Sources of Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Among Saudi Preservice English Teachers: A Qualitative Inquiry

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Abstract
This study sought to explore the sources of foreign language teaching anxiety experienced by non-native preservice English as foreign language (EFL) teachers. Fourteen preservice Saudi EFL teachers enrolled in a public university participated in this study during their teaching practicum. The study used a qualitative research design with an in-depth semi-structured interview as the data collection tool. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques and the findings revealed five main causes of anxiety: (i) fear of making mistakes, (ii) fear of negative evaluation, (iii) teaching unfamiliar topics, (iv) lack of preparation, and (v) a large number of students in one classroom. Generally, the results provide important implications for further research development and educational practices.

Keywords
foreign language teaching anxiety, English teaching, preservice teachers, Saudi Arabia

Introduction
In the area of foreign language classrooms, the significance of emotional factors has long been recognized (Pavlenko, 2011). Among these factors, foreign language anxiety is considered to exert adverse impacts on foreign language learning and achievement (Aida, 1994; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Worde, 2003). Anxiety is generally described as a vague fear, a state of apprehension (Scovel, 1991). Brown (2000) broadly described it as feelings associated with self-doubt, uneasiness, worry, and apprehension. Foreign language anxiety is a unique and separate kind of anxiety specific to foreign language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986). Horwitz et al. (1986) described foreign language anxiety as a distinct complex of feelings, behaviors, beliefs, and self-perceptions associated with classroom learning emerging from the distinctiveness of the process of foreign language learning. Likewise, MacIntyre (1999) contended for the unique type of foreign language anxiety and defined it as the negative reaction or worry aroused when learning or using a foreign language. Numerous research studies have consistently revealed negative associations between foreign language anxiety and students’ achievements in language learning (for more details, see recent meta-analysis studies: Botes et al., 2020; Dikmen, 2021; Teimouri et al., 2019; Zhang, 2019).

Most research studies conducted on foreign language anxiety have emphasized language anxiety experienced by foreign language learners rather than that experienced by foreign language teachers (Amengual-Pizarro, 2019). Horwitz (1996) was a pioneer in suggesting that non-native language teachers can also suffer from foreign language anxiety (Tum, 2012). Horwitz (1996) argued that although non-native language teachers are assumed to have a high level of foreign language competency, they are still considered language learners. As language learning/mastering is never complete, many non-native language teachers are expected to experience uneasy moments communicating their foreign language. When these experiences of inadequacy and uneasiness in the foreign language are frequent and repeated, non-native language teachers develop chronic foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 1996).

Horwitz (1996) argued that anxiety experienced by non-native language teachers can have adverse impacts on foreign language education in a variety of ways. First, non-native teachers with high foreign language anxiety levels tend to employ less of the target language in classrooms. Second, foreign language anxiety can prevent non-native teachers from interacting efficiently with students, actively presenting the target language, and serving as positive models of language learners. She explained that when non-native language teachers are uncomfortable using the target language, they might unconsciously prefer teaching strategies that...
protect them from having to use the target language actively and publicly. Third, anxious non-native foreign language teachers might deliver negative messages about language learning to their students. She claimed that when anxious non-native teachers appear uncomfortable communicating the target language, students are expected to believe that they also will be unable to speak the language.

Horwitz (1996) also argued that language competence is not the only cause of anxiety for non-native language teachers. She indicated that factors such as unruly students, inflexible performance standards, classroom management, and lack of confidence about their target language proficiency all promote anxiety among non-native foreign language teachers and cause them to favor cautious instructional approaches. She explained that, for example, teachers may want to experiment innovation in teaching, but apprehension about whether it will lead to problems in classroom management can deter risk-taking and creative tendencies.

To date, and since Horwitz’s (1996) seminal publication on foreign language teacher anxiety, a limited but increasing number of studies have examined the levels and anxiety-provoking sources of foreign language teaching anxiety (e.g., Amengual-Pizarro, 2019; Aydin, 2016; Barahmeh, 2016; Ipek, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2004; Liu & Wu, 2021; Merc, 2011; Yoon, 2012). For example, Liu and Wu’s (2021) quantitative study of 151 Chinese college English teachers reported that confidence in English competence, apprehension of speaking English and fear of negative outcomes were the main sources of foreign language teaching anxiety among the teachers. Similarly, in a quantitative study with 75 Spanish prospective primary school English teachers, Amengual-Pizarro (2019) found that most participants experienced average to high anxiety levels in the language classroom. Her findings also indicated that the major cause of anxiety was teachers’ lack of English proficiency. Likewise, Sammephet and Wanphet (2013) conducted a qualitative study with four Thai preservice English teachers and explored the possible causes of teachers’ anxiety. The results revealed that teachers’ own personality, supervision context and teaching context were the main causes of anxiety among participants. Also, in Aydin’s (2016) quantitative study with 60 preservice Turkish English teachers, the author found that language proficiency, teachers’ perceptions, fear of negative evaluation, technical concerns, teaching inexperience, and teaching demotivation were the main anxiety-provoking factors. In Korea, Kim and Kim’s (2004) study with 139 Korean English teachers indicated that lack of confidence, fear of negative evaluation, limited English competency, inadequate classroom preparation, being compared with native teachers and lack of teaching experience were the main anxiety-provoking situations experienced by teachers. Further, Yoon’s (2012) study with 52 Korean English teachers found that fear of using English in class, class preparation, and teachers’ confidence affect teachers’ anxiety in the classroom. In the Indonesian context, Pasaribu and Harendita’s (2018) mixed-method study included 50 English preservice Indonesian teachers and indicated that preparation, confidence, English skills, students’ profiles, lesson delivery, classroom management, and evaluation were the key factors that contribute to teachers’ anxiety. In a study conducted in Iran, Klanrit and Sroinam’s (2012) mixed-method study with 673 Iranian English teachers additionally reported that teachers’ language proficiency, learning, and teaching management and students’ attitudes toward studying English were the main sources of teachers’ anxiety in the classroom. The findings of the aforementioned research studies provide evidence that supports Horwitz’s (1996) theorization that non-native foreign language teachers experience anxiety levels in target language classrooms.

Aim of the Study

The literature review above showed the relevant role foreign language anxiety plays in foreign language teaching and learning. While foreign language learning anxiety has received considerably increased attention from researchers (e.g., Alrabai, 2014; Al-Saraj, 2014; Alshahrani, 2016; Asif, 2017; Sadiq, 2017) in the Saudi context in recent years, foreign language teaching anxiety remained an avenue of research in its infancy. In fact, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, research studies which particularly exploring foreign language teaching anxiety in Saudi Arabia are practically absent. Therefore, this study attempts to address this research gap by exploring the potential anxiety-provoking factors experienced by preservice Saudi English teachers. In particular, the study seeks to explore the following overarching research aim:

- To explore the main sources of foreign language teaching anxiety experienced by preservice English teachers in Saudi Arabia.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were 14 preservice English teachers enrolled in a public university in the northern part of Saudi Arabia. All participants were Saudi males between 22 and 28 years old. The exclusion of female participants was due to gender segregation between men and women in Saudi educational institutions. The participants hold a Bachelor of Arts in English language, and at the time this study was conducted, they were completing a Diploma of Education to qualify as prospective teachers. In the Diploma of Education, they are required to complete a teaching practicum of a 15-week semester in public high schools. Participants were randomly selected from 37 student teachers who were doing their practicum at the time this study was conducted. None of the participants had taught English in schools before this
practicum. All participants were Arabic native speakers and were teaching English as a foreign language under the supervision of university supervisors and cooperating teachers from the practicum schools. In addition, all participants were told that their participation in this study was voluntary, provided with information about the aim of the research and assured that their identity would remain confidential. Each participant signed an informed consent form before the commencement of the interviews.

Research Design
A qualitative research design was used in this study with semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool (Creswell, 2009). The rationale behind the employment of interviews as the main data collection tool was that it offers researchers the chance to explore things that cannot be directly observed, such as thoughts, perceptions, beliefs, or intentions. In other words, interviews can provide researchers with the opportunity to reach a particular kind of information, or what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (Ohata, 2005). In addition, as Creswell (2009) described, in-depth interviews allow participants to explain the meaning of a certain phenomenon as they have experienced it.

Data Collection Procedures
Each interview lasted between 15 and 30 minutes and was held in quiet offices in the preservice teachers’ practicum schools. Each participant was interviewed only once and was asked the following interview questions:

Have you ever experienced any anxiety both inside and outside the classroom during your teaching practicum? If yes, when did you experience that?

What make you feel anxious about the lesson that you will teach tomorrow?

What are the things/factors that cause the highest anxiety when you teach English?

The above interview questions were adopted from similar qualitative studies (İpek, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2004; Ohata, 2005). While following these three questions as a framework for the interview, the author also used modified statement questions from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), mainly to facilitate and initiate the conversation in the interview (Ohata, 2005). Such questions included, for example, “Do you feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of students?”; they were helpful in eliciting comments from participants.

The interviews were held during the second half of Semester 2, 2018. All interviews were undertaken in Arabic, the native language of the participants, to ensure that they could express their ideas confidently and fluently. All interviews were electronically recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Transcripts of the interviews were translated to English using the independent back-translation method to ensure the accuracy of translation.

Data Analysis
Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted to analyze the transcripts of the interviews. The six main phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed during the analysis process. These six phases were (1) data familiarization, (2) developing codes, (3) producing initial themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) naming and defining themes, and (6) writing the analytic narrative. To bolster the credibility of the analysis, frequent meetings, with an academic colleague who is expert in qualitative data analysis, were held throughout the analysis process (Forero et al., 2018). Any questions, ideas, or confusion related to the developing of codes and the searching, identification, and naming of themes were fully discussed. Discussions resulted in consensus on the final themes. Finally, member checking was also used to improve the trustworthiness of the data. In this process, the researcher asked the participants to review the transcripts and the resulting themes for validation purposes (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009). None of the participants requested edits or changes.

Results
Most preservice teachers interviewed indicated explicitly and implicitly that they experienced and are experiencing anxiety in their English teaching. Thematic analysis of the data showed five main themes pertaining to the sources of foreign language teaching anxiety. These themes are shown in Table 1. For the purpose of reporting the results, the themes and some of the exemplars that led to the developments of these themes are presented below.

Theme 1: Fear of Making Mistakes
Most student teachers frequently highlighted that fear of making mistakes was one of the main causes of anxiety. For example, one student teacher stated: “I feel anxiety in the class because I do not want to make mistakes, thinking of mistakes” (Student Teacher 9). Another student teacher emphasized that he cannot use English during all the classroom time because of the fear of making mistakes: “I cannot speak English in all the class time. Sometimes I do not want, I think that if I speak English in all the time in the class I will make mistakes such as grammar mistakes or wrong words, pronunciation of a word or my talk will not be clear to the students” (Student Teacher 2). Similarly, another student teacher highlighted that fear of making mistakes does not allow him to speak on all topics in the classroom: “One of the stressful things is speaking English in whatever topics in the class, in any topics. If you want to talk, this needs fluency and you don’t want the students to say I do not understand,
teacher” (Student Teacher 10). In addition, one student teacher indicated the reasons why he does not elaborate on his topics: “And I avoid elaboration on some points or topics because maybe I feel that I will not teach these points perfectly so I try to make my teaching simple and no more explanations or stories or examples on some points” (Student Teacher 12). Likewise, a number of student teachers expressed their apprehension about the challenge of teaching in English, compared with the ease of teaching in their native language, Arabic. For example, one student teacher indicated: “I teach parts of the lesson using Arabic. It is easy and in my lesson I want to deliver what I want to say but if I use English sometimes it is difficult with mistakes maybe and English is not my mother tongue and not the students’ mother tongue, unclear, and it is difficult for the students to understand exactly what I want to say” (Student Teacher 8). Along similar lines, one student teacher stressed that even outside of the classroom, he did not initiate conversations in English for the fear of making mistakes and, consequently, people might have a negative image about his English proficiency. He stated: “Even outside the school, sometimes I do not start talking in English with everyone, individuals who are perfect in English. They might see you as a teacher of English and your English or there are a lot of mistakes in your language” (Student Teacher 13).

**Theme 2: Fear of Negative Evaluation**

Most preservice teachers interviewed in this research indicated their worries about the evaluative circumstances in which their performance and knowledge in English were to be observed by their students, supervisor, cooperating teachers, and other individuals who are fluent in English outside the classroom context. In particular, they indicated that they feel anxious when they teach students of excellent levels in English, especially when they attempt to answer questions or use classroom English that could be considered unsuitable or ungrammatical by these students. For example, one student teacher remarked: “I have one student, his father I think is a medical doctor, he has an English tutor at home, maybe. He is very good in speaking, this is clear, I know that from his participations. I feel afraid when he asks me something in English because I do not want him to think you are bad in teaching if I do not know the answer” (Student Teacher 7). Another student teacher reflected on an evaluative situation: “One student loves American movies, he watches movies a lot. I think every weekend he watches movies. Sometimes he asks me what are the meanings of some words that he heard in the movies. For example, last week, he asked me what is the meaning of ‘band’. I did not know the meaning. He is young, he will think I am not good in teaching” (Student Teacher 4). In addition, one student teacher expressed that: “The students consider you as a scholar, the students think that you know everything. This is a problem and cause more stress on you. To be logic, I mean I hope they understand that I am not a scholar or I was not born in an English country” (Student Teacher 10). Similarly, some student teachers stated that they experience a high level of anxiety when their supervisor observes them. For example, one student teacher said: “The supervisor, especially when he is taking notes, I feel anxious, giving me notes I feel anxious” (Student Teacher 2). Likewise, one student teacher highlighted that the presence of his cooperating teacher caused him to be anxious in the classroom: “Being watched by my supervising teacher or when he asks students about me, this causes anxiety” (Student Teacher 1). Another student teacher noted that: “And when someone listens to me, this is considered anxiety reason, even my colleagues, or even men who are good speakers of English, they may think you are bad in English” (Student Teacher 12).

**Theme 3: Teaching Unfamiliar Topics**

Teaching unfamiliar topics was mentioned repeatedly by the student teachers as an important anxiety-provoking factor in the classroom. In particular, they highlighted that teaching unfamiliar topics or activities and the unexpected questions
when teaching these topics all promote anxiety. For example, one student teacher asserted: “There are some topics that I do not have enough knowledge about them. This is a problem, I think. I get nervous how to teach them. What is the best way to teach them” (Student Teacher 4). Another student teacher expressed: “I feel anxious if I read the topic and the activities or the page and do not know the answer even before the class start I feel anxious” (Student Teacher 14). Likewise, another said: “Some topics are easy and we use them in everyday such as family, parts of the house, friends, food, sport, but some topics make anxiety because they require good knowledge in English such as scientific topics such as oil industry or treatment of cancer for example or the production of jewelry for example” (Student Teacher 9). In a similar vein, one student teacher indicated that, compared with teaching Arabic subjects, teaching English is complex and requires adequate knowledge on the topics and a good proficiency level, which generates anxiety and frustration: “I did not born in an English country. If I teach Arabic subjects that is easy and I can explain any topic that you give me, but some topics in English need the teacher to have extensive information. Sometimes there are information that you are not used to them. I mean if you want to teach very good, you need extensive information in the topics and English in general and this makes me unhappy sometimes” (Student Teacher 10).

Theme 4: Lack of Preparation

The analysis of the interviews also showed that insufficient classroom preparation was a major source of anxiety among the preservice English teachers. For example, one student teacher highlighted: “If I do not prepare well for the lesson, this is an answer to your question, this is one reason that makes me anxious in the classroom, how to start the lesson, where I start from” (Student Teacher 5). Another student teacher noted that coming to the class unprepared increases anxiety related to unexpected questions: “When I come to the classroom without reading the lessons very well, I feel anxious about unexpected questions or not knowing the answers in the book” (Student Teacher 8). Further, one student teacher emphasized that inadequate preparation of a lesson leads to an unsuccessful delivery of that lesson, which as a result, induces anxiety: “One reason is that when my teaching of the lesson is not good, I feel anxious. It is important that I read the lesson before I explain it, if I explain it without reading it more than once and prepare it, I will not teach it very well” (Student Teacher 13). Additionally, another student teacher explained that preparation increases his confidence in his teaching; conversely, lack of preparation increases his anxiety levels. He stated: “Preparation makes me confident. But if I do not prepare, I cannot be confident in my teaching and not ready to the lesson and the anxiety goes up” (Student Teacher 11). Concurring with this, another student teacher explained that insufficient preparation leads to superficial or ignorance of some parts of the lesson that need deep explanation. He remarked: “Some parts of the lesson need deep explanation. If I am busy and do not have time before the class, I do not prepare for these parts, and I explain them very quickly, not very well. Preparation is very very beneficial. You will not ignore any part of the lesson when you prepare it” (Student Teacher 2).

Theme 5: Large Number of Students in One Classroom

Some student teachers also reported overcrowding as an important cause of anxiety in the classroom. They indicated that a large number of students in one classroom did not allow them to control the classroom properly, making it challenging to manage unruly behaviors and the noise in classroom. Further, it did not encourage them to implement effective teaching strategies, such as peer work and groupwork, and affected the pace and flow of their lessons. For example, one student teacher remarked: “I have more than 35 students in one classroom. Even teachers with long experience will face difficulty in managing the classroom, and the noise students make I cannot deal with it” (Student Teacher 6). A second student teacher suggested: “There are a lot of students in classrooms, and I cannot control them, mention that in the research, this is important, the Ministry of Education should lessen students number in classroom, I think this is important to teachers’ psychology” (Student Teacher 4). Another student teacher reflected on the difficulty of using innovative teaching strategies, such as peer work and groupwork, because of classroom crowding, which resulted in disappointment: “I feel nervous from the noise students make. Sometimes I ask them to do an exercise in groups. I feel upset from the noise and ask students to not work in groups and to look at me. The class is crowded, and I cannot use these useful teaching strategies in a crowded classroom” (Student Teacher 7). The same student teacher also explained that the crowd in the classroom negatively affected the flow and pace of his lesson. He explained: “And I want to say something but they interrupt me, I stop and continue stop and continue. This has relation to the large number of students in the classroom, this is from the reasons of anxiety” (Student Teacher 7).

Discussion

This research explored the sources of foreign language teaching anxiety experienced by preservice English teachers in Saudi Arabia. The findings provide evidence that supports Horwitz’s (1996) theoretical view and previous research results (e.g., Amengual-Pizarro, 2019; Aydin, 2016; Barahmeh, 2016; İpek, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2004; Merç, 2011; Yoon, 2012) that non-native language teachers experience foreign language anxiety. In particular, the results revealed five main sources that cause preservice teachers’ anxiety in the classroom: (i) fear of making mistakes, (ii) fear of negative evaluation, (iii) teaching
unfamiliar topics, (iv) lack of preparation, and (v) a large number of students in one classroom.

**Fear of Making Mistakes**

Most student teachers indicated that they were concerned about having to teach English using English because they fear making mistakes. More specifically, the student teachers indicated that their anxiety about making mistakes did not allow them to use English actively in class time, elaborate on their topics or speak on various topics. As a result, they predominantly use Arabic in the teaching process. This finding is in line with previous research (Aydin, 2016; İpek, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2004; Liu & Wu, 2021; Merç, 2011; Tum, 2012; Yoon, 2012) that highlighted that most non-native teachers appear to feel self-conscious and have negative feelings when they have to teach English using English in classrooms because of the fear of making mistakes, which might result in apprehension and embarrassment. This finding also supports Horwitz’s (1996) contention that when non-native language teachers are uncomfortable and anxious when using the language, they unconsciously prefer teaching strategies that protect them from having to use the language actively in classrooms. Nowadays, because of technological advancements worldwide, English as a foreign language learners and teachers have many more opportunities than before to be exposed to and access English. However, learners of English, especially in Saudi Arabia, where English is not commonly spoken in public, have limited chances of using English communicatively in their daily lives, which might even decrease or minimize their language abilities, especially speaking competency. Thus, it is understandable that the preservice teachers were apprehensive about their teaching effectiveness and concerned about making mistakes in situations where they were required to be role models for students and use English efficiently.

**Fear of Negative Evaluation**

The results of this research also showed that fear of negative evaluation was a main source of foreign language teaching anxiety. In particular, many preservice teachers reported that they were concerned about situations in which their English was to be monitored and evaluated by their excellent students, supervisor, mentors, and other English-qualified individuals outside the school context. This result is in accordance with prior research (Amengual-Pizarro, 2019; Can, 2018a; Horwitz, 1996; Kim & Kim, 2004; Merç, 2011; Samad et al., 2021) that revealed that fear of negative evaluation contributes to non-native English teachers’ anxiety. Kim and Kim (2004) explained that students who are advanced in English can constitute a threat or burden to foreign language teachers, especially when the teachers try to communicate using classroom English that may be considered inappropriate or ungrammatical by fluent students. Teachers might be concerned that they are being evaluated by fluent students. This explanation is supported by Aydin and Ustuk (2020), who reported that non-native teachers in their study experienced lower anxiety levels when they believed that their students were bad in English. Similarly, Amengual-Pizarro (2019) also indicated that fear of going blank when speaking in public or being on the spot are considered anxiety-inducing factors. Likewise, Sammephet and Wanphet (2013) suggested that preservice teachers may experience anxiety about the evaluation from supervisors because it may directly affect their final grades. Merç (2011) contended that fear of being negatively evaluated is not limited to preservice teachers. Other people share this sentiment when being observed and evaluated. In a similar vein, this experience of fearing a negative evaluation by the student teachers could also be explained by the fact that they don’t consider language errors or moments of inadequacy as natural parts of a foreign language process, but as threats to their image or as sources for negative evaluations, even from their students.

**Teaching Unfamiliar Topics**

Teaching unfamiliar topics, materials, and activities included in the curriculum were reported by the preservice teachers to be among the main reasons for their feelings of anxiety in classrooms. This result supports the results of previous studies (Aydin, 2016; Barahmeh, 2016; Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018) that have reported that teaching unfamiliar topics and materials escalate levels of anxiety among non-native English teachers. This result also supports other researchers’ (Amengual-Pizarro, 2019; Machida, 2011) views that limited and inadequate command of the English language, especially on unfamiliar topics and situations, is most likely to produce feelings of insecurity and linguistic apprehension, which might lead to feelings of anxiety among non-native English teachers. Machida (2011) explained that teachers’ main role in classrooms is to explain and impart knowledge to students. Without adequate knowledge about the teaching topics and materials, it is normal that teachers would experience high teaching anxiety.

**Lack of Preparation**

Many preservice teachers in this study indicated that they were anxious when they lacked adequate preparation for their lessons. They reported that going to class unprepared caused them to be confused about where to begin, not to consider expected questions, be unable to deliver a successful lesson, be unconfident in their teaching, and avoid important parts of the lessons that need deep explanations, which as a result, triggers anxiety. This finding coincides with the findings of other research studies (Aydin, 2016; Can, 2018a; Kim & Kim, 2004; Machida, 2016; Merç, 2011; Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018; Yoon, 2012) that reported unpreparedness for classes as an anxiety-inducing factor among non-native English teachers. This finding also supports Çelik’s (2008)
contention that effective preparation can diminish foreign language teaching anxiety. He explained that foreign language teachers need to be effectively prepared before their lessons, considering every detail so as not to have any issues in the pace of their lessons. Effective preparations for their lessons, according to Çelik (2008), can lessen the occurrence of challenging situations in the lessons, which may directly reduce levels of anxiety.

**Large Number of Students in One Classroom**

The findings of this study also indicated that large numbers of students in each classroom was an important cause of anxiety among preservice teachers. Overcrowded classrooms are an important issue in most Saudi public schools and it negatively affects the teaching and learning processes (Alrabai, 2016; Al-Tamimi, 2019; Tawalbeh & Al-Asmari, 2015). Analogously, the preservice teachers interviewed in this study frequently indicated that classroom overcrowding prevented them from controlling their classroom properly, and made it difficult to manage unruly behaviors and classroom noise. Further, it created challenges to employing innovative teaching strategies, such as groupwork and pair work, and negatively affected the pace and flow of their lessons, which consequently intensified their teaching anxiety. This result is consistent with several previous studies that have indicated that overcrowded classrooms are related to foreign language teaching anxiety (Barahmeh, 2016; Can, 2018b; Ekşi & Yakişık, 2016; Klanrit & Sroinam, 2012; Merç, 2011; Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018; Samad et al., 2021). For example, Ekşi and Yakişık (2016) reported that the most cited anxiety-provoking factors among preservice English teachers were related to large classes and classroom management. Kim and Kim (2004) explained that English teachers have to use a large number of activities in classrooms that require students’ active participation. This makes it, as Kim and Kim (2004) explained, challenging for just one teacher to manage all students’ activities in a large classroom. Also, the lack of sufficient teaching experience in managing and controlling oversized classrooms could have negatively influenced the preservice teachers’ levels of anxiety.

**Implications, Limitations, and Conclusions**

**Implications**

According to the results and discussions presented above, the study suggests several implications for consideration. First, non-native teachers need to be mindful that it is not abnormal to experience anxiety, inadequacy, and stress from time to time when using English; this realization is the first step to overcome such issues. More importantly, they need to exert effort to quash their perfectionist tendencies and admit that they can never know all there is to know about English. They also need to realize that even native speakers can never explain and know every grammatical and linguistic item. Once non-native English teachers begin to realize this, it may assist them to accept and acknowledge their limitations (Kim & Kim, 2004; Merç, 2015; Mousavi, 2007; Tum, 2012). Second, Horwitz (1996) recommended that non-native teachers be trained in relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, imagining speaking well when facing challenging situations and progressive exercises of relaxation to combat anxiety feelings in classrooms. She also recommended that non-native teachers be encouraged to advance their English skills through long-term self-training.

Third, teacher educators and teacher education programs should involve topics to increase the awareness of foreign language teaching anxiety. In other words, student teachers need to be trained regarding the sources, consequences, and control of foreign language teaching anxiety. Moreover, student teachers should receive extensive training on planning, preparation, and classroom management. When foreign language teaching anxiety is considered in educational programs, as contended by Merç (2011), it is quite likely that student teachers will experience a supportive and meaningful practicum experience. Fourth, university supervisors and mentors in schools, as suggested by Merç (2015), should build a considerate, non-threatening atmosphere for teaching practice. In particular, they need to avoid unnecessary negative remarks when they provide feedback to student teachers. They also should not compare student teachers with each other because a competitive environment may be destructive for the student teachers in the initial stage of teaching. Instead, they might encourage peer teaching, teamwork, and the sharing of ideas for a better experience (Merç, 2015).

Fifth, reflection might be an important factor that contributes to decreasing student teachers’ level of anxiety. Reflective practices allow student teachers to recognize their weaknesses and strengths, evaluate the techniques and strategies they apply in their lessons and enhance their teaching practices by overcoming future issues and situations (Richards, 1991), which might have a positive impact on anxiety levels (Barahmeh, 2016; Merç, 2011). Finally, enhancement of non-native teachers’ confidence can be an effective way to relieve the debilitating effects of foreign language teaching anxiety (Amengual-Pizarro, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2004). To improve their self-confidence, as Kim and Kim (2004) suggested, foreign language teachers need to be mindful of their strong points as non-native teachers. These strong points include that they were learners of English in the past and thereby understand the difficulties and processes of language learning, they possess knowledge of both the target language and the native language, they are sensitive to and mindful of the differences between the two cultures and they might better understand the feelings and emotions of the students of their native language, which enables them to manage students with few difficulties. When they recognize that these strong points are very important qualifications for

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According to the results and discussions presented above, the study suggests several implications for consideration. First, non-native teachers need to be mindful that it is not abnormal to experience anxiety, inadequacy, and stress from time to time when using English; this realization is the first step to overcome such issues. More importantly, they need to exert effort to quash their perfectionist tendencies and admit that they can never know all there is to know about English. They also need to realize that even native speakers can never explain and know every grammatical and linguistic item. Once non-native English teachers begin to realize this, it may assist them to accept and acknowledge their limitations (Kim & Kim, 2004; Merç, 2015; Mousavi, 2007; Tum, 2012). Second, Horwitz (1996) recommended that non-native teachers be trained in relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, imagining speaking well when facing challenging situations and progressive exercises of relaxation to combat anxiety feelings in classrooms. She also recommended that non-native teachers be encouraged to advance their English skills through long-term self-training.

Third, teacher educators and teacher education programs should involve topics to increase the awareness of foreign language teaching anxiety. In other words, student teachers need to be trained regarding the sources, consequences, and control of foreign language teaching anxiety. Moreover, student teachers should receive extensive training on planning, preparation, and classroom management. When foreign language teaching anxiety is considered in educational programs, as contended by Merç (2011), it is quite likely that student teachers will experience a supportive and meaningful practicum experience. Fourth, university supervisors and mentors in schools, as suggested by Merç (2015), should build a considerate, non-threatening atmosphere for teaching practice. In particular, they need to avoid unnecessary negative remarks when they provide feedback to student teachers. They also should not compare student teachers with each other because a competitive environment may be destructive for the student teachers in the initial stage of teaching. Instead, they might encourage peer teaching, teamwork, and the sharing of ideas for a better experience (Merç, 2015).

Fifth, reflection might be an important factor that contributes to decreasing student teachers’ level of anxiety. Reflective practices allow student teachers to recognize their weaknesses and strengths, evaluate the techniques and strategies they apply in their lessons and enhance their teaching practices by overcoming future issues and situations (Richards, 1991), which might have a positive impact on anxiety levels (Barahmeh, 2016; Merç, 2011). Finally, enhancement of non-native teachers’ confidence can be an effective way to relieve the debilitating effects of foreign language teaching anxiety (Amengual-Pizarro, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2004). To improve their self-confidence, as Kim and Kim (2004) suggested, foreign language teachers need to be mindful of their strong points as non-native teachers. These strong points include that they were learners of English in the past and thereby understand the difficulties and processes of language learning, they possess knowledge of both the target language and the native language, they are sensitive to and mindful of the differences between the two cultures and they might better understand the feelings and emotions of the students of their native language, which enables them to manage students with few difficulties. When they recognize that these strong points are very important qualifications for
foreign language teachers, this acknowledgement could provide them with confidence as non-native teachers.

**Limitations**

The results of this research study are meaningful, in that it is one of the first, if not the first, to investigate foreign language teaching anxiety in the Saudi context. It has several important limitations that need to be considered in future research. One important limitation is that the participants were all preservice teachers and predominantly male. The findings would have been more generalizable if in-service experienced teachers and teachers of both genders had been recruited, which justifies continuous research on this matter. Moreover, the findings of the study were based solely on qualitative interview data. Future studies should use different sources of data (e.g., classroom observations, surveys, journals, and diary analysis) for more comprehensive, ample, and accurate findings. Further, while the sample size was sufficient in terms of the standards of qualitative research, generalization of the findings is limited to the study population, and sufficiently analogous contexts. Therefore, a more comprehensive study, using quantitative and qualitative approaches, with a larger sample size from different settings is recommended to replicate the findings of this study. In addition, since many variables, including confidence, motivation, teacher beliefs, attitudes, empathy, and inhibition and risk-taking, can affect foreign language teaching, the correlation between these variables and teaching anxiety need to be examined in future research. Finally, researchers are also recommended to use longitudinal research designs to observe changes of teaching anxiety among EFL teachers during long periods of teaching experience.

**Conclusion**

This research study sought to explore the sources of foreign language teaching anxiety experienced by preservice English teachers. The study used an in-depth qualitative semi-structured interview format, and the findings indicated five main causes of foreign language teaching anxiety among preservice teachers. These anxiety-inducing factors related to fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, teaching unfamiliar topics, lack of preparation, and a large number of students in one classroom. Overall, these results highlight the importance of foreign language teaching anxiety in relation to EFL classroom teaching. Therefore, all important steps should be taken to ensure the enhancement of more successful and supportive environments that might help preservice teachers prevent or relieve the debilitating effects of foreign language teaching anxiety.

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