Examining Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety in a Saudi University

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Abstract

This study examines the foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA) faced by EFL teachers in the Saudi context. Moreover, it aimed to investigate the relationship between teachers' gender and years of experience with their perceived level of FLTA. The study employed a quantitative method and used an adaptive version of FLTAS by Ipek (2006). The participants were 97 EFL teachers working in a Saudi university in Jeddah. The results indicate that the participants experienced a low level of FLTA. The findings also demonstrate a significant relationship between teachers' level of FLTA and both their gender and years of experience. Male EFL teachers were found to experience more teaching anxiety than female teachers. Furthermore, EFL teachers with more than 10 years of experience faced lower FLTA levels than the other teachers. The findings of this study provide an insight of FLTA in the Saudi context and some recommendations for further research development.

Keywords: anxiety, teaching anxiety, EFL teachers, FL teaching anxiety

1. Introduction

Teaching is a demanding profession that considered one of the high-stress occupations (Cooper & Travers, 2012). According to Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015), many teachers have reported a noticeable level of stress and symptoms of burnout related to their working conditions. The surfacing of this subjective distress is known as teaching anxiety. Like many teachers from different disciplines, foreign language (FL) teachers are no exception; they are also vulnerable to experiencing pressure and feeling anxious in their profession.

Much of the current literature on anxiety in the FL context focuses mainly on understanding the source of learners' FL anxiety (Dewaele et al., 2008; Kruk, 2018; Mahmoodzadeh, 2012) and endeavored to provide ways to cope with it and enhance their learning experience (Dornyei & Ryan, 2015; Kim, 2009). Most of the emphasis in these studies was on the significant role of the FL teachers in helping the learners reduce their anxiety. Nevertheless, scant attention was paid to the fact that teachers themselves may experience a certain level of anxiety while teaching FL. This was first highlighted by Horwitz (1996), who stated that practicing a foreign language is vastly different from teaching that language. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA) remains an untouched area in the field of FL, specifically in the Suadi context. Therefore, the purpose of the current research is to examine FLTA faced by EFL teachers in the Saudi context. This study contributes to the literature on FLTA by broadening the scope of this phenomenon among in-service EFL teachers in the Saudi context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety

Research on FL teaching has proven that this profession can be demanding, and FL teachers – like many teachers from other disciplines – are vulnerable to experiencing anxiety while teaching the target language (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014; Aydın, 2016; Fish & Fraser, 2001; Horwitz, 1996; İpek, 2006; Kim & Kim, 2004; Liu & Wu, 2021; Merç, 2011; Önem & Ergenç, 2013; Tüfekçi-Can, 2018). The anxiety experienced by FL teachers is considered a separate construct different from both FL practicing anxiety and general teaching anxiety, in which it is labeled as a situation-specific type related to teaching a foreign language (İpek, 2016; Merç, 2011; Williams, 1991). Aydin (2016) defined the construct of foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA) as "an emotional and affective state that a teacher feels tension due to personal, perceptional, motivational and technical concerns before, during, and after teaching activities" (p. 639). Tüfekçi-Can (2018) added that FLTA is considered a psychological apprehension experienced by language teachers who are expected to teach the language effectively. It occurs when they feel incompetent to teach the target language to acceptable levels and experience feelings of inadequacy in teaching it to real students in a real teaching context.

The literature on FLTA has highlighted its debilitative impact on the FL teaching process. Williams (1991) found a negative correlation between teaching anxiety and the effectiveness of the teaching practice. Önem and Ergenç (2013) considered the severe level of teaching anxiety to be an inhibitor of the teaching process. Furthermore, Horwitz (1996) stated that anxiety could prevent FL teachers from productively using the target language to interact with the students and avoid certain class activities. Accordingly, it may limit the students' exposure to natural and spontaneous target language during class. Similarly, Kang (2013) and Tum (2015) found that FLTA prevents teachers from using spontaneous target language and classroom practices focusing on language-intensive teaching or applying a communicative approach to discipline issues. Moreover, FLTA was also found to have an impact on the well-being and emotional state of the teachers (Aydın & Uştuk, 2020; İpek, 2006; Merç, 2011; Mercer, 2018).

Horwitz (1996) stated that anxiety may influence teachers' mental well-being and job satisfaction. Khani and Mirzaee (2015) indicated that FLTA could provoke other stressors and lead to teachers' burnout. Therefore, it is worthwhile to highlight the anxiety-provoking sources of FLTA in order to raise awareness of this phenomenon.

2.2 The Sources of FLTA

2.2.1 Intrinsic Factors as Sources of FLTA

The literature on FLTA revealed that this emotional state could be associated with every aspect of the teachers' activities, and teachers themselves are seen as a prospective cause that influences FLTA. One of these sources is teachers' target language performance. Aydin (2016) found that monitoring the target language performance, pronunciation, and speaking skills caused the teacher to be anxious. Kunt and Tüm (2010) found that the desire to speak the target language flawlessly provoked the teaching anxiety. Moreover, Ipek (2016) indicated that teachers' thoughts of misspelling or mispronouncing a word or making grammatical mistakes provoke their anxiety. Furthermore, Machida (2016) demonstrated that teachers' lack of confidence in communicating using the target language affects their level of anxiety.

A closer look at the literature indicated other factors related to the teachers that also trigger FLTA. Studies revealed that teaching a particular language skill or sub-skill (e.g., vocabulary and grammar) impacts the level of FLTA (Ipek, 2016; Öztürk, 2016; Tüfekçi-Can, 2018). Likewise, being compared to another colleague in knowledge or teaching methods disturbed language teachers (Ipek, 2006). Furthermore, lack of experience, fear of negative evaluation, being observed by the mentors, and receiving negative comments from the learners were among the causes of FLTA (Alrashidi, 2022; Anwar & Sari, 2021; Aydin & Ustuk, 2020). Disliking the teaching profession and career uncertainty also increased teachers' anxiety (Permatasari et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Extrinsic Factors as Sources of FLTA

Since the learners are the cornerstone in the educational context, they play a crucial role in FLTA. Teachers' relationships with their students, and maintaining discipline during class were found as anxiety-provoking factors (Merç, 2011). Additionally, the learners' level of language proficiency and not being understood by the students increased teachers' level of FLTA (Aydin, 2016; Merç, 2015).   Moreover, learner's lack of motivation, unwillingness to participate, and their negative attitudes during class were factor that affected teaching anxiety faced by EFL teachers (Aydin, 2016; Permatasari et al., 2019). In addition, studies on FLTA offered further notes on the role of the environment and how it affected the level of the anxiety. Furthermore, having bad relationships with colleagues and administrators and limited access to teaching equipment increase the tension among EFL teachers (Khani & Mirzaee, 2015). Similarly, factors such as personal relations, employment structure, facilities, and resources were also considered as causes of FLTA (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014). Furthermore, in the Saudi context, teaching a large number of students in one classroom was among the reasons behind FLTA (Alrashidi, 2022).

2.3 FLTA and Demographic Characteristics

Research has shed light on the assumption that teachers' background characteristics are predictors of the level of experienced FLTA. In a study that examined FLTA in relation to some contributing variables, Canessa's (2006) qualitative study evidenced a high level of FLTA correlations with both teachers' years of experience and cultural background. Öztürk (2016) yielded a mixed-method study on FLTA using FLTAS by Ipek (2006) for the quantitative part of the research. Aligned with Canessa's (2006) results, years of experience were found to correlate with FLTA, while the study reported no notable impact of teachers' gender on anxiety. Research by Aydın and Kesen (2014) and Kobul and Saraçoğlu (2020) investigated the level of FLTA faced by EFL teachers in relation to their gender and years of experience using FLTAS by Ipek (2006). They reported a significant effect of years of experience on the level of FLTA, while gender did not yield a significant impact. In another mixed-methods research, Merç (2015) delved into the influence of variables such as gender and type of practicum school on EFL teachers' level of FLTA and the self-efficacy and found no significant results. Paker (2011), in descriptive research, demonstrated that although female teachers were slightly more anxious than males, no significant differences were found between gender and FLTA. Kim and Kim (2004) undertook quantitative research on FLTA and found no effect of gender, major, or school group they teach (e.g., elementary or secondary) on the level of FLTA. Contrary to the other mentioned research, their results showed that teachers with more than ten years of experience had a higher FLTA level than the less expert ones. However, the difference between the two groups was not significant.

Aydın and Uştuk (2020) descriptively investigated FLTA and revealed that the level of teaching anxiety varies in relation to gender, age, years of experience, and school groups. The male participants reported a higher level of FLTA than the females. In their correlation study, Güngör and Yaylı (2012) indicated that teachers who had overseas experience, and attended professional development activities reported lower level of FLTA. Also, contrary to Aydın and Uştuk (2020), they found male participants to have a lower level of anxiety and were less stressed from teaching listening comprehension. Similarly, Eren (2020) found that the level of FLTA of non-native teachers was affected by age, qualification, years of experience, and gender, in which females were more anxious than males.

In general, the literature presented limited quantitative research on the influence of teachers' demographic variables on FLTA. In most studies, a clear negative correlation was noted between teachers' years of experience and the level of FLTA. Albeit valuable information was provided regarding the variable of gender, no consensus can be noticed on the relationship between gender orientation and teachers' level of FLTA. Thus, the purpose of the current research is to examine the level of FLTA faced by EFL teachers in the Saudi context with regard to their gender and years of experience.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study examines one type of teaching anxiety – FLTA – related to a specific teaching context. To achieve this aim, the appraisal theory of emotion is used to illuminate the base of understanding of this type of anxiety. The fundamental conception of emotions in the appraisal

theory is that they are adaptive responses that reflect the features of appraisals of individuals' environment, which is considered significant for their well-being (Arnold, 1960, as cited in Moors et al., 2013). It defines the appraisal as the process of evaluating the significance of the environment for individuals' well-being, which can be conceptualized as either the satisfaction or obstruction of concerns (Lazarus, 1991). That is to say, this theory asserted that one's judgment of the event is what causes the emotion. For instance, teachers' evaluations of their FL teaching situation and environment are what lead them to experience FLTA.

Within this scope, this theory proposes that appraisals play an essential role in determining the quality and intensity of feelings, behaviors, and action tendencies (Clore & Ortony, 2000; Roseman & Smith, 2001). It also accounts for the differences in the individual cultural and developmental aspects in the variation of their emotional responses to the same situation (Moors et al., 2013). Two individuals will experience different emotions by how they perceive and evaluate an event's novelty, goal congruence, controllability, or any other appraisal characteristic. Therefore, the appraisal theory provides a framework within which various individuals and occasions can provoke different emotions in the same situation.

2.6 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to examine the level of FLTA among in-service EFL teachers in a Saudi public university. In addition, it aims to investigate the difference of FLTA levels with regards to some demographic characteristics (e.g., gender and years of experience). The main objective is to address the following questions:

1- What is the level of FLTA among EFL teachers?

2- Does the level of the FLTA among the participants significantly differ according to their:

    a.   gender,

    b.   years of experience.

Therefore, two hypotheses were generated to answer the second research question:

1- There is no significant difference between the FLTA level and the teachers' gender.

2- There is no significant difference between the FLTA level and the teachers' years of experience.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Following the Positivism paradigm, this study adopts a quantitative descriptive approach employing a self-reporting questionnaire as the instrument. According to Gall et al. (2003), self-reporting instruments are generally used to study phenomena that are difficult to directly observe, such as values, inner experience, and opinions.

3.2 Participants and Context

The participants were 97 EFL teachers working at the English Language Institute in a Saudi public university located in Jeddah. Sixty-two female and thirty-five males participated in this study. The participants held varying qualifications, ranging from bachelor to doctoral, with varied years of experience. Table 1 below presents a summary of the teachers' demographic information. All the participants teach a required English language course for foundation-year students in their first year of university. The participants were chosen due to the expected accessibility to the researcher.

Table 1. Participants' Demographic Information

Demographics	Variable	N	%
Gender	Male	35	36.1
	Female	62	63.9
	Total	97	100.0
Years of experience	0-5	27	27.8
	6-10	24	24.7
	More than 10 years	46	47.4
	Total	97	100.0
Last Qualification	Bachelor's degree	22	22.6
	Master's degree	51	52.6
	Doctoral degree	24	24.7
	Total	97	100.0

3.3 Instrument

The instrument used in the present study was an online questionnaire consisting of three sections to measure the level of foreign language teaching anxiety. The first section included an informed consent form and a summary of the research objective. The second section included an adaptive version of Ipek's (2006) Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS) by Eren (2020). The scale consists of 26 items designed as a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from never, rarely, sometimes, often, to always. Lastly, the third section was designed to collect the basic demographic data of the participants, such as gender, years of experience, and educational status.

The items of the original FLTAS were divided into five subscales. The first subscale examined anxiety in teaching a particular language skill and included seven items. The second subscale focused on teachers' worry about target language performance and consisted of eight items. Next, the third subscale examined teachers' worry about making mistakes, including six items. The fourth one looked into their feelings when being compared to fellow teachers with two items. Lastly, the fifth subscale focused on teachers' worry about using the native language, which included three items. The overall reliability of the whole scale Ipek (2006) reported was considerably high (0.9173). In the original scale, Ipek (2006) referred to the native language in the items of the fifth subscale using "Turkish" as her study targeted Turkish participants. Therefore, Eren (2020) used the English version of the scale and implemented a slight change

by using the phrase "students' native language" instead of "Turkish" in all three items in the fifth subscale to suit participants with diverse native languages. The reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient by Eren (2020) for the whole scale after the modification was also 0.92, which is considered high. For this reason, the current study adopted the latest version of FLTAS by Eren (2020) without any changes.

3.4 Procedure

After obtaining ethical permission, an online version of the questionnaire was created using Google Forms due to its ease of use for the targeted population. A snowball nonprobability sampling technique was used to reach a large number of EFL teachers at the targeted university. The survey link was then sent to the targeted participants through emails and WhatsApp application. The questionnaire was administered to both male and female EFL teachers to avoid a gender-biased sample.

The study considered several ethical concerns. The participants' anonymity was ensured as no information about their emails, phone numbers, or names was required in the questionnaire. In addition, all participants who voluntarily agreed to complete the questionnaire were informed about their right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. Finally, the data was only accessible to the researchers and was used for research purposes only to maintain confidentiality.

3.5 Means of Data Analysis

The responses of the participants were transferred to IBM SPSS software. As the online survey was adjusted to require all items to be completed by the participants before submitting their responses, no missing data was found. Then, to answer the first research question, descriptive statistics were conducted to find the means, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage of the obtained data. Additionally, the data were checked for normality to determine the inferential tests and whether parametric or non-parametric ones should be applied to answer the second research question. A Shapiro-Wilk test was performed and showed significant departures from normality (W =97, p = 0.00). Since the p-values are less than 0.05 (See Table A1), the data are not normally distributed (Pallant, 2016). Therefore, non-parametric Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were chosen to differentiate the level of FLTA in accordance with the categorical variables in the second research question.

4. Results

4.1 RQ 1: What is the level of FL teaching anxiety (FLTA) among ELI teachers?

To answer the first research question, the data were descriptively analyzed and presented with regards to five variables: anxiety in teaching a particular skill, worry about target language performance, worry about making mistakes, being compared to fellow teachers, and worry about using students' native language. A comparison between the means, frequencies of responses, and percentages of all items in each scale was carried out to analyze the data.

In general, as presented in Table 2 below, the overall mean score for FLTAS is 1.818 (*SD*=0.630) and falls into the range of 1.81-2.60 on a 5-point Likert scale range (See Table A2), which

indicates that the teachers rarely felt anxious while teaching FL. This result accounts for a low level of FLTA among the participants. Additionally, the lowest mean score among the five factors was reported for the second factor ($M = 1.601$), which demonstrates that the teachers were least worried about their own target language performance (See Table 2). On the other hand, the fifth factor, which examined the teachers' anxiety while using the students' native language during the class, received the highest mean score of 2.03. However, it did not supersede the second range (Rarely) of the 5-point Likert scale range (See Table A2), which still indicates a low level of anxiety.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics of FLTAS Subscales*

Subscale	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	*SD*
1- Teaching a particular skill	97	1.00	3.43	1.698	0.653
2- Target language performance	97	1.00	3.25	1.601	0.639
3- Making mistake	97	1.00	4.33	1.977	0.773
4- Being compared to fellow teachers	97	1.00	4.50	1.778	0.960
5- using students' native language	97	1.00	4.67	2.034	0.864
FLTAS Overall	97	1.00	3.30	1.818	0.630

Table 3 below demonstrates the descriptive statistics values of the teachers' responses to the items of the first factor. The teachers were found to mainly experience a low level of FLTA during teaching a particular skill. The data also shows that approximately 80% barely felt anxious when teaching listening topics in item 23, with the lowest mean score among the other items in the first factor ($M = 1.56$). Furthermore, the majority of the teachers (62.9%) reported that they were never worried about teaching grammar effectively (Item 10, $M = 1.57$). Additionally, the highest mean score of this factor was reported for item 11 ($M = 2.01$) in which only about 30% of the participants found themselves sometimes anxious while teaching a skill in which they feel they are not proficient enough.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics of the Factor of Anxiety in Teaching a Particular Skill*

Statement	Never F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)	Always F (%)	*M*	*SD*
10. I worry about not being able to teach grammar effectively	61 (62.9)	19 (19.6)	15 (15.2)	2 (2.1)	-	1.57	.828
11. I feel uncomfortable when teaching a skill in which I feel I am not proficient enough	37 (38.1)	27 (27.8)	29 (29.9)	3 (3.1)	1 (1)	2.01	.952

Statement	Never F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)	Always F (%)	M	SD
12. I worry about not being able to teach listening effectively	56 (57.7)	25 (25.8)	11 (11.3)	4 (4.1)	1 (1)	1.65	.913
16. I worry about not being able to teach speaking effectively	58 (59.8)	21 (21.6)	13 (13.4)	4 (4.1)	1 (1)	1.65	.936
22. I worry about not being able to teach reading effectively	57 (58.8)	23 (23.7)	13 (13.4)	3 (3.1)	1 (1)	1.64	.904
23. I feel uneasy when am teaching listening topics	59 (60.8)	25 (25.8)	10 (10.3)	3 (3.1)	-	1.56	.803
24. I worry about not being able to teach writing effectively	46 (47.4)	28 (28.9)	19 (19.6)	3 (3.1)	1 (1)	1.81	.928
Total						1.69	.653

According to the descriptive statistics values in Table 4, the teachers hardly experienced any anxiety related to their target language performance. Item 7 ($M = 1.39$) and Item 14 ($M = 1.40$) have the lowest mean score among all the other items in the whole FLTAS. This result demonstrates that almost 80% of the teachers never experienced FLTA while giving instructions in English or speaking English in general during the class. On the other hand, item 6 has the highest mean score of 1.89 among the second factor's items, and the level of responses considered (Rarely) according to the means' range for a 5-point Likert scale. This finding shows that the teachers were rarely anxious when teaching English to students with an average proficiency level.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics of the Factor of Worry About Target Language Performance*

Statement	Never F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)	Always F (%)	M	SD
6. I feel nervous when teaching English to students with an average proficiency level	49 (50.5)	20 (20.6)	20 (20.6)	6 (6.2)	2 (2.1)	1.89	1.069
7. I feel tense when I am giving instructions in English	69 (71.1)	20 (20.6)	7 (7.2)	-	1 (1)	1.39	.715
9. I think my knowledge of English is not good enough to teach in English	71 (73.2)	14 (14.4)	8 (8.2)	4 (4.1)	-	1.43	.815
13. I worry about not	63	15	15 (15.5)	2 (2.1)	2 (2.1)	1.61	.964

Statement							M	SD
being able to give clear instructions in English	(64.9)	(15.5)						
14. I feel nervous when speaking English in class	71 (73.2)	17 (17.5)	7 (7.2)	-		2 (2.1)		1.40	.799
15. I feel nervous when teaching English to students with a high proficiency level	48 (49.5)	25 (25/8)	20 (20.6)	4 (4.1)		-		1.79	.912
18. Teaching English to students with a high level of language proficiency makes me feel uneasy	49 (50.5)	22 (22.7)	22 (22.7)	3 (3.1)		1 (1)		1.81	.961
20. I feel uneasy when I am teaching speaking topics	68 (70.1)	16 (16.5)	10 (10.3)	1 (1)		2 (2.1)		1.48	.963
Total								1.60	.639

Table 5 below presents descriptive statistics values of the teachers' responses to the items of the third factor. Accordingly, the teachers rarely experienced FLTA with regards to making mistakes during the class. The data also presents that approximately 60% of the teachers reported to never feeling anxious by their students' criticism of their knowledge of English. Item 21, demonstrates this with the lowest mean score among the other items in the third factor ($M = 1.61$). Whereas the highest mean score of this factor was reported for Item 4 ($M = 2.29$) in which about 43% of the participants found themselves sometimes anxious by the thought of making a spelling mistake on the board.

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics of the Factor of Worry About Making Mistakes*

Statement	Never F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)	Always F (%)	M	SD
2. The thought of making a grammar mistake worries me	28 (28.9)	36 (37.1)	20 (20.6)	6 (6.2)	7 (7.2)	2.26	1.157
3. I feel anxious about my students testing my knowledge of English	43 (44.3)	29 (29.9)	20 (20.6)	3 (3.1)	2 (2.1)	1.89	.978
4. The thought of making a spelling mistake on the board disturbs me	29 (29.9)	26 (26.8)	31 (32)	7 (7.2)	4 (4.1)	2.29	1.090
5. I get so nervous when I am teaching English	50 (51.5)	26 (26.8)	11 (11.3)	7 (7.2)	3 (3.1)	1.84	1.087

Statement	Never F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)	Always F (%)	M	SD
that I forget the things that I know							
21. I am afraid of my students criticizing my knowledge of English	59 (60.8)	23 (23.7)	10 (10.3)	4 (4.1)	1 (1)	1.61	.908
25. I feel anxious about making a mistake while teaching English	39 (40.2)	28 (28.9)	23 (23.7)	6 (6.2)	1 (1)	1.99	.995
Total						1.97	.773

The fourth factor investigated the level of FLTA with regards to the teachers' worries about being compared to their colleagues. Table 6 below presents the descriptive statistics values of teachers' responses to the two items of this factor. In general, the overall means score of the fourth factor is 1.77 which falls into the range of (Never) according to the means' range for a 5-point Likert scale. This result indicates that over 50% of the teachers never found themselves anxious of their English knowledge or teaching methods being compared to their fellow teachers.

Table 6. *Descriptive Statistics of the Factor of Worry About Being Compared to Fellow Teachers*

Statement	Never F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)	Always F (%)	M	SD
8. I feel uncomfortable when my English knowledge is compared to that of other teachers	50 (51.5)	23 (23.7)	15 (15.5)	4 (4.1)	5 (5.2)	1.88	1.139
19. I feel uneasy when my English teaching methods are compared to that of other teachers	57 (58.8)	20 (20.6)	16 (16.5)	2 (2.1)	2 (2.1)	1.68	.963
Total						1.77	.960

Table 7 below shows the descriptive statistics values of the teachers' responses to the fifth and the last factor in FLTAS which examined the teachers' worries about using students' native language during the class. Although it received the highest mean score of 2.03 among other factors; however, it lies in the second means' range (Rarely) which indicates a low level of anxiety. The given data showed that the majority of the teachers found it uneasy to use the students' native language during the lesson. This is evident in item 26, which has the lowest mean score in this factor (*M* = 1.84). Furthermore, the data also indicated that Item 1 has the highest mean score among all the other items in the whole scale of FLTAS (*M* = 2.37). According to their responses to this item, over half of the teachers were not comfortable when using students' native language in the class.

Table 7. *Descriptive Statistics of the Factor of Worry About Using Students' Native Language*

Statement	Never F (%)	Rarely F (%)	Sometimes F (%)	Often F (%)	Always F (%)	M	SD
1. I feel uncomfortable when I use students' native language in the class	32 (33)	15 (15.5)	36 (37.1)	10 (10.3)	4 (4.1)	2.37	1.167
17. I feel uncomfortable when I think about having used students' native language during the lesson	46 (47.4)	26 (26.8)	18 (18.6)	3 (3.1)	4 (4.1)	1.90	1.075
26. I feel uneasy thinking that I might have to use students' native language during the lesson	48 (49.5)	26 (26.8)	16 (16.5)	5 (5.2)	2 (2.1)	1.84	1.017
Total						2.03	.864

4.2 RQ 2: Does the level of the FL teaching anxiety (FLTA) among the participants significantly differs according to their: a. gender, b. years of experience?

4.2.1 Gender. The first hypothesis: there is no significant difference between FLTA level and the teachers' gender. The results of the Mann-Whitney U showed that the difference between teachers' gender and their reported FLTA level is statistically significant as the *p*-value is less than 0.05, $Z = -2.40$, $p = .016$. The male participants ($n = 35$) with a mean rank of 58.16 had a significantly higher level of anxiety than the females ($n = 62$) with a mean rank of 43.83 (See Table A3). As a result, the first null hypothesis is rejected, and an alternative hypothesis is accepted that states "there is a significant difference between FLTA level and the teachers' gender".

4.2.2 Years of Experience. The second hypothesis: there is no significant difference between FLTA level and the teachers' years of experience. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that the difference in FLTA levels across the three different groups of years of experience is statistically significant as the *p*-value is less than 0.05, $\chi2 (2, n = 97) = 11.387$, $p = .003$. The second group with 6-10 years of experience ($n = 24$) recorded a mean rank of 58.35 which is slightly higher than the first group with 0-5 years of experience ($M = 57.98$, $n = 27$). While the third group with more than 10 years of experience ($n = 46$) had the lowest mean rank of 38.85 (See Table A4). Additionally, a post hoc pairwise comparisons using Dunn's test was performed to determine which of the groups is significantly differ from the others (See Table A5). The results showed that the scores of the third group (more than 10 years of experience) were observed to be significantly different from those of the first group (0-5 years of experience)

(p = .013) and the second group (6-10 years of experience) (p = .015). No other differences were statistically significant. The findings of the Kruskal-Wallis and the post hoc tests indicates that the teachers with more than 10 years of experience had a significantly lower level of FLTA than the other groups. Therefore, the second null hypothesis is rejected, and an alternative hypothesis is accepted that states "there is a significant difference between FLTA level and the teachers' years of experience".

5. Discussion

The research findings demonstrate that the participants experience a low level of FLTA, which coincides with previous literature by Aydin and Uztuk (2020) and Kobul and Saraçoğlu (2020). On the other hand, this result contradicted some other research findings that reported higher levels of anxiety among their participants despite the use of the same FLTA instrument (Aydın & Kesen, 2014; Eren, 2020; Güngör & Yaylı, 2012; Öztürk, 2016). This finding aligns with the appraisal theory that views the individual's judgment of the event. It shows that the emotion and what can be an anxiety-provoking factor in one context, is not necessarily true for another context. A possible interpretation of the perceived low level of anxiety could be reasoned to the fact that the EFL teachers in the current study are working in the public sector, and it is acknowledged that the public sector provides higher job security compared to the private ones (Munnell & Fraenkel, 2013). In addition, in the context of the teaching career in Saudi Arabia, the job condition is perceived as highly secured for teachers working in the public sector (Alwaleedi, 2017). Furthermore, the link between anxiety and job security finds confirmation in previous studies, where they found that workers develop fear and stress and encounter poor mental health and well-being when they find their job conditions to be insecure (Heffernan & Rochford, 2017; Khalid & Sahibzada, 2023; Ibelegbu et al., 2023). The same confirmation was also found in the context of the foreign language teaching profession. Fraschini and Park (2021) determined that being concerned about working conditions and security is a vital predictor of teachers' anxiety. Likewise, Morris and King (2018) consider it the origin of their frustration.

The current study also found that the participants reported lower levels of anxiety related to the factors of *target language performance* with a mean score of 1.60, and *teaching a particular skill* with a mean score of 1.69 compared to the other three remaining factors (e.g., worry about making mistakes, being compared to fellow teachers, and worry about using students' native language). This result could suggest that the participants positively viewed their own target language performance and teaching practices during the class. It, thus, highlights the assumption that teachers' beliefs about themselves can be a predictor of the anxiety and stress they may encounter during their careers (Aydin, 2016; Liu & Wu, 2021; Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018; Yoon, 2012). These studies confirmed that EFL teachers' confidence and perceptions of their own language competence and teaching performance impact their level of teaching anxiety, in which the less they were confident and the more negative they perceived themselves and their abilities, the more anxious they became.

In addition, a further result was found in the current study, which demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the male and female participants and their perceived FLTA level.

The finding suggests that the male teachers had higher mean score of 58.16. Surprisingly, this finding contradicts most of the similar studies that found no notable impact of gender on FL teaching anxiety (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014; Aydın & Kesen, 2014; Kim & Kim, 2004; Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020; Machida, 2016; Merç, 2015; Öztürk, 2016). Some studies found that female EFL teachers encounter higher levels of FLTA than males (Eren, 2020; Güngör & Yaylı, 2012; Li et al., 2023; Paker, 2011), suggesting that females are more prone to experience stress and anxiety in their lives. In comparison, only two studies (Aydin & Uztuk, 2020; Permatasari et al., 2019) reached a similar conclusion and found that male EFL teachers are more anxious than females when teaching foreign languages. This result of the current study is likely to be related to the profound impact of culture on human cognition, which means that what can be an anxiety-provoking factor in one culture may not be the same in another (Ganuon & Daris, 2023; Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020; Mazzola et al., 2011). Moreover, as the current study takes place in an Islamic country and according to its culture, the males are responsible for supporting their families and attending to their financial needs. Accordingly, it may possibly burden them and cause them to be overwhelmed and experience more anxiety related to their job compared to the females, as to most of them, it is the primary source of income.

Furthermore, in accordance with most previous research, the findings of the current study found that teachers with long years of experience encounter lower FLTA levels than those with less years of experience (Aslrasouli & Vahid, 2014; Canessa, 2006; Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020; Öztürk, 2016). This finding confirmed the well-acknowledged fact that years of teaching experience play a crucial role in reducing the amount of anxiety faced by teachers.

6. Conclusion

The current study aimed to examine the level of FLTA among in-service EFL teachers in the Saudi context. It also investigated the relationship between teachers' gender and years of experience with their perceived level of FLTA. The finding of the first research question revealed that the participating in-service EFL teachers experience low levels of FLTA. In addition, the findings of the second research question rejected the two null hypotheses; accordingly, they accepted the alternative hypotheses that indicate a significant difference between the level of FLTA and teachers' gender and years of experience. The results showed that the male participants felt more anxious while teaching FL than the females. Furthermore, participants with more than 10 years of experience faced lower FLTA levels than the other teachers.

This research has accomplished its purpose and provided valuable information regarding the perceived level of teaching anxiety among EFL teachers in a Saudi context. Nevertheless, there may be some possible limitations in this study that need to be addressed to provide opportunities for future research. First, the scope of this research was limited to only one university and did not include other educational institutions. Second, this study did not examine the anxiety related to all the possible sources. The instrument that was used in the current study focused mainly on intrinsic sources of anxiety related to the teachers themselves, thus limiting its scope. Third, the study was limited to only one method, and an online questionnaire was

used as its main tool to collect the data.

6.1 Recommendation

Considering the limitations mentioned so far, several recommendations for future research are given. In future work, exploring FLTA using qualitative or mixed methods approaches might provide a deeper understanding of this phenomenon. Additionally, future research could study FLTA further by considering different possible anxiety-provoking factors, for instance, teacher-learner relationship, learners' attitude and motivation, classroom\time management, teachers' workload, etc. Finally, it will be beneficial to study FLTA in various educational contexts (e.g., schools, private institutions, and other Saudi universities) and compare them with the results of the current study.

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Appendix A

Appendix A: Results of The Inferential Tests

Table A1. Normality Test Using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk of FTLA

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
FLTA Total	.100	97	.017	.925	97	.000

Table A2. *The Means' Range for Five-point Likert Scales*

Answer	Value	Means' Range
Never	1	1.00-1.80
Rarely	2	1.81-2.60
Sometimes	3	2.61-3.40
Often	4	3.41-4.20
Always	5	4.21-5.00

Table A3. *Ranks of Mann-Whitney U Test of Male and Female EFL Teachers*

Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Male	35	58.16	2035.50
Female	62	43.83	2717.50
Total	97		

Table A4. *Means' Ranks of Kruskal-Wallis Test of The Years of Experience Groups*

Teaching experience	N	Mean Rank
0 to 5 years	27	57.98
6 to 10 years	24	58.35
More than 10 years	46	38.85
Total	97	

Table A5. *Post Hoc Dunn's Pairwise Comparisons of Teaching experience*

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	Sig.	Adj. Sig.[a]
More than 10 years-0 to 5 years	19.389	6.819	2.843	.004	.013
More than 10 years-6 to 10 years	19.878	7.082	2.807	.005	.015
0 to 5 years-6 to 10 years	-.488	7.891	-.062	.951	1.00

*The significance level is .05.

a. Significance values have been adjusted by the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Macrothink Institute.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.