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Transitioning into a Professional Teacher: EFL Preservice Teachers' Anxiety in Teaching Practicum

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Abstract. Foreign language anxiety has been proven to be an important issue in language learning, according to research on language learning in foreign languages. This study aims to determine the level of anxiety experienced by English preservice teachers. Most research projects in the past concerned learners' anxiety about students who learning English. To fill the gap, the current study tries to deliver a different perspective on classroom anxiety. Thus, the current study investigates anxiety from preservice teachers' points of view quantitatively. The current study examines the level of anxiety by adopting the Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS) by Yoon (2012). Next, the scale in the form of a questionnaire has been responded to by 27 English preservice teachers. Further, the results show that the preservice teachers have a moderate level of anxiety. Overall, the study outlines the principal factors causing and affecting preservice anxiety about teaching English as a foreign language in the classroom.

Keywords: Foreign language teaching anxiety; EFL preservice teachers; source of anxiety

Introduction

The idea that anxiety is a mental or emotional construct has been the foundation for a wave of recent study interest in a wide range of areas. This interest crosses the boundaries of clinical psychology, the classroom, language classes, and more recently, foreign language classrooms (Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020; Li et al., 2023; Rani et al., 2022). a significant number of studies concentrated on the anxiety related to learning a foreign language, which is one of the important

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affective factors that may negatively affect people when learning a foreign language (Gorospe, 2022; Ismail et al., 2022; Novitasari & Murtafi'ah, 2022; Sari & Anwar, 2021).

This feeling of anxiousness, which is a component of the affective filter, might discourage individuals from participating in a classroom (Djawamara & Listyani, 2021; Liu & Wu, 2021; Liu & Xiangming, 2019; Liu & Yan, 2020). In this case, affective factors act as a filter to control how much information is taken in. In other words, they have an impact on input processing, which in turn has an impact on what individuals potentially comprehend. Consequently, it can be concluded that facing the tense may lead individuals to stop or go blank due to the anxiety they feel (Chen & Hwang, 2022; Daymiel et al., 2022; Giray et al., 2022; Krashen, 1982).

In classroom practice, EFL preservice teachers also may experience anxiety when teaching due to their part in the classroom processes as active participants and still considered learners of second language (Maharyadin et al., 2022; Saidi & Arefian, 2023; Tsui & Cheng, 2022). Yet, some of them may encounter challenges and issues that lead to anxiousness since they lack classroom teaching skills, which makes it challenging for them to provide a great teaching performance (Ardi et al., 2023; Halim et al., 2021; Imamyartha et al., 2023; Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018). EFL preservice teachers, for which they lack a natural background, report feeling anxious in their classroom settings. EFL preservice teachers may encounter difficulties navigating the practicum since they are less fluent in the target language and have less experience speaking it. As a result, they might feel anxious when speaking in front of their students and unable to make students possess linguistics proficiency (Gregersen, 2020; Imamyartha et al., 2023; Widiati et al., 2021).

Many studies (e.g. Aydin, 2016; Aydın & Uştuk, 2020; Charisma & Nurmalasari, 2020; Djawamara & Listyani, 2021; Han & Tulgar, 2019) have investigated the causes of anxiety that EFL preservice teachers attribute to various reasons. Preservice teachers experience anxiety for a variety of reasons, the primary among them being the fact that mentors or supervisors are always watching them. It supports the findings of Aydin and Ustuk's (2020) study on the anxiety experienced by EFL preservice teachers, which found that anxiety can also be influenced by factors such as learners' lack of interest and the possibility of being observed by colleagues, mentors, or supervisors when teaching a foreign language.

On the other hand, Wijaya (2022) found that, with the support of sufficient teaching practicum programs and creative self-management techniques, preservice Indonesian EFL teachers' anxiety about teaching a foreign language may be diminished. To sum up, several ways to replace excessive foreign language teaching anxiety are helpful practicum mentors, essential recognition of foreign language teaching anxiety causes, suitable instruction training, and education faculty programs.

Moreover, anxiety may impede teachers' development in their lesson preparation and lead to detrimental relationships with the students (Halim et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Saidi & Arefian, 2023; Tang, 2022). As a result, it plays a decisive role that directly affects the quality of teaching practices. EFL preservice teachers who have not had any classroom teaching experience may feel this much more intensely.

Further, for EFL preservice teachers who are not native English speakers, it could turn out even worse. EFL preservice teachers are constantly regarded as highly competent teachers in the future (Halim et al., 2021; Ma, Cavanagh, et al., 2022; Ma, Chutiyami, et al., 2022; Sari & Anwar, 2021), and since such, they may experience anxiety in light of professional obligations like speaking in front of students and providing authentic language examples. Their anxiety levels rise to such an extent that they are unable to use creative teaching strategies, and this turn interferes with the students' motivation and acquisition of a second language (Gorospe, 2022; Heikkola et al., 2022; Maher & King, 2022). Given that their decisions would mostly determine the future of the students in language classes, as it could have an impact on how effectively students adjust to the target settings along with how effectively they achieve their instructional goals (Djawamara & Listyani, 2021; Wijaya, 2022; Yaniafari & Rihardini, 2022). Hence, the aforementioned reasons strengthen the need to find out about the preservice English teachers' teaching anxiety.

However, with the growing focus on the factors that lead to foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA) among preservice teachers, the research reveals that not much has been done to understand FLTA in EFL teachers as it has done with EFL students (Alrashidi, 2022; Aydın & Uştuk, 2020; Saidi & Arefian, 2023). In the Indonesian context, some researchers have conducted the study in this field. For instance, Ulfa and Sholah (2023) have explored the level of anxiety experienced by seventh-semester English students who are enrolled in teaching practicum. The study showed that they have perceived low to high anxiety levels, with some contributing factors such as a lack of teaching experience (Novitasari & Murtafi'ah, 2022), poor self-confidence, and limited vocabulary (Ulfa & Sholah, 2023) fear of receiving a poor grade, lack of enthusiasm from students, and a problem managing their time (Sari & Anwar, 2021). Djawamara and Listyani (2021) also found that instructional materials and lesson plans, as well as the methods used for conveying the content, become the source of their anxiety.

Furthermore, preservice teachers have adopted some coping strategies to overcome their problems. Some of the strategies include improved lesson planning, building relationships with students, doing icebreakers and warm-up exercises, and forming study groups, to alleviate their anxiety (Charisma & Nurmalasari, 2020; Irhamna & Fithriani, 2023; Ulfa & Sholah, 2023).

In terms of gender, a study by Hayuningtyas et al. (2022) has revealed that male or female EFL preservice teachers exhibit distinct traits related to gender. Insufficient resources seem to evoke anxiety among male EFL preservice teachers. On the other hand, female preservice teachers tend to feel anxiety when they find themselves unable to control the classroom environment.

However, despite the growing numbers of research on EFL preservice teachers' anxiety, most of the studies employ qualitative research by focusing only on the specific case in particular settings and involving preservice teachers who are in the final year of their undergraduate study at the university (e.g., Charisma & Nurmalasari, 2020; Djawamara & Listyani, 2021; Novitasari & Murtafi'ah, 2022; Sari & Anwar, 2021). Thus, the findings of these studies cannot be generalized, to the limited number of participants in the studies. To show that, Charisma and Nurmalasari (2020) conducted a case study involving two English preservice teachers. Then, Djawamara and Listyani (2021) in their study have

investigated six English preservice teachers from a private university in Central Java. Also, Novitasari and Murtafi'ah (2022) have included one English preservice teacher from a private university in Yogyakarta in their study.

Notably, many researchers (e.g., Alrashidi, 2022; Kobul and Saraçoğlu, 2020; Merç, 2015; Saidi and Arefian, 2023; Wijaya, 2022) recommended that a more extensive study be carried out in this field, with participants chosen from different settings. Indeed, as far as the researcher is aware, there are hardly any studies that specifically examine anxiety related to teaching foreign languages experienced by preservice teachers enrolled in the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) quantitatively. Preservice teachers who enrolled in the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) have completed their undergraduate studies and received a bachelor's degree. And majority of them have one to four years of previous teaching experience. Different from preservice teachers who are still pursuing their bachelor's degree in university, most of them have not previously taught in a classroom setting. Also, those who are enrolled in PPG are expected to be professional teachers after graduating from the program. So, there is a high expectation for them to perform well in the classroom and have the ability to deliver the materials effectively.

Thus, this study aims to fill this research gap by investigating the anxiety level and possible anxiety-alleviating factors encountered by preservice Indonesian teachers quantitatively, by utilizing the Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS) by Yoon (2012). It is expected that the current study will produce fruitful information for the field of research.

Method

Data for this study were collected via a survey. Because it is employed to gather information on people's attitudes, beliefs, and views as well as to report on their experiences and/or behaviors (Cohen et al., 2018; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Leavy, 2017). A background questionnaire and the Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS) will be the tools utilized to gather the data. The initial questions on the background form asked about their age, gender, undergraduate program, practicum school, as well as teaching experiences. To determine the level of preservice teaching anxiety, the researcher adopted, the Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS) by Yoon (2012). The 21 questionnaire items comprised a five-point Likert scale strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA). In this instrument, there are four aspects to analyze the anxiety level of EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers. These are language anxiety about using English in class, language anxiety based on self-confidence, language anxiety about class preparation, and language anxiety overcome with effort. The distribution of the items is shown in the table.

Table 1. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale Blueprint

Variable	Factors	Total number	Item number
Teaching anxiety	language anxiety on using English in class	12	1/ 2/ 3/ 4/ 5/ 6/ 7/ 8/ 9/ 10/ 11/ 12
	language anxiety based on self-confidence	3	13/ 14/ 15/
	language anxiety about class preparation	5	16/ 17/ 18/ 19/ 20/
	language anxiety overcome with efforts	1	21
The overall number		21	

In this study, a closed-ended questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The research was conducted using an online survey made with Google Forms. The questionnaire comprises 21 questions in the form of a Likert scale scoring system formulated into the Google Form.

Due to the practicality for both researchers and respondents. The data were gathered by an online survey. This system was seen as useful and approachable. It is assumed that since a lot of people have downloaded and installed them on their smartphones, they are experienced to use them. Also, a lot of people have shared files and messages in groups using these platforms. They most likely distributed and exchanged a large amount of data or files quickly among several groups of people.

Next, the participants were invited via WhatsApp and Telegram messages to participate in this study. As a result, 27 preservice EFL preservice teachers who were enrolled in an EFL preservice teachers' professional program from Sumatera and Java agreed to participate and filled out the questionnaires. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 31, this included 26 female and 1 male EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers. Only four of them came from the English Literature program for their undergraduate study, and the rest graduated from the English Education study program. In terms of teaching experience, all of them have taught in the classroom before. They have one to 4 years of teaching experience based on the data from the questionnaire.

Further, to analyze the data in this study descriptive statistics were used, and the Google Form function automatically calculates percentages, whereas the mean and standard deviation are determined by using Microsoft Excel software to determine the level of anxiety experienced by English EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers.

Findings and Discussion

In line with the objective of the study, which is to examine the EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers' perception of their Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTAS). 27 EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers participated in this study. The anxiety experienced by the EFL preservice teachers comprised of four factors, namely language anxiety about using English in the class, language anxiety based on self-confidence, language anxiety about class preparation, and language anxiety overcome with effort. The four anxiety factors

experienced by the EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers are presented in the figure below.

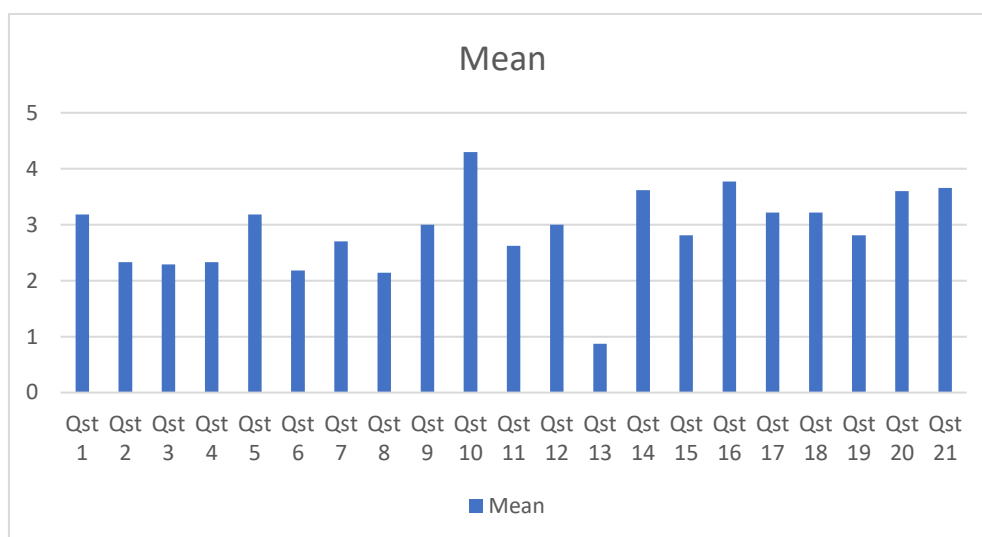


Figure 1. Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety for Each Factor

Table 2. Levels of FLTA

Level	Mean Score interval	Factors	Mean
Low	1.00-2.33	language anxiety on using English in class	2.83
Moderate	2.34-3.67	language anxiety based on self-confidence	3.12
High	3.68-5.00	language anxiety about class preparation	3.34
		language anxiety overcome with efforts	3.66
Overall FLTA			3.24

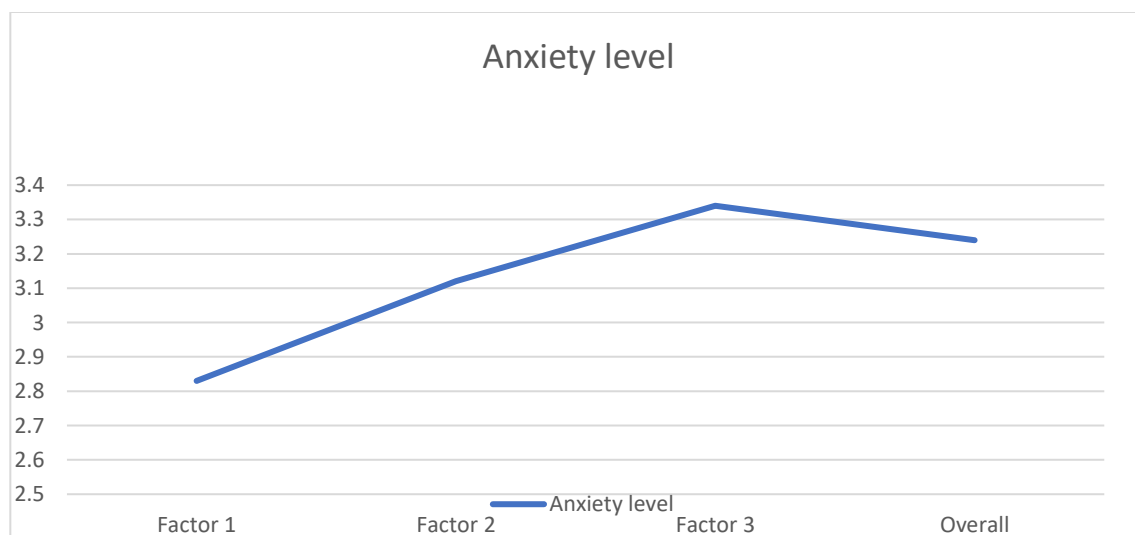


Figure 2. Levels of FLTA

As shown in Figure 2, the overall mean score perceived by EFL preservice teachers to FLTAS showed that the levels of FLTA experienced by the participants were found to be moderate. Moreover, the table proved that the most provoking factor was 'language anxiety overcome with efforts' (M=3.66), which is in line with the mean score intervals in the table. Even though all factors fell into a moderate level of anxiety, the lowest level was shown by the first factor 'language anxiety on using English in the class' (M=2.83). Thus, the factors of the FLTAS are listed in the following order from highest to lowest based on their mean scores' language anxiety overcome with efforts, language anxiety about class preparation, language anxiety based on self-confidence, and language anxiety on using English in the class.

Similarly to the current study, Amengual Pizarro (2019) discovered that most participants in a quantitative study with 75 Spanish-speaking future primary school English EFL preservice teachers had average to high levels of anxiety in the language classroom. Her research revealed that EFL preservice teachers limited English ability was the main source of concern. Similarly, Novitasari and Murtafi'ah (2022) investigated the potential reasons for EFL preservice teachers' anxiety by conducting qualitative research with four Thai preservice English EFL preservice teachers. The findings showed that the participants' major sources of concern were their personalities as EFL preservice teachers, the supervisory setting, and the teaching context.

It is also in line with Hayuningtyas et al. (2022) study with Indonesian English EFL preservice teachers discovered that the primary anxiety-provoking conditions encountered by EFL preservice teachers were lack of confidence, fear of negative evaluation, limited English proficiency, lack of classroom preparation, and inadequate instructional experience. Again, Nugroho and Mbato (2021) also revealed other factors that influence EFL preservice teachers' anxiety in the classroom, including preparation for the lesson and EFL preservice teachers' confidence.

In contrast to the previous investigations, the findings of (Bidari et al., 2021; Hismanoglu, 2013; Ulfa & Sholah, 2023) showed that participants had lower levels of FLTA. The study looked at FLTA among preservice EFL preservice teachers, and it was shown that these people had lower FLTA levels.

The moderate level of FLTA reported in the current study is in terms of students' lack of interest. This finding was another important result. This result is consistent with research conducted by Aydın and Uştuk (2020) with 156 in-service EFL preservice teachers from various nationalities. This conclusion may be explained by the fact that EFL preservice teachers' sources of motivation included their students. Moreover, Aydın (2016) found that demotivation and motivation were a cause of FLTA in their research of 60 pre-service EFL preservice teachers. Consequently, it may be concluded that EFL preservice teachers may become anxious because of students' lack of interest.

Yet, unlike the previous studies (e.g., Charisma & Nurmalasari, 2020; Djawamara & Listyani, 2021; Novitasari & Murtafi'ah, 2022; Sari & Anwar, 2021) who used a qualitative approach, the current study has contributed to the field by exploring EFL preservice teachers' anxiety from a quantitative point of view. As assured by previous studies such as Wijaya (2022) to generate a broader

significance of study findings, there is a need to engage an adequate number of Indonesian EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers at different universities.

Moreover, the participants in the current study are different from previous studies. The current study has involved EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers who have joined in EFL preservice teachers' professional education program (PPG). Those participants have graduated and got a bachelor's degree from university. Most of them already have teaching experience between one and four years. Whereas, previous researchers used student EFL preservice teachers who are in the final year of undergraduate study as participants. Most of them have never taught in a classroom, thus they encounter challenges and issues that make them anxious, which makes it challenging for them to work effectively as qualified EFL preservice teachers (La Ede et al., 2022; Lestari, 2020; Ulfa & Sholah, 2023). Particularly, these preservice English EFL preservice teachers practice teaching the language in classrooms for at least two months.

Thus, the current study has fruitful information regarding the anxiety experienced by EFL preservice teachers in the PPG program. Based on the findings of the study, the current study makes several recommendations for its implications. Firstly, since they have moderate levels of anxiety in teaching, EFL preservice teachers have to acknowledge that feeling anxious, inadequate, or stressed occasionally when speaking the language is natural. Because acknowledging the anxiety is the first step in resolving the problems (Alrashidi, 2022). It is suggested to make an effort to overcome their tendency for perfection to reduce their anxiety levels.

Then, to fight emotions of nervousness in the classroom, it is suggested that EFL preservice teachers get training in ways to relax such as gentle relaxation activities, taking deep breaths, and visualizing performing successfully in stressful circumstances. Also, self-training is needed by EFL preservice teachers to improve their English (Ardi et al., 2023; Ke Lomi & Mbato, 2020; Köksal, 2019; Li et al., 2023; H. A. Nugroho et al., 2022).

Moreover, anxious EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers could find it difficult to create a supportive learning atmosphere, pay attention to details in the lesson plan, or follow the curriculum precisely. This may impede instructional development and lower the performance of instruction. To navigate this, they need to prepare the content well in advance of the lesson. Make a well-organized, comprehensive lesson plan, and gain a thorough understanding of it. Hence, the level of confidence in EFL preservice teachers will increase with the level of preparation (Evişen, 2021; La Ede et al., 2022; Lestari, 2020; Ulfa & Sholah, 2023).

Conclusion

The discussion in this study alerts us that in a second language or foreign language classroom, the learners are not the one who suffers the anxiety. However, the EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers also suffer since they are still considered learners of the target language. Due to their fear of the foreign language, EFL preservice teachers who are not native speakers may find it difficult to interact with students successfully, actively convey the target language, or serve as positive role models for language learners. This study also proved that EFL preservice EFL

preservice teachers experienced anxiety while teaching English in the classroom. The results showed a moderate level of anxiety perceived by Indonesian EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers during teaching practicum. Previous studies have confirmed that anxiety will affect instruction in the classroom. Such as EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers avoid explaining complicated topics to their students because it requires them to employ detailed explanations which they try to prevent because of the foreign language anxiety they experience. Further, it is also confirmed that the anxiety encountered by EFL preservice EFL preservice teachers affects their mood, motivation, and burnout. Therefore, regarding the problems that arise due to the anxiety perceived by EFL preservice teachers, it is necessary to supply them with the strategies to overcome it.

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