

**Cultivate Mindfulness: A Case Study of Mindful Learning in an
English as a Foreign Language Classroom**

Yang Wang and Chao Liu

Abstract

This case study investigated how the use of mindfulness affected college English as a foreign language (EFL) students learning and how mindful learning strategies supported their learning of English. Mindful learning considers the students' abilities to be aware, perceive and conceive. Mindfulness results in an increase in competence, memory, creativity, and positive affect based on the previous studies. In this study, 24 undergraduate freshmen participated at a Northeastern University in China. The data collection included those undergraduates' pre-surveys, post-surveys, work samples, the instructor's observation notes and the researcher's reflective journal entries. This practice found that by engaging in mindful strategies, EFL students took ownership of their learning in the following ways: students built and became aware of a comfortable learning environment in their classroom through mindfulness; mindful writing helped students generate new thoughts and become aware of their thinking; mindfulness facilitated their learning process, cultivated creativity and intelligence; mindful cooperative learning provided students with an opportunity to discover their awareness, learn from others, reflect and think critically.

Keywords: mindful learning; mindfulness; English as a foreign language learning; college learners; case study.

Introduction

“Many of my students don’t seem to care about learning a foreign language. They are sitting in my classroom; however I don’t think they are aware of what they are learning.” Mr. Liu brought this up when we chatted about teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) over coffee. Mr. Liu is an English language instructor at a northeast university in China and we have been working together and sharing ideas on teaching and learning EFL for many years. Both of us realized learning English as a foreign language has been a great challenge for those learners who live in a non-native-English-speaking environment. We have had many EFL students learn English language in this way: they spent plenty of time and effort in memorizing vocabulary and grammar rules, practicing reading comprehension skills, writing three-paragraph-essays, listening to audio recordings, imitating after video clips, and seeking chances to speak English or converse with a native speaker. However, little attention is given to the awareness processes during the learning of English. Many EFL learners compliantly follow their teachers’ instruction, keep notes and memorize the lectures. They passively deposited the input that was passed by their teachers like a banking system (Freire, 2000), without paying much attention to their awareness or mindfulness.

At all the universities and colleges in the mainland of China, English language is one of the mandatory courses. EFL learners are eager to boost their knowledge of English language and culture, in order to become competitive globally. Thus, many teachers and educators practice and search for effective instructional strategies for college EFL learning. Both of us, as researchers and teachers, believed using mindfulness would help the adult EFL learners become aware of their learning process and make achievements. However, little work has been done using mindfulness with adult EFL learners.

The purpose of this case study was to explore mindfulness in an English as a foreign language classroom at a Northeast university in China. At this stage in the research, we define mindfulness as the ability to be aware and inquire (Cooper & Boyd, 1996; Hassed & Chamber, 2015; Siegel, 2007). Mindful learning means learners have the ability to be aware, to perceive, and conceive during their learning process (Cooper & Boyd, 1996). This research investigated how mindfulness affected adult EFL students learning English in class, and what mindful strategies supported their learning.

Literature Review

Mindfulness may be simple but it is not easy. Mindfulness is “not just about meditation; it is also a way of living with awareness” (Hassed & Chamber, 2015, p. 7). It is an intrinsic process requiring effort and discipline (Siegel, 2007). In the book *The Mindful Brain*, Siegel (2007) stated that mindfulness enlightens us to come to a deeper understanding and lead us to new ways of living in this world. Mindfulness appreciates our feelings and empowers us to explore our creativity and intelligence. It guides us to reflect on our own life and learn from it. However, mindfulness does not happen automatically. This process takes effort.

Cooper and Boyd (1996) discuss their thoughts about using mindfulness in teaching and learning. They consider teaching is a process of facilitating and uncovering skills. Also, to be mindful means to expand students’ thinking. They state, “Mindfulness takes into account the student’s inclination to search, to inquire. It considers the student’s ability to be aware, to perceive and conceive” (p. 9). Mindfulness involves refining, thinking, formulating meaning and benefiting from learning. In an effective mindful class, the teacher helps his/her students build meaning, reflect on their learning, and make use of their learning.

Mindfulness creates other benefits for learning. Langer (2000) presents that mindfulness can result in “an increase in competence; a decrease in accidents; an increase in memory, creativity, and positive affect; a decrease in stress; and an increase in health and longevity” (p. 220). In addition, Brady (2004), a meditation practitioner as well as a teacher, agrees that if we became aware of the negative thoughts and feelings and developed ways to replace them with positive ones, we would live happier lives. Students could appreciate mindfulness in class and teachers would benefit from the advantages of mindfulness.

Mindful learning relates to reflection. Cooper and Boyd (1996) state that “mindful learning is dependent upon learner reflection and mindful reflection requires mindful learners” (p. 61). Meanwhile, they point out that teachers play various roles in a mindful class: they display interpersonal skills, think critically, exhibit creativity, communicate effectively, develop personal wellness, demonstrate global responsibility, and assess and use information. Additionally, the authors affirm that teacher and students need to build a mindful learning environment in class, where students are encouraged to think, are interested in studying and working, are respected and respect each other, and are continuously supported and challenged.

Numerous instructional strategies can be applied to support mindful learning in the classrooms. For example, Campbell (2009), along with Cooper and Boyd (1996) include using graphic organizers, asking and improving questioning skills, and using mindful assessments in their strategy lists. Also, Campbell (2009) incorporates technology for students who are interested and enjoy using technology to learn mindfully. Boice (1994) studies that mindful free writing (writing about whatever comes to mind) helps with writing fluency and creativity. Moreover, Brady (2004, 2007, and 2008) practices cooperative learning, writing prompts, as well as free writing in his class, and proves that those strategies all facilitate the students’ learning. Furthermore, Langer (1997) discusses that many indirect factors contribute to mindful learning: openness to novelty; alertness to distinction; sensitivity to different contexts; implicit awareness of multiple perspectives; and orientation in the present. Goguen-Hughes (2011), working at a contemplative teaching and learning institute, states that mindfulness helps learners become more reflective and accept diverse views.

Our study was inspired by Richard Brady (2004), who worked with high school teachers and students. Brady brought meditation to a high school classroom where the practices of mindful strategies improved the students’ learning. We shadowed Brady’s work and our goal was to explore how mindful learning would affect EFL students’ English learning. Our case study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014) was guided by the following questions: How did the use of mindfulness affect college EFL students learning of English? How did the mindful learning strategies support college EFL students learning of English? This article weaved together the voices of various participants – the researcher, the teacher, and the students.

Methodology

This qualitative case study was conducted in a freshmen’s EFL classroom at a Northeast university in the Mainland China. Our bounded unit of this case study is the group of EFL students learning English mindfully with their teacher’s facilitation. We framed our work within constructivism and believed that people co-construct their theories and knowledge by experiencing and reflecting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). We construct our beliefs and knowledge of learning English language in a mindful way through this study.

Mr. Liu obtained a Linguistics and Applied Linguistics Master Degree and was an English language instructor for eight years at the study university. He continually explored effective instructional strategies to use with his EFL students. He was a yoga practitioner and practiced

meditation in a weekly yoga class. He was willing to implement meditation in his class after we talked about the possible outcomes of this mindful learning project.

Mr. Liu's students in this comprehensive English class all participated in the study. They majored in International Business, were about twenty years old and had been learning English language for nearly nine years in a non-native speaking environment. Seventeen participants were female and seven were male. Mr. Liu and his students met three times a week, one and a half hours each time with a ten-minute recess. The learning content focused on a textbook titled *Contemporary College English* (Yang, 2009), which was widely adopted at universities and colleges in the Mainland China. Each unit included a vocabulary learning section, reading section, interactive activities section, unit review section, worksheet section, and test section.

At most class meetings, before we introduced mindfulness, Mr. Liu played music, mainly popular songs in English, when the students walked into the classroom in order to create a lighthearted English learning environment in his classroom. In addition, he often played video clips to preview a new unit, prompt a discussion, or review the learning material. His class routine included his lectures of the new knowledge, the students' individual reading time, worksheets and exercises, group discussion, and the time set for questions and answers. The teacher taught to the test and the students memorized vocabulary and got ready for the test. Mr. Liu generally held the role of authority figure in the classroom...

We practiced mindful strategies in Mr. Liu's classroom for three months in a spring semester. The strategies we incorporated in class included graphic organizers (Campbell, 2009; Cooper & Boyd, 1996), word definition diagram (Campbell, 2009), improving questioning skills, using mindful assessments (Cooper & Boyd, 1996), cooperative learning (Brady, 2004, 2007, 2008), and mindful writing (Boice, 1994). We integrated all the strategies along with guided meditation (Brady, 2004). Students did meditation before or during the classroom activities at least once a week. Mr. Liu led a one-minute meditation in the beginning of the study and then slightly extended the time length of meditation when the students became familiar and comfortable with meditation.

The data collection included students' pre-survey, work samples, semi-structured interviews, the teacher's observation notes, and researcher's reflection journals. The pre-survey was conducted before this study to learn about the students' learning strategies, attitudes on learning and working in this EFL classroom. Throughout this study, we collected the students' work samples, including in-class graphic organizers, writing reflections, and presentation slides. The interviews, conducted after the study, aimed at finding out how mindfulness affected and how mindful strategies supported the learning process. Mr. Liu kept his observation notes, and I kept reflection journals related to applying mindfulness in this study. The data analysis started along with data collection and all data were open coded for patterns (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). The themes that emerged from the data answered our questions.

Results

The pre-survey revealed the participants' attitudes in learning English as a foreign language. The participants reported that they were satisfied with their current learning methods: they learned mainly from their teacher's lectures, joined the class discussion and group work, did a few hands-on activities, and used technology assistance, for instance, playing English songs, the PowerPoint slides, and video clips. The students also reported in the pre-survey that they would like to learn through interesting activities, such as listening to popular songs in English, watching Hollywood movies and popular television shows, reading authentic novels and magazines, having more opportunities to speak in English, and communicating with English

native speakers. Their surveys revealed that whenever they were motivated in learning, they were able to concentrate and achieve more. Additionally, they reported that improving their individual learning was a critical step before they contributed to group work. Moreover, they said that they appreciated when the teacher made more connections to the real world and their prior knowledge. Those responses helped Mr. Liu and I learned about the students' interests, and their English learning. Based on what we knew about the students, Mr. Liu and I borrowed some mindful learning strategies from the literature and modified them for his students.

Meditation

The first time Mr. Liu brought meditation into class was when the students responded to their reading in small groups. His students, in groups of six, read a text named *More Crime and Less Punishment* from their textbook (Yang, 2009). After the students read it aloud in small groups, Mr. Liu brought them together in a large group and led the meditation. Mr. Liu let the students sit in comfortable positions on their chairs and take deep breaths. They sat still in silence and closed their eyes for a one-minute meditation. Mr. Liu guided them to relax and let their minds wander. After the meditation, the students free wrote about their thoughts for five minutes. Then they shared their writing in a large group. Since it was the first time for the students to do meditation and free writing, Mr. Liu allowed them, if they struggled writing in English, to use their first language – Chinese. In that way, they were more comfortable writing about their awareness and expressing their thoughts. About half of the students free wrote in Chinese, and then we translated their free writing to English. For example, one student wrote:

When the teacher asked us to close our eyes, I was nervous. Our group worked on the fifth paragraph. I just scanned it and there were so many words that I'm not familiar with. And I didn't read the other paragraphs carefully. When it's time to open my eyes, I notice that this paragraph is about [Translated from the student's response.]

Some other students like the one above reported that they were nervous and curious about how this would work. Several responded they did not spend enough time reading and the new words were distracting. However, they still grasped the main idea of the text and reported in their freewriting. Another student wrote:

Actually I think we should have more metaphors, analogy, and examples in the texts. The big theories and persuasive language are so boring and make us struggle with understanding. The metaphor in the fourth paragraph really stood out. I like it. [Translated from student's response.]

This student critiqued about the text she read and discussed the way to improve the text. Both of those two students seemed to filter the useful information when they closed their eyes and reported in their writing. Their freewriting responses showed their cognitive reading strategies as well as their comprehension of what they had read. The meditation activity helped those students focus on their work and reflect on their own reading, which was also reported in their post-survey.

KWL Chart

The pre-survey revealed that the students loved doing group work, hands-on activities, and using visual aids. So the next instructional strategy Mr. Liu brought in class was doing a KWL chart. In this three-column chart, students listed: What do I **K**now? What do I **W**ant to Know? What have I **L**earned (Fisher, Brozo, Frey & Ivey, 2014). After reading another piece from the

textbook, the students did a two-minute guided meditation. Again, Mr. Liu reminded them to relax and be mindful of what they were doing. Then the students, in groups, filled in a three-column chart of “what I know, what I want to know and what I learned.” During the group discussion, one member volunteered to be the recorder, and filled in the chart for what the group members already knew about an upcoming lesson, what they wanted to know, and what they have learned after the lesson. Here’s one example (see Figure 1).

what I know	what I want to know	What I learned.
① different backgrounds lead to different belief, values and life style. ② have different theoretical hav. different ways of education. ③ White people are proud of themselves and black (USA). people look down themselves upon. ④ racial discrimination become is not as serious as before.	1. The reason why the whites and the blacks are treated in different way. 2. What's current condition of the blacks? (After Obama become the president of USA).	All men are created equal. All people should be treated equally. We should not judge person in different colour. Everyone has his own disorder. Blacks and whites should try to contact with each other (with no prejudice).

Figure 1. KWL chart from one group.

Figure 1 presents the KWL chart from one small group’s work. When this group of students discussed their chart, they described how more than one recorder contributed to filling in the chart. Mr. Liu observed that they had a discussion which accurately expressed their thoughts and reflection after reading the given text. As figure 1 presents, they revised their written sentences and improved them for clarity. For example, under the *What I learned* column, one member first put in “All men are created equal.” Then they seemed not satisfied with that so another member changed it to “All people should be treated equally.” This shows that through the group discussion, their thinking and understanding went deeper and they expressed their thoughts in a more accurate way that they agreed upon. Mr. Liu also reported that after meditation his students concentrated more on their group work and more critical conversations emerged out of their group discussion. Nearly all students reported in their post-surveys that they loved discussing and working in groups. One student explained, “because everyone has different views, and it can also promote our friendship.” The students became aware of their own learning and acquired new input in a comfortable environment.

Free writing

Besides group work, the students also achieved more outcomes in their individual work through mindfulness. After they read the text *The Man in the Water* (Yang, 2009), depicting a man who gave up his life to save others in an airplane crash, the students meditated for two minutes and then free wrote their individual responses to this story. Since they had experience with free writing by then, they were comfortable writing all their responses in English this time. Here

are some selections from the students' writing pieces (All the following selections are the students' original words, so please forgive any misspelling and grammar mistakes.):

Maybe human is powerless comparing to nature, but human has emotion and kindness. When the man in the water handed life over to a stranger, he made a great impact on the total society. He won the fight. (From Student Tiange, all pseudonyms)

What we learn from the man is that when you are in trouble, you can still be willing to help others which is one of the greatest conduct. (From Student Shiying)

This reminds me of Huang Jian Xiang. (His reference to football). Nobody is a born hero, at the right moment everybody will be the hero. You cannot judge a man by his look. The real hero does not want to get any rewards when he makes contribution. (From Student Deyang)

Like every other person, he was desperate to survive. However, facing with danger, he didn't hesitate and give the living opportunity to others, no matter how slow the effect of the cold. The spirit of commitment is worth to learn. But, in our opinion, life is precious, we can't risk our lives to try to be brave. We must make sure that we have the capacity to save others. We shouldn't act without reflection. So we should do everything with intelligence. (From Student Qianqian)

Similar to the above selected responses, many other students agreed on helping others and committing to society. Several students made connections to their real life. A couple other students, like Qianqian, criticized risking personal life to be brave and thought he should be concerned about his own safety and evaluate conditions before taking any initiatives. From their response sharing in class, Mr. Liu found that they understood the texts deeply after doing meditation and when they were mindful. The students not only learned the facts of the text, but also formed their own opinions. Additionally, they enjoyed joining in the group discussion while respecting each other's words. Students also reported that when they were mindful, they concentrated on writing, thought independently, and learned more.

Found Poem

The other mindful strategy Mr. Liu used was creating found poems. A found poem is one created by taking words, and phrases from the original resources and reorganizing them into a poem (Fisher, Brozo, Frey & Ivey, 2014). First, the students read an essay titled *Quick Fix Society* (Yang, 2009), from their textbooks. They volunteered to take turns reading the texts out loud in a big group. Mr. Liu reminded them to read slowly and be aware of what they were reading. During reading, they underlined or highlighted the words, phrases, and sentences to which they related or echoed. Then Mr. Liu guided them to do a two-minute meditation followed their reading. After the meditation, the students worked in groups of four to create one found poem with the texts they had marked. When Mr. Liu walked around the classroom, he noticed that the students were highly engaged. They shared their favorite words and expressions, discussed the theme of the text and the poem they wanted to create, then selected the words and organized them in the poem. They even varied the spacing and lines of their poems as shown in the examples.

Selected Poem 1 Untitled

The sky is crying,
And the wheels are spinning,
Across the gorgeous farms peasants working,
While my heart is paining.

I tried to defer the gratification,
But I couldn't help speeding imagination.
You said you didn't have affection,
However, I believe you are my destination.

Selected Poem 2 Untitled

Look at the rear-view mirror
There are herds
Remember how it makes us feel
And we will have to leave the quick fix society

We follow our hearts, now
Instead of later and faster
Instead of slower, superficially
Instead of thoroughly
That is gorgeous

Selected Poem 3 Untitled

Life is a journey
Everything passing by is gorgeous
But not everyone can catch it
We are always so anxious that we miss some of it
So please slow down
And appreciate it that we can find subtle changes

Selected Poem 4 Changing Life

To admit or not
the world has changed
we cannot escape

antique cars, Polaroid, chalkboards
are in history
also in my memory

ATM, where I get money
VCR, which I use to record life
are in my mind

in my dream
I may sigh even cry
for missing the old life

but as time can fly
when tomorrow comes
I'll smile to the sky

After they created their poems in groups, the students shared them in one large group. They all volunteered to share and enjoyed the poem sharing time. It seemed that they started to embrace writing in English and gain more confidence in it. Mr. Liu commented that the found poem was his favorite strategy with mindfulness. Though it was the first time they created English poems in class, the students were highly involved in this activity and created beautiful poems. During group work, the students were aware of what they were doing; they cooperated with each other to select their words and sentences in groups; they all expressed their opinions actively; and they discussed the organization of the poem and edited them. The students also reported that they were “happy with their discussion and group work” and they benefited from being aware of what they did and how they did it.

Technology Project

In the pre-surveys, students reported that they would love the teacher to incorporate technology into their learning. Mr. Liu never considered himself to be a tech-savvy person; however, he incorporated as much technology assistance as he could in his class. Usually he represented his lecture through PowerPoint slides. In order to engage his students, he assigned them two technology projects. One was an individual task of teaching a vocabulary mini-lesson through a PowerPoint presentation; and the other was a collaborative project of creating a campus-life themed short film.

动词辨析-

appoint, assign, designate, constitute

- **appoint**: 意思是“任命, 指派, 委任”, 后多跟职位一类的名词
eg: They **appointed** him **Minister** of Education. 他们任命他为教育部长。
- **assign**: 意思是“分配, 分派, 指定”, 后多跟具体的工作。
eg: I **assign** you **to wash the dishes**. 我分配你去洗盘子。

The students accomplished the first individual project in the computer lab at class time. Following a three minutes meditation, the students did individual brainstorming about their presentation plans. They listed out the meanings of their target words, made new sentences as

examples, differentiated them from other words with similar meanings, found more oral and written expressions using the new words, and gave real world examples. They used an online dictionary and resources as references. The students brought their awareness of learning to work on this project. They reported in their survey that when they became interested, their “mental power kept (them) focused.” After they created their PowerPoint slides in the computer lab, they volunteered to teach the vocabulary mini-lessons to the big group during the next class meeting time. Here are two examples of the students’ PPT slides (see Figure 2). The first one presents the differences between “appoint” and “assign.” This student used Chinese to explain the word meaning, gave one example of each word in a sentence, and translated the sentence into Chinese. She color-coded the key words and selected the template by herself. The second slide presented the expressions of “breath.” This student listed out 12 expressions using breath and their Chinese translations. When they taught in class, they projected the slides on the screen and shadowed how Mr. Liu taught vocabulary lesson. They explained the key points, asked interactive questions to the audience, and shared their slides on their campus drive so that the other students could get access.

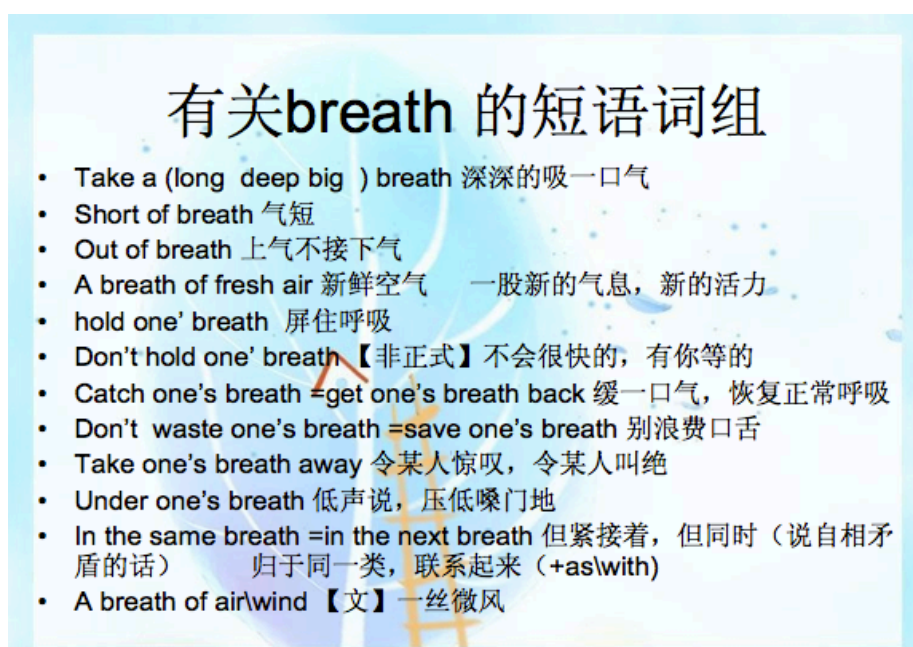


Figure 2. Students’ PowerPoint slide examples

The students developed the other technology project of making movies as their homework and presented in class. They self-selected any topic of campus life, wrote the scripts, did their rehearsal, filmed, and edited after class. Mr. Liu reminded his students to work on their group projects mindfully throughout the entire process. He checked their progress in class. The students brought their group films to share in their last class. This collaborative video project turned out to be a great success. They were engaged in this interactive group work. The students reported that they “loved learning through these interesting activities” and were able to concentrate on their work when they were aware of what they were doing. In addition, Mr. Liu commented favorably on his students’ magnificent film pieces. He said, “this couldn’t be accomplished without mindfulness.”

Discussion and Conclusion

Engaging in mindful strategies, the students took ownership of their learning. Through mindfulness practices, the EFL students built a learning community and became aware of this

comfortable social environment; mindful writing helped students generate new thoughts and become aware of their thinking; mindfulness facilitated the learning process, cultivated creativity and intelligence; mindful cooperative learning provided the students with an opportunity to discover their awareness, learn from others, reflect and think critically.

Mr. Liu and his students reported that they built up a stronger mutual respect between the teacher and the students and among the students. The students formed a closer relationship with each other. In such a community, the students became more willing to take risks, concentrated on their learning, and became more confident about learning English language. The students became aware of the process of learning English, they started to value their own learning process and became more motivated to learn and engaged in this process than before.

The EFL students generated new thoughts and became aware of their thinking through mindful experiences. When they read and discussed in small groups, they concentrated on constructing deeper meaning from the text rather than only decoding the word meanings. Their discussion expanded their thinking of the text meaning (Cooper & Boyd, 1996). In addition, during the practice of free writing, the students had a chance to cultivate new ideas, think deeply about their reading, think critically, and improve their writing skills. In the beginning, half of the students free-wrote in Chinese as they felt more comfortable expressing their thoughts in their first language; while toward the end, all of them wrote their reflections in English. This suggests they became comfortable and confident writing in English marking significant progress in learning English as a foreign language.

Mindfulness facilitated these EFL students' learning process, cultivating their creativity and intelligence (Siegel, 2007). When the students were mindful and the learning process was interesting, they became more concentrated and productive. All the mindful strategies adopted in Mr. Liu's class were introduced to his students for the first time. When they did the found poems, they were highly engaged in their reading, marking up the text, and creating their poems mindfully. The students focused on their tasks, were aware of the meaning of their reading, worked with their group members, and created their poems in a focused manner. They proudly shared their products and valued their mindful learning experience. Additionally, they created vocabulary lessons and taught them to their peers. Many students reported that they acquired more than what they expected from the mindful strategies. These findings suggest that mindfulness resulted in the students' creativity and positive learning effects (Langer, 2000).

The EFL students collaborated with their peers for many of the mindful strategies we introduced and we found that cooperative learning provided those students with an opportunity to discover their own awareness, learn from the others and to reflect and think critically (Cooper & Boyd, 1996). The students were highly involved in group activities and they enjoyed working with their peers. Meanwhile, they acquired the English language from each other in this social environment (Vygotsky, 1978). When discussing and working on tasks in groups, the students had strong motivation to get involved and express their opinions on the texts they read. The exploratory talk (Barnes, 2009) in their discussion inspired their critical thinking, which led to a higher level of understanding and learning. For example, when they discussed the text, they read and filled in the KWL chart, they talked back to the author, questioned the content, and considered multiple perspectives. The students' mindfulness contributed to this achievement.

Introducing meditation and mindfulness, the teacher played a key role in the beginning phase, since this was an initial mindfulness study in this group and the teacher needed to facilitate and lead the process. Mr. Liu modelled and demonstrated for his students before asking them to

act. When the students built a meditation routine and became familiar with mindful strategies, Mr. Liu released the responsibilities and encouraged the students' involvement in their own learning process. Thus, the students became more independent and gained agency in their learning (Johnston, 2004; Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007). That is to say, the students learned actively and took ownership of their English language learning.

Limitations

During our practice of mindful learning, we have seen limitations along with this study. As a case study, the intent is to provide a rich, contextualized account. In this classroom, the teacher and the students already knew each other well. The rapport between the teacher and students definitely contributed to this practice. In other cases, it the relationship between the teacher and students and among the students will also contribute to outcomes. Also, Mr. Liu led the students to do a weekly short meditation. The length and frequency of meditating practice could possibly influence the students' learning.

Implications

This study explored a group of college EFL learners practicing several mindful learning strategies under their teacher's guidance. The study provides teachers with some insights in using mindfulness in college EFL learning. This study would be beneficial for learning English mindfully, improving English language skills via helpful strategies, arousing student interest, developing awareness, increasing confidence and increasing efficiency. In addition, college EFL teachers could use mindfulness to facilitate enhancing student awareness of learning, reducing stress, creating a comfortable environment, enhancing concentration, learning efficiently, and increasing achievement. Other EFL teachers could also borrow mindful instructional strategies for learners of different ages and from different cultural backgrounds. Classroom teachers could introduce meditation, and apply mindful strategies as we did. In doing this, teachers need to constantly remind the students to be aware of their learning and release the responsibility for mindful learning when the students start to take ownership. Further research could examine mindfulness in reading and writing areas respectively, for example, the relationship between mindfulness and metacognition of reading comprehension.

Final Word

As teachers and researchers, Mr. Liu and I learned about the benefits of cultivating mindfulness in an EFL classroom. We would like to explore and practice more instructional strategies that would be helpful for EFL students to be aware of their learning. Brady's (2008) metaphor of the mind provides insight into this process:

The mind is like a television set. It has many channels, including, for example, the happiness, the boredom, the confidence, and the anxiety channels. Each person has the same channels, but some channels have better reception than others. The strongest one are default channels, ones that tune in automatically a lot of the time. (p.96)

We want to offer our EFL students the opportunities to be mindful of their awareness and of their English language learning process. Through resolving their own default learning channels, students will value their own learning and achieve more in their learning.

*Acknowledgements to Dr. Donna Strickland at the University of Missouri for inspiring this research and her help during the research.

References

- Barnes, D. (2009). Exploratory talk for learning. In N. Mercer & S. Hodgkinson (Eds.), *Exploring talk in schools* (pp. 1-15). London: Sage.
- Brady, R. (2004). Schooled in the moment: Introducing mindfulness to high school students and teachers. *Independent School*, 64(1), 82-87.
- Brady, R. (2007). Learning to stop, stopping to learn: Discovering the contemplative dimension in education. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 5(4), 372-394.
- Brady, R. (2008). Realizing true education with mindfulness. *Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 6(3), 87-97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344607313250>
- Boice, R. (1994). *How writers journey to comfort and fluency*. Praeger Publishers. Campbell, L. (2009). *Mindful learning: 101 proven strategies for student and teacher success* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Cooper, C. & Boyd, J. (1996). *Mindful learning*. Launceston Tasmania, Australia: Global Learning Communities.
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative work. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds). *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-30). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Fisher, D., Brozo, W., Frey, N., & Ivey, G. (2014). *50 instructional routines to develop content literacy* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Pearson.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Goguen-Hughes, L. (April 19, 2011). Mindfulness and learning: What's the connection? Retrieved August 20, 2016 from <http://www.mindful.org/mindfulness-and-learning-whats-the-connection>
- Hassed, C., & Chambers, R. (2015). *Mindful learning: Reduce stress and improve brain performance for effective learning*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Johnston, P. H. (2004). *Choice words: How our language affects children's learning*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.
- Langer, E. J. (1997). *The power of mindful learning*. Reading, Mass.: Perseus Books. Langer, E. J. (2000). Mindful learning. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9(6), 220-223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00099>
- Lewis, C., Enciso, P., & Moje, E. (2007). *Reframing sociocultural research on literacy - Identity, agency, and power*. New York: Routledge.
- Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Siegel, D. (2007). *The mindful brain*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological process*. Cambridge, MA & London, England: Harvard University Press.

Yang, L. (2009). *Contemporary college English*. Vol.2. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching & Research Press.

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.