THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING ANXIETY AND PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

Daraini Binti Oyot, Claire Leslie Sylvester and Daisy Constance Anak Banta

Abstract — **Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among Second Language learners (L2) learners has been determined as one of the essential factors in influencing the success of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). However, there is still a scarcity in literature related to Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA) among non-native pre-service language teachers and how it influences their level of proficiency in the target language especially in the context of Malaysian education. In hope to enrich the reference of literature pertaining to these variables, this research seeks to unveil the level of FLTA among the pre-service English teachers who have been experiencing practicum at the local primary schools. As well, this research aims to identify the FLTA level in regards to gender. This non-experimental research utilizes survey method whereas a purposive sampling technique is used to obtain the sample in collecting the data. The data is then gathered using a set of questionnaires that has been adopted from Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale by Aydin And Ustuk in 2020. The data collected is then analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science, SPSS version 26. The findings of this research unveil medium level of FLTA among the pre-service English Language teachers and the interesting nature of FLTA based on gender. As well, negative correlation was evident between the two variables being studied. The implication and suggestion for future research will also be discussed.**

Keywords — Foreign Language Anxiety, Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety, Second Language Proficiency, Pre-service English teacher.

I. INTRODUCTION

Dealing with anxiety is very important in second-language learning environments. Anxiety is characterised by feelings of unease, worry, and fear, which have a negative impact on human emotions. According to Tobias and Everson (1997), anxiety is a complicated term that involves one's sense of self-efficacy, evaluation of prospective and perceived risks, and other factors that are important in certain situations. As a result, anxiety when speaking in a second language, namely English, can have a disastrous effect on pupils, influencing their adaptation to the target environment and, most likely, their educational aim.

Due to language learning anxiety, students may feel irritated and have low self-esteem when conversing with people in English. This is similar to the situation in

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Malaysia, particularly in teacher's institute, where the English course syllabus is a compulsory subject for all.

Teacher's institute are regarded as a notable institution in Malaysia that provides methodology and pedagogical education. Teacher's institute have undergone numerous changes throughout the years in order to meet the needs of the currents education system. This is to keep up with the globalisation era and to assure the ability to generate manpower that meets the educational need and is capable of becoming a respected teacher. This is also to ensure that the pre service teachers can apply the skills they have learned in their field later.

"The English curriculum for primary schools is designed to provide learners with a strong foundation in the English language," write Janemary and Melor (2016). In general, students in Malaysia spent approximately 11 years in school, beginning with a strong foundation in the English language in elementary school and progressing to intensive instruction in the English language in high school. As a result, the foundation allegedly enables pupils to communicate fluently in both written and conversational form, both within and outside of school. Students who can communicate fluently in this language may reap numerous rewards.

Because the syllabus design is connected with the technological context, the English course in teacher's institute is crucial. Students must obtain a CI for their language proficiency test in order to graduate. As a result, students with varying levels of skill may be brought together in a classroom setting. Students must be able to communicate in English on a regular basis. This is to ensure that their language skills do not become a barrier in future.

Students may have various experiences as individuals while learning a second language. For example, some students may face various language learning challenges such as fear, a lack of desire, a lack of exposure, and insufficient materials offered by educators or institutions. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope as individuals while learning a second language. For example, some students may face various language learning challenges such as fear, a lack of desire, a lack of exposure, and insufficient materials offered by educators or institutions. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; 1994), a number of studies have shown that many students face difficulties in learning a second language due to language anxiety, which is one of the affective factors that lead to low second language performance among learners.

Anxious students tend to exaggerate their proficiency level and try to avoid interactions and situations that could

help them improve their proficiency level. As a result, appropriate approaches to addressing language learning anxiety in students must be developed in order to assist the learner in becoming a successful language user, particularly in second language learning.

We are at present witnessing a rapid increase in the use of English as a language of wider communication (Smith, 2015). However, in many parts of the world, English is still considered as a foreign language (i.e. Panggabean, 2015). In other words, most EFL learners have no chance to be exposed to English culture and they mostly do not use English on a daily basis (Abushihab, 2016).

Fortunately, the development and ubiquity of internet has affected language education. The abundance of resources on internet has brought convenience in language learning (Chen, 2013). Thus, EFL students can easily learn English anywhere and anytime. In recent days, for instance, there are many English platforms available online. Some of them are social network, video messengers, and 3D virtual worlds.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The standard of linguistic proficiency among pre service teachers has recently been a problem. This problem could be caused by a lack of exposure to the English language in their regular tasks. Students are hesitant to speak English, and many of them choose to disengage from any English language activity.

Furthermore, teacher's institute implement a new curriculum that focuses on communication skills for students. Based on communication contexts, the syllabus emphasises the use of the English language in both written and oral communication. The new curriculum teaches students how to communicate effectively, describe products and services, and give oral presentations. Furthermore, evaluations in teacher's institute come in both oral and written forms, with students required to work in groups for group work assessments and individually for individual assessments.

This is a challenge for some students because they lack the necessary skills to communicate effectively in order to perform the assignment, which may hinder their ability to finish the task. This could be attributed to their low English language skills.

Furthermore, studying English as a second language in teacher's institute adds to the difficulty for students who are not fluent in English. Students will be required to master new technical components for their courses, which will be taught in English. The technical course content itself is difficult since students will face many new vocabulary and jargon words. Students with a low skill level may have difficulty understanding the language while also grasping the course content.

Broadly speaking, EFL settings have very limited opportunities to engage in a real English context (i.e.Marwan, 2007). There are some studies which have discussed the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in practicing English conversation (Hosni, 2014). In Indonesia, for instance, a teacher reported that students

readily mock anyone who tries to use English in public (Lamb, 2007).

The reluctance to use English on a daily basis is also found in several non-English-speaking countries. For example, in Turkey, it is found that EFL learners have fear of being negatively evaluated when making mistakes, particularly in front of their friends (Dil, 2009). Likewise, EFL learners in Oman also perceived that making mistakes in front of their classmates is very embarrassing (Al Hosni, 2014). Consequently, many EFL learners are afraid to use English in a real context (Lamb, 2007).

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

It must be mentioned in the literature review that FLA, which is commonly considered to be a universal phenomenon that hinders students' progress, has both a crippling and a facilitating impact on learning foreign languages. As an illustration, while some studies on FLA showed that anxiety had a negative impact on learning and achievement (Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; MacIntrye & Gardner, 1994; Oxford, 1999; Trylong, 1987; Young, 1991), others showed that anxiety could actually help people learn a foreign language (Alpert & Haber, 1960; Chastain, 1975; Scovel, 1978). Studies by Fletcher (1997) and Hancock (2001) and others also suggested that worry had a negative impact on speaking a foreign language.

It's believed that pre-service EFL teachers who are nonnative speakers may be more susceptible to FLTA. Tum (2015) proposed three phases as the origin of FLTA. First, as language learners in the foreign language classrooms, pre-service EFL teachers may have FLA experiences. Second, as their training course drew nearer, pre-service teachers became increasingly conscious of the difficulties and obligations that lay ahead in their future job. Furthermore, for relatively new teachers, the first time they join a foreign language classroom as a teacher may feel daunting.

Merç (2004) revealed that among the most commonly mentioned issues of pre-service EFL teachers completing their teaching practicum at Anadolu University Faculty of Education was nervousness in the literature on FLTA. Furthermore, Kim and Kim (2004) have performed research on the sources that pre-service teachers find to be the most nerve-wracking. The findings showed that the pre-service teachers occasionally felt anxious when teaching English through English, teaching English to students who had previously lived in English-speaking nations, working with unmotivated students, teaching English speaking and listening, fielding unexpected questions, struggling to maintain control of the class, and, finally, when being observed in lessons. Pek (2007) also identified six categories of anxiety sources: making mistakes, teaching a certain language area, utilising the native language, teaching students at a specific language level, fear of failure, and comparison to other teachers. Another study on the sources of anxiety faced by pre-service EFL instructors during teaching practicum was undertaken by Merç (2011), who identified the following sources of FLTA: students and class profiles; classroom management; teaching processes;

being observed; mentors; and other.

According to Horwitz (1996), teachers' nervousness about teaching a foreign language might prevent them from engaging with students, using the target language productively, and serving as an effective role model for language learners. Similar to this, Ztürk (2016) found that teachers have a moderate amount of teaching anxiety when imparting a particular ability in which they lack confidence. Students' behaviour, knowledge of the target culture, and knowledge of the target language were the three categories used to group the causes of teaching anxiety.

The research by Fish and Fraser (2001) revealed that the activities associated with teaching were the origins of the highest levels of teaching anxiety, similar to ztürk's (2016) study. In a similar vein, Pek's (2016) study found that non-native EFL teachers had anxiety specific to teaching the target language when they made mistakes, felt incompetent when teaching grammar, used the native language, taught students at specific language proficiency levels, and had a fear of failing.

The study of Na (2007) identified the variables of anxiety-provoking factors as communication apprehension, fear of unfavourable assessment, test anxiety, anxiety of English lessons, and English classroom anxiety. This study was one of many on the sources of FLTA. Yoon (2012) highlighted the causes as the use of target language, a lack of confidence, and a lack of preparation, whereas Gardner and Leak's (1994) study focused on the reasons of teaching anxiety in relation to academic rank and teaching experience.

Contrarily, Aslrasouli and Vahid (2014) examined anxiety among EFL teachers in the Iranian context and found that different sources, including interpersonal relationships, employment structure, language proficiency and knowledge, facilities and resources, and other factors, are present in both male and female teachers. An intriguing new element, the fear of ambiguity in English, appeared as a new factor in terms of language anxiety in another study (Thomson & Lee, 2013), which looked at the impact of language anxiety on achievement. According to the findings of a study done in a Turkish context (Tum, 2015), nervous pre-service teachers had considerable levels of language anxiety, to the point where they could refrain from using the target language and other language-intensive teaching techniques in their classrooms.

FLTA also results from other factors, such as identity-based anxiety (Stroud & Wee, 2006), which is brought on by fear, shyness, and discomfort (Anandari, 2015); students' unwillingness to take risks when using or speaking English in class; students' fear of being negatively evaluated; students' anxiety about public speaking and tests; students' reluctance to communicate (Liu & Jackson, 2008); teachers' inadequate attention to anxiety (Trang, 2016); and students' unwillingness.

IV. METHOD

The study was conducted among the pre-service English language teachers in one of the Teacher Training Institutes in Sabah. The population of this research was randomly sampled. Later, an online survey containing 37 items were administered to the selected sample in order to measure their level of English language proficiency as well as Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety, FLTA. The instrument used in this research was adopted from the Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale, FLTAS created by Aydin and Ustuk in 2020.

The pre-service teachers' level of proficiency was assessed based on their performance in the CEFR-alligned assessment test which was currently used worldwide as a mean of standardizing the non-native English language teachers' language proficiency score. In order to gather the respondents' perceptions on the items, five score Likert Scale was used. The detail of the five scores is illustrated in table 1 below.

TABLE I: FIVE POINTS LIKERT SCALE

Very Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral	3
Agree	4
Very Agree	5

In this quantitative research, descriptive statistics was utilized to analyze the data gathered using Statistical Package for Social Science, SPSS version 26.

V. FINDINGS

Research Respondent

A total of 38 pre-service teachers responded to the questionnaire and the demography is presented in the table below.

TABLE II: RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHY

ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
MALE	6	
FEMALE	32	

The table above illustrate the proportion of the respondents' according on their gender.

Level of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety

In order to identify the level of each variable, the cut-off mean score proposed by Levin and Rubin (1998) was referred. The details of the mean score interpretation is presented on the table below.

TABLE II: LEVIN AND RUBIN MEAN SCORE INTERPRETATION

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00-2.33	low
2.34 – 3.67	medium
3.68-5.00	high

As shown in the table above, there are three levels of mean score which are high, medium and low. The high score is ranging from 3.68 to 5.00, medium level starts from 2.34 until 3.67 whereas the low mean score range from 1.00 t0 2.33. The SPSS analysis of the mean

score for English Language level of proficiency and FLTA is presented in the following table.

TABLE IIIV : LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY MEAN SCORE DIFFERENCE IN REGARD TO GENDER

VARIABLE	MEAN SCORE	LEVEL
Male	3.77	High
Female	3.76	High
	Significance level	0.437

TABLE IV: FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING ANXIETY MEAN SCORE DIFFERENCE IN REGARD TO GENDER

VARIABLE	MEAN SCORE	LEVEL
Male	3.31	Medium
Female	3.29	Medium
	Significance level	0.882

Based on the mean score of each variable based on their gender, it can be concluded that groups of gender possess high level of English language proficiency and medium level of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety.

Comparison of Means According to Gender

In order to achieve the second objective of the research, the respondents were grouped according to their gender and the mean score differences for both FLTA and English Language Proficiency are presented on table III and V. Based on the analysis of the independent sample T-Test on the pre-service teachers' level of English Language Proficiency presented on table III, the mean score for female and male pre-service English language teachers are 3.77 and 3.76 respectively. The result demonstrated that the p>0.05 value is (p=0.437). This portrays that, although male teachers show slightly higher level of English Language Proficiency than their female counterparts, teachers' level of proficiency in regard to gender group shows no significant difference.

Moving on, the result of Independent Sample T-Test on the students' level of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety, FLTA has also been analysed on the result is presented in table VI. Fundamentally, the male respondents score a higher level of FLTA as compared to the female respondents in which both of the group's score (3.31) and 3.29 respectively. Nonetheless, the significant level p>0.05 value is (p=0.882) signifies that there is no significant difference on the teachers' level of FLTA according to their gender.

Relationship Between English Language Proficiency and Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety

In order to respond to the main objective of the study, the Pearson Correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between the two variables. The interpretation of the relationship follows the specification of Cohen (2007) which is presented in the following table.

TABLE VII: COEFFICIENT CORRELATION STREGTH

Mean Score	Interpretation
0.81 -1.00	very strong
0.61 - 0.80	strong
0.41 - 0.60	medium
0.21 - 0.40	weak
0.01 - 0.20	very weak

There are five levels of correlation based on Cohen (2007) and they range from very weak to very strong relationship. The result of the Pearson Correlation analysis of this study is presented in the table below.

TABLE VIII: PEARSON CORRELATION ANALYSIS ON FLTA AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

		FLTA	English Language Proficiency
FLTA	Pearson Correlation	1	-.103
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.538
	N	38	38
English Language Proficiency	Pearson Correlation	-.103	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.538	
	N	38	38

Based on the result of the analysis, there is a negative correlation between FLTA and English language proficiency. However, the strength of the relationship is very weak which is -0.103 and, in many cases, it could be abandoned. However, the significant level p>0.05 value is (p=0.538) showing that the result is not significant and therefore cannot be generalized into other population. In other words, although statistically, there is a relationship between the two variables, it could safely be said that anxiety in teaching a foreign language does not have any effect in determining the English teachers' language proficiency for the sample in the study.

VI. DISCUSSION

The alarming issue pertaining to the non-native English Language teachers' proficiency hits almost all countries across the globe. Realizing the impact that proficient language teachers have towards the overall quality of ESL classroom and instruction has called upon the urgency to identify the possible causes that lead to the matter in hope that proper measures could be conducted to then escalate English teachers' language proficiency.

Therefore, the research wishes to unearth the level of English language proficiency as well as anxiety in teaching of English among the non-native pre-service English language teachers. Furthermore, the research also seeks to unveil the difference among gender and teaching experience in regard to both variables and later unveil the relationship that exist between the variables.

Significantly, the medium level of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety among the sample of the

research resonates with the emerging contempered findings in regard to FLTA among the pre-service English teachers. This could be due to various factors including lack of experience, classroom situation and students' observation from their mentor.

Additionally, the high level of English language proficiency among the respondents provide promising future for the primary ESL classroom in Malaysia as the students will definitely benefit from having proficient English language teachers at school. It cannot be denied that, English teachers are the role model of the language in the classroom since they demonstrate the proper use of the language in their classroom instruction. In fact, proficient teachers would be able to encourage and motivate their students to grow the confidence to utilize the target language.

Basically, the negative relationship between the two variables as revealed in the Pearson Correlation Analysis are expected but the very weak level of correlation coefficient demonstrates that FLTA does not have any implication specifically on the level of proficiency among the pre-service English teachers. Although FLTA did exist and in a medium level among the pre-service teachers, their proficiency in the language remains unchallenged. This could be due to other factors such as motivation and efficacy that is not analysed in the study.

VII.   CONCLUSION (OR LIMITATION OR SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER STUDIES)

The findings of this research shades light on the nature of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety among the pre-service English language teachers. Signitficantly, the level of FLTA among pre-service English Language teachers differs and is also influenced by factors such as outside stressors and gender. In fact, more research pertaining to FLTA is needed to enrich the source of literature covering the area since anxiety has been mostly researched among language learners (Teimouri et al., 2019). This is due to the fact that, emotion is an essential element that influence teachers' personal and professional development (Aydin & Ustuk, 2020; Sari & Anwar, 2021).

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