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NOVICE TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN OVERCOMING CLASSROOM
MANAGEMENT ANXIETY

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Graduation Thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate various teaching strategies that novice teachers of English as a foreign language implement in order to cope with anxiety and stress experienced in the classroom setting. Furthermore, this study also examined what strategies the novice teachers perceived to be more effective, as well as their reasoning for implementing certain strategies. To collect the necessary data, a list of stressors which were proven to have the greatest effect on classroom management was extracted from a study by Pavićević (2013), and a 9-question form was developed. The questionnaire was administered to 49 novice teachers of English as a foreign language. The results of the research point to communication and improvisation as most commonly implemented strategies and suggest that more experienced teachers implement these strategies more easily.

Keywords: teaching anxiety, classroom management, communicative competence, coping techniques, teaching English as a foreign language

1. Introduction

Classroom management anxiety is an aspect of foreign language teaching anxiety that is oftentimes present among novice teachers of English as a foreign language. It is a specific type of anxiety that affects a considerable number of foreign language teachers, and, as a result, can impede their ability to perform adequately in the classroom. Although many studies have already covered the subject of foreign language teaching anxiety, the majority of them focused on its causes and effects on the teacher performance, rather than on specific strategies teachers implement in the classroom to overcome and resolve these situations. Further research is required to examine how novice teachers that experience stressful situations in the classroom cope with them, as well as the reasoning behind their actions in such situations. What the research found is that the participants mostly rely on communication with students to overcome stressful situations in the classroom.

To better understand foreign language teaching anxiety, some closely related types of anxiety, such as anxiety in general and teaching anxiety in general, should be looked into as well. These could be considered components of foreign language teaching anxiety. Additionally, considering that the present study is concerned with strategies novice English language teachers implement to handle anxiety-inducing situations in the classroom, it would prove useful to delve deeper into the subjects of classroom management. Finally, since many participants mention communication as a significant aspect of classroom management, it could also prove useful to examine why that is the case.

1.1. Anxiety

According to Spielberger, anxiety is considered “an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterised by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry, and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (as cited in Edelmann, 1992, p. 3). Another definition of anxiety is offered by the American Psychiatric Association, in which it elaborates that anxiety is a feeling that “stems from the anticipation of danger, the source of which is largely unknown or unrecognised” (as cited in Edelmann, 1992, p. 3).

Since the term has a widespread use and covers many different types of anxiety, a distinction can be made depending on various factors. One distinction can be made between anxiety as a trans-situational trait (e.g. generalised anxiety disorder) and anxiety as a situationally specific response (e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder) (Edelmann, 1992, p. 3). The two types have been defined by Spielberger, Gorusch and Lushene: trait anxiety has been defined as “relatively stable individual differences in anxiety proneness”, and state anxiety has been defined as anxiety “characterised by subjective, consciously perceived feelings of

tension and apprehension, and heightened autonomic nervous system activity” (as cited in Edelman, 1992, p. 17). Anxiety can manifest in a myriad of ways, but the most common symptoms include feelings of fear, dread and panic, inability to concentrate, increases in heart rate, respiration, sweat gland activity, as well as trembling (Edelman, 1992). Although a certain amount of anxiety is considered normal, especially in stressful or dangerous situations, persistent or high amounts of anxiety can have a negative effect on everyday tasks. Individuals experiencing heightened anxiety often have difficulties concentrating and performing tasks that, to others, might seem usual or easy.

This is where another distinction arises - Scovel’s distinction between facilitating and debilitating anxiety (as cited in Pavićević, 2013). Facilitating, or beneficial anxiety has a positive effect on an individual, increasing their effort and improving their performance. However, if an individual is frequently experiencing higher levels of anxiety, it will most likely inhibit their performance. That type anxiety is considered debilitating, or inhibitory anxiety. In cases of teaching anxiety, a debilitating anxiety can seriously interfere with the individual’s ability to teach a class. This is why many people experiencing debilitating anxiety turn to various coping techniques to alleviate their anxiety.

According to Lazarus and Folkman (as cited in Edelman, 1992, p. 209) coping can be divided into two types: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping “involves actions directed towards the modification, avoidance or minimisation of the impact of the problem encountered, or attempts to control the situation,” while emotion-focused coping involves “attempts to regulate the emotional distress by relaxation and attention redirection or by denial or wishful thinking to avoid direct confrontation with the problem”. While the two types are often in effect simultaneously, “problem-focused coping tends to predominate when people feel that something constructive can be done, whereas emotion-focused coping tends to predominate when people feel that the stressor is something that must be endured” (Carver, Weintraub, & Scheier, 1989).

Carver, Weintraub and Scheier (1989) devised the COPE Inventory, a questionnaire that assesses a wide range of coping strategies which they distributed into 13 dimensions of coping: active coping, planning, suppression of competing activities, restraint coping, seeking social support for instrumental reasons, seeking social support for emotional reasons, focusing on and venting of emotions, behavioural disengagement, mental disengagement, positive reinterpretation and growth, denial, acceptance and turning to religion.

These strategies can be divided into problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Active coping, a process in which an individual works toward removing the cause

of the stress or ameliorating its effects by increasing their efforts, and planning, which involves thinking about how to handle the cause of stress, both belong to problem-focused coping strategies. Other problem-focused coping strategies are suppression of competing activities, which involves removing distractions and setting other projects aside, and restraint coping, which means that an individual is waiting for the right opportunity to react. Lastly, seeking social support for instrumental reasons, where an individual requests help, information or advice, is also considered problem-focused.

Seeking social support for emotional reasons, that is, requesting moral support, understanding or sympathy, falls under the category of emotion-focused coping. The same stands for behavioural and mental disengagement. While behavioural disengagement involves avoiding dealing with the stressor, mental disengagement occurs when behavioural disengagement is not possible and the individual tries to take their mind off the stressor. Positive reinterpretation and growth is an emotion-focused strategy that focuses on coping directly with emotions caused by the stressor, rather than the stressor itself. Focusing on and venting of emotions; denial, or refusal to believe the stressor exists; acceptance, a strategy where an individual accepts the reality of their stressful situation; and turning to religion, are all emotion-focused coping strategies.

COPE Inventory provides a more detailed insight into coping strategies and their effects, as some of these dimensions, such as planning active coping and planning, have been proved to have a high correlation with optimism, and other dimensions, such as denial and behavioural disengagement have negatively correlated with optimism (Carver, Weintraub, & Scheier, 1989). A careful examination of these correlations can help determine what coping strategies are, in the long term, more successful.

1.2. Teaching anxiety

Teaching anxiety has been defined by Gardner and Leak as “anxiety experienced in relation to teaching activities that involve the preparation and execution of classroom activities” (Gardner & Leak, 1994). Although teaching can be a rewarding profession, there are many stressors present in a teaching environment - disciplining students, time management and public speaking are only some of the possible stressors.

Teaching anxiety is frequent among novice teachers. Akinsola (2014) found that, in a group of 140 pre-service teachers, the most common stressors were classroom control problems, evaluation by supervisors, relationships with students, and achieving lesson goals. A study conducted by Ekşi and Yakışık (2016) on 52 pre-service teachers yielded similar results, claiming that the highest on the list of stressors were evaluation and problem

behaviour in the classroom. There are many more aspects of teaching that might induce anxiety among novice teachers, such as heavy workload or relationship with the supervisors. Ekşi and Yakışık (2016), however, discovered that numerous reports of anxiety among their subjects were related to classroom management. The most common stressor related to classroom management proved to be dealing with disruptive students. Other stressors included giving equal amount of attention to all students, time management, lack of experience and making the subject matter interesting for the students.

Although teaching practice is an opportunity for pre-service teachers to test and hone their teaching skills, it can often be a source of anxiety. A negative experience in the classroom can have a long-lasting effect on novice teachers, making them anxious about their future lessons. While some novice teachers will take these experiences as an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and improve their lessons, others might react negatively, avoiding future lessons if possible, or making even more mistakes due to their nervousness.

1.3. Foreign language teaching anxiety

Foreign language teaching anxiety is a situationally specific anxiety that many language teachers experience, especially those still acclimating to the language teaching experience. Foreign language teaching experience is different when compared to the experience of teaching other subjects. While all subjects require certain knowledge to be transferred to the students, teaching a foreign language puts more emphasis on the teacher's linguistic performance. Since the language teacher is expected to be a linguistic example for the students, the teachers often aim to perform flawlessly, thus putting themselves under a great deal of pressure. On top of that, most foreign language teachers are not native speakers, and are, in some ways, still language learners themselves - their own insecurities about their language proficiency and knowledge might arise during the language teaching experience.

Horwitz (1996) explains that even the most advanced and proficient learners of a foreign language can experience anxiety, if they are often experiencing feelings of inadequacy in the target language, even when those feelings do not reflect the real situation. Thus, even foreign language teachers, experienced as they are in learning and studying foreign languages, can feel anxious about their performance. This can affect their self-confidence, use of target language, and instructional decisions. All that, combined with the issues of classroom management, can make the language classroom a stressful place, especially for less experienced foreign language teachers.

The main study which the questionnaire for this study was based on was developed by Pavićević (2013). Pavićević (2013) focused on the sources of anxiety among student teachers

of English as a foreign language. The results of this study showed that the most common sources of anxiety among novice teachers are lack of time for preparation, interruption by the mentor, making mistakes, lack of control over the class, observation and evaluation by others, teaching advanced learners and teenagers, and the lack of student participation. None of the sources of anxiety were classified as those that cause high anxiety. Furthermore, a lot of participants claimed to use strategies for dealing with stress and anxiety in the classroom. In this area, items that received the highest scores were: asking help from a mentor, rehearsing lessons at home, and asking colleagues for help.

In a recent study, Merç (2015) investigated the correlation between self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers and their anxiety levels. The study uncovered that those pre-service foreign language teachers with high self-efficacy levels were more open to challenges and had more innovative approaches. This corroborates Bandura's theory (as cited in Pavićević, 2013) that individual's thoughts and beliefs can positively or negatively affect their actions. Teachers that expect their lessons to go badly will often "self-sabotage". As mentioned in section 1.1, anxiety can manifest in various ways, many of which can hinder performance. This can create an "enchanted circle": a teacher might enter the classroom with negative expectations, make mistakes, lose control over the class or "lash out" at students, and arrive to the next lesson even more anxious than before. Neither the students nor the teacher benefit from that experience.

In a study of students' perception of effective English language teachers, Kourieos and Evripidou (2013) discovered that students appreciated communicative teachers who took into consideration the students' individual differences, language anxiety, abilities and interests, and who would design learning environments accordingly. These characteristics were appreciated more than authoritative behaviour, which would indicate that a more communicative approach towards classroom management would be welcome in a language classroom. While communicative approach is more effective in the classroom, the amount of aspects on which the teachers have to pay attention is increased. Some teachers might find this bigger load stressful. Majority of the teachers are probably aware of the fact that the quality of language teaching is not determined solely by the teacher's knowledge, but also by their approach. This awareness, however, does not exclude the possibility of being overwhelmed by all of these things. Still, knowing what students expect from a language lesson might alleviate some anxiety among novice language teachers and encourage them to organize their lessons accordingly.

1.4. Communication in the classroom

Keyton (2011) defines communication as “the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another”. It is understandable that many participants considered it a crucial part of their classroom management, especially considering that proper communication is crucial in a foreign language classroom.

Lunenburg (2010) describes eight elements of communication. The two most common elements are the sender and the receiver, with the sender initiating the communication and the receiver receiving the message. Encoding is the third element. It is the process in which the sender selects words, symbols and gestures to convey the message. The outcome of the encoding process is the message, another element of communication. The medium or the channel is the fifth element, and is the carrier of the communication. After receiving the message, the receiver decodes it into meaningful information. Decoding is the sixth element of communication. Anything that distorts the message is called noise, and is another element of communication. It is important to clarify that noise can be anything from different perceptions of the message and language barriers to interruptions and emotional state of the receiver. Lastly, feedback is given by the receiver to the sender, and allows the sender to determine if the message has been received and understood (Lunenburg, 2010).

In the classroom, the medium of communication will most often be a face-to-face conversation. It is important that the teacher knows how to encode the information for each class so that the students can understand the message. If there is noise that distorts the message sent by the teacher, students must give feedback accordingly. This way, proper communication can be established. Any of the above elements can have an effect on the quality of communication.

Good communication in a classroom leads to effective classroom interaction. Dagarin (2004) explains that classroom interaction is a two-way process between the teachers and the learners where the teacher influences the learners and vice versa. Furthermore, effective classroom interaction will create a pleasant learning atmosphere and will encourage students to communicate more in the target language.

Both verbal and non-verbal communication are important aspects of proper classroom interaction. Verbal communication is the oral or written transmission of information, while non-verbal communication entails “facial expressions, eyes, tone of voice, gestures, posture or movement, touch and sight” (Kozić, Globočnik Žunac and Bakić-Tomić, 2013).

In a paper that addressed the non-verbal behavior of teachers, Kozić et al. (2013) explain that most teachers that received training in non-verbal skills retained those skills even after more time has passed. The analysis of various research in the aforementioned paper

concluded that more successful teachers use more gestures. Furthermore, it has been determined that a teacher that displays disinterest will induce disinterest among the students. This suggests the crucial role that non-verbal communication poses in the classroom. Finally, along with learning about and applying non-verbal skills, the teachers must be able to interpret the non-verbal cues sent by the students. This not only makes it easier for them to modify the lessons, but also enables them to create a positive classroom climate. Both the quality of lessons and the classroom climate affect the learners' experience.

According to Barr (2016), if the students and instructor have a good rapport, this will create a positive classroom environment and will lead to better outcomes by students. A communicative teacher will build a rapport between themselves and the students. Frymier & Houser (2000) emphasize both personal and content-driven communication in the classroom. It has been determined that students have a higher regard for teachers who show interest and enthusiasm. This suggests that "students want instructors who are respectful, supportive, available, and display enthusiasm for teaching" (Barr, 2016).

Considering the crucial role communication has in the classroom, it is not surprising that the classroom management styles have been shaped to reflect the principles of a positive classroom climate.

1.5. Classroom management styles

Classroom management is a process that occurs every day in classrooms around the world. Teachers use their skills and experience to manage lessons, more or less successfully. According to Wolk, the goal of classroom management should be "to help students develop and shape their character, as well as to promote self-discipline" (as cited in Garrett, 2003).

Wragg (1993) describes seven possible classroom management styles: authoritarian, permissive, behaviour modification, interpersonal, scientific, social systems, and folklore style. While the authoritarian style focuses on control of the classroom and students, the permissive gives students more autonomy. The behaviour modification style works on a principle of rewards and punishments, and students are rewarded for their good behaviour. The interpersonal relations and social systems styles emphasize the importance of a positive learning environment and focus on good social relationships in the classroom. The scientific style of classroom management is based on observation and analysis of successful teaching. Lastly, the folklore style is based on the collective history of teachers and their experiences. While each of the styles has its merits, using only one at the expense of others would be disadvantageous to both students and teachers. For example, while authoritarian and permissive styles seem to be two opposing styles, they could be successfully combined to

manage a classroom. Authoritarian style could prove useful in a situation where students continuously misbehave, while a more permissive approach could be introduced once the situation is under control.

In the past, the predominant style of classroom management implemented by the teachers was the authoritarian style. However, this, more traditional style of classroom management, where students are expected to sit quietly and do what they are told, is quickly being replaced with a more innovative approach. As Wolk (as cited in Garrett, 2003) describes, the *goodness* of a student is no longer just in their obedience and good behavior, but in their ability to learn about their behavior and how it affects others. Jacobsen, Eggen and Kauchak (2009) emphasize the difference between the terms classroom management and classroom discipline. While management refers to the teachers' strategies in creating a pleasant and orderly learning environment, classroom discipline refers to their responses to student misbehaviour.

Classroom management has multiple aspects, many of which can be stressful, especially for novice teachers. From lesson planning and time management to controlling the classroom and motivating students, there are many things that could go wrong. According to a study by Luo, Bellows and Grady (2000), the biggest problems perceived by teaching assistants regarding classroom management are: students coming unprepared to class, students arriving late to class, bored students, lack of motivation or participation among students, students talking among themselves during a lesson, and students that challenge or disagree with the teacher. Every classroom is different, and it is difficult to predict what will happen once the teacher enters it. Teachers are frequently required to adjust their behaviour as well as their lessons according to the students' needs. However, many stressors regarding classroom management might diminish as the teacher becomes more experienced.

The benefits of good classroom management are evident. According to Jacobsen, Eggen and Kauchak (2009), teachers who are successful at classroom management achieve increased student motivation and increased student achievement. Effective management requires that the teachers are enthusiastic, caring, and firm, and that they have high, rather than low expectations of students. It can be concluded from this that a good and honest communication with the students will result in a better classroom management.

2. Study

2.1. Aims

The present study was devised to examine classroom management anxiety of novice teachers of English as a foreign language. More specifically, it examined what teaching

strategies novice teachers implement in order to cope with stressful situations in the classroom. Furthermore, the participants were also asked to explain their reasoning for implementing specific strategies, as well as to determine what strategies they perceived to be more effective. It also investigates what kind of effect the stressful situations have on the teachers' abilities to proceed with the lesson and retain control over the class.

2.2. Sample

The questionnaire for this study was completed by 49 novice teachers of English language. Out of the total number of participants, 44 were female, and five participants were male. Regarding the academic status of the participants, 30 were students, while 19 participants finished their studies. As the study was interested in novice teachers' experiences, it was requested that none of the participants has more than five years of teaching experience.

At the time of the study, 40 of the participants had taught more than 20 lessons. One participant had taught between six and 10 lessons, two participants had taught between 11 and 20 lessons, and six participants had taught between one and five lessons. Most of the participants, that is, 39 of them, had experience in teaching private lessons, although only seven of those 39 had no other teaching experience. Out of 29 participants who attended teaching practice, 21 had taught both micro-lessons and full lessons. One of the 29 participants had taught only micro-lessons, while seven participants taught only full lessons. There were 33 participants that had experience teaching in private language schools: 28 of them worked part-time, and five of them worked full-time. A smaller number of participants taught in state schools, that is, 13 of them. Out of those 13, nine of the participants taught part-time, four of them full-time. There were 10 participants who had experience teaching both in both private and state schools. Finally, two participants had experience teaching in college and two participants had experience teaching business English to adults.

2.3. Instrument

The instrument used to gather information in this study was a questionnaire developed from a master thesis by Pavićević (2013). Pavićević (2013) studied the levels and sources of anxiety among student teachers of English, and its change over time.

While the study by Pavićević (2013) aimed to identify the most common causes of teaching anxiety among student teachers of English, the questionnaire developed for this study focused more on classroom management, and techniques novice teachers implemented to deal with stressful situations in the classroom. After comparing the stress factors described in Pavićević (2013) with other existing findings of this research subject, a 3-part form was developed.

The purpose of the first part was to gather information about the type and amount of teachers' experiences, their gender, and their year of study or graduation.

The second part was a 9-question form designed for more elaborate answers. Every question in this part covered a potentially stressful and anxiety-inducing situation that might occur in the classroom, such as students misbehaving or the teachers having technical difficulties in the classroom. The situations selected as examples were related to classroom management, and, according to Pavićević (2013), caused the greatest amount of anxiety among student teachers. Considering the fact that some teachers might not have encountered all the situations, the questions were formed as hypothetical in order to allow everyone to provide an answer:

1. *What would you do if you lost control over your class (e.g. children yelling, whispering among each other, not calming down)?*
2. *What would you do if you weren't able to answer a student's question?*
3. *What would you do if you made a language mistake in front of your students?*
4. *What would you do if you were entering a classroom for a lesson you know you haven't had time to prepare?*
5. *What would you do if you encountered hostile comments or disrespect from your students (e.g. swearing, talking back)?*
6. *What would you do if you noticed your students' attention was wandering?*
7. *What would you do if you had a hard time making students participate in class?*
8. *What would you do if you finished your lesson too early and had nothing else to do?*
9. *What would you do if you encountered technical problems while teaching (e.g. the projector not working, audio too quiet)?*

The last part of the questionnaire was a 4-question form concerned with participants' general thoughts on teaching anxiety and anxiety coping techniques. Here, the participants could name other things that made them anxious about teaching, their methods of coping with anxiety before and during teaching, the effects of their nervousness on their teaching, and things that helped them overcome it:

1. *Is there anything else that causes you to feel anxious before or during the lesson?*
2. *How do you deal with anxiety you feel before or during teaching? Is there anything specific you do that calms you down?*

3. *How does feeling anxious affect your teaching?*
4. *In your opinion, what helps you the most when you are feeling anxious about teaching?*

2.4. Procedure

The questionnaire was administered via social networks through a Google Forms link. As the link was shared, the aims of the study were explained. Considering the aims of the study, which was interested in experiences of novice teachers of a foreign language, the participants were requested to have no more than 5 years of teaching experience.

2.5. Results and discussion

2.5.1. The main part of the questionnaire

The main part of the questionnaire is the second part of the three-part questionnaire. It consists of nine questions, which the participants were asked to answer honestly and in detail. As a result, each question received a variety of informative answers.

The first question was asked to determine how the participants handle a class that is out of control. The examples of an out-of-control classroom were children yelling, students whispering among each other and generally not calming down. One group of the participants, that is, 18 of them, mentioned silence as a very effective way to calm students down. Nine out of those participants also mentioned making eye contact with the students while remaining calm and silent. One participant explained that “it’s an effective method because the students are more frightened by the teacher looking stern (...) than by the teacher yelling”, while another participant remarked that “yelling would probably not have any effect”. Next to silence, another often utilized way of handling unruly students was introducing a new activity and talking to the students – this was mentioned by 24 out of 49 participants. While 11 participants out of 49 mentioned verbally reprimanding students and call students out in their conversation, six participants that used conversation to resolve the situations emphasized staying calm. Those participants that introduced a new activity mentioned that the new activity should take up more of the students’ attention so that they do not have time to talk and misbehave. Lastly, out of 49 participants, only eight of them mentioned formal measures or yelling as ways to handle a class out of control.

The hypothetical situation in the second question, not knowing the answer to a student’s question, received an almost unanimous answer among the participants. Most of them, 46 out of 49, would simply admit they did not know the answer, and would check the information for the next class. Eight participants did mention that they would include the

students and work with them on finding out the answer to the question. A few participants, that is, five of them, even noted that it was not a shame to not know everything.

The third question aimed to determine how the participants would handle making a language mistake in front of students. The vast majority, that is, 41 out of 49 participants, offered self-correction as a solution. The ways in which the participants would do this differed. Four participants would use humor to lighten the situation; nine out of 49 would use the opportunity to teach their students that it is normal to make mistakes; and five participants admitted that they wouldn't correct minor mistakes, only the bigger ones. Regarding the minor mistakes, one participant explained that "slips of tongue are always possible and not that relevant if there is no communication breakdown".

The fourth question was asked to determine what the participants would do if entering a classroom unprepared for the lesson. Here, most emphasis was put on improvisation. One participant concluded that "improvisation is the most valuable characteristic of every competent teacher". Six participants gave more extensive descriptions and explanations of how exactly they would improvise in the classroom. Out of 49 participants, two would pick an activity based on students' mood, while one would adapt it according to students' ages. Five participants mentioned relying on speaking activities, such as debates. These activities were chosen because they were an effective and easy way to engage the class while also giving an educational aspect to the activity. Six participants would rely on revising activities to fill up the time, and three admitted to stalling for time, which would give them slightly more time to come up with an activity. One participant noted:

"I don't believe in zero-preparation, you always know at least what the topic is if you are the least bit motivated. I would avoid parts I am not sure I could pull it off and try to do a review-lesson or let them help me out with making a rules-list (student's get to show their knowledge)."

Next to improvisation, another often used tactic in this situation was, in a way, to avoid facing this situation. Seven participants explained how they always have backup activities which they can use whenever they need to buy some time.

In the fifth question, the participants were asked how they would deal with hostile comments and disrespect from students. This question received a variety of answers, ranging from calm responses to open hostility towards the students. Three participants admitted becoming hostile themselves, while 30 participants would try to talk to the students. The participants that mentioned becoming hostile themselves even went so far as to shame the students. 19 participants mentioned bringing in outside help, such as parents, the school staff,

and others. Three of the 49 participants would even resort to removing the students from the classroom. Formal punishments, such as bad grades and more homework, were mentioned seven times. An interesting and valuable answer was provided by one participant on the possible origin of negative behavior in some students:

“...if students are older, and are not satisfied with your work, then I would change my methods. That happened to me; I got negative feedback from my older students and I changed my teaching methods which they started to appreciate more.”

The sixth question asked the participants to describe what they would do if their students' attention was wandering. The answers were mostly centered on changing the activities, i.e. introducing an activity which will increase the students' engagement. The newly introduced activities were mostly games of some sort, either related to the lesson itself or simply designed to increase students' engagement. One of the participants explained that “it's better to spend 5 minutes on a break and then have 20 quality minutes than 25 minutes of bad attention”.

In the seventh question, the participants were asked to explain what they would do if they had a hard time getting the students to participate in class. A large group of participants, that is, 26 of them, answered that they would change their approach to motivate the students better. This change would entail things like switching to more energizing activities, inquiring the students on what they would find more interesting, introspection or consulting with other teachers. One of the participants had a unique approach to this situation. The participant in question said that forcing a student to participate in the class if the student is unwilling is “nothing but a needless way to cause anxiety”. While that is true, there is a difference between a single student being too nervous to participate and a majority of class lacking motivation.

The eighth question required the participants to answer what they would do if they finished their lesson early and had nothing else to do. Again, the majority of participants, 20 of them, answered that they relied on improvisation. Still, there were other methods mentioned, such as stalling. Out of 49 participants, 14 would revise the lesson to stall for time until the class was over. One participant explained how they were never unprepared, as they always had extra activities, just in case this exact scenario occurred.

The final question of the second part of the questionnaire asked the participants what they would do if they encountered technical problems while teaching. A large majority of the participants, 43 out of 49, relied on improvisation again. Eight participants also emphasized the importance of having a backup.

2.5.2. Additional questions

The additional four questions inquired participants about their thoughts and opinions on teaching anxiety and anxiety coping techniques. The participants were asked to list other things that made them anxious in the teaching setting. They were also inquired about their techniques of coping with anxiety before and during teaching.

Answering the first question, the participants listed the other anxiety-inducing factors of teaching that were not mentioned in the main questionnaire. The most frequently mentioned factors had a social component – six participants out of 49 named interactions with students or fellow teachers, as well as their supervisors, to be another great source of anxiety. Four participants said that their concern was handling a new, unfamiliar group of students, and five participants said that tough groups or unruly students make them anxious. Other factors that were listed as anxiety-inducing were time management, special needs students or a certain age group. Fourteen of the participants did not list any additional factors, and two of the participants admitted that their personal issues can sometimes cause stress in the classroom.

Some of the coping techniques the participants mentioned answering the second question are breathing exercises, humour, additional preparation, meditation, rest and hydration. The participants mentioned these as things that help them if they experience anxiety before the class.

As mentioned previously, anxiety can reflect differently on each person. Many of the side-effects of anxiety mentioned before, i.e. trembling, inability to concentrate, sweat gland activity and others were present in the participants. They mentioned feeling paralyzed, trembling, forgetting things, losing focus, having shaky hands and sweating. Only two out of 49 participants reported being more focused and preparing better because of the anxiety they felt. Again, this points to two different ways anxiety can influence people, depending on whether it is debilitating or facilitating. One of the participants, having a few years of teaching experience, did note that the anxiety has less of an impact as the years go by. One might conclude from this that the greater amount of teaching experience might decrease anxiety.

The last question required of participants to determine what helps them the most when they are experiencing teaching anxiety. The most common answers were preparation and help and support from others. Out of 49 participants, 17 relied on thorough preparations for the class, so that they could avoid some anxiety-inducing scenarios. Ten participants said that they would try to focus on the positive sides of their experiences and on the positive outcome.

Lastly, three of the participants mentioned that they were aware that overcoming anxiety might take some time and experience, and that being aware of that helps them cope. One participant in particular explained how it was important to “relax and know that it takes experience to be the *all in control* teacher”.

2.5.3. Discussion

The responses to the questionnaire showed that many participants use already established anxiety-coping techniques to handle the stress of foreign language teaching. Methods such as breathing exercises, planning, seeking support and positive thinking were mentioned. These techniques, however, were mostly used before the actual lessons, and rarely during them. When it came to coping with stress and anxiety in the classroom, the participants' answers focused more on aspects of classroom management and classroom interactions than on actual anxiety coping techniques.

Analyzing the participants' answers, it became clear that many of them rely on communication with the students to resolve the potentially stressful situations in the classroom. A number of the participants' answers point to this as very important aspect of classroom management. Communication is not just important for transferring knowledge, but is crucial in resolving conflicts. If a teacher gives the students clear directions on how to approach a task, there will be less room for communication errors. As explained by Beyda, Zentall, and Ferko (2002), “the information-explicit management (...) decreases task avoidance and off-task behaviors”. Furthermore, effective classroom communication on the teacher's part will set a good example for the students and decrease the number of disruptions by students. In many cases, the participants tried to communicate their issues clearly and directly. Whether these issues were related to the lesson content or the students' behavior, it is evident that most participants saw verbal and non-verbal communication as the key towards better understanding in the classroom.

Since many participants mentioned eye contact as something they applied in the classroom, it appears that they were aware of its importance. Eye contact can be highly beneficial in the classroom, as it is associated with positive feelings - teachers increase eye contact when they admire students or want to confirm what the students are saying (Barati, 2015).

Another thing many participants emphasized is acting calm in stressful situations. Either paired with eye contact or conversation with students, maintaining composure was frequently mentioned in the answers. By maintaining composure, the participants seemed to not only control their emotions but the emotions of their students - it is possible that some

students would take advantage if they perceived a lack of confidence. Losing composure in front of the students would not set a good example, and would badly affect the classroom climate.

In addition, some participants noted that the amount of teaching experience is also a significant factor in lowering the anxiety in the classroom. Many of them expect the anxiety to decrease as their teaching experience increases.

3. Conclusion

Many teachers encounter stressful situations in classrooms, and teachers of English as a foreign language are no exception. Foreign language classroom can be a stressful place, especially for a novice teacher. The scope of the responsibility that lies on the teachers is vast; novice teachers need to find the balance between delivering the lesson and building rapport with the students. The present study examined strategies that novice teachers of English as a foreign language applied when they were faced with stressful and anxiety-inducing situations.

A 9-question form was developed and administered to 49 novice teachers of English as a foreign language. The answers revealed that most participants use established anxiety-coping techniques prior to the lessons. During the lessons, the participants would focus more on verbal and non-verbal communication with the students to handle stressful situations. Finally, experience was mentioned having a significant impact on the amount of anxiety in the classroom.

Considering all the answers given by the participants of this study, it would prove useful to put more emphasis on the communicative skills of novice teachers. Both the participants of this study and other studies mentioned in this paper point to the importance of experience and practical application of theoretical knowledge.

While many courses put their focus on theoretical approaches to teaching English as a foreign language, a practical approach to these topics seems to be more desirable. Increasing the amount of practical teaching experience for student-teachers of English as a foreign language would give them more confidence in the classroom, and, as a result, would make their students' learning experience much more enjoyable and productive.

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5. Sažetak

Svrha ovog rada bila je istražiti strategije kojima se učitelji početnici služe tijekom nastave engleskog jezika kako bi se nosili s anksioznošću i stresom koju nastavno okruženje može prouzrokovati. Prvi dio osvrće se na pojmove anksioznosti, anksioznosti kod učitelja, komunikacije u učionici i upravljanja razredom. Uz navedeno, prvi se dio osvrće i na istraživanja provedena na područjima komunikacije u učionici i anksioznosti kod nastavnika. Drugi dio opisuje istraživanje koje je provedeno na 49 ispitanika koji su imali manje od pet godina iskustva u poučavanju engleskog jezika. Cilj je bio istražiti na koji se način ispitanici nose sa stresom koji upravljanje razredom i poučavanje engleskog jezika mogu prouzrokovati. Drugi dio također daje obrazloženje prikupljenih odgovora i prijedloge kako poboljšati poduku budućih učitelja engleskog jezika.

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix I

Methods in Overcoming Classroom Management Anxiety

Thank you for participating in this research project!

This project investigates the methods novice teachers of English use to deal with potentially stressful situations in the classroom. Your answers will remain strictly confidential and will be used only for research purposes.

This questionnaire is anonymous.

PART I

1. GENDER

M F Prefer not to say

2. Current year of study:

Undergraduate level 1 2 3

Graduate level 1 2

Other: _____

3. Circle the answer that best describes your teaching experience. How many lessons have you taught so far?

a) 0

b) 1-5

c) 6-10

d) 11-20

e) 20+

4. What kind of lessons have you taught? Circle all the appropriate answers.

a) Private lessons

b) Teaching practice:

i. Micro-teaching

ii. Peer-teaching

iii. Full lessons in a private language school

iv. Full lessons in a state school

c) Part-time work:

i. In a private language school

ii. In a state school

d) Other: _____

PART II

This part of the questionnaire is designed to determine how novice teachers handle stressful situations in the classroom.

The questions stated here present situations that you might have encountered in class. If you have been in some of these situations, answer from experience. If you have not found yourself in these situations, think about what you would do and answer accordingly.

Please answer in as much detail as possible.

- 1) What would you do if you lost control over your class (e.g. children yelling, whispering among each other, not calming down)?
- 2) What would you do if you weren't able to answer a student's question?
- 3) What would you do if you made a language mistake in front of your students?
- 4) What would you do if you were entering a classroom for a lesson you know you haven't had time to prepare?
- 5) What would you do if you encountered hostile comments or disrespect from your students (e.g. swearing, talking back)?
- 6) What would you do if you noticed your students' attention was wandering?
- 7) What would you do if you had a hard time making students participate in class?
- 8) What would you do if you finished your lesson too early and had nothing else to do?
- 9) What would you do if you encountered technical problems while teaching (e.g. the projector not working, audio too quiet)?

PART III

- 1) Is there anything else that causes you to feel anxious before or during the lesson?
- 2) How do you deal with anxiety you feel before or during teaching? Is there anything specific you do that calms you down?
- 3) How does feeling anxious affect your teaching?
- 4) In your opinion, what helps you the most when you are feeling anxious about teaching?