

An Exploration of Anxiety Factors and Coping Strategies in Teaching Practicum: A Study of Sixth-Semester Student Teachers in microteaching classes

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore and find anxiety factors that occur during teaching practicum in microteaching classes experienced by English education students in the Unisma English Department study program. In addition, the researcher also explored several coping strategies that the participants used when teaching anxiety occurred. The data were collected in June 2024 from 3 students of the English Department at Unisma. This research uses a Qualitative Research approach, focusing on a case study design, and the instruments used are observation and interviews. The findings of this study are that the source of anxiety during teaching practice is multifaceted, stemming from both internal and external factors. Internal factors include overthinking, nervousness, and self-doubt, while external factors involve pressure from observers and peers and the need to adhere strictly to lesson plans. The coping strategies students use are also very diverse and can effectively reduce the anxiety that occurs during teaching practice in microteaching classes. These strategies include self-practice, religious approaches, and psychological strategies such as intelligent prospection and learning from others' mistakes. This study concludes that effective coping strategies can help student teachers manage their anxiety levels and perform more confidently and professionally during their teaching practicum. The insights gained from this research provide valuable guidance for future student teachers in preparing for and overcoming anxiety in their microteaching experiences. This preparation is crucial for shaping their perceptions and enhancing their readiness for the teaching profession.

Keywords: Anxiety factors; coping strategies; teaching practicum; and microteaching.

INTRODUCTION

What can be clearly seen is the phenomenal anxiety in English language teaching especially in microteaching classes. The phenomenon of anxiety in teaching practice is the hottest and most talked in the world of English language teaching. Teaching practice is necessary for EFL student teachers before entering the field. Before carrying out teaching practices in the school, EFL student teachers must take microteaching courses to prepare them for teaching in the field later. Microteaching is a model or method of basic teacher training conducted in a micro setting, starting from the time, material, and number of students. Microteaching is usually conducted by EFL student teachers who exchange roles in practicing to master basic teaching skills, learning practices, and discussing teaching practices. In a sense, microteaching is a simplified form of teaching practice but still in a classroom and context like teaching in general which offers a helpful setting for experienced and inexperienced teachers to hone their teaching skills (McKnight., 1971). Microteaching provides new experiences in teaching and learning and refreshes skills as a means of feedback on teaching performance. Through microteaching, prospective teachers can obtain information about their shortcomings and strengths in teaching. What are the strengths that need to be maintained and what are the weaknesses that can be improved. In addition, through microteaching, teachers can try new learning methods or models before being used in actual classes. According to Helmiati et al., 2013, there are 3 specific objectives with the holding of teaching practice in microteaching classes, namely: prospective teachers can analyze the learning behavior of their friends and themselves so that they can be applied to real students, prospective teachers can carry out various types of skills in the learning process both teaching

sequences and teaching materials according to what students need professionally, and prospective teachers can realize effective, productive and efficient learning situations. Teachers have a great responsibility in running an effective and efficient classroom. Teachers and students must hold each other accountable for creating an effective and smooth classroom, this can provide learning opportunities for all (*Students__class_routines*, n.d.). A prospective teacher must be able to manage the classroom effectively and efficiently, some of what must be considered when managing the classroom effectively is that the teacher must pay attention to how the classroom is arranged, how they manage learning time in the classroom, how they appear in front of students and use their most valuable asset which is the voice, how they speak to students and who speaks more in the lesson, whether the teacher or the students (Harmer, 2007). Prospective teachers must consider all of the above, therefore the practice of teaching in microteaching classes can help teachers to be more prepared in teaching in all aspects needed by students.

Anxiety in teaching practice is a common thing experienced by prospective teachers before teaching or before teaching practice in microteaching classes. This is because they have no previous teaching experience and do not know the real conditions when teaching. Prospective EFL teachers in Indonesia have a heavy burden because Indonesia uses English as a foreign language rather than a second language, which presents a challenge for prospective EFL teachers. Teaching anxiety can affect various aspects of the learning process and outcomes and teaching for teachers and learners should be contextualized (Aydın, 2021). Teacher anxiety has a significant impact during the period of direct teaching in the classroom because several factors influence anxiety (Liu, et.al. 2022). This phenomenon is quite widely discussed among students who are running microteaching, researchers have the initiative to examine the sources of anxiety when teaching in microteaching classes and explore what prospective teachers do in microteaching classes to overcome this.

METHODS

The method of this research is qualitative methodology. According to Moleong (2019), Qualitative research is research that understands new phenomena in a place experienced by the research subject. Through qualitative research, the researcher researched teaching practicum anxiety and coping strategies of 6-semester English education department student teachers in microteaching courses. The researcher used a case study design in this research. A case study provides detailed, vivid, and context-specific explanations about the examined phenomenon. The research was conducted in the Unisma English education department, especially in the microteaching classes with conducting 3 student teachers from the English education department as the research subject.

DATA COLLECTION

This study aims to identify the factors that cause students' anxiety during classroom teaching practice and the strategies they use to minimize this anxiety. Observations have been made of students who have taught practice activities in microteaching classes. This observation aims to determine the extent of anxiety seen when they teach in class and interact with students. In addition, researchers also conducted structured interviews through voice notes by asking nine questions related to anxiety in teaching practice and its coping strategies. Researchers and participants coordinate with each other in determining the interviews to be conducted, the results of the discussion of researchers and participants are using voice notes as data collection for this research. In this research, the interview uses Indonesian by answering one question with one voice note. The results of these interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of the causes of anxiety and how students overcome it.

In selecting participants for this study, the researcher chose three students who had practiced teaching in microteaching classes. The researcher also made observations before determining the participants to be studied. Some criteria for selecting participants are students with a background in teaching in

schools before teaching in microteaching classes, researchers also choose students who have never taught at all, and students who have completed teaching modules following those determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Interview Questions of Pre-Teaching Practicum Anxiety

1. What did you feel before, during, and after your first microteaching session?
2. What is the main source of anxiety when teaching a microteaching class?
3. How does pressure from observers (e.g. lecturers or classmates) affect your anxiety level?
4. How does the anxiety affect your performance when teaching, especially when interacting with students (classmates)?
5. What strategies or techniques did you use to overcome anxiety when teaching in microteaching classes?
6. How important is the support from classmates and lecturers in helping you overcome anxiety?
7. What are the biggest obstacles or challenges you face when practicing teaching in microteaching classes? How do you overcome these obstacles?
8. Do you have any recommendations for other students who will undergo microteaching so that they can overcome anxiety better?
9. How has this experience affected your view of the teaching profession in the future?

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in this study used thematic analysis. First, the researcher listened to the participant's voice notes several times so that the researcher could capture the important points. Second, the researcher transcribed the interview results via WhatsApp voice note. Then the researcher read the transcript several times to get thematically important points. Researchers also wrote important points in each interview that had been conducted. The most important aspect of thematic analysis is that the analysis process should be systematic and structured so that the final research results are of a highly reliable quality (Braun & Clarke, n.d.). Themes can be considered to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Therefore, a large number of thematic codes may emerge when analyzing the data (Dawadi, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study asked about the factors of student anxiety when practicing teaching in microteaching classes and how their strategies to overcome this anxiety. As a result of the research conducted by the researcher, the researcher obtained three themes based on interviews conducted by the researcher with participants ranging from sources of anxiety, coping strategies, and the results obtained after conducting teaching practice activities in microteaching classes. The resulting themes are in line with what the researcher studied, namely exploring the sources of student anxiety during teaching practice and the strategies used in overcoming anxiety in microteaching classes.

Source of anxiety

As mentioned in data collection, the researcher also observed the participants when they practiced teaching in the microteaching class. The researcher found gestures such as trembling, lowered voice, eyes that were not focused on the audience, and tense face. Anxiety can arise at any time, one of the causes is excessive and prolonged tension (Guntur et al., 2022). This researcher's findings by observing are also supported by the participants' answers when they were interviewed. The results of the interview are as follows:

"I felt nervous and surprised because I got the first turn and the first order in this teaching practice. This was my first experience in teaching before I had never taught before"

The first source of anxiety comes from nervousness because the participant has never taught at all and this is her first experience in teaching English in the class. The participant feels nervous when she interacts with students, then she often repeats and wastes words and effect unclear task instructions.

"I was overthinking whether I would succeed or not in this practice, and then I felt nervous until I couldn't sleep. The things that made me anxious were that I was afraid of the lecturers' commentators, guest teachers, and observers, I was

afraid of not meeting their expectations when practicing teaching and I was afraid of getting bad grades, then I was afraid of my friends' expectations because I already had previous teaching experience so I was believed to be an expert in teaching, besides that teaching practice in microteaching classes was not as easy as teaching children before or teaching in the field, I was afraid of the views of my friends"

The source of anxiety also comes from the participant's thinking, overthinking, and nervousness, which becomes the cause of the participant's fear of facing teaching practice. Participants have a perfectionist soul, so they fear making mistakes when practicing and getting bad grades. The participant's background was also tested in this teaching practice, because before teaching in the microteaching class the participant already had teaching experience. Hence, she was afraid of not meeting the expectations of others.

"I'm afraid my teaching practice was not following what I had arranged in my lesson plan."

In microteaching classes, each student must make one lesson plan and then use it as a guide for teaching practice so when participants practice must follow what is written in the lesson plan used, both in terms of time, material activities, and others. One source of fear for participants in teaching practice is the incompatibility of their teaching practice with the lesson plan because the lesson plan has a strong influence on practical assessment.

From the results of these interviews, it was found that the source of anxiety comes from students' teacher thoughts, then there is an assessment from lecturers, host teachers, and observers after teaching practice is carried out, the source of anxiety also comes from classmates who are taught not native students, which makes students afraid and anxious, and also the practice order number affects the source of this anxiety because usually, those who practice or appear first will be an example of the others. On the other hand, the main source of anxiety in this teaching practice is nervousness.

Based on the results of interviews with researchers and participants, it can be concluded that the source of anxiety comes from two things:

1. Internal factors: the source of anxiety comes from within the participant such as overthinking, nervousness, fear of making mistakes, and not meeting their expectations when teaching.
2. External factors: come from the microteaching class environment such as pressure and judging from observers and other friends. Then the influence of performances when teaching such as having to be in accordance with the lesson plan made, time management and classroom management must be in accordance with the teachings of TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language).

Coping strategies

Strategic coping is needed to reduce anxiety, it aims to manage emotions and reduce the negative impact that can affect participants. Each participant has different strategic coping to reduce their anxiety

"I practice independently repeatedly, starting from articulation, the sequence of activities in my learning later, then check the teaching time. In addition, I also approach my God, I often pray to get peace of mind so that when teaching I am not anxious."

Self-practice is proven to be able to overcome anxiety when teaching practice because careful preparation and practice can reduce anxiety during teaching practice such as learning to manage time and prepare learning materials that will be used for teaching. A religious approach is also helpful for overcoming anxiety to gain peace of mind and not worry.

"I consider myself smarter than my other friends. I consider them to be as real students as I teach at school. Then I also learned from the mistakes of my friends who have practiced before, so I do not repeat the same mistakes."

The participant's perception of her intelligence compared to his friends when practicing teaching, was reflected during the interview, then the participant also explained the impact of this, she felt this was so effective when she practiced teaching and could reduce her anxiety and fear. Then a proactive approach in observing and learning from others' mistakes in microteaching classes can be an effective strategy for improving the quality of the participant's teaching.

Some effective strategies that researchers found to overcome anxiety when teaching microteaching practice are that participants practice many times before the microteaching class starts which can be

called self-practice, clear and coherent teaching modules can help the learning process to be structured and efficient. Then to overcome anxiety in the classroom participants liken them to teaching as real teachers and teaching real students this can help participants to increase their confidence when teaching and can also reduce anxiety. Interacting with students and paying attention to them can help participants reduce their anxiety. So there are 3 coping strategies used to overcome anxiety, namely self-practice and preparation, religious strategies, and psychological strategies. These strategies proved effective in helping to reduce their anxiety when under the pressure of teaching practice.

After conducting microteaching practice

Teaching practice is a precious experience for education students, of course, in microteaching classes teaching practices provide a lot of teaching supplies before going directly to school. The results of interviews received by researchers are that participants appreciate this microteaching course because from here they get a lot of knowledge, tactics in teaching, compiling annual programs and semester programs, and advice before teaching in real schools. In addition, teaching in this microteaching class can change the participant's view of the profession: *"This teaching practice changed my outlook. As it turns out, being a teacher is not easy and requires a lot of creativity to make the classroom lively."* Thus, based on the participant's statement regarding teaching practice in microteaching classes, it is an important part of prospective teacher education. It not only overcomes teaching anxiety but also prepares them mentally when teaching assistance in education units later.

This study aims to explore the factors of anxiety experienced by students when practicing teaching in microteaching classes and also examine coping strategies used when overcoming anxiety so that other students can be prepared before undergoing microteaching practice or taking microteaching courses. In a previous study, it was found that the source of anxiety comes from prospective teachers' beliefs, in this context, prospective teachers experience higher anxiety and tend to doubt their abilities when teaching. Self-efficiency has a strong influence on the anxiety level of a prospective teacher and can have an impact on classroom management (Bach & Hagenauer, 2022). Self-efficiency has a strong influence on teaching, it is related to how prospective teachers overcome the anxiety that occurs when teaching, self-efficiency is very influential on classroom management, such as approaches with students. This relates to the researcher's findings regarding the sources of anxiety researched by the researcher, prospective teachers feel depressed and anxious about the judgments given by people around them. In the case of the researcher's study, it was found that the biggest source of anxiety was influenced by internal factors such as nervousness, overthinking, and doubts about one's ability, this is related to the previous literature which states that good self-efficacy can have a big impact in overcoming anxiety when teaching in class. Anxiety about the results of teaching evaluations is a major influence on prospective teachers, prospective teachers are afraid of feeling incompetent in their profession, and this becomes a teacher's mind when teaching, causing anxiety (Galana et al., 2023).

According to the Galana et al., 2023 collaborative approach and mentor support can help reduce anxiety when teaching because it increases knowledge. Support from surrounding people can affect the tranquillity of prospective teachers. Adequate preparation can help to reduce anxiety, as prospective teachers already know what they will be teaching and the activities they will be doing with their students. Interestingly, in the researcher's research it was found that participants used intelligent prospection by considering themselves the most knowledgeable source of information in the classroom for their strategic coping when teaching, this proved effective in overcoming this. With this prospective teachers can reduce the fear of being wrong about the material being taught. This finding is the latest finding in overcoming anxiety while teaching because from the previous article, the results found were the same as the researcher found that the difference was overcoming anxiety with intelligent prospection.

CONCLUSION

The study findings highlight that teaching practice anxiety in microteaching classes is multifaceted and comes from anywhere such as from internal and external factors. With effective strategies used by

participants, it is proven to reduce anxiety during teaching practice in microteaching classes such as careful preparation, psychological reframing, and religious approaches, participants can manage their anxiety levels and practice more professionally in microteaching classes. In addition, microteaching has a positive impact on the practice of teaching in microteaching courses, this can shape their perceptions of the profession of being a teacher and the practice of teaching in microteaching classes trains students' emotional and self-confidence before conducting innovative field learning practices in schools.

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