

# A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING ANXIETY

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## Abstract

Anxiety is one of the most commonly investigated topics in the field of foreign language education; however, foreign language anxiety is attributed to learners extensively even though most teachers suffer from high levels of anxiety both as language teachers and language users while teaching. In this study, foreign language teaching anxiety is investigated descriptively to provide a clear picture concerning the terrain of this teacher emotion. Using the Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS) and data collected from 156 teachers with diverse nationalities, the study aims to give a cross-culturally consistent understanding of the phenomenon. The results show that foreign language teaching anxiety cannot be limited to language use of teachers; factors such as low interest among learners and being observed by colleagues, mentors, or supervisors are also anxiety-provoking factors. To add, variables such as age, gender, school type, and teaching experience can also lead to significant results. Accordingly, several implications and recommendations are presented to elevate emotional sustainability in the teaching profession.

*Keywords:* English as a foreign language, teacher emotion, anxiety, teaching anxiety

## 1. Introduction

Many studies focused on foreign language anxiety, one of the significant affective factors that may adversely affect learners in the foreign language learning context, while a limited number of studies concentrated on foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA) (Aydın, 2008, 2016). In other words, while research investigated the identification of anxiety, its sources, and impacts on the learning process, FLTA has not drawn enough attention from researchers. Within this scope, research remained too limited to reach implications and conclusions in terms of FLTA (Tüm, 2012). However, FLTA is a major factor that has a debilitating factor on teachers' efficiency of their teaching practice and emotional sustainability regarding their well-being (İpek, 2006; Merç, 2011; Mercer, 2018). Thus, the current study aims to examine anxiety in the foreign language teaching process.

Horwitz (1996), who discusses FLTA in the scope of nonnative teachers and student/pre-service teachers' experiences, notes that they experience teaching anxiety that is sourced from inadequacy in the target language and the feeling of uneasiness. She also underlines that FLTA has adverse effects on teachers' instructional preferences and the use of target language in classes and reduces their self-confidence. At this point, a crucial claim arises: Foreign language teachers suffer from teaching anxiety because they are still language learners. However, Aydın (2016) points out that there are contextual differences between foreign language learning and teaching. More specifically, anxiety in the learning context may not be the same as FLTA. Thus, when the lack of research on the issue is considered,

research is necessary for a better understating of this contextual difference. Moreover, as Aydın (2016) emphasizes, studies should focus on the sources of FLTA, factors affecting the FLTA levels among foreign language teachers, and the relationship between the levels of FLTA and certain internal, external, and demographic variables. Below, before presenting a brief synthesis of research, a theoretical framework for FLTA is presented.

### 1.1. Theoretical framework

Within the educational/applied linguistics research, being one of the most widely studied emotions, anxiety has long interested scholars, language teachers, as well as learners (Horwitz, 2010; Koteková, 2013). Beginning from Scovel's assertions (1978), scholars investigating anxiety within foreign and second language (L2) contexts, regarded *anxiety* as a complex individual difference that may have both facilitating and debilitating impacts on second and foreign language (L2) learners (Horwitz, 2010; Koteková, 2013). In addition to this binary distinction, several anxiety types have been underlined to emphasize its multifaceted nature; these types were trait, state, and situation-specific anxieties. *Trait anxiety* refers to the general dispositional type of anxiety as a behavioral pattern (Scovel, 1978) whereas *state anxiety* is temporary emotion experienced at a particular moment related to a definite situation (Spielberger, 1983). *Situation-specific anxiety*, though, is associated with specific situations and events. Anxiety manifested in the L2 education context is mostly categorized as situation-specific anxiety and this type of anxiety is typically referred as foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, 2010). That being said, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) defined foreign language anxiety as the feeling of tension and apprehension among learners who are not proficient enough to perform in L2 in a specific situation, and they are associated with L2 contexts such as speaking, listening, and learning.

*Foreign language anxiety* has been classified into three constructs, which are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). According to Aydın (2016), *communication apprehension* occurs when learners have difficulty in conveying their mature thoughts and ideas due to their insufficient communicative skills. Second, *test anxiety* refers to an individual's anxiety related to exam failure, and last, *fear of negative evaluation* can be defined as the apprehension that is based on one's "incapacity of making a proper social impression" (p. 630). Here, it is important to highlight Horwitz's assertion (2010) that these constructs are simply related to foreign language anxiety rather than constituting it.

That being said, Aydın (2016) also underlines that these constructs are associated with foreign language anxiety and not with foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA). Horwitz (1996) pointed out the performative aspect of language teaching that requires L2 teachers to speak in the target language in the classroom contexts, and this may result in foreign language anxiety particularly for non-native teachers teaching a particular foreign language. Similarly, Mercer (2018) sees teaching anxiety among language teachers as a teacher emotion that is potentially a result of low language skill self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety, especially for non-native teachers. However, Aydın (2016) proposes a wider understanding of FLTA by stating that it is not limited to situation-specific anxiety of teachers as the generic users of foreign languages and defines FLTA as "an emotional and affective state experienced by a language teacher because of personal, perceptual, motivational, and technical concerns of language teaching before, during, and after the teaching practice" (p. 639). According to his understanding, FLTA includes foreign language anxiety among non-native language teachers but goes beyond by underlining other aspects of it.

## 1.2. Literature review

The current study specifically focuses on the anxiety experienced by foreign language teachers; therefore, the extensive literature of foreign language classroom anxiety of learners is not presented in this review. Compared to foreign language anxiety among learners, little research has been conducted on FLTA. Albeit foreign language teaching's complexity compared to other subjects (i.e. FL teachers are also language users; language is both the aim and means), FL teachers' anxiety is either extensively associated with the fact that especially the non-native teachers are foreign language speakers, or with that, they may experience anxiety due to the generic situations related to the teaching profession. Nevertheless, little focus has been invested to acknowledge both sides of the coin.

In tandem with the multidimensional view of FLTA, prior research includes a limited number of studies reporting different dimensions. Some directly investigated FLTA, whereas some focused on negative emotions and/or anxiety provokers language teachers experience. As for pre-service EFL teachers' anxiety, Bekleyen (2009) reported the relationship between foreign language anxiety and listening comprehension among teacher candidates. In her mixed-methods study, she suggested that teacher candidates suffer from high levels of foreign language anxiety in regards to listening comprehension, and this debilitating teacher emotion can be traced back to their experience as EFL learners. Similarly investigating anxiety experienced by pre-service language teachers, Merç (2010b) developed a scale, *the Foreign Language Student Teacher Anxiety Scale*. Factors underlying the teaching anxiety of pre-service EFL teachers were relationship with mentors, pre-service teachers' language proficiency, their feelings about academic incompetence, fears of peer-criticism and others' opinions, and the effect of students in the practicum environment. Merç (2011) also reported data collected from 150 pre-service EFL teachers via their practicum diaries and interviews with 30 participants to investigate sources underlying foreign language student-teacher anxiety. His content analysis demonstrated that pre-service EFL teachers felt anxious about student and class profiles, classroom management issues, teaching procedures, being observed by authorities, and mentor-related issues. Similarly, Yoon's study (2012) also provided evidence about foreign language anxiety sources among non-native pre-service EFL teachers in the South Korean context. The survey data showed that several factors such as using the target language, low self-esteem, and perceived unpreparedness caused anxiety among participants. In a similar context, Tüm (2015) found that pre-service EFL teachers with high levels of anxiety may avoid using the target language in classrooms and have problems during language-intensive teaching practices. According to the author, this was a particularly significant result because high-anxious pre-service EFL teachers avoiding the use of the target language may also avoid free and spontaneous use of the target language in their teaching practice. As a result, a high level of foreign language anxiety of an EFL teacher may have a negatively-multiplying effect on EFL instruction, which constitutes a serious hindrance to the effectiveness of foreign language education.

Specifically about FLTA experienced by language teachers, Kim and Kim (2004) noted that low level of language proficiency results in FLTA, as well as other factors such as mentor observation and classroom management problems. To add, Ipek (2006, 2016) depicted fear of failure and making language proficiency-related mistakes as another anxiety provoker whereas Kang (2013) portrayed FLTA as a result of teacher proficiency. Likewise, it was found in Kang's study (2013) that teachers with low target language proficiency prefer using their native language for classroom management and discipline issues. Moreover, teachers with low target language proficiency refrained from using the communicative approach in the classrooms. Kang's study (2013) supported Horwitz's stance on foreign

language teaching anxiety; however, the study was prominent, in that it provided insight on how foreign language anxiety may influence teaching practice.

In the Iranian context, Khani and Mirzaee (2015) conducted a quantitative study with 216 EFL teachers. In their analysis, the authors proposed that contextual variables may result in stressors and negative emotions, which may further lead to teacher burnout. Their study was important to find out correlational data among some contextual variables for EFL teachers -such as lack of social support, relations to colleagues and administrators, access to teaching equipment, and other stressors such as anger, frustration, and depression within the context of EFL teaching. However, there was no specific evidence regarding FLTA in their findings.

Last, Wieczorek (2016) regarded anxiety as one of the factors causing teacher stress. In her qualitative study in the Polish context, she collected data from 25 teachers working at various institutions. The findings yielded that factors underlying teacher stress can be grouped into two, which are general teacher stressors and foreign language teaching-specific stressors. According to her study, factors such as heterogeneity of the target learner group, lack of equipment, and teaching aids, teaching particular skills like listening and speaking, teaching grammar, and implementing new materials in the classroom were associated exclusively with foreign language teaching.

Based on the findings of the prior research, Aydin (2016) conducted a qualitative study to specifically focus on FLTA and the ways it is manifested in foreign language education. Drawing on the data collected by questionnaires, interviews, and reflective papers from 60 pre-service EFL teachers, he shed light on temporal dimensions of FLTA experienced by the participants. Furthermore, his study also supported some of the earlier findings such as technical concerns in the classrooms, low-level language proficiency. On the other hand, he provided evidence for further sources of FLTA such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of experience in teaching, teaching demotivation, and amotivation.

The review presented above showed that there are several studies directly addressed the issue of FLTA. To add, some studies focused on negative teacher emotions and stressors for teachers that can arguably be generalized to FLTA. However, both the number and the content of the studies reviewed made it clear that there is a lack of holistic view of FLTA. Despite huge interest in anxiety research in applied linguistics (Horwitz, 2010) and research in teacher emotions that recently gained impetus (Mercer, 2018), researchers have either discussed the issue of FLTA partially in a specific country context or avoided having an exclusive focus on it.

### 1.3. Research questions

In conclusion, several reasons guide this study. First, as previously mentioned, a fairly limited number of studies focused on FLTA, while studies mostly dealt with foreign language anxiety in the learning context. Second, research seems necessary to understand better how FLTA differs from anxiety in the learning context. Third, as can be seen from the research synthesis, studies mainly concentrated on negative teacher emotions and stressors for teachers, while FLTA, an independent predictor among affective factors, has attracted little attention among researchers. With these concerns in mind, this study aims to investigate the levels of foreign language teaching anxiety among EFL teachers and the relationships between FLTA and certain variables, gender, age, school levels and types, teaching experience in years and whether they are native or non-native speakers of English, the degree of graduation. In other words, the study seeks to answer two research questions:

- What are the levels of FLTA among EFL teachers?

- Do the levels of FLTA differ regarding the variables of gender, age, school levels and types, teaching experience in years, whether they are native or non-native speakers of English, the degree of graduation, and their nationalities?

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Research design

A descriptive research design was preferred for the study, as it seemed necessary to gain further insight into FLTA among EFL teachers. In a narrower scope, as the study focuses on the aspects of FLTA and relationships between FLTA and certain variables, a descriptive research design seemed appropriate to fulfill these objectives. Within this scope, descriptive research deals with the examination that uses already existing data with a preconceived research question, as Seliger and Shohamy (1989) note. Therefore, a scale, FLTAS was used among data collecting techniques as it best represents the already existing perspectives of the participants without intervention and enables them to collect first-hand data in a natural context.

### 2.2. Participants

The sample group of the study consisted of 156 EFL teachers working in various countries. The group consisted of 107 female (68.6%) and 49 male (31.4%) teachers. The mean of the participants' age was 35.5 within the range of 22 and 58. In terms of their nationalities, the group consisted of 15 Turkish (9.6%), 14 Brazilian (9.0%), 13 Greek (8.3%), 12 Bulgarian (7.7%), 11 Italian (7.1%), 11 Algerian (7.1%), 11 Lithuanian (7.1%), 11 Spanish (7.1%), 11 Moroccan (7.1%), 10 Ukrainian (6.4%), 10 Malaysian (6.4%), nine Russian (5.8%), nine Iranian (5.8%) and nine Indonesian (5.8%) teachers. The rationale behind this distribution was the context of EFL instruction; in that, English is taught in the foreign language context in the mentioned countries. The participants worked as EFL teachers in Turkey (9.6%), Russia (5.8%), Italy (7.1%), Bulgaria (7.7%), Algeria (5.8%), Lithuania (7.1%), Malaysia (7.1%), Spain (6.4%), Greece (7.1%), Brazil (8.3%); Ukraine (9.0%), Indonesia (6.4%), Morocco (5.8%) and Colombia (7.1%).

Of the participants, 34 teachers (21.8%) worked at primary schools (ISCED 1), whereas 40 participants (25.6%) worked at secondary schools (ISCED 2). Besides, 31 teachers (18.9%) worked at high schools (ISCED 3), whereas 51 participants (32.7%) worked at higher education institutes (ISCED 5, 6, and 7). Of the participants, 103 teachers worked at public schools (66.0%) and 53 (34.0%) worked at private institutions. The mean score for their teaching experience in years was 10.8 within the range of 1 and 40 years. Among the teachers, 68 had a BA degree, whereas (43.6%), 68 had an MA degree (43.6%). To add, 20 teachers had a Ph.D. degree (12.8%). Finally, 140 teachers were non-native speakers of English (89.7%), while 16 participants were native speakers (10.3%). As a note, the rationale behind the participation of native speakers in the study was that they taught English in the foreign language context in various countries where English was taught as a foreign language.

### 2.3. Tools

The data collection tools consisted of a background questionnaire and *the Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale* (FLTAS). The background questionnaire probed participants' genders, ages, nationalities, countries where they worked, the types of schools they worked at, teaching experiences in years, graduation degrees, and native/nonnativeness. The FLTAS, designed by Aydın and Uştuk (2020), consisted of 27 items on a Likert scale

ranging from one to five (never=1, rarely=2, sometimes=3, often=4, always=5), and preliminary results were reported. The scale was developed over a long-term research process that started with qualitative research concerning the underlying factors of FLTA, which reported in Aydın (2016). Later, FLTAS was created and piloted; relatedly, it obtained a high level of reliability coefficient (.95 in Cronbach's Alpha) and internal consistency in a five-factor solution in the preliminary study (Aydın & Uştuk, 2020). The five-factor solution was found accounting for 69.09% of the variance. The factors were self-perception of language proficiency, teaching inexperience, lack of students' interest, fear of negative evaluation, and difficulties in time management. In other words, the items were given in the order of the above-mentioned factors. As a final note, it should be also added that the items in the scale reflected the specific *situations* about the foreign language teaching context.

## 2.4. Procedure

After the participants were informed about the purpose, significance, and methodology of the study, the rationale behind the subject choice was clarified. They were also informed that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw anytime without any penalty. They were also informed that researchers ensured the anonymity and the confidentiality of their answers and their personal information. After an online form version of the questionnaire and the FLTAS was designed, the form was published online, and the participants were invited to complete the form involving the questionnaire and scale.

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the collected data. First, the data on participants' gender, country, types of schools, graduation degrees, and whether they were native or non-native speakers of English were presented in frequencies and percentages. Then, mean scores for age and teaching experience in years were calculated. Then, the reliability coefficient was computed. For the items in the scale, the reliability coefficient was found to be .95 in Cronbach's Alpha. These values were consistent with the ones that were noted as .95 in Cronbach's Alpha and .95 in Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items by Aydın and Uştuk (2020). Values showed that the reliability level of the scale was acceptable. Next, factor analysis was performed to test the validity of the scale. The percentage of variance was 65.18%, whereas the rotated factors explained 69.09% of the variance in the preliminary study (Aydın and Uştuk, 2020). Similar to the ones in the preliminary study, the results indicated a five-factor solution based on self-perceptions of foreign language proficiency, teaching inexperience, lack of students' interest in classes, fear of negative evaluation by observers and students, and difficulties in time management. These values demonstrated that the scale was valid for estimating levels of FLTA among EFL teachers. Finally, *t*-test and ANOVA were performed to examine the relationships among the items in the scale and the subject variables.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. The levels of foreign language teaching anxiety among EFL teachers

According to the values in Table 1, EFL teachers mainly experience a low level of teaching anxiety that may stem from their self-perceptions of foreign language proficiency. To begin with, they stated that they sometimes had difficulties in using the target language in their classes when they felt anxious ( $\bar{x}$ =2.53). On the other hand, they rarely felt embarrassed when they perceived that students performed better at speaking than them ( $\bar{x}$ =1.74) and while using the target language ( $\bar{x}$ =1.51). Similarly, EFL teachers rarely felt nervous when they used English in their classes ( $\bar{x}$ =1.51) and when they encountered unfamiliar topics in textbooks ( $\bar{x}$ =2.33). Teachers also stated that they rarely felt anxious due to making mistakes

while speaking ( $\bar{x}=2.35$ ) and teaching the cultural content of the target language ( $\bar{x}=2.21$ ). Speaking specifically, they rarely felt tense regarding pronunciation ( $\bar{x}=2.24$ ) and making grammar mistakes ( $\bar{x}=2.07$ ). Furthermore, they rarely felt pressure due to students' unexpected questions ( $\bar{x}=2.13$ ). To conclude, EFL teachers rarely experienced anxiety during their teaching activities ( $\bar{x}=1.74$ ).

**Table 1.** The levels of teaching anxiety regarding self-perceptions of foreign language proficiency (N=156)

| Items                                                                               | Frequencies  |             |             |             |            | Mean | Std. Error | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------|------------|--------------------|
|                                                                                     | Never        | Rarely      | Sometimes   | Often       | Always     |      |            |                    |
| When I feel anxious in classes, I have difficulty in using English.                 | 40<br>25.6%  | 43<br>27.6% | 36<br>23.1% | 25<br>16.0% | 12<br>7.7% | 2.53 | .10        | 1.25               |
| I feel embarrassed when some students speak English better than me.                 | 74<br>47.4%  | 37<br>23.7% | 19<br>12.2% | 12<br>7.7%  | 14<br>9.0% | 2.07 | .10        | 1.31               |
| I feel embarrassed because I am not good at English.                                | 94<br>60.3%  | 28<br>17.9% | 19<br>12.2% | 11<br>7.1%  | 4<br>2.6%  | 1.74 | .09        | 1.08               |
| It makes me nervous to use English in classes.                                      | 109<br>69.9% | 22<br>14.1% | 19<br>12.2% | 4<br>2.6%   | 2<br>1.3%  | 1.51 | .07        | 0.90               |
| Unfamiliar topics in the textbook confuse me.                                       | 42<br>26.9%  | 50<br>32.1% | 42<br>26.9% | 14<br>9.0%  | 8<br>5.1%  | 2.33 | .00        | 1.12               |
| I feel embarrassed when I think that I am not good at English.                      | 64<br>41.0%  | 39<br>25.0% | 26<br>16.7% | 13<br>8.3%  | 14<br>9.0% | 2.19 | .10        | 1.30               |
| Pronunciation mistakes while I am speaking make me nervous.                         | 49<br>31.4%  | 55<br>35.3% | 27<br>17.3% | 15<br>9.6%  | 10<br>6.4% | 2.24 | .09        | 1.18               |
| Making mistakes while I am speaking makes me feel embarrassed.                      | 42<br>26.9%  | 55<br>35.3% | 30<br>19.2% | 21<br>13.5% | 8<br>5.1%  | 2.35 | .09        | 1.16               |
| I am bothered when I have difficulties in teaching the cultural content of English. | 47<br>30.1%  | 58<br>37.2% | 28<br>17.9% | 18<br>11.5% | 5<br>3.2%  | 2.21 | .09        | 1.09               |
| Unexpected questions from students put pressure on me.                              | 57<br>36.5%  | 54<br>34.6% | 21<br>13.5% | 16<br>10.3% | 8<br>5.1%  | 2.13 | .09        | 1.17               |
| I forget almost everything while I am teaching.                                     | 90<br>57.7%  | 41<br>26.3% | 11<br>7.1%  | 4<br>2.6%   | 19<br>6.4% | 1.74 | .09        | 1.13               |
| I feel tense when I have difficulties in teaching grammar.                          | 62<br>39.7%  | 46<br>29.5% | 29<br>18.6% | 13<br>8.3%  | 6<br>3.8%  | 2.07 | .09        | 1.13               |

Values in Table 2 indicate that teachers experience a low level of teaching anxiety in terms of teaching inexperience. For instance, they stated that they rarely felt tense in the classroom ( $\bar{x}=1.55$ ) and were worried before entering the classroom ( $\bar{x}=1.75$ ) and during teaching activities ( $\bar{x}=1.62$ ). Furthermore, they believed that the lack of teaching experience rarely constituted a source of anxiety ( $\bar{x}=1.76$ ). Finally, fear of making mistakes while teaching English in the classroom was rarely a source of teaching anxiety ( $\bar{x}=2.21$ ).

**Table 2.** The levels of teaching anxiety regarding teaching inexperience (N=156)

| Items                                                         | Frequencies  |              |             |              |            | Mean | Std. Error | Standard Deviation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|------------|------|------------|--------------------|
|                                                               | Never        | Rarely       | Sometimes   | Often        | Always     |      |            |                    |
| I feel tense when I am in the classroom.                      | 101<br>64.7% | 32<br>20.5%  | 17<br>10.9% | 4<br>2.6%    | 2<br>1.3%  | 1.55 | .07        | 0.88               |
| I feel worried before entering the classroom.                 | 90<br>57.7%  | 32<br>20.5%  | 22<br>14.1% | 7<br>4.5%    | 5<br>3.2%  | 1.75 | .09        | 1.06               |
| I feel anxious when I teach in the classroom.                 | 92<br>59.0%  | 42<br>26.9%  | 14<br>9.0%  | 6<br>3.8%    | 2<br>1.3%  | 1.62 | .07        | 0.90               |
| I think the lack of teaching experience makes me nervous.     | 92<br>59.0%  | 31<br>19.19% | 18<br>11.5% | 9<br>5.8%    | 6<br>3.8%  | 1.76 | .09        | 1.11               |
| I fear to make mistakes while I am teaching in the classroom. | 57<br>36.5%  | 48<br>30.8%  | 26<br>16.7% | 12<br>7.7.7% | 13<br>8.3% | 2.21 | .10        | 1.25               |

As shown, in Table 3, EFL teachers suffer from teaching anxiety at a moderate level due to the lack of interest in their classes among students. For instance, they stated that they sometimes felt stressed when students did not prefer participating in the activities in the classes ( $\bar{x}=3.00$ ). Besides, they sometimes felt upset when they thought that students were not good at learning the target language ( $\bar{x}=2.76$ ), whereas they sometimes felt discouraged when students lost their interest in the activities ( $\bar{x}=3.29$ ). Last, EFL teachers sometimes felt worried when students were not interested in the activities ( $\bar{x}=2.38$ ).

**Table 3.** The levels of teaching anxiety regarding students' interest in classes (N=156)

| Items                                                               | Frequencies |             |             |             |             | Mean | Std. Error | Standard Deviation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------|------------|--------------------|
|                                                                     | Never       | Rarely      | Sometimes   | Often       | Always      |      |            |                    |
| I feel stressed when students do not participate in the activities. | 19<br>12.2% | 30<br>19.2% | 55<br>35.3% | 36<br>23.1% | 16<br>10.3% | 3.00 | .09        | 1.15               |
| I feel upset because my students are bad at learning language.      | 35<br>22.4% | 33<br>21.2% | 40<br>25.6% | 30<br>19.2% | 18<br>11.5% | 2.76 | .10        | 1.31               |
| I feel discouraged when students lose interest in the activities.   | 13<br>8.3%  | 27<br>17.3% | 48<br>30.8% | 38<br>24.4% | 30<br>19.2% | 3.29 | .10        | 1.20               |
| I feel tense when students are not interested in activities.        | 21<br>13.5% | 33<br>21.1% | 43<br>27.6% | 37<br>23.7% | 22<br>14.1% | 3.04 | .10        | 1.25               |

Values in Table 4 indicated that fear of negative evaluation is a source of foreign language teaching among EFL teachers at a moderate level. For example, they stated that they sometimes felt anxious due to their mentors' observations ( $\bar{x}=2.52$ ). Then, they felt panicked during mentor-teachers' observations. On the other hand, they sometimes suffered from mentors' observations, students' negative comments about teachers, which caused a low-level of teaching anxiety ( $\bar{x}= 2.38$ ).

**Table 4.** The levels of teaching anxiety in relation to fear of negative evaluation (N=156)

| Items                                                 | Frequencies     |                 |                 |                 |                 | Mean | Std. Error | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|------------|--------------------|
|                                                       | Never           | Rarely          | Sometimes       | Often           | Always          |      |            |                    |
| My mentors' observations make me nervous.             | 48<br>30.8<br>% | 40<br>25.6<br>% | 27<br>17.3<br>% | 21<br>13.5<br>% | 20<br>12.8<br>% | 2.52 | .11        | 1.38               |
| I feel panicked when my mentor-teacher observes me.   | 53<br>34.0<br>% | 37<br>23.7<br>% | 27<br>17.3<br>% | 24<br>15.4<br>% | 15<br>9.6%      | 2.53 | .11        | 1.35               |
| Students' negative comments about me make me nervous. | 48<br>30.8<br>% | 43<br>27.6<br>% | 33<br>21.1<br>% | 21<br>13.5<br>% | 11<br>7.1%      | 2.38 | .10        | 1.25               |

Values in Table 5 demonstrate that problems concerning time management constituted a low-level anxiety-provoking factor, while unpreparedness for classes was a source of teaching anxiety at a moderate level. As an example, teachers stated that they rarely felt panicked when they could not finish their classes on time. Furthermore, they were rarely nervous when they finished the activities before classes ended. On the other hand, they sometimes felt anxious when they thought that they were not prepared for their classes.

**Table 5.** The levels of teaching anxiety regarding time management (N=156)

| Items                                                            | Frequencies     |                 |                 |                 |                 | Mean | Std. Error | Standard Deviation |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------|------------|--------------------|
|                                                                  | Never           | Rarely          | Sometimes       | Often           | Always          |      |            |                    |
| I feel panicked when I cannot finish the class on time.          | 68<br>43.6<br>% | 39<br>25.0<br>% | 30<br>19.2<br>% | 13<br>8.3%      | 6<br>3.8%       | 2.04 | .09        | 1.15               |
| I am nervous when I finish the activities before the class ends. | 73<br>46.8<br>% | 42<br>26.9<br>% | 18<br>11.5<br>% | 15<br>9.6%      | 8<br>5.1%       | 1.99 | .10        | 1.20               |
| I feel tense when I am not prepared for the class.               | 29<br>18.6<br>% | 34<br>21.8<br>% | 35<br>22.4<br>% | 30<br>19.2<br>% | 28<br>17.9<br>% | 2.96 | .11        | 1.37               |

### 3.2. The relationship between FLTA and certain variables

Results indicate that gender, age, school levels and types, teaching experience in years, and whether they are native or non-native speakers of English significantly vary in relation to FLTA. On the other hand, values show that the degree of graduation does not relate to the

FLTA levels. The details on the relationship between (the levels of) FLTA and the mentioned variables are presented.

Values given Table 6 show that there is a statistically significant difference between gender and the levels of FLTA regarding six items in the scale. Male teachers feel more anxious than female teachers do in terms of the self-perceptions of language proficiency, fear of negative evaluation, inexperience, and time management. To begin with, male teachers seemed more anxious in classes when they had difficulties in using the target language than when females did ( $p=.03$ ). Similarly, males felt more bothered when they had difficulties in teaching the cultural content of the target language than female teachers ( $p=.00$ ). What is more, male teachers seemed to have more pressure when students asked unexpected questions compared to female teachers ( $p=.00$ ). Male teachers also suffered more from the lack of teaching experience as a source of anxiety than females ( $p=0.01$ ). They are also more negatively affected by students' negative comments ( $p=0.03$ ) and felt more panicked when they could not finish class on time than female teachers ( $p=.02$ ).

**Table 6.** Gender and foreign language teaching anxiety (t-test)

| Items                                                                               | Gender | Number | Mean | Mean Difference | F     | Sig. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|------|-----------------|-------|------|
| When I feel anxious in classes, I have difficulty in using English.                 | Female | 107    | 2.37 | -.49            | 4.82  | .03  |
|                                                                                     | Male   | 49     | 2.86 |                 |       |      |
| I am bothered when I have difficulties in teaching the cultural content of English. | Female | 107    | 2.06 | -.47            | 15.37 | .00  |
|                                                                                     | Male   | 49     | 2.53 |                 |       |      |
| Unexpected questions from students put pressure on me.                              | Female | 107    | 2.00 | -.41            | 9.91  | .00  |
|                                                                                     | Male   | 49     | 2.41 |                 |       |      |
| I think the lack of teaching experience makes me nervous.                           | Female | 107    | 1.65 | -.33            | 6.72  | .01  |
|                                                                                     | Male   | 49     | 1.98 |                 |       |      |
| Students' negative comments about me make me nervous.                               | Female | 107    | 2.29 | -.30            | 4.75  | .03  |
|                                                                                     | Male   | 49     | 2.59 |                 |       |      |
| I feel panicked when I cannot finish the class on time.                             | Female | 107    | 1.94 | -.30            | 5.44  | .02  |
|                                                                                     | Male   | 49     | 2.24 |                 |       |      |

According to the values given in Table 7, age is a considerable predictor of FLTA concerning three items of FLTAS. That is, younger teachers feel more worried than the older in terms of self-perceptions of target language proficiency and fear of making mistakes. For instance, younger teachers seemed more worried when they encountered unfamiliar topics in the textbooks than older ones did ( $p=.00$ ). In addition, younger teachers stated that they felt more nervous when they had pronunciation mistakes during speaking ( $p=.04$ ). Last, fear of making mistakes was a stronger source of anxiety among younger EFL teachers ( $p=.04$ ).

**Table 7.** Age and foreign language teaching anxiety (ANOVA)

| Items                                                       | Age     | Number | Mean | F    | Sig. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|------|------|------|
| Unfamiliar topics in the textbook confuse me.               | 20 - 30 | 65     | 2.69 | 4.66 | .00  |
|                                                             | 31 - 40 | 44     | 2.20 |      |      |
|                                                             | 41 - 50 | 34     | 2.03 |      |      |
|                                                             | 51 - 60 | 13     | 1.78 |      |      |
| Pronunciation mistakes while I am speaking make me nervous. | 20 - 30 | 65     | 2.42 | 2.84 | .04  |
|                                                             | 31 - 40 | 44     | 2.25 |      |      |
|                                                             | 41 - 50 | 34     | 2.23 |      |      |

|                                                               |         |    |      |      |     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----|------|------|-----|
|                                                               | 51 - 60 | 13 | 1.38 |      |     |
|                                                               | 20 - 30 | 65 | 2.52 |      |     |
| I fear to make mistakes while I am teaching in the classroom. | 31 - 40 | 44 | 2.09 | 2.87 | .04 |
|                                                               | 41 - 50 | 34 | 1.94 |      |     |
|                                                               | 51 - 60 | 13 | 1.69 |      |     |

According to Table 8, results indicate that teachers working at high schools seem more anxious regarding fear of making mistakes. For example, teachers working in high schools sometimes felt nervous because of pronunciation mistakes while speaking ( $p=.03$ ). In addition, they had fear of making mistakes at a higher level than the ones during speaking activities in their classes ( $p=.05$ ).

**Table 8.** School levels and foreign language teaching anxiety (ANOVA)

| Items                                                          | School type      | Number | Mean | F    | Sig. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------|------|------|------|
| Pronunciation mistakes while I am speaking make me nervous.    | Primary school   | 34     | 2.32 | 3.02 | .03  |
|                                                                | Secondary school | 40     | 1.95 |      |      |
|                                                                | High school      | 31     | 2.74 |      |      |
|                                                                | University       | 51     | 2.12 |      |      |
| Making mistakes while I am speaking makes me feel embarrassed. | Primary school   | 34     | 2.44 | 2.73 | .05  |
|                                                                | Secondary school | 40     | 2.08 |      |      |
|                                                                | High school      | 31     | 2.81 |      |      |
|                                                                | University       | 51     | 2.22 |      |      |

According to the values in Table 9, teachers working at public schools feel more anxious than the ones working at private schools regarding the use of target language in classes, time management, and perceived unpreparedness for classes. The ones teaching at public schools seemed tense when they were in classes ( $p=.01$ ), and when they used English while teaching ( $p=.01$ ). They were also more anxious when they experienced difficulties in time management ( $p=.00$ ) and did not feel sufficiently prepared for their classes ( $p=.05$ ).

**Table 9.** School types and foreign language teaching anxiety (t-test)

| Items                                                   | School Type | Number | Mean | Mean Difference | F    | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------|------|-----------------|------|------|
| It makes me nervous to use English in classes.          | Public      | 103    | 1.59 | .23             | 8.04 | .01  |
|                                                         | Private     | 53     | 1.36 |                 |      |      |
| I feel tense when I am in the classroom.                | Public      | 103    | 2.16 | .25             | 6.92 | .01  |
|                                                         | Private     | 53     | 1.91 |                 |      |      |
| I feel panicked when I cannot finish the class on time. | Public      | 103    | 2.20 | .48             | 8.81 | .00  |
|                                                         | Private     | 53     | 1.72 |                 |      |      |
| I feel tense when I am not prepared for the class.      | Public      | 103    | 3.08 | .34             | 3.90 | .05  |
|                                                         | Private     | 53     | 2.74 |                 |      |      |

Values given in Table 10 demonstrate that EFL teachers who have less teaching experience feel more anxious when compared to the more experienced/senior/veteran teachers concerning their perceived target language proficiency, fear of negative evaluation, lack of teaching experience, and fear of making mistakes. More specifically, the teachers who had less experience felt more embarrassed because they thought that they were not good at

English when compared to the more experienced ones ( $p=.01$ ). Less experienced teachers also stated that unfamiliar topics in the textbooks were a source of confusion ( $p=.00$ ). To add, they felt more pressure due to students' unexpected questions compared to the more experienced ( $p=.00$ ). Last, the lack of teaching experience ( $p=.00$ ) and fear of making mistakes ( $p=.00$ ) were other sources of anxiety for the teachers who had less experience in teaching.

**Table 10.** Teaching experience and foreign language teaching anxiety (ANOVA)

| Items                                                         | Experience | Number | Mean | F    | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|------|------|------|
| I feel embarrassed because I am not good at English.          | 0 -10      | 94     | 2.19 | 4.59 | .01  |
|                                                               | 11 - 20    | 34     | 1.97 |      |      |
|                                                               | 21 - 30    | 28     | 1.79 |      |      |
| Unfamiliar topics in the textbook confuse me.                 | 0 -10      | 94     | 2.57 | 6.10 | .00  |
|                                                               | 11 - 20    | 34     | 2.06 |      |      |
|                                                               | 21 - 30    | 28     | 1.86 |      |      |
| Unexpected questions from students put pressure on me.        | 0 -10      | 94     | 2.31 | 3.26 | .04  |
|                                                               | 11 - 20    | 34     | 1.82 |      |      |
|                                                               | 21 - 30    | 28     | 1.86 |      |      |
| I think the lack of teaching experience makes me nervous.     | 0 -10      | 94     | 2.02 | 7.32 | .00  |
|                                                               | 11 - 20    | 34     | 1.32 |      |      |
|                                                               | 21 - 30    | 28     | 1.39 |      |      |
| I fear to make mistakes while I am teaching in the classroom. | 0 -10      | 94     | 2.47 | 5.56 | .01  |
|                                                               | 11 - 20    | 34     | 1.79 |      |      |
|                                                               | 21 - 30    | 28     | 1.82 |      |      |

Values in Table 11 show that the relationship between being a native or non-native teacher and FLTA presented significantly different values in two items. In other words, non-native speakers of English felt more worried than native speakers. For example, non-native speakers of English felt more nervous when they used English in classes than native speakers did ( $p=.00$ ). Non-native speakers also felt more upset when their students were bad at learning English than native speakers ( $p=.04$ ).

**Table 11.** Speaker type and foreign language teaching anxiety (t-test)

| Items                                                          | Gender                        | Number | Mean | Mean Difference | F     | Sig. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|------|-----------------|-------|------|
| It makes me nervous to use English in classes.                 | Non-native speaker of English | 140    | 1.56 | .50             | 22.27 | .00  |
|                                                                | Native speaker of English     | 16     | 1.06 |                 |       |      |
| I feel upset because my students are bad at learning language. | Non-native speaker of English | 140    | 2.89 | 1.20            | 4.12  | .04  |
|                                                                | Native speaker of English     | 16     | 1.69 |                 |       |      |

Values in Table 12 indicate that EFL teachers' nationality significantly differs in terms of only one item on the FLTAS. The ones who were Indonesian, Italian, Russian, Moroccan, Algerian, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, and Lithuanian felt anxious at a high level when they thought that their students were bad at learning English. On the other hand, the

ones who are Spanish, Iranian, Brazilian, and Malaysian experienced a low level of teaching anxiety if they believed that their students were bad at learning ( $p=.02$ ).

**Table 12.** Nationalities and foreign language teaching anxiety (ANOVA)

| Items                                                          | Nationalities | Number | Mean        | F    | Sig. |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------------|------|------|
| I feel upset because my students are bad at learning language. | Indonesian    | 9      | <b>3.89</b> | 2.11 | 0.02 |
|                                                                | Italian       | 11     | <b>3.73</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Russian       | 9      | <b>3.33</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Moroccan      | 11     | <b>3.00</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Algerian      | 11     | <b>2.91</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Turkish       | 15     | <b>2.80</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Greek         | 13     | <b>2.77</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Bulgarian     | 12     | <b>2.75</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Ukrainian     | 10     | <b>2.60</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Lithuanian    | 11     | <b>2.55</b> |      |      |
|                                                                | Spanish       | 11     | 2.36        |      |      |
|                                                                | Iranian       | 9      | 2.22        |      |      |
|                                                                | Brazilian     | 14     | 2.07        |      |      |
|                                                                | Malaysian     | 10     | 2.00        |      |      |

#### 4. Discussion

Two main conclusions were drawn from the study. From the broadest perspective, it can be concluded that the in-service EFL teachers experience FLTA overall at a low level. More specifically, their self-perception of the target language proficiency is not a source of FLTA. On the other hand, the lack of students' interest in foreign language classes is a cause of FLTA at a moderate level among EFL teachers, as well as the fear of negative evaluation. Besides, time management issues caused FLTA at a low level, while preparedness for classes was a source of anxiety at a moderate level. The second conclusion is that gender, age, school levels, and types, teaching experience, and nativeness/nonnativeness significantly varied in terms of the levels of FLTA, while the degree of graduation did not differ in relation to FLTA. In terms of gender, male teachers felt more anxious than female teachers in terms of the self-perceptions of language proficiency, fear of negative evaluation, inexperience, and time management, whereas younger teachers felt more worried than older ones in terms of perceived target language proficiency and fear of making mistakes. To add, teachers working at high schools seem more anxious regarding fear of making mistakes, whereas the ones working at public schools feel more worried than the ones working at private schools regarding the use of target language in classes, time management, and unpreparedness for classes. EFL teachers who have less teaching experience are more worried in terms of their self-perceptions of target language proficiency, fear of negative evaluation, the lack of teaching experience, and fear of making mistakes. Finally, non-native speakers of English felt more worried than native speakers, while the ones who are Spanish, Iranian, Brazilian and Malaysian experience less anxiety when they use English in classes and when they feel that their students are bad at learning English.

Drawing on these results, it can be discussed that FLTA falls under the category of situation-specific anxiety. It should be also noted that FLTA differs from foreign language anxiety in the learning context fundamentally because teachers' self-perception of the target language proficiency is not a source of FLTA, while Horwitz (1996) claims that inadequacy in the target language is a source of teaching anxiety. Moreover, as one of the factors that

provoke FLTA is the lack of students' interest in foreign language classes, FLTA is different from foreign language anxiety; this perception mistakenly indicates that teachers get anxious only as language users themselves. On the other hand, fear of negative evaluation and unpreparedness for classes are two sources of anxiety in both learning and teaching contexts. From this conclusion, it can be underlined that anxiety in the mentioned contexts has similar sources.

Anxiety is surely a debilitating emotion in the language classroom but it cannot be limited only to anxiety experienced by the learners. The specific features of language classrooms make teachers life-long learners. To add, foreign language teachers need to perform in the target language, which is also a foreign language to them in most of the cases. It is important to see that foreign language teachers may feel anxiety because they are life-long language learners; however, teaching-situation-specific factors should not be neglected. They can also be anxiety provokers for foreign language teachers.

Earlier studies underline various factors such as mentors and being observed (Merç, 2010a, 2011; Tüm, 2015), learner proficiency (İpek, 2006, 2016), or language use related factors (Horwitz, 1996; Tüm, 2012). However, the current descriptive study showed the two teaching-situation-specific factors (being observed while teaching, and problems concerning learner engagement) as major anxiety provokers whereas language use related factors resulted in lower levels of FLTA. Accordingly, the current descriptive study is of critical importance to get the picture concerning FLTA clearer. This clear picture may provide several pedagogical implications that may minimize the debilitating effect of FLTA.

First of all, language teacher trainers should take into the account that foreign language teachers (and teacher candidates) need more pedagogical preparation and support to cope with FLTA rather than a preparation/support that would make them feel more proficient. Second, policy-makers and school leaders who administer schools or school districts can inform their administrative practice with the descriptive findings of the current study. Specifically speaking, certain variables such as gender, age, school type, and teaching experience may be closely related to FLTA. Relatedly, it was found that males, younger teachers who teach at high schools with lower teaching experience are more likely to experience FLTA. Last, the findings may shed light on teachers' teaching practice; more awareness regarding the factors of FLTA that were demonstrated in this study can increase the reflexivity and awareness of these teachers.

## **5. Conclusion**

Drawing on the discussion of results, several recommendations can be noted. First, given that the lack of interest in classes among students is one of the important sources of FLTA, teachers should develop strategies and techniques to raise students' interest in their classes. Those strategies should also be incorporated into the content of pre- and in-service teacher education/professional development programs. This way, the efficiency of practicum and in-service education of EFL teachers can increase. Second, as fear of negative evaluation is found as a source of FLTA at a moderate level, foreign language teachers should focus on the improvement of their social impressions among students and colleagues. For this, they should be supported by counselors and school administrators. Third, EFL teachers should be prepared for their classes before starting their classes so that careful lesson planning is important to decrease the level of overall FLTA. In tandem with this, teachers should raise their awareness of time management, and plan/organize the activities they use in classes. Fourth, teachers should raise their awareness of gender and age differences regarding FLTA.

In other words, male teachers need to improve their perceived target language proficiency, and they should work on the fear of negative evaluation, feeling of being inexperienced and time management skills, whereas younger teachers need support in terms of perceived target language proficiency and fear of making mistakes. Fifth, given that teachers working at high schools seem more anxious regarding fear of making mistakes and that the ones working at public schools feel more worried regarding the use of target language in classes, time management and unpreparedness for classes, they should raise their awareness of adolescent learner characteristics and develop strategies to overcome those management problems. Sixth, as non-native teachers feel more worried when they use the target language in classes, they should find ways to improve the perceived target language proficiency and confidence.

Some limitations of this research were that the participants were restricted to 156 EFL teachers working in various countries. Moreover, the scope of the research is confined to a descriptive research design that uses a background questionnaire and the FLTAS including 27 items. The data collected are limited to EFL teachers' perceptions of FLTA and the relationships between the perceived anxiety levels and certain variables. In light of current findings, further research should focus on anxiety levels among EFL teachers rather than perceived anxiety levels. To achieve this, experimental studies interrogating several variables should be carried out. In those studies, further descriptive details can be inquired such as whether EFL teachers' graduate degrees are within the area of FLT-related areas or not. What is more, as the online teaching context is becoming a norm in foreign language education, anxiety related to online FLT teaching can be investigated. Similarly, further research may focus on internationally-diverse samples greater in number so that FLTA differences across the nations of L2 teachers can be discussed. In addition, studies may research the relationship between anxiety levels and students' characteristics.

## **6. Conflict of interest**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## **7. Ethics Committee Approval**

The authors confirm that the study does not need ethics committee approval according to the research integrity rules in their country.

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