



Teacher's Anxiety: A Phenomenological Study in Pakistan

Tanveer Ahmed

Lecturer, ELC (English language center), Karachi, Pakistan.
tanveermelodious@yahoo.com

Sunny Maqsood

Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Corporate communication , KASBIT, Karachi, Pakistan.
sunny@kasbit.edu.pk

Faizan Ahmed

Lecturer, Quaid-e-Azam Rangers School, Karachi, Pakistan
allsheikhrajput@gmail.com

Abstract

This research is based on a study explores the experiences of non-native pre-service English teachers confronting anxiety in the classroom. The study enquired how the anxiety is experienced by the non-native pre-service English teachers while teaching English language. And the reasons behind how this anxiety affects their performance as the key questions were investigated in the study. For which interviews were conducted as an instrument to collect the data. The sample used for the study was of 10 non-native pre-service English teachers graduated from private universities of Karachi city. The findings revealed that pre-service English teachers show low performance. The interviews transcriptions as data for the study were analyzed by thematic analysis of the responses inculcating the reasons behind anxiety in pre-service teachers, i.e. Lack of Vocabulary & Feeling anxious, Lack of Experience & Feeling Insecure, worrying about Fluency in English, Communicative apprehension, and Negligence of Institutions regarding workload on teachers. Besides, the study paved recommendations for further futuristic study pertinent to the phenomenological study of pre-service English teachers.

Keywords: *Teacher, Anxiety, Phenomenological, Study, Pakistan, Education.*



Introduction

English as a global language has proven its pervasive power amongst other nations across the globe. English is deemed as a passport to the world because of its impressive presence in all areas and fields of life and its continuous development. Progression in education, sciences, social sciences, trade, and economy is governed and encapsulated by English as a medium for communication, i.e., English everywhere. Overwhelming others to pursue the standard settled in different areas of life for development is considered licensed if it is a form of English. Each field of life has been encountered by English as the medium to understand and pursue further horizons of development. English has become a global language on its prevailing attributes across countries (Nunan, 2014).

Similarly, pre-service teachers experience difficulties and undergo anxiety just because of their lack of experience in using and teaching the targeted language. Non-native and inexperienced teachers may feel nervousness in speaking and teaching English as a foreign language. Similarly, the same issue is prevalent in the Pakistani context. Many studies have undergone researchers' observation as per their required investigation of the study. Studies in Pakistan have been conducted using the key concepts such as pre-service, self-efficacy, and anxiety in different domains like IT, mathematics teaching, and teaching in general. Focusing on attitudes and perceptions between pre-service and in-service teachers in Pakistan, Yalmanz (2021) has been a common study. However, the anxiety of ESL teaching in pre-service teachers has not been thoroughly studied in the Pakistani context. Emotional intelligence and self-efficacy beliefs, as assessed by Shaukat (2017), are indirectly psychological in nature and lead to anxiety when faced with adverse conditions.

Problem Statement

Here in Commonwealth countries like Pakistan, ESL learning has been an inevitable matter, forcing individuals to learn English, which has proven to be highly causative for anxiety in ESL learning and teaching. As English has become the official language, it is widely used in Pakistani society (Mansoor, 2004). Yusi Chen (2015) stated English as a lingua franca, and the pressure of speaking English has increased in the speaking milieu for learners and teachers (Jhaveri, 2015). Studies conducted by Can (2018) investigated that pre-service and non-native foreign language teachers have a higher tendency towards anxiety while teaching EFL (English as a Foreign Language). The feeling of discomfort assures the presence of anxiety amongst pre-service teachers. The probability of teaching having a negative effect of anxiety on approaches used by teachers may increase (Medgys, 1983 & Horwitz, 1996). Very



little study and research have been done on the specific topic of teaching anxiety (Can, 2018). In schools and colleges, the ratio of genuine English speakers is very rare. Talking of syllabi, Arshad & Nadeem (2015) investigated that the practitioner does a colossal waste of time, from either side of students or teachers, both. Walkinshaw & Duongthi (2014) stated comparatively, the non-native language teachers, the native ESL teachers are like a gold standard, whereas the non-native English-speaking teachers are inferior, lacking innate linguistic skill. Dealing with selective pedagogies couldn't make or grab a good outcome of ESL speakers in the English language.

Ascertaining the learning, it's necessary to overcome anxiety as a factor while teaching English, confronting people, and providing some pedagogical comforts to provoke the acquisition of English in teaching ESL/EFL. Even experienced teachers confront anxiety while teaching a foreign language. It's important to understand the phenomenon of foreign language teaching anxiety to explore the factors causing anxiety. The exploration of factors causing anxiety can make the teaching process comfortable and successful, along with finding ways to overcome the problem. Retaining the problem of teaching anxiety may lead to an unsuccessful and useless journey of teaching EFL. Therefore, it is important to investigate and understand the phenomenon of the factors causing anxiety in teaching EFL in the Pakistani context.

Rationale of the Study

The teachers, particularly pre-service in the profession, present themselves as experienced ones. Less experience in the profession creates situations of anxiety while teaching English as a second language. It's important to understand the phenomenon of foreign language teaching anxiety to explore the factors causing anxiety. Pre-service and non-native foreign language teachers show a tendency to feel anxiety and discomfort in teaching, affirming the existence of anxiety amongst non-native pre-service teachers (Can, 2018; Tum, 2012; Tum, 2015).

Horwitz (1996) states that the language learning process is never complete, and non-native teachers are equally susceptible to foreign language anxiety as language learners.

While English proficiency opens doors to education, employment, and social mobility, pre-service teachers often face hurdles in developing and imparting language skills effectively. These challenges include navigating linguistic complexities, adapting teaching methodologies, and managing classroom dynamics, all of which contribute to heightened levels of anxiety among educators. Despite the critical role of addressing teacher anxiety in



fostering effective English language education, there is a noticeable gap in research focused on this aspect within the Pakistani educational landscape.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by investigating the phenomenon of teacher anxiety, specifically focusing on pre-service English teachers in Pakistan. By identifying the factors contributing to anxiety in English language teaching, this research seeks to provide valuable insights that can inform the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms. Ultimately, the findings of this study have the potential to significantly impact the quality of English language education in Pakistan, enhancing the professional development and well-being of pre-service teachers while improving learning outcomes for students.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were focused on the Present study:

1. To explore how Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA) in Non-Native Pre-Service English Teachers is experienced.
2. To analyze the extent (measure) of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA) in Non-Native Pre-Service English Teachers persists in Pakistani context.
3. To describe the intricacy and detailed information concerning phenomenon i.e. feelings, thought process, and emotions.
4. To explore the reasons behind the teaching anxiety research.
5. To describe teachers' attention towards anxiety the sustaining problem of Foreign Language teaching.
6. To draw attention of academics/ researchers in the field of ELT research and institutions towards the findings of this research.

Significance of the study

The research is an inculcation of those answers which an anxious individual is seeking and is unable to absolve the unwanted trap from the never-ending anxiety of ESL learning and teaching process. The process, which has affected the teachers 'competence terribly, and has tagged the incompetence for the teachers undoubtedly, is no less than muffling of breath. Therefore, the research purpose is to dive into the deep investigation of the causes of teaching anxiety by understanding the phenomenon behind the factors causing teaching anxiety. By instruments of investigation in the study, the insight evaluation and investigation will excavate the insight traces of problems and Causes behind the teaching anxiety. For further research this could pave a workable surface to explore the unknown areas in the research. For



the teachers, educationists, and researchers it will suggest the innovative solutions and way outs for the identified problems in future by implementing creative innovation and solutions to overcome the confronted problems in ESL/EFL teaching environments. By using the instrument in form of an interview the researcher assures the insights of the sufferer of the problem, which can propagate the factual truth and examine the problem in an adequate degree of possibility.

Literature Review

Anxiety, a term addressed across various disciplines, has been defined and classified by numerous scholars. It is characterized as an emotional and affective state accompanied by tension (Blue, 1955). Scovel (1978) described anxiety as an emotional state originating from the limbic system. Spielberger (1983) proposed a taxonomy of anxiety, distinguishing between trait and state anxiety. Anxiety is commonly understood to evoke feelings of tension, apprehension, and nervousness, contributing to individuals' uneasiness and insecurity. Transitioning from general anxiety to anxiety specifically within the context of foreign language teaching, it is evident that anxiety emerges as a common experience during EFL learning environments. Horwitz (1999) pioneered the exploration of anxiety in language teaching, developing the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) for learners and Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA) scale for teachers. Anxiety, particularly in speaking classes, is a prevalent issue among EFL learners (Aide, 1994; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Mak & White, 1997).

Building upon the discussion of anxiety in foreign language teaching, several studies have investigated anxiety among pre-service non-native language teachers, revealing their tendency to experience discomfort and anxiety in teaching (Tum, 2015; Aydin et al., 2016). Tum (2015) highlighted the complexities faced by pre-service non-native teachers, particularly those with less teaching experience.

The discussion then shifts to anxiety specifically within the domain of language teaching, emphasizing its significance as a concern for language educators (Alrabai, 2015; Yamat and Bidabadi, 2012). These studies underscore the importance of addressing FLTA and the responsibility of teachers to provide encouragement and positive feedback to alleviate anxiety among students.

Despite these insights, there is a lack of exploration into different models or types of anxiety relevant to teachers within the literature review.



However, there is a need for a clearer connection between discussing general anxiety and its manifestation in the specific context of FLTA.

The chosen research method for this study is a phenomenological approach, which focuses on exploring individuals' lived experiences and perceptions. This approach is particularly suitable for investigating the subjective experiences of pre-service teachers in relation to anxiety in foreign language teaching. By delving into the participants' subjective experiences, the phenomenological approach allows for a deeper understanding of the nature and impact of anxiety in this context. Additionally, it enables the researcher to uncover the underlying meanings and interpretations associated with anxiety, shedding light on the complexities of this phenomenon within the realm of language teaching. Overall, the phenomenological approach offers a robust framework for exploring the nuanced experiences of pre-service teachers and their encounters with anxiety in foreign language teaching.

Research Questions

These are the major research questions guiding this study:

1. How foreign language teaching anxiety is experienced by non-native pre-service English teachers?
2. What is the level of anxiety amongst pre-Service teachers experiencing while teaching?
3. What are the reasons as source of anxiety amongst pre-Service teachers while teaching English?

Research Methodology

In this study, a qualitative approach was chosen to investigate into the lived experiences of pre-service English teachers regarding anxiety in teaching. Qualitative methods are ideal for exploring complex phenomena and understanding individuals' subjective experiences in depth.

Sampling:

A purposeful sampling method was utilized to select participants who fit the criteria of being non-native English teachers, aged 18-25, with a minimum of 2.5 years of teaching experience. This method allows for intentional selection to ensure the relevance of participants to the research question.

Sample Size:

The sample size of 10 participants was determined based on recommendations from existing research in phenomenology. This size is deemed appropriate for achieving a rich



understanding of participants' experiences while ensuring manageability in data collection and analysis.

Participants

The participants in this study were purportedly set as a sample from private university graduates who were studying English as their compulsory course in their graduation from the university. The participants were 10 in number.

Table 1

Qualification	No of Participant Teachers
B.Ed.	R1
BA	R2
BA	R3
BA B Ed	R4
BSc B Ed	R5
BSc Microbiology	R6
BA	R7
BA B Ed	R8
BA Economics	R9
BA	R10

Data Collection:

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in questioning while maintaining consistency across interviews. This method enabled participants to share their experiences and perspectives in-depth, providing valuable insights into the phenomenon of interest.

Interview Process:

The interview process included developing open-ended questions to explore various aspects of anxiety in teaching English. Challenges in participant recruitment were encountered due to participants' busy schedules, which required careful planning and flexibility in scheduling interviews.

Interview Protocol:

Interviews were conducted following a structured protocol, which ensured consistency in questioning and ethical considerations such as obtaining informed consent from participants. The protocol outlined the interview process, including procedures for conducting interviews and ensuring confidentiality.



Data Analysis

Data analysis has involved thematic analysis, a method for identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data. This approach has allowed for the exploration of common themes and variations in participants' experiences, providing a comprehensive understanding of anxiety in teaching English.

Findings

Discussion and Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted to extract key themes from the interview data. This involved several steps.

1. Familiarization with the data: Interview transcripts were reviewed to gain a thorough understanding of the content.
2. Generating initial codes: Relevant segments of the data were coded based on recurring patterns and themes.
3. Probing for themes: Codes were organized into potential themes, exploring commonalities and variations across participants' responses.
4. Revision of themes: Themes were refined and revised to ensure they accurately represented the data.
5. Defining and naming themes: Each theme was clearly defined and given a descriptive label.
6. Generating a report: The finalized themes were summarized and reported, providing insights into the participants' experiences.

Key Findings on Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA)

Participants in the study reported experiencing various forms of anxiety related to teaching English as a foreign language. The key findings include:

Negligence of Institutions: Teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of support and resources provided by their educational institutions, leading to increased stress and anxiety. Many felt overwhelmed by the demands of teaching and lacked guidance on effective teaching strategies.

Concerns about Language Proficiency: Pre-service teachers expressed anxiety about their proficiency in English, particularly when dealing with technical terms and unexpected questions from students. Some reported feeling embarrassed or inadequate when they struggled to express themselves fluently.



Vocabulary Limitations: Participants reported feeling anxious due to their limited vocabulary and language proficiency, leading to errors in communication and feelings of inadequacy. They expressed frustration with their inability to convey complex ideas effectively and feared being judged by their students.

Fear of Negative Evaluation: Teachers experienced anxiety stemming from concerns about how they were perceived by students, peers, and school administration, leading to heightened stress and pressure. Many felt pressure to perform well and feared criticism or negative feedback from others.

Connection to Existing Research

These findings align with existing research on foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA) in other contexts. Studies conducted in similar settings have documented similar experiences of anxiety among pre-service language teachers, highlighting the universal nature of FLTA. Participant quotes further support these themes, providing firsthand accounts of the challenges and stressors faced by teachers in the classroom.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for practice in the field of English language teaching. Firstly, educational institutions should prioritize the well-being of their teachers by providing adequate support and resources to help them cope with the demands of teaching. This may include offering professional development opportunities, mentorship programs, and access to counseling services.

Secondly, teacher training programs should incorporate strategies for managing anxiety and promoting self-care among pre-service teachers. This may involve teaching stress management techniques, promoting positive thinking, and fostering a supportive learning environment where teachers feel comfortable seeking help and advice from their peers.

Finally, policymakers should recognize the importance of addressing FLTA in teacher education programs and allocate resources accordingly. By investing in the professional development of teachers and creating supportive working environments, policymakers can help reduce anxiety levels among educators and improve the quality of English language instruction.

Limitations

It is important to note some limitations of the study, including the relatively small sample size and the focus on a specific geographic location. These factors may limit the generalizability of the findings and warrant caution when interpreting the results. Additionally, the study



relied solely on self-reported data from participants, which may introduce biases or inaccuracies in the findings.

Future Research Directions

Future research could explore the effectiveness of different intervention strategies for reducing FLTA among pre-service teachers. This could involve implementing mindfulness-based stress reduction programs, peer support groups, or other forms of support tailored to the needs of language teachers.

Furthermore, longitudinal studies could track changes in anxiety levels among pre-service teachers over time and identify factors that contribute to resilience and well-being in the profession. By gaining a better understanding of the long-term effects of FLTA, researchers can inform the development of more effective support systems for language teachers in the future.

Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the experiences of pre-service teachers in dealing with foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA). By identifying key themes related to institutional support, language proficiency, vocabulary limitations, and fear of negative evaluation, the study provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by language teachers and the implications for practice. Moving forward, it is essential for educational institutions, teacher training programs, and policymakers to prioritize the well-being of teachers and address FLTA to improve the quality of English language instruction and promote positive learning outcomes for students.

Discussion and Recommendation

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into the level of anxiety experienced by pre-service English teachers in Karachi, Pakistan, contributing to the broader research on Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA). Understanding the experiences and challenges faced by language teachers is crucial for improving teacher well-being and enhancing the quality of language education. Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA) has been extensively studied in the literature, with numerous studies highlighting its prevalence and impact on language teachers worldwide. Our findings align with existing research, which has identified various factors contributing to FLTA, including language proficiency, lack of teaching experience, institutional support, and workload pressures (Horwitz, 2001; Derakhshan & Sattarpour, 2016).



By connecting our findings to this body of research, we can better contextualize the experiences of pre-service English teachers in Karachi within the broader landscape of FLTA. This allows us to identify common themes and patterns across different contexts and develop targeted interventions to support language teachers in managing anxiety and improving their teaching effectiveness. Our study identified several key themes related to FLTA among pre-service English teachers in Karachi. One significant theme was the lack of institutional support for teachers, particularly in terms of workload management and professional development opportunities. Many participants expressed feeling overwhelmed by their teaching responsibilities and lacking access to resources and training programs to help them cope with anxiety.

Another prominent theme was the participants' language proficiency and vocabulary limitations, which contributed to feelings of insecurity and self-doubt in the classroom. Many pre-service teachers reported struggling to communicate effectively with their students, leading to increased anxiety and stress during teaching sessions. Additionally, our findings highlighted the impact of teaching experience on anxiety levels, with less experienced teachers expressing higher levels of anxiety compared to their more experienced counterparts. This suggests that providing opportunities for practical teaching experience and mentorship could help pre-service teachers build confidence and reduce anxiety in the classroom. While our study provides valuable insights into FLTA among pre-service English teachers in Karachi, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations. One limitation is the small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Additionally, the study focused exclusively on pre-service teachers in Karachi, which may not capture the full diversity of experiences among language teachers in Pakistan.

Another limitation is the use of qualitative methods, which may restrict the depth of analysis compared to quantitative approaches. Future research could benefit from incorporating larger sample sizes and utilizing mixed methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of FLTA. Despite its limitations, our study has important implications for practice in the field of language teaching. Educational institutions should prioritize the well-being of their teachers and provide adequate support to help them manage anxiety in the classroom. This may involve offering professional development opportunities, mentorship programs, and access to counseling services.

Teacher training programs should focus on improving language proficiency and providing practical training to help pre-service teachers build confidence in their teaching abilities.



Policymakers should recognize the importance of addressing FLTA in teacher education programs and allocate resources accordingly to support the professional development of language teachers. Analyzing the implications and recommendations based on the findings highlights the need for systemic changes in how FLTA is addressed in educational settings. By prioritizing the well-being and professional development of language teachers, institutions and policymakers can create more supportive environments that enable teachers to thrive in their roles. In conclusion, while our study offers valuable insights into FLTA among pre-service English teachers in Karachi, further research is needed to build upon these findings and develop effective interventions to support language teachers worldwide. By acknowledging the limitations of the study and drawing connections to existing research, we can better understand the complex nature of FLTA and work towards creating more supportive environments for language teachers.

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