

SHORT REFLECTIVE ARTICLES | 小論

Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety among Pre-service EFL Teachers in Japan

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Abstract

Foreign language anxiety is the manifestation of tension and apprehension EFL learners feel when they are in situations of speaking, listening, or learning a foreign language. Although foreign language anxiety experienced by language learners has been examined over several decades, anxiety which EFL teachers feel during English classes remains under-researched. This study aims to examine how pre-service EFL teachers feel anxious about their teaching and reveal the sources of teaching anxiety. The research questions are as follows: 1) What kind of anxiety do pre-service EFL teachers feel in their teaching? , 2) Why do they feel language teaching anxiety? , and 3) How do they cope with their language teaching anxiety? Accordingly, an open-ended questionnaire was used as an instrument. The responses of 9 pre-service teachers were analyzed qualitatively using Grounded Theory Approach. Results indicated that all of the participants were feeling some amount of anxiety in their teaching, and the sources of their language teaching anxiety were examined thoroughly.

Keywords: Foreign language anxiety, foreign language teaching anxiety, pre-service EFL teachers, grounded theory approach

Introduction

Foreign language anxiety is defined as: “the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). There has been a considerable amount of studies on foreign language anxiety among foreign language learners in the last three decades. Through those studies, it appeared that high levels of anxiety mostly harmed the language acquisition process (e.g. MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Price, 1991; Young, 1991). Besides, it should be known that language anxiety is not exclusive for lower-level learners; higher-level learners of the target language are also prone to feel acute levels of language anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Liu, 2006; Tum, 2015). Although such studies on language anxiety are mainly focusing on language learners, it is not a phenomenon limited to learners (Suzuki & Roger, 2014). Horwitz (1996) states that nonnative foreign language teachers also experience foreign language anxiety. This means, foreign language anxiety is a complex psychological factor to both its learners and teachers (Yoon, 2012). Horwitz (1996) mentions that language teachers are concerned about their students’ reactions to classroom activities and plan language instruction that minimizes anxiety, but unfortunately, language teachers have not considered that they may experience foreign language anxiety which affects their teaching. It is said that even skillful teachers are susceptible to the feeling of anxiety. Therefore, there is no doubt that pre-service teachers, who have just started to teach, are prone to feel anxiety while teaching. According to Yoon (2012), “When it comes to the

case of pre-service ESL teachers who definitely lack enough formal classroom teaching experience, the level of anxiety that they feel must be even higher than opposed to skillful ESL teachers” (p.1099).

Literature Review

The first studies of foreign language anxiety among language teachers date back to the 1990s. Horwitz (1996) wrote an article based on teacher language anxiety, arguing that it is not only learners who feel anxiety, but also non-native language teachers could feel anxiety which affects their language instruction. For example, in the case of anxious teachers, teaching practices such as role-play activities, pattern drills, grammatical explanations in the target language were unlikely to be used, since these are language-intensive for the teacher. Instead, anxious teachers tend to use the target language less in the classroom. According to Horwitz (1996), this is due to their overconcern about correctness or perfect pronunciation. These teachers avoid making mistakes when speaking in the target language in front of their students.

Merç (2011) conducted a qualitative study based on 150 student teachers' diary entries and interviews during their teaching practicum. The participants submitted their diaries weekly to their university supervisors and the interviews were held at the end of the teaching practicum. The analyses of the diary entries indicated six main categories as the sources of student teachers' anxiety throughout the teaching practicum. They were: students and class profiles; classroom management; teaching procedures; being observed; mentors; and miscellaneous. From the findings, it appeared that student teachers experience a high level of anxiety in their relationships with their students.

Tum (2015) used a questionnaire survey including FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) and Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (TFLAS) (Horwitz, 1996), followed by a semi-structured interview with each of the participants to obtain more information about their experiences of foreign language anxiety. The participants were 12 nonnative pre-service teachers who were enrolled in the last year of a 4-year EFL teacher education program in Turkey. From the results, the seven high-anxious participants described how they strive to avoid errors, and how they are worried about making errors while speaking. Besides, high-anxious participants had fear of the evaluation of students, not wanting to appear foolish in front of them. On the other hand, the five low-anxious participants were not particularly concerned about making errors, or any concerns about the evaluation of their peers. This study uncovered the differences between high-anxious and low-anxious teachers.

In a Japanese context, Suzuki and Roger (2014) considered foreign language anxiety from the framework of teacher cognition. The participants were 15 English teachers. The experience of the participants varied from less than 5 years to more than 30 years. From the findings, the majority of participants (13 out of 15) reported experiencing some degree of anxiety when they used English in class. The participants' experiences of foreign language anxiety were affected by two broad categories: internal factors related to the teacher themselves (e.g. perceived lack of English proficiency), and external factors related to others (e.g. the presence of a particular cohort of students). The findings of this study were theorized in the new framework of teacher cognition.

Machida (2019) is also a study which examined teacher anxiety in a Japanese context. Using the TFLAS (Horwitz, 1996) as a measurement, he evaluated junior-high school teachers' feelings of anxiety toward teaching English in English. As a whole, 44.9% of the teachers were feeling anxious about their command of English. Three kinds of anxiety were identified: anxiety about their own English proficiency, anxiety about using appropriate expressions with students of different proficiency levels, and anxiety about explaining

grammar in English. Machida elaborated the perceptions of junior high school teachers toward teaching English in English.

Although some of the studies cited above focus on foreign language teaching anxiety, as shown above, there is still room for further investigation. It can be said that many of the earlier studies have not yet revealed the concrete structure of teaching anxiety with its sources and solutions. Moreover, especially in the Japanese context, the Course of Study by MEXT (2017) offers suggestions that English should be taught all in English. This transition of EFL classes in Japan may induce even more anxiety among teachers. Moreover, foreign language teaching anxiety among pre-service teachers in Japan has yet to be thoroughly investigated. However, because pre-service EFL teachers still lack teaching skills, “it is obviously considered that they may encounter even more serious anxiety in terms of teaching a lesson, using English in the classroom” (Yoon, 2012, p.1099). Therefore, examining anxiety among pre-service EFL teachers in Japan deserves attention.

Research Questions

- 1) What kind of anxiety do pre-service EFL teachers feel in their teaching?
- 2) Why do they feel language teaching anxiety?
- 3) How do they cope with their language teaching anxiety?

Method

The current study was carried out in the form of an open-ended questionnaire. The participants were 9 pre-service teachers in a university in Sapporo. The ages of the participants ranged from 20 to 23 years old. All of the participants were female. The participants were taking the same class of English teaching.

Six questions were prepared, beginning with the first question, “Do you feel anxious when you are teaching English?” In some cases, participants do feel anxiety and others do not feel anxiety at all, the rest of the questions were designed in two patterns depending on the responses of the first question. Interestingly, however, all of the members answered “yes” in the first question, which means all of the participants in this study were feeling anxiety in their teaching. Therefore, only the first four questions were used in this study, which are: 1) Do you feel anxious when you are teaching English?, 2) In what ways do you feel anxious?, 3) Why do you think you feel anxious?, 4) How do you cope with your anxiety?

The data analysis was done using Grounded Theory Approach, referring to Saiki-Craighill (2005) for the detailed procedures. Open coding includes three coding steps as follows, 1) dividing the data into meaning clusters; 2) identifying properties and dimensions; and 3) naming categories. Axial coding is the process of relating categories to their subcategories. Finally, selective coding is the process of integrating and refining the theory. The open coding was done by two researchers, including the author. The rest of the analysis, which are axial coding and selective coding, were done by the author.

Results and Discussion

From the analysis of Grounded Theory Approach, three paradigms were extracted from the data. According to the results of selective coding, the three paradigms will be explained in detail. In the following descriptions, ‘names of the categories’ are written in brackets < >, and the ‘names of the labels’ are italicized.

Paradigm 1: Anxiety towards English use

Many pre-service teachers in this study were feeling anxiety against *communication in English*. In the Course of Study proposed by MEXT (2017), English instruction is highly recommended to be done all in English, so understandably, many teachers are worried whether or not they could conduct the class using English. Their *English skills* and the *ability to teach in English* must be a big concern for many teachers more than ever. These anxiety sources related to English use may come from <a lack of English use> in daily lives. Many student teachers mentioned a *lack of opportunities to use English* while living in Japan and, unless they go abroad, there is *limited use of English* in their daily lives. To lessen anxiety towards English use, <reinforcing class preparation> might be effective. By *increasing drills* and *repeating teaching practice*, they might feel more <confident in using English>. Even if they *made best efforts*, in times they will end up <perceiving their lack of proficiency>.

Paradigm 2: Anxiety towards student relations

This form of anxiety includes concerns about *responding to student questions* or fears regarding *student reactions*. These concerns may arise because of <lack of teaching experience>. When pre-service teachers feel they *lack knowledge, ability, and experience*, they cannot feel confident in keeping relationships with students. *Not enough teaching experience* also leads to such anxiety. To improve situations like these, <taking actions> such as *considering anxiousness* or *taking measures for weak points* might help. Besides, <input from outside the classroom>, for example, asking for *support from other people*, *participating in seminars*, or *interacting with senior teachers* will be very helpful. Using these measures, it might be possible to <gain proficiency> as a skillful teacher.

Paradigm 3: Anxiety towards class implementation

Pre-service teachers are worried about giving *understandable explanations* and creating a *comprehensive class*. It seems they are having trouble *expressing their intentions*, and *giving directions* appropriately. These problems are possibly rooted in pre-service teachers' <mental pressure>. For example, their *lack of confidence*, having *nervous traits* by nature, or *feeling too much responsibility* might lead to anxiety. In such situations, having <readiness against teaching> will be very effective. Whenever a problem arises in the classroom, *keeping cool* and *keeping confidence* is very important as a teacher. *Not being afraid of failure* is also important in many cases. Moreover, in daily classes, if the teacher had *confidence in his/her teaching method*, the lesson would be much more fruitful. As a result, it might be possible to <reinforce teaching capability>, or become <confident as a teacher>. On the other hand, it might be possible to determine <the limit of knowledge> each teacher possesses.

Starting from the above three paradigms, it became clear that pre-service teachers in this study were feeling anxiety towards using English in class or towards creating a comprehensive class, in addition to keeping good relationships with students. Such anxiety arose from both external and internal factors among them, however, it is also clear that the participants tried to overcome their anxieties in various ways. Although most of the pre-service teachers in this study were highly-anxious about teaching English, they hoped that they could change their attitudes and through continued practice and reflection on their experiences become more proficient teachers.

Conclusions

In this study, the anxieties felt by Japanese pre-service EFL teachers were described in terms of paradigms exploring both the sources of their anxieties and possible solutions. As Horwitz (1996) argues, when EFL teachers feel teaching anxiety, there can be crucial effects on teaching practices including the amount of target language use in class. Moreover, due to the stipulations of the Course of Study by MEXT (2017), EFL teachers in Japan are facing a situation where they have to conduct ‘lessons completely in English’ to nurture students’ English communication skills. The survey results showed, naturally enough, given that pre-service EFL teachers are both new to the target language and to teaching itself, that pre-service EFL teachers will suffer a predictable amount of anxiety due their lack of experience. The Course of Study by MEXT(2017), emphasizing English as the preferred medium of instruction in EFL classrooms, may precipitate high levels of foreign language anxiety even among experienced teachers with proven track records in meeting the Ministry's long-standing guidelines for foreign language instruction and assessment. Although the pre-service teachers felt anxiety towards their English use, student relations, and class implementations, the survey results suggest that such teaching anxieties can be partially alleviated through the experiences gained in preparing for classes, developing proficiency and building confidence as a teacher. These results also suggest that it is essential to increase our awareness of the roots of foreign teaching anxieties among teachers by conducting studies with a greater number of participants from a variety of institutional settings in future.

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‘Three Way Strong’ on Mornington Island – A Remote Indigenous Community in Australia

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My work background is as a secondary English (subject, not language) and History teacher in Australia. I have a special interest in language as my grandmother came from Italy as an 18-year-old girl to marry a man she had never met. During the war she tried to limit her Italian and usually only spoke English. When she died in her nineties she could no longer speak Italian except for her prayers which she knew by heart. I always thought this was sad.

But what is devastating is the loss of Indigenous languages because, unlike my grandmother’s language which still exists in all its beauty, many Aboriginal languages are now extinct. In 1788 across Australia there were more than 250 Indigenous languages plus 800 dialectal varieties. Currently there are only 13 languages being spoken by children, and approximately 100 that are spoken to various degrees by older generations (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2020).

Up until the 1970s government policies discouraged or banned Aboriginal people from speaking their languages. Children were forbidden to speak their traditional language at school by the federal government in the 50s and teachers in mission schools had to report if and for what purpose any Aboriginal words were used in classrooms. Traditional languages were banned in school playgrounds. Missions under the control of the Church contributed to the loss of language where children were removed from their families and put into dormitories. However some missions helped preserve the language by translating the bible into the local language, but as far as I know, this was not done on Mornington Island.

In 1953 linguist Arthur Capell wrote “government policy looks forward to the loss of Aboriginal language so that Aborigines may be assimilated” (Rademaker, 2019). From the time of initial impact through early years of British settlement and colonial times, where contact was brutal and led to the massacre and loss of many Aboriginal lives, up to the present day there have been several government policies that impacted the retention of Indigenous languages. These policies affected different areas of Australia differently depending on the amount of contact. The policies ranged from protection policy in 1837, assimilation 1936, integration in the 1970s to self-management and self-determination in the 1980s. Today Aboriginal people still fight for the right to self-determination, respect for, and protection, of cultural rights and the right to equality and non-discrimination.

I am currently the principal of a Kindergarten to Year 10 school in a remote Aboriginal community on Mornington Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland. This work is interesting and challenging from a language perspective as students speak a creole at home and are expected to access the Australian Curriculum in Standard Australian English. There are some older members of the community who speak the traditional Aboriginal languages of the area, Lardil and Kayadild. My teachers all speak Standard Australian English (SAE). There are no local teachers employed at the school. The elders in the community want our young people to learn their traditional language. In 2018 the school conducted a community consultation to

Mornington Island Creole	Standard Australian English
<i>A yufla wan watch where yufla walkin might be find yarburr.</i>	<i>You (plural) want to watch where you are walking. You might step on a snake.</i>
<i>Wat yufla gut dat buya?</i>	<i>Have you (plural) got any prawns? (for bait)</i>
<i>Look ya all da buya jumpin.</i>	<i>Look at all the prawns jumping there.</i>
<i>Ay gut down from dere. Yufla ga fall.</i>	<i>Get down from there. You (plural) are going to fall.</i>
<i>Nomore brekimbut branch yufla.</i>	<i>Don't break those branches anymore, you boys.</i>
<i>Ay look ya. One balibal.</i>	<i>Hey look there. It's a stingray.</i>
<i>Ay Joe pass da ball oba ya!</i>	<i>Hey Joe pass the ball over here!</i>
<i>I bin dere early part.</i>	<i>I was there earlier.</i>
<i>I bin askim</i>	<i>I asked him.</i>
<i>Whatfor you bin laugh?</i>	<i>Why are you laughing?</i>
<i>Pa come meyu go la house.</i>	<i>Grandad, come on, we will go to the house.</i>

look at our next 4-year plan. One of the strong recommendations from the community was that the school be involved in teaching the local languages to students.

From 2020 all Queensland schools are required to teach a Language other than English (LOTE). At our school, following the wishes of our community, we embarked on a process of introducing the traditional languages of Lardil and Kayadild as our LOTE. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) asserts that all Australian students Indigenous and non-Indigenous benefit from learning and Aboriginal language as these languages form part of our cultural identity:

'Through studying these languages, students also learn about the history, culture, land and environment of the country in which they live' (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011).

In the last 10 years language has been identified as playing a significant role in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people as stated in a report prepared by the House of

Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2018).

So schools like Mornington Island State School are situated within a complex working environment from a language perspective as we try to negotiate the facilitation of teaching the traditional language, respecting the local creole, and teaching Standard Australian English as the transactional language. ACARA calls this process “three way strong” (The State of Queensland, Department of Education, 2018).

The two main traditional languages are Lardil, which is local to Mornington island, and Kayadild, which is from a neighbouring island called Bentinck Island. All the inhabitants of Bentinck Island now live on Mornington Island. The Bentinck Islanders were moved to Mornington Island in 1947-48 following a cyclone and tidal surge which destroyed most of the settlements on the island.

The approach we are taking is the “The Language Revival Learner Pathway” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). This takes into account the documented resources and the extent of local language use and knowledge.

The broad category of language revival that represents our community is “language revitalisation” (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). This is because there are some fluent speakers in the older generation, and even though the younger generations in the community know some words and phrases, they do not speak it as their first language.

All our local children come to school speaking Mornington Island Creole (sometimes referred to as home language, Aboriginal English, or Mornington Island English). This language is based in English and uses some Lardil / Kayadild words as well as some words from other traditional languages from the mainland and influenced by creoles spoken in Cape York. Some of the differences from SAE are words may have different pronunciation and meanings, take different endings, and are used in different sentence patterns. This includes differences in grammar, for example past tense, and the use of pronouns, vocabulary, and sounds, for example: k/g and t/d/th (Berry & Hudson, 1997).

The following table shows a few examples of Mornington Island creole.

To complicate matters, approximately 60% of our students have some form of conductive hearing loss which makes learning another language difficult. Conductive hearing loss results from interruption of the transmission of sound from the external auditory canal to the inner ear. It is commonly caused by inflammation of the middle ear. This condition is much more prevalent in Indigenous Australian children than it is in non-Indigenous children.

We use an (English as an Additional Language or Dialect) EALD approach to teach Standard Australian English (SAE). This approach includes identifying the SAE demands of the curriculum and determining students’ proficiency levels with SAE, as well as bandscaling children. Bandscaling is identifying on a continuum where a child is in their SA English language development and what are the next steps in their learning. Teachers plan and explicitly teach SAE and allow students at all levels of SAE proficiency to demonstrate their knowledge of the Learning Areas. For example, in Science in the early years, it may not be essential that the

student present their findings in SAE: They could equally meet the achievement standard for that Learning Area in their creole. However, this becomes more difficult for both the student and the teacher as students get older and science concepts become more complex. Many children in our community are highly adaptable and code-switch seamlessly when speaking SAE to a teacher or creole to their friends or family.

Traditional Languages

The introduction of a Lardil and Kayadilt language programme involved consultation, collaboration, and cooperation between the school and the local community. We had several meetings with the board of Elders of Junkuri Laka, the local Justice group. We then signed an agreement which set out the terms including: the language to be taught, the speakers, and teachers we could engage from the community. We also developed a language advisory group who approves resources and contributes to our knowledge and resource base.

The next step was to develop a local curriculum. There are curricula developed by ACARA for languages such as French, Italian and German. However as Indigenous languages are locally specific this same model is not workable. Therefore each language group needs to develop their own curriculum with a programme that covers culturally appropriate topics and language for that particular area. We worked with other schools on the Cape who were also introducing traditional languages and who were a little ahead of us in their planning. We also worked with our local advisory group and local school staff to make decisions about what would be taught.

One of the most complex issues is the recruitment, training, and appropriate remuneration of Aboriginal language teachers. Many of the people fluent in the language are elderly. It is difficult to engage younger people in this work. Currently through our staffing allocation we can only employ these teachers as teacher aides as they do not have formal qualifications. The other option is to employ the elders as consultants and for that we need to find an alternate source of funding. Living in a remote area further adds to the expense and access to training.

The fact that traditionally these languages were oral languages also adds to the complexity. About 10 years ago we had some linguists come to the island and develop print / written dictionaries which are helpful. There have also been a few publications of local stories and children's books illustrated by the local school children. Different projects over the years have contributed to the resources available. The most important and diminishing resource is the voices of the elders who are proficient in the languages. We have begun to record those to help preserve the language through an app which includes simple words and phrases spoken by some elders and have also commissioned some videos from a local producer.

On Mornington Island 'Three Way Strong' is challenging but important work. It helps with reconciliation as well as contributing to the wellbeing of our students and strengthens links between the school and the wider community. As teachers and school leadership teams come and go and competing priorities emerge, we need to develop a sustainable approach to continuing this important work. Work that has been done in the past can support work happening now. Every now and then we will come across some work that was done years ago that we did not know existed but that can add value to our program. For example, we have recently been shown a video *Lurugu* (Levy, 1973) by a local elder made in the 70s about reintroduction of initiation ceremonies on the island. This video was commissioned by The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and shows some elders speaking in traditional language. These recordings are invaluable as resources for our language and culture program. This was the time when things began to change for the people in the missions and one moment in the video confirms this when an elder says to

another member of the community “Don’t talk English talk Lardil.” Now almost 50 years later elders are trying once again to reintroduce initiation ceremonies for the young men here that have once again become rare.

The lack of sustainability is the key reason that language revival is so difficult. Resources show that attempts over the years have been short lived. It is my belief that there are a couple of generations where the language has been all but lost. The traditional ways of passing on the language in households was ruptured through the mission system where children were often housed in separate dormitories to their parents. Many students are sent off the island for their high school years so this creates another gap where children are separated from hearing their language completing their schooling in a SAE setting. They often do not return to the island until they are much older.

I have enjoyed this work and cannot measure how much I have learnt through the process. At this stage the program is not leading to fluency in the language but is teaching a basic level of language proficiency. There are currently no sustainable funding sources for a project of this magnitude. The sustainability can only be gained through the empowerment of local people. There is still much work to be done.

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