

Managing foreign language teaching anxiety during work-integrated learning in rural South African high schools: A self-directed learning approach

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Pre-service teachers (PSTs) experience anxiety when teaching a foreign language, such as English first additional language (English FAL), during work-integrated learning (WIL). Despite this, research focusing on how English FAL PSTs use a self-directed learning approach to manage foreign language teaching anxiety in rural South African high schools remains limited. This qualitative study explored how English FAL PSTs used self-directed regulatory mechanisms to manage anxiety during WIL. Ten conveniently sampled English FAL PSTs from four rural high schools participated in the free attitude interviews and focus group discussions. Through thematic analysis of data, the study revealed that learners' limited English proficiency and teachers' self-incompetence, fear of negative evaluation, and lack of classroom management skills induced anxiety among English FAL PSTs. Additionally, seeking help from others, engaging in free voluntary reading, and adopting pedagogical translanguaging practices were the self-directed regulatory mechanisms used by these PSTs to manage anxiety during WIL.

Keywords: English first additional language, foreign language teaching anxiety, rural schools, self-directed learning, work-integrated learning

Work-integrated learning (WIL), otherwise known as teaching practice in educational settings, remains an important component of many initial teacher education programs globally. During this training period, pre-service teachers (PSTs) are introduced to the 'real world' of teaching and the dynamics of classroom teaching (Maphumulo & Gcabashe, 2025). For instance, in Zimbabwe, the policy requires PSTs to be assigned qualified and experienced mentors during WIL (Muyengwa & Bukaliya, 2015). Similar practices are also observed in Ethiopia, where PSTs review lesson plans, engage in discussions with their mentors before observing the actual teaching in the classroom. The policy also requires the PSTs to be supervised by both the mentor teacher and the university lecturer for four weeks (Nigate et al., 2023). In South Africa, the Minimum Requirements for Qualification in Teacher Education Policy governs the incorporation of WIL as a mandatory part of the initial teacher education programs. Among other things, the policy stipulates that PSTs must gain comprehensive subject knowledge, knowledge related to pedagogical strategies, and skills related to literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology, and effective communication (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2015) in the initial teacher education programs. Learning in practice, as understood in the MRTEQ policy, involves PSTs teaching in authentic and simulated classroom environments (DHET, 2015).

However, the policy does not provide any guidelines and mechanisms for PSTs to cope with the challenges they may encounter during WIL in these environments. This void is often left for educational institutions to address (Dlamini & Tsotetsi, 2024). For instance, English is a language of learning and teaching for almost all South African high schools, even though it is spoken by less than 10% of the country's population. This situation presents challenges for English FAL PSTs during WIL in rural South African high schools. These PSTs have limited English proficiency, while others lack the content and pedagogical knowledge to teach English FAL (Omodan, 2022; Mncube et al., 2021). As a result, PSTs experience anxiety when teaching using English during WIL in rural high schools (Q. Li et

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al., 2023; Sanjaya et al., 2024). Language anxiety is associated with a negative reaction toward learning or using a foreign language, such as English in educational settings (Y. Liu & Wang, 2023). In the context of English FAL teaching in South African high schools, this anxiety manifests in the form of foreign language teaching anxiety (FLTA).

Despite its prevalence, anxiety among English FAL PSTs in the context of WIL remains under-researched (Q. Li et al., 2023). In South Africa, there is a dearth of studies about how PSTs use the self-directed learning approach to manage anxiety while undertaking WIL in rural high schools. Using a self-directed learning approach, the current study explored ways in which English FAL PSTs used the self-directed regulatory mechanisms to manage FLTA during WIL in rural South African high schools. The study is guided by the following objectives: 1) to identify FLTA-inducing factors among English FAL PSTs during WIL in rural high schools; 2) to explain how English FAL PSTs have used self-directed regulatory mechanisms to manage FLTA during WIL in rural high schools.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING ANXIETY

Researchers describe language anxiety as a negative reaction toward learning or using a foreign language in the classroom (Y. Liu & Wang, 2023). Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is characterized by emotional tension experienced before, during, and after the learning and teaching process carried out in a foreign language. Recent studies indicate that FLA is also common among English FAL PSTs (Kobul & Saraçoğlu, 2020), and it can be experienced while teaching a foreign language (Gannoun & Deris, 2023). This means that PSTs invariably take FLA into their English FAL classrooms, and then FLA translates into what is known as foreign language teaching anxiety. This involves the feelings of apprehension experienced by teachers who are not proficient or perceive themselves as incompetent in the English language (Amengual-Pizarro, 2019). For Aydin (2016), anxiety extends beyond self-perception of language competence and proficiency. It also includes language teachers' personal, perceptual, motivational, and technical aspects regarding language teaching while undertaking WIL.

Studies indicate that anxiety among English FAL PSTs result from a lack of self-confidence, inadequate content knowledge, and a lack of thorough lesson preparation (M. Liu & Wu, 2021). Other PSTs suffer from anxiety because of self-perceived incompetence in using the English language when teaching (Amengual-Pizarro, 2019). For instance, in their study in Korea, Kim and Kim (2004) confirmed high anxiety levels among PSTs, resulting from their struggle to teach grammar and literature using English. In another qualitative study involving 32 non-native English FAL teachers, Ipek (2016) found that they were anxious about using English proficiently to teach grammar. Coşkun (2013) found that English FAL PSTs lacked confidence and had limited English proficiency during teaching practicum. According to other researchers (Sanjaya et al., 2024; M. Liu & Wu, 2021), PSTs also experienced anxiety when they failed to communicate in English and when they were evaluated by university lecturers. Poor classroom management skills contribute to the prevalence of anxiety (Alrashidi, 2022). However, there is little understanding regarding which self-directed regulatory mechanisms English FAL PSTs use to manage anxiety while undertaking WIL in rural high schools.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING IN THE WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING CONTEXT

In South Africa, Goal 16 of the *Action Plan 2014: Realisation of Schooling 2025* requires that all teachers (current and future) improve their teaching skills and pedagogical knowledge throughout their careers (Department of Basic Education, 2011). To achieve this, Wittmann and Olivier (2019) emphasize the importance of adopting a self-directed learning approach to address developmental challenges (i.e., anxiety) facing South African teachers. Self-directed learning presents an opportunity for PSTs to

practice and foster teaching competence (Morris et al., 2023). In educational settings, self-directed learning is associated with autonomous learning, self-regulated learning, and self-sufficiency. Research also indicates that English FAL PSTs benefit from self-directed learning during WIL. Güneş (2023) found high-level self-directed learning skills among English FAL PSTs in Turkey. Drawing from the findings of their study, Mulyadi et al. (2023) confirmed that self-directed learning positively impacts English mastery. In another study, Hussein and Al-Bakri (2022) noted positive perceptions of teacher competencies about self-directed learning among Iraqi English FAL PSTs. In Chile, Charbonneau-Gowdy and Salinas Carvajal (2017) reported an increase in English FAL PSTs' responsibility for learning and their desire to become lifelong learners.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING ANXIETY

Notwithstanding the limited scope of available research linking self-directed learning and anxiety, some studies demonstrate that self-directed learning and anxiety are context-specific phenomena (Ajani & Maphalala, 2023; Aydın & Uştuk, 2020). Aydın and Uştuk (2020) indicate the need to incorporate self-directed learning techniques in initial teacher education programs to lessen the impact of anxiety in educational contexts, thus enhancing the teaching and learning of English. In their mixed-method study, Yukselir and Ozer (2022) explored the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and learner autonomy among 146 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) PSTs in Turkey. The findings revealed the importance of self-directed learning in coping with anxiety. In another study, self-directedness gave PSTs in rural contexts a voice and control over their professional development (Bakhshi, 2019). Martirossian and Hartoonian (2015) explored the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and self-regulated strategies in Iraq. Ultimately, the study reported a negative correlation between these two variables. In other words, self-directedness lowers anxiety in educational contexts.

In addition, self-directed learning creates a motivating and anxiety-free environment in which the participants are empowered to define their own needs, control their learning process, and identify resources and strategies to address those educational needs (Ajani & Maphalala, 2023). In light of this, it is crucial to transform educational research and advocate for the empowerment of the participants. In the context of the current study, as Mokoena and Hlalele (2021) observe, people in rural environments know and understand the challenges they face and ways to remedy them. This study became a space for English FAL PSTs from one rural university to address the problem of anxiety during WIL. This student-centered approach to problem-solving with the view to empowering the marginalized (rural) students sets this study apart from others.

THEORETICAL FRAMING: THE ANXIETY/UNCERTAINTY MANAGEMENT THEORY

Theoretically, this study is framed within the anxiety/uncertainty management theory. As a theoretical framework, anxiety/uncertainty management emerges following several revisions of the uncertainty reduction theory of interpersonal communication (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In this process, Gudykunst (1993) incorporates a communication competence framework. The framework emphasizes effective communication in learning and teaching environments such as the English FAL classrooms. However, teaching in these environments is characterized by feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. Understanding the predictive and explanatory uncertainty often characterizes interpersonal communication (Berger & Calabrese, 1975).

In the context of English FAL teaching during teaching practice, PSTs may struggle to predict and explain learners' attitudes, values, and behaviors toward the English language. In addition to

uncertainty, they may become anxious when communicating with learners from different backgrounds (Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996). This may result from the inadequate knowledge they acquired about the learners they teach in the classroom. The limited period that PSTs spend in schools disrupts their efforts to establish rapport and build strong relationships with learners. As Gudykunst and Shapiro (1996) observe, high uncertainty and anxiety hamper effective communication. The participants in this study also confirmed that uncertainty about learners' behavior and attitudes contributed to anxiety. In response, they discovered the mechanisms to manage anxiety during teaching practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was situated within the interpretive paradigm and adopted a qualitative research approach and phenomenology as a research design. Interpretivism emphasizes the need to view and understand the phenomena through the eyes of the participants (Cohen et al., 2018). Similarly, phenomenology helps the researcher to make sense of the participants' lived experiences (Qutoshi, 2018). Therefore, the research design and the research paradigm used in this study brought participants' lived experiences and perspectives about anxiety to the fore.

Participants and Sampling

Researchers need to address power relations when designing the methodology for research (Pincock & Jones, 2020). In this study, the researcher was a teacher educator from one South African university and whose role also included assessing English FAL PSTs from the same university during WIL. This situation had the potential to create a power-imbalanced relationship between the researcher and the participants (English FAL PSTs). To mitigate this, the participants were not part of the students assigned to the researcher for formative assessment purposes. Moreover, the researcher explained his approach to the participants. The approach was two-fold: first, to create a space where PSTs could express their frustrations and be listened to without perpetuating their marginalization; second, the approach was developmental in that the focus was on affirming and expanding the PSTs' capabilities to manage anxiety using the self-directed learning approach. As shown in Table 1, the study included ten participants ($n = 10$) from the same university, consisting of four males and six females. All participants were in their fourth year of study toward a Bachelor of Education degree, specializing in English First Additional Language (FAL) teaching in the Further Education and Training Phase. They undertook their WIL program in four rural high schools, which were easily accessible to the researcher. As a result, a convenience sampling technique was used to select all participants for the study.

TABLE 1: Biographical data of participants.

Participants	Year of Study	Gender
Teacher 1	4 th	Female
Teacher 2	4 th	Male
Teacher 3	4 th	Female
Teacher 4	4 th	Male
Teacher 5	4 th	Male
Teacher 6	4 th	Female
Teacher 7	4 th	Female
Teacher 8	4 th	Male
Teacher 9	4 th	Female
Teacher 10	4 th	Female

Data Generation

A qualitative approach supports the use of data collection tools that allow participants to have a voice (Cohen et al., 2018). In this study, data were generated through the free attitude interview (FAI) technique and focus group discussions (FGDs). The FAI technique involves initiating conversations and using prompts to guide and sustain discussions with participants (Mokoena & Hlalele, 2021). Dlamini and Tsotetsi (2024) state that the FAI creates opportunities for participants to freely express their feelings about their experiences. The prompts guided the FAI, focusing on anxiety-provoking factors, while the FGDs primarily focused on the self-directed regulatory mechanisms. Both FAI and FGDs were conducted in both Sesotho and English at a designated location. This data generation process continued for several days over two weeks; the responses were audio-taped and later transcribed.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically using a qualitative inductive approach based on Braun and Clarke's (2021) recommendations. The aim was to identify similarities, elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge from the themes as they emerged to address each research question. This procedure involved familiarizing with the data, identifying significant codes, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing a detailed description, producing a fundamental structure, and seeking verification of the basic design as part of the analytical processes. To ensure reliability, member verification was conducted to confirm the validity of the data. In a qualitative study like this, member checking is an essential procedure to enhance the study's reliability (Sanjaya et al., 2024). After the analysis, participants were allowed to read and compare the transcribed and translated data with the audio-recorded version of the data.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was sought from the institution, and permission was granted by the Ethics Review Committee: UFS-HSD2023/0247. The participants' consent was sought, and the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and therefore, they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identities, while data was stored in a password-protected computer for safekeeping.

FINDINGS

This section provides a thorough overview of the collected data on anxiety-inducing factors for English FAL PSTs and the self-directed regulatory mechanisms used by English FAL PSTs to manage anxiety during WIL in rural high schools. The summary of the key findings is presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: Summary of the main findings.

Themes	Key findings
Main theme: Anxiety-inducing factors	
Learners' limited English language proficiency and teachers' self-incompetence	The study found that the prevalent experiences of anxiety among rural PSTs could be attributed to limited English proficiency.
Fear of negative evaluation	The study also found that the anticipation of being evaluated by the university lecturers induced anxiety among English FAL PSTs
Lack of classroom management skills	The PSTs linked their anxiety experiences to the lack of classroom management skills
Main theme: Self-directed regulatory mechanisms	
Seeking help from others	The study found that some PSTs took the initiative to seek help from their colleagues (other PSTs) and mentor teachers to manage anxiety effectively
Engaging in voluntary reading	The study found that PSTs engaged in free-voluntary reading and self-motivation to manage anxiety.
Adopting translanguaging practices	The study found that PSTs resorted to adopting pedagogical translanguaging in their classrooms.

Anxiety-Inducing Factors During Work-Integrated Learning in Rural High Schools

This theme addresses the factors that contribute to anxiety among English FAL PSTs during WIL in rural high schools. The subsequent sub-themes detail the views of English FAL PSTs.

Learners' limited English language proficiency and teachers' self-incompetence

The participants indicated that learners limited English proficiency was a source of anxiety. They reported that some learners struggled to express themselves in English, while others found it difficult to follow simple instructions and actively participate during the lesson. For instance, one participant stated

I feel anxious about using English in the classroom because I can tell that most or the majority of the learners don't understand what I am teaching them. Most of the time, they fail to answer the questions posed to them, indicating that they don't understand. (Teacher 1)

Another recurring sentiment among the participants involved poor comprehension of the questions asked and the content taught, resulting in one of the participants stating that what frustrated her included, "Learners being unable to fully capture the contents of the lesson when everything is taught in English" (Teacher 3). This situation hampered participants' efforts to maintain effective communication and interaction in the classroom. Additionally, the participants found this situation stressful because they had to repeat some of the concepts that they had already taught and spent more time switching codes and translanguaging to facilitate learners' comprehension of concepts. To illustrate this, one participant expressed her frustration and stated that "Some learners hardly

understand English, therefore, from time to time you have to translate to their home language for everyone to understand" (Teacher 4), while another participant shared similar sentiments and stated, "It worries me using the English language [because] in many cases when everything is explained in English, learners fail to understand. They will even ask you, as a teacher, to give explanations or examples in Sesotho" (Teacher 6).

Other participants viewed learners' passive participation and lack of interest in classroom activities as a reflection of their limited understanding and poor implementation of the teaching approaches they had learned in the English methodology course at the university. Generally, they felt that they were not adequately prepared, with one student stating

Sometimes it is nerve-wracking because it is a new environment and I also believe these grade 8 learners need a teacher who is qualified and has experience, this is because some of them do not even know how to read English. (Teacher 9)

Participants demonstrated they lacked the experience and expertise to teach learners with limited English proficiency, which affected their confidence and self-efficacy in teaching English FAL during teaching practice.

Another issue the participants raised related to perceived self-incompetence. In this case, they doubted their ability to successfully teach using English. For example, "English is not my mother tongue, so I can't really explain broadly to learners the way I would have explained using my home language" (Teacher 6). This perception was prevalent given the quantity of time they needed to teach, "I am not fluent in the English language; therefore, teaching for the whole period is stressful during evaluation" (Teacher 8). Self-incompetence was also highlighted when participants discussed their capabilities relating to details, such as grammar and range of vocabulary, "I am always worried about my grammar when using the English language while teaching, and that affects my teaching" (Teacher 8) and "Not being fluent in English throughout the lesson and running out of the correct words when trying to clarify or give instructions to learners" (Teacher 3).

Fear of negative evaluation

Several participants indicated that being subjected to summative assessment by the university lecturers was another anxiety-provoking factor. They experienced heightened levels of anxiety before and during the final evaluation. For example, one of the participants stated that "Sometimes we feel worried because it was our first time being evaluated in the classroom by lecturers in front of the classroom...we feel scared and nervous" (Teacher 7). The main concern stems from the fact that assessment by university lecturers determines their progress. In other words, the move to the next level of study or to complete the teaching practice component of the Bachelor of Education program is often decided during this period.

Lack of classroom management skills

Others linked their anxiety experiences to the lack of classroom management skills. They stated that they worried about their ability to maintain order and decorum in the classroom, especially during the summative evaluation period. As expressed in these extracts, "The anxiety-inducing factor I faced during my teaching practice was classroom management. I find it very difficult to ensure discipline in my English class since it is overcrowded" (Teacher 9), and "We are also worried about how learners will respond when the lecturer arrives, how they are going to behave, will they show respect...?" (Teacher 10), the participants were highly anxious about learners' unpredictable behavior and whether

the lecturer's presence would impact learners' participation during the instruction. Adding to this, another participant stated that

I believe that most student-teachers are not monitored daily, and they get used to teaching alone in class...we tend to start having doubts or are unsure of whether you have been teaching correctly. This increases the anxiety of that particular teaching. (Teacher 10)

As expressed in the extracts, the participants attributed poor classroom management skills to a lack of effective mentoring and overcrowding. Coupling this with the scarcity of educational resources, it was almost impossible to keep learners occupied and motivated to learn.

Self-Directed Regulatory Mechanisms for Managing Anxiety During WIL in Rural High Schools

This theme focuses on the self-directed mechanisms used by English FAL PSTs to manage anxiety during WIL in rural high schools. The views of the English FAL PSTs are detailed in the sub-themes below.

Seeking help from others

According to the participants, managing anxiety requires a collective effort. In this case, they realized the significant role that others could play in bringing about much-needed assistance in managing anxiety during WIL. On the one hand, others resorted to observing and seeking assistance from experienced teachers who had overcome anxiety at some point in their careers. For one participant, "Seeking support from fellow pre-service teachers or experienced educators who have successfully overcome FLTA" (Teacher 4) proved effective in managing anxiety. Several participants mentioned seeking assistance from other PSTs who seemed confident and competent when teaching English FAL. This happened after realizing that other PSTs appeared more proficient due to better past exposure to English. For instance, one participant stated, "Throughout my stay here, I decided to become friends with some of the fellow pre-service teachers who attended English home language schools. I mean, they speak almost like native English speakers" (Teacher 1), while another mentioned that "I always make sure to speak English more often, no matter where I am, and interact with other pre-service teachers and speak English with them" (Teacher 10). In this case, engaging in informal conversations with these PSTs proved effective in enhancing the participants' confidence and communication skills.

Engaging in free voluntary reading

For most PSTs, especially in rural schools, teaching practicum allows them to showcase their capabilities and create a lasting impression on their potential employers (school principal and school management team). To achieve this, the participants realized the importance of identifying and remedying pedagogical and content knowledge gaps to teach English FAL effectively. It emerged that some participants focused on improving their English vocabulary and grammatical knowledge through voluntary reading as a mechanism to manage anxiety and improve their instructional practices. This is corroborated by the assertion that "Reading books has helped me improve my vocabulary. Using English weeks before evaluation day helped significantly. I was getting comfortable day by day as I was preparing for the evaluation day" (Teacher 6). For another participant, incorporating multimodal texts and using a wide range of educational resources assisted in closing gaps in content and pedagogical knowledge of English FAL. This is well-summarized in the extract

I now begin my classes with 5 min of reading and 5 min of explaining a few words in a language they understand so that when I start teaching, they already know what some words mean. I also bring auxiliary materials like pictures of what I will be teaching about. (Teacher 3)

Additionally, the participants highlighted the importance of proper planning and intrinsic motivation. Some of them stated that they spent more time planning for their lessons, while others were motivated to experiment with various teaching methods in the classroom. For example, some of the sentiments expressed included “I use scenarios when explaining a difficult term or word. Scenarios help learners bring back prior knowledge about the term and also help make sure that learners understand” (Teacher 9), and “I always come to class relaxed, pray, meditate, think positively, and motivate myself. This makes it easier to speak English and become confident” (Teacher 2). According to the participants, experimenting with various teaching methods not only promoted active learning and participation in the classroom but also enhanced their confidence as teachers.

Adopting pedagogical translanguaging practices

Learners’ difficulty in understanding English and their unwillingness to actively participate in the classroom activities were identified as another anxiety-inducing factor for English FAL PSTs in this study. The participants resorted to translanguaging practices to promote participation, enhance understanding of English, and lessen anxiety during teaching practice. Interchanging between English and their indigenous languages assisted them in gaining confidence to teach English and alleviating anxiety, for instance, one participant mentioned that “Sometimes, using your own language when teaching for the first minutes before starting the lesson” (Teacher 7), while other participants added that “Some learners hardly understand English; therefore, from time to time, you have to translate into their home language for everyone to understand” (Teacher 10). Engaging in translanguaging practices reduced the feelings of self-doubt and self-perceived incompetence among the participants.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the self-directed regulatory mechanisms that PSTs use in managing anxiety during WIL in rural high schools. The first part of this study discusses the findings related to anxiety-inducing factors. First, the study found that the prevalent experiences of anxiety among rural PSTs could be attributed to limited English proficiency. The participants in this study experienced high levels of anxiety when learners struggled to understand the content and follow verbal instructions during the lesson. This was an unexpected finding because normally, one would expect learners, rather than the educators, to become anxious for not understanding the content. Recent studies also confirm that many learners in rural schools are not proficient in English, and they face challenges such as limited vocabulary, poor reading comprehension, and general comprehension of the English language (Fesi & Mncube, 2021).

These findings indicate that poorly developed oral and academic proficiency hamper effective learning and teaching because they lead to anxiety in the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to ensure that learners reach high school with sufficiently developed basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency in the English language. It also emerged that PSTs interpreted learners’ language comprehension problems as a reflection of their incompetence. In other words, they perceived themselves as lacking the ability to effectively teach English FAL due to their limited language proficiency and content knowledge. In tandem with this study, other researchers also reported on PSTs’ limited content knowledge and difficulty expressing themselves in English (Mncube et al., 2021). Other studies also link teachers’ poor self-efficacy and anxiety among PSTs during WIL (Q. Li et al., 2023). In the context of this study, these findings underscore the need for PSTs to improve not only their content and pedagogical knowledge but also become proficient in the English language.

Second, the study also found that the anticipation of being evaluated by the university lecturers induced anxiety among English FAL PSTs. Other studies have also highlighted the fear of evaluation as an anxiety-inducing factor among PSTs (Alrashidi, 2022; M. Liu & Wu, 2021; Y. Liu & Wang, 2023). In this study, however, this fear stemmed from the unclear expectations of the university lecturers. It appeared that the participants lacked the knowledge of what the university lecturers wanted them to teach and how to teach it, especially during summative assessment. Some PSTs become anxious that lecturers would focus more on their grammar and less on the pedagogical knowledge and methods they employed during the lesson. It is, therefore, important for university lecturers to hold briefing sessions and explain their expectations before PSTs leave for WIL and before the day of summative assessment.

Third, the study found that the lack of classroom management skills contributed to anxiety among PSTs during WIL. They mentioned difficulties in effectively addressing learners' disruptive behavior in overcrowded classrooms. This is supported by the view that PSTs lack the skills to address real-life problems that confront them in the classroom (Q. Li et al., 2023). This finding corroborates other studies (Alrashidi, 2022; Mokoena & Moloi, 2024) by highlighting that the lack of classroom management skills induces anxiety among PSTs. These findings underscore the need for language methodology courses at universities to strike a balance between equipping PSTs with pedagogical content knowledge and preparing them for classroom management in diverse contexts.

The second part of the study discusses the findings related to the self-directed regulatory mechanisms used by English FAL PSTs to manage anxiety. Ajani and Maphalala (2023) argue that self-directed learning is mainly concerned with helping students become critical thinkers and problem-solvers. Once these skills are in place, students become responsible and take the initiative to address the challenges they face in educational settings. Self-directed students also enjoy the autonomy to decide what to learn and which resources they can use (Ajani & Maphalala, 2023). Furthermore, they remain open-minded about receiving support from others, including colleagues and interlocutors in the school environment (Z. Li et al., 2023). In line with this, the study found that some PSTs took the initiative to seek help from their colleagues (other PSTs) and mentor teachers to manage anxiety effectively. They sought advice from the ones they viewed as confident when teaching English FAL without any anxiety. Additionally, they engaged in classroom observations to learn how other experienced English FAL teachers handled anxiety-provoking situations in the classrooms. This is inconsistent with the observation that PSTs with poor English proficiency avoid situations that require them to speak and interact with others in English (Alrashidi, 2022). On the contrary, interacting with their colleagues created an opportunity for anxiety-prone PSTs to enhance their communication skills. The anxiety/uncertainty management theory also supports effective communication in the teaching and learning environment (Gudykunst, 1998). These findings also demonstrate that self-directed learning is not an exclusionary and individualized approach that relegates other stakeholders (teachers) to the periphery, but it thrives on the facilitation and scaffolding roles of others (Z. Li et al., 2023).

The desire to become competent English FAL teachers and the fear of negative outcomes when being evaluated by university lecturers motivated the PSTs to confront the challenge of anxiety in the classroom. The study found that they engaged in free-voluntary reading and self-motivation to manage anxiety. They enhanced their vocabulary, instructional practices, and communication skills through extensive reading. In addition, they became motivated to put more effort into planning, preparing, and finding resources for their lessons. These factors resulted in the successful management of anxiety. These findings demonstrate the importance of PSTs' self-directedness during WIL.

To lessen the impact of anxiety during instruction, the study found that PSTs resorted to adopting pedagogical translanguaging in their classrooms. Pedagogical translanguaging involves the teacher purposely alternating different languages to convey information to the learners and to receive feedback from the learners (or vice-versa) during the instruction (Makalela, 2015). In the current study, the PSTs adopted the pedagogical translanguaging model proposed by Cenoz and Gorter (2017) in which learners received the information in their Home Language, Sesotho (L1) and provided feedback to the teacher using an additional language, English (L2). In this case, the PSTs used Sesotho for the introduction of new concepts and checking and activating learners' background knowledge. Thereafter, the content was delivered mainly, and not entirely, in English.

The findings of this study indicate that alternating between English and Sesotho assisted the PSTs to gain confidence when teaching English, thus alleviating anxiety. Moreover, it improved engagement and comprehension in the classroom because learners were allowed to tap into their linguistic repertoires when completing learning activities. This also reduced the feelings of self-doubt and self-perceived incompetence and ultimately resulted in fewer experiences of anxiety in the classroom. The findings of many studies provide insights into how pedagogical translanguaging could be used to enhance language teaching and learning in multilingual contexts (Makalela, 2015). Although the current study corroborates the findings of these studies, through its findings, the study provides a unique perspective by demonstrating that pedagogical translanguaging could also be used to manage anxiety among PSTs. These findings underscore the need for HEIs to further promote heteroglossic approaches and translanguaging practices in the English methodology courses, thus equipping PSTs with pedagogical knowledge to implement translanguaging strategies in rural and multilingual contexts to promote learning and manage anxiety.

CONCLUSION

The interpretation of data and the review of the literature confirm that anxiety remains a challenge facing English FAL PSTs during WIL in rural high schools. The implication is that effective teaching and learning of English FAL in the classroom is hampered to some extent. However, the evidence from the study suggested that English FAL PSTs could use innovative and self-directed regulatory mechanisms to mitigate the effects of anxiety on their teaching during WIL. These findings underscore the need for initial teacher education programs and language methodology courses at universities to equip English FAL PSTs with strategies to teach in diverse and anxiety-inducing contexts. Also, training PSTs on heteroglossic ideologies and multilingual pedagogies, such as translanguaging in English methodology courses, can go a long way in alleviating anxiety in English FAL classrooms. Furthermore, these findings indicate the importance of strengthening support mechanisms for English FAL PSTs in rural high schools. Notwithstanding these important findings, this qualitative study used a small sample, thus making it almost impossible to generalize its findings to all rural high schools in South Africa. This identifies a gap for future studies using larger samples and triangulated methodologies to explore this under-researched area and to provide deeper insights that could be generalized to a larger population in other rural contexts.

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About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues related to Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE).

In this Journal, WIL is defined as:

An educational approach involving three parties – the student, educational institution, and an external stakeholder – consisting of authentic work-focused experiences as an intentional component of the curriculum. Students learn through active engagement in purposeful work tasks, which enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice that is relevant to the students' discipline of study and/or professional development (Zegwaard et al., 2023, p. 38).*

Examples of practice include off-campus workplace immersion activities such as work placements, internships, practicum, service learning, and cooperative education (co-op), and on-campus activities such as work-related projects/competitions, entrepreneurship, student-led enterprise, student consultancies, etc. WIL is related to, and overlaps with, the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training.

The Journal's aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, WIL practitioners, curricular designers, and researchers. The Journal encourages quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of quality practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

The Journal is financially supported by the Work-Integrated Learning New Zealand (WILNZ; www.wilnz.nz), WACE (www.waceinc.org), WIL Australia (www.acen.edu.au), and the University of Waikato (www.waikato.ac.nz).

Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL are primarily in two forms: 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of WIL and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider good practice submissions.

Research publications should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed description and justification for the methodology employed. A description of the research findings - tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data, and a conclusion including recommendations.

Topical discussion articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights into how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

Good practice and program description papers. On occasions, IJWIL seeks manuscripts describing an example of good practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or it was situated in an unusual context. There must be a clear contribution of new knowledge to the established literature. Manuscripts describing what is essentially 'typical', 'common' or 'known' practices will be encouraged to rewrite the focus of the manuscript to a significant educational issue or will be encouraged to publish their work via another avenue that seeks such content.

By negotiation with the Editor-in-Chief, the Journal also accepts a small number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.

Reference

Zegwaard, K. E., Pretti, T. J., Rowe, A. D., & Ferns, S. J. (2023). Defining work-integrated learning. In K. E. Zegwaard & T. J. Pretti (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of work-integrated learning* (3rd ed., pp. 29-48). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003156420-4>

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International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning

ISSN: 2538-1032

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Publisher: Work-Integrated Learning New Zealand (WILNZ)

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