

**ERD 2022**  
**Education, Reflection, Development**

## **TEACHING MINDFULNESS IN THE ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

Sharon Fayerberger (a)\*  
\*Corresponding author

(a) Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania, Sharonfayer@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Research is now beginning to emerge about the negative effects of the pandemic on students learning experience and well-being namely a rise in anxiety, depression, and lack of concentration. Mindfulness practices in the classroom can help alleviate the problems that the post pandemic era has posed on young adolescents. After a period of a year and a half in which high school students in Israel studied from home a case study was conducted in a 12th grade English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. The purpose of the study was to check whether learning mindfulness in the EFL classroom would create positive attitudes towards students' English learning experience and also towards learning mindfulness in the EFL setting as well as to check the effect of the program on the student's well-being. The aim of introducing a mindfulness program into the EFL classroom was not only to make learning English more enjoyable, but also to give students a lifelong skill to deal with post pandemic effects. Further, to use the EFL classroom as a vehicle for teaching social and emotional skills as envisioned by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the English Foreign Language Curriculum in Israel. The benefits of teaching mindfulness in the EFL classroom are discussed with several pedagogical implications.

2672-815X © 2023 Published by European Publisher.

*Keywords:* EFL teaching and learning, mindfulness, mindfulness-based interventions, well-being

## 1. Introduction

One of the aims and objectives of *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) is to ensure that language learners become social agents of language (CEFR, 2001, 2020). Ahearn (2001), “a linguistic and sociocultural anthropologist, defines agency as referring to action thought through in a sociocultural way. Every person is an agent of change within his or her surroundings and change can be mediated through language” (p. 112). In other words, each language learner is an individual who becomes a social agent by using the language to socially integrate within and among different cultures. The learners become social agents by carrying out tasks and actions in particular situations, environments and fields which are not necessarily language oriented (CEFR, 2001). The CEFR also promotes the use of an action-oriented approach which sees language learning as a vehicle by which more purposeful, collaborative tasks in the classroom can be taught i.e., learning to use the language rather than looking at language as just another subject to be taught in the classroom.

Teaching mindfulness in the English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom is one way of fulfilling the CEFR’s vision of making language learning more purposeful. Further, the Organization for Economic co-operation and development (OECD) have recently defined student’s well-being as a major goal (OECD, 2018) and have published a report on the importance of incorporating mindfulness programs in education (Laukkonen et al., 2020). Mindfulness intervention programs are a growing trend in education around the world. Practicing mindfulness develops metacognitive awareness, attention and the ability to focus on the present moment as well as developing students’ ability to perceive and notice explicit language input (Bishop et al., 2004; Hussain, 2015; Mrazek et al., 2013). Further, mindfulness reduces foreign language anxiety (Önem, 2015) and develops self-efficacy (Fallah, 2016). All of the aforementioned concepts are important for successful EFL learning.

The practice of mindfulness, the ability to focus on and be aware of the present moment in a curious and non-judgmental way, has become a buzzword in western society over the past twenty years. Work places, educational systems, medical institutions and mental health care givers are investing more in Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBIs) to become more productive and more focused at work. Academic institutions offer mindfulness courses with the aim at helping students reach academic success (Chapman-Clarke, 2016; Schaufenbuel, 2014; Schmidt, 2011; Shapiro et al., 2006). More and more schools are adopting mindfulness programs to help pupils reduce anxiety and become more engaged in their studies (Ergas, 2021, pp. 40-45). Chapman-Clarke (2016) mentions that one hundred and fifteen parliamentarians in Westminster, U.K participated in a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course (MBSR) to check the potential and importance of mindfulness practice in the work place. This is not what a Buddhist monk would contend as the aim of practicing mindfulness, since there are many differences between Western and Eastern practices (Schmidt, 2011). Nonetheless, the popularity of mindfulness practice in Western society is on the rise.

MBI’s have also been reported to have a positive effect on reducing stress and anxiety in the classroom, regulate mind wandering, improve attention, create cognitive flexibility and creativity, help adolescents with emotional regulation and help improve academic achievements at school (Laukkonen et al., 2020). Living in a post pandemic age, society is currently experiencing the results of the pandemic in education, namely, social and emotional stress, learning gaps, lack of motivation and a general decrease

in teacher's and student's well-being around the globe. Therefore, teaching mindfulness in the classroom is a one way of restoring social and emotional stability as well as motivation among students and teachers (Tan, 2021).

MBI's are becoming more and more popular in the educational setting and so has the plethora of research accompanying them (Albrecht et al., 2012; Ergas, 2019; Renshaw et al., 2017; Zenner et al., 2014). Whether the studies focus on teachers or students, there is a consensus that MBI's are an important contribution to well-being which is one of the goals that is presented by the OECD's (Laukkonen et al., 2020). The aim of this article is to present the results of a ten-week MBI carried out with 12<sup>th</sup> grade EFL students in Israel and to discuss the effect it had on the students' attitudes towards their English studies, their attitudes towards learning mindfulness in general, and their state of well-being.

### **1.1. Mindfulness - definition and the history**

The practice of mindfulness can be divided into two narratives, one stemming from the other (Ergas, 2019, 2021). The first originates from Buddhist tradition which began around the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. The Buddha, known originally as Siddhartha Gautama was a young ancient Indian prince who set out on a quest to find out why people suffer and founded a spiritual path to seek liberation of all suffering – *Nirvana* – which can be obtained by following the four noble truths; *Dukkha*, in Pali meaning suffering, dissatisfaction and constant yearning, *Samudaya* – the clinging and attachment we have to pleasure and our existence (*Tanhā*), *Niroda* – the cessation of *Dukkha* and the fourth truth, known as *Marga*, which is the actual prescription to find this sought liberation<sup>1</sup>. Part of this prescription is to practice *sati*, the Pali word for mindfulness which Joseph Goldstein (2013), Buddhist meditator and teacher and co-founder of the Insight Meditation Society, describes as the opposite of absentmindedness. Being mindful is being aware of the present moment in a state of wakefulness so that if we feel lost or confused, we can return to a present moment experience.

The second narrative that Ergas (2019, 2021) describes is one founded by Jon Kabat-Zinn in the seventies in the United States. Kabat-Zinn claimed that many doctors could not seem to find a cure for chronic illnesses and depression (2013). Therefore, he opened a clinic and developed a program called M.B.S.R (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) and M.B.C.T (Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy) which took the principles of the original ancient Buddhist practice and secularized it with the emphasis of reducing stress, not necessarily curing it but helping people to live with their chronic pain or depression (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, 2011, 2013). As founder of the secular mindfulness movement, Kabat-Zinn defines mindfulness meditation as “the awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally” (2013, p. 35). By focusing on the breath, the idea is to cultivate attention on the body and mind as it is moment to moment. Kabat-Zinn's MBSR courses have contributed to many fields of what he calls “participatory medicine” (2013, p. 171), the ability for a patient to participate in his/her own recuperation. Mindfulness practice, according to Kabat-Zinn is based on seven attitudinal factors: non-judging, the ability to be aware and recognize our judgmentalism while practicing mindfulness and in everyday situations and at the same time, not get carried away by our judgemental

---

<sup>1</sup> This information is based on a course the author took on Buddhism and Modern Psychology by Prof. Robert Write – University of Princeton.

thoughts. Patience, the ability to cultivate a mindset of patience while practicing and understanding the benefits of practice yet recognizing that practice takes time – a sort of gym for the mind. The beginner’s mind, which is seeing things from afresh each time as our thoughts arise. Trust, which is the ability to meet reality as is and deal with any situation that may arise. The opposite of trust in this case would be fear. Non-striving, is the ability to put our goals on hold while meditating. Our goals can often be a hindrance to mindfulness practice since we are concerned with where we need to be instead of just being in the present moment. This does not necessarily mean we should not have goals but rather we shouldn’t let them engulf us. Acceptance is being able to adjust to life as it is (Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 27) and finally letting go or non-attachment is the ability to let go of our thoughts, feelings and emotions that often take control of how we behave. Recently Kabat-Zinn has added two more: gratitude and compassion which are part of “heart” qualities, the other wing of mindfulness which includes loving kindness, forgiveness and equanimity.

Brown and Ryan (2003, p. 824) have defined Mindfulness as a natural and essential state of consciousness which involves consciously attending to one’s moment to moment experience. Mindfulness learning therefore, takes into account the learner’s ability to be aware of the present moment, perceive and conceive and cultivate curiosity and awareness of their learning process. Shapiro et al. (2006) proposed a model of mindfulness to show how mindfulness affects positive change. The model is made up of three core axioms: *intention* – to know why the learner wants to practice mindfulness, *attention* – paying attention and helping to stay focused on the present moment and *attitude* being compassionate and loving to oneself and others which are the above mentioned “heart” qualities. Bishop et al. (2004) proposed an operational definition of mindfulness in order to come to a consensus for mindfulness programs and for mindfulness research. It consists of a model of two components: The first is one of self-regulation, attention and the ability to contain and recognize the present moment experiences and mental processes of the mind. The second are the attitudes we take on with those experiences, namely curiosity, openness and acceptance which coincide with many of the other definitions mentioned above.

A short mindfulness meditation practice would usually start in getting into a comfortable sitting position, closing the eyes and taking deep full breathes – inhaling and exhaling. The idea would be to focus on breath and to be aware of when you are lapsing into thought. Once the mind begins to chatter with thought the meditator gently brings the focus back to the breath which is an anchor. The next stage would be to focus on the body by doing a body scan and paying attention to any sensations of the body – numbness, tingling, the heartbeat, a pulse and when the mind begins to wander again, the meditator pays attention to the lapse into thought and can return to the sensations of the body or focus on the breath and the present moment. An extension of this practice would be to continue observing as thoughts arise and watch them as if watching a movie but not being the main actor in the movie. These practices enable the participant to learn to accept and live with any uncomfortable or painful thoughts rather than push them away as well as notice any ruminations that reoccur and control the emotions.<sup>2</sup>

In summary, Mindfulness is regarded as a self-help therapy which can be practiced alone or in a course or with a group of people. It has become particularly popular in education, medicine, business and

---

<sup>2</sup> As a mindfulness instructor this is an example I use in my courses.

even among politicians. The goal of mindfulness is to help ease anxiety, stress depression or chronic pain by making the participant aware of the very nature of his or her thoughts and by whereby thoughts automatically become so insubstantial and irrelevant that they lose their power of control.

## 1.2. Mindfulness Based Interventions (MBI's) in Education

MBI's in schools around the world have gained more and more popularity in recent years (Emerson et al., 2020) especially in light of the OECD 2030 educational project which lays particular emphasis on student's well-being (Ergas, 2021; OECD, 2018). Between 2002-2017 447 research papers directly researched the connection between Mindfulness and education (Ergas & Hadar, 2019) Incorporating mindfulness intervention programs in the classroom is gaining worldwide popularity for the purpose of reducing stress, and nurturing learner's well-being (Zenner et al., 2014). Most research on MBI's focus on reducing anxiety and other negative psychological ailments. However, little research has been done to see how MBI's can increase well-being and life skills in healthy adolescents in schools Maloney et al. (2016) or increase in academic success (Laukkonen et al., 2020). MBI's aim at cultivating student's mindful awareness by practicing moment-to-moment sensations, objects and emotions all done with an attitude of care, kindness, curiosity, open-heartedness and non-judgmentally (see the example in section 1). Mindfulness in School Programme (*MiSP*) is a universal intervention program used in the U.K (Kuyken et al., 2013). It is a 9-week program taught by the curriculum developers or teachers who were trained by the curriculum developers. In order to test acceptability and feasibility of the program, Kuyken et al. (2013) studied 242 participants from secondary schools around the U.K who underwent the program and were tested before and after the program and then again three months after the program to see whether the students sustained what they had learned especially at a time of stressful exam taking. The results showed encouraging evidence in the programs acceptability and efficacy in terms of well-being and stress reduction. *MindUp* is another intervention program funded by the Hawn foundation, developed in the United States and implemented in hundreds of classrooms globally (Maloney et al., 2016). It is a popular program used for ages 3-14 and includes 15 lessons that integrates Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning. Teachers are trained via videos, workbooks and workshops given online and face to face. Schools that participate in the program must evaluate it at the end of the course. A quasi-experimental study (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010) followed by a randomized controlled trial (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015) showed that participants (fourth and fifth grade Canadian students) of the *MindUp* program showed significant gains in social and emotional skills and a decrease in symptoms of depression. Other popular MBI's include *Learning to Breathe* for adolescents in the U.S (Broderick, 2013), *Mindful Schools in the U.S*, (Smith et al., 2012). In Israel, to date there are three major MBI's Sfrat Hakeshev (The mindfulness language), *Pashosh* and *Purple school program* taught at Reichman University. There are several institutions of higher education in Israel that offer teachers and students mindfulness courses with the intention that they incorporate a mindfulness program in their schools such as Oranim academic college, Beit Berel teachers training college, Seminar Hakibbutzim college, T.A University, Haifa University and Reichman University's Awareness Institute (cited from a talk given by Dr. Aviva Bercovitch Ohana at the Neuroimaging forum at the University of Haifa, 2018).

Five major meta-analysis and reviews of MBI's have been published over the past ten years respectively: (Emerson et al., 2020; Felver et al., 2016; Meiklejohn et al., 2012; Zenner et al., 2014; Zogman et al., 2015). All of the above analyses reviewed a range of 14 – 28 studies from the last decade which investigated the effect of MBI's on children and youth within the school framework. All conclude that MBI's offer benefits, potential and positive student outcomes namely a decrease in anxiety and stress and an increase in cognitive performance and social emotional skills and feeling of well-being. However, they all stress that the heterogeneity among the different MBI's, teacher expertise and methodology as well as the random assignment of schools and lack of active control comparisons in many of the studies pose a challenge in assessing the true benefits of MBI's. Emerson et al. (2020) goes as far as saying that the more studies on MBI's are conducted the less feasible they become and suggests that for further research MBI's and teacher training will have to become standardized, curriculum more transparent and research design needs to use mixed methods.

In addition to the above research on MBI's which unanimously find a small to significant improvement in psychosocial skills, mindfulness in the classroom enhances metacognitive skills (Bishop et al., 2004; Hussain, 2015; Jankowski & Holas, 2014) students' attention span (Mrazek et al., 2013; Zanesco et al., 2016) improves self-efficacy (Greason & Cashwell, 2009; Lightsey, 2006; Luberto et al., 2013; Vidic & Cherup, 2019) and executive functions. Flook et al. (2010) found that mindfulness awareness practices have positive effects on executive functions among elementary school children ages 7-9 after an 8-week intervention program for 30 minutes, twice a week. Goldin (2008) also found a significant change in elementary school children's ability to control attention and emotional reactivity both at home and at school after a mindfulness-based intervention program. Tarrasch et al. (2016) found that mindfulness meditation helped readers with dyslexia and ADHD and keep them on the lexical path because the meditation practice helped the students improve sustained attention. Mrazek et al. (2013) found that after a two-week intensive mindfulness intervention with 48 undergraduate students, working memory capacity and GRE tests (Graduate Record Examination) scores improved. The students were also tested for mind wandering and distractive thoughts which decreased after the intervention.

Van dam (2018) concludes that despite the problems in researching mindfulness interventions because of their diversity in definitions, all of them include a common denominator, which is, practicing paying attention to the present moment, accepting and responding to everything that arises in a non-judgmental way. Finally, the plethora of research conducted on mindfulness intervention, even with its' research limitations, has shown that mindfulness practices and interventions in education are beneficial for students' well-being.

## **2. The MBI used in the case study**

The repercussions of a year and a half school lock down due to the Covid 19 pandemic are now being felt by many teachers in Israel where the current case study was conducted. High school students from the school where the study was conducted, studied at home via the Zoom platform or studied by hybrid teaching from March 2020 until September 2021. In September, 2021 the students returned to study at school. Teachers at the school reported that since the students have returned to school, they have shown less motivation to study, are noisier in class, are anxious and stressful about exams and find it

more difficult to focus during class time. Tan (2021) reports that there is an increase in anxiety, depression and lack of concentration among students globally as a result of the pandemic. Reimers (2022) reports on a global decline in well-being among learners. Therefore, the rationale for conducting the mindfulness program in a 12th grade EFL classroom was two-fold: first, to give the students the tools to deal with the post pandemic era and improve their state of well-being and second to generate a positive attitude towards learning English after a year and a half of learning English online. Further, using an MBI in the EFL classroom can become a means to making English studies more purposeful as envisioned by the CEFR (2001, 2020) and the English curriculum in Israel, Ministry of Education (2020)

The mindfulness program was partly based on the American mindfulness curriculum for adolescents - Learning to Breathe (Broderick, 2013) and part on the author's experience as a mindfulness teacher (see appendix for the program). The students learned how to use the breath in order to calm themselves, how to pay attention to what is going on around them, how to change automatic responses and behavior, how to deal with stress, how to deal with difficult emotions and thoughts and how to be kinder to themselves and others. They learned expressions such as an attitude of gratitude, loving kindness, forgiveness, surfing the waves of life, guests as thoughts, take time to stop, noticing what is going on around you, be less judgmental. The students began each lesson with a short breath meditation, followed by fifteen minutes of learning either by video or a presentation. There was always time for discussion and sharing with exercises and homework practice. Students practiced different types of meditations such as breath awareness, body scan, observing their thoughts, loving kindness and self-compassion and sometimes guided imagery was added. Further, they were asked to keep a journal for themselves to reflect on what they had learned. The journal was not compulsory.

## **2.1. Methodology**

The case study aimed to answer three questions:

- i. What are the student's attitudes towards learning English after learning mindfulness in the EFL classroom?
- ii. What are the students' attitudes towards learning mindfulness in general, after the MBI was administered?
- iii. Do the students feel that the mindfulness program in English improved their state of well-being?

### **2.1.1. Participants**

The participants were 32, 12th grade students at an established well known high school situated in the North of Israel. They all had a high proficiency level in English, three of whom spoke English at home. Their class was defined as an accelerated English class, meaning that they finish their English studies earlier than the rest of their year class. There were 11 females and 21 males. These students have been studying English since the 4th grade and were in their final semester of learning English before their matriculation exams. At the end of term, after their final matriculation exam, they were asked to fill in a questionnaire on their experience of learning English and mindfulness in their final semester of learning English.

### 2.1.2. Instruments

A Likert scale from 1-5 questionnaire was administered to the students at the end of the mindfulness intervention program. 17 out of 35 items on the questionnaire pertained to the mindfulness program and were used for analysis in this study. In addition, the students were also asked to answer one to two questions in writing about their overall gains from learning mindfulness in English. A mindfulness intervention program was also administered for a period of ten weeks (see section 2).

### 2.1.3. Procedure

From the beginning of the school year 32 12th grade students underwent mindfulness lessons once a week, for a period of ten weeks, as part of the English curriculum for an accelerated English class. English is taught five times a week in the school and two (a double lesson of an hour and a half) out of the five lessons were dedicated to learning mindfulness in English while the remaining three lessons were dedicated to other projects in English. Since the practice was not initially intended for research, data was not collected prior to the experimental lessons. At the end of term, after their final matriculation exam, they were asked to fill in a questionnaire on their attitudes towards learning mindfulness in the EFL classroom (as seen by any improvements students felt in their well-being), their attitudes towards learning English (as seen by questions relating to enjoyment of the program). Some of the questions were meant to be answered retrospectively.

**Table 1.** Means and standard deviations for the questions referring to the MBI

| Item  | No. of participants who answered | Mean score | S. D | T      |
|---|----------------------------------|------------|------|--------|
| I feel that studying English this semester was valuable to me     | 26                               | 3.8        | 1.2  |        |
| The teacher taught in an interesting way                          | 26                               | 4.3        | 0.7  |        |
| I enjoyed participating in the meditations.                       | 26                               | 3.42       | 1.39 |        |
| Before the mindfulness program I found it difficult to focus      | 26                               | 2.7        | 1.05 |        |
| The program helped me focus better during school work.            | 26                               | 2.88       | 1.31 | -0.724 |
| Before the mindfulness program I felt that I didn't pay attention | 26                               | 2.84       | 1.06 |        |



---

|   |    |      |      |          |
|---|----|------|------|----------|
| to things around me.  |    |      |      |          |
| The program raised my awareness about paying attention to the things around me. | 26 | 3.42 | 1.24 | -2.670*  |
| Before the mindfulness program I was very judgmental towards myself.            | 26 | 3.19 | 1.17 |          |
| I feel less judgmental towards myself   | 26 | 2.69 | 0.95 | 2.575*   |
| Before the mindfulness program I was very judgmental towards others.            | 26 | 2.73 | 1.09 |          |
| I feel less judgmental towards others.  | 26 | 2.73 | 1.09 | -2.101*  |
| Before the mindfulness program I barely paid attention to the present moment.   | 26 | 2.65 | 1.23 |          |
| The program helped me pay more attention to the present moment.                 | 26 | 3.30 | 1.16 | -3.411** |
| Before the program I found I was living part of my life on automatic pilot.     | 26 | 2.88 | 1.25 |          |
| I feel as though I function less on automatic pilot.                            | 26 | 2.76 | 1.04 | 0.461    |
| I feel more gratitude towards life than before I started the program.           | 26 | 2.88 | 1.55 |          |
| I didn't find the mindfulness program effective.                                | 26 | 2.30 | 1.25 |          |
| I tried hard to come to all the English lessons.                                | 26 | 3.76 | 1.18 |          |

---

\*p < 0.05 \*\* p < 0.01

**Table 2.** Written feedback relating to the MBI (the language is authentic and unchanged)

- 
1. The mindfulness wasn't for me.....
  2. I liked mindfulness a lot, taking a break from usual learning was great. overall, this was a very good experience throughout the whole year (half a year). thank you!
  3. I did mindfulness before the program so my answers probably don't reflect the experience very well
  4. I enjoyed learning English as well as mindfulness the teacher did a great job teaching. my only regret is not getting into the mindfulness lessons more.
  5. I really enjoyed English study this year. I loved how we for the most part stopped with the painstaking memorization of grammatical structures and vocabulary altogether, and instead engaged in interesting projects and the mindfulness sessions. You said that in your class, you see no purpose in meticulously studying and practicing for the finals, because it is very easy. I strongly agree, and am very grateful for you not making us work pointlessly. Thank you for an amazing year of English study!
  6. "I enjoyed coming into class, I knew I can just relax and listen to the teacher without any fear of having to meet any unrealistic expectations, it was very calming.
  7. The mindfulness meditation program felt like a waste of time.
  8. Overall, I had fun and kept loving English, the teacher was great and the class was always well behaved (because of the teacher)."
  9. I think the mindfulness was ok and i learned new things
  10. You made English classes fun and interesting to come to every single time! I really enjoyed learning with you and I felt that you really do care about making your students have fun while learning
  11. I personally didn't care much for the meditations, though I did become more passionate and understanding towards my surroundings because of the mindfulness program.
  12. Meditation was a good way to relax after a long tiring day at school, especially after exams.
  13. I think this semester challenged me in different ways and at the end i can say that I feel that I overcome those challenges partly because of mindfulness.
  14. I really enjoyed the mindfulness program! Sharon taught the material in a very interesting and efficient way. I learned many new skills for coping with stress. I also learned about the importance of living in the present moment and about meditation. I started using the things i learned in my everyday life and they help my deal with different situations better. Thank you!
  15. I think the mindfulness program was very effective and in my opinion every student needs to learn it. Everyone even if he doesn't think he needs to, it is very important to be mindful and self-aware.
  16. Mindfulness practices, were especially meaningful this year: it is great to learn something that is not only relevant, but necessary. Thank you, Sharon, for your caring and dedication!
  17. Unfortunately, the meditation thing was not very effective with me, but everything else was very good. You teach the material in an interesting way, unlike many other teachers."
  18. Even though right now I don't really practice mindfulness and didn't really give it a real shot, maybe in the future I will, and I will use the tools you gave us. Either way, being exposed to it was interesting, fun and even comforting.
  19. The classes were great and I enjoyed them. Thank you very much Sharon ! ♥□"
  20. Thank you for giving me the chance to learn mindfulness
  21. I feel as if the mindfulness lessons were just a way to pass the time.
- 

### 3. Results

It is important to note that although 32 students underwent the MBI, only 26 students in the class filled in the questionnaire. On the day the questionnaire was administered, 6 students were at home with Covid and therefore, their responses to the MBI are unknown. The students' answers on their attitudes towards English studies and the mindfulness program are summed up in Table 1. The written answers are shown in Table 2. A paired samples T-test was conducted to see if there was any improvement in their feeling of well-being before and after the mindfulness program. In answer to research question on whether the students feel that the mindfulness program in English improved their state of well-being, the results show that students felt that after the program they judged themselves less ( $t = 2.575$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) they were less judgemental towards others ( $t = -2.101$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). An improvement was found in the way they

paid attention to the present moment ( $t = -3.411, P < 0.01$ ) and also to the way they pay attention to things around them ( $t = -2.670, P < 0.05$ ). These are all fundamental aims of practicing mindfulness to improve well-being. No significant gains were found in the way the students perceived their focus on school work, living on automatic pilot or feeling more gratitude in their lives. In the written responses students reported on overcoming challenges, coping better with stress, dealing better with everyday situations and feeling more passionate towards their surroundings after they had learned mindfulness.

In answer to the question on students' attitudes towards learning mindfulness in general, after the MBI was administered, from the very limited findings, it seems that most of the class felt that the mindfulness program was useful (mean = 3.53) and enjoyed participating in the meditations (mean = 3.42). From the written answers (table 2) only 2 written answers reported negative attitudes to the mindfulness program. The rest of the comments (11 comments) showed very positive attitudes towards the program. Students reported feeling that the program was effective, enjoyable and meaningful and gave them opportunities to learn new skills. In addition, to the authors surprise, 12 students who participated in the course wrote and signed a letter to the principal of the school, praising the course and stating that in their opinion the mindfulness program was the most useful tool they had been taught in high school.

In answer to the question on attitudes towards learning English after the mindfulness program was administered in the EFL classroom, most of the class felt that studying English this last semester was valuable to them (mean = 3.8), most of the class felt that the teacher taught English in an interesting way (mean = 4.3) and most students did their best to come to English classes (mean = 3.76) even though they were quite capable of passing their English final matriculation exam (set at B2 CEFR level) without having to do exam practice. In fact, their average score on their final national English exam was 93%. The written answers students reported a positive attitude towards English studies saying that they enjoyed learning English, preferred engaging in interesting projects instead of learning grammatical structures and practicing for the final exam and having fun in English.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

In their review for educators, Laukkonen et al. (2020) looked at the science behind mindfulness programs in Education and found that MBI's reduce stress, regulate mind wandering, help students to focus on the present moment and improve academic achievement. Zenner et al. (2014) and Tan (2021) claim that mindfulness programs nurture students well being and improve their social and emotional stability. Although this case study did not look into academic achievement, it is evident from the results that the students were motivated to come to English lessons because of the mindfulness program. They felt that English classes were valuable to them, that the lessons were interesting and purposeful and students did their best to come to all the lessons. In turn their matriculation results in English were very high (average 93%) in comparison to the rest of the students in their year (average 85%). Their high exam results can also be attributed to their high proficiency in English but since no exam practice was taught throughout the semester, their high grades can also be attributed to their motivation, and positive attitudes towards English. Further, the results suggest that their sense of well being was improved after the mindfulness program taught in English. They felt less judgmental about themselves and others and

paid more attention to the present moment and things around them. Some students reported that the tools given to them from the mindfulness program, helped them to overcome challenges and helped them overcome stress.

This small case study explored the concept of teaching mindfulness in the EFL classroom. Despite the limitations of this study with only 26 participants who filled in the questionnaire, in general it can be concluded that using mindfulness in the classroom is a unique way of teaching English presenting several benefits outside of the English curriculum such feelings of well-being, enjoyment and meaningfulness. The students' attitudes to their English studies and to the mindfulness program were positive as they felt that they had learned material that was meaningful to them. When students enjoy their learning, they are more motivated to come to English lessons. The pandemic lock-downs have resulted in a broken rhythm of learning for all students but especially adolescents whose last few years of school were interrupted both socially and educationally. Teachers in Israel have reported an increase in students' anxiety, addictions to social media, class management issues students lack of concentration and motivation towards their studies and a decrease in students' feeling of well-being. Using the English language classroom as a vehicle for social change is one of the CEFR's goals (2020). Further, the OECD place great importance of student's well-being in their future vision for education. Although this was a small case study, it's results still offer some initial and optimistic insights of the benefits of practicing mindfulness in the EFL classroom. Mindfulness is a way of enhancing adolescents well-being. Further, using mindfulness is also a way of enriching EFL learning by motivating the students to be active learners in the classroom, making language learning more enjoyable and more meaningful. In the future, it may be interesting to research other social emotional learning programs (SEL) that are taught in the EFL classroom. This research paper is intended to be followed up by a more detailed and larger scaled study on high school students with an average proficiency level of B1 to see whether a longer MBI conducted in English can enhance EFL proficiency. EFL classrooms can offer both teachers and students a chance to get a whole set of new and important life-long skills and at the same time make foreign language learning more meaningful and purposeful.

## References

- Ahearn, L. M. (2001). Language and Agency. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 30(1), 109-137. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.30.1.109>
- Albrecht, N. J., Albrecht, P., & Cohen, M. (2012). Mindfully Teaching in the Classroom: a Literature Review. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(12). <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n12.2>
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., Segal, Z. V., Abbey, S., Speca, M., Velting, D., & Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11(3), 230-241. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bph077>
- Broderick, P. C. (2013). *Learning to breathe: A mindfulness curriculum for adolescents to cultivate emotion regulation, attention, and performance*. New Harbinger Publications.
- Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822>
- Chapman-Clarke, M. A. (2016). *Mindfulness in the workplace: An evidence-based approach to improving wellbeing and maximizing performance*. Kogan Page Limited.

- Council of Europe. (2020). Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: *Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing. [www.coe.int/lang-cefr](http://www.coe.int/lang-cefr)
- Council of Europe. Council for Cultural Co-operation. Education Committee. Modern Languages Division. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.
- Emerson, L.-M., de Diaz, N. N., Sherwood, A., Waters, A., & Farrell, L. (2020). Mindfulness interventions in schools: Integrity and feasibility of implementation. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 44(1), 62-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025419866906>
- Ergas, O. (2019). Mindfulness in, as and of education: Three roles of mindfulness in education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 53(2), 340-358. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9752.12349>
- Ergas, O. (2021). *Mindfulness and the Quiet Revolution in Education*. Resling Publishing.
- Ergas, O., & Hadar, L. L. (2019). Mindfulness in and as education: A map of a developing academic discourse from 2002 to 2017. *Review of Education*, 7(3), 757-797. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3169>
- Fallah, N. (2016). Mindfulness, coping self-efficacy and foreign language anxiety: a mediation Analysis. *Educational Psychology*, 37(6), 745-756. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2016.1149549>
- Felver, J. C., Celis-de Hoyos, C. E., Tezanos, K., & Singh, N. N. (2016). A Systematic Review of Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Youth in School Settings. *Mindfulness*, 7(1), 34-45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-015-0389-4>
- Flook, L., Smalley, S. L., Kitil, M. J., Galla, B. M., Kaiser-Greenland, S., Locke, J., Ishijima, E., & Kasari, C. (2010). Effects of Mindful Awareness Practices on Executive Functions in Elementary School Children. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 26(1), 70-95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377900903379125>
- Goldin, P. (2008). Mindfulness-based stress reduction for school-age children. *Acceptance and mindfulness treatments for children and adolescents: A practitioner's guide*, 139.
- Goldstein, J. (2013). *Mindfulness: A practical guide to awakening*. Sounds True.
- Greason, P. B., & Cashwell, C. S. (2009). Mindfulness and Counseling Self-Efficacy: The Mediating Role of Attention and Empathy. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 49(1), 2-19. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2009.tb00083.x>
- Hussain, D. (2015). Meta-Cognition in Mindfulness: A Conceptual Analysis. *Psychological Thought*, 8(2), 132-141. <https://doi.org/10.5964/psyct.v8i2.139>
- Jankowski, T., & Holas, P. (2014). Metacognitive model of mindfulness. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 28, 64-80. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2014.06.005>
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2003). Mindfulness-based interventions in context: Past, present, and future. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.1093/clipsy.bpg016>
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2011). Some reflections on the origins of MBSR, skillful means, and the trouble with maps. *Contemporary Buddhism*, 12(1), 281-306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2011.564844>
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your and mind to face stress, pain, and illness. Revised and updated Edition*. Bantam Books
- Kuyken, W., Weare, K., Ukoumunne, O. C., Vicary, R., Motton, N., Burnett, R., Cullen, C., Hennesly, S., & Huppert, F. (2013). Effectiveness of the Mindfulness in Schools Programme: non-randomised controlled feasibility study. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 203(2), 126-131. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.113.126649>
- Laukkonen, R., Leggett, J. M. I., Gallagher, R., Biddell, H., Mrazek, A., Slagter, H. A., & Mrazek, M. (2020). The Science of Mindfulness-Based Interventions and Learning: *A Review for Educators*.
- Lightsey, O. R., Jr. (2006). Resilience, Meaning, and Well-Being. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 34(1), 96-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000005282369>
- Luberto, C. M., Cotton, S., McLeish, A. C., Mingione, C. J., & O'Bryan, E. M. (2014). Mindfulness Skills and Emotion Regulation: the Mediating Role of Coping Self-Efficacy. *Mindfulness*, 5(4), 373-380. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-012-0190-6>
- Maloney, J. E., Lawlor, M. S., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Whitehead, J. (2016). A mindfulness-based social and emotional learning curriculum for school-aged children: The MindUP program, in: K.

- Schonert-Reichl, & R. W. Roeser (Eds), *Handbook of mindfulness in education* (pp. 313–334). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-3506-2>
- Meiklejohn, J., Phillips, C., Freedman, M. L., Griffin, M. L., Biegel, G., Roach, A., Frank, J., Burke, C., Pinger, L., Soloway, G., Isberg, R., Sibinga, E., Grossman, L., & Saltzman, A. (2012). Integrating Mindfulness Training into K-12 Education: Fostering the Resilience of Teachers and Students. *Mindfulness*, 3(4), 291-307. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-012-0094-5>
- Ministry of Education. (2020). *English Curriculum 2020*. Jerusalem: Pedagogical Secretariat.
- Mrazek, M. D., Franklin, M. S., Phillips, D. T., Baird, B., & Schooler, J. W. (2013). Mindfulness Training Improves Working Memory Capacity and GRE Performance While Reducing Mind Wandering. *Psychological Science*, 24(5), 776-781. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612459659>
- Önem, E. (2015). A study on the effects of meditation on anxiety and foreign language vocabulary learning. *Journal of Language and Literature Education*, 15, 134-148.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (OECD) (2018). The future of education and skills: Education 2030. *OECD Education Working Papers*.
- Reimers, F. M. (2022). Learning from a pandemic. The impact of COVID-19 on education around the world. In *Primary and secondary education during COVID-19* (pp. 1-37). Springer, Cham.
- Renshaw, T. L., Fischer, A. J., & Klingbeil, D. A. (2017). Mindfulness-based intervention in school psychology. *Contemporary school psychology*, 21(4), 299-303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40688-017-0166-6>
- Schaufenbuel, K. (2014). Bringing mindfulness to the workplace. *UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School*, 1, 13.
- Schmidt, S. (2011). Mindfulness in East and West – Is It the Same?. In: H. Walach, S. Schmidt, & W. Jonas (Eds.), *Neuroscience, Consciousness and Spirituality*. Studies in Neuroscience, Consciousness and Spirituality, vol 1. Springer, Dordrecht.
- Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Lawlor, M. S. (2010). The Effects of a Mindfulness-Based Education Program on Pre- and Early Adolescents' Well-Being and Social and Emotional Competence. *Mindfulness*, 1(3), 137-151. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-010-0011-8>
- Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social-emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology*, 51(1), 52-66. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038454>
- Shapiro, S. L., Carlson, L. E., Astin, J. A., & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(3), 373-386. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20237>
- Smith, A., Guzman-Alvarez, A., Westover, T., Keller, S., & Fuller, S. (2012). Mindful Schools program evaluation. *Unpublished manuscript, Center for Education and Evaluation Services, University of California at Davis, Davis, CA*. [https://education.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/mindful\\_schools\\_final\\_report.081512\\_0.pdf](https://education.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/mindful_schools_final_report.081512_0.pdf)
- Tan, C. (2021). Mindful education for a post-pandemic world. In *Mindful education* (pp. 179-197). Springer, Singapore.
- Tarrasch, R., Berman, Z., & Friedmann, N. (2016). Mindful reading: Mindfulness meditation helps keep readers with dyslexia and ADHD on the lexical track. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7, 578.
- Van Dam, N. T., van Vugt, M. K., Vago, D. R., Schmalzl, L., Saron, C. D., Olendzki, A., Meissner, T., Lazar, S. W., Kerr, C. E., Gorchov, J., Fox, K. C. R., Field, B. A., Britton, W. B., Brefczynski-Lewis, J. A., & Meyer, D. E. (2018). Mind the Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13(1), 36-61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617709589>
- Vidic, Z., & Cherup, N. (2019). Mindfulness in classroom: Effect of a mindfulness-based relaxation class on college students' stress, resilience, self-efficacy and perfectionism. *College Student Journal*, 53(1), 130-144.
- Zanesco, A. P., King, B. G., MacLean, K. A., Jacobs, T. L., Aichele, S. R., Wallace, B. A., Smallwood, J., Schooler, J. W., & Saron, C. D. (2016). Meditation training influences mind wandering and mindless reading. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3(1), 12-33. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cns0000082>

Zenner, C., Herrleben-Kurz, S., & Walach, H. (2014). Mindfulness-based interventions in schools—a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in psychology*, 5, 603. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00603>

Zoogman, S., Goldberg, S. B., Hoyt, W. T., & Miller, L. (2015). Mindfulness Interventions with Youth: A Meta-Analysis. *Mindfulness*, 6(2), 290-302. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-013-0260-4>