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Mindfulness-based practices for EFL teachers: Sample tasks and insights to cultivate mindfulness

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Abstract: There has been a growing interest in the concept of mindfulness and how it can be used in foreign language (FL) teaching to promote the well-being of both teachers and learners. In FL education, mindfulness is a novel practice, and it can be used as a tool to positively transform negative arousal in the language classroom to create enhanced learning environments. Thus, implementing mindfulness into FL teaching and learning may affect the conscious management of reactions to events happening in a language classroom and establish a less stressful learning atmosphere. However, FL teachers may lack both knowledge and practical realizations of mindfulness; and hence, need guidance in how mindfulness can be incorporated into their own teaching contexts. Based on this insight, this paper presents the latest findings from mindfulness research in language teaching and offers ways to promote mindfulness in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. For this purpose, several activities, including breathing exercises and meditation practices, to foster a mindful attitude for teachers are suggested along with mindfulness practices for the development of language skills. Moreover, this paper proposes insight into mindfulness-based language teaching with notable implications to enrich FL teaching/learning environments and highlights the importance of integrating mindfulness in FL teacher education.

Keywords: mindfulness in FL mindfulness-based classroom practices for FL education, mindfulness techniques in FL.

Introduction

Mindfulness practices, which have received increasing attention in recent years (e.g., Caballero et al., 2019; Mortimore, 2017; Zeilhofer & Sasao, 2022), are generally defined as directing one's attention to instantly emerging inner and environmental experiences without judgment (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). Mindfulness musters a form of awareness that encompasses emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations, as well as external stimuli such as sight, hearing, and smell, in a non-judgmental and non-reactive way to the experiences of the present moment. Thus, it requires a holistic attitude towards the self. That is, not only the emotions or thoughts but also an individual's all sensations (i.e., hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, etc.) are attentively considered. Mindfulness was first developed as a psychotherapy practice by Dr. John Kabat-Zinn in the late 70s and was used to reduce the symptoms of stress-based chronic diseases experienced in daily life (Fulwiler & de Torrijos, 2011). Since then, mindfulness has been used widely in health-related fields in the last three decades and numerous benefits of it have been reported such as decreased stress levels, improved brain activity, and promoted

general well-being in physical and mental indicators (Williams et al., 2015). Mindfulness practices have gained extraordinary momentum in the last ten years, and the application of these practices to the field of education has just recently attracted attention (e.g., Hooker & Fodor, 2008; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Moafian et al., 2019). The integration of mindfulness-based interventions in education environments is a new area of interest, and there is a need for research and practices on teaching and disseminating mindfulness practices, especially in EFL education (Fallah, 2017; Zeilhofer, 2020; Zeilhofer & Sasao, 2022).

The use of mindfulness practices in general provides a positive personal transformation for learners, and it supports noticing and acceptance instead of avoiding negative feelings, thoughts, and experiences (Caballero et al., 2019). Moreover, a mindfulness attitude towards learning increases readiness for the learning experience, helps to gain awareness about the learning process, and provides a holistic approach to learning comprising feelings and thoughts (Mortimore, 2017). Therefore, the implementation of mindfulness practices may have a transformational effect on the conscious choice of reactions given to mental and physical actions and situations in learning and teaching environments that would have a direct impact on learning. Thus, it may be possible to make learning-teaching environments more effective through the integration of mindfulness practices. Mindfulness-based practices (MBPs) provide various benefits for both teachers and students. According to Langer (2000), mindfulness promotes an increase in memory, creativity, and positive emotions, while reducing stress and supporting general vitality. Considering that teaching is a very intense, demanding, and elaborate profession, the importance of stress, anxiety, and professional burnout felt by teachers and the effects of teachers' behaviors and feelings on their general well-being and vitality can be understood. According to Hooker and Fodor (2008), students' motivation may also be related to their well-being and vitality levels. That is, when students' self-acceptance, self-understanding, and self-management skills are taken into consideration and training on mindfulness is provided, students become more motivated towards learning. Accordingly, MBPs are recommended to increase the general well-being of learners (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). It is assumed that MBPs contribute positively to academic achievement, as well as lead to an increase in learners' reading comprehension grades and improvement in their concentration skills and resistance to stimuli (Mrazek et al., 2013; Shao & Skarlicki, 2009). Several studies have emphasized that MBPs have positive effects on reducing anxiety levels and the importance of using them at all levels of education such as K12 education, higher education, and adult education are recommended (e.g., Capel, 2012; Hjeltne et al., 2015; Mrazek et al., 2013).

In general, MBPs involve various types of techniques to direct learners' conscious attention to the present moment of learning, freeing their learning channels from anxiety related to negative past learning experiences and future projections of failure. Among these

techniques, there are breathing exercises (i.e., body scanning, square breathing, mindful breathing to increase readiness for the learning of a new topic), simple body exercises rooted in Yoga, meditation practices (i.e., guided sitting meditations, visualization meditations), and creating mindful learning experiences through journaling and gratitude practices. Implementation of mindfulness into FL instruction is quite a new tendency and there are no published materials and activities, to the author's best knowledge, available for FL teachers to integrate mindfulness-based practices into their lessons. The focus of this paper is to introduce mindfulness as a novel approach to English Language Teaching (ELT). To this end, this paper first clarifies the features of mindfulness and how they can be adapted to EFL environments. It also suggests various practices and activities that can be implemented into various stages of English lessons. In this regard, this paper offers practical insight into how to cater for positive transformation in ELT via MBPs.

Mindfulness and foreign language teaching

Mindfulness and FL teaching have been an expanding area of research recently and it can be considered as an area open to investigation (Zeilhofer & Sasao, 2022). In the field of FL education, the effects of guided meditation practices as part of mindfulness have been investigated. Jenkins (2015) revealed that three minutes of mindfulness-based meditation practices in language teaching are useful as a classroom management technique, support new vocabulary learning, and foster calmer and more careful learning by lowering the sensory filter. It echoes Krashen's (1986) affective filter hypothesis. Accordingly, there is an imaginary filter in the mind that prevents input and blocks cognition when negative arousals such as anxiety and fear are experienced. When this filter is lowered, the feeling of safety is elevated which supports language acquisition. In this case, mindfulness practices can help to lower the affective filter inviting learners to feel safer and more relaxed in the learning environment. Mortimore (2017) emphasizes the contribution of different mindfulness-oriented meditation practices to create a more effective classroom atmosphere by positively affecting FL learning and attention orientation. Zeilhofer (2020) asserts that due to its repetitive nature, meditation practices can support better vocabulary learning in the FL class along with their positive effects on academic achievement in general and focused attention that supports FL learning. It is further pinpointed that guided meditation exercises in the FL classroom can result in better grades and increased mindfulness towards FL learning (Zeilhofer, 2020).

One vein of research that has gained recent momentum is the relationship between mindfulness practices and FL anxiety. Önem (2015) found that guided meditation practices helped lower FL anxiety in addition to gains in vocabulary learning. Likewise, Fallah's (2017) study yielded a negative relationship between mindfulness and FL anxiety. Mortimore (2017) investigated the effects of mindfulness-based

interventions in an FL context and highlighted the effects of mindfulness-based interventions for creating a calmer learning environment even though its effects on decreasing FL anxiety were inconclusive. In the Thai context, Charoensukmongkol (2016) found a decrease in FL anxiety levels of students with higher mindfulness states. Morgan and Katz (2021) investigated the effects of mindfulness on FL classroom anxiety (FLCA) and found that although mindfulness did not reduce FLCA, it helped students understand students' FLCA from a different perspective. Apart from FL anxiety, Moghadam et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between mindfulness and FL learners' burnout levels, and they reported a decrease in the overall burnout levels and an improvement in receptive language skills. Engaging in mindful strategies while learning an FL was also found to help learners take the responsibility of their own learning, generate new thoughts, facilitate the FL learning process, and cultivate creativity and intelligence (Wang & Liu, 2016). All in all, recent studies in general highlight a conspicuous need to integrate mindfulness into FL learning and teaching and explore its effects as mindfulness practices have the potential to support creativity, increase attention, lower anxiety, and promote engagement in language practice (Moafian et al., 2019).

Mindfulness in the EFL classrooms

Derived from the reported benefits of mindfulness practices in teaching and learning contexts, their effects on FL vocabulary learning, academic achievement, increased attention, and lowering FL anxiety, incorporating mindfulness in EFL contexts is a promising area of research. However, language practitioners and teachers in EFL contexts may lack awareness of how mindfulness can be integrated into their classrooms due to the lack of sufficient background information on mindfulness, its features and techniques, scarcity of published studies on how mindfulness can be used in EFL contexts, and lack of available and accessible materials that can be used in actual teaching contexts. The preliminary findings of a needs analysis conducted recently as part of an Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership Project with 245 EFL teachers in Turkey revealed that teachers, in general, are not familiar with mindfulness practices albeit their willingness to implement such practices and that there is a need to provide training and materials they can use with their learners.

In EFL teaching and learning contexts, the features inherent in mindfulness can be used to enrich language learning experiences and to create effective environments. Table 1 displays nine attitudes of mindfulness (non-judgement, acceptance, beginner's mind, patience, non-striving, trust, letting go, compassion, gratitude) adapted from Kabat-Zinn (2013) and the section following it highlights how these features are of use in FL teaching and learning with a specific focus on EFL.

Table 1
Nine attitudes of mindfulness and their implications for EFL classroom

Attitudes	Features	Implications for EFL Classroom
Non-Judgement	Not labeling or categorizing the events, situations as good, bad, nice, awful, etc. Cultivating an ability to understand.	Approaching English language learning by leaving the judgments about learning FL and adopting an objective perspective.
Acceptance	Accepting fear, anxiety, and sorrow as they are and not running away from them.	Accepting negative arousals related to FL learning and going through all with an open perspective. Being able to see solutions to language learning problems.
Beginner's Mind	Experiencing things like a child as if they are happening for the first time.	Going through everything as they are related to FL learning with curiosity regardless of the concerns of the past and future.
Patience	Trying to control the plans of expectations of the future. Making negative consequences out of the things and situations that have not happened yet.	Being stuck in negative past experiences of learning English and jumping into conclusions. Language learning takes time, and it can only happen in the present moment.
Non-Striving	Observing the feelings and sensations as they rise and fall and being in full awareness of the experience.	Avoiding difficult situations and topics related to English, and expecting to learn everything at the end of a single lesson bring disappointment.
Trust	Taking your own responsibility. Trusting in yourself and what the present moment offers.	Accepting everything as they are, awareness of one's capacity and limits related to FL learning and directing attention to FL learning consciously.

Table 2
Continued

Table 2 Continued		
Letting Go	Having an awareness of 'everything shall pass' by conscious observation of the internal states.	Letting go of negative FL learning experiences, choosing to focus on the present moment instead of living in the same worrisome story repeatedly.
Compassion	Having a friendly attitude towards feelings, thoughts, and all internal states.	Building emotional resilience for learning FL by acknowledging the reasons for failure and downfalls.
Gratitude	Not taking everything for granted. Appreciating even the simplest things.	Being able to say 'I am here, I am healthy, and I am in the class. I am here for language learning, and I am putting my effort into this.'

When you overview all nine attitudes and their implications for EFL in Table 1, you may find out that all these attitudes are connected with and complementary to each other. Teachers in EFL contexts would help their learners build mindfulness attitudes towards FL learning once they understand what each attitude entails for their learners. Having a non-judgmental attitude is the key to effective mindfulness practice. FL learners often tend to think much about negative past language learning experiences; and thus, may have problems in concentrating on and realizing the new learning opportunities that arise in the moment of learning. Learners may have been occupied by thoughts like ‘I don’t need English; why would I learn English? Other people should learn my native language, etc.’ A non-judgmental attitude here does not encompass a passive state of denial; on the contrary, it promotes less self-criticism and more self-understanding about how one learns a foreign language. It requires observing the momentarily rising sensations and thoughts (e.g., ‘I feel anxious when I have to speak in English’, ‘I can’t write in English’, ‘I have an awful pronunciation’, etc.) and being able to pass through them to open up oneself to the language learning experience.

Acceptance is building courage to face problems in language learning situations especially when there are formidable difficulties. For instance, there may be obstacles stemming from L1 and L2 differences, inaccessibility to FL input in the social context of learning, lack of practice opportunities, and some affective negative arousals due to stress, anxiety, and lack of motivation. In such cases, accepting such problems as they are and trying to find solutions for more learning and practice opportunities would help to realize one’s potential abilities. Having a *beginner’s mind* in FL experiences would also help to become fully aware of the richness of the present moment in the language classroom for utilizing the learning opportunities. That is, seeing each language lesson from a fresh lens full of new experiences would help to increase concentration and motivation. The attitude of *patience* reminds us that learning a foreign language is a complex system and there are many stages to go through. It echoes the importance of learners’ readiness for learning certain structures and the developmental stages a learner goes through in second/foreign language acquisition (i.e., question order) (Meisel et al., 1981; Spada & Lightbown, 2002). Learning a foreign language takes time and language learning is a complex system emerging from learners’ dynamic encounters with language highlighting that each learner’s developmental trajectory is unique and is influenced by various factors such as past experiences and the social ambient of the language they are exposed to (Larsen-Freeman, 2012; Ortega & Han, 2017). Thus, helping learners to be patient would help them to understand their emerging experiences and view language learning as a dynamic process.

A *non-striving* attitude within mindfulness is crucial in understanding learners’ struggles with projected expectations (i.e., of the society, the statewide exams). The constant pressure of always ‘doing’ is then replaced by just ‘being’ which features being present for learning with all the necessary attentional resources. Then, noticing can take place

which is considered as crucial for second/foreign language acquisition (Schmidt, 1990, 2001). Such an openness for FL learning would also foster building *trust* on learners' behalf. Trusting the language learning process, and experiencing it with all the difficulties and improvement it comprises would enhance increased inner confidence which in turn would provoke motivation and willingness to experience. Another attitude of mindfulness is *letting go*. That is, not being stuck in ruminative thoughts and feelings repeatedly, but rather trying to create new stories out of emerging experiences. In this respect, FL learners may need to develop compassion for showing self-care and kindness in difficult situations. Instead of blaming others and oneself for failures and negative reactions towards FL, learners may approach the experienced difficulties as they rise and fall with compassion. The last attitude of mindfulness is having *gratitude*. Such an attitude would help to know the value of learning, being in an FL class for new experiences, and making the best out of them. Reminding learners that they are capable of language learning and there are many moments of success even in simple language tasks would help them to transform any FL learning experience into a memorable one. In the following section, mindfulness-based practices that can be implemented in EFL contexts are presented within sample practices and tasks.

Mindfulness-Based Practices for EFL Classes

Mindfulness-based practices (MBPs) can offer crucial insight into fostering awareness for better classroom practices. A mindful attitude can help teachers to create a positive teaching experience as it is based on the idea of increasing kind attention that is non-reactive and non-judgmental which involves all emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations (Baer et al., 2006). One simple MBP task is given below, and it can be adapted to any part of a foreign language lesson when the teacher feels a need to increase attention, awareness, and willingness. Such a practice can be used to concentrate on the lesson, switch between activities, increase students' motivation, and prepare them for the subject to be taught.

A sample MBP task

Focus on your breath and observe the breath in and out of your body. Invite yourself to a calm and serene space and ask yourself these questions:

- What am I thinking?
- What's on my mind today about learning English? Which of these are real and which are the recording/story?
- What are my concerns/anxieties/fears about the past and the future related to learning English right now?
- How do I feel?
- How is my breathing?
- Am I here?

- Am I ready to learn English?

With the help of the MBP presented here, teachers would be provided with an insight to create an awareness of how mindfulness can be used in the FL classrooms. In the following section, sample breathing exercises, meditation practices, and a language skill task will be presented for EFL teachers to integrate mindfulness practices into FL education based on the features of mindfulness attitudes. All the sample practices given here are designed originally by the author for the EFL classrooms and teachers can use them in their own teaching contexts either in print out or in digital copies with appropriate citation of this paper. All rights of the practices presented here are reserved considering the amount of work to create these practices. Teachers who would like to use multiple copies can contact the author.

Sample breathing exercises

Breathing exercises lie at the heart of MBP, and when used as part of instruction, such exercises may have positive effects on FL language learning (Tasan et al., 2021). Breathing techniques presented here within MBPs are applied through the guided visualization technique since it is important for EFL learners to follow how breathing can be used to create a mindful attitude rather than a taken-for-granted physical activity. When used effectively, breathing exercises lower stress levels, help to concentrate on the task, calms down the nervous system, and increase motivation for learning (Jenkins, 2015).

In the EFL classroom, the sample breathing exercises given here can be used at the beginning of a lesson to prepare and warm the learners for the upcoming topics and tasks, at the end of a lesson to wrap up the day's language activity, during the transition from one part of a lesson to another to increase attention, when there is a need to help learners focus on a task at hand, and simply to create a positive and calming environment for effective FL learning. Moreover, such exercises can be useful to strengthen the rapport between teachers and students by increasing trust in the teacher. These exercises are also a source of language input as they include simple instructions and guidance in English, involve an array of everyday vocabulary, and would help to create a shared classroom language repertoire. Figure 1 below is a sample breathing exercise called *Rainbow Breathing*.



- Find 'Start Here' sign. Place your index finger and do the entire breathing by following the arrows or simply follow with your eye.
- Start with the purple ring and follow the other colors with your breathing.
- Deepen your breath within each ring.
- Slowly inhale following the arrow 'breathe in' and slowly exhale following the arrow 'breathe out'. Repeat this cycle of breaths until the red ring.
- Imagine you are breathing in and breathing out the color of the ring you are following. In each breath, relax your shoulders.
- Breathe in and out as you like it when you are in the red ring. Close your eyes and follow your breaths for a while.
- How do you feel? Are you ready for learning?

Figure 1
Rainbow Breathing

Rainbow Breathing-This breathing technique, given in Figure 1, within the shape of a rainbow is appropriate for learners who are new to breathing exercises. This exercise is useful to focus on inhaling and exhaling and how breath can be deepened with expanding inhales and exhales within each ring of the rainbow. Thus, it is important to start with the purple ring, following the colours one by one, and expanding inhales and exhales as the rings become longer in each colour upwards. Rainbow is also useful for colour visualization of the breath helping learners to focus more on their breathing which in turn will help to focus attention on the present moment. Learners can follow the arrows specifically placed on the rings referring to breathing in and breathing out. This will also help to avoid the mind's wandering around the thoughts, past experiences, or future projections, and concentrate only on the given shape. The last ring of the rainbow includes a free-breathing practice and learners can close their eyes to become aware of their own breathing after following the previous rings. This will also create an individual space for each learner to

focus on the changes in breath and realize any change in body sensations as well. At the end of the rainbow breathing exercise, teachers can ask their learners how they are feeling, whether they observe any change in their body and breath, and whether they are ready for learning. Such a stance would likely increase focused attention on getting ready for the learning experience. Rainbow breathing can also be used when learners experience a negative feeling in the FL class or just before the introduction of a topic. Another sample breathing technique presented here is *Worm Breathing* given in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2
Worm Breathing

Worm Breathing This breathing technique is designed to prepare EFL learners ready for the learning experience and help them to focus on the present moment which is full of learning opportunities. Different from rainbow breathing, the worm breathing technique involves breathholding instances which would assist learners to gather their attention more on their breathing and relax. The shape of the worm guides the learner in inhaling and exhaling and holding the breath in between. The curves of the worm shape are specifically designed to help learners feel the ups and downs of the breath by visualizing it. The worm

is a tiny creature yet is an indispensable part of nature. Once the students practice worm breathing for a few minutes they can close their eyes and can be guided to imagine themselves as a tiny worm in the huge forest exploring around and being part of it in harmony. The journey of the worm is emphasized while directing attention to its progress in each breath as the worm continues its journey with all the ups and downs in the curves of its body. Holding their breath just a second between inhalation and exhalation will also create a space for learners to stay with their breaths without taking any action. This is helpful to find stillness and resilience in the given moment and get ready for learning without rushing with a mind full of thoughts and projections. Worm breathing can be useful in the EFL class when learners struggle with a language area or unfamiliar exercises, especially before communicative practices, when they lack self-confidence, and when they need motivation.

Simple visuals such as the rainbow and worm are selected here as these shapes are quite appropriate to follow the path of the breath and are simple and easy to imagine for all learners. Colourful, high-quality, and attractive visuals are used for the guided breathing exercises along with clear and simple instructions. Teachers can project these exercises on the interactive whiteboard or use a printout version. The visuals can also help to elicit language output and direct learners' attention (i.e., rainbow breathing-how many colours are there on the rainbow, what colours do you see, when do we see rainbows etc.) It is suggested that teachers give instructions for these exercises in a calming voice with a steady flow. Once the instructions on the breathing cards are followed with the visuals, learners can close their eyes and continue doing the breathing exercise on their own at their own pace. A few minutes reserved for a breathing exercise would help to focus learners' attention on the present moment, on their bodily sensations, and their own breathing in specific. Such a mindful space would likely create a positive learning environment echoing the reported benefits of MBPs in FL learning (i.e., increased attention, and lowering of FL anxiety).

A sample guided meditation practice

Mediation is a crucial aspect of mindfulness and guided meditation has been used widely as an intervention in many studies conducted in FL learning contexts (e.g., Jenkins, 2015, Mortimore, 2017; Zeilhofer, 2020). Mediation is a technique that is used to direct attention to inner states for observing thoughts and feelings and focusing on the mind to create a space to bring attention to the present moment. There are several misconceptions, such as meditation is a spiritual technique practised by a certain group of spiritual people, it is difficult and one must spend long years to benefit from it, it is about stopping the thoughts and quieting the mind, and about escaping from the reality (Chopra, 2003). However, meditation practice is the opposite of these misconceptions that it can be practised by anyone who wants to, even a minute of meditation practice can be transformational, and it is not about

stopping the thoughts or feelings; rather, it is about becoming aware of all thoughts and emotions as they rise and fall and observing and accepting them without judgement. In this respect, meditation can be practised by all students if they don't have any physical or mental restrictions. In the EFL classroom, meditation can be practised a few minutes or longer before starting the lesson to help learners concentrate, increase motivation and self-confidence; during the lesson when needed; and at the end of the lesson to help them become aware of their thoughts and feelings related to that lesson. Guided meditation practices may involve gathering attention to all bodily sensations such as hearing, smelling, tasting, seeing, and feeling. In this way, all attentional resources required to concentrate on language study are directed at momentary sensations rather than lingering around many unattended thoughts and feelings occupying the attentional resources. This moment of simple sitting, observing, awareness, acceptance, and concentration potentially would help to create a space for realizing the learning opportunities inherent regardless of the difficulties and negative experiences. The following sample guided meditation exercise given in Figure 3 below with a visual can be practiced in the FL classroom.



You are in the classroom sitting with a long spine. Feel your environment: your desk, the classroom objects around, the air, your friends, the sounds in the classroom. Give all your attention to this present moment. Feel the ground under your feet and your desk under your sitting bones. Focus on all the body sensations right now. Just observe them. Breathe in and out deeply. Expand your belly in each breathe. Relax your shoulders and jaw. Remember that the only reality right now is that you are sitting and breathing. How do you feel?

Figure 3
A Sample Meditation Practice

In this meditation practice, learners are invited to focus on the present moment while they are in the classroom. This practice intends to guide learners to focus on their immediate environment and that meditation is possible anywhere. In this guided practice, learners are asked to feel their presence in the classroom along with the presence of others. With the imagined concentration on all the sensations of their body and the sounds around them, learners' momentary attention is drawn to the observation of everything around them and the classroom itself; thus, it helps them to relax and align themselves with the learning practice that will take place in the classroom. This guided meditation practice can help to focus on what is happening within their bodies and the actual classroom environment rather than wandering around the thoughts of plans, past experiences, and future projections showing them that none of these thoughts defines their momentarily experience at that particular moment. In the EFL classroom, this practice can also assist language practice since the instructions are clear and to the point, and they guide the learners to have a certain

action mentally without even any physical movement. Hence, it is likely to promote security, create a self-space, and raise self-awareness which in turn will prepare learners for language learning.

A sample mindfulness-based language practice

The breathing exercises and the guided meditation practices can be used at various parts of the FL lesson depending on the need (i.e., before the start of the lesson, during the transition of the parts of the lesson, when an unexpected negative experience happens, at the end of a lesson, before language tests, etc.). They can also be useful to focus learners' attention to upcoming tasks.

Apart from these practices, mindfulness-based language tasks can be used to practice various language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) and areas (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation). A mindfulness attitude proposes a holistic approach to FL teaching and learning; hence a skills-integrated approach within MBPs would likely increase language awareness, foster confidence, promote self-expression abilities in English, and activate the existing schema while at the same time creating a space for self-awareness of thoughts, feelings, and sensations. The following integrated skills language task given in Figure 4 can be used in the EFL classroom. This sample task is given here to highlight the rationale of MBPs and how they can be incorporated into EFL teaching/learning. Teachers can also adapt existing tasks in the course books or create their own tasks following the rationale given here.



- Look at the picture. This is Melisa. What does she do in her room? Look at the bubble over her head. What does she think? How do you think she feels? Have you ever felt the same? Do you sometimes find yourself at your desk like that? Are you aware of how long you sit like that?

- Now, think about a similar moment in which you experience intense thoughts or emotions (joy, sadness, pride, etc.). You can also think about a specific problem that bothers you.

- Close your eyes and imagine yourself in your room thinking about that thought(s). How do you feel? Just observe yourself. What kind of feelings arise? Can you locate these feelings in any part of your body (head, stomach, legs, etc.)? Now focus on your breath. Inhale and exhale deeply for a few times. Open your eyes, now.

- Write down several adjectives that express your feelings.
- Are these feelings present right now?
- Write a short paragraph using the adjectives above and describe the event(s) and intense emotions. Tell the event, when it happened, and why it is intense.

Follow-up:
Do you think thinking about an intense emotion, an event, or a situation so much repeatedly helps? What else can you think of doing in those moments when you find your mind occupied with so many thoughts?

Figure 4

A Sample Mindfulness-Based Language Practice

In the sample language task above, learners are guided to practice a mindful attitude during a language practice activity. They are also involved in speaking, writing, reading, and listening as well as practising grammar and vocabulary. In this task, guided by the visual, FL learners think about an experience in which they ruminated; and a mindful space is created to help them reflect on that experience, become aware of how they feel and think, and express themselves in English. In the follow-up, a reflection and discussion ground is created to share their thoughts about experiences of rumination and in this way, a shared community is supported. Learners may become aware that experiencing such instances and feelings is all right and anyone can experience them. This also brings forward the mindfulness attitudes of non-judgement, acceptance, patience, trust, non-striving, and letting go.

All in all, the practices presented here are samples of MBP tasks that can be integrated into English language teaching. A plethora of activities and materials can be designed and incorporated into EFL classrooms. The focus of this paper is to support and guide EFL teachers on the fundamentals and ideals of mindfulness and help them enrich their classrooms with such novel practices.

Conclusion

Mindfulness can offer insights into EFL teaching and learning contexts. That is, MBPs in the language classroom target increasing well-being, decreasing stress and anxiety that may block learning, and fostering a mindful attitude that would help to focus attention on the learning opportunities that are only available in the present moment of learning. Current studies also put forward that mindfulness practices, such as breathing and meditation exercises, have numerous benefits for FL learning and studies rigorously stress that mindfulness and FL learning/teaching is a novel territory open to investigation (e.g., Mortimore, 2017; Zeilhofer & Sasao, 2022). In this paper, sample tasks and exercises are presented to inform the EFL teachers what mindfulness can offer for an effective FL experience and how the ideas of mindfulness can be adapted to English language teaching. The merit of this paper is to create awareness of mindfulness as a new approach to enhancing FL teaching environments. The sample tasks and exercises given here (i.e. breathing exercises, meditation practices, mindfulness-based language practice) can be used in K-12 classrooms with young learners and adolescents; however, they can easily be adapted to various age groups studying at English-medium schools and higher education institutions.

The educational contexts have been under constructive change recently. The profile of FL classrooms involves learners who immigrated from the war zones adapting to new school environments and do not share the mother tongue of the other learners. Additionally, learners, in general, are now adapting to the COVID-19 aftermath following an emergency remote teaching period which altered previous learning experiences. According to World Health Organization report (2020), there has been an increase in the stress levels of adolescents and young adults, and mental health disorders in school children are at high stake. In this regard, teachers have an indispensable role in guiding their learners to pay attention to their well-being and mental health. With the help of MBPs, they can guide learners to become aware of their states of mind, emotions, and prejudices, give their attention to fully accept what they are experiencing, and create a space for enhanced learning experiences. However, there are no published materials or tasks that can be used by teachers, and mindfulness practices are mainly used in educational contexts through personal efforts. There is a need for conducting studies on the integration of mindfulness into English language teaching, designing materials and tasks, and making them accessible to teachers. I hope future endeavours of adapting mindfulness into language teaching/learning environments will provide fruitful results. A mindful class is possible both for the teachers and the learners.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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