

Pre-service EFL Teachers' Anxiety regarding the Online Teaching Practicum during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Thailand Case Study

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Abstract

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, pre-service English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers (PSTs) experienced various forms of teaching anxiety. However, during the pandemic, they likely encountered additional, different types of teaching anxiety, especially at the teaching practicum stage. This study investigated factors causing anxiety in these PSTs prior to the practicum. It surveyed 257 PSTs from 10 polytechnic universities across Thailand scheduled to conduct a teaching practicum in the subsequent semester. The findings indicated that 246 PSTs (95.7%) had no prior experience with online learning. The PSTs reported being most familiar with Zoom and Google Meet, that these were the most convenient learning platforms, and also being most proficient in them. Two of their greatest concerns regarded online teaching, namely how they would do their practicum, e.g., hybrid, and what equipment and facilities schools would provide for them. Regarding anxiety, the participants demonstrated extremely high levels on four factors all associated with online teaching: the mode of instruction, whether online, onsite, or hybrid; the stability of the internet connection during online teaching; their teaching skills in the online mode; and their ability to integrate technological applications into their teaching. Given the participants' anxiety towards online teaching, pedagogical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Anxiety, EFL classrooms, pre-service teachers, teacher's use of technology, teaching practicum

The COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected the world's countries, including their educational systems. In Thailand, most schools and colleges have had to transition from traditional

classroom-based education, i.e., the face-to-face learning environment, to a mixed (hybrid) or fully online learning environment. This sudden change has had a significant impact on several elements of teaching and learning, affecting both teachers and students.

During the pandemic, teachers experienced issues such as a deficiency in information communication technology (ICT) skills, a lack of readiness to utilize online tools, a low level of confidence in conducting online courses, and a lack of understanding of how to incorporate technology into classrooms (Boonmoh et al., 2022a). The pandemic may have made it harder for teachers to create online courses, produce online teaching materials, and modify content to meet changing demands. In some ways, pre-service teachers (PSTs) may face the same difficulties as in-service teachers (Thamachat & Kerdtip, 2021). Additionally, because many schools and colleges do not supply PSTs with free internet access or mobile devices, many of them may find it more difficult to learn online. Moreover, PSTs, as with in-service teachers, may have been adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic when delivering actual lessons (Boonmoh et al., 2022b; Jeh-Awae & Wiriyakarun, 2021).

During a teaching practicum, PSTs are typically guided by mentor teachers and university supervisors in order for them to develop professionally. The teaching practicum is also the stage at which PSTs can apply their pedagogical knowledge, including demonstrating their knowledge of approaches, methods, and lesson plans (Gan, 2013). However, due to the pandemic, delivering a teaching practicum in an online teaching environment may have adversely impacted instructional elements and increased PSTs' anxiety.

The current study investigated the teaching anxiety of EFL PSTs in Thai polytechnic universities, or *rajabhat*, which are publicly funded local universities specializing in teacher development. They began as teacher colleges and initially held the status of institutes. Subsequently, in 2005, they were elevated to university status, and 38 such universities are now located across Thailand (Grubbs et al., 2009).

While experienced EFL teachers are always expected to teach professionally, research has demonstrated that even they suffer from teaching anxiety. For example, teachers can worry about an unexpected question that they are unable to answer or might not be able to answer accurately (Kim & Kim, 2004; Gardner & Leak, 2015; Ameen, Guffy, & Jackson, 2016). While PSTs suffer from similar teaching anxiety, they may also be facing a greater dilemma over whether they will actually enjoy their future careers. Worse, before the pandemic, EFL PSTs confronted various, but relatively well-known, teaching constraints. For example, PSTs were concerned about using English in class (Yoon, 2012; Tüm, 2015; Eksi & Yılmaz Yakisik, 2016), classroom management (Merc, 2011), their amount of teaching experience (Agustiana, 2014), and opportunities to practice their English in real classroom settings (Tüfekçi-Can, 2018). Still, teacher preparation courses attempted to prepare PSTs to manage and overcome these challenges (Bannister-Tyrrell, et al., 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic's worldwide impact on education has necessitated that the traditional face-to-face learning environment rapidly change to an online learning environment. As the pandemic has been prolonged, PSTs have not been able to foresee whether they will teach online or onsite during their teaching practicum. They may be required to prepare to teach onsite, online, or through a hybrid learning environment. Therefore, this study aims to determine the experience of PSTs with online teaching, their concerns as they prepared for their teaching practicum, and the primary causes of their foreign language teaching anxiety in teaching English prior to their practicum during the pandemic.

Literature Review

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Anxiety is the usual emotion a person experiences when confronted with uncertain events or anything unfamiliar; it causes feelings of nervousness, fear, panic, turmoil, and worry (Spielberger, 1983). Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) was first described by Horwitz et al. (1986), who defined foreign language classroom anxiety as a subjective sense of fear, nervousness, tension and uneasiness associated with the situation of learning a foreign language. They classified FLA as comprising three types of anxiety specific to the foreign language classroom: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

Communication apprehension is defined as a feeling of shyness, discomfort, or tension which learners experience in classroom speaking activities (Toth, 2010; Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015), whereas fear of negative evaluation can be defined as apprehension regarding the incapability of making a proper social impression (Aydin, 2016). Finally, test anxiety is the fear of failing an examination (Aydin, 2016). Students that suffer from this anxiety believe that regardless of how hard they study for a test, they will fail.

Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety (FLTA)

The term anxiety in teaching a foreign language is more specific than in general definitions. Broadly, Keavney and Sinclair (1978) and Gardner and Leak (1994) state that teaching anxiety refers to anxiety involved in teaching activities that include the planning and implementation of learning environments. In foreign language teaching, Horwitz (1996) notes that foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA) refers to the feeling of anxiety experienced when teachers, especially non-native EFL teachers, deliver foreign language instruction, especially present in non-native EFL teachers. Actual or perceived inadequacy in using a foreign language or target language as the language of instruction in the classroom may affect foreign language teaching and self-confidence. FLTA may occur before, during, and after teaching. Similarly, Kralova et al. (2017) noted that non-native English teachers suffer language anxiety when teaching due to multiple factors. Researchers have described the various factors causing teaching anxiety. Merc (2011) argues that FLTA arises from several factors, including classroom management, specific teaching approaches, and supervision. Further, Mercer (2018) argues that teachers' low level of mastery of the target language may induce negative emotions in them. Aydin (2016) added that FLTA may occur due to unrealistic expectations regarding the success of the teaching and learning process in foreign language classes.

As FLA in the learning context differs from in the teaching context (Aydin, 2016), Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed the Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS) to determine the level of FLTA among non-native teachers. Several studies have implemented this questionnaire in their research. For example, Agustiana (2014) assessed PSTs' foreign language teaching skills throughout their 50-day teaching practicum in Indonesia. The findings indicated that teaching anxiety developed as a result of supervisor observation and a lack of prior teaching experience. Simons and Smits (2020) compared the level of FLTA in 11 non-native pre-service and beginning in-service foreign language teachers in the Netherlands. The findings showed that the non-native pre-service beginning language teachers demonstrated a higher level of FLTA than their native equivalent. Lui and Wu (2021) conducted a study in which they studied the teaching anxiety and FLA of 151 Chinese college English teachers in China. The data

indicated that teaching anxiety arose due to concerns about classroom teaching, research, other work and promotions, and their interest and confidence in teaching. Fear of speaking English, fear of negative outcomes, and level of English proficiency were the key factors influencing their levels of teacher FLA.

In summary, this prior research shows evidence supporting Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) conceptualization of three categories of FLA. However, the pandemic has introduced a complicating factor in that traditional learning has been displaced by online learning. Foreign language teachers may be anxious about teaching in a novel learning environment, making the use of technology in foreign language instruction a new source of anxiety.

In EFL teaching, a few empirical studies have investigated online teaching anxiety in PSTs. For online EFL classes, several studies have been conducted on online English Language Teaching (ELT). For example, researchers have investigated using teaching materials in an online class and the selection of a suitable platform for organizing their classroom activities (Thammachat & Kerdtip, 2021), the lack of training in how to implement online classrooms (Sanjaiprom, 2021), time spent in online class preparation (Todd, 2020), and the need to better understand online teaching pedagogy (Phuwijit, 2021). In addition, Phuwijit (2021) found that in an online class the students have no chance to work cooperatively when compared with a traditional class. Moreover, Naah (2020); Promkot, Tasana, and Limsiri (2021); and Frascini and Park (2022) agreed that poor internet network connectivity was an issue that caused anxiety in PSTs during the online EFL teaching practicum.

The majority of previous studies focused on online teaching aspects that can be found in Thai EFL teachers; however, additional factors influencing EFL PSTs can be explored, especially those which might affect PSTs during the COVID-19 pandemic (Damrimungkit & Kijkuakul, 2021). PSTs may encounter anxiety online when they might never have previously encountered it in class. For example, Merc (2015) investigated the teaching anxiety of 117 EFL PSTs in micro teaching via distance learning in Turkey. The results showed that even though the participants prepared well in terms of delivering their lessons, they still lacked confidence when teaching in class while being observed by their teacher. This finding supports Horwitz et al.'s (1986) conceptualization of the fear of negative evaluation. Similarly, Aydin (2018) noted that a few studies have been conducted to investigate FLTA in PSTs who are teaching using online learning environments.

Empirical Studies

The previous reviewed studies suggest that FLTA can be a problem for EFL PSTs when they operate in an online learning environment. However, studies have made recommendations regarding how to reduce FLTA. These can be grouped into three main FLTA categories: status of being non-native teachers, level of teaching experience, and capability in teaching online. The first aspect is how FLTA affects non-native teachers. Horwitz (1996) found that non-native teachers and PSTs may suffer anxiety when using the target language in the classroom. Similarly, Kim and Kim (2004) reported that non-native PSTs worried and felt unwilling to teach because they were anxious about their limited English proficiency, especially their inability to speak English well. In another related study, Yoon (2012) employed a questionnaire to investigate the most influential language anxiety factors experienced by 51 non-native pre-service EFL instructors in South Korea. The results indicated that using English was the most influential negative factor causing FLA in the classroom, followed by non-native teachers'

feelings of inadequacy and discomfort when operating in the target language. These two types of fear had a long-term negative impact on language learning and self-esteem. Similarly, Han and Tulgar (2019) explored the causes of English PSTs' anxiety and identified how to manage anxiety when teaching 30 Indonesian EFL PSTs by using questionnaires and focus group discussions. They found that the participants were anxious about their English skills, which caused them to lose confidence in their teaching. Similarly, Wijaya (2022) investigated two Indonesian student teachers' anxiety during the teaching practicum by interviewing them and via student journals. The results showed that weak English proficiency made them anxious while teaching English. Furthermore, Li et al (2023) identified the current level of FLTA among 72 Chinese EFL PSTs by using a Foreign Language Teaching Anxiety Scale (FLTAS) online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The findings showed that the PSTs were anxious about their English proficiency being inadequate, as they were required to conduct teaching activities and speak English while teaching. As a consequence, researchers such as Han and Tulgar (2019), Wijaya (2022), and Li et al (2023) agree that English proficiency plays an important role in the EFL teaching practicum in a classroom setting. Even though using English in teaching can cause anxiety in non-native EFL PSTs, in order to overcome this and improve teaching performance, continuous practice and repetition may be the best strategies (Horwitz, 1996).

With regard to the second aspect, i.e., the teaching anxiety factors of PSTs, Agustiana (2014) employed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to investigate the FLTA levels of 50 Indonesian PSTs during their teaching practicum. The findings indicated that teaching anxiety arose when teaching observations were conducted by a supervisor and there was a perception of insufficient teaching experience. This is consistent with the findings of Eksi and Yılmaz Yakisik (2016), who found that 52 pre-service language teachers in Turkey were anxious when their supervisor evaluated their micro-teaching course and teaching practicum. Similarly, Permatasari et al (2019) determined by using a questionnaire the level of anxiety of 34 Filipino PSTs towards final teaching demonstrations, particularly in the areas of lesson planning, class management, and evaluation, leading to the proposal of interventions to manage their anxiety. The results showed that student teachers experienced a normal level of anxiety on being evaluated. Similarly, Charisma and Nurmallasari (2020) explored the emotional challenges of 37 Korean student-teachers who were enrolled in a Korean as a Second Language teaching undergraduate degree course by using a questionnaire. The student teachers lacked the experience necessary to properly deliver their teaching and to demonstrate good classroom management. In another related study, Sari and Anwar (2021) discovered that the English language teaching anxiety of 31 PSTs enrolled in an undergraduate internship program in Indonesia was associated with both the fear of receiving a poor evaluation and a lack of time management skills. The PSTs worried about their relationships with their colleagues and supervisors. In a similar vein, Novitasari and Murtafi'ah (2022) investigated the anxiety of 32 Turkish PSTs before, during and after teaching English in a Turkish elementary classroom setting by using self-report forms, peer-reflection forms, and diaries in a blended learning classroom setting. The findings included that being observed by a mentor was the most common concern during the class. Moreover, this study also found that receiving negative feedback from mentors after the post-practicum experience made PSTs very anxious.

Another factor that affects PSTs' teaching experience is evaluation anxiety during the teaching practicum. Alrashidi (2022) explored the sources of FLTA experienced by 14 non-native pre-

service EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia by using a semi-structured interview. They found that the PSTs experienced fear of a negative evaluation. Similarly, Albasin-Lacaba et al (2022) investigated two Indonesian EFL teachers' FLTA in teaching practicum activities by using a questionnaire employing open-ended written narrative inquiry questions. They found that the PSTs felt anxious when they were evaluated while teaching.

The final aspect is the online teaching anxiety of EFL PSTs. For example, Naah (2020) investigated 94 EFL PSTs' perception of online distance teaching and learning during the COVID-19 era in Ghana. The participants in the study were satisfied with the class delivery platforms but not with the poor network connectivity. This echoes the findings of Promkot, Tasana, and Limsiri (2021), who evaluated the pandemic conditions of online learning and instruction facing 50 fifth-year PSTs and newly graduated English majors in Thailand. The results indicated that anxiety over online issues were due to external factors, such as being annoyed by their parents, the noise in their neighborhoods, the inefficiency of technological instruments, and poor internet network connectivity. Similarly, Fraschini and Park (2022) investigated via interview the sources of teaching anxiety as experienced by one Malaysian EFL PST during the online teaching practicum. The PST reported feeling anxious about a lack of online teaching experience, and the internet network was a concern in the online teaching practicum when she noticed that no student was answering the question.

In conclusion, the reviewed studies demonstrate multiple factors causing FLA in students: FLA in the classroom, identifying students' foreign language classroom anxiety, such as the fear of speaking English; the fear of negative evaluation; and the fear of failing an examination. Moreover, the PST FLA studies reveal a fear of negative outcomes, fear over the level of English proficiency, fear of supervisor observation, and fear over a lack of prior teaching experience. Therefore, these studies appear to confirm the results found in Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study on FLA in the classroom, which identified communication apprehension, the fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Nonetheless, the balance of factors causing FLA in learning and teaching may have significantly changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the online learning environment may affect students and teachers' FLA levels. Consequently, the study described herein aimed to identify the factors causing FLA in PSTs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of this study was to identify the experience of PSTs with online teaching and learning during the pandemic. Further, it aimed to investigate the concerns of PSTs as they prepare for the teaching practicum and explored the primary causes of their English FLTA prior to the practicum. Consequently, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What experience do PSTs have with online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are their concerns as they prepare for teaching practicum?
3. What are the primary causes of their FLTA in teaching English prior to the practicum?

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative approach to investigate various aspects of the emotions experienced by EFL PSTs when teaching their practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic. An online survey titled 'Thai Pre-service EFL Teachers' Anxiety regarding the Online Teaching Practicum during the COVID-19 Pandemic' (see Appendix) was employed to collect responses

from 257 PSTs. The study's primary objective was to determine the nature of these PSTs' anxiety concerning their forthcoming teaching practicum.

The participants in this study comprised 257 third- and fourth-year English teacher education students from ten Rajabhat universities throughout Thailand who were studying in their final semester prior to completing a one-year teaching practicum in either a primary school or a high school in the upcoming 2022 academic year, starting in June 2022. The participants belonged to two different programs, the study plans of which differed in terms of length. The first cohort consisted of students who were enrolled in a four-year teacher education program, who were, at the time of the study, in their third year. The second cohort consisted of students from a five-year education program who were in their fourth year. The participants were selected using the convenience sampling technique (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Consent forms were signed by respondents before they started completing the online survey. They were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the right to retire from the study at any time. The demographic profile of the 257 participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

	Categories	Participants	Percentage
Gender	Male	59	23.0%
	Female	198	77.0%
Age	20	28	11%
	21	134	52.1%
	22	79	30.7%
	23	16	6.2%
Year of study	Third year	166	64.6%
	Fourth year	91	35.4%
Experience in online learning	Yes	11	4.3%
Prior to COVID-19	No	246	95.7%

The study included an online questionnaire designed to obtain information on the participants' backgrounds and about their anxieties regarding their upcoming teaching practicum. The questionnaire contained 12 items separated into four sections: the pre-service teacher's background, their prior student experience with online learning, important factors to consider when preparing for a teaching practicum, and their anxiety about teaching. The survey was piloted with three teachers. The questions were then revised to improve their clarity and relevance to the research questions.

The results of the online survey were analysed utilizing frequency count, percentage, mean (\bar{x}), and standard deviation (SD). On the basis of frequency counts and percentages, the researchers analysed the participants' replies regarding their background, prior experience with online learning as a student, and important elements to consider when preparing for a teaching practicum. Specifically, the participants' responses regarding their future teaching anxiety were

analysed using descriptive statistics employing the SPSS program to derive means and standard deviations, and then they were processed according to a five-point Likert scale to interpret the mean score of each item, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Interpretation of Mean Scores

Mean Scores	Descriptive Rating
4.21 - 5.00	Very High
3.41 - 4.20	High
2.61 - 3.40	Moderate
1.81 - 2.60	Low
1.00 - 1.80	Very Low

In this study, "very high" indicates that the participants were extremely anxious, "high" indicates that they were anxious, "moderate" indicates that they were moderately anxious, "low" indicates that they were anxious to a low degree, and "very low" indicates that they were anxious to a very low degree.

Results

Table 3. Participants' experience with online learning platforms and their satisfaction with and competence in the platforms

	Your online learning platform experience		Satisfaction with the platforms		Level of competence in the platforms	
	Total	Percentage	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Competent	Not competent
Zoom	245	95.3%	240	5	227	30
Google Meet	226	87.9%	208	18	215	42
Line Video Call	122	47.5%	63	59	224	33
Microsoft Teams	84	32.7%	44	40	78	179
Messenger Video Call	6	2.3%	2	4	180	77

In response to the first research question, Table 3 summarizes the participants' experiences with online learning platforms, their satisfaction with them, and their self-reported competency in them. As can be seen, at least 87.9% reported having participated in online learning via two platforms, Zoom and Google Meet, while less than half of the participants reported participating in online learning via three additional platforms: Line Video Call (47.5%), Microsoft Teams (32.7%), and Facebook Messenger Video Call (2.3%).

When participants were asked about their satisfaction with various platforms, it was discovered that they were satisfied with two main online learning platforms, i.e., Zoom and Google Meet, while slightly more than half of those who reported having learned through Line Video Call (63/122 participants) and Microsoft Teams (44/84) were satisfied with them, with Facebook Messenger Video Call (2/6) being an outlier.

When the participants were asked about their competence in the various platforms, the majority stated that they were competent in four out of the five platforms, the exception being Microsoft Teams. This may be because in Thailand, LINE and Facebook Messenger are regarded as social networking applications, with their primary role being the exchange of messages or conversations, not online learning. Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, on the other hand, are primarily video teleconferencing platforms, which is likely to explain why participants were satisfied with them for online learning. The fact that only 78 participants reported being competent in Microsoft Teams could be explained by the fact that only these participants had utilized this platform.

Table 4. Level of concern when preparing for the upcoming semester's teaching practicum

Level of importance to consider when preparing for the upcoming semester's teaching practicum	Very important	Important	Not important	Was the following information given to you?	
Rate the importance of the instructional mode you will be using (online, onsite, or both).	235 (91.4%)	20 (7.8%)	2 (0.8%)	Yes	52 (20.2%)
				No	205 (79.8%)
Rate the importance of knowing the school you will teach at in advance.	218 (84.8%)	37 (14.4%)	2 (0.8%)	Yes	250 (97.3%)
				No	7 (2.7%)
Rate the importance of knowing what equipment or instructional materials will be provided by the school.	194 (75.5%)	61 (23.7%)	2 (0.8%)	Yes	60 (23.3%)
				No	197 (76.7%)
Rate the importance of knowing the grade level you'll be teaching.	180 (70%)	72 (28.0%)	5 (1.9%)	Yes	78 (30.4%)
				No	179 (69.6%)
Rate the importance of knowing how to get to school from your home.	178 (69.3%)	75 (29.2%)	4 (1.6%)	Yes	220 (85.6%)
				No	37 (14.4%)
Rate the importance of knowing who will observe your class.	168 (65.4%)	82 (31.9%)	7 (2.7%)	Yes	145 (56.4%)
				No	112 (43.6%)
Rate the importance of knowing who will act as a teacher mentor at your school.	141 (54.9%)	112 (43.6%)	4 (1.6%)	Yes	101 (39.3%)
				No	156 (60.7%)
Rate the importance of which of your friends will be teaching at the same school as you.	106 (41.2%)	130 (50.6%)	21 (8.2%)	Yes	221 (86.0%)
				No	36 (14.0%)

In response to the second research question, Table 4 summarizes the factors influencing the PSTs' concerns regarding the teaching practicum for the forthcoming semester. As can be seen, the participants prioritized the following, in this order, to prepare for their upcoming teaching practicum: mode of instruction (online, onsite, or hybrid); which school to teach at; what equipment will be provided at that school; what grade they will teach; how they will commute to school from home; which lecturer will observe their teaching; which school teacher will serve as their mentor; and finally, which of their friends will teach at the same school.

It is well known that individuals focus their attention on the subjects that are most important to them. Based on the information that the participants reported knowing already, the findings show that these PSTs have eight concerns, despite the fact that three of the eight factors' specific

details were already known to them. Two hundred and fifty PSTs (97.3%) had already been informed of the school where they would be teaching during their practicum, 220 of them (85.6%) were already aware of how to get to that school from their homes, and 221 (86.0%) knew which of their classmates would also be teaching at that school.

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Table 5. Anxiety level when preparing for the upcoming teaching practicum

When preparing for the next teaching practicum, how anxious are you about the following factors?	\bar{X}	SD
Instruction modes (online, onsite, or hybrid)	4.38	0.60
Stability of internet connection	4.36	0.66
Your ability to teach in an online environment	4.32	0.66
Integration of technological applications in teaching	4.31	0.72
Equipment or instructional materials provided	4.14	0.76
Creating online quizzes and tests	3.91	0.83
Marking quizzes and examinations	3.76	0.88
Lecturer observing the teaching	3.47	0.81
School teacher serving as a mentor	3.46	0.80
Your English proficiency	3.45	0.98
How to use online teaching platforms	3.34	0.92
Classroom management	3.33	0.99
Your familiarity with technology apps and how to operate them	3.30	0.89
How to get to school from home	3.13	0.91

In response to the third research question, Table 5 shows the PSTs' anxiety levels as they prepared for their forthcoming teaching practicum. As can be observed from the mean scores reported in Table 2, the first four factors, demonstrating very high anxiety, are associated with online teaching as opposed to onsite teaching. The participants were most anxious about the mode of instruction, then the stability of the internet connection when conducting online teaching, then their teaching ability in the online mode, and next their ability to integrate technological applications into their teaching.

In preparing for their future teaching practicum, the participants exhibited high levels of anxiety in six factors. The first three factors were also associated with online teaching, namely worries about what equipment or instructional materials will be provided, how to create online

quizzes and online tests, and how to grade those quizzes and tests. The second three factors were related to the following: anxiety about which university lecturer will observe their teaching, anxiety about who will be their mentor teacher, and anxiety about their confidence in using English.

Finally, participants were only moderately anxious about the following: using online teaching platforms, classroom management, familiarity with technology apps and how to use them, and how to travel to school from home.

Discussion

This study sought to answer three research questions. The first aimed to identify PSTs' experience with online teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results indicate that most participants had previous experience with Zoom and Google Meet as teaching and learning platforms and that they were satisfied with them. This corroborates Fitria (2020), who researched 81 teachers' attitudes regarding online learning systems in Indonesia. Fitria found that the Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom applications proved useful for EFL instruction. Similarly, Sakulprasertsri et al. (2021) found that 48 participants in three webinars on English Language Teaching (ELT) in Thailand during the COVID-19 pandemic were satisfied with Zoom and found it to be beneficial. This research demonstrated that Zoom and Google Meet were the most popular learning platforms.

More than seventy percent of participants in the current study indicated that they were highly proficient in online learning platforms and technology. In explanation, the age of the students ranged from 20 to 23 years old, meaning they may have a higher level of familiarity with technology than older people; therefore, it is possible that the students may indeed be able to use the online learning platforms proficiently and quickly. Similarly, Khasasin et al. (2021), who investigated factors affecting the online teaching of university students in Thailand, found that PSTs and newly graduated teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with the use of technology for language teaching. This may suggest that the most recent generation of EFL teachers perceive themselves as being able to use technology relatively competently in their classrooms.

According to the findings addressing the participants' satisfaction with, and competency in, the platforms, Line Video Call and Facebook Messenger were not perceived as being particularly satisfactory. This may be because these tools are not intended for academic use; they are primarily designed for communication rather than teaching. Despite studies demonstrating the benefits of the Line application in EFL learning, such as in providing voice calls, sending messages to support learning activities, submitting students' homework (Van De Bogart & Wichadee, 2015), providing pictures of new words and sounds in pronunciation (Dewi & Arifani, 2021), expressing ideas in written forms, giving feedback on friends' pieces of writing, and receiving feedback (Junmariati & Febriyanti, 2010), the application has limitations. It was primarily developed for exchanging texts, photographs, video, and audio, not for video conferencing or as a teaching and learning platform.

In the current study, participants reported being competent in using Facebook Messenger but were unsatisfied with it as a teaching and learning platform, suggesting that it may not be effective in this role. This is corroborated by Talafhah et al.'s (2019) finding that in their study Facebook Messenger was primarily used to read and observe discussions, rather than to provide language output or participate in discussions. Talafhah et al.'s (2019) participants only used

Facebook Messenger to observe and receive information. Compared to other platforms, like Zoom or Google Meet, Facebook Messenger appears inadequate for teaching and learning.

This study also investigated PSTs' concerns regarding preparing for the teaching practicum and explored the primary causes of their FLTA in teaching English prior to the practicum. The study was conducted during the pandemic and involved unprecedented teaching circumstances, including the mandating of online only teaching, and the data revealed numerous problems with online education. The findings indicate that COVID-19 is the primary factor influencing participants' concerns when preparing for the forthcoming semester's teaching practicum. Two of the participants' top three concerns were related to online learning. Although other issues were important, such as which school to teach at, what grade level to teach, and how to travel to work from home, the participants already had the required information, assuaging their concerns over these factors.

The fact that the mode of instruction, the stability of the internet connection when conducting online teaching, the PSTs' teaching ability in the online mode, and their ability to integrate technological applications into their teaching, were all rated with a very high level of anxiety suggests that PSTs may feel uncertain about teaching online or lack the confidence to teach online. This is likely because the transition from traditional classroom instruction to fully online instruction was sudden and compulsory but also because of technical challenges. The finding in this study showing the participants were very anxious about the internet connection are consistent with the findings of Naah's (2020) study that 94 EFL PSTs were particularly concerned about inadequate network connections while needing to conduct online distance teaching. Apart from noting PSTs' anxieties about online teaching were realistic and reflected in-service instructors' actual problems, Somsathan and Sanjaiprom (2021) discovered that school learners and teachers lacked the necessary online teaching skills to conduct an e-learning English class in Thailand. In addition, Phuwijit (2021) found that 42 secondary school Thai EFL teachers in Thailand lacked online teaching skills and the ability to integrate technology into their online teaching, and the study found that they needed to learn about online teaching pedagogy to improve their teaching ability during the pandemic. Damrimungkit and Kijkuakul (2021) discovered that the inability to conduct online lessons using technology impeded the development of science teaching in the 21st century for three mentor teachers and three PSTs (as participants) in a Thai secondary school. Further, Boonmoh et al. (2022a) investigated 120 Thai EFL teachers across Thailand and noted issues with the stability of internet connections for online teaching.

All teachers can experience these anxieties; however, the participants in the present study were inexperienced PSTs. It is reasonable to assume that on a hypothetical 'experience' sub index of anxiety that their levels of anxiety when teaching online are higher than those of experienced teachers. However, older or experienced teachers may be less competent at teaching using technology when compared with young PSTs. As young PSTs may feel more confident about using technology, the less they may feel anxious about it (Paul & Glassman, 2017). This merits further research.

According to the results, not knowing what equipment and instructional materials are offered by schools for the PSTs' to prepare for their teaching practicum preparation may result in a significant source of anxiety. Equipment and instructional materials are the most important tools for online classes. Consequently, PSTs' preparation is significantly influenced by their knowledge of the school's provision of equipment and instructional materials. Effective online

teaching may require ready-to-use equipment and instructional materials, for as Khamprem and Boonmoh (2019) found with Thai teachers, they were reluctant to use new technology in their classrooms due to a lack of familiarity with the equipment and facilities supplied by their colleges. Moreover, Lengkanawati et al. (2021) and Sari and Putri (2022) noted that online learning materials play an essential role in students' online education for students. These previous studies found that PSTs may not have sufficient funds to purchase equipment and instructional materials such as desktops, laptops, computer software, applications, and online platforms. In order for PSTs to formulate a plan if certain equipment or facilities were not to be available to them during their teaching practicum, it was vital for them to have information regarding the school's provision of actual instructional equipment and materials.

The findings indicate that the PSTs were highly anxious about creating online quizzes and examinations and marking examinations. This suggests that, despite having online learning experience as learners in completing online quizzes or online examinations, they may not have sufficient online teaching experience when training as teachers. Consequently, this lack of experience may impact the confidence of PSTs when it comes to developing and grading tests. These PSTs were definitely taught how to create quizzes or tests and how to grade them in a traditional classroom setting, but they might not have been prepared to create and grade these quizzes or tests online, given that the pandemic spread extremely rapidly. The capacity to make and grade online quizzes was a source of anxiety for PSTs, but it is actually a source of problem for many teachers. Cassady and Gridley (2005) noted that developing online quizzes and examinations necessitates both pedagogical and technological skills. In the traditional classroom, before the pandemic, Almari (2018) found positive and satisfactory results (62.9%) with applying standard assessment techniques to assess the taught content of PSTs. During the pandemic, Ghanbari and Nowroozi (2021) and Hilden et al. (2022) found that designing and implementing online exams and informing students about learning targets and grading criteria were the most essential tasks for PSTs who were preparing for online teaching. However, Todd (2020) found that in the online mode, teacher time on task increased, as preparing online assessments required a significant and greater amount of time when compared with preparing traditional tests.

The findings indicate that when being evaluated by a university supervisor, the identity of the school teacher mentor, together with a lack of confidence in one's English competence, were considered to be major sources of anxiety. The results of the present study supplement those of Horwitz et al. (1986) and Horwitz (1996), who postulated that FLTA centered mostly on communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. This is the case in previous studies conducted prior to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, as in Agustiana's (2014) finding that a lack of teaching experience may be the reason why PSTs are uncomfortable with supervisor observation. Similarly, Merc (2015) found that EFL PSTs felt insecure while teaching in class when the university supervisor came to observe their lessons using distance learning micro teaching. Similarly, as mentioned previously, Permatasari et al (2019) determined their PSTs' level of anxiety towards the final teaching demonstrations. They found that the PSTs experienced a normal level of anxiety while being evaluated by their respective evaluators. In contrast, when the pandemic spread, the mode of teaching and evaluation mode shifted abruptly to online education. Sari and Anwar (2021) found fear of negative evaluation was an important challenge for Indonesian PSTs. However, teaching experience was found to be more important than fear of negative evaluation because PSTs may experience most anxiety about making mistakes while teaching. In addition, Ekşi and Yakışık

(2016) recommended that support from a school-based teacher mentor at the school may reduce teaching anxiety. Further, their participants were more comfortable staying with a supervisor with whom they had formed a partnership from the micro-teachings in their methodology courses all the way through until they reached the supervision phase in their practicum.

PSTs are often highly anxious about classroom management. Before the pandemic, numerous studies (Merc, 2012; Pasaribu and Harendita's, 2018; Trotsenko et al., 2020; Alrashidi, 2022) demonstrated that FLTA can be related to classroom management. However, the pandemic has meant that delivering online lessons via technology has become a more serious problem for teachers (Damrimungkit & Kijkuakul, 2021). Similarly, Shinta and Aprilia (2020) found that classroom management was the main problem which Indonesian PSTs faced in an online learning environment. The PSTs in their study revealed that preparing lesson plans for, and delivering, online classes; interacting with students by using online platforms; and receiving assignments and returning them by using apps were all sources of anxiety. This suggests that the PSTs may lack teaching experience and/or may need to be more proficient in online teaching skills.

Using online teaching platforms, being familiar with technology apps, and knowing how to operate them were found to be less severe causes of anxiety. Using online teaching platforms or apps and operating them may not be major sources of anxiety because the average age of the participants fell in a range where there was a degree of familiarity with using technology. This finding is similar to those of other recent studies which have investigated university students' use of technology. Maneewongse (2021) and Lertsakornsiri et al. (2021) found that Thai students aged 19-20 years old demonstrated a high degree of competency in studying online and in utilizing technological tools in their learning, suggesting that age is a key factor affecting technological competency. Essentially, the more students feel confident about using technology, the less they feel anxious (Paul & Glassman, 2017), which may in turn improve their efficiency in utilizing technological tools (Promkot et al., 2021). While Boonmoh et al. (2022a) suggested that many teachers do not have the problems with using technology and with their level of ICT knowledge because of the support from their institution which provided them with tools and training workshops, the current study showed that integrating technology in teaching and knowing how to operate apps caused high levels of anxiety.

Finally, PSTs are not particularly anxious about how to travel to school from home. This factor caused the lowest level of anxiety as most PSTs knew how to travel. They may have found it easy to search for and find that information. In addition, the participants were studying at local (rajabhat) publicly funded universities across Thailand. One of the strengths of these universities is that they are institutes of higher education development for local people, and their students are also typically locals. Therefore, the participants may not worry about how to travel to school because most of them live, and will work, locally.

In summary, due to COVID-19, online teaching may cause greater anxiety in PSTs who have no experience teaching. Moreover, the factors causing anxiety in PSTs conducting online teaching during the pandemic differ from those identified prior to the pandemic specifically because of anxiety related to the mode of the practicum.

Table 6 Primary Factors Causing FLTA

Author (s)		Factors causing anxiety	Target group
Horwitz et al. (1986)	1.	Apprehension	ESL students
	2.	Fear of negative evaluation	
	3.	Test anxiety	
Horwitz (1996)	1.	Teachers' feeling of self confidence	Non-native foreign language teachers
	2.	Using target language in classroom	
Present study	1.	Anxiety over mode of instruction (online, onsite, or hybrid learning) for teaching practicum	PSTs
	2.	Anxiety over proficiency in online teaching skills and classroom management	
	3.	Anxiety over using online teaching platforms, being familiar with technology apps, and knowing how to operate them during the teaching practicum	

Table 6 shows the additional FLTA factors identified in the current study. Horwitz et al. (1986) and Horwitz (1996) found that anxiety over communication (speaking) significantly affected both ESL students and non-native foreign language teachers. However, the pandemic has accelerated the adoption of online teaching, which has played a more important role in learning and teaching. This is probably the main reason why the current study's findings may differ from those in previous studies. Even though this study found that PSTs were anxious about using the target language and being observed, these are not the main causes of teaching anxiety as previously identified by Horwitz et al. (1986) and Horwitz (1996). Because the PSTs' online teaching ability in the new mode of online instruction was more important, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on FLTA.

Conclusion

This study investigated factors causing anxiety in COVID-19-era EFL PSTs prior to their teaching practicum. Due to a lack of information about which mode of instruction they were due to employ during the practicum, the results suggest that the online teaching mode is the most significant source of anxiety. Returning to Horwitz et al.'s (1986) and Horwitz's (1996) landmark studies, the present study reveals a greater number of anxiety-related factors. Fear of using the English language and fear of being evaluated by teachers in the classroom may not be the most significant causes of FLTA. The primary factors in this study were online teaching, online teaching skills, and the ability to integrate technology into online teaching. To overcome these, COVID-19-era PSTs must be knowledgeable about how to teach equally well in online and traditional classrooms. This corroborates Phuwijit's (2021) finding that Thai EFL teachers require a deeper understanding of online teaching methodologies in order to adapt effectively to the educational changes caused by COVID-19.

Based on our findings, a variety of recommendations are offered. First, policy makers and senior academics responsible for the design of curricula need to improve them, for instance by designing them more proactively so as to address the most serious factors causing anxiety associated with online instruction. Consequently, policy makers and senior academics need to develop more and/or longer training programs in online instruction for university lecturers, i.e., training the teachers. These programs should enable university lecturers to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to implement online classes and to train their students in those same skills.

Second, university lecturers should be trained in how to teach subjects via integrated online instruction, with the same functionality as in the traditional classroom. For example, in online classes, lecturers should not simply add computer technology to the teaching content. Instead, they should fully integrate subject content with technology to deliver pedagogical knowledge, such as via online micro teaching, online seminars, online quizzes and examinations, and online evaluation.

Third, PSTs should pay attention to developing their own pedagogical knowledge and skills. The findings from the current study demonstrate that PSTs can accept that acquiring online teaching skills is critical to decreasing FLTA and to delivering successful online classes. Furthermore, making PSTs aware of their own needs and sources of anxiety may reduce their FLTA.

To sum up, online instruction plays a significant role in the teaching practicum phase of rajabhat university PSTs, and, likely, EFL PSTs globally. However, it is associated with high levels of anxiety. Future research should investigate the role of FLTA in online teaching in different phases in teachers' lives, i.e., PST, novice, mid-career, and late-career (Richards et al., 2005), to investigate ways to reduce their FLTA, including investigating how teaching institutes might integrate technological and pedagogical knowledge in order to more effectively teach PSTs to teach their own future students in the online environment. Given the fact that online or at least hybrid teaching is now the 'new norm', attention must also be paid to how to retrain mid- and late-career teachers.

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Appendix – Survey Form (on Google Form)

Survey of Pre-service EFL Teachers' Anxiety Regarding the Online Teaching Practicum during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The purpose of this survey is to investigate the level of anxiety among English-majoring students from the faculty of education who will participate in teaching practicum next semester during the COVID-19 pandemic. All responses will be kept strictly confidential. Please feel free to contact me at the following address if you have any questions. Email: atipat.boo@kmutt.ac.th, thiratchapon@gmail.com

The questionnaire contained 12 items separated into four sections: the pre-service teacher's background, their prior student experience with online learning, important factors to consider when preparing for a teaching practicum, and their anxiety about teaching.

I agree to participate in the research study. I understand the purpose and nature of this study and I am participating voluntarily. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without any penalty or consequences. The results of this survey will not impact me in any way.

☐ Yes ☐ No

- 1) Gender: ☐ Male/Female
- 2) Age: years old
- 3) Year of study: third year fourth year
- 3) Years of teaching experience:
- 4) Affiliation:
- 5) Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, have you ever studied online? Yes/No
- 6) Which of the following online learning platforms have you used in prior semesters?
☐ Zoom ☐ Google Meet ☐ Microsoft Team
☐ Line Video Call ☐ Messenger Video Call
☐ Other (s) please specify
- 7) Based on your response to question 6, how satisfied are you with the online platforms you use?

SatisfiedNo satisfiedNever use

☐ Zoom
☐ Google Meet
☐ Microsoft Team

Line Video Call

Messenger Video Call

Other (s)

- 8) How competent are you in using the online platforms you use?

Competent

No competent

Never use

Zoom

Google Meet

Microsoft Team

Line Video Call

Messenger Video Call

- 9) Have you been told about the following aspects for your teaching practicum next semester?

Yes No

What teaching mode will you use (online, onsite, or both)?

Which school will you teach next semester?

What equipment or instructional materials will be provided by the school?

What grade level you'll be teaching?

How will you get to school from your home?

Who will observe your class?

Who will act as a teacher mentor at your school?

Which of your friends will be teaching at the same school as you?

- 10) Please indicate whether the following aspect is very important, important, or not important to you when preparing to teach for the forthcoming semester's teaching practicum.

Very important

Important

Not important

Knowing what teaching mode you will use (online, onsite, or both)

Knowing which school you will teach next semester

Knowing what equipment or materials the school will offer

Knowing the grade level in which you will teach

Knowing how you will go to school from your home

Being aware of who will observe your class

Knowing who at your school will serve as a teacher mentor

Knowing which of your friends will teach at the same school as you

11) How anxious are you about the following aspects of your upcoming teaching practicum? 1 indicates no anxiety, whereas 5 indicates extreme anxiety.

1 2 3 4 5

Instruction modes (online, onsite, or hybrid)

Stability of internet connection

Your ability to teach in an online environment

Integration of technological application in teaching

Equipment or instructional materials provided

Creating online quizzes and examinations

Marking quizzes and examinations

Lecturers observing the teaching

School teacher serving as a mentor

Your English proficiency

How to use online teaching platforms

Classroom management

Your familiarity with technology apps and how to operate them

How to get to school from home

12) Do you have any suggestions?

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