International pre-service teachers' anxiety and coping strategies: Perspectives of a geographically disadvantaged Islamic boarding school

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to delve into anxiety experienced by international pre-service teachers who taught English in a very remote Islamic boarding school in Malaysia and how they cope with their feelings. This study employs narrative inquiry involving two research participants. The findings reveal that both participants felt anxious particularly because the students have very diverse English competencies which further creates negative effects such as unequal class participation, losing interest, etc. which subsequently affect classroom management. Varying teaching techniques and employing strategies favoured by the majority of students are considered to be the best ways to improve both their class participation and learning interest; hence, alleviating their anxiety. They include teaching through language games, learning through songs, grouping students in varied competence levels, and prized quizzes. Cultural differences are also the factors causing their anxiety, further calling for intercultural competence when living through cross-cultural encounters. Immersing in the target community is a strategic way to achieve such competence. This article ends with further pedagogical implications.

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1. Introduction

Being a skillful teacher is a long, arduous, and even a lifetime journey which is particularly since the classroom is a very complex community that is emotionally as well as motivationally ever-changing (Dai & Wang, 2023; Talbot & Mercer, 2018). To prepare a good teacher in response to such complex nature of the classroom, well-planned and measurable preparations need to be carried out, one of which is teaching practicum commonly undertaken by preservice teachers before they serve communities. This teaching professional development-oriented attempt is considered critical to their future teaching profession (Trent, 2013; Choy et al., 2014; Cohen et al., 2013; Gebhard, 2009; Gray et al., 2019; Grudnoff, 2011; Ulvik & Smith, 2011). The underlying reason for holding a teaching practicum is to provide them with real-life experiences regarding immediate teaching practices, enhancement of personal communication, classroom management as well as decision-making in a variety of classroom circumstances (Geng et al., 2017; Caires et al., 2012). Through this preparation, they are expected to be able to deal with actual classroom instruction which certainly poses challenges to them. One of the challenges they face is psychological problems particularly anxiety (Camlibel-Acar & Eveyik-Aydin, 2022; Can, 2018). This psychological problem arises due to factors including lack of confidence, poor classroom management, school pressures, and high expectations (Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Santamaria et al., 2021).

Anxiety is believed to have - two side impacts on teaching (Cheng, 2023). Mild level anxiety in teaching inspires teachers to turn pressure into motivation, allowing them to be more agentive in decision-making (Richards, 2022; Cheng, 2023). People with mild anxiety tend to be more alert to changing classroom situations which drives them to put stronger efforts in carrying out their tasks, enabling them to make decisions in uncertain conditions (Eysenck et al., 2007). However, high anxiety which is sometimes a result of teachers' accumulated fears and anxiousness is believed debilitating and even has detrimental impacts on both their professional advancement and psychological well-being since people with high anxiety commonly experience negative emotional feelings of agitation, uneasiness, and apprehension, ineptitude, fear, or nervousness about accomplishing something, causing particularly loss of focus, decreased self-confidence, self-efficacy and even losing motivation which eventually affects their teaching performance negatively. This further implies that anxiety should be well managed to make teaching successful and to further professional teaching development (Pasaribu & Harendita, 2018, Valera & Desiderio, 2020).

In recent years, research into pre-service teachers' anxiety is burgeoning and has been extensively documented (Camlibel-Acar & Eveyik-Aydin, 2022; Can, 2018; Han & Tulgar, 2019; Kobul & Saraolu, 2020; Li et al., 2023; Taghizahdeh & Basirat, 2022; Valera & Desiderio, 2020; Zhao, 2019). Their studies mostly explored the causes of

teaching anxiety. Han and Tulgar (2019), for example, revealed five primary factors causing preservice teachers' anxiety namely lack of teaching experience, classroom management, a fear of making mistakes, time management, and poor student-teacher communication. Furthermore, this study unveils that classroom management is the primary cause of their anxiety, it is assumed that they have no experience in dealing with students. Correspondingly, Cavanaugh (2021) reported that preservice teachers' anxiety arises due to poor ability in teaching and fear of making mistakes. Those factors correlate positively to their anxiety levels, suggesting that the poorer their teaching skill and the more afraid they make mistakes, the higher their anxiety is.

A more recent study by Taghizahdeh and Basirat (2022) investigated 100 EFL pre-service teachers teaching online and how they cope with online teaching resources which might cause them anxiety. The findings reveal that they face several problems potentially causing their anxious feeling such as the inability to use online resources, build teamwork, and limited interactions between teacher and students, as well as students' poor participation. These findings, to a greater extent, lend support to previous study by Zhao (2019) investigating teaching anxiety experienced by 51 college students enrolled in an English education program at a Chinese university. She reported that the participants' anxiety ranges from moderate to high levels. Moreover, the researcher claimed that their anxiety is due to several factors from learner variables including learners' interest, student evaluation, and preservice teacher variables such as classroom management and language proficiency.

Another study by Can (2018) exploring factors that cause anxiety of EFL pre-service teachers when teaching English to junior students in an actual classroom setting as part of their teaching practicum reported that the EFL pre-service teachers' anxiety is affected by cognitive, affective, and sociocultural factors. In more elaborate findings, Li et al. (2023) listed several anxiety-related factors experienced by preservice teachers during teaching practicum. They are self-perception of language competency, instructing inexperience, fear of bad assessment, time management difficulties, and lack of student enthusiasm.

In a broader context, the global teaching practicum trend commonly called International Teaching Practicum (ITP) has received much attention in recent decades which is particularly driven by spreading the need for English skills, international student mobility, intercultural exchange, and experiences as well as enhancing broader and global views (McAllister & Irvine, 2012; Nieto, 2016). The studies regarding ITP primarily focus on the challenges the preservice teachers face during teaching abroad. Most of them reveal that intercultural communication due to language proficiency problems is one of the top challenges encountered by preservice teachers. The study by Kabilan (2020) examining Indonesian preservice teachers attending teaching practicum in Malaysian schools reported that they face four major challenges namely language proficiency problems, lesson plan development, differences in curriculum, as well as intercultural differences. An earlier study by Yulia (2019) exploring challenges faced by six

Indonesian pre-service teachers teaching primary schools in Thailand reveals similar problems encountered by them. They include communication barriers due to different languages, classroom management, and culture shock.

To sum up, myriad studies have attempted to unveil preservice teachers' anxiety when doing their teaching practicum; meanwhile, studies on International Teaching Practicum (ITP) focus primarily more on challenges faced by preservice teachers in international teaching practicum. However, little is known regarding anxiety experienced by preservice teachers attending ITP and how they deal with such feelings. Instructional demand, learning cultures and objectives, assessment systems, or instructional curricula which very likely differ across countries may spark a broader spectrum of anxiety among international pre-service teachers. To address this issue, this study is guided by a research question "What are the factors contributing to the anxiety of Indonesian preservice teachers attending teaching practicum in Malaysia and how do they cope with their anxiety?"

2. Literature review
2.1. Teaching anxiety

Anxiety is related to concern, unease, disquiet, and inquietude (Chiang, 2012; Tercan & Kenan, 2015). Furthermore, Terrel and Brown (2006) defined anxiety as the subjective experience of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry caused by autonomic nervous system activation. These negative sensations emerge in response to unpleasant and unwelcome conditions, such as when a person feels frightened, despondent, or lacks self-confidence. On the other hand, language anxiety has long been recognized as one of the most difficult aspects of learning a foreign language. According to Zheng and Cheng (2018), language is stimulated by anxiety and negative emotional reactions when studying or using a second language.

A recent study in the subject of linguistics EFL has revealed some sorts of anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three categories of anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. Spielberger (1983) defined trait anxiety as a general tendency to feel nervous in any setting. This anxiety can emerge at any time and in a variety of scenarios. People with trait anxiety are prone to experiencing panic or nervous feelings, and even minor events might trigger their worry. Finlay-Jones and Brown (1981) suggested that state anxiety is linked to a specific event or scenario. State anxiety usually emerges when a person feels threatened or uncomfortable. Furthermore, Luo (2014) claimed that situation-specific anxiety is stable over time, similar to trait anxiety, but may not be consistent across scenarios. Situation-specific anxiety typically develops in certain settings, such as exams and public speaking.

2.2. Factors inducing anxiety and coping strategies

Previous studies (Herendita & Pasaribu, 2018; Kim & Kim, 2004) mention several factors contributing to pre-service teachers' anxiety. They include confidence, pre-service

teachers' language skills, preparation, the situation or the condition of the students, evaluations, and classroom management.

Confidence is one of the major issues in teaching particularly for pre-service teachers who do not have enough experience in teaching actual classes. This issue commonly happens when they teach at early meetings since they are not familiar with their new students. This unfamiliarity with the immediate class may make it difficult to control their feelings or emotions due to unpredictable or unexpected student behaviour. The next factor, English language skills, also contributes to pre-service teachers' anxiety. Their language skill might be compared to their real or supervising teachers, making them feel inferior in front of the class.

Students' Profile is another factor affecting their anxiety. If most students in the class are very smart, the preservice teachers might ask very difficult questions, making them unable to respond to those questions so that they look foolish in front of them which creates disrespect to them. The class with very low competence also may make them anxious as the students are unable to participate in the class well. The other factor is evaluation, particularly from their supervisors. The pre-service teachers were particularly very anxious when the teaching did not meet their expectations which further affected their teaching practicum grade. The last factor is classroom management. The pre-service teachers might find hard driving and crowded classes very stressful since the students are difficult to control and especially ignore pre-service teachers' instructions.

2.3. Strategies for managing pre-service teachers' anxiety

The aforementioned scholars assert that there are several strategies to cope with anxiety. Those strategies are categorized into social, personal, institutional, and professional strategies.

A personal coping strategy is an individual choice or preference to alleviate anxiety. She or he might have a preference for a certain strategy to deal with his/her anxiety such as humour. This type of strategy is believed useful in relieving distress in the classroom. The next coping strategy is social strategy, a coping strategy which involves others for social support including sharing the problem with peers, friends or family. Sharing problems with those who have similar problems might reduce their anxiety.

The other strategy to alleviate anxiety is institutional strategy. This coping strategy involves staff or workers in the institution such as his/her supervisor. The teaching supervisor certainly provides support to the pre-service teacher as the success of teaching and learning in the classroom is the responsibility of both. The last category is a professional coping strategy, a coping strategy related to the skills, qualities and knowledge of pre-service teachers (Murray-Harvey et al., 1999). This coping strategy ranges from good planning and preparation in teaching to being proactive to get him/herself close to students.

2.4. Islamic boarding school and English language teaching (ELT)

Islamic boarding school, frequently referred to as *Pesantren, is the* oldest education system in Indonesia (Sari, 2023). This education model commonly has three primary goals namely instilling students with religious knowledge, maintaining Islamic traditions and reproducing or regenerating ulama', Islamic scholars (Lundeto et al., 2021). These goals reflect that Islamic boarding school is a religion-oriented institution which gives priority to Islamic-based courses in its curriculum.

In recent years, Islamic boarding schools have been categorized into two i.e. *Salaf* and modern Islamic boarding schools or *Pesantren*. The s*alaf* is a type of *Pesantren* which strongly holds Islamic values and traditions reflected in the curriculum content emphasizing religious courses. Arabic is a top language to learn. Meanwhile, Modern *Pesantren* gives priority to both religious and general subjects such as English even though religious subjects are more dominant in their curriculum.

In reference to the proportion of religious subjects and priority of learning at *Pesantren*, students who study at this type of education commonly orient more to religion rather than general subjects including English. Hence their motivation to learn English is frequently low, posing challenges to English teachers (Sari, 2023). Her study reveals that the Islamic boarding school students perceived English as a non-primary lesson and exit pass for national examination rather than as an instrumental means for their future life. This perception leads to students' low motivation requiring the teachers to employ a larger array of teaching strategies. Furthermore, Marzulina et al. (2021) reported that the students of *Pesantren* not only have low motivation but also low proficiency levels which might be caused by their low learning motivation. Their low language competencies include their vocabulary mastery as well as poor pronunciation reflected in their poor speaking ability. Their study also reveals that the teachers encounter problems in classroom management due to students' low motivation and overcrowded classes.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

In response to the research questions, this study employs narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2006). This design is adopted since this study seeks to unveil the research participants' lived experiences during teaching practicum in Malaysia. The primary goal of this study is to understand the factors contributing to their anxiety when attending the teaching practicum in Malaysia and how they deal with such feelings.

3.2. Research context

This study is situated in an Islamic Boarding school *Al Madras* (pseudonym) located in a very remote area called Selangor, Malaysia. This school which was established 9 months ago has very limited learning facilities such as no LCD, poor internet connection, and only has a classroom with 25 students. They are from Indonesia and Malaysia. The courses center on Indonesian and Islamic-based courses. English is

considered a minor subject which is given only 2 hours a week. This school does not administer placement or other kinds of tests in the admission process, resulting in very heterogeneous competencies among them.

3.3. Participants' profile

Before conducting this research, a preliminary study was carried out on May 2, 2023, by interviewing the prospective research participants via Zoom after they arrived in Malaysia and conducting a needs assessment and placement test. They were very surprised that students were very diverse in terms of their competencies, some of them even struggled to read and write even though they were in Junior high school level grade 7. Cultural issues such as the way they talked and several terms which are different from Indonesian also become another issue in this teaching practicum. They said that the condition particularly the serious disparity in language competence makes them feel very uneasy, discomfort and anxious in this international teaching practicum which is the prestigious international mobility program of Unisma which might intimidate them in implementing this program.

The researcher recruited 2 participants, Andi and Anita (pseudonyms), male and female pre-service teachers for gender representation. Both participants are students of a leading private university who major in English. They were selected among around 100 students majoring in English who registered for teaching practicum in Malaysia as part of the university student mobility program framed in international teaching practicum. These two pre-service teachers never had teaching experiences abroad but have quite decent teaching experience in Indonesia. The different places of teaching may also have different teaching aspects or systems including teaching delivery, classroom atmosphere, educational practices, and policies, all of which may trigger psychological responses different from when teaching in their home country. This study focuses on 2 Indonesian pre-service teachers' anxiety when teaching in Malaysia and how they deal with it.

3.4. Data collection

To collect data, the researcher conducted multiple interviews to check the participants' consistent responses and achieve data saturation. Semi-structured interviews are used to ensure the flexibility of participants' responses and allow the interviewers to explore deeper responses and follow up on the participants' responses. During the interviews, we asked the research participants about the factors that contribute to their anxiety when teaching in Malaysia and how they deal with such feelings. Here are the main interview questions that may develop along the course of interviews:
- When you had a teaching practicum in Malaysia, did you feel uneasy, discomfort, or anxious?
- What factors or aspects affect your anxiety?
- Among those factors, which one do you think affects your anxiety most?
- How do you deal with your anxiety? Etc.

3.5. Data analysis

To analyze data from the interviews, we adopt Braun and Clarke's (2014) data analysis procedures. The first is familiarizing the recordings through listening repeatedly to the recorded interviews on the factors causing their anxiety during teaching practicum and how they cope with that problem. The second is transcribing the interviews and reading them several times for a more comprehensive understanding of the data. This stage is performed to interpret participants' accounts regarding the factors causing their anxiety and their actions to deal with it. After a comprehensive understanding of the data was achieved, coding was carried out, and finding the patterns relevant to the issues under study. The next step is grouping or segmenting similar expressions to reveal emerging themes. The final step is categorizing the themes into factors causing anxiety and participants' actions to cope with the anxiety.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Factors inducing participants' anxiety

The data analysis demonstrates several emerging themes regarding the factors contributing to the participants' anxiety. Those themes include huge discrepancies in language competence, low participation and language and cultural differences. The serious discrepancy among students makes the participants difficult and anxious about delivering their teaching materials as Anita stated:

> When I administered the pre-test to find out their language competence, I was surprised that they had varied competence encompassing competence at the middle and very low levels, making me difficult to deliver materials and they could not keep up with the teaching and learning process, which further results in students' boredom and low interest in teaching and learning process, A student even slept during the class and others did their activities. Moreover, I could not make use of technology due to limited facilities in the schools. However, I always thought positively and kept trying to respond to such situations."

Similarly, Andi expressed his feelings regarding students' competence as follows:

> The biggest challenge I face is the students' varied competencies, making it difficult to handle the class particularly those with low competence; even some students still had problems in reading and writing. The factor that made me worried a lot is the huge discrepancy in language competence.

Both Andi and Anita expressed their serious concern regarding the low achievers with very low participation in the class. Andi expressed:

> The class participation is unequal among students and I found low participation by the low achievers which made me work harder to manage the class and sometimes I asked other teachers to handle this situation. Anita similarly said that

the low achievers poorly participate in class and I sometimes involved others to deal with this situation.

Another factor affecting their anxiety is language and cultural differences even though they think this is not a serious issue to them. Andi expressed his language and cultural concerns as follows:

When I came here for the first few days, I was a bit worried about their speech culture in which they speak Malay faster, sometimes making it difficult to understand their talks; I tried to immerse myself and got involved in their daily routines. After some days living with them, I could understand their speaking much better.

However, Anita did not feel anxious about Malay culture and language since both aspects are similar to Indonesian. She narrated that:

I did not feel worried about the language and cultures there as they share a similar culture and language to ours. Surprisingly, there are many Indonesians, particularly from Madurese ethnic groups living in and around the boarding school where I taught, and I have been living in the Madurese community in my country for years.

4.2. The strategies to deal with their anxieties

Even though they face similar factors causing them anxiety, they perform different strategies to cope with such situations. The emerging themes concerning their coping strategies related to the differences in students' competence include peer scaffolding learning model, attractive learning media use, teaching through games and songs as well as giving rewards and immersing into the local community to cope with language and cultural discrepancies. To deal with differences in competencies across students, Andi prefers using the peer scaffolding learning model through grouping with members who have varied competence, hoping the more competent scaffolds the less, allowing them to avoid face threats among others as he stated:

The strategy is by grouping them across competent students and students enjoy this learning model. This learning model allows the more competent to scaffold the less without facing threats since they have known one other well. The students' interest in learning English grew positively indicated by their improved motivation in the class. This condition made me feel better.

Since low participation, especially the low achievers' is his serious concern affecting his anxiety, he tried hard to encourage them to participate actively in class. Another strategy he employed to encourage them for active participation is by using attractive learning media as he asserted:

I sometimes printed out pictures from the Internet for learning material and they paid attention to the pictures seriously and enthusiastically because they learned new words through realia.

Meanwhile, to cope with the serious competence gap, Anita employed strategies different from Andi's in coping with that factor. She prefers activities that engage and motivate students in learning activities such as teaching through games and songs as well as giving presents to those who can answer quizzes. As Anita said:

To cope with those challenges, I frequently discussed with my peer teachers and asked for suggestions from my teaching supervisor, Dr. Kurniasih. The solutions I applied to the class are teaching through games and beginning the class by doing ice-breaking. We also frequently had outdoor classes to avoid students' boredom. I also often conducted door prize- quizzes to enhance their motivation. Surprisingly they were very enthusiastic about attending my classes, making me less anxious.

In addition to the aforementioned strategy, Anita also made use of learning media she downloaded from her laptop. Her laptop is the savior of her teaching. She further stated:

I tried to survive and innovate my teaching through learning videos I downloaded from my laptop. All students participated in teaching and learning process enthusiastically even through the sound is directly from laptop because I did not find loudspeaker in this school.

On the other hand, to deal with language and cultural discrepancy, Andi expressed:

"I try to get involved with local community activities so that I can understand several words which are different from Indonesian and this immersion allows me to understand their language and culture better"

In summary, the research participants shared similar factors triggering anxiety and employed different ways to deal with that problem. Furthermore, their different experiences in their home countries affect the causes of their anxiety in attending international teaching practicum.

To answer the proposed research question, the findings reveal that both pre-service teachers experienced anxiety triggered by some factors during teaching practicum in an international context. One of the most prominent causes of their anxiety is the diverse language competencies among students in the class as the school did not conduct placement tests in the admission process. The differences in the competencies among students made the preservice teachers manage the class since it is hard to adopt a certain learning method to accommodate such a situation. Very frequently, some students lag in the classroom, resulting in low interest in learning. Thus, managing a classroom is a huge challenge which is partly, in this study, triggered by the diversity in student competencies.

Classroom management is a complex issue commonly experienced by pre-service teachers when teaching in an actual context (Yulia, 2019; Han & Tulgar, 2019; Cavanaugh, 2021; Taghizahdeh & Basirat, 2022; Li et al., 2023).

Employing a learning strategy that is able to engage students across proficiency levels in their learning is a crucial aspect of teaching and learning processes. In this case, Anita employed language games to deal with students' low interest in learning. Language games are not only able to lure students' interest but also allow them to acquire language skills in fun ways, build better language attitudes, and even encourage them to take risks in language activities (Dzulfikri, 2016; Liu et al., 2021.). The favourable language attitude likely leads the students to be more active in participating in the class which further affects the development of pre-service teachers' psychological states, permitting their anxiety to decrease (Getie, 2020; Ashari et al., 2023; Johnston et al., 2023). Furthermore, to promote students' engagement in learning English, particularly for low-achieving students, Anita also varied her teaching with songs. This learning activity is believed to be not only a fun activity but also able to enhance learners' language mastery (Güler & Bozkurt, 2021; Rohana & Saharani, 2023; Teppa et al., 2022). These studies unravel that learners acquire language components such as new words and even internalize them in provided contexts.

Meanwhile, Andi offered a student-centred learning model to cope with such a heterogeneous class, emphasizing peers' scaffolding through grouping the able and less able students, permitting the more able students to help the poorer, particularly with vocabulary. This more linear power relation may promote active participation which subsequently enhances scaffolding enactment among the group members in learning. The efficacy of scaffolding has been extensively researched and documented (Karimi & Jalivand, 2014; Tabrizi et al., 2019; Muzammil & Saifullah 2020; Sholeh et al., 2019; Tabrizi et al., 2019; Reynold 2017). The experimental study of Karimi and Jalivand (2014), for instance, demonstrates that the experimental group with teacher and peer scaffolding outperforms the experimental group in the posttest. This finding further substantiates the notion of Jenkin's (2006) collective intelligence stating that knowledge is co-constructed which is socially embedded through interactive practices between the more competent and the less. This notion is also in line with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a metaphor illustrating the improvement of an individual's knowledge as a result of interactive practices (Lantolf, 2001).

Apart from the aforementioned learning strategies, both participants made use of learning videos to deal with such conditions. This technologically-enhanced media offers both audio and visual sensory modes. Drawing on Mayer's (2014) "cognitive theory of multimedia learning", one of the primary advantages of video is that learning requires active processing of input. In this context, the learners select and organize sound as well as pictures into a mental model of the materials presented and then integrate them with background knowledge, allowing meaningful learning to occur. Furthermore, learning videos also encourage students to engage in learning activities (Muslem et al., 2022; Jackman, 2019), and student engagement is believed to be a top priority in learning. In

addition, the classroom is a complex community with diverse learning styles, posing huge challenges to meet such diversity; hence the use of learning videos, providing both audio and visual channels, may meet a broader range of learning styles.

In addition to anxiety rooted in the difference in competencies among students which has a broader impact on classroom management in particular, *Andi* felt anxious due to cultural differences. This phenomenon of cultural differences which poses a particular challenge to deal with is also frequently experienced by international pre-service teachers (Yulia, 2019; Kabilan, et al., 2020). This is partly because they are immersed in a new community that likely has values and practices different from their original community. Following Post post-structuralist school, culture is no longer viewed as a static construct; but rather as dynamic community practices (Kasper & Omori, 2010). The differences in culture cause pre-service teacher's anxiety as experienced by the participant in this study, Andi, who experienced cultural anxiety even though the differences in culture between his home country and Malaysia are not strikingly different. Hence, he easily copes with his feelings after immersing himself in the community just for a few days. On the other hand, Anita had no problems with the culture of her new community since she used to live in a community with a similar culture in Indonesia. Central to this issue is that intercultural competence, which encompasses cognitive, behavioural as well as affective skills, is essential when immersing in cross-cultural encounters (Qiqieh & Regan, 2023; Zhang & Zhou, 2023); hence the capability of adapting to new surrounding is one of the key factors to the success of international teaching practicum (Kabilan, 2017).

This current study provides considerable insight, particularly to pre-service teachers both those attending teaching practicum in their home countries and international teaching practicum in particular who may experience similar emotional experiences when interacting with a new community including a group of students. The ability to deal with such emotional states as anxiety may enhance their agentive actions in their teaching (Nazari & Karimpour, 2022) and promote their emotional understanding for better learning outcomes (Chen, 2019). In addition, intercultural competence which is indicated by the ability to adapt to new surroundings is considered essential, particularly in responding to challenging global contexts (Yulia, 2019; Kabilan et al., 2017; Kabilan, et al., 2020).

5. Conclusion

Teaching a class with very diverse abilities is not only cognitively demanding but also emotionally provoking which becomes a crucial factor inducing international pre-service teachers' anxiety. This situation causes another problem such as unequal class participation which also affects the emotional state of their teaching. Various teaching strategies and media are employed to accommodate the differences and engage them in learning processes. Another teaching anxiety-inducing factor, even though it is a critical issue, is cultural differences, further calling for intercultural competence which can be

well nurtured through interactive practices, especially with immediate school community members.

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