

INVESTIGATING ANXIETY ABOUT TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AMONG EFL TEACHERS PURSUING THEIR POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

In the discipline of teaching English, scholars and even language teachers have long been interested in foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA). With the increasing proliferation of English as a foreign language (EFL), there is a lack of comprehensive research on FLTA among EFL teachers. Therefore, the current study examines FLTA among 48 EFL teachers during their postgraduate programme at a public university in Northern Cyprus. The current analysis included the administration of the Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (TFLAS) and interviews. According to the results, the participants experienced varying degrees of foreign language teaching anxiety, and anxiety levels do not correlate with participants' gender and teaching. The findings also revealed that fear of making mistakes was the primary factor that could induce language teaching anxiety. This study contributes to the existing body of prior research on FLTA with valuable contextualised data that could help alleviate anxiety levels experienced by EFL teachers.

Keywords: anxiety; English as a foreign language teacher; foreign language anxiety; foreign language teaching anxiety

Introduction

Various variables, procedures, and processes are associated with learning a foreign or second language, many of which have been the subject of scientific study since the 1960s. Many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students experience difficulties in their classrooms, which can negatively impact their progress (Horwitz et al., 1986). In other words, prior research has attempted to fully emphasise foreign language anxiety (FLA) to comprehend learners' challenges in foreign language (FL) classrooms. In their major study, Horwitz et al. (1986) described FLA as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning; arising from the uniqueness of the language learning experience” (p.128). Research has identified many subtypes of anxiety, including trait anxiety, state anxiety, and facilitative-debilitative anxiety, all distinct from one another (Crookall, 1987; Scovel, 1978). Elevated levels of FLA can cause frustration and are disruptive to students in the EFL classroom (Horwitz et al., 1986; Liu & Wu, 2021). Over the past three decades, several studies have shown that student's ability to master a FL is negatively affected by their anxiety (Horwitz, 1996; Horwitz et al., 1986; Tum & Kunt, 2013; Wern & Rahmat, 2021). FLA negatively impacts FL achievement, whereas positive emotions promote learning and achievement (Bielak, 2022).

However, along with this growth in the field, researchers appear to have overlooked the possibility that EFL teachers may also experience Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA) when speaking the target language (TL), which is detrimental to the EFL teaching process (Tum, 2015; Wern & Rahmat, 2021). EFL teachers' anxiety is either due to the fact that they are FL users or generic teaching profession situations. Nonetheless, little effort has been made to recognise both sides of the coin (Aydin & Ustuk, 2020). Further, recent research in FLA has focused on the possibility that anxious EFL teachers could unintentionally pass on their irritation and anxiety to their students (Horwitz, 1996; Mercer, 2018). As a result, the discipline needs to deeply understand the teachers' psychology to optimise the efficiency and dynamism of EFL classrooms. Therefore, this study aims to shed new light on this debate by examining FLTA among EFL teachers that may affect their teaching behaviour. Specifically, this research aims to measure the extent of FLTA of EFL teachers pursuing their postgraduate studies and determine the sources of their FLTA level. It seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) To what extent do EFL teachers experience foreign language teaching anxiety?
- (2) Does the level of FLTA correlate with the participant's gender and teaching experience?
- (3) What are the sources of FLTA among EFL teachers?

Literature Review

Considering studies in this area of research, EFL teachers may experience not only teaching anxiety but also FLA. As stated by Horwitz (1996), while EFL teachers are required to alleviate their students' anxiety levels, they may experience anxiety that adversely impacts their teaching behaviour. Horwitz (1996) noted that although the

quality of language teaching is affected by such fears, it would significantly affect teachers' mentality and sense of satisfaction. Although language teaching has prioritised improving education in reducing learners' anxiety levels, the teacher's feelings of anxiety are occasionally underestimated (Brodar, 2020; Horwitz, 1996) and still needs to be defined (Aydin & Ustuk, 2020; Brodar, 2020; Selvi, 2011).

Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA)

Aslrasouli and Vahid (2014) define FLTA as a complex psychological experience impacted by several factors that lead to stress or anxiety among teachers in the EFL classroom. As with all novice EFL teachers, it is reasonable to assume that most teachers are no exception to going through critical moments of anxiety. Horwitz (1996) notes that when EFL teachers need to minimise their learners' anxiety in the classroom, they may feel anxious and inferior, disrupting their practice of teaching the TL. The bulk of the recent work in this area (e.g., Aydin & Ustuk, 2020; Fraschini & Park, 2021; Lee & Lew, 2001; Machida, 2016; Soleimani & Allahveisi, 2022; Tum, 2012; 2015) reported that pre-service and in-service EFL teachers from various countries encountered considerable levels of FLTA. These studies are valuable in recognising emotions as an essential element of teacher development and arguing for providing resources and support necessary for teachers to overcome challenges in their teaching and training. Furthermore, since there are comparatively limited studies on FLTA, it is crucial to look into its causes, effects, and how language teachers address these challenges (Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020).

Reasons behind EFL Teacher's Feelings of Anxiety

EFL teachers are supposed to be well educated and exhibit a dynamic and resourceful personality to impart their FL expertise. A review of major studies in this area confirmed that indicators of FLA among EFL teachers could be categorised into two subdivisions. Internal factors include personal characteristics, lack of preparation and confidence, lack of teaching experience, perceived language proficiency, fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation. On the other hand, external factors include classroom characteristics, teaching environment, L2-linguistic factors, and cultural identity (Alrashidi, 2022; Ghanizadeh et al., 2020; Han & Takkaç-Tulgar, 2019; Hismanoglu, 2013; Hofstede, 1984; Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020; Liu et al., 2022; Liu & Wu, 2021; Machida, 2016; Merç, 2011).

Furthermore, EFL teachers may still suffer from FLA as they were EFL learners. Several researchers (e.g., Han & Takkaç-Tulgar, 2019; İpek, 2016; Jugo, 2020; Song & Park, 2019; Tum, 2015) revealed that anxious teachers frequently felt threatened when speaking the target language and feel highly self-conscious of any deficiencies they could show in front of others. However, FL teaching is a challenging profession where teachers may be required to deal with various challenging issues daily. Therefore, a teaching license may not be enough to inspire confidence in newly licensed teachers, and it would be naïve to assume that EFL teachers would be able to manage feelings of inadequacy if they were only granted teaching credentials (Tum, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

FLA can be recognised using theories and hypotheses of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research. Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis is among the most influential hypotheses, emphasising how emotional variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety may impact individuals by interrupting information from the brain's language acquisition system. According to this Hypothesis, once the emotional filter is active, learners may feel anxious, stressed, and selfless, which is detrimental to their success in EFL learning, while low filters do not cause anxiety, allowing language learners to comprehend effortlessly. Besides, a preliminary work undertaken by Horwitz et al. (1986) categorised FLA as situation-specific anxiety responsible for unpleasant emotions towards a foreign language because it demands more self-concept and self-expression. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), FLA differs significantly from state and trait anxiety since it appears primarily in FL classrooms. Horwitz and her colleagues highlighted three significant anxieties: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Communication anxiety is the fear of interacting with people in the TL. Fear of negative evaluation occurs when students are concerned about their mistakes. Test anxiety is linked to performance anxiety triggered by fear of failure.

Methodology

This study was conducted at a public university in Northern Cyprus. The university is an international institution with students of different nationalities. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in multiple disciplines. According to the postgraduate programmes, the department of foreign language education offers MA (1-2 years) and PhD (2-5 years) programmes. The courses offered by the department are designed to provide applicants with a comprehensive understanding of both the theoretical and practical aspects of English Language Teaching (ELT). All ELT postgraduate candidates are required to exhibit a minimum score of 7.0 on IELTS or 90% of English language proficiency tests before enrolling on any ELT programme.

The reason for targeting EFL teachers pursuing their postgraduate studies was that anxiety research rarely investigated whether such participants had any struggles with teaching anxiety (Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020). The participants with a minimum of one year of EFL teaching were included (range: 2-13 years). A number of 48 EFL teachers (30 MA students and 18 PhD students) voluntarily participated in this study. Sixteen participants were males, and thirty-two were females aged between 23 and 53 (average 30.35). All participants were non-native English speakers from African and Middle East countries (Cyprus, Turkey, Libya, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Nigeria) with EFL teaching experience (from 1 to 15 years).

According to the study objectives, a mixed-method (explanatory-sequential) research approach was adopted. According to Creswell et al. (2003), this method entails gathering and analysing quantitative and qualitative data in two sequential periods within a single research project to arrive at a more robust study in which the qualitative data help explain the initial quantitative results in more detail. In the first

phase, the researcher collects and analyses the quantitative data and subsequently uses the results to plan the second qualitative phase. The quantitative results typically provide information about participants' selection for the qualitative phase and the types of questions for interviews (Creswell et al., 2003). In the first phase, this study is designed to collect quantitative statistical data to address the level of FLTA among EFL teachers.

All participants were invited to complete a background questionnaire prepared by the researcher and the Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (TFLAS) developed by Horwitz (1996). The TFLAS was utilised to establish whether they felt the feeling of foreign language anxiety or not. The TFLAS has 18 items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. A high degree of reliability has been documented for the TFLAS since its invention. According to Tum (2015), TFLAS has a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.94. The Cronbach alpha of the TFLAS in this study was 0.90.

In the second phase, the study collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews to investigate factors that trigger teachers' language anxiety among the participants (see Appendix 1 for interview questions). Interviews allow researchers to get a sense of engagement and active participation from respondents (Robson, 2017). Therefore, TFLAS and interviews enable researchers to gain more knowledge about the impact of anxiety on FL instruction. In order to consider the homogeneity, the participants were purposefully selected based on the results from TFLAS for interviews, as shown in Table 1, using pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. The interviewees included anxious and non-anxious participants with a balanced number of males and females. This type of sampling helps study a phenomenon related to what is considered typical members of the affected population.

The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the research and publication ethics regulations approved by the Research and Publication Ethics Board (RPEB) of the university (Protocol Code: 12.05.2022 RG 95 EK III AE 349). Before participating in this study, all participants received an authorisation form and were assured that their identities would be kept confidential at all stages. Additionally, each interview was recorded and lasted roughly 30 minutes.

Table 1
Characteristics of the Selected Participants for Interviews

	Participants	Gender	Education Level	Anxiety Score		Teaching Experience (years)
Anxious Participants	Izad	Male	PhD	3.78	68	10
	Arash	Female	PhD	3.39	61	11
	Salma	Female	MA	3.39	61	6
	Adaku	Female	MA	3.06	55	2
Non-Anxious Participants	Sami	Male	MA	1.33	24	13
	Metin	Male	PhD	1.22	22	10
	Derye	Female	PhD	1.22	22	3
	Fadi	Male	PhD	1.22	22	12

Data Analysis

The participants' responses to the TFLAS were statistically analysed using the SPSS software (version 19) to calculate the mean scores and standard deviation. Some TFLAS items (2, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17 & 18) were reverse-coded according to the intended values. The data from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). Six steps are included in the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step is to familiarise the researchers with collected data by transcribing, reading, viewing, and marking the initial thoughts. In the second step, the researchers systematically develop initial codes of essential elements of the data throughout the entire data collection and then compile information relevant to each code. The third step involves sorting codes into potential themes and collecting all related data for each theme. In the fourth step, the researcher reviews and checks the consistency of themes throughout the coded extracts in the analysis. The fifth step is to refine and clarify each theme and the broader picture the analysis conveys, providing accurate descriptions and labels for each theme. The report is the final analysis step by selecting vivid and appealing extract examples and connecting the results to the research objective and literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results and Discussion

The Level of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety

The first objective of this study is to determine the level of FLTA among the participants. As previously indicated, 48 EFL teachers completed the TFLAS, which included 18 statements on a five-point Likert scale. According to this scale, the lowest score is 18, and the highest is 90, with 45 being half the highest possible score, indicating a moderate score. The TFLAS assessed participants' FLTA levels and yielded a mean score of 2.23 (range: 1.22-3.78, Table 2). Anxiety is slightly below the moderate level at 40.23 (45).

Table 2

The Descriptive Statistics about Anxiety Levels

Scale	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
TFLAS	48	2.23	11.997	1.22	3.78

According to Horwitz (1996), participants with mean anxiety scores below 2.0 are considered non-anxious. Participants between 2.0 and 3.0 are considered moderately anxious, and participants above 3.0 are considered very anxious. Based on their anxiety levels, all respondents in this research were categorised into three groups (see Table 3): 16.8% (8 participants) with a mean score greater than or equal to 3; 41.6% (20 participants) with moderate anxiety mean score between 2 and 3, and 20 participants with anxiety mean score below 2. Item 5, "I feel self-conscious

speaking my foreign language in front of other teachers", has the highest mean value above 3, indicating participants' anxiety about communicating in the FL (see Appendix 2 for all items).

Table 3
The Descriptive Statistics about Participants' Anxiety Levels

Mean average	N	Rank	
1.0 to 1.99	20	Low	41.6%
2.0 to 2.99	20	Moderate	41.6%
3.0 to 5.0	8	High	16.8%
Total = 48			

In addition, the anxiety level was measured for all participants and compared concerning their gender. As a result, the mean anxiety score for females (N=32) was 2.28, slightly higher than for males (N=16) at 2.12. Independent-sample t-tests were performed for the two groups to determine the statistical differences. No significant differences (P-value < 0.05) were indicated between males and females regarding their anxiety levels (see Table 4). Similarly, based on teaching experience, all participants were divided into two groups. Their mean anxiety scores were compared to observe the influence of teaching experience on the FLTA level. The first group included 28 participants with teaching experience ranging from 1 to 5 years, whereas the second group included 20 participants with experience teaching from 6 to 15 years. The first group had a mean score of 2.32, and the second scored 2.21. As a result, independent samples t-tests were employed to determine if the two groups differed significantly. The P-value ($p > .05$) indicated no significant difference in anxiety levels between the two groups (see Table 4).

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of Gender and the Teaching Anxiety

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value
Males	16	2.12	11.523	>.05
Females	32	2.28	12.327	
Teaching experience 1 to 5 years	28	2.32	11.030	>.05
Teaching experience 6 to 15 years	20	2.21	9.529	

Sources of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety

As for the second objective, the interview results indicate that fear of making mistakes is the primary factor that causes anxiety among participants. The themes are avoid using the language, avoid making errors, and prioritise the grammatical accuracy.

Fear of Making Mistakes

Although the sampling of interviewees depended on their anxiety level, it is noteworthy that none of those who reported the highest anxiety levels in the questionnaire did so during the interview session. However, Horwitz (1996) states that anxious teachers tend to skip activities that involve heavy reliance on FL and instead turn to those that require less FL use by teachers. Horwitz (1996) claims that EFL teachers with high anxiety levels appear to limit the use of the target language in the classroom. Although they are at a postgraduate level that requires extensive and spontaneous use of the language, they are concerned about making grammatical or linguistic mistakes in TL. The results suggest that anxious EFL teachers may avoid using TL extensively in classrooms because they are worried about making mistakes and being negatively evaluated. In particular, the interviewees with high anxiety (Izad, Salma, Adaku, and Arash) indicated how they lately reduced their TL employment in their actual classes to avoid making language errors during their speech in front of their students. Izad (an anxious male EFL teacher) stated:

It is not an easy feeling. I remember that I made an error in pronunciation because my pronunciation was not good, and one of my students pointed out some errors I made. I felt upset at that time, which frustrated me and forced me to not speak more and improve myself more in pronunciation. It happened to me several times ...

According to Horwitz (2010), concern about mistakes is one of the critical elements of foreign language anxiety. Anxious language learners often avoid using the TL for fear of making mistakes and being judged negatively to avoid appearing foolish to others (Tum, 2015). Likewise, the anxious respondents overestimated their fear of making mistakes in front of their students, as they expected to be competent teachers given their level of qualifications. In particular, they explained how they would feel if they made a mistake, and their students pointed it out. For example, Adaku (an anxious female interviewee) said she would feel uncomfortable making errors in front of her students as she expected to be an excellent example of a language user. She stated:

I believe that making language errors or mistakes is not a good experience. I am afraid about it, by the way. As a teacher, my students think that I am proficient and not making errors ... if they point out an error I made, I will be very ashamed, but I will respect their opinion.

The response of anxious participants to the following items in TFLAS also confirmed this view:

Item 3, "I am afraid that native speakers will notice every mistake I make."

Item 5, "I feel self-conscious speaking my foreign language in front of the other teachers."

Item 7, "I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language."

Item 9, "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking my foreign language in front of native speakers."

Item 11, "I do not worry about making mistakes in my foreign language."

Despite being postgraduates, they were particularly concerned about making mistakes in the TL. In contrast, fear of mistakes and negative evaluation appear to be significant concerns for anxious EFL teachers; these concerns do not appear to be substantial concerns for the less anxious EFL teachers.

However, anxiety is often associated with classroom performance (Tum, 2015), so anxious EFL teachers were asked how they would feel if they could teach the TL in their mother tongue. This question aimed to specify whether the participants' feelings of anxiety observed in this study might be related to instructional performance or TL. In particular, EFL teachers indicated that they felt more relaxed to teach the TL using their mother tongue, suggesting that participants' feelings of anxiety were directly related to the TL. For example, one anxious EFL teacher, Izad, stated:

When I teach in my country, I feel more self-confident and easier to teach the language than abroad because, in my country, I share the same mother tongue as my students. I can use the first language to discuss the difficult issues of the target language to make it easier for my students and me.

They may probably believe that at their current level of education, making language errors seem irrational and unacceptable to the students. They perhaps recognise that their prospective students are likely to be university students who can qualify as advanced language learners. Therefore, to avoid mistakes and embarrassment, they preferred using their native language to boost their confidence in speaking.

A follow-up question about the participant's suitability to teach the TL was asked during the interview. In contrast to most confident participants, the anxious participants appeared unsure if they were sufficiently equipped to teach the TL. Anxious respondents expressed a need for additional experience and training in teaching TL and dealing with advanced learners in their classes; as Adaku put it, "My big fear is about how to transfer my beliefs and thoughts into practice, how to apply them in the classroom. It is about the coming situations with advanced levels". Acknowledging the obligations and problems of becoming a language teacher at an advanced level, such as a university level, could end up causing anxious participants to have feelings of inadequacy and self-awareness, pushing them to set lofty expectations for their TL skills (Horwitz, 1996). The anxious participants' replies throughout the interviews revealed their concerns over their FL teacher training. For example, Salma (a female anxious interviewee) stated:

As a teacher, I would feel under pressure, as I always try to improve myself and not disappoint my students. The important issue is how to develop my professional career and my knowledge more regarding how to deal with different students' lifestyles and backgrounds.

Due to fear of making mistakes in the TL, many anxious participants prioritised the grammatical accuracy of learning EFL during interviews. They generally believe addressing student mistakes is a major concern in FL courses. For instance, some responses labelled this as “useful”. Anxious interviewees stated, “it is beneficial because students must not learn wrong” and “it helps [me] to learn the English language faster”. Some anxious participants prioritised grammatical accuracy in the TL. Perhaps these anxious EFL teachers were inspired to maintain a pure language approach (Horwitz, 1996). Therefore, it was presumed to be an essential issue in FL classrooms to correct students’ mistakes. To illustrate, Izad (an anxious male interviewee) said:

I pay due more attention to error correction. I always fear learners developing bad habits. They should be conscious of errors at the learning stage to develop the right habits. The time will come when they unconsciously speak correctly.

Error correction is still essential for most respondents, but anxious participants showed negative evaluation experiences in their interview responses. They said that teachers should pay attention to students' feelings while correcting their mistakes, especially in front of their peers. In other words, they emphasise encouraging students to practice their TL and avoiding error correction approaches that might create a sense of apprehension. For example, Arash (an anxious female interviewee) said:

Error correction is important, and I would do it when needed and relevant to the task, though I would not hurt my students in front of their colleagues, and sometimes it is better to focus on fluency rather on accuracy.

Discussion

Education development to minimise anxiety among EFL learners has been given precedence by the language teaching profession, disregarding the teacher’s FLA (Brodar, 2020; Horwitz, 1996). This research used multivariable analyses to examine EFL teachers' feelings about FLA during their graduate studies. According to a review of the literature, little research has looked at FLTA among EFL teachers compared to research on EFL learners. As a result, this research provides an excellent opportunity to expand our knowledge of FLTA to develop and recommend some ways of dealing with it in a teaching environment.

The initial objective of the present research was to identify the level of FLTA among EFL teachers. According to the findings, EFL teachers enrolling in graduate school had varying degrees of FLTA, with some participants reporting mildly high anxiety levels. Interestingly, these results support that EFL teachers are vulnerable to FLA feelings. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) claim that EFL teachers often assume that their work should be impeccable from start to finish, making them dissatisfied with their TL performance. They may be concerned about whether their current

skills in TL will be sufficient to meet their future job needs and may be frustrated by feelings of self-awareness, inability, and apprehension (Tum, 2012). As a result, they encounter challenges in practically fulfilling teaching responsibilities (Aydin & Ustuk, 2020; Horwitz, 1996). This study supports earlier observations, demonstrating that pre-service and in-service EFL teachers encountered different anxiety levels. For example, Lee and Lew (2001) reported that EFL teachers from various countries pursuing postgraduate studies at a TESOL program had significant levels of FLTA. These findings were consistent with the results of Frascini and Park (2021) and Tum (2015), who reported that pre-service and in-service EFL teachers encountered considerable levels of FLTA.

Secondly, another objective of the current study is to determine whether the FLTA level correlates with gender and years of teaching experience. Although the number of participants was unbalanced based on gender (16 males, 32 females), the findings revealed no significant differences between males and females. In addition, there were no significant differences between the participants' anxiety levels regarding years of teaching experience. The present findings are consistent with Machida (2016), who found that gender and anxiety scores were not correlated. In contrast, these findings contradict the data reported by Liu and Wu (2021), who found that females reported a higher level of anxiety than males among 151 EFL teachers. Additionally, Machida (2016) revealed that experienced EFL teachers reported lower anxiety levels. An explanation for this could be that experienced teachers were used to teaching unfamiliar subjects, which gave them confidence and strategy to adapt to teaching English (Machida, 2016).

Thirdly, although the participants in this study were simultaneously postgraduate students and in-service EFL teachers, their responses to TFLAS and interviews indicated that they were often concerned about making mistakes and negative reviews they may receive about their performance. This study also agrees with the results of Liu and Wu (2021), who surveyed 151 in-service EFL university teachers. They found that feelings of FLTA among participants attributed to apprehension about speaking the FL and making mistakes. In a qualitative study, Song and Park (2019) interviewed 14 secondary school EFL teachers. Their finding revealed that the participant experienced FLTA due to fear of making mistakes in front of their students. These results demonstrate that EFL teachers can easily fall prey to the misconception that only fully proficient language teachers and experienced users of the TL could be acceptable to students (Tum, 2015). Therefore, they wonder if they have the necessary skills to succeed in their new profession and become more concerned with expanding their subject knowledge than improving their teaching methods (Tum, 2015). As a result, they may not effectively represent and reflect the optimal example of using the TL for their FL learners (Horwitz, 1996; Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020; Kunt & Tüm, 2010). According to Horwitz (1996), anxious EFL teachers generally avoid language-intensive initiatives that may reveal their lack of TL proficiency for fear of being seen as TL incompetent.

Another thing to consider is the reciprocity of the interaction between teacher and student, which means the latter is not only a passive observer of the former's behaviours and vice versa (Mercer, 2018). An EFL teacher's influence on student achievement and well-being extends beyond their content and delivery

methods. Therefore, anxious EFL teachers likely unintentionally transfer their irritation and unease with the TL to their students (Horwitz, 1996). This indicates that EFL teachers' psychology may affect students individually and collectively. EFL teachers as individuals also have a tremendous effect on students. The effectiveness of the teaching-learning process, students' learning, and psychology are all shaped by the teacher's psychology (Mercer, 2018). However, even if FLTA did not alter EFL classroom instruction, Horwitz (1996) stated that teachers' frustration and insecurity would likely arise from using the TL regularly in front of a real audience, reducing teachers' performance and sense of achievement. According to this study, the participants, upon their graduation, may become educators for pre-service EFL teachers. Thus, the priority of the language teaching profession should not be only to reduce the feeling of anxiety among students but also that language teachers and even teacher educators.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate FLTA among EFL teachers during their postgraduate studies at a university in North Cyprus. First, the study found that EFL teachers experienced varying levels of FLTA, ranging from low to slightly high. Second, it has found that the level of FLTA does not significantly correlate with participants' gender and teaching experience. Third, the questionnaire and interview findings indicated that fear of making mistakes was the primary factor that induced FLTA and could impact the effectiveness of EFL instructional performance. This study provides evidence that even many EFL teachers at this level of education are prone to experiencing varying levels of FLTA due to feelings of incompetence and mistrust of their abilities to fulfil the EFL teaching profession (Horwitz, 1996; Tum & Kunt, 2013). Thus, it seems that even if they have gained teaching certificates, it does not imply that their feeling of anxiety is going to vanish (Tum, 2015). Horwitz (1996) suggested that EFL teachers should realise that other FL teachers also suffer from such feelings and acknowledge that they are still FL learners where errors are essential and unavoidable in the language learning process. Consequently, teacher education programmes need to go beyond just imparting knowledge and recognise that their students regularly suffer from FLTA. They need to be guided on how to handle these encounters appropriately (Tum, 2012). However, there are certain limitations to the current study. First, generalisability issues could arise from the study's sample size. The sample size could be increased for further research to examine EFL teaching anxiety and its correlation with gender, age, years of experience, and culture. Secondly, this study's scope was limited in assessing the level and sources of anxiety among EFL teachers. For this reason, further research is recommended to determine the exact effects of FLTA on classroom performance for novice and experienced EFL teachers using various methods such as classroom observations with a larger population sample size.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. What do you think is anxiety, and how does it arise?
2. In general, do you feel confident or nervous when speaking English?
 - a. If the answer is: I am nervous) Do you think your feelings can affect your language lessons? If so, how?
3. To what extent do you feel ready to teach the language? Are there any challenges you are still afraid of?
4. How do you usually plan your lessons? What is important to you when planning your lessons?
5. How much is error correction necessary in your language classes?
6. What teaching approach/method do you believe in most to teach the language? Why?

Appendix 2

The Mean Score and Standard Deviation for All TFLS' Items

Item		Mean	SD
1	It frightens me when I do not understand what someone is saying in my foreign language.	2.31	.993
2	I would not worry about taking a course conducted entirely in my foreign language.	1.92	1.088
3	I am afraid that native speakers will notice every mistake I make.	2.33	1.294
4	I am pleased with the level of foreign language proficiency I have achieved.	2.23	1.242
5	I feel self-conscious speaking my foreign language in front of the other teachers.	3.56	1.128
6	When speaking my foreign language, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	2.25	1.042
7	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	2.50	1.149
8	I feel comfortable around native speakers of my foreign language.	2.08	.986
9	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking my foreign language in front of native speakers.	2.29	1.184
10	I am not nervous speaking my foreign language with students.	1.90	.973
11	I do not worry about making mistakes in my foreign language.	2.21	1.129
12	I speak my language well enough to be a good foreign language teacher.	2.08	1.069
13	I get nervous when I do not understand every word a native speaker says.	2.33	1.059
14	I feel confident when I speak a foreign language.	1.98	.956
15	I always feel that the other teachers speak the language better than I do.	2.29	1.166
16	I do not understand why some people think learning a foreign language is so hard.	2.29	1.184
17	I try to speak my foreign language with native speakers whenever I can.	1.69	.776
18	I feel that my foreign language preparation was adequate to become a foreign language teacher.	1.98	.911