

EXPLORING PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHER ANXIETY DURING TEACHING PRACTICUM IN THAI CLASSROOMS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This study explores the teaching anxiety experienced by Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers during teaching practicum in Thai classrooms and the strategies they use to cope with it. Teaching practicum is crucial component of teacher education because it provides opportunities for pre-service teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in real classroom setting. However, teaching in an international context may intensify challenges due to cultural differences, language barrier, and unfamiliar educational environment. This study uses a qualitative multiple-case study design; the research involved two pre-service teachers from an English Education Department at a private university in East Java who completed a teaching practicum in private schools in Krabi, Thailand. The data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show there are several factors contributing to teaching anxiety, such as lack of self-confidence, language barriers, material preparation, time management, and anxiety about teaching performance. Despite those challenges, the pre-service teachers have some strategies to manage their anxiety, such as adapting their teaching methods, practicing self-management skills, and building a support system, which will increase their teaching experience. This study highlights the significance of emotional support, adequate preparation, and institutional guidance in teaching anxiety among pre-service teachers in international practicum settings

Keywords: Teaching anxiety, pre-service teachers, teaching practicum, cross-cultural teaching, coping strategies

INTRODUCTION

The term English is the main tool for communication and plays an important role in many factors, such as career, education, technology, and science. Yuzulia (2021) stated that English is used for education, science, career, technology, and communication. Those aspects have an essential role in life. In Thailand, English is taught as a foreign language (EFL), which means Thai students rarely use English for daily communication. According to the Education First (EF) English Proficiency Index, Thailand often falls into the low proficiency category. Thailand had the lowest rank of English proficiency when compared to other countries (Apichat & Fatimah, 2022).

In this context of global communication and educational development, language competence has become a fundamental requirement. Mastering the English language is important; therefore, those who have good English skills will have more opportunities and be respected by others (Sari et al., 2024). In the English education department, English students are required to participate in the teaching practicum not only in Indonesia but also in other countries. get a different experience, they can understand the different cultures, the different educational system, and social norms. Wu et al. (2025) stated that internship teaching experience will increase students' professional and personal growth by promoting cross-cultural competence and improving specific knowledge. Pre-service teachers shall do teaching practice before going to the real internship because it helps them manage the classroom in complex classes. Furthermore, Dzulfikri and Azami (2024) stated that pre-service teacher must practice their teaching ability

before coming to the community; they should practice basic skills so they can manage complex classes when they become real teachers. Additionally, Ubaidillah (2018) stated that teaching English had affected the way pre-service teacher looks at and teach English to their students.

Language proficiency is developed effectively; higher education institutions need to provide learning experiences that connect theory with practice. Siregar et al. (2023) stated that an internship is a practical way of learning outside the classroom, and it provides students with opportunities to practice their theoretical knowledge in real life. In addition to gaining practical teaching experience, pre-service teachers are required to develop a clear professional identity. Beijaard et al. (2004) found that teachers must engage in dialogue, be wise to many approaches and ways of doing everything to find their identity. The internship program is really useful for students because it significantly improves students' competence, such as hard skills, soft skills, and also gives students experience in the work life. The internship program is able to enhance students' ability, specifically in hard skills and soft skills, preparing them for a high-quality experience in the workplace (Lutfia & Rahadi, 2020).

There are many challenges that are faced by preservice teachers in teaching Thai classrooms, such as teaching anxiety, including communication, instructional, support factors, and informal, which can really influence EFL pre-service teachers during teaching practicum in Thai class communication, support system, and informational. Pre-service teachers in Thailand face many challenges, such as instructional, communication, and support factors during teaching practicum (Imsa-ard et al., 2021). Pre-service teachers experience anxiety because they seldom handle the class; thus, the education institution should prepare pre-service teachers very well before going into the program. One of the experiences that is considered a pre-service teachers are that they lack experience in handling classroom situations, which should be improved by pre-service teachers in educational institutions (Gorospe, 2022). Indonesian pre-service teacher has strategies to solve anxiety during teaching English practicum by applying social, professional, institutional, and personal strategies. Novitasari and Murtafi'ah (2022) found that there are four strategies to reduce teaching anxiety, such as social, personal, professional, and institutional strategies.

Anxiety is able to hamper pre-service teacher development in performance and limit their professional growth. Most students feel anxious in the teaching practicum, and it can have a negative effect on the teachers' performance (Djawamara & Listyani, 2021). This study will give insight into pre-service teacher' experiences and manage their anxiety in the classroom. The teaching practicum is the right moment for preservice teachers for learning before they teach in the real workplace in the future.

In the context of teaching in Thailand, pre-service teachers will use English as a means of communication, and it will be difficult for them when they explain the material or give instructions to their students, because not all students can understand English. The process of learning and teaching English in Thailand is low because the vocabulary, speaking, and grammar become problems to solve (Apichat & Fatimah, 2022). Sometimes, there are misunderstandings between a pre-service teacher and a Thai student in the classroom. This study is to investigate sources, effects, and strategies during teaching practicum. By knowing this, the study is able to provide preservice teacher preparation before going to the program.

There were some previous studies related to this study that discussed pre-service teachers' anxiety and the strategies through their teaching in Thailand. Such as a study conducted by Li et al. (2023) found that self-perception in English foreign language ability, fear of negative evaluation by supervisor, and teaching experience were found to be the main factors associated with FLTA. In addition, Kurniasih et al. (2020) added that students experience cognitive anxiety, which can make them feel worried about negative evaluation from teachers and friends. This study gives insight into anxiety research in implications, and the EFL context for teachers to better reduce anxiety in the English teaching practicum. In another study by Novitasari and

Murtafi'ah (2022) stated that pre-service teachers were anxious because of a lack of experience in teaching, time management, and afraid of making mistakes. However, they also found that EFL pre-service teachers have implemented some strategies to overcome their teaching anxiety.

This study tells the primary anxiety, and there are some strategies to manage the anxiety, including cognitive strategies and emotional strategies. Research conducted by Pasaribu and Lestari (2023) found that pre-service teachers are not confident when teaching in a real class, moreover, when the supervisor observes and evaluates their performance. Those previous studies have mostly been conducted with Indonesian EFL teachers; they investigated the experiences and strategies of preservice teachers, but only a few explored how Indonesian pre-service teachers experience teaching anxiety in Thai classes. Therefore, there is a limited understanding of how cross-cultural differences in language influence their anxiety during the international teaching practicum.

Based on the background that already been discussed, researchers generated the research question below:

1. What are the factors that pre-service teachers describe as causing teaching anxiety during practicum?
2. How do pre-service teachers implement teaching anxiety-reducing strategies during practicum?

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore pre-service teachers' anxiety and their coping strategies during teaching practicum in Thailand. A qualitative approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in a real educational context. This study focused on pre-service teachers teaching English in Thai classrooms, where differences in language and educational culture may contribute to teaching anxiety. Using a case study design, this research aimed to examine the phenomenon comprehensively and identify strategies used by pre-service teachers to manage their anxiety. These findings are expected to provide insight for future pre-service teachers, especially in an international context.

The participants were two female pre-service teachers from the English Education Department of a private university in East Java, Indonesia. Both participants had completed a teaching practicum in Thailand for at least a month. They were selected based on their practicum experience and completion of relevant pedagogical courses, such as microteaching and teaching English as a foreign Language (TEFL). Each participant was placed in a different school. This study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 14 questions to explore participants' experiences, the source of anxiety, and strategies for managing it during their practicum. The interview guide was reviewed and validated by a language expert. In addition, teaching practice videos were used as supporting documents to enrich the data.

The data were collected after those pre-service teachers had completed their teaching practicum in Thailand. The interviews were conducted individually at different times based on the participants' availability. Each session lasted 40-45 minutes, and it was conducted in a mix of Indonesian and English to ensure the participants' understanding. One interview was carried out face-to-face, while the other was conducted via Zoom. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2014). The process involved familiarizing with the data through repeated reading of transcripts,

generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally reporting the findings. This approach enabled a systematic exploration of patterns related to teaching anxiety and coping strategies.

Finally, to confirm the trustworthiness of this data, the researcher applied the standard for credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher uses member checking to ensure the credibility and validity of this data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

FINDING

The findings of this research are based on pre-service teachers' anxiety during teaching practicum in Thailand, and several themes are categorized under four main themes, which show the research focus: Factors of teaching anxiety and strategies to cope with teaching anxiety. These findings are presented based on the research question of this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cause of teaching anxiety

Lack of self-confidence

Lack of self-confidence has become one of the main factors in teaching anxiety. The participants felt unsure and nervous about their ability to teach for the first time in real life, which is a different language environment and a different culture. P1 stated,

"I feel low self-confidence because I had never been to Thailand before, and I was afraid that students wouldn't understand my explanation." (P1, Face-to-face interview, January, 2025)

In P1's explanation, she said that she lacked self-confidence because she never taught students from different languages and cultures. Explaining the material to students made her afraid that the students didn't understand what she had explained.

"I felt nervous for the first time because this was my new experience teaching in Thailand. We had different cultures and languages, and I realized that most students had limited English language." (P2, Zoom interview, January, 2025)

In accordance with P2's said nervousness when teaching in Thailand was a completely new experience for her. This feeling shows that pre-service teachers should face differences in language and culture, which create challenges in adjusting to a new teaching environment.

Both students shared the same opinion about the nervousness experienced by the two pre-service teachers. This indicates that teaching in an international setting requires a high level of adaptability, mostly in understanding different cultures and languages between pre-service teachers and Thai students.

Language barrier

Communication will not be fluent because the pre-service teachers have a different language from the students. It will not be effective because the students seldom get the English language or have varying levels of proficiency.

"I felt that students didn't understand my instructions when I gave them instructions in English; they were confused about what I was telling them. Of course, that made me culture shock." (P1, Face-to-face interview, January, 2026)

Similar to P1, P2 also stated that she was afraid of miscommunication with Thai students due to language differences.

"I felt afraid because I couldn't deliver my explanation very well. I also felt worried about making mistakes when I gave instructions, as they didn't respond to my instructions due to the language barrier." (P2, Zoom interview, January, 2026)

Both participants had similar views that pre-service teachers felt confused and surprised when students couldn't understand the instructions in English. This situation reflects how teaching in a linguistic environment and a new culture is not always as easy as expected.

Heavy Material Preparation

These pre-service teachers also said that preparing the material is the most demanding part of their preparation.

"The Thai teacher didn't give me any books to teach; there is no guidebook, therefore I should make the material that I would teach for the next class. That's so difficult for me because I had to search in internet." (P1, Face-to-face interview, January, 2026)

Not much different from P1's account, P2 also states that she should prepare the material the day before.

"The supervisor handed over all the materials to us. When I gave Thai students the material that I prepared the day before, I was afraid that the material would not suit them." (P2, Zoom interview, January, 2026)

The participants above said the same thing, that they don't get any guidebooks from the Thai teacher. Without clear teaching material or clear guidance, the pre-service teacher might feel overwhelmed and unsure about what to teach Thai students.

Difficulties Time Management

The pre-service teacher delivers that time management is too long because they need to teach 3-8 hours a day. Adjusting to unfamiliar teaching schedules and balancing classroom responsibilities requires time management skills.

"I taught English was not an hour, but it was more than that time. There are three to four classes that I teach every day, and that really drains my energy." (P1, Face-to-face interview, January, 2025)

These responses show that P1 finds have much time to teach English in the Thai classroom, and that is very overwhelming.

"I often got pressure because before I taught English, I had prepared the material, ice-breaking. Suddenly, the Thai teachers gave me more time, till three hours, it would be boring for Thai students." (P2, Zoom interview, January, 2026)

This pre-service teacher experienced some unexpected situations when the Thai teacher gave her more time than usual. These situations can affect her decision on what kind of activity should be taken when teaching.

Both participants show how time management can affect teachers' performance and well-being. When pre-service teachers get much time to teach without any support or proper planning, they may feel like they lose energy and feel overwhelmed.

Anxiety on performance

The pre-service teacher felt anxiety when teaching, they shared that they sometimes felt nervous about their teaching performance in the classroom. Overthinking to explain the material, and this feeling made them a little scared that students might not enjoy the lesson. These pre-service teachers were afraid when students asked questions, and they couldn't answer those questions.

"When students asked me questions in their native language, and they didn't use English, that made me afraid because I don't understand what they spoke. That made me anxious and pressured." (P1, Face-to-face interview, January, 2026)

These statements reflect that P1 felt anxious and afraid when Thai students asked questions in their native language instead of English. It created worry during the teaching and teaching process.

"One of the activities that made me anxious about students gave me a question, because I had to directly answer that question. I was afraid I can't answer that question, or I found it difficult to answer." (P2, Zoom interview, January, 2026)

"P2 shared that P2 lacks confidence and feels nervous when students asked question in the class. P2 felt worried can't answer the question as soon as possible. This becomes pressure because the P2 had to answer immediately in front of the class.

Both pre-service teachers highlight that being asked a question by a student is a source of stress for them, basically when they feel unsure. It shows of making mistakes, overthinking, which made the teacher feel anxious during classroom interaction.

Strategies to Cope with Teaching Anxiety

Teaching Adaptation

The pre-service teachers shared that they tried to manage their feelings when they started feel worried or nervous while teaching. They were able to try to control their body, stay calm, and think positively with their confidence.

"I trusted in myself that the students were going to understand my instruction. I can use things like body language, and that could build my confidence." (P1, Face-to-face interview, January, 2026)

P1 shows that she tried to calm her nervousness by trusting her own ability. P1 had self-belief, which helped reduce build confidence and fear while teaching in the classroom, using body language as a strategy to support her communication.

"One of my ways to control my nervousness was trying to exercise how to teach, self-talk, and make small notes to calm down before entering the class." (P2, Zoom interview, January, 2026)

This statement shows that P2 actively tried to control nervousness before entering the classroom. By doing self-talk, practicing how to teach, and making small notes, these actions indicate that P2 was aware of her anxiety.

P1 and P2 show how to control themselves even though they got nervousness. They made personal struggles to calm themselves, using gestures or body language, small notes, self-talk, and practice before entering the class. Those have helped them feel more confident, especially in a new environment.

Self-management skill

Pre-service teachers highlight that they had tried to manage themselves well, so they prepared the materials well, had small discussions with the Thai teacher, and made lesson plans before teaching in the classrooms.

“Preparing the material the day before was my activity, and I should also consult the material that I had to teach tomorrow to the Thai teacher.” (P1, Face- to-face interview, January, 2026)

P1 implies that consultation and preparation not only reduced anxiety and technical activity, but also helped build confidence before entering the classroom. This part became part of their self-management strategy.

“I arranged the material in detail, and I should make the material suit the students' ability. I also prepare visual material, games, and interactive activities, which made students interested in the lesson.” (P2, Zoom interview, January, 2026)

The preparation of interactive and creative materials also suggests that P2 struggles to improve students' participation and understanding. This implied that P2 took responsibility for making learning enjoyable and meaningful for students.

Both participants expressed that preparation reduced anxiety and confusion because those pre-service teachers already know what they would teach and how to deliver to students in the classroom. When these pre-service teachers manage their preparation well, the learning process becomes more meaningful and effective.

Support System

Having someone to talk to became a support system, and the pre-service teacher tried to find support from people around them, such as friends and teachers. These small supports helped them to feel more comfortable and not worried when teaching in a new environment.

“The Thai teacher was supportive in overcoming my nervousness, and they always gave me motivation. That made me calm down when teaching.” (P1, Face- to-face interview, January, 2026)

This statement shows that P1 didn't overcome the nervousness on their own. Motivation and support from the Thai teacher helped P1 feel confident and calm while teaching. When someone gives motivation, it helps P1 feel less anxious.

“Having friends when teaching in a new environment helps me to realize that they feel what I feel, sharing experiences could support me emotionally, so I did not feel alone.” (P2, Zoom interview, January, 2026)

P2 shows that peer support and friendship are essential for her to adapt to a new environment. This emotional connection helps them motivated and stay positive. Feeling supported makes it easier for her to stay confident and teach effectively in a new place.

P1 and P2 highlight that receiving support from people around them helps them feel confident and calm. That support gives them emotional strength to face challenges in a new environment. It shows that teaching success is not only about preparation and self-management skills, but also about emotional support. Having positive support is able to help pre-service teachers feel motivated, valued, and allows them to perform better.

DISCUSSION

The Teaching anxiety is often identified as a particular factor that can influence the quality of teaching among pre-service teachers in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context. This type is able to create a negative effect that makes it difficult for pre-service teachers during teaching practicum. When pre-service teachers feel anxious, they may face problems in managing the classroom and lose confidence. The source of teaching anxiety is able to affect EFL students' teachers' presentation during the teaching practicum, and it will harm student teachers on the teaching practicum (Pasaribu & Lestari, 2023). In addition, Sammephet and Wanphet (2013) stated that pre-service teacher may experience anxiety, and this condition is able to influence their teaching effectiveness.

Furthermore, the causal factor that makes teaching anxiety is the lack of self-confidence. The participants felt unsure about their ability when teaching in a new environment, especially in an international classroom with different cultural backgrounds and languages. This condition makes them feel worried when interacting with students and delivering material. This finding is in line with Gumartifa and Syahri (2021), who stated that a lack of self-confidence is able to make students believe that they are not capable enough to teach or speak English.

Low self-confidence may create indecision when explaining lessons and giving instructions. As a result, Pre-service teachers may feel less capable of managing in the classroom effectively. Moreover, Li et al. (2023) found that self-perception of language ability and fear of negative evaluation are sources of teaching anxiety among pre-service teachers. Therefore, confidence plays a crucial role in helping pre-service teachers perform effectively in the classroom.

Another factor that contributed to teaching anxiety was the language barrier between pre-service teachers and Thai students. Communication become problems when students had limited English proficiency and they do not fully understand the instructions given by pre-service teachers. This situation created misunderstanding and confusion in the classroom. Finally, pre-service teachers feel anxious about their ability to deliver the lesson clearly. This finding supports Horwitz (1996), who stated that anxiety often appears when non-native teachers use a foreign language as a medium of instruction. Limited language proficiency may create nervousness and discomfort during teaching.

Making the material also becomes a significant source of anxiety for pre-service teachers. The participants reported that they had to prepare the materials independently without clear structured support or guidebooks. This condition made them feel unsure and overwhelmed about whether the material was suitable for students' needs. Preparing the material every day required extra time and energy, which increased their emotional pressure. This finding is supported by Srimuliati et al. (2025), who highlighted that preparation and lesson planning are able to create stress for pre-service teachers, especially when they feel unprepared for their teaching content.

Time management difficulties were also identified as a cause of teaching anxiety. The participants experienced long teaching hours and unexpected schedule changes, which made them feel emotionally and physically exhausted. When the participants were not prepared for these requests, they felt stressed and overwhelmed. According to Djawamara and Listyani (2021), found that time management, lesson planning, and new environments are factors that influence pre-service teachers' anxiety during teaching practicum. Without effective time management skills, the participants may struggle to balance teaching responsibilities and preparation.

The last cause of teaching anxiety that the participants felt worried when students asked questions, especially when they did not fully understand the students' language. They were

afraid of making mistakes and giving incorrect answers. This fear created pressure during classroom interaction and made them overthinking of their teaching performance. This result is supported by Buric and Frenzel (2023), who stated that teaching anxiety can influence emotional conditions such as frustration, reduced motivation, and stress. Another study from Novitasari and Murtafi'ah (2022) explained that fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation can increase anxiety among pre-service teachers.

However, there are several strategies used by pre-service teachers to overcome their teaching anxiety through teaching adaptation strategies. This is able to control nervousness and remain calm in the classroom. They tried to think positively, build confidence through self-belief, and use body language. This finding is supported by Sammephet and Wanphet (2013), who stated that self-control strategies such as positive thinking, calming techniques, and self-talk can help reduce teaching anxiety.

Furthermore, another strategy carried out by pre-service teachers are self-management skills. The participants created lesson plans, prepared teaching material carefully, and consulted with local teachers before teaching. Proper preparation helped them feel more confident. When pre-service teachers understand what they are going to teach, they feel less anxious and more organized. This finding is consistent with Djawamara and Listyani (2021), who highlighted that preparation, adaptation, and classroom planning are effective strategies to manage teaching anxiety.

The final strategy used by pre-service teachers in overcoming their teaching anxiety is the support system strategy. Motivation or support from the teacher and friends helped participants feel more confident and comfortable. Emotional support allowed them to share experiences, stay motivated, and reduce stress. Having this supportive environment made it easier for pre-service teachers to adapt to new teaching situations. These results supported Khajavy et al. (2018), who emphasized that the social environment and a positive classroom can increase motivation and reduce anxiety in teaching.

Overall, the discussion shows that teaching anxiety among pre-service teachers is influenced by personal, professional, and contextual factors. However, by applying suitable coping strategies such as adaptation, self-management skills, and support system strategies, pre-service teachers can manage their anxiety and perform more effectively during the teaching practicum.

CONCLUSION

This study discusses teaching anxiety experienced by pre-service teachers during their teaching practicum in an international classroom setting. Based on the findings and discussion, it is possible to conclude that teaching anxiety is a common experience among pre-service teachers, and it can influence their teaching performance and emotional condition in the classroom.

This study showed that factors of teaching anxiety, lack of self-confidence, and pre-service teachers often felt unsure about their ability to teach in different environments. Second, the language barrier between pre-service teachers and students created communication difficulties. Limited understanding of English among students and differences in language background increased anxiety during classroom interaction. Third, the heavy material preparation contributed to teaching anxiety. Pre-service teachers need to prepare teaching materials independently without complete guidance, and this requires extra time and effort. Fourth, difficulties in time management were found to increase emotional stress. Having a long time and sudden schedule changes made pre-service teachers feel overwhelmed and tired. Last, anxiety related to teaching performance appeared when pre-service teachers worried about making

mistakes, answering students' questions incorrectly, or being unable to manage the class effectively.

To cope with this teaching anxiety, pre-service teachers applied several strategies. Teaching adaptation, such as maintaining positive thinking and building self-confidence, helped them stay calm and focused in the classroom. Furthermore, self-management skills include lesson preparation and consultation with teachers. The last, a supportive system from the teacher and a friend, has played an important role in increasing and reducing anxiety.

Limited language proficiency may create nervousness and discomfort during teaching. Therefore, Pre-service teachers should develop emotional control and self-confidence during the teaching practicum. Practicing teaching in various situations may help them become more confident and adaptable in different classroom environment.

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