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Investigating Pre-service Indonesian EFL Teachers' Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety in Teaching Practicum Activities

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#### Abstract

The primary objectivity of this current small-scale qualitative study was to profoundly investigate Indonesian EFL teachers' foreign language teaching anxiety in teaching practicum activities. To reach this pre-determined research aim, 5 open-ended written narrative inquiry questions were administered to 2 English Education Master Students, batch 2020 of Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. The research procedure employed in this present qualitative study was asking an agreement from the research participants, sending the online narrative inquiry questions, and subdividing the frequently-appeared research findings into specific themes. Drawing on the obtained research results, it was revealed that foreign language teaching anxiety experienced by pre-service Indonesian EFL teachers could potentially be alleviated in the support of suitable teaching practicum programs as well as ingenious self-management strategies. As a final note, supportive teaching practicum mentors' supports, critical identification of foreign language teaching anxiety factors, appropriate teaching training, and education faculty programs are indispensably needed to progressively supersede excessive foreign language teaching anxiety with high-quality teaching performances.

#### Keywords

foreign language teaching anxiety, narrative inquiry, pre-service EFL teachers

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Worldwide universities, especially Education departments, annually require prospective teachers to engage in teaching practicum activities. It is quite sensible to be deemed that through this teaching simulation dynamic, future teachers will be more capable of becoming more professional educationalists in the presence of real-time students. Dinçay and Gülten (2019) postulate that the main purpose of conducting teaching practicum enterprises is to prepare pre-service teachers' readiness before they confront various barriers, challenges, and adversity discovered in their future specific fields.

Another notable beneficial value of internalizing teaching practicum activities in education faculty is to elevate prospective teachers' knowledge, pedagogical competencies, and classroom management skills which will be particularly useful to transform them into more competent educators. This perspective is in line with the theory of teaching practicum proposed by Nemtchinova (2018) stating that the utmost objectivity of teaching practicum activities does not only make future teachers become more accustomed to the authentic classroom learning experiences but also bring them closer to the full attainment of both knowledge and pedagogical skills urgently needed to constantly survive in nowadays teaching-learning vicinities.

By conducting teaching practicum activities, prospective teachers are also able to inculcate more holistic visionary values in later teaching dynamics since they have become more planful, organized, and considerate to impart the best learning enterprises for diverse learners. Associated with this third advantageous value, Busher, Gündüz, Cakmak, and Lawson (2015) articulate that besides preparing prospective teachers to become more adept in terms of knowledge and pedagogical competencies, well-designed teaching practicum programs can potentially nurture their utmost motivation to give their best teaching efforts resulted in the escalation of targeted learners' learning outcomes.

Apart from these above-mentioned advantages, one of the perilous psychological impediments that should be diminished while prospective teachers fully engage in teaching practicum dynamics is anxiety. This term is quite challenging to be defined specifically. Practically, it refers to the significant degradation of teachers' self-belief, restlessness, and self-confidence whenever they are dealing with a wide variety of teaching-learning activities. Horwitz (2016) adduces that teaching anxiety denotes the negative feelings, experiences, and emotions of teachers while encountering any kinds of classroom learning dynamics.

In ELT enterprises, this term has been burgeoning into foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA). Can (2018) mentions that when EFL teachers ingrain a higher level of foreign language teaching anxiety, the ongoing target language exposure can more likely be broken down since these uneasy teachers possess an erroneous mindset that they are not the decent models of the target language communicators for students. In an exhaustive investigation of foreign language teaching anxiety, Tum (2015) found out that the majority of EFL teachers possessing excessive teaching anxiety were not capable of utilizing the target language competencies as they should be since the existing discomfort feelings are greater than their self-assurance.

There are wide arrays of factors responsible for the striking elevation of foreign language teaching anxiety that occurred among pre-service EFL teachers. In general, most pre-service EFL teachers, particularly those who are non-native speakers like Indonesian people, are constantly experiencing constant anxious feelings when they are still not capable enough of promoting a more conducive classroom learning atmosphere, meeting the school's expectations, and harnessing the target language competencies into the utmost potentials to bring about better teaching-learning experiences. Besides, their foreign language teaching anxiety will arise bigger when they know that expert teachers are going to evaluate their teaching performances in the actual classroom learning surroundings.

All these prompting factors are supported by the findings of Machida (2016) discovering that a considerable number of non-native EFL teachers confront more arduous obstructions while entering the authentic teaching-learning activities due to the developing classroom management skills, insufficient target language skills mastery, and feeling reluctant to be evaluated by other experienced teachers. To address more supportive assistance for alleviating these psychological issues, globalized teachers and education faculty are advocated to design more long-term teaching practicum programs for prospective educators. Long-lengthy teaching practicum programs should be taken into our account since pre-service teachers will be more confident, quite experienced, and knowledgeable in terms of handling unruly students, accomplishing ample administrative works, and executing their pre-determined teaching plans in an organized manner.

All these attributive factors are of crucial importance in which prospective teachers will be more confident, mature, and ready to face the complexities of the everchanging educational world. This suggestion seems fit with the theory of Merç (2015) theorizing that on account of the unpredictable educational realm, especially in ELT dynamics, it is worth considering for worldwide teacher training and education faculty to prolong the teaching practicum enterprises for EFL teacher candidates to lessen a higher degree of anxiety, which in turn, can potentially help them to promote a conducive-friendly class climate for their future students.

Furthermore, there were five previous relevant foreign language teaching anxiety studies conducted in our archipelago. The first study was conducted by Permatasari, Mulyono, and Ferawati (2019) unearthing that most pre-service Indonesian EFL teachers ingrained an excessive level of teaching anxiety in a vast range of educational levels due to the gradual reduction of their teaching motivation. In an identical investigation, Pasaribu and Herendita (2018) revealed that the key factors boosting Indonesian EFL teachers' anxiety were lack of classroom management, target language, and teaching preparation skills. Thus, they recommended all pre-service EFL teachers utilize varied coping strategies to gradually alleviate foreign language teaching anxiety.

The majority of pre-service Indonesian EFL teachers capable of decreasing their

foreign language teaching anxiety were those ingraining a higher degree of optimism and calm feelings whenever they are hindered by unintended classroom learning issues (Arisandi & Vanissa, 2020; Oktaviani & Jaelani, 2021). All pre-service Indonesian EFL teachers exhibiting more robust teaching endeavors, commitment, and motivation while engaging in teaching practicum activities to enrich their cognitive along with affective domains mutually interlinked with the upcoming teaching enterprises.

In the last study, Djawamara and Listyani (2021) highly recommended prospective Indonesian EFL teachers become more flexible, adaptable, and reliable while plunging into the teaching-practicum activities to allow them to progressively minimize the exaggerated growth of their teaching anxiety. Although these above-cited studies had successfully contributed to a growing body of knowledge about foreign language teaching anxiety, there are still no generalized methods that can be more impactful in lowering this deceptive feeling within pre-service EFL teachers either in the global or local context.

Anchored on this identifiable gap, this current qualitative study attempted to specifically investigate Indonesian EFL teachers' foreign language teaching anxiety in teaching practicum activities by collecting the data narratively from English Education Master Students. By integrating their particular perceptions into our existing understanding, it is expectantly hoped that this study can shed more enlightenment concerning the efficient coping strategies of handling foreign language teaching anxiety commonly taking place among pre-service EFL teachers. To realize this research objectivity, this present qualitative study was framed by one research problem namely: (1) how do pre-service Indonesian EFL teachers manage their foreign language teaching anxiety during teaching practicum activities?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

All around the globe, teaching practicum activities are compulsory subjectspecific courses that should be endured by pre-service teachers to be eligible to educate their prospective students. It is worth accentuating that by engaging in these educational simulation enterprises, these young teachers will transfigure into more professional, confident, and competent future educationalists due to the intensive exposure to the dynamic educational processes. All these prominent objectivities are tightly interwoven with the theory of teaching practicum put forward by Yangın and Yılmaz (2016) that the teaching practicum enterprises are crucially pivotal for student teachers to bridge the huge gap between the simulated educational practices with the apparent educational climates, which will be particularly rewarding to increase their professional attributes as future educators. In reverse, the incorporation of teaching practicum activities is not without its hurdles. As alluded to, since most of these teachers are inexperienced, they may struggle to unearth various probable solutions to overcome those unpredictable barriers. Hence, the effortful action that can be embodied by the mentors of these young teachers is to provide adequate cognitive, affective, and psychological support for them while encountering those hard times in the designated teaching practicum activities.

All these proposed solutions are in harmony with the theory of mentoring support theory devised by Moussaid and Zerhouni (2017) strongly advised teaching practicum mentors to adequately address continual supports for student teachers to help them become more confident, critical and mature educators who are ready to embrace a vast array of teaching challenges in their future fields. In the same vein, these pre-service EFL teachers are also susceptible to stress, burnout, saturation, and emotional exhaustion while performing their teaching practices; even all these activities are still resided in teaching practicum arenas. These arising teaching practicum issues should not be taken for granted since the excessive development of teaching anxiety can also potentially impede the existing classroom learning processes undergone by students. It can also be phrased that when this teaching anxiety feeling is uncontrollable, students will experience a higher level of anxiety as well for there is no more enjoyment found in their learning activities.

These above-explicated conceptions are positively linked with the critical suggestion propounded by Mahmoudi and Yzkan (2016) avowing that student-teacher mentors working under the teaching practicum activities are strongly required to play their new roles as supportive learning facilitators who can continuously assist these prospective teachers to lighten their excessive teaching anxiety. By doing so, more holistic, favorable, and meaningful teaching-learning activities will be the final rewards waiting to be experienced by all learning community members.

As there is a wide range of factors causing foreign language teaching anxiety, those general matters are worth reemphasizing in this following line. In a specific investigation of pre-service Indonesian EFL teachers' teaching anxiety, while participating in teaching practicum activities, Agustiana (2019) forthrightly mentioned eight factors responsible for the significant escalation of teaching anxiety. Those factors were lack of teaching experiences, fear of being evaluated by experienced teachers, feeling not confident with their teaching capabilities, big-classroom size, experiencing a higher level of apprehension toward students' sudden questions, having difficult moments in maintaining students' learning focus, unorganized teaching plans, and intensive external pressure from schools. Dealing with these aforesaid issues, there is still good news for educational stakeholders around this nationwide to degrade foreign language teaching anxiety experienced by pre-service EFL teachers. This good news refers to coping strategies. Coping strategies are one of the effective solutions to progressively reduce a vast variety of negative psychological feelings such as anxiety.

This approach can be deemed as effective since human beings are slowly directed to discover particular factors causing their anxiety, which eventually come up with appropriate solutions. Pozzi et al. (2015) confessed that it is tremendously paramount for highly-anxious people to utilize coping strategies to weaken their high anxiety level and to preserve their sanity while being crammed with plentiful issues in their lives. Concerning these possible strategies, pre-service EFL teachers are strongly advised to embrace those anxious feelings before they engage in the teaching practicum or apparent teaching enterprises. In other words, this uneasiness is normal as long as they are capable of exerting rigorous controls over this unpredictable feeling, uncovering specific strategies that can lower their anxiety, and precisely discovering certain circumstances supportive for diminishing their existing anxiety (Al-Obaydi, Nashruddin, Rahman, & Suherman, 2021). This suggestive advice can be geared to the strategies to cope with anxiety, in which they critically averred that since uncontrollable anxious feeling can act as one of the intrusive factors prompting people to halt certain actions to accomplish their duties, it is worth advocating for anxious people to fully welcome this feeling as an inseparable part of their psychological aspect, which in turn, propelling them to discover the most suitable strategies together with circumstances that work best to diminish it in a stepwise manner.

# **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was fully supported by narrative inquiry to obtain more authentic data from the research participants. Under the guidance of narrative inquiry, the researchers will have wider opportunities to obtain more thorough data in conjunction with the tangible life stories shared by the research participants. Concerning the abovementioned nature of this current qualitative study, 5 open-ended written narrative inquiry questions were administered to 2 English Education Master Students, batch 2020 from one private university in Yogyakarta city. The major reason for choosing these research participants was to gain more in-depth stories regarding the typical strategies they frequently utilized while experiencing a higher level of foreign language teaching anxiety in their teaching practicum activities. For this reason, short data gathering processes are applicable and doable in this present qualitative study since the research participants have already experienced teaching practicum enterprises in the third semester right before they graduated in the upcoming semester. Hence, the researcher held such a strong belief that the obtained data will impart some significant contributions with regard to the breakthrough in reducing excessive foreign language teaching anxiety undergone by Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers. In the data analysis processes, the researcher subsumed the often-appeared findings into some specific themes to be argumentatively corroborated by some relevant theories and prior research findings critically delving into pre-service EFL teachers' foreign language teaching anxiety in order to yield robust and reasonable research findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Theme 1: A Higher Level of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety can be Dimished in the Light of Well-Prepared Teaching Practicum Programs

Based on the above-mentioned theme, it was revealed that a higher degree of foreign language teaching anxiety can potentially be reduced in the support of wellprepared teaching practicum programs. This particular theme was derived from the authentic teaching practicum sharing told by the first research participant. Based on her online teaching practicum experiences, the first pre-service EFL teacher fully repudiated that she had not fully possessed a wide variety of supportive attributes to be handicapped as a professional target language educator like becoming a more confident learning facilitator, organized teaching planner, and laudable classroom manager. Concerning all these indispensable professional teaching characteristics, she also added that her foreign language teaching anxiety significantly increased when it came to the occurrence of unruly learners' classroom behaviors, scarcity of the intended target language mastery, and inharmonious rapport with school stakeholders. In tandem with all these findings, Aydın and Uştuk (2020) strongly suggested all worldwide educational stakeholders mutually work hand-in-hand with teacher training and education faculty to address more intensive moral, affective, and emotional support for future EFL teachers, which in return, can progressively alleviate their foreign language teaching anxiety in terms of second language mastery, classroom management, preteaching preparations. From this finding, it means that the whole educational institutions along with universities constantly impart more relatable teaching practicum activities where prospective EFL teachers are capable of discovering effective strategies to gradually eradicate their foreign language teaching anxiety covering self-confidence, pedagogical mastery, and specific knowledge-based understanding. All these aforementioned evidence seem congruent with the following first teacher's interview excerpts.

[Teacher 1: First, the low level of confidence during teaching. While teaching the students, sometimes I did not trust myself and my competence in teaching. I was fear if the majority of students are not willing to follow my instruction.]

[Teacher 1: I realize that I also have low experience and knowledge in constructing the teaching planning, managing the class, especially in online class, mastering the English content, and link with other teacher.]

Irrespective of those above-explained impediments mentioned by the first teacher, she thoroughly felt grateful that her university had already provided teaching practicum programs for her as well as colleagues to continuously develop their professionalism as prospective EFL teachers. Furthermore, the first pre-service EFL teacher simultaneously acknowledged that the teaching practicum programs did not only allow her to boost the professional attributes such as content knowledge mastery, pedagogical competencies, and classroom management skills but also discern some specific strengths together with weaknesses worthwhile for her future career as an educationalist. In parallel with these beneficial teaching training outcomes, Can (2018) unveiled that a great number of young EFL teachers were still capable of exceeding the mentors' expectations toward their particular teaching performances when they positively perceived that teaching practicum professional attributes. Moreover, she also frankly confessed that the teaching practicum mentors' role is crucially essential to elevate her confidence, persistence, and optimism

while encountering a vast range of teaching obstacles in classroom learning situations. While the insistent accompaniment, advice, and support are continually given to this young EFL teacher, it is fairly to be deemed that her excessive foreign language teaching anxiety significantly decreased since she has possessed robust endeavor to always exhibit gratifying teaching performances. It is worth articulating that an overwhelming majority of prospective EFL teachers had been succeeding in carrying out satisfying teaching performances through teaching practicum activities and successfully becoming more adaptive while facing the complexity of classroom learning dynamics due to the insistent moral supports addressed by their mentors. All these above-said findings are about the first pre-service EFL teacher's interview excerpts as can be seen as follows.

[Teacher 1: Of course, the existence of teaching practicum mentors has some contributions in guiding me to deal with the teaching anxiety. Teaching practicum mentors can motivate and encourage me to do my best.]

[Teacher 1: *I owed a lot to the teaching practicum programs provided by my university because I was able to improve my cognitive, affective, emotional, and professional characteristics which are particularly useful for my future teaching career.*]

Lastly, the credibility, readiness, and professionalism characteristics ingrained by pre-service EFL teachers are also closely interlocked with the relevancy of teacher training and education programs designed by each education institution. In other words, it can also be said that these thorough teachers and teaching preparation programs should be more adaptable toward the dramatic educational shifts, particularly in this pandemic era. This notion is mutually interrelated with the lense of perspective shared by the first pre-service EFL teachers strongly suggesting that teacher training and education faculty need to be well-prepared to devise the novel pedagogical approaches, introduce various online learning platform potentials, and expose the particular complexities that may be faced by these prospective educators to holistically promote meaningful target language learning enterprises for diverse learners. Ulum (2020) phrased that all teacher training and education faculty members are advocated to mobilize all the potential teaching practicum resources, hands-on activities, and complexities for their EFL teacher candidates to intensively address varied corresponding ways enabling them to transfigure into more confident, proficient, and professional future educators. Armed with all these contentions, the following first preservice EFL teacher's interview excerpts are also worth observing as follows.

[Teacher 1: I suggest that the education faculty need to help student teachers learn how to manage and control the particular classroom during the onsite learning and online learning. Some study program only focuses on helping student teachers in teaching students during the onsite classroom.] [Teacher 1: It is good for education faculty to provide student teachers with some teaching skills and knowledge (technology, content, and pedagogical knowledge) during the online teaching activities.]

[Teacher 1: Providing more knowledge regarding the media used in online learning might be meaningful and useful for the student teachers in developing teaching activities.]

2. Internal Motivation Prompting EFL Teachers to Gradually Diminish Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety

Concerning the above-depicted theme above, it was uncovered that internal motivation inculcated by EFL teachers could progressively lessen foreign language teaching anxiety. This second theme is tightly interwoven with frequently-encountered foreign language teaching hurdles he confronted. The second pre-service EFL teacher forthrightly mentioned that three primary sources were causing him to possess a higher level of foreign language teaching anxiety namely a sizeable number of learners, developing technological mastery, and lack of teaching preparations. All these daunting foreign language classroom learning factors considerably affected his teaching performances. To a greater extent, the second pre-service EFL teacher concurrently experienced a higher degree of foreign language teaching anxiety leading to the presence of a negative classroom atmosphere. It is worth underscoring here that inexperienced EFL teachers normally underwent an intensive growth of foreign language teaching anxiety due to the considerable classroom size, inaptitude in utilizing technological platforms, lack of in-depth preparations prior commencing the upcoming teaching-learning enterprises. In harmony with these above-said ordeals, the following excerpts of the second pre-service EFL teacher are also of critical importance to be observed.

[Teacher 2: First, I have no experience teaching in a formal class setting. It was my first-time teaching in a big number-formal class.Second, my skill in utilizing technology in online teaching was so limited.]

[Teacher 2: I was struggling a lot to design LMS, make videos, and do other interesting activities using internet applications. Third, lack of time management to prepare the lesson or teaching scenario. These factors made me pressured and anxious.]

Luckily, the second pre-service EFL teacher could progressively alleviate his foreign language teaching anxiety due to the continual moral together with pedagogical supports addressed by the teaching practicum mentors. Speaking specifically, the teaching practicum mentors consistently reminded him to better prepare the particular lessons he was going to address to diverse learners. Furthermore, the second pre-service EFL teacher simultaneously felt thankful to his teaching practicum mentors since they also disseminated precious knowledge in terms of managing a substantial number of distinctive learners and imparting encouraging feedback for the advancement of future teaching performances. He openly acknowledged that these valuable supports slowly mitigate his foreign language teaching anxiety to be substituted by robust self-confidence and constant creativity. In tandem with all these above-explained supports, it is strongly advocated teacher training and education faculty to arm future EFL teacher candidates with ample hands-on experience of classroom learning instructions, management, and plans to sustain their teaching confidence constantly. Thus, it is highly recommended teaching practicum mentors to address intensive cognitive, pedagogical, and psychological supports for prospective EFL teachers to debilitate the growth of foreign language teaching anxiety and boost their self-confidence that they can carry out the apparent classroom teaching-learning processes successfully. These specific recipes of foreign language teaching-learning success are also attested by the second pre-service EFL teacher's excerpts as follows.

# [Teacher 2: Yes, the mentors have some contributions toward the escalation of your anxiety. They remind me to prepare the teaching content before the class.]

[Teacher 2: They also give some tips to handle the class and give feedback to improve my future teaching performance. Their support and advice help me a lot to teach with confidence and creativity.]

After internalizing robust self-confidence in foreign language teaching-learning processes, the second pre-service EFL teacher's motivation to showcase his teaching performances is simultaneously escalated. More specifically, there were three specific consecutive steps incorporated by him before commencing the tangible teachinglearning dynamics in multi-diverse classrooms. First, the second pre-service EFL teacher dedicated his leisure time to designing more enlightening, appropriate, and appealing learning materials for learners. By implementing this strategy, his foreign language teaching anxiety was progressively diminished since he believed that the best versions of his teaching performances will expose learners to more meaningful learning processes. Secondly, the second pre-service EFL teacher also added that he continuously aimed to inculcate robust positive perceptions within his mindset at the onset of teaching-learning enterprises to fully exhibit gratifying teaching performances. Lastly, the second pre-service EFL teacher also learned a vast range of technological platforms that can potentially corroborate his teaching motivation and confidence. He frankly confessed that the mastery of technological platforms also acted as a good means to alleviate his excessive development of foreign language teaching anxiety. It is strongly advised future EFL teachers to commensurately equalize their cognitive, affective, pedagogical, and technological aspects in diverse-wide ranging classroom contexts to guide learners to achieve more holistic target language learning outcomes (D, Monica, & Sean, 2016; Imsa-ard, Wichamuk, & Chuanchom, 2021). The second pre-service EFL teacher also remarked identical values in the subsequent lines.

[Teacher 2: First, regarding the teaching preparation, I tried to advance in the preparation so that I will not be trapped in the time limitation.]

[Teacher 2: Second, I also tried to nurture positive mindset that I can give my best to my students before the teaching activities begin. Third, I try to learn more skills of technology in order to show improvement and dedication to my students.]

# CONCLUSION

Drawing on these results, it can be parsed that Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers are still struggling intensively to quench their foreign language teaching anxiety. A vast array of both internal and external factors are responsible for this widespread foreign language teaching issue ranging from inadequate teaching experiences, developing technological mastery, negative teaching perceptions, low selfconfidence, and unprepared teaching materials. Contrastively, some precautionary actions have been incorporated to progressively overcome all these debilitating issues through appropriate teaching practicum programs, continual teaching mentors' supports, and accurate identification of foreign language teaching anxiety factors. Above all, the mentors are also strongly advocated to rejuvenate their current roles to become more facilitative learning to teach facilitators in the midst of ongoing teaching practicum activities in order to thoroughly create more sound teaching-learning simulations potentially elevating prospective EFL teachers' confidence, knowledge, and experience. Apart from these rewarding research results, this current small-scale qualitative study was also accompanied by particular shortages. Firstly, since this present investigation merely involved a small number of research participants, it is worth accentuating that future researchers should invite a considerable number of Indonesian pre-service EFL teachers coming from distinctive universities to produce more generalizable research results. Secondly, owing to the single research instrument utilized in this study; openended written narrative inquiry questions, it will be more rewarding for prospective researchers to utilize a greater number of reliable research instruments like teachers' journals, Likert-scale questionnaire, and classroom observation sheet to generate a significant degree of benefits impactful for the advancement of EFL teacher training and education faculty.

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