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CULTIVATING MINDFULNESS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Şule Çelik Korkmaz[1] and Esim Gürsoy[2*]
[1, 2]Bursa Uludağ University, Türkiye
scelik@uludag.edu.tr[1] and esim@uludag.edu.tr[2]
[*]Correspondence: esim@uludag.edu.tr
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Abstract
Mindfulness, as a way to enhance well-being, has been practiced in different fields and now in education. However, empirical studies in educational contexts are rather few. Thus, the present study aims to determine the impact of mindfulness practices embedded in course design on prospective English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers' mindfulness levels and their reasons and willingness to use them in young learner classrooms. The research uses a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach with a pre-experimental design. The data were collected from 90 prospective teachers over 18 months. The results showed that the participants' mindfulness levels increased after the intervention, and they displayed positive tendencies to integrate these techniques in their future classes for different reasons and in different ways. The participants reported that the mindfulness practices cultivated their personal and academic lives. This study contributes to teacher education research by demonstrating how mindfulness-integrated course design can systematically cultivate prospective teachers' well-being and pedagogical intentions. Positioned within positive psychology and language teacher cognition research, this study offers empirical evidence on how mindfulness practices shape prospective teachers' awareness, professional decision-making, and perceptions of TEYL pedagogy.

Keywords: language teacher education, mindfulness, prospective teachers, teaching English to young learners, well-being

Introduction

The teaching profession is so challenging, intense, demanding, and stressful that teachers need to deal with various psychological barriers, such as stress, anxiety, and professional burnout (Kuru Gönen, 2022; Song & He, 2021). Recent developments in applied linguistics have increasingly foregrounded teacher well-being and affective variables as integral components of effective language pedagogy. The pandemic era, especially, caused educators to realize the need for the betterment of the mind, soul, and physical self (see, Gürsoy, 2022). After the pandemic, the need for well-being in individuals along with educators came to increase. Hence, the studies regarding the teachers' and students' well-being have multiplied (Henriksen & Gruber, 2024; Liu et al., 2024; Portele & Jansen, 2023).

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Mindfulness practices "served as a life jacket" to help educators ensure a positive environment in the classrooms as well as their contentment and welfare. The growing body of evidence strongly supports the idea that developing mindfulness skills, attitudes, and abilities equips teachers with the tools to create an optimal learning environment. Thus, the teachers serve as the cornerstone of effective classrooms and schools. As argued by Weare and Bethune (2024), mindful schools need mindful teachers.

Mindfulness provides a useful lens for teacher cognition research because teachers' thinking and classroom decision-making are closely connected to how they manage their attention and emotional responses. Teacher cognition research conceptualizes teaching as a cognitively and affectively mediated practice shaped by teachers' beliefs, experiences, and emotional resources. By promoting present-moment awareness and a less reactive approach to thoughts and emotions, mindfulness may help teachers become more aware of how they interpret classroom situations and respond to them. Research with teachers has linked mindfulness to self-awareness, attentional capacity, emotion regulation, and reduced reactivity (Emerson et al., 2017). More recent research also highlights attention regulation, cognitive self-regulation, guided reflection, and mindful teaching as relevant outcomes of mindfulness-based interventions in teacher education (Zareian Jahromi et al., 2026). Similarly, the research regarding mindfulness- and metacognitive-based training with future English language teaching (ELT) educators revealed that the participants' improved questioning turned them from thoughtful observers into active directors of their own teaching and practicing mindfulness helped them embrace difficult feelings and demanding situations by buffering against negative self-talk, maintaining inner calm, and treating themselves with kindness, as well as, increased their satisfaction with life (Çelik Korkmaz, 2026).

Within the ELT context, teachers' emotional regulation, attention control, and self-awareness have been shown to influence classroom interaction, instructional decision-making, and learner engagement. Mindfulness is particularly relevant to ELT because learning a foreign language involves more than acquiring linguistic knowledge. It requires the interaction of cognitive processes, such as attention, memory, and the processing and retention of linguistic information, with affective factors, including anxiety, motivation, self-confidence, and attitudes toward the target language, and metacognitive factors such as learning strategies (Babanoğlu & Atalmış, 2025). By supporting attention regulation (Çelik Korkmaz & Gürsoy, 2026) and present-moment awareness, mindfulness may facilitate the encoding and retrieval of linguistic information, while its emphasis on non-judgmental awareness may help learners regulate negative emotions (Aydın & Çelik Korkmaz, 2026), reduce language anxiety and fear of making mistakes, and engage more fully in language-learning activities (Babanoğlu & Atalmış, 2025). These benefits are especially relevant to oral communication, where anxiety and self-consciousness may inhibit learners' willingness to use the target language. In an EFL intervention study, mindfulness training was associated with greater willingness to communicate, lower speaking anxiety, improved concentration, increased classroom participation, greater self-confidence, and better emotion regulation (Ersanlı & Ünal, 2022).

Mindfulness, defined as non-judgmental, present-moment awareness, offers a theoretically coherent framework for supporting both teacher well-being and

pedagogical quality in language education. The well-being of prospective teachers (PTs), in this sense, is critical as they face the stress and anxiety of being in the classroom with real students for the first time during their practicum.

Yet these challenges are not unique to Türkiye; international research reports parallel concerns regarding practicum stress, emotional overload, and early career burnout in TEYL contexts globally. Therefore, although the study is situated locally, its findings address concerns of international relevance in teacher education. As Lucero and Roncancio-Castellanos (2019) indicated, English as a foreign language (EFL) PTs, who reported their fear, enthusiasm, as well as anger regarding the way of cultivating their classes, are required to develop not only theoretical and practical approaches, but also emotional strategies. It is, therefore, very prominent for PTs to be provided with an opportunity to equip themselves with tools to develop resilience and adaptive functioning in the realms of classrooms (Birchinall et al., 2019).

Along with the common difficulties in becoming an effective teacher, some contextual factors, such as passing the "Public Personnel Selection Examination," which is one of the requirements of becoming a teacher in the Turkish context, create a lot of stress on PTs. Graduation from the Faculty of Education does not guarantee to become a teacher and increases PTs' worries regarding future employment. Recent changes in the policy now make it compulsory to attend a "Teacher Academy" to receive a teaching license. The new system sets back the PTs' initial start in the occupation, hence increasing monetary anxiety. Although the sources of stress and anxiety might be different, it cannot be ignored that PTs and their future students need to ensure and augment their well-being.

The theoretical foundation of this study is rooted in positive psychology (PP), a modern branch of psychology derived from humanism. Introduced by Seligman (2006), PP emphasizes a paradigm shift away from traditional student-centered pedagogy. Accordingly, the emergence of PP led researchers to examine teaching not just through the lens of negative aspects, but also by focusing on positive aspects like teacher well-being (Jin et al., 2020). For instance, in a study with PTs majoring in education, mindfulness training proved to be effective, as participants could alleviate their stress, control their impulsive behaviors, and improve their emotion regulation skills (Kerr et al., 2017). In a more recent study, Ding (2024) found out that mindfulness is the mediator in the relationship between learners' critical thinking skills and their well-being. She suggests that universities and colleges should prioritize mindfulness training for aspiring teachers, ensuring that it is delivered by qualified instructors using high-quality programs. As suggested, incorporating mindfulness into teacher education to equip future educators with valuable tools to improve their well-being and professional practice should be considered vital to cultivating a more mindful and resilient teaching workforce.

Although mindfulness has been a widely investigated topic in health science and psychology, how it is conceptualized within teacher education, particularly with respect to language teacher cognition, has received little attention. Existing research often reports benefits but barely examines how mindfulness practices (MP) work, the environmental limitations involved, or pedagogical transferability (see Weare & Bethune, 2024).

Within TEYL, a field where managing attention spans and emotional control are pedagogically crucial, few studies have explored how mindfulness-integrated

course design shapes PTs' way of teaching. Mindfulness offers a twofold benefit: enhancing PTs' personal well-being while equipping them to use mindfulness as an instructional tool. PTs' personal experiences in mindfulness may help them make sense of how MPs that support emotional awareness, emotion regulation, and attention could be adapted for young learners (YLs) who might have academic, psychological and social-emotional challenges. Luckily, school-based mindfulness studies have revealed positive effects as related to attention, resilience, self-regulation, prosocial behavior, and peer relationships (Dai et al., 2022; Phan et al., 2022; Pickerell et al., 2023). Mindfulness could therefore foster not only individual psychological well-being but also focused listening, noticing others, and building positive relationships. This broader awareness can also be linked to Freire's (1970) notion of critical consciousness, which emphasizes becoming aware of one's social world and developing the capacity to act within it. For PTs, mindfulness can thus move beyond a personal practice and become a resource they may draw on to support the cognitive, emotional, and social development of their future learners. Grounded in positive psychology and language teacher cognition frameworks, the study investigates whether structured mindfulness exposure supports prospective teachers' mindfulness levels and informs their pedagogical intentions to integrate MPs into young learner classrooms. Thus, the current study intends to answer the following research questions.

1. To what extent do MPs have an impact on EFL prospective teachers' mindfulness levels?
2. What are the prospective teachers' ideas on the effectiveness and use of MPs?
3. What are the prospective teacher's views about integrating MPs into YLs' classrooms?

Mindfulness in positive psychology

As emphasized by Ivtzan and Lomas (2016), a PP perspective on mindfulness offers valuable insights into the psychological and physiological advantages of mindful practices. In their longitudinal study, de Vibe et al. (2018) found out that the participants enrolled in a 7-week shortened mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program, after a six-year follow-up, demonstrated higher levels of well-being, mindfulness, and problem-focused coping, which served as a predictor of greater overall well-being. However, after examining several mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) from the perspective of PP, Allen et al. (2021) revealed a dominance of hedonic aspects, which emphasize short-term pleasure such as happiness and life satisfaction over the enhancement of eudaimonic well-being, which is centered on meaning, purpose, and personal growth. Accordingly, their study suggests developing new and innovative interventions that could ensure a more balanced approach to well-being that integrates immediate pleasures and deeper, meaningful life satisfaction to achieve long-term fulfillment and inner peace, even in the absence of immediate pleasure. In particular, after reviewing studies regarding mindfulness, PP, and teacher immunity, Li (2021) underlined the professional development of both prospective and in-service EFL teachers by prioritizing cultivating positive emotions alongside enhancing pedagogical expertise. Accordingly, he suggests teacher trainers contribute to this holistic

development by facilitating teachers' understanding and effective application of mindfulness and attention-related strategies to support their professional growth.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is defined by Kabat-Zinn (2003) as "awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (p. 145). The study by Romero-Martín et al. (2022) found out that mindful people could deal with the dimensions of burnout such as exhaustion, depersonalization, and low efficacy; besides, they are better at handling different areas of work life such as workload, justice, and values. Similarly, mindful teachers tend to be better at handling student behaviors and become more patient and present, which creates a calmer and more focused classroom (Weare & Bethune, 2024). MPs enable individuals to examine the self and one's impact on others, which leads to a reduction in harm and an increase in equity and positive social change in classrooms. Incorporating MPs within undergraduate and graduate studies with adults, particularly with those planning to work with children, is highly recommended to enable an early start for their own mindful journey and to become a mindful role model (Albrecht, 2018; Tarrasch et al., 2017).

MPs indicated positive outcomes for students in language learning contexts. For instance, in the Thai context, mindful students indicated less presentation anxiety (Charoensukmongkol, 2019), and in the Vietnam context, mindfulness enhanced foreign language learning (FLL) and improved communication and memory through information encoding processes (Tung et al., 2021). Furthermore, a significant and positive correlation between mindfulness and vocabulary retention and between mindfulness and FLL efficiency (Tung et al., 2021) was identified. Compared to the control group, elementary school children who participated in the mindfulness-based intervention exhibited enhanced social and emotional skills, such as optimism, emotional regulation, empathy, perspective-taking, prosocial behaviour, and mindful awareness (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015). Similarly, in a private university context in Türkiye, a mindfulness meditation-based program helped the participants decrease their level of foreign language anxiety, increase their willingness to communicate, become more mindful, and show higher L2 speaking scores (Öz, 2017). Not surprisingly, studying with adolescents in the Türkiye context, Sünbül and Güneri (2019) discovered a facilitating role of mindfulness in adopting a gentler, more indulgent position toward themselves and society at large. As can be seen in the previous studies, MPs have positive outcomes in children, adolescents, and adults.

As for the studies conducted with prospective and practicing teachers regarding mindfulness, the results were notable. For instance, in a qualitative study by Bernay (2014), the beginning teachers, referring to their first year of teaching experience, reported that MPs improved their well-being, reduced their stress, and increased their attention to their lesson planning and their students. Similarly, in the Spanish context, the teachers reported that MPs organized by their schools helped them to become emotionally steady, which enabled them to cope with challenges (Carvajo Lucena & Guijarro Ojeda, 2024). Furthermore, the study by Hirshberg et al. (2020) indicated that the mindfulness intervention supported PTs' practicum, particularly in terms of classroom management (CM) by decreasing stress and

increasing higher levels of instructional skill. Aiming to expand mindfulness interventions in schools, Romano and Chang (2022) explained the advantages of mindfulness-based training in teacher education as follows: (1) providing a deeper awareness and interrogation of one's personal experiences and how educators use their power when interacting with students and teaching their lessons; (2) cultivating and maintaining compassion and empathy for all students; (3) developing wisdom and insight when making instructional decisions by following a critically conscious perspective; (4) doing regular reflection to be able to identify harmful practices. In his qualitative study with 104 English language instructors at the tertiary level, Demir (2024) discovered that only a small fraction of the teachers acknowledged the importance of meditation and mindfulness practices in stress management and improving mental well-being. Whereas recently published research by Demir et al. (2025) found a strong positive relationship between teachers' intrapersonal mindfulness and various aspects of psychological well-being, such as purpose in life, personal growth, subjective happiness, and life satisfaction, the study suggested incorporating mindfulness practices into teacher education programs as an effective strategy for enhancing teachers' psychological well-being.

As can be seen in the literature, although a few, whether it is implemented with PTs or with children, MPs can play an important role in well-being as well as foreign language skills. By pointing at the gap in the literature regarding MPs' effectiveness on the PTs as well as their perceptions of implementing these techniques with YLs, the present study underscores the role and value of well-being in education.

Method

Design

Using a longitudinal pre-experimental framework (one-group pretest–posttest), this study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were gathered before and after the intervention, followed by immediate and one-year post-intervention qualitative interviews. The interviews were designed to contextualize and elaborate on quantitative data to identify possible shifts in PTs' mindfulness and pedagogical perceptions. Integration took place during interpretation by pairing quantitative trends with qualitative insights via narrative synthesis. Given the nature of the pre-test/post-test design, several threats to internal validity are acknowledged, including maturation, testing effects, history, and the lack of a comparison group. Therefore, causal interpretations are made cautiously.

Participants

Participants were selected via convenience sampling from a cohort of 3rd-year prospective English language teachers who are studying in the ELT department of a large state university in Türkiye. They were all enrolled in the Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) course. The participants started micro-teaching sessions for the first time in the course, and they have not attended practicum yet. Thus, they do not have any teaching practice, neither with YLs nor adolescents. Of the 120 eligible students, 90 (62 females; 28 males), aged between 20 and 24, provided informed consent and completed both the pretest and posttest measures during the

2022–2023 academic year. The twelve participants who contributed to the immediate interviews were selected via maximum variation sampling among those who displayed the lowest and highest mindfulness scores in the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory. One year after the intervention, as the participants completed their practicum, they were called in for the second interview. Nine out of the twelve interviewees agreed to contribute to the delayed interview.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from Bursa Uludağ University's Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (dated September November 30, 2022, number 8) prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and all participants provided written informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured using numerical identifiers as well as pseudonyms, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty.

The intervention

The intervention was embedded within a 3-hour Teaching English to Young Learners I (TEYLs) course. Since the pre-test and post-test instruments were distributed in the first and last weeks of the academic term, the following 12 mindfulness techniques, which took from 15 to 20 minutes to practice at the beginning of the lesson, were integrated into the course. This way, PTs were mentally and emotionally getting ready for the course by trying to gather their attention to the present moment via the activities. Each week, a new technique was introduced, and the PTs were asked to continue to use the technique for a week for practice. However, the major reason for introducing new techniques was to enable the PTs to choose from those that they feel more comfortable with. As mindfulness practices aim to give attention to the present moment, thus easing the stress caused by thoughts related to the past or future, the PTs were introduced to the techniques and asked to continue practicing the ones they feel comfortable with. The activities in the first two weeks and the last week aimed to create awareness and practice breathing from the diaphragm. The rest was taken from those used in MBSR (mindfulness-based stress reduction program). The techniques used were as follows: (1) focusing on breathing; (2) understanding the self; (3) square breathing; (4) 3-7-8 breathing; (5) mindful eating; (6) body scanning; (7) breathing boards; (8) mindful listening; (9) activating five senses; (10) 4-8 breathing; (11) watching feelings; and (12) ocean breathing.

Implementation of fidelity was monitored through weekly instructor logs, a standardized sequencing of the twelve practices, and adherence checks ensuring that duration and instructions remained consistent across sessions. As the intervention was during the TEYL I course, the benefits of using MPs in young learner classes were also discussed, activities that can be done with children were exemplified, and different uses of MPs, such as for classroom management, emotion regulation, etc., were also introduced as part of the course. Hence, the aim of the intervention was twofold: to increase the well-being of PTs and to investigate their perceptions regarding MPs use with YLs.

Data collection instruments and procedure

Quantitative data were collected via "The Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory" (FMI). The final short version of the FMI with 14 items, which revealed good statistical features as a one-factor unidimensional scale (Walach et al., 2006), was applied in the study before and after the intervention. The FMI, which involves four-point Likert-type questions with scores ranging from 1 (rarely) to 4 (almost always), was answered by 90 participants, and the data were found to be reliable (see Table 1). The original validation study established high internal consistency for this 14-item version, reporting Cronbach's alpha coefficients of α = .86 across both the full sample (N = 246) and the clinical sample (N = 103), as well as α = .79 for non-meditating general community participants (N = 74), reporting that the inventory effectively detects changes in mindfulness and applies well to non-meditating populations (Walach et al., 2006). Regarding effect sizes, Walach et al. (2006) and related intervention literature evaluated changes in mindfulness using Cohen's d ($d = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{SD_{pooled}}$) for parametric data and Wilcoxon-derived effect sizes ($r = \frac{Z}{\sqrt{N}}$) for non-parametric tests.

Qualitative data were collected via two interviews, one conducted at the end of the semester to see the immediate impact and the second, one year after the implementation, to see the delayed impact of the intervention. The first semi-structured interview was conducted with 12 PTs (6 females and 6 males) to delve into quantitative findings. To ensure homogeneity of the interviewees, purposive sampling was used, and both PTs with high and low mindfulness levels were selected. The interview was conducted in the PTs' native language, audio-recorded, and then transcribed. The questions were as follows:

- What do you think about the use and effectiveness of the MPs in the course?
- Which technique/s was/were the most effective one/s for you?
- What are your views about the use of MPs in teaching English to YLs?
- What are your thoughts on implementing MPs in your lives?

A semi-structured delayed interview was conducted a year after the intervention with 9 PTs (3 males and 6 females) after completing the practicum to unveil the extent to which they integrated the MPs into their lives and their teaching practice.

- Did you use the mindfulness techniques you learned in your daily lives? Which one/s do you practice?
- Did you integrate the MPs into your teaching practice? If so, why did you feel the need to use these techniques?
- Would you consider integrating these techniques into your teaching profession? Why?

Data analysis

Firstly, sample statistics, namely skewness and kurtosis, were calculated via SPSS to gauge the extent to which the assumption of normal distribution was met. According to the normality criteria of Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), skewness and kurtosis should be within -1.5 to +1.5. Our quantitative questionnaire data align with these parameters, implying a normal distribution. Since the values for the data

derived from both pre-and post-test scores were within the range of an absolute value of -/+ 1.0, the data were normally distributed.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics, normality analysis, and reliability for the FMI

The FMI	N	M	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness	α
Pre	90	2.35	.43881	0.634	-0.302	.75
Post	90	2.51	.45781	1.293	-0.032	.79

Therefore, the paired sample t-test was carried out through SPSS to reveal whether the "mindfulness" intervention was effective (or not) in increasing PT's levels of mindfulness. Furthermore, an inductive content analysis was conducted for the immediate semi-structured interviews. Qualitative coding followed a multi-stage development process: initial open coding, iterative code refinement, and theme consolidation. Saturation was assessed by examining redundancy in meaning across interviews rather than by numerical thresholds. Overlapping codes were merged during axial coding to enhance conceptual distinctiveness.

In addition, regarding the delayed interviews, a deductive content analysis was followed for the structured questions while an inductive content analysis was used for semi-structured questions. The codes were identified separately by the researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The compliance percentage between the two encoders was found to be 92.45% for the codes that emerged from the immediate interviews and 93.02% for those that emerged from the delayed interview, indicating reliability.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Quantitative results

RQ1 investigated the extent to which the MPs have an impact on EFL PTs' mindfulness, and the results are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2. Difference between the pre- and post-test scores in the FMI

The FMI	N	M	SD	t	df	p	Cohen's d
Pre	90	2.35	.43881	-2.286	89	.025	-.241
Post	90	2.51	.45781				

The t-test results presented in Table 2 indicated that the post-intervention total mindfulness scores for PTs showed a statistically significant increase relative to pre-intervention baseline levels. The study's effect size (d = -.241) is categorized as small based on Cohen's d scale (Medin, 2024, p. 109).

Qualitative findings

To answer RQ2, which investigated the PTs' ideas on the effectiveness and use of MPs, the inductive content analysis was used. The findings of the immediate interviews, which revealed 6 themes with 34 codes, were presented in Table 3. Additionally, each interviewee was given a number from 1 to 12, and each code was clarified by one representative extract and presented under each theme.

Table 3. Findings from the immediate interviews

No	Themes	Codes
1	Effectiveness of MPs	Regulating emotion / Regulating physical reactions
2	The most effective MPs	3-7-8 breathing / Square breathing / Mindful listening / Mindful eating / Mindful walking / Finger breathing / Body scan / Five senses / Who am I? & How do I feel?
3	Benefits of MPs	Being in the moment / Feeling energetic / Increased enjoyment / Ease of mind / Feeling of comfort / Increased attention to a task / Contribution to happiness / Physical self
4	Reasons for using MPs in TEYLs	Classroom management / Reducing anxiety / Focus
5	Ways of integrating MPs in TEYLs	Concreteness / Music / Fun / Duration / Creativity
6	Situations MPs are practiced	Before doing sports / After school / Before sleeping / When studying / Burnout / Anxiety provoking situations / Before the practice lesson

Theme 1: Effectiveness of MPs

Theme one demonstrated two codes, highlighting the effectiveness of MPs in terms of both emotional and physical aspects. For the code regulating emotion, they said that short pauses for conscious breathing helped them regain composure. As I5 explained, "When I took deep breaths and became silent for a while, I noticed that I calmed down and came to my senses." For the code regulating physical reactions, the PTs saw breathing as acting on both body and mind. I9, who reported insomnia and nervousness at the start of lessons, said, "Breathing is effective both psychologically and physically. I have insomnia, and I always start my lesson nervously. Taking a deep breath helps me feel energetic."

Theme 2: The most effective MPs

In the second theme, nine codes emerged, indicating that the PTs named nine practices as the most effective. These fall into four groups, including breathing-based practices, attention to the senses, attention to the body, and emotional awareness. Among the breathing-based practices, 4-7-8 breathing was linked to personal experience. I4 claimed that "I usually like swimming and holding my breath in the sea. I can forget everything in the water. Practicing 4-7-8 breathing is my favourite because it reminds me of swimming." Square breathing was found challenging as I7 stated: "It was so challenging that it helped me to stay in the moment." Finger breathing gave the PTs a tactile experience and a sense of control as I1 argued: "It helps me relax because I can concentrate when I touch. This makes me feel that everything is in my control."

Several practices directed attention to the senses and the immediate environment. For mindful listening, I3 said that "listening to sounds in my immediate environment helped me live in the moment." Mindful eating changed I2's daily habits: "Mindful eating was very effective for me, as I used to eat very quickly. Now, I remind myself to be slow, calm down, and enjoy what I am eating." I2 further indicated that mindful walking encouraged his/her self-focus: "Mindful walking helped me focus on myself. I could notice my feelings." Similarly, I10 claimed the same for the five senses practice as it shifted attention from outside to

inside: "I was only focusing on what was outside before; now I can focus on my senses too". The body scan was described as releasing tension held in the body. I9 claimed: "When I scan my body, I feel that someone removes the stress and problem stored in my body". Finally, regarding 'who am I? how do I feel?', this practice raised their emotional awareness. I11 said it "helped me realize my emotions at the moment, which go unnoticed most of the time."

Theme 3: Benefits of MPs

Eight codes indicating several positive outcomes of MPs emerged in theme three. For instance, they stated present-moment awareness, feeling energetic, and increased enjoyment in daily activities as I9 and I11 said: "Everybody should be aware of being in the moment for at least five minutes every day" (I9) and "In the rush of life, I like getting pleasure from everything. It is very valuable to notice that I am alive and well" (I11), and "I can enjoy my meal after learning to be mindful" (I9).

With regard to breathing exercises which led to ease of the PTs' mind, I2 explained, "When my mind wanders in the lesson, I take a deep breath by counting," and underlined that "holding my breath helped me focus on the task." MPs also enabled the PTs to feel comfort. I4 said, "I have been very stressed for years, but when you tell me to focus on my breathing, I calm down and feel comfortable" (I4).

In addition to stress reduction, the PTs associated MPs with a positive contribution to happiness and personal well-being; I8 shared, "I am an introverted person; I practice mindfulness to be happy." Finally, MPs enhanced participants' relationship with their physical self by increasing awareness of their bodies and personal habits. As I5 reflected, "I noticed that I have stress while scanning my body. I am a fidgeter; thus, mindfulness helped me know myself better."

Theme 4: Reasons for using MPs in TEYL

Theme four revealed three codes, showing the PTs' reasons for using MPs with YLs. First, they saw MPs as a tool for classroom management as I6 stated: "I think it will be effective in classroom management." Second, they expected MPs to help in reducing anxiety among children. I6 said, "Mindfulness would help children with anxiety. It can help decrease anxiety." Third, they pointed to children's limited attention spans and saw MPs as a way to improve focus as can be seen in I12's utterance: "Children's attention span is very short. Mindfulness can increase focus."

Theme 5: Ways of integrating MPs into TEYL

Five codes indicating the PTs' suggestions for integrating MPs into YLs' classrooms were categorized under theme five. I6 and I8 underlined the importance of music and making techniques tangible for children, saying "Children get bored easily, so MPs should be combined with meditation music" (I6) and "Concrete MPs such as finger breathing should be used" (I8). Building on this, I1 highlighted the need for fun and enjoyment, revealing that "MPs can be more fun when the techniques are practiced with music." The interviewees also drew attention to duration. I12 pointed out that "Children might not understand the reasons for doing MPs, so it should be short." They also emphasized the importance of teacher creativity in the use of MPs, as suggested by I5 that "Teachers should be creative in finding appropriate MPs."

Theme 6: Situations in which MPs are practiced

Theme six revealed seven codes, indicating the PTs' descriptions of situations in which they used MPs. The codes fell into two sub-themes, including everyday routines and stressful or demanding moments. In everyday routines, the PTs practiced mindfulness before doing sports. I1 said, "I play American football, so I always watch my breath." They also practiced after school, sometimes as an alternative to other habits such as I7 claimed that "Instead of spending time on social media, I practice mindfulness techniques before doing sports and after school." Others practiced before sleeping just like I9 stated "I allocate 5 or 10 minutes to practice mindfulness before I sleep. Everybody can do this." MPs were also used when studying to manage mind-wandering, as understood from I8's utterance saying that "sometimes my mind wanders when studying, so I frequently have breathing breaks."

MPs also served as a coping strategy in demanding situations. For burnout, I5, who worked at a private course, explained, "I sometimes have hard times. During recess, I practice 3-7-8 breathing techniques to prepare myself for the lesson." For anxiety-provoking situations, I8 noted, "When I become exhausted and overwhelmed, I take a breathing break." Finally, the I2 used MPs before the practice lesson to manage teaching-related stress: "I am very stressed before the micro-teaching sessions. I become comfortable when we practice mindfulness techniques."

In short, based on the immediate interview findings, the PTs, at the outset, practiced mindfulness as self-regulatory tools to decrease their stress, pre-teaching anxiety, and somatic burden; thereafter they used as pedagogical tools, leading to a pedagogical shift in how they think. Since the PTs experienced MPs firsthand and noticed how their bodily regulation mitigated their teaching anxiety and increased their focus, they transferred this awareness into pedagogical empathy and used MPs to lower YLs' affective filter and increase their readiness for learning. Moreover, the PTs intuitively reframed MPs into developmentally appropriate pedagogical activities for YLs, including tactile concreteness such as finger breathing, sensory engagement such as music, brief duration, and playfulness in TEYL, where mindfulness shifts from an abstract concept into an embodied classroom routine that supports emotional co-regulation and proactive classroom management.

The deductive content analysis of the delayed interview extracts showed that nearly all of them use MPs in their daily lives (N=8) (Q1). Regarding practicum (Q 2), most of them (N= 6) integrated MPs into their classes. Furthermore, regarding their teaching profession (Q3), all of them (N=9) reported that they would consider integrating MPs into their future classes. Also, most of the interviewees (N= 6) reported that they were mindful (Q4). Finally, most of them (N=7) mentioned that they used MPs to focus on what they were doing.

Table 4. Findings from the delayed interviews

No	Themes	Codes
1	The techniques used	Mindful breathing / 3-7-8 breathing / Square breathing / Body scan / Mindful eating
2	Reasons for integrating MTs into their lives	Self-awareness / Calming down / Reducing stress / Noticing senses / Environmental awareness / Social anxiety / Falling asleep

No	Themes	Codes
3	Reasons for integrating MPs into their practicum	Preparing the students / Ease of mind / Classroom management / Reducing anxiety
4	Reasons for planning to integrate MPs into their teaching profession	Focus / Positive experience / Coping with negative emotions / Well-being / Relaxed mind
5	Effects of the mindfulness training	Here and now situations / Self-value / Self-awareness / Conscious reaction / Engagement / Creativity / Calm down / Better relationship
6	Situations they need to focus on	Studying / Doing homework / Procrastination / Having stress
7	Reasons for using MPs in TEYLs	Classroom management / Reducing negative feelings / Concentration / Attention / Creativity / Critical thinking / Self-esteem / Building rapport / Identifying senses and sensations / Increasing willingness to participate / Transitioning activity / Here and now principle / Regulating mind and physical activities / Motivation / Imagination
8	Ways of integrating MPs in TEYLs	Concreteness / Fun / Duration / Improving listening skills / Improving vocabulary / Facilitates chunk acquisition / Speaking / Concentration / Classroom management / Regulating mind and physical activities / Feeling secure

Theme 1: Mindfulness techniques used by the participants

The first theme concerned the mindfulness techniques the participants reported using after the training. Three of the five techniques they named were breathing-based. Some interviewees such as I7 described mindful breathing in general terms: "I try to focus on my breathing." Others named specific techniques, such as 3-7-8 breathing. I3 said this technique had also made them better at recognizing when they needed it: "I use 3-7-8 breathing more, and I can notice when I need to use it." Square breathing was also mentioned by I6: "I use square breathing in my daily life." Apart from breathing exercises, the PTs reported practising the body scan, which I2 was trying to turn into a routine: "I try to make body scanning my routine" and mindful eating as I5 argued that "I try to follow mindful eating."

Theme 2: Reasons for integrating mindfulness practices into daily life

Theme two uncovers seven codes regarding the PTs' reasons for bringing mindfulness practices into their daily lives. Self-awareness was one of them. As I1 explained, "When I am aware of my body and mind, my feelings, and my thoughts, I know how I should do my duties." Emotion regulation was another prominent reason. I3 stated, "I am generally an angry person. I use these techniques to calm myself down" and I5 said "I noticed that I could cope with my stress though breathing exercises." I6, I2 and I4 also reported how MPs helped them cope with social anxiety and notice their senses and environments: "Square breathing helps me cope with my social anxiety" (I6) and "I use these techniques most while eating. I smell the food before I taste it to be aware of my sensations" (I2) and "MPs help me become more aware of what is happening around me" (I4). I10 also mentioned a more practical use of mindfulness, saying "I use MPs to fall asleep."

Theme 3: Reasons for integrating mindfulness practices into the practicum

Four codes in theme three indicate how the PTs use mindfulness for pedagogical reasons during their practicum. They integrated mindfulness to prepare students for the lessons, ease their mind, and manage classes better: "I sometimes use MPs to prepare students for the lesson" (I2), "I believe that MPs are useful both for teachers and students to start a lesson with ease of mind" (I4), and "They are so energetic. The calmness that comes with breathing exercises makes my job easier in CM" (I10). The PTs also used the practices in response to learners' anxiety. I7 shared his/her experience as: "When I observed that my students were anxious, I tried to help them calm down through breathing exercises."

Theme 4: Reasons for planning to integrate mindfulness practices into the teaching profession

Theme four revealed five codes indicating why the PTs intended to keep using mindfulness practices in their future careers. They pointed to its contribution to learners' focus as in I3's statement: "MPs help students focus on the lesson." Their intentions were also shaped by positive experiences during the practicum. I2 argued: "Whenever my peers or I integrated MPs into the classes, we got positive feedback from the students." The PTs saw mindfulness as a way to help learners cope with negative emotions in the long term. I4 said, "We can help students practice MPs regularly to overcome their stress, tension, and negative emotions." I5 also linked it to well-being more broadly: "The sooner we learn to be mindful, the better life we might have." The same participant connected a relaxed state of mind to more efficient learning: "It would be more efficient when students listen to teachers with a relaxed mind" (I5).

Theme 5: Perceived effects of the mindfulness training

Eight codes were categorized under theme five, highlighting several personal benefits from mindfulness training PTs received. Present-moment awareness and a growing sense of self-value were mentioned by I5: "It helped me realize how to stay here and now. I also value myself and the present moment." I4 declared increased self-awareness: "Now I am more aware of myself. This training taught me how to notice my feelings." The same participant also reported more conscious responses to their surroundings: "I can react more consciously to what is happening around me" (I4), as well as greater task-engagement: "I notice that I can engage myself in what I am doing" (I4). Creativity was also underlined by I2: "When I need to create something, the process becomes more efficient for me", as well as emotion regulation as argued by I3: "This training helped me learn how to calm down." Finally, I3 explained how this training effected their relationships with learners: "This training helped me build better relationships with my students."

Theme 6: Situations requiring focus

Four codes were reported under theme six, underscoring the PTs' academic situations in which practicing mindfulness enabled them to regain their focus. For instance, I7 stated, "MPs help me become more patient when studying) and I5 claimed "I use MPs to stay on task when I get overwhelmed while doing homework." MPs also helped them overcome their procrastination. I4 mentioned: "When I notice I procrastinate, I use MPs. When I feel myself and my breath, I can

calm down, clear my mind, and think about what I should do." Additionally, the PTs tended to use specific techniques under stress. I2 mentioned breathing: "When I am stressed, I use the 3-7-8 breathing technique. This helps me focus on what I am doing."

Theme 7: Reasons for using mindfulness practices in teaching English to young learners

Theme seven, with 15 codes, was the most richly coded, suggesting several affective, cognitive, and pedagogical reasons for using MPs in TEYLs. Starting with classroom management, I4 stated, "It reduces behavioral problems." In terms of affective benefits, the I6 believed that "Children can get rid of negative emotions caused by excessive use of technology, pandemics, and social life." I5 also believed mindfulness "helps them gain self-esteem before the activities" and that "it strengthens the teacher-student relationship." Motivation was also emphasized. I3 believed "It triggers motivation and thus increases concentration", and I4 said, "It increases children's interest and motivation in the lesson."

On the cognitive side, the interviewees explained the link between calmness and attention. I2 stated his/her observation: "As they calm down, they can give their attention to the lesson." I6 associated mindfulness with higher-order thinking. They noted that it "enables the students to think creatively." I6 also added that "We can help children to make decisions and think critically as they learn to regulate their emotions and behaviors." Mindfulness was also seen as a tool to support metacognitive awareness. I4 said "It can help children to raise their awareness of their thinking and actions" and I2 referred to the present-moment focus, saying "It helps children to focus on the here and now." I2 linked mindful listening to imagination as well, saying that "Mindful listening triggers imagination."

Finally, the interviewees highlighted pedagogical benefits. I4 noted that mindfulness "can be used for identifying senses and discovering the environment via seeing, hearing, and touching." I2 linked it to participation: "Increased attention can increase willingness to participate as it encourages shy students." Considering YLs' characteristics, I3 suggested using it as a transition activity: "Children's attention span is short; it can be used before a new activity."

Theme 8: Ways of integrating mindfulness practices into teaching English to young learners

The final theme revealed 11 codes indicating the PTs envisaged integrating MPs into YL classrooms. On the practical side, the I6 stressed concreteness: "It provides concrete learning opportunities when using balloon breathing and flower-smelling activities." I3 also emphasized enjoyment: "It makes the lesson fun and interesting" and I2 mentioned the importance of keeping activities short: "Children get bored quickly; I prefer quick MP activities."

The participants also made direct connections between mindfulness practices and language skills. I8 claimed that "mindful listening facilitates bottom-up listening skills." I3 suggested that "Mindful eating activities can be used in the food and drinks unit for vocabulary." I2 proposed that "MPs can be used in weather and emotions units and to teach senses as they describe their feelings." Among language skills, speaking was mentioned by I5: "MPs reduce anxiety and facilitate speaking in the FL." Mindfulness was linked to comprehension processes by I8: "It helps

activate content schemata to understand the context by triggering attention and concentration."

Children's self-regulation and general classroom climate were also considered by the interviewees. I6 mentioned, "It helps the class settle down. It helps children regulate their behaviors" and I2 stated "Since children are kinesthetic and energetic, MPs help them regulate themselves." I3 underlined how MPs create the sense of safety: "Children feel at home and safe."

Based on the delayed interviews, this study suggests that engaging mindfulness personally enabled the PTs to make pedagogical decisions based on their experiences in practicing mindfulness, indicating the bridge between personal well-being and methodology regarding YLs. The PTs moved beyond traditional behaviours by considering affective and attentional challenges YLs have, such as limited attention span and language anxiety as they experienced how mindfulness helped them calm down. To sum up, the PTs reframed mindfulness into a physical, action-based strategy for learning languages through implementing short sensory activities to enhance vocabulary uptake and auditory processing, along with age-appropriate sensory routines to activate existing schemata and stimulating spoken communication.

Discussion

This study was intended to examine the effects of the MP-embedded TEYL course on PTs' mindfulness levels, as well as their willingness and reasons to use MPs in YLs' classes during their practicum. Despite indicating a small effect size, practicing mindfulness regularly (once a week) revealed a statistically significant difference in the participants' mindfulness levels. The small effect size leaves open the question of the intensity and duration of 12-week MPs to indicate robust cognitive or behavioral change. It is highly probable that weekly exposure was not enough for deeper transformation, particularly in the context of highly demanding ELT courses. This is in line with broader critiques in mindfulness studies discussing that short-term interventions risk fostering surface level engagement instead of absorbing the ideas deeply (Weare & Bethune, 2024).

Aligning with Kabat-Zinn (2003) and Sünbül and Güneri (2019), the PTs promoted non-judgmental acceptance and appreciation of the self, bodily sensations, consciousness of the wandering mind, as well as awareness of the here and now. The scale scores were supported by the qualitative findings from the immediate and delayed interviews. In the immediate interview, PTs stated that the MPs helped them to regulate their emotions and physical reactions, which are some of the expected benefits of these practices, as also found in the literature (Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Kerr et al., 2017). In the delayed interviews, they stated that MPs raised consciousness, increased self-value, self-awareness, engagement, and creativity, and helped them calm down and build better relationships as they helped conscious reactions. In their study, Sünbül and Güneri (2019) also found similar results related to the indulgence of the self and others.

In line with Demir et al. (2025), who found that mindfulness significantly boosts mental well-being, contributing to a greater sense of purpose, increased happiness, and higher satisfaction with life, this study reported similar findings as for the benefits of MPs, like being in the moment, feeling energetic, increased enjoyment, the feeling of comfort, increased attention on a task, and contribution to

happiness were also mentioned. The study's beneficial impact of MPs on the participants' psychological well-being was reducing stress, coping with social anxiety, and calming down by promoting positive emotions such as comfort and happiness, which also aligns with Keng et al. (2011). Conclusively, it is apparent that the participants have experienced the benefits of mindfulness-integrated course design.

In addition to the immediate benefits of MPs, the delayed interviews showed increased awareness and use of MPs in personal life and teaching. A year after the intervention, the participants stated that they continue to use MPs in their lives for a variety of reasons, such as controlling stress, awareness about the environment, coping with sleep disorders, calming and controlling themselves, etc. (see Kabat-Zinn, 2003). When we look at whether participants use MPs out of school, we see that it is usually before or after an anxiety-provoking occasion or to reduce stress. It seems that PTs find a way to integrate MPs into their lives according to a variety of needs.

The most inspiring outcome of the delayed interviews has been their efforts to integrate MPs during practicum. They claimed that they use the practices to prepare the students for the lesson, reduce anxiety, and calm the students down (see Gürsoy, 2022; Hirshberg et al., 2020; Romano & Chang, 2022). As Weare & Bethune (2024) note, MPs, while beneficial, do not replace traditional classroom management techniques. However, this study demonstrates that mindfulness can be an effective tool for managing classrooms, as it helps students calm down and regulate their behaviors. In addition, PTs stated that the students feel valued, cared for, and seen which helps the improvement of the teacher-student relationship. Hence, they stated that they would like to continue using these practices when they start the profession for different purposes, from increasing attention, focus, and refocusing to coping with negative emotions and improving overall well-being. The findings also underline the use of MPs for FLL, such as improving listening and speaking skills, developing vocabulary, and facilitating chunk acquisition. It can be concluded that MPs can be used as a scaffolding strategy and serve as a mediator to improve language skills by increasing focus and attention, thus metacognitive awareness.

Apart from the personal benefits related to well-being, PTs have also identified the use of MPs with YLs while teaching English. They have mentioned its role in CM, reducing anxiety, increasing focus, and calming down students. As a way to accomplish these, they have suggested ways to embed MPs by making use of concrete tools in breathing activities like breathing boards or finger breathing. Being easily distracted and having a low attention span and being in the period of concrete operations between 7 and 11 (Gürsoy, 2010; Moon, 2000), children need breathing boards or finger breathing as concrete tools for MP practice (Gürsoy, 2022). Furthermore, according to the PTs, these practices shouldn't be too long, and teachers need to be creative in finding and embedding MPs. Both interviews displayed PTs' intention to use MPs in their everyday lives and for language teaching purposes, suggesting the benefit of mindfulness-enhanced training.

From a language teacher cognition perspective, the qualitative results suggest that MPs informed prospective teachers' reasoning about classroom management, affective scaffolding, and attentional regulation in TEYL contexts. The participants conceptualized mindfulness not merely as a personal well-being strategy but as a

pedagogical resource for preparing learners for instruction, reducing anxiety, and enhancing classroom focus. However, as these outcomes are based on self-reported perceptions rather than behavioral measures, claims regarding instructional effectiveness remain tentative.

The study contributes to applied linguistics by empirically linking mindfulness-integrated course design to prospective teachers' pedagogical thinking in EFL teacher education. Nevertheless, the absence of a control group, reliance on self-report instruments, and limited intervention intensity constrain causal inference. Furthermore, institutional and curricular constraints may mediate the sustainability of mindfulness integration in real classroom settings. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory rather than confirmatory.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to see the impact of MPs integrated into the content of the TEYL course on PTs' mindfulness levels and their perceptions of using them with YLs. Overall, this study indicated that while the quantitative gains were modest, experiential engagement with MPs revealed a meaningful qualitative influence on PTs' emerging teacher cognition. Specifically, firsthand experiences with somatic and emotional self-regulation enabled the PTs to cultivate pedagogical empathy, recognizing and addressing YLs' limited attention spans, high energy levels, and foreign-language anxiety. Therefore, the study contributes to ELT and TEYL scholarship by demonstrating how mindfulness moves beyond an individualized coping strategy to become a dual-purpose pedagogical tool. The PTs reconceptualized MPs both as proactive, non-punitive classroom management and as developmentally responsive language-learning vehicles via using sensory tasting and mindful listening to scaffold vocabulary and bottom-up auditory processing.

This study suggests practical implications for ELT teacher education. All teacher educators, not only the instructors of TEYLs course, could implement MPs by adapting them into their courses. They could also design their syllabus in a way that PTs can bridge theory and practice, modelling concrete, short, and adaptable MPs in their course. In addition, PTs can be motivated to integrate MPs not only in their micro-teaching sessions in their courses but also during their practicum lessons.

These findings, however, must be viewed through the lens of key limitations. First, the small quantitative effect size suggests that brief exposures may yield only emergent shifts, aligning with critiques asserting that brief MBIs risk superficial engagement rather than sustained cognitive change. Second, reliance on self-report data leaves the behavioral transfer to real classroom settings unverified. Third, the PTs' reported intentions may face institutional and curricular constraints in standard schools. Fourth, the mechanisms linking mindfulness and language teacher cognition remain under-theorized. This study identifies potential pathways but cannot confirm them without more rigorous modelling. Fifth, the participants were not exposed to MPs unless it was their own desire to practice outside of the school. Also, the results are limited to the practices selected. The use of other techniques might have an impact on participants' perceptions. Hence, the results are bound to the PTs who taught about and used the MPs, indicating their ability to introduce and practice MPs might affect the results. Finally, although the PTs described enhanced awareness and emotional regulation, these outcomes cannot be equated

with professional resilience without longitudinal evidence. Thus, future research should utilize longitudinal, observational designs to investigate how PTs' mindfulness preparation translates into instructional practice and sustained teacher resilience during the induction years.

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