

# 國小教師之英語教學焦慮

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## 摘 要

為了因應社會對於英語的需求，教育部持續加強實施英語教育向下延伸與扎根之目標，也基於此一教育改革計畫，國小英語教師需求量驟增，許多國小在職教師必須在投入英語教學行列前參加英語教學訓練課程，在短時間內必須提昇英語與英語教學雙重能力必然會引發教師們的焦慮感與關切。因此，為了避免教學焦慮影響學習成效，了解在職教師的英語教與學焦慮並建議可行之解決之道實刻不容緩。本研究報告藉由量化與質化研究法探討在職國小教師學習與教授英語的焦慮，結果發現引起教師焦慮的原因包括自認英語能力不足以教學與課內外活動之負擔、學生與家長的期待、及英語教學專業智能不足等。相信本研究之結果除了有助於幫助職前與在職英語教師面對與體認英語教學焦慮之外，對於將來規劃英語教學師資訓練課程提升英語教學信心有重要的參考價值。

**關鍵詞：**在職教師、教學焦慮、英語為第二外語教學

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## Introduction

At the turn of twenty-first century, Taiwan government started an education reform movement in response to global changes and trends. To directly respond to the societal consensus of importance of students' English proficiency for future success, one of the major reforms was the extension of English education from the seventh grade to fifth grade starting from 2001 and later to second grade. Among the supporters of including English instruction in the public elementary school curriculum, parents, in particular, consider English proficiency not only necessary for cultivating the children's positive international outlook, but also excel in academic and career pursuits. As a result of the educational reform movement, an increasing demand for qualified English teachers has emerged.

Although teaching English to public elementary school students has been in effect in Taiwan for over a decade now, many cities and counties, particularly in rural and remote areas, are still facing a serious understaffing of qualified English teachers possibly due to tight education budget ("English Conversation," 2009; 徐夏雄, 2010) and heavy loads of administrative obligations of teachers (Chang, 2010). Mediocre English competence and ability of potential English teachers may be another major cause for understaffing. According to Taiwan's Ministry of Education (林思宇, 2010), qualified elementary school English teachers must demonstrate their English proficiency on MOE-approved English proficiency tests which equals to B2 in Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (林思宇, 2010). To resolve the difficulty in recruiting qualified English teachers, inservice elementary school teachers (IESTs), most of whom had obtained a bachelor's degree in elementary education, were required by the MOE to gain both English Proficiency Test and TEFL certificates by participating in MOE-approved English teacher preparation programs offered by universities nationwide. To these inservice teachers in training, however, having to simultaneously develop English skills as well as TEFL pedagogical knowledge may cause them to experience various degrees of anxiety and uncertainty. What is worse is that most of them may perceive themselves to be at incompetent levels of English proficiency, and therefore developed even stronger feelings of anxiety in both learning and teaching English.

In foreign language acquisition, anxiety is regarded as "a distinct complex of

self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 128), which may act as a major obstacle to be overcome. Language learners are not the only group who experience foreign language anxiety. Nonnative English teachers (NNETs), as Horwitz (1996) observed, also experience various levels of anxiety. For example, in Taiwan and other similar TEFL contexts, expectation of providing instruction in an English-only classroom by school administrators and parents may lead to potential increase in anxiety. If the teacher becomes anxious about using English as the medium of instruction, their effectiveness as instructors is likely to be influenced (Cheng & Wang, 2004; Horwitz, 1996; Moskowitz & Hayman, 1974; Wood, 2000).

Researchers (Doyal & Forsyth, 1973; Hart, 1987; Horwitz, 1996; Parkay, Greenwood, Olejnik & Proller, 1988; Pigge & Marso, 1990; Sinclair & Ryan, 1987; Wood, 2000) have found that teacher anxiety has deleterious effects on the successful functioning of the teacher and thus can, to some extent, influence students’ academic classroom achievement, rapport and acceptance by students, and classroom discipline problems (Doyal & Forsyth, 1973; Parkay et al., 1988). *Concerns*, Analogous or causes of anxiety, include teachers’ preoccupations, motivations, and thoughts (Fuller, 1969). Several researchers (Capel, 1997; Coates & Thoresen, 1976; Conway & Clark, 2003; Fuller, 1969; Pigge & Marso, 1997; Urmston, 2003) contended that concerns about survival and performance as teachers may cause resistance to change the status quo.

In order to resolve concerns about English teaching and enhance teaching effectiveness, examining sources of anxiety and concerns about English language teaching (ELT) which might consequently lead to potential increase in teaching anxiety is thus crucial. Understanding teachers’ anxiety and concerns can furthermore help raise awareness of their self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors and, as a result, increase confidence and effectiveness in English teaching. Whereas most studies focused on learners, student teachers’, and preservice teachers’ anxiety, primary purposes of this study were to explore inservice elementary school teachers’ (IESTs) anxiety and concerns about ELT at elementary schools. Research questions guiding this study were: (a) What are the IESTs’ levels of anxiety of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL)? (b) Is there a correlation between the IESTs’ EFL learning and teaching anxiety? (c) What are the IESTs’

perceived sources of EFL learning and teaching anxiety? (d) What are the IESTs' concerns about elementary school English teaching which may potentially lead to anxiety?

## Review of the Literature

### Foreign Language Anxiety

Among the research conducted to achieve a coherent theoretical framework of anxiety (Capel, 1997; Coates & Thoresen, 1976; Fuller, 1969; Marso & Pigge, 1998; Sinclair & Ryan, 1987; Spielberger, 1966; Urmston, 2003), Spielberger (1966) made an important distinction between anxiety as a transitory state and as a relatively stable personality trait. *State anxiety* consists of feelings of apprehension accompanied by heightened activity of the autonomic nervous system and reflects an “unpleasant emotional state or condition (p. 1).” On the other hand, *trait anxiety* is “a motive or acquired behavioral disposition that predisposes an individual to perceive a wide range of objectively non-dangerous circumstances as threatening (p. 17).” Based on Spielberger’s definitions, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) found a positive relationship between trait anxiety and state anxiety. However, they found that trait anxiety, due to its global nature, has not been proved to be useful in predicting second language achievement.

A number of explanations have also been offered to account for why students have difficulties with foreign language as it is typically taught in school settings. Oxford (1990) contended that language anxiety is ranked high among factors influencing language learning, regardless of whether the setting is informal learning “on the street,” or formal learning in the language classroom. Oxford further claimed that when learners experience language anxiety, giving up and feeling discouraged occur more frequently than searching for solutions to solve the problems. Furthermore, Young (1992) summarized six potential sources of language learning anxiety. Among them, instructor-learner interaction, in particular, was considered a major attributor to language anxiety. The potential sources are: (a) personal and interpersonal anxieties, (b) learner beliefs about language learning, (c) instructor beliefs about language teaching, (d) instructor-learner interactions, (e) classroom

procedures, and (f) language testing. Moreover, Moskowitz and Hayman (1974) attributed learners' foreign language anxiety partially to an instructor's adopting a teacher-centered or authoritarian posture in the class. They indicated that the underlying problem lies mainly in the teachers' manner of correcting students' errors.

## **Teachers' Anxiety**

Many researchers (Doyal & Forsyth, 1973; Erdle, Murray, & Rushton, 1985; Parsons, 1973; Phillips, Carlisle, Hautala & Larson, 1985) aimed to investigate teaching anxiety in general. They found that, theoretically, high levels of anxiety about teaching could have a detrimental impact on the transition into teacher profession and classroom teaching behaviors. Moreover, teacher anxiety was also found to have a debilitating effect on student motivation and performance. In their longitudinal study with novice teachers, Pigge and Marso (1990) found levels of anxiety about teaching decreased during teacher preparation as teaching knowledge and skills are developed. Other studies (Keavney & Sinclair, 1978; Sinclair & Nicoll, 1981) investigating teachers' attempts to deal with perceived anxiety found that, with teaching experience, state anxiety gradually fell in intensity while authoritarian attitudes to classroom control increased. Such a finding suggested the need of anxious teachers to increase the extent of their control over the threatening situations as a coping mechanism by which teachers attempt to manage their anxiety. In a survey study to examine teacher anxiety in relation to student perceptions of teacher effectiveness and student anxiety, Sinclair and Ryan (1987) found that the higher the level of teacher anxiety while teaching, the less well-organized their perceived lessons were and the less well-explained ideas were presented in the perceived lesson. The authors further found that the higher the level of teachers' anxiety, the lower tendency the students perceive their teachers to be warm and approachable, displaying a sense of humor, and showing enthusiasm for teaching.

In relation to foreign language teaching, Horwitz (1992, 1993, 1996) argued that many nonnative foreign language teachers (NNETs) experience foreign language anxiety, which can have negative consequences for language teaching, mental well-being, and job satisfaction. Among language teaching approaches, Horwitz noted that more innovative and

language-intensive teaching approaches such as target language discussions, grammar explanations in the target language, and role-plays are more unlikely to be used by the non-native language teachers. Wood (2000) aimed to describe and explain anxiety in preservice foreign language teachers, conducted a triangulated research using a questionnaire, focused open-ended interviews, and direct observations in the classroom. The findings showed that foreign language learning contexts were associated with levels of foreign language anxiety and that lower levels of foreign language anxiety were associated with higher levels of perceived proficiency. Wood's participants were particularly apprehensive about areas of teaching in general such as: administrative issues, preparing lessons, and negative attitudes that students, parents, and other teachers held about the study of foreign languages. As with NNETs, linguistic incompetency is generally identified especially about vocabulary and speaking (Horwitz, 2008; Medgyes, 1994). Due to the perceived linguistic weaknesses, NNETs are more likely to experience teaching anxieties than their counterparts of native language teachers (NETs). According to Medgyes, NNETs are "in constant distress as we realize how little we know about the language we are supposed to teach (p. 40)."

### **Teachers' Concerns**

Teachers' concerns are defined as perceived problems or worries based on fear or failure elicited from feelings or personal incompetency in teaching (Fuller, 1969). Fuller and her colleagues (Fuller & Case, 1972; Fuller, Parsons & Watkins, 1974) conducted a series of studies to develop a more solid conceptualization of teacher concerns, which demonstrated that perceived concerns of teachers change during different teaching stages. Varying concerns of the stages of pre-, early, and more experienced teaching are related to non-concerns, self-adequacy, and task and students respectively. Three levels of teachers' concerns are further identified: (a) concerns about self as a capable professional educator, (b) concerns about the tasks involved in teaching, and (c) concerns about students and the impact of teaching efforts. Ever since, Fuller's stages of teachers' concerns have been adopted and re-examined in research in various educational contexts including preservice preparation, multicultural education, integration of educational technology, adaptive teaching, and educational reform. For example, Coates and Thoresen's (1976) findings revealed that

beginning teachers' concerns are centered around aspects of ability to maintain classroom discipline, making mistakes and running out of material, knowledge of subject matter, personal relationships with other faculty members, school system, and parents. McCann and Johannessen (2004) identified novice teachers' five major concerns: relationships, workload/time management, knowledge of subject/curriculum, evaluation/grading, and autonomy/control. As with more experienced teachers, they were more concerned about time demands, difficulties with students, large class enrollments, financial constraints, and lack of educational resources were reported.

## Methodology

Methodology of this study is comprised of quantitative and qualitative designs. In Phase 1, a survey questionnaire was administered for soliciting IESTs' background information and anxiety about EFL learning and teaching. In Phase 2, semi-structured group interviews with IESTs enrolled in certificate TEFL programs to substantiate the survey results and to illustrate the IESTs' concerns about teaching English at elementary schools were conducted. It was anticipated that this study, using the research methods as delineated in this section, enables the IESTs' the opportunity to present their opinions and experience about teaching English at elementary schools for purpose of exploration rather than generalization.

## Data Collection

### *Phase 1: Survey*

In this phase, a survey questionnaire was distributed in summer 2008 to two classes of IESTs enrolled in a TEFL certificate program to solicit background information and anxiety about IESTs' teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

**Participants:** Sample strategy of this study was to recruit *pre-existing groups*, where clusters of people who work or socialize together are invited to participate (King & Horrocks, 2010). According to King and Horrocks (2010) recruiting people who share similar characteristics

and experiences will “offer a level of confidence in the group’s ability to discuss and interact ”(p. 67). The participants were 103 inservice elementary school teachers recruited from TEFL certificate programs located in Miao-li and Taichung counties offered by a university in central Taiwan.

**Instrument:** The questionnaire consisted of two parts, 43 questions in total. Part 1, consisting of 12 questions, was about the IESTs’ background information and elf-perceptions of EFL learning and teaching. Part 2 contained 31 items adapted and modified from Wood’s (2000) questionnaire and was entitled by the author of the present study as *Foreign Language and Teaching Anxiety Scale* (FLTAS) to measure IESTs’ foreign language learning and teaching anxiety. Of the 31 questions, twenty items (Items 2 to 21) that addressed foreign language learning anxiety had been adopted and modified by Wood from Horwitz’s (1986) *Foreign Language Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS) (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ); eleven questions related to EFL teaching anxiety were adopted and modified by Wood from Parsons’ (1973) *Teaching Anxiety Scale* (TCHAS) (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ ). The FLTAS was translated into Chinese from its English version by the author of this study. To validate the Chinese FLTAS, eight second-year TEFL graduate students were asked to closely review the wording and meaning of the question items. Upon collecting suggestions from the graduate students, wordings and meanings of the Chinese version of FLTAS were revised for better understanding and suitability for English teaching situations of elementary schools in Taiwan (see Appendix A). Reverse coding was used for the 13 reverse items of 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, and 30. All items were scored on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being *strongly agree*. The possible range of scores for the FLTAS scale was 31 to 155. Higher scores indicate higher anxiety.

### **Phase 2: Group Interviews**

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) emphasized that the worth of qualitative research lies in its “degree to which it generates theory, description, or understanding” (p. 46). The importance of qualitative data, in comparison to quantitative data, was clearly pointed out by Marquart, Li, and Zercher (1997) as follows:

While numbers can assess empirical reality more precisely, they are

incapable of providing details on the process that leads to a certain kind of situation. Qualitative data, on the other hand, are often rich in process-oriented information. So combining the two can help ensure a more complete understanding of the topic under study. (p. 10)

This study chose the qualitative method of semi-structured group interviews for *exploratory* purpose in the initial stages of understanding IESTs' anxiety and concerns. Group interviews can encourage recall and stimulate opinion collaboration (King & Horrocks, 2010; Morgan, 1988), during which time "the interviewed subjects' viewpoints are more likely to be expressed in a relatively openly designed interview situation (Flick, 1998, p. 76)." In addition, group interviews also allow for focusing on particular themes and for validating the data derived from the survey questionnaire.

The interview guide was semi-structured in that supplementary modes of questions were employed only when the interviewer judges there is more to be disclosed at a particular point in the interview (Gillham, 2005). The interviewees' responses were followed up with probes to get them to talk more about the targeted issue, their anxiety and concerns about teaching English at elementary schools. Semi-structured interview guide developed by the author is shown in Appendix B.

To substantiate and validate the quantitative data and to illustrate IESTs' concerns which might increase their EFL teaching anxiety, twelve inservice elementary school teachers were interviewed in summer 2008 in two groups of six with each group representing teachers from Miao-li and Taichung counties in central Taiwan. The interviews were conducted in Chinese, during which several predetermined questions based on the survey questionnaire were posed with considerable flexibility. All IESTs agreed to tape recording of the interviews and all recordings were subsequently transcribed and translated into English by the author.

## **Data Analyses**

Main purposes of this study were to explore IESTs' anxiety and concerns about teaching English at elementary schools. Descriptive analysis was employed for frequency counts and mean response scores for each statement of the FLTAS for examining perceived

sources of EFL learning and teaching anxiety. In addition, to explain in-depth the quantitative results derived from the survey responses and to solicit the IESTs' concerns, the interview transcripts were examined by following Bogdan and Biklen's (1992) scheme of coding system development, which was focused on identifying major themes and concepts having general explanatory power.

## Results and Discussion

### Background Information

Appendix C shows items regarding the IESTs' demographic information and self-perceptions of EFL learning and teaching. Of the 103 participants, 78 (75.6%) were female and 25 (24.4%) were male. More than half of the IESTs (55.3%) majored in education. Moreover, only six of the participants (5.8%) had been teaching at elementary schools for less than a year upon the time of the questionnaire administration. It was also found that most of the IESTs lacked confidence in both EFL learning and teaching. In responding to confidence in EFL learning, a majority of the IESTs (70.9%) answered *not much*. Similarly, most IESTs (73.8%) expressed *not much confidence* in EFL teaching.

### Perceived Sources of Language Learning and Teaching Anxiety

#### *English learning anxiety*

The theoretical range of the foreign language anxiety score is 20 to 100, with higher scores indicative of higher levels of anxiety. In this study, the IESTs' scores ranged from 47 to 81 ( $M=63.34$ ,  $SD=6.73$ ) and the overall perception of English teaching anxiety was above the average score ( $M=3.4$ ,  $SD=.64$ ) on the 5-point Likert scale. This result suggested that the IESTs had a moderate level of anxiety about learning English as a foreign language. Table 1 shows the top three ranked sources of EFL learning anxiety as perceived by the IESTs. In brief, the IESTs were especially anxious about not understanding English ( $M=3.83$ ,  $SD=.86$ ), about the English proficiency level they had achieved ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SD = .80$ ), and when

speaking English in front of other English teachers ( $M=3.60$ ,  $SD=.94$ ).

Table 1

*Perceived Sources of EFL Learning Anxiety*

Source	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
It frightens me when I do not understand what someone is saying in English.	3.83	.86
I am pleased with the level of proficiency I have achieved in English.	3.82	.80
I feel very self-conscious speaking English in front of other English teachers.	3.60	.94

***English teaching anxiety***

The theoretical range of English teaching anxiety scores on this subscale was from 11 to 55 with higher scores indicating higher levels of anxiety. In this study, the scale scores ranged from 25 to 47 ( $M=33.84$ ,  $SD=3.26$ ). A grant scale score of 31.39 would correspond to an average response of 2.86 ( $SD=.40$ ) on each of the 11 items. This result suggests that, on average, the IESTs who were about to start teaching English in the near future reported a moderate level of EFL teaching anxiety. Furthermore, in comparison to their EFL learning anxiety, the IESTs generally felt more comfortable about EFL teaching. Table 2 shows the top 3 ranked sources of English teaching anxiety. In short, the IESTs were most anxious when conducting spontaneous conversation activities in class ( $M=3.84$ ,  $SD=.1.03$ ), not knowing how to apply communication strategies such as guessing for compensating conversational breakdowns ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=.86$ ), and using English in front of their supervising professors ( $M=3.81$ ,  $SD=1.02$ ).

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Table 2

### *Perceived Sources of EFL Teaching Anxiety*

Source	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
My lessons will encourage spontaneous conversations in English.	3.84	1.03
If I am unsure about how to say something, I am willing to guess to use what knowledge I have of English in order to create novel utterances.	3.82	.86
I am nervous about using English in front of my professors.	3.81	1.02

### **Correlation of EFL Learning and Teaching Anxiety**

*Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r)* was conducted to examine if the IESTs' perceived English learning anxiety is correlated with their English teaching anxiety. Results from the correlational analysis showed that English learning and teaching anxiety had a positive, statistically significant, and high correlation ( $r=.69, p<.01$ ). These results confirmed that the participating IESTs with higher levels of EFL learning anxiety tended to be associated with higher levels of EFL teaching anxiety and vice versa.

### **Concerns about EFL Teaching at Elementary Schools**

The IESTs' principal concerns which may cause or heighten English teaching and learning anxiety emerged from the group interviews are discussed in this section. Group interviews were conducted semi-structurally for purpose of understanding IESTs' anxiety and concerns about EFL teaching at elementary schools. As a result of coding analyses of the interview transcripts, the IESTs' concerns fell into three categories: (a) increasing non-instructional workload, (b) parents' and students' attitudes toward elementary school English education, (c) self-perceived English proficiency and competence.

#### **Increasing Non-instructional Workload**

In addition to planning and delivering lessons, teaching encompasses a host of tasks that impose upon the daily routine such as organizing and supervising extracurricular activities, paperwork, after school meetings, and parent conferences. These non-instructional duties

may involve commitments beyond regular school hours, which can often intrude in professional development and cause anxiety. Unfortunately, non-teaching duties, in addition to heavy teaching workloads, can in turn make teaching difficult (Capel, 1989; Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2000; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Freedman, Jackson & Boles, 1983; McCann & Johannessen, 2004; Urmston, 2003). Similarly, many participating IESTs expressed increasing non-teaching responsibilities in addition to a burdensome teaching workload of approximately 24 class sessions a week to students in multiple grades and English proficiency levels. An IEST detailed non-teaching duties as burdensome and stressful as follows:

The school is obligated to participate in an increasing number of government-sponsored contests, including English speech, English songs and rhyme, English drama contests, and end-of-semester English exhibitions. Since all schools and teachers are anxious about the interscholastic competition rankings and results, responsibilities of training students and preparing for the activities naturally fall on the English teachers' shoulders. Such duties often occupy a tremendous amount of class and after-class time.

Other teachers were concerned about the supererogatory TEFL training and responsibilities added to the already burdensome and stressful teaching and non-teaching workloads as stated below:

Due to the shortage of certified English teachers, the principal demanded all homeroom teachers be responsible for teaching his/her class English, which can lead to severe work stress and negatively affect the instructional quality of existing classes.

The English teachers are called on to decorate the campus with English signs, labels, and bulletin boards conducive to English learning, which can also take away lots of time for preparing for lessons.

### **Students' and Parents' Attitudes toward Elementary School English Education**

Teaching large classes of students of multiple English proficiency levels and backgrounds, in addition to having to compromise with pre-determined curriculum, materials

and time limitations, can discourage positive views and thus cause disappointment and anxiety of teachers (Fukami, 2007). An IEST expressed a similar concern as follows:

We have to teach students with a wide range of mixed-ability levels of English proficiency, attitudes, and motivation in a class, including those who are from low-socioeconomic-status and those who have given up learning English. Some students in my class can already speak native-like English, while others don't even know the alphabet.

Gaining acceptance of students and parents while trying to establish authority in the English classroom and to compromise with pre-determined administrative mechanism also concerned the IESTs. Many IESTs expressed concerns that parents are distrustful of their pedagogical knowledge and skills; they even questioned the IESTs' English proficiency by comparing it with the native-English-speaking teachers of the cram schools their children were attending. As a result, most elementary school students in Taiwan, rather than learning English at school, develop English language skills in English cram schools. An IEST articulated her frustration in this regard: "I often felt helpless when realizing that those top students in my class learnt English from their cram school teachers, not from me." As a result, students attending English cram schools often lacked participation and enthusiasm for learning in the IESTs' classes. Similar frustration related to students' attitudes were found in an IEST's statement: "Some students who learned English from native-English-speaking teachers in the after-school cram schools tended to neglect their nonnative elementary school teachers. Some even openly tried to challenge the teacher's English knowledge in class." Yet, another IEST expressed her concern over students' offensive behavior: "The students criticized the instructional methods of the teachers of the elementary school and of the cram school. Some students even teasingly relayed the cram school teacher's opinions to the teacher."

### **Self-perceived English Proficiency and Competence**

Non-native English teachers often express self-doubt about whether they have what it takes to be teachers as far as English language and pedagogical skills are concerned. The IESTs expressed similar concerns in the survey responses and interviews about having to use

English before their students and fellow-teachers. An explanation of such a concern may, especially with non-native English teachers, root in their feeling vulnerable to language deficiencies (Cullen, 2001; Medgyes, 1994). They are afraid of losing face and lack of self-confidence in maintaining authority in the class due to self-perceived feelings of inadequate knowledge of English. For example, the IESTs were worried about their English language skills as in: “I am not pleased with the level of proficiency I have achieved in English” and “I felt very self-conscious when speaking English in front of other English teachers.” Another IEST expressed both enthusiasm for and anxiety in teaching English: “I will try to teach the class in English, but I am very worried about my English abilities.”

With regard to pedagogical competence, abilities for preparing proper instructional methods, materials, and instruction, teaching competence, and classroom management are all included (Chen, 2001). As aforementioned, the IESTs were concerned that their language difficulties would deter pedagogical performance and teaching efficacy. They were anxious about teaching English and they, as a result, would spend more time on preparing instructional plans and materials for English lessons than they would for teaching other subjects. What is worse, teachers with high anxiety were found to have more difficulty maintaining classroom control. In this study, the IESTs were also aware of their EFL teaching anxiety rooted in concerns about TEFL pedagogical competence. As an IEST stated, “I am confident in teaching mandarin and math, but I am less confident in and worried about making mistakes when teaching English. Consequently, I would spend lots of time on making teaching tools and flashcards for English lessons.” Another teacher said: “Though I majored in English in college, I still lack knowledge about and training in English teaching methodology. As a result, I am not confident in teaching English. What I did was trying to consult more experienced English teachers about how to teach pronunciation and the alphabet.” Regarding how teaching English can cause a high level of anxiety, an IEST expressed: “I didn’t know how to prepare, teach, or select a suitable English textbook. As a result, I often had nightmares and could not sleep well at night.”

## Conclusions and Implications

This study examined EFL learning and teaching anxiety of inservice elementary school teachers and concerns which might cause or heighten their anxiety. The questionnaire results showed that the IESTs, on average, had a moderate level of EFL learning anxiety ( $M=3.4$ ) and a slightly above average level of anxiety about teaching English in the near future ( $M=2.86$ ). In short, the IESTs were more confident in teaching English than learning it. Their relatively higher level of confidence in teaching English, regardless of the relatively high EFL learning anxiety, may have come from their accumulated elementary school teaching experience. In terms of English learning anxiety, the IESTs were most anxious when being unable to understand utterances in English and about their unsatisfactory English proficiency levels. With regard to English teaching, it is worth noticing that the IESTs' were most anxious in both English learning and teaching situations about using English in situations of speaking English in front of professors and colleagues, comprehending others in English, and conducting classroom activities which require spontaneous discourse skills. About performing instructional duties, they were concerned about heavy teaching and non-teaching workloads, parents' and students' attitudes toward elementary school English education, and self-perceived English language skills and competence. Significant findings about teachers' concerns and sources of anxiety and implications regarding how future TEFL training programs can help lower the aforementioned EFL learning and teaching anxiety are discussed below.

### Development of English Proficiency

This study revealed the IESTs' uneasiness about speaking English in front of their supervisors, colleagues, and students. Such results are coincident with Horwitz's (2008) claim that nonnative teachers can be anxious about speaking and avoid conversational activities. Their heightened anxiety was plausibly due to difficulties in comprehending what others say in English, according to the survey results of this study. Communication apprehension, according to Horwitz, et al. (1986), is derived from the personal knowledge that "one will almost certainly have difficulty understanding others and making oneself

understood” (p. 127). It is thus obvious to see that, when concerning about inadequate levels of English comprehension, the IESTs were anxious about conducting communicative activities both in and outside of the class.

Similar to the finding of this study, Medgyes (1994) cautioned that nonnative English teachers are relatively vulnerable because of their language deficiencies. He therefore emphasized that English development, in addition to pedagogical knowledge and skills, be incorporated in TEFL training programs. The importance of developing EFL teachers' language competence and skills can no longer be ignored in developing TEFL training programs. In addition to TEFL certificates, future elementary school English teachers must also be required of internationally-recognized English proficiency certificates to demonstrate their English commands adequate for EFL teaching. Effective ways to increasing language proficiency, according to Horwitz (1996), are for nonnative English teachers to make concrete and realistic plans and strategies including traveling and studying abroad, taking graduate courses, watching English language TV programs, and undertaking group activities to enhance confidence in English communication. At this point, it is worth mentioning, however, that the IESTs can be excessively critical of their English commands and may set their English learning goals unrealistically high. In fact, a good English teacher may not need a native-like command of English in order to teach, as long as she knows the language better than the students (Canagarajah, 1999). Therefore, future TEFL training programs should focus primarily on what components of English proficiency are most crucial for English teachers. For instance, the nature of instructional discourse containing a specific set of speech acts and functions used by English teachers needs to be addressed to ensure clear directions and instructions provided to students. In conclusion, future TEFL training programs need to continue addressing both classroom English and the teacher's English learning need to help increase teacher confidence and facilitate the use of English in the classroom.

## **Professional Development in TEFL**

Most IESTs participating in this study were not English teachers, some of whom admitted that they participated in the TEFL certificate program only for self-advancement

rather than TEFL preparation. According to the triangulated results of this study, it can be confidently interpreted that high levels of anxiety may have been a major reason for the IESTs' resistance to EFL teaching. Consistent with the finding, Marso and Pigge (1998) found that certified teachers who did not want to teach reported higher levels of anxiety about teaching. However, the levels of anxiety about teaching decreased during teacher preparation as teaching knowledge and skills are developed. Therefore, future TEFL training programs should continue to develop TEFL pedagogical competence (particularly in areas of understanding and selecting appropriate teaching techniques and activities); examine teachers' beliefs about TEFL; reflect on and familiarize with existing administrative and instructional realities about elementary school contexts; and prepare and present instructional materials and activities for students of diverse socioeconomic background and English abilities.

### **Coping With Increasing Workload**

Increasing workload can influence surpass teachers' abilities to cope, and overworked teachers can negatively affect student learning. In Taiwan, being obliged to participate in non-teaching activities such as preparing students for various English contests and organizing and supervising extracurricular activities is to some extent burdensome to English teachers. Therefore, it is urgent to identify areas of IESTs' workload issues in order to help them better cope with the resulting anxiety and stress. As teachers are required to be responsible for a wide variety of out-of-class activities, they should have prior training that would enable them to better perform such duties (Urmston, 2003). Moreover, it is also imperative that future teacher preparation programs be geared toward helping teachers cope with those problems as articulated and confronted by the IESTs. Future programs can invite experienced English teachers to give advice on how to cope with increasing workload in order to help novice IESTs reduce related anxiety.

### **Reducing Teachers' Anxiety**

Previous research has concluded that teachers' anxiety can have a negative impact on teaching effectiveness and students' performance. Anxious teachers are likely to raise

students' anxiety level (Horwitz, 1996; Medgyes, 1994; Payne & Manning, 1990). In order to respond to such an urgent issue, this study explored and provided insights into IESTs' anxiety about EFL learning and teaching. A relatively high positive correlation was found in this study between English learning and teaching anxiety. English learning anxiety, just as what Horwitz (1996) has cautioned, "can inhibit a teacher's ability to effectively present the target language, interact with students, and serve as a positive role model as a language learner" (p. 366). Therefore, methods for lowering teaching anxiety should be emphasized in future TEFL programs, which include: (a) recognizing teachers' feelings of FEL learning and teaching anxiety, (b) giving teachers permission to be less than perfect speakers of English, (c) helping teachers to become more aware of the EFL learning process, (d) making a plan to improve teachers' English proficiency, and (e) inviting experienced elementary school EFL teachers to deliver speeches on the realistic elementary school teaching and non-teaching responsibilities as well as students' and parents' expectations of EFL lessons.

In conclusion, this study unveiled IESTs' sources of anxiety and concerns which have been largely ignored in both related literature and TEFL training practice. Harmful effects on both teachers' successful functioning and students' academic classroom achievement may occur if teachers' anxiety and concerned are not explicitly recognized and properly resolved. In this study, the IESTs were mostly concerned about: (a) increasing non-instructional workload, (b) parents' and students' attitudes toward elementary school English instruction, and (c) self-perceived English proficiency and competence. Potentially caused by these concerns, the IESTs were mostly anxious about: (a) limited English skills, (b) limited TEFL competence, (c) increasing workload, and (d) English learning anxiety. Having been aware of these concerns and sources and anxiety, implications gained and suggestions made to future EFL teacher training are summarized below.

1. In order to enhance teachers' confidence in English proficiency and performance, future TEFL programs need to first communicate realistic and achievable English learning goals with English teachers. Second, focused components of English proficiency such as classroom English purporting for effective directions and instructions should be explicitly addressed. Finally, as was found in this study, the IESTs were most conscious about speaking in front of others. Therefore, proportion of oral training time in the TEFL program with an emphasis on public speaking and

presentations should be increased.

2. In order to ensure an appropriate level of IESTs' pedagogical competence, future TEFL training programs should target only at those teaching techniques and activities suitable for elementary school English education. Moreover, examining regularly teachers' beliefs about TEFL and familiarize them with existing administrative and instructional realities in elementary school contexts are also crucial in maximizing classroom teaching effectiveness.
3. To help English teachers better cope with increasing workload, it is urgent to identify openly areas of workload issues which may result in anxiety and stress. Future TEFL programs should provide training that would enable teachers to better perform various duties required of elementary school authorities. Inviting elementary school principals and experienced English teachers to give advice on and to share about how to cope with non-instructional workload and stress is also of importance to both potential and novice English teachers.
4. To lower English language anxiety, future TEFL programs should, first of all, help teachers explicitly recognize and discuss openly IESTs' feelings of FEL learning and teaching anxiety. Second, teachers should be more aware of the EFL learning process and make a plan with the help of EFL educators to improve English proficiency. That is, English language development should be a significant part, in addition to teaching methodology, of future TEFL training programs.

### **Limitations**

A major limitation of this study was the IESTs' time available for interviews. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies conduct interviews with individual IESTs to provide a more personal and in-depth understanding of teachers' anxiety. Besides, the IESTs were all experienced general-subject teachers aiming to enhance TEFL profession; hence, findings in this study may not be generalizable to pre-service, novice, or novice student teachers. However, by triangulating data from questionnaires and interviews, this study aimed to provide a more insightful illustration of IESTs' anxieties about teaching English at elementary schools.

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# Teachers' Anxiety and Concerns about Teaching English at Elementary Schools

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## Abstract

For more than a decade, Taiwan's Ministry of Education has been emphasizing an extension of English education to the lower grades of elementary schools to help prepare students for growing global competition and challenges. To echo such an English learning trend, inservice elementary school teachers (IESTs), most of whom were education-majors, were required by their school authorities to participate in MOE-approved English teacher preparation courses offered by universities nationwide in order to meet the increasing demand for certified English teachers. These IESTs, most of whom perceived themselves to be at incompetent level of English proficiency, tend to experience anxiety in developing both English and pedagogical skills. In order to avoid negative impact of teachers' anxiety on student learning and to enhance English teaching effectiveness, it is thus crucial to examine teachers' anxiety and concerns about EFL learning and teaching. By employing quantitative survey and qualitative semi-structured group interviews, this study found that the IESTs were most anxious about their English inadequacy and concerns about the increasing workload, parents' and students' attitudes toward their EFL teaching abilities, and lacking EFL pedagogical skills. Findings of this study confirmed the importance of acknowledging teachers' anxiety and make constructive suggestions to future English teacher training programs to ameliorate English teaching anxiety and to enhance English learning and teaching confidence.

**Keywords:** inservice teachers, teachers' anxiety, teaching English as a foreign language

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**說明:** 以下的 1 到 31 項敘述是關於您對於**英語教學**的感受，請依據您讀完每一項敘述後的第一反應，選擇答案 1-5 作答。

1.非常不同意    2.不同意    3.意見中立    4.同意    5.非常同意

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. 教書令我感到緊張。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. 我擔心說英語人士會注意到我所犯的每一個英語錯誤。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. 我擔心自己聽不懂別人所說的英語。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. 我對自己的英語能力感到滿意。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. 在其他英語老師面前說英語令我感到不自在。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. 說英語會令我緊張到頭腦一片空白。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. 為了教英語而必須先學會眾多英文文法規則令我焦慮。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. 我可以跟說英語人士自在相處。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. 在同事面前說英語令我感到尷尬。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. 我不太有信心在上課時說英語。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. 跟說英語人士以英語交談不會使我緊張。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. 我不擔心犯英語錯誤。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. 在人前說英語會令我心跳加劇。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. 我的英語口語能力足以讓我成為一位好老師。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. 無法了解說英語人士所說的所有英語字彙會令我緊張。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. 當我說英語時我覺得有自信。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. 我總是覺得其他英語老師說的英語都比我好。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. 我無法理解為何有些人會覺得學英文是一件很困難的事。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. 說英語時我變得緊張與困惑。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. 我儘可能的與說英語人士以英語交談。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. 我覺得我的英語學習經驗不足夠讓我教英語。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. 說英語比教書更令我緊張。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. 我的英語課會鼓勵學生盡量用英語自然交談。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. 如果我不確定有些英語怎麼說，我會試著用猜的或是用我已經知道的英語創造出另一種說法。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. 我有自信可以教會學生他們應該學到的英語。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 26. 我有自信可以勝任教英語。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 27. 在英文教授面前說英語會令我緊張。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 28. 上課之前，我會先想好我會用到的英語。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 29. 教書比說英語更令我緊張。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 30. 我在人群前說話相當自在。
- \_\_\_\_\_ 31. 我學英語時很重視正確文法與正確發音。

## **Appendix B**

1. Talk about your English teaching experience including type of educational institute and duration.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a future elementary school English teacher?
3. What are your strengths and weaknesses in English?
4. What was your motivation for attending the TEFL certificate program?
5. What is your opinion about native vs. non-native English teachers teaching at elementary schools?

## Appendix C

## IESTs' Background Information

Personal Characteristics			ELC and English Learning (N = 103)		
Variable	<i>n</i>	%	Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Gender			Perceived English proficiency		
Female	78	75.6	Beginning	37	35.9
Male	25	24.4	Beginning-intermediate	34	33
College Major			Intermediate	26	25.2
Education	57	55.3	Intermediate-Advanced	6	5.8
Business	13	12.6	Perceived difficult in English use		
Science	14	13.6	Speaking	31	30.1
Humanities	12	11.7	Vocabulary	30	29.1
English & FL	7	6.8	Listening	17	16.5
Seniority			Writing	10	9.7
Less than 1 year	6	5.8	Pronunciation	9	8.7
2 – 3 years	23	22.3	Grammar	6	5.9
4 – 5 years	23	22.3	Confidence in learning English well		
6 – 7 years	23	22.3	Not at all	7	6.8
8 years or longer	19	17.4	Not much	73	70.9
			A little	20	19.4
			Somewhat	2	1.9
			Very much	1	1.0
			Confidence in teaching English		
			Not at all	15	14.6
			Not much	76	73.8
			A little	10	9.7
			Somewhat	1	1.0
			Very much	1	1.0