) used the CIT to reveal some insights into the challenges and coping strategies of ESP teachers in Iran. They found that ESP instructors face various challenges, such as difficulties in language-related issues, which could lead to feelings of inadequacy or uncertainty about their teaching effectiveness. This feeling of vulnerability emphasizes the need for supportive professional development, achievable, in our view, through the integration of the CIT into teacher training and professional development programs.

Despite a substantial body of research demonstrating the effectiveness of the CIT, this technique remains under-utilized by TESOL educators, at least within the Russian ELT context. It is worth mentioning that recent research typically utilizes the method of case studies to explore teachers’ reflective skills and practices (Farrell & Kennedy, 2019; Farrell & Kennedy, 2020; Farrell & Macapinlac, 2021; Nguyen, 2022). All these research projects use a

holistic approach of Farrell's five-level framework (2015), which includes critical reflection on practice and beyond practice along with reflecting on teacher philosophy, principles, and theory. These studies have highlighted the importance of reflective practice in enhancing educational outcomes, professional development, and personal growth within TESOL contexts across various countries. They have contributed to a nuanced view of how reflective practice can be operationalized effectively to benefit educators and learners alike. Our study aims to complement this body of research by using the CIT, a valuable diagnostic tool for individual teachers aspiring to reflect on their practice. Because, to our knowledge, the CIT has not been adopted with English language teachers in the Russian context, we designed our study to gather data from both experienced and novice teachers using the CIT, in order to better understand what it might reveal about those teachers' reflective practices.

This research aims to address three primary questions:

1. What challenges constitute critical incidents for English language teachers in Russia?
2. What coping strategies do English language teachers in Russia utilize to deal with these challenges?
3. How do experienced and novice English language teachers in Russia participate in reflective practice across multiple levels observed in their narratives of critical incidents?

Thus, the study compares narratives elicited from experienced and novice English language teachers in Russia and reveals differences in their reflective practices. Therefore, it contributes to the body of literature on reflective practices within the Russian TESOL context. Moreover, the findings of the research should also be relevant for the international TESOL community, as this represents among the first studies of the CIT within the ELT context that compares the ways novice and experienced educators reflect on the challenges encountered in their teaching practices. By illuminating these differences, the research offers valuable insights into effective language teacher training and informs the development of reflective teaching courses for aspiring ELT educators as well as professional development programs for current teachers of English.

Methodology

The critical incident technique (CIT) is a well-established qualitative research method that facilitates the exploration of significant experiences to better understand resulting behaviors. Emerging as a valuable tool for investigating various aspects of teaching practice, the CIT was first introduced by John Flanagan in 1954. In his seminal work, Flanagan (1954, p. 327) describes the technique as comprising "a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems." We therefore decided to use the CIT to gain insights into Russian English language teachers' reflective practices. The study examines 20 Russian teachers' narratives of critical incidents in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL).

Participants

In order to recruit participants for our study, we selected universities in different regions of Russia, including its European part, the capital city, Siberia, and the far-eastern region. Our goal was to ensure geographical diversity within the Russian ELT context, considering the varying distribution of resources and differing levels of interest in English across these areas. The European region shows a high interest in English, while in Siberia and the Far-East, English competes with Chinese. We emailed university teachers and heads of ELT departments, inviting them to participate in the research. We explained how to report incidents

and informed them about the moral and ethical considerations connected with the research. These were clearly presented to the participants, along with the research purpose, procedure, risks, benefits, confidentiality obligations, and the respondents' agreement to voluntary participation in the consent form designed for this purpose. Participants could withdraw from completing the survey at any point.

Twenty teachers participated in this study, including experienced (n=10) and novice (n=10) TESOL teachers. One additional narrative was excluded after the first round of the analysis due to its incompleteness. Information about the participants and their teaching contexts is presented in Table 1. For confidentiality reasons, the participants will be referred to as P1, P2, etc. throughout this article.

Table 1. Participants and their Teaching Contexts

Participant	Gender	Teaching experience*	Institution	Course goal	Students' level
P1	F	E	Linguistic Center	General English	A1
P2	F	E	University	General English	B2
P3	F	N	Primary School	General English	A1
P4	F	N	Linguistic Center	General English	A1
P5	M	N	Middle School	General English	A2
P6	M	N	Primary School	General English	A2
P7	M	E	University	ESP	A2
P8	F	N	Linguistic Center	General English	A2
P9	F	E	Linguistic Center	General English	B2
P10	M	N	Middle School	General English	A2
P11	F	E	University	English Major	B1
P12	F	E	University	General English	B1
P13	F	E	Linguistic Center	General English	B1
P14	F	E	Linguistic Center	Exam Prep	B1
P15	F	N	Linguistic Center	General English	A1
P16	F	N	Primary School	General English	A2
P17	F	N	University	ESP	B1
P18	M	E	University	English Major	B1
P19	F	N	University	General English	A2
P20	M	E	University	English Major	B2

* *E - experienced teacher; N – novice teacher*

Both groups of experienced and novice teachers include an equal proportion of female and male educators (F=7, M=3). In this regard, the gender representation is skewed; however, it reflects the gender imbalance in the field of language teaching not only in Russia but in many other countries, where there are traditionally more female than male educators. Participants

represent the following regions of Russia: Central (Moscow, Tula), Volga (Saratov, Engels, Nizhniy Novgorod), Southern (Belgorod, Voronezh), Siberian (Barnaul, Novoaltaysk), and Far-Eastern (Vladivostok).

Novice teachers usually work in state schools or linguistic centers teaching predominantly A1-A2 English learners. State schools in Russia have a rigid curriculum unlike universities, which allow more flexibility. Therefore, experienced teachers, who primarily work in universities and linguistic centers, get to work in a more diverse teaching context instructing a wider range of English learners as far as their English level and age are concerned.

Data collection

Data collection was conducted within two weeks following participant recruitment. As mentioned above, our primary research methods consisted of the critical incidents technique (CIT) and a brief questionnaire. The former was employed to gain insights into Russian TESOL teachers' reflective practices through exploring current challenges faced by them and uncovering some of their coping strategies. The tool used to collect the narratives was a written narrative frame. The narrative frame was designed by the authors with a reference to the research by Nejadghanbar et al. (2024), in which they identified four steps in reporting critical incidents: self-observation, recounting of what happened, self-awareness, and self-evaluation. Building upon this concept, we formulated a series of questions aimed at delving deeper into the realm of reflection practices and addressing the following aspects:

- The critical incident:
 1. Description of the critical incident (What exactly happened and under what circumstances?).
 2. A teacher's reaction to the situation (How did you behave in this situation?).
 3. Students' reaction following the teacher's initial reaction (How did the students react?).
- Reflective revision of the critical incident:
 4. Reasons for the incident (What circumstances, in your opinion, caused the incident?).
 5. Outcomes after the incident and reflection on it (How has this incident affected your teaching activities? What conclusion have you come to?).

Although the questions in the narrative frame refrained from eliciting either positive or negative critical incidents, it included an example illustrating a negative critical incident in a TESOL context. Therefore, the participants were primed to provide negative critical incidents, allowing us to collect data to address the research questions related to the challenges and coping strategies of Russian TESOL educators.

Once participants provided their written response to the CIT, they also completed a brief follow-up questionnaire. This instrument included 8 items eliciting detailed descriptions and, consequently, in-depth analysis of each case, and ensuring a general representation of participants' diversity in terms of gender, educational background, teaching experience, and position within their educational institution. Additionally, information regarding the language course goal, students' age, and their language proficiency level was collected and analyzed. Along with demographic information about the teachers, we also gathered the data on geographical locations of educational institutions represented in the study in order to ensure a broad representation of reflective practices of TESOL teachers across Russia. All the

questionnaire items were designed to get a clear and full picture of each individual critical incident in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of different teaching contexts and TESOL teachers' reflective practices.

Analytic Procedures

The first round of data analysis was conducted by the first and second authors, who are an English teacher-trainer and an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teacher, respectively, and who are thus familiar with similar teaching contexts and experiences of the study's participants. In accordance with the research questions, they determined that units of the qualitative content analysis should include individual words and phrases describing challenges TESOL educators in Russia face, as well as verbs denoting actions teachers and students performed. They read and analyzed together half of the narratives and developed a coding scheme using an inductive (i.e., bottom-up) approach. They continued reading and coding the other half of the narratives individually applying the principle of consensus coding (Richards & Hemphill, 2018) while discussing problematic instances in order to refine the coding scheme. The major codes include:

- Challenges faced by Russian TESOL educators.
- Factors linked to these challenges and reasons for them.
- Types of attribution Russian TESOL educators exhibit.
- Coping strategies Russian TESOL educators use.
- Students' reactions to teachers' actions.
- Outcomes of the critical incidents.

Once the coding was complete, the first and second authors collaborated on interpreting the results of the data. Then, they calculated the inter-coder agreement (Holsti Index), which comprised 0.68. Holsti's method (1969), which is a variation of percent agreement, was chosen because the two coders did not code pre-defined quotations and were allowed to select coding segments themselves. According to Landis and Koch (1977), between 0.61 and 0.80 is considered a substantial level of agreement, especially bearing in mind a highly subjective coding task set before the coders in this study.

At the next stage of the analysis, the third author (a teacher-trainer) and the fifth author (an ESP teacher) coded the narratives independently using the coding scheme developed by the first and second authors. We view coding as an iterative process; therefore, the second round of coding did not utilize a codebook with pre-defined quotations, as we wanted to avoid limiting the discovery of new themes. As a result, the third and fifth authors coded segments of the narratives that they considered relevant and could modify the coding scheme. Their inter-coder agreement (Holsti Index) comprised 0.62. When the second round of coding was completed, the third and fifth authors discussed their results and resolved any differences.

At the subsequent meeting, all the researchers exchanged the results of the analysis, which appeared to be similar. All the authors who coded the segments reported the same tendencies in the common challenges identified by Russian TESOL educators, with classroom disruptions being the most frequently cited issue. The authors also agreed on the observed differences in the ways experienced and novice teachers try to deal with problematic situations in their teaching practices.

This iterative, collaborative, and complex set of analytic procedures allowed us to verify the consistency of the results presented in the corresponding section of the article. It is worth noting that all the authors have extensive experience as language teachers (with an average teaching experience of 16.2 years). Two of the researchers are experts in ESP teaching, while the other

have extensive experience teaching English to English majors at the university level as well as in the context of general English teaching. The fourth author has expertise in both fields and can evaluate the validity of research concepts and methodology integrity. This experience makes it possible for the authors to better understand all the types of cases described in critical incident (CI) narratives as well as to interpret the results from the point of view of reflective habits TESOL teachers exhibit through the description of critical incidents.

Results

Challenges for Russian TESOL educators

The qualitative content analysis of the 20 narratives of critical incidents revealed the following challenges presented in Table 2, which illustrates a portion of our codebook (see the Appendix for the full list of codes with examples).

Table 2. Challenges Faced by TESOL Teachers in Russia

Code	Parameter
A1	Disruption of classroom discipline/reluctance to work
A2	Assessment disagreement
A3	Emotional issues of students (e.g., a language barrier) / Emotional or mental discomfort and stress of students (e.g., uncomfortable classroom atmosphere for students)
A4	Special educational needs

Both experienced and novice teachers attribute the majority of the challenges to the disruption of classroom discipline (A1). In most cases, the disruption is expressed in students' reluctance to practice speaking (“*refused* to pronounce interdental [θ]”), leaving an online lesson (“almost burst into tears and *disconnected*”), or demonstrating indifference and boredom (“*wasn't involved* in a lesson and *said it was boring*”).

When it comes to novice teachers, discipline disruption in their classroom might be explained by the young age of both the teacher and the students. It is difficult for young teachers to maintain discipline, and for young students to control their behavior. Students disobey young teachers' instructions because young teachers are not treated ‘seriously’ as fully-fledged teachers (“At that time, *not all the students took me seriously*, as I myself looked like a student”). One of the novice educators (P5) revealed the details of this kind of disruptive behavior among the 7th-grade state school students aged 12-14.

... When asked to do something, the students would, in a friendly manner, try to ask me for answers to questions or would respond with a joke. Sometimes they would ask me personal questions that were not related to the lessons at all (Novice Teacher (N. T.); P5).

As follows from his CI narrative (“Since I was an advocate of the teacher-as-friend approach, I found that students often did not take my words seriously”), P5 was trying to implement a teacher-as-a-friend approach, which resulted in a discrepancy between his image and the traditional image of a teacher.

Novice teachers operate in a very similar context, teaching primary and secondary mixed-ability classes, with 80% of students in the collected narratives aged under 18. For this reason, some of the challenges are connected with individual students who either require special educational needs or whose level of English does not fit the entire group but they have no option of being transferred. Working in an inclusive classroom can be challenging even for an

experienced instructor, let alone for a novice teacher with only 3 years of teaching experience. One of the participants (P3), who unexpectedly discovered the presence of a student with special needs in the class, provides the following critical incident (CI) description:

The child refused to respond in class and engage in dialogue afterward; it was just difficult for her to admit that she didn't know anything (not even the alphabet). I calmed the child down and let her go, and then I talked with the homeroom teacher and contacted the mother. In the following lessons, the girl had separate assignments (N. T.; P3).

As can be noted, P3 not only interpreted the student's behavior as disruptive but also expressed empathy, recognizing the emotional state of the child and thinking something was wrong. In general, emotional issues of students (A3) pose concerns for both experienced and novice teachers, being described in their CI narratives either as a major challenge or as a contributing one. When describing the emotional state of students, teachers report such students' feelings as *hesitation, tension, anxiety, fear, confusion*, etc. These emotions cause students to change their behavior and lead to disruptions in the learning process and material comprehension. Yet, there are some exceptions when the emotional issues of students become a primary challenge for a teacher. A remarkable example was described by an experienced TESOL instructor, P20:

However, I was surprised to find out that for the vast majority of students, the main issue throughout the semester was to overcome the fear of speaking in class. Many wrote about feelings of discomfort, insecurity, and fear of making mistakes. I had no idea that in every class most of them were pushing themselves to speak English (Experienced Teacher (E. T.); P20).

This challenge was revealed by P20 through the reflective practice he implemented with his students at the end of the course. Specifically, the teacher had asked his students to complete a written reflective assignment on their studies throughout the semester. Although the students followed the instructions and demonstrated success in academic writing, the teacher was not satisfied with the unexpected revelation about their fear of speaking. Consequently, creating an emotionally comfortable environment in his English language classes is one of the key components that allow P20 to consider himself a professional in his field.

As a result of our analysis, we identified a wide range of factors contributing to CIs (B1...B17 in the Appendix), including both external and internal circumstances as well as characteristics of the interlocutors – both teachers and students. Both experienced and novice teachers identify a similar number of factors contributing to the challenges of their work. However, novice teachers primarily highlight a lack of student motivation and interest as well as (their own self-reported) poorly developed teaching skills, especially in managing classroom discipline and student emotions. We observed that two of the novice educators referred to themselves in 3rd person as if they still could not believe that they were the teachers. Reflecting on their teaching experience made them step out of the role and look at themselves from the outside. P10's narrative serves as a vivid illustration.

However, the lesson did not go as planned. The children were not interested in the game, did not actively try to use the English language, and just tried to quickly find their partner and "finish the lesson."

...The teacher did not pay enough attention to motivating the students, did not demonstrate the importance and interest of the activity; the teacher did not break the game into stages, did not set clear objectives, and did not monitor the completion of the exercises (N. T.; P10).

The lack of students' interest made this incident critical for P10. Their behavior did not meet the teacher's expectations. According to his CI, he spent a considerable amount of time

preparing the game, tried to apply an individual approach to his students, and anticipated their excitement; instead, the lesson plan and its timing were disrupted. In general, the analysis of CIs has shown that most of the novice teachers mention that students' behavior disrupted lesson plans. Based on our own experience and familiarity with the context, we believe there are at least two factors contributing to critical incidents of this nature. The first factor stems from the educational environment and a student's language level. While 80% of experienced participants teach intermediate-level young adults at the university, 80% of novice teachers work with beginner and elementary-level primary and middle school students. In contrast to experienced teachers, novice instructors may not yet have developed the strategies needed to effectively manage younger students, who generally have less impulse control and lower language proficiency. The second factor is a lack of experience and self-confidence among novice teachers. While experienced teachers typically have a well-established and consistent approach to organizing their lessons, novice teachers often rely heavily on lesson plans for each class. When faced with challenges, they feel the need to adapt these plans on the fly to address the issues that arise.

When remembering their critical incidents, experienced teachers refer to their past experience, while novice teachers describe their present experience as reflecting the modern educational environment. Being a novice teacher, P19 reflects on the CI:

Several students systematically completed a number of homework assignments using artificial intelligence technologies. This was especially true for written assignments. They almost ignored my reprimands, occasionally rephrasing some sentences from the text generated by AI (N. T.; P19).

Apparently, P19 perceives this incident as critical because, in her opinion, thoughtless and excessive use of AI becomes a hindrance to the improvement of writing skills. Students do not understand the importance of completing this assignment independently. They see their main goal as simply submitting a written work, while the source seems unimportant. Their ignorance of the teacher's dissatisfaction and reluctance to make any changes creates additional challenges for the teacher.

There are a number of possible pitfalls in using information and communications technology (ICT) in both experienced and novice educators' practice. Thus, distance learning becomes a challenge-generating factor frequently cited by experienced teachers. P9, an experienced educator, reports the situation that became a matter of concern:

Since the lessons are conducted online, students were supposed to use any available text editing application, such as Word or Google Docs. One student reported that she was unable to open these programs during the lesson (E. T.; P9).

Apparently, the online class required students to use their personal devices, and P9 could not ascertain their technical capabilities in advance. The lack of access to a text editor limited the student's ability to complete the assignment, which disrupted the lesson plan.

We identified three ways of explaining critical incidents that the teachers mentioned in their narratives: C1 – external attribution (connected with students or circumstances/environment), C2 – internal attribution (connected with teachers), and C3 – both types of attribution.

Experienced teachers showed considerable variation in how they explained the reasons for their challenges. Some concentrated only on external factors involving students' behavior or surrounding conditions. For instance, P2, with 32 years of teaching practice, reports the following:

Now I spend more time explaining each type of assignment, as it is important to consider the current circumstances: the emergence of various technologies, students' reduced ability and willingness to thoroughly prepare for certain types of assignments at home, their reluctance to fully engage in work, and a greater sense of overconfidence in some cases (E. T.; P2).

Although the teacher acknowledges the need to explain assignments better, she does not think that the source of the problem lies in her actions. Instead, she attributes the CI exclusively to the influence of a group of external factors. However, these factors transcend the mere description of the incident itself, which involves a student exceeding the time limit for his oral presentation; they also encompass important ethical and social issues that go beyond teaching practices. This critical level of reflection is characteristic of the experienced TESOL practitioners who participated in the study, with 60% of the narratives including reflections that connect individual experiences to broader social issues. Experienced teachers often consider readiness of an educational institution to facilitate online instruction ("not all universities were ready for such development of the situation [introduction of online learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic]"), user-friendliness of the ICT ("If I plan to use a new app, I have to let my students know about it beforehand"), and students' diversity ("I should have identified this student as a reserved one," "working with international students ... I have to create conditions for their somewhat psychological and linguistic adaptation").

Unlike experienced teachers, novice teachers rarely engage in reflection at the critical level. We have collected only three narratives that consider ethical (inappropriate use of AI) and social (emotional learning of students and inclusive education) issues. As far as the type of attribution is concerned, novice teachers primarily attribute their challenges to external factors, suggesting that these challenges are rooted in student behaviors or environmental factors. However, they do attribute some challenges to internal factors, indicating that they recognize their own inexperience, teaching practices, or personal traits as contributing to the difficulties they face. For example, a novice teacher P5 demonstrated this way of explaining the CI:

As a reflective part of this case, I came to the following conclusion: the lack of sufficient teaching experience influenced this incident. My personal misunderstanding of how to build relationships with students and how to establish my personal boundaries significantly affected the occurrence of this incident (N. T.; P5).

The reason for this conclusion may be insufficient teaching experience (5 years in P5's case). However, even some experienced teachers focus solely on internal factors involving their lack of insight. P9 with 22 years in profession readily acknowledges her mistakes.

I believe that I did not sufficiently consider the technical challenges that students might encounter. It would have been prudent to ascertain in advance whether each member of the group had the capability to work with the required programs. If not, I should have warned them that they would need to exchange handwritten texts. Additionally, I should have been prepared to address any objections (E. T.; P9).

The analysis of CI's narratives revealed similarities in the attribution of challenges among experienced and novice teachers. However, in contrast to novice teachers, experienced teachers are more likely to exhibit both types of attribution. Thus, reflective practices of experienced teachers demonstrate a greater level of self-awareness and a more comprehensive view of the situation. They tend to consider multiple perspectives, frequently going beyond their teaching practices. Most novice participants (70%) reflect at the conceptual level, often considering and describing alternative practices that they implement as soon as facing a challenge. When

reporting their challenges, novice teachers reveal their vulnerability in adjusting to the professional role of a teacher, often doubting themselves and their teaching practices.

Russian TESOL Educators' Coping Strategies

The results of the data analysis regarding teachers' reactions to critical incidents demonstrate a diverse repertoire of coping strategies used by both experienced and novice Russian TESOL teachers. Basically, all the strategies mentioned by the participants aimed at either reinforcement and support of students or avoidance and suppression of the situation. Thus, the strategies were identified as positive or negative. Considering the former, we can distinguish the cases where teachers tend to react immediately to the incident sometimes sacrificing the lesson plan and its parts. Herein, such strategies as 'positive reinforcement,' 'emotional understanding,' 'differentiated instruction,' 'immediate response,' and 'correction' were identified. In other instances, teachers describe the strategy of delayed and individualized responses to those particular students whose behavior triggered the incident. They choose to carry out face-to-face conversations or counseling after the class is over, addressing the student's needs individually. Negative strategies mostly involve avoiding additional problems at the lesson, which leads to the teacher ignoring the case or avoiding the necessity to change something in their teaching practice. Furthermore, some teachers resort to punishment hoping to solve the problem this way. As a result, we added 'avoidance or delayed reaction,' 'ignoring,' and 'punishment' to the list of coping strategies. Finally, one strategy stands out in the entire list and involves a teacher's effort to seek support from colleagues or students' parents. Table 3 below provides examples of the strategies identified in the narratives of experienced and novice teachers.

Our findings reveal that both groups of TESOL teachers in Russia acknowledge the importance of differentiated instruction to address students' needs, but their approaches differ. Experienced educators adopt a more balanced approach that incorporates emotional understanding and support. Novice teachers tend to provide immediate reactions, such as altering the lesson plan or in-class activities on the spot.

Another observation suggests that experienced Russian TESOL teachers tend to choose to employ avoidance, differentiated instruction, and face-to-face conversations with students. Some experienced teachers prefer to provide delayed reactions, scheduling conversations, or counseling after class. Less frequently, they provide positive reinforcement or express emotional understanding. Immediate responses to the situation are not frequent as well. This can be attributed to the common nature of the critical incidents. Avoidance occurs mostly because the incident involves an individual student, and the teacher decides to deal with it later in a face-to-face setting. Presumably, this can be seen as a way for teachers to reduce stress and maintain their emotional balance, rather than succumbing to provocation, reacting impulsively, and showing a lack of confidence. In these cases, teachers speak with students and explain their teaching practices. The use of differentiated instruction serves a similar purpose. Experienced teachers believe that their established teaching methods are ineffective for an individual student and adjust them to suit this student's individual needs.

Table 3. Examples of Coping Strategies

Coping strategies	Examples of experienced teachers' responses	Examples of novice teachers' responses
Positive reinforcement	A vivid example is always indicative, it is better to show one vivid example than to read notations from lesson to lesson. (P14)	I pronounced all the necessary phrases together with him, praising him for the small work done. (P16)
Emotional understanding	In the most extreme cases, you can allow a student not to complete the assignment and respond favorably to this if the student's emotional state does not allow them to immerse in the task. (P9)	I calmed the child down and let her go. (P3)
Seeking support	Therefore, I had to talk to the head of the department and send the student with his work to her. (P11)	A talk with the homeroom teacher helped to remedy the situation. (P3)
Differentiated instruction (Individualized approach)	I suggested that she should write her answers with a pen or a pencil, take a photo of them and send it to her speaking partner. (P9)	I did not abandon this student; I invited him for consultations and prepared separate tasks for him for each lesson that corresponded to the topic of the lesson but in a simplified format. (P16)
Face-to-face conversation and counseling	To overcome the situation, a conversation was held with the student about how, with a shortage of language resources, it is possible to maintain communication in English. (P7)	In this regard, the teacher conducted a conversation with the students, finding out that it would be more interesting for this particular student to keep records in electronic format. (P15)
Correction	The child refused to pronounce the interdental sound in class. At first, I made comments... (P14)	They almost ignored my reprimands, occasionally rephrasing some sentences from the text generated by AI. (P19)
Immediate response/reaction (providing an answer to a question, change in the lesson plan, activity in class)	The teacher allowed them to first translate texts from English into their native language in their own mind - and only after that, after a few minutes of such "adaptation," translate them aloud into Russian. (P18)	I had to interrupt the class to start a conversation specifically with this student. (P4)
Avoidance/delayed reaction	...if I didn't know, I said that I would definitely look at it and tell you next time... (P13)	-
Ignoring	The child refused to pronounce the interdental sound in class. At first, I made comments, but I encountered aggressive denial, so I later ignored the matter (P14)	Trying to establish friendly and warm relations with students, I tried to be as understanding and condescending as possible about many issues during the lesson somehow violating discipline. (P8)
Punishment	-	I had to show strictness and urge the students to complete the homework assignment during the break. (P8)

**The examples of teachers' responses provided in the table have not been corrected and preserve the original style of the author. Although some teachers use first-person narratives when describing critical incidents, others prefer third-person storytelling.*

Novice teachers' strategies differ. It is possible to discern a predominant approach among those outlined in the case studies, which most often involves an immediate response or reaction to alterations implemented by the teachers within the given context. Furthermore, only a single experienced educator mentions the strategy of 'seeking support,' which is mentioned several times by novice instructors. However, some of the novices show hesitation or doubt when seeking support from more experienced colleagues, classroom teachers, or parents. Punishment has not been mentioned by experienced teachers. When confronted with disruptive behavior in their classrooms, most novice instructors tend to adopt a punitive approach towards students who disrupt discipline. For instance, they opt for additional tasks assigned to the students who frequently disrupt the discipline or force students who did not complete a home assignment to do it during a break.

Overall, experienced teachers engage with individual students seeking to understand them and address their specific issues. Novice teachers, conversely, tend to focus primarily on their own reactions when describing how they handle challenges. They describe how they quickly adapt to the changing circumstances and alter their practice on the spot. A small proportion of novice teachers surveyed focus on students and their individual needs. This might indicate areas for their professional development, particularly in enhancing their emotional intelligence.

When it comes to students' reactions to the coping strategies used by the teachers in critical incidents, most students exhibit cooperative reactions. However, a few cases of aggression or refusal to cooperate have been identified (Table 4).

Table 4. Examples of Students' Reactions

Students' reactions	Examples of experienced teachers' responses	Examples of novice teachers' responses
Cooperation/Collaboration	The students actively supported the teacher and 'did not understand' phrases in Russian addressed to them. (P7)	In general, students who behaved badly realized that they were not communicating with a peer friend. (P5)
Negative reaction and/or aggression	I met with the student online, and we sorted out the comments that I left on the platform; the student had the opportunity to ask additional questions. Unfortunately, I could not convince him of the adequacy of the assessment of his work. (P11)	Of course, these students were not happy with my comments and extra homework. (P5)
Refuse to cooperate	The student became even shyer and refused to participate in the task at all. (P9)	My reprimands were practically ignored. (P19)

Apparently, there is a positive tendency that can be observed with both categories of teachers as far as the reaction of students to teachers' coping strategies is concerned. In both cases, we see that students react positively to the changes the teachers introduce or to the actions they take in order to change the difficult situation for the better. Students show a willingness to cooperate that is reflected in the text in such expressions as '*actively supported,*' '*psychological adaptation,*' '*took into account some of my recommendations,*' '*received feedback,*' etc.

While both experienced and novice teachers generally elicit positive reactions from students to their coping strategies in general, there is a notable difference. Experienced teachers report negative reactions and aggression from students in some cases, primarily due to their chosen strategies. In contrast, novices have encountered a single case of student refusal to cooperate. However, this reaction is local in nature and is shown by the student who initially caused the incident.

Regarding the outcomes, experienced educators report modifications in their approach to classroom management with equal frequency as they mention professional development, which is most often connected with the experience they have gained. Only one experienced teacher mentions a lack of results. Novice teachers, on the other hand, predominantly highlight alterations in their teaching practice (the majority of the coded elements in this category indicate this). In three cases, novices point to the lack of results. Thus, experienced teachers' reflective habits are mostly connected with reasoning and observation rather than immediate reactions. They choose to make an effort to understand the needs of individual students and to preserve the emotional balance of the class, whereas the novice teachers' reflective habits are primarily based on on-the-spot experimenting with their teaching which is supposed to cause the change in the student's behavior or reactions. When describing their reactions to challenges, both categories of language teachers seem to demonstrate in-action reflection. However, experienced instructors more frequently combine in-action and on-action reflective practices in order to draw conclusions about their teaching and to implement changes based on their experiences, as indicated in their descriptions of the outcomes after the incidents. As a result, nine out of ten experienced teachers report how the incidents have influenced their future planning and practices ("Now, while designing a course, I always plan an opportunity for students to provide me with reflective feedback," "Since that time, I try to give both American and British pronunciations of this or that word," "Now, I pay more attention to learners' personality types"). In contrast, only four out of ten novice teachers demonstrate this level of reflection (reflection-for-action). For instance, they highlight the significance of maintaining communication with students' parents, changing routine practices to boost students' confidence and speaking skills, and setting clear learning goals and objectives.

Discussion, Limitations, and Future Research

Based on the findings, we can infer that both experienced TESOL teachers and novice instructors are actively addressing the obstacles they encounter. They employ a similar repertoire of coping mechanisms, yet the two cohorts exhibit divergent tendencies in the preferred coping strategies. Novice teachers seem slightly more adaptable in classroom management, as they are still developing their skills in this area; but, unlike experienced teachers, they lack an individualized approach. While novice teachers tend to respond quickly to emerging challenges, experienced teachers allow themselves more time to react and opt for differentiated instruction that is better tailored to the needs of their students.

Findings also show that both groups report favorable outcomes from their CIs and acknowledge the necessity for ongoing professional growth. This aligns with other research suggesting that analyzing both positive and negative critical incidents provides teachers with valuable insights into their teaching practices and methods, enabling them to make adjustments based on both

their reflections and feedback from students, thereby fostering professional growth (Megawati et al., 2020; Yu, 2018). Therefore, we believe that the CIT can be effectively used in teacher training to prepare pre-service teachers for work in the professional environment.

The CIT can be used as a teaching tool to develop the reflective skills of pre-service teachers. They can prepare written responses to challenges encountered during their teaching internships and compare them to descriptions of critical incidents reported by experienced educators. Such comparison can demonstrate differences in the levels of reflection. Research shows that new teachers tend to reflect at the descriptive level “because they are just developing their schemata of teaching from experiencing classrooms for the first time” (Farrell, 2024a, p. 22). This is also suggested by our findings, which indicate that experienced educators frequently use both internal and external attribution to explain the factors and reasons behind their critical incidents. In other words, their open-mindedness allows them to question their thinking and gain insights into their actions, leading to higher levels of reflection, both conceptual and critical. By reading critical incidents reported by experienced teachers and comparing them to their own descriptions, pre-service teachers can develop the necessary skills to reflect at higher levels. Apparently, such a use of the CIT requires a guidebook for teacher trainers as well as a repository of critical incidents prepared by experienced TESOL educators, which we see as one of the perspectives of this research.

Besides developing reflective skills, the CIT can be used as a teaching tool for the professional development of pre-service teachers. CIs reported by both experienced and novice teachers highlight real classroom challenges and effective strategies for overcoming them. By familiarizing themselves with such ‘critical’ situations, pre-service teachers can better prepare for the professional environment. This preparation could help mitigate the negative effects of the transition from university to a real classroom. Besides, introducing critical incidents into teacher training curriculum can resolve an issue of a disconnect or disparity between the content of such a curriculum and the real world of the classroom (Farrell, 2024b), which is reported to be one of the main issues that novice educators experience.

In addition to suggesting the use of the CIT as a teaching tool for pre-service teachers, this study also proposes utilizing the CIT as a diagnostic tool for a TESOL educational system within a national context. For example, critical incidents reported by the participants in this study demonstrate recent challenges that most TESOL educators experienced over the last five years. They are linked to the shift to online education due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the unethical use of AI, characteristic of the post-pandemic teaching landscape. Based on our findings, most teachers have to develop effective solutions to address these challenges on their own. For instance, experienced TESOL participants rarely use the coping strategy ‘seeking support,’ which can indicate underdeveloped communities of practice – an issue of the entire educational system in Russia. Additionally, novice teachers often report critical incidents connected with acknowledgment of their professional roles. These roles are often pressured by their pupils who “treat them as friends.” This pressure factor is rarely addressed in the Russian teacher training curriculum, leaving pre-service teachers without coping strategies to manage this challenge in their work. The use of the CIT as a diagnostic tool via research projects similar to ours could potentially reveal consistent issues related to teacher training at a national level.

Despite the fact that this study includes a range of teachers from various regions of Russia, the small number of participants could be considered by some as a limitation. However, based on our extensive experiences and our familiarity with the ELT teaching circumstances in Russia, we consider the results to be representative of the country’s English teaching realities. It is thus likely that replicating this study on a larger scale would yield similar results. However, widening the scope of this research could enable us to gain deeper insights into the reflective

practices of experienced and novice teachers. Therefore, as a future direction, it would be interesting to explore the extent to which an educational system contributes to the differences in reflection practices between experienced and novice teachers. Is it possible that TESOL teachers who work in similar educational systems (perhaps, those that exhibit some hereditary traits) report their critical incidents in a similar way and utilize similar coping strategies? In this regard, a similar research project could be conducted in the former USSR republics, whose educational systems developed similarly in the past but have been reformed separately over the past 30 years to meet current challenges.

Finally, it is worth exploring how much the cultural context influences the reflection practices of TESOL teachers. The fundamental differences between experienced and novice teachers appear to be quite similar across many countries, with novice teachers primarily struggling to fulfill their professional roles. However, the cultural context may influence how teachers describe critical incidents, the factors and reasons behind them, and the coping strategies they use.

Conclusions

Our exploration of critical incidents faced by experienced and novice TESOL teachers in Russia contributes to the prosperous professional development of both groups as it provides a thorough understanding of how both groups navigate challenges, with novice teachers eager for adaptability while lacking the individualized approach their more experienced counterparts possess.

The CIT revealed that experienced teachers engage in critical reflection, linking personal experiences to broader social issues, while novice teachers primarily reflect conceptually, exploring alternative practices when faced with challenges. Novices also exhibit vulnerability, often doubting their teaching practices. Both groups demonstrate in-action reflection, but experienced teachers are more likely to combine in-action, on-action, and for-action reflection, using these insights to adjust and refine their teaching practices based on their experiences.

As the sphere of education constantly evolves in response to recent challenges such as the shift to online learning and the integration of AI technologies, the data gathered through the CIT not only highlights the personal and contextual factors of teaching practices but also calls attention to systemic issues within educational frameworks, particularly within the Russian TESOL context.

Therefore, we advocate for the integration of CIT into teacher training programs to enhance reflective practices among pre-service teachers and enrich their professional preparation. We believe that their experienced colleagues will find it equally useful as effective teaching is a continuous process of reflection and adaptation to meet the diverse needs of the students. We additionally suggest further research into the influence of cultural contexts and educational systems on the reflection practices of TESOL teachers.

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Appendix – Coding Scheme

Category	Code	Parameter	Example
Challenges faced by TESOL teachers in Russia	A1	Disruption of classroom discipline/reluctance to work	“... one of the students refused to speak English, switched to Russian when answering questions, asked questions in Russian, translated questions addressed to her, and generally violated the ‘English only’ policy introduced within the course, destroying the artificial language environment that had been created.” (Experienced Teacher, Participant 7)
	A2	Disagreement about assessment	“The student requested an even more detailed comment on the assignments: he was not satisfied with the grades, and he suspected me of being biased.” (E.T., P11)
	A3	Emotional issues of students (e.g., a language barrier) / Emotional or mental discomfort and stress of students (e.g., uncomfortable classroom atmosphere for students)	“The student became even shyer and refused to participate in the task at all because she was afraid that her handwriting would be difficult for her partner to read.” (E.T., P9)
	A4	Special Educational Needs	“When working in a school with inclusive education, it is necessary to find out if there are any special needs children in the class for whom learning is more difficult than for others.” (Novice Teacher, P. 3)
Factors / reasons linked to challenges	B1	Student(s)’ age	“The teacher came to the following conclusion: <u>for primary school students</u> with low motivation for learning activities, it is advisable to use non-traditional teaching methods to heighten their interest.” (N.T., P 15)
	B2	Lack of student(s)’ self-discipline	“But the student relied on his abilities and did not even rehearse the report at home the day before the presentation.” (E.T., P2)
	B3	Lack of student(s)’ motivation	“During the lesson, the student was not engaged in it, constantly showing indifference to what was happening, and said that he was bored.” (E.T., P 1)
	B4	Student(s)’ motivation	“Once, during class, a student repeatedly asked how a certain word sounds or is defined in American English. This happened in several classes... There wasn't any incident as such; he just needed it. The guy was planning to go to America.” (E.T., P 13)
	B5	Student(s)’ poor soft skills (e.g., time management, critical thinking, teamwork, etc.)	“The student was giving a presentation on one of the suggested topics and significantly exceeded the time limit.” (E.T., P 2)
	B6	Student(s)’ level of English	“The reason was true indeed. The student in this group had a higher level than his classmates.” (E.T., P 1)
	B7	Psychological problems of students (language anxiety, lack of confidence)	“However, I was greatly surprised to find out that, for the majority of students, the main problem in class during the semester was overcoming the fear of

		speaking. Many of them wrote about feelings of discomfort, uncertainty, and fear of making a mistake.” (E.T., P 20)
B8	Individual/personal traits of students	“In my opinion, there is an unhealthy perfectionism present here and the mindset of ‘if you can’t do something well, it’s better not to do it at all.’ Such students require special attention.” (E.T., P 12)
B9	Parents’ negligence	“It is obvious to me that several factors contributed to such underachievement: insufficient attention from parents to their child and their academic performance...” (N.T., P 16)
B10	Sudden change in the classroom environment	“The students were quite active during the lesson: they eagerly completed all the tasks I offered and answered questions when suddenly an independent observer, who was monitoring the teaching, entered the classroom...” For me personally, her appearance was not something I wasn’t prepared for, but the students’ activity sharply decreased: there were significantly fewer raised hands, the children began to speak hesitantly, and it was clear that the presence of an unfamiliar person in the classroom had an impact on the learning process.” (N.T., P6)
B11	Contemporary technologies	“In my opinion, the cause of the incident was the imperfection of the assessment system for assignments on the interactive platform.” (E.T., P 11)
B12	Distance learning	“Since the studies are conducted online, students had to use any available application for typing, such as Word or Google Docs. One student reported that she could not open these programs during the class.” (E.T., P9)
B13	Individual/personal traits of teachers	“Since I was an advocate of the teacher-as-friend approach, I found that students often did not take my words seriously.” (N.T., P5)
B14	Teachers’ strictness (teacher is too demanding)	“It is obvious to me that several factors contributed to such underachievement: insufficient attention from parents to their child and their academic performance, possibly a <u>strict previous teacher...</u> ” (N.T., P16)
B15	Teacher’s little teaching experience	“As a reflective part of this case, I came to the following conclusion: lack of sufficient teaching experience influenced this incident.” (N.T., P 5)
B16	Teacher’s heavy workload	“Unfortunately, at that time, being under the pressure of other moral circumstances and physical exhaustion, I could not emotionally handle this situation.” (N.T., P4)
B17	Teacher’s poor or underdeveloped professional	“I think I hadn’t considered technical difficulties that students might encounter. I could have found out

		skills (e.g., tech skills, classroom management)	whether each member of the group had access to the necessary programs before the lesson.” (N.T., P9)
Way of explaining	C1	External attribution (connected with students or circumstances/environment)	“A possible circumstance that contributed to the incident was the fact that I was not informed about the observer's visit. Additionally, the children were unable to mentally prepare mentally for her presence.” (N.T., P6)
	C2	Internal attribution (connected with teachers)	“The teacher did not pay enough attention to the student’s motivation, did not show them the importance and interest of the lesson; the teacher did not divide the activity into stages, did not set clear tasks, and did not monitor the completion of the exercises.” (N.T., P10)
	C3	Both types of attribution	“I believe that the student did not voluntarily choose to engage in additional studies, as his statements repeatedly reflected a lack of interest in the subject. In this situation, the factor of overall misunderstanding of the material, the student’s initial mindset before the lesson, and the relaxed atmosphere of the class played a role.” (N.T., P4)
Strategies used by TESOL teachers in Russia to cope with challenges	D1	Positive reinforcement	“However, I decided to support him, and in the very first lesson, I went over all the necessary phrases with him, praising him for the small, yet significant, effort he had made.” (N.T., P16)
	D2	Emotional understanding	“I had to change the general approach to speaking in class the following semester and introduce new techniques and technologies that would make students feel more relaxed.” (E.T., P20)
	D3	Seeking support	“I calmed the child down and let her go, and then I spoke with the homeroom teacher and got in touch with his mother.” (N.T., P3)
	D4	Differentiated instruction (Individualized approach)	“After this incident, I always prepare additional tasks for children with a higher level, or offer a student to transfer to another group with the appropriate level.” (E.T., P1)
	D5	Face-to-face conversation and counseling	“To overcome the situation, a discussion was held with the student on how to maintain communication in English despite a lack of language resources, what methods of compensation exist, how to find the right word or construction, or to express one’s thoughts with a limited vocabulary and range of grammatical forms.” (E.T., P7)
	D6	Correction	“Her response was weak; I listened and said something like, “Overall, not bad. Let’s think together about what we could add.” (E.T., P12)
	D7	Immediate response/reaction (providing an answer to a question, change in the lesson plan, activity in class)	“I responded, but if I didn't know, I said that I would definitely look it up and let them know next time.” (E.T., P13)

	D8	Avoidance/delayed reaction	“The teacher patiently listened to the presentation until the end, without interrupting the speaker or making any comments. Later, during the break, she inquired about the problem and offered to consult with her the day before if there were any questions.” (E.T., P2)
	D9	Ignoring	“At first, I made comments, but I encountered aggressive denial, so I later ignored the matter...” (E.T., P14)
	D10	Punishment	“I became stricter and, if I may say so, I reined in the students who distracted me and others from learning using various methods: comments, additional assignments, and so on.” (N.T., P5)
Students’ reaction to teachers’ actions	E1	Cooperation and/or collaboration	“The situation has improved a lot. She even started to take some of my recommendations into account in her subsequent responses.” (E.T., P12)
	E2	Negative reaction and/or aggression	“At first, I made comments, but I encountered aggressive denial.” (E.T., P14)
	E3	Refuse to cooperate	“Unfortunately, even a serious conversation did not lead to a change in attitude.” (N.T., P4)
Result / Outcome of the incident	F1	Classroom management (a teacher has changed their practice, started to teach differently, or suggested a student’s transfer into another class)	“The teacher had to change the standard sequence of his pedagogical actions in order to adapt to the needs of students who do not have a good knowledge of Russian and English.” (E.T., P18)
	F2	Professional development (gained some experience, developed a skill, undergone professional training)	“This incident helped me to reconsider online education and adapt faster to this form of work.” (E.T., P11)
	F3	Lack of the result	“I can’t say that this case particularly affected my professional activity.” (E.T., P12)

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