

Mindfulness towards Learning in Mitigating Second Language Classroom Anxiety among Prospective Teachers

AnuRadha Jamwal*, Swati Gupta

Abstract

Second language classroom anxiety is a widely recognised barrier that negatively impacts both teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes, especially for prospective teachers who are still developing their professional skill. High anxiety levels often lead to a decline in motivation, loss of self-confidence and teaching-learning enthusiasm. By exploring the role of mindfulness – a proven method to reduce psychological stress, and anxiety – this study was designed to examine the interconnection between mindfulness towards learning and second language classroom anxiety among prospective teachers. The sample consisted of 200 prospective teachers who enrolled in BA BEd. and BSc. BEd. programmes. The required data were collected via second language classroom anxiety scale and self-developed mindfulness towards learning scale. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, i.e., Karl Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis to identify relationships and assess the significance of this relationship. The result found that a strong negative co-relationship exists between mindfulness towards learning and classroom anxiety related to second language, and mindfulness towards learning contributes significantly to the prediction of second language classroom anxiety among prospective teachers. Moreover, mindfulness and anxiety are inversely connected, which shows that as mindfulness increases, anxiety decreases. The finding emphasizes the need for integrating mindfulness practices into teacher training programmes to better prepare educators for the emotional and cognitive demands of modern classrooms..

Keywords: Mindfulness, Second Language Classroom Anxiety, Higher Education, Prospective Teachers

Introduction

English has become a global language, playing a crucial role in international communication, education, and governance. It is the primary language in several major countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, and numerous island nations across the Caribbean and Pacific (Rohmah, 2005). Additionally, English is the official language in 55 countries and 27 territories, with many other regions adopting it also as an official language (Rao, 2019). This widespread

use has elevated English to a global lingua franca, facilitating communication across cultural and linguistic boundaries (Victoria, et al., 2025). In India, English was adopted as an official language and became a second language (L2) during British rule; it also maintained its status post-independence as a key medium for education and employment (Banerjee, 2016).

Although vernacular education is becoming more common in primary and secondary schools, the prevalence of English, which is the medium of teaching in Indian higher education, is still significant (TOI, 2024). Most

of the time it linked to elevated psychological pressure among learners, especially with those who are from non-English educational backgrounds (Meganathan, 2015). They face difficulties to understand the content that causes anxiety or feelings of worry, nervousness, and stress during learning L2 (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Students who have higher anxiety levels show poor achievement in language classes, which badly affects their academic performance and future outlook (Beiter, et al., 2015; Chen & Chang, 2004; Horwitz, et al., 1986; Sanchez-Herrero & Sanchez, 1992.) It also negatively affects L2 acquisition and other hindering factors, i.e., oral tasks in the L2 reading process (Brantameier, 2005).

Therefore, language anxiety is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 128). It is not only a concern for students but also for teachers, teacher educators, preservice/prospective teachers (Alrabai, 2015) because they experience high levels of language anxiety while teaching English to young learners in real time classroom settings. It may prevent them from using the target language and adopting language-intensive teaching methods in classrooms (Tum, 2015; Can, 2018).

Thus, it is necessary to reduce anxiety especially during pre-service because the quality of education depends on how teachers teach and engage with their students as well as effectiveness of education relying largely on the quality of the teachers (Zaki & Salsabila, 2024). If student teachers are unable to effectively manage negative emotions, they may find themselves unprepared for the challenges of the pre-service experience.

However, learners who are more mindful while speaking English tend to feel less anxious during their presentations (Charoensukmongkol, 2019), feeling more confident in their language skills and experience less anxiety and burnout (Gao,

2024). Mindful learning helps people focus on what they are learning and usually makes the experience more positive (Langer, 2000). When an individual engrosses in mindful learning, he avoids forming mindset that unnecessarily limit him (Langer, 1997 as cited in Langer, 2000). Integrating mindfulness practices into curricula could enhance language learning outcomes, and educators are encouraged to incorporate mindfulness interventions to support students’ language development because mindfulness is the practice of maintaining awareness of oneself and the surrounding environment in the present moment, without judgment or unintentional reactions, and includes the ability to articulate one’s personal experience (Baer, et al., 2006).

Its practice aims to cultivate a disciplined mind with strong self-regulation skills (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). When a person practices mindfulness, his/her thoughts are into what he/she is sensing in the present moment rather than rephrasing the past or imagining the future (Singla, 2011). It is accessible to anyone, anytime, and requires no special equipment. Mindfulness is an innate human ability that goes beyond cultural and religious boundaries. It is a natural aspect of human existence and a state of awareness accessible to all individuals (Shapiro, Siegel & Neff, 2018). Enhancing mindfulness through practices such as meditation training leads to improved well-being for individuals (Falkenstrom, 2010; Zautra, et al., 2008; Aikens, et al., 2014). Mindfulness helps people feel better by paying more attention to, being more accepting of, and acting by their own needs and values (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Literature Review

Learners often feel worried while learning the language (Latif & Binti, 2015), a rise in anxiety tend to have lower proficiency in spoken English (Woodrow, 2006). Anxiety in foreign and second language classrooms significantly hampers students’ academic success, as their anxiety levels rise, their

academic performance tends to decrease (Amiri & Ghonosooly, 2015; Gjergo & Mece, 2022). Sholikh (2022) study indicated that students' anxiety came from three sources – communication apprehension, test anxiety related to perceived unfair grade distribution, and fear of poor evaluation associated with standardized testing. These factors emphasize the challenges students face in meeting language requirements and adapting methods of assessment in higher education. These are the multifaceted psychological issues that affect both teachers and their students (Horwitz, 2001).

When it comes to pre-service teachers, who lack sufficient formal classroom experience and may also have limited English language proficiency, are likely to experience higher levels of anxiety compared to more experienced English L2 educators. Furthermore, if these pre-service teachers are non-native English speakers, their anxiety may be even more pronounced, particularly when it comes to delivering lessons and using English in the classroom setting (Yoon, 2012).

Including mindfulness training in pre-service teacher education programmes could have positive effects not only for the teacher candidates themselves but also for the students they will eventually teach (Brown, 2017). Studies on mindfulness suggest its potential as an intervention to reduce stress and anxiety, serves as significant factor against stress, providing individuals with the opportunity to assess situations thoughtfully and maintain a sense of control (Hwang, et al., 2017). Carvalho, et al. (2020) found a significant negative relationship between dispositional mindfulness and various types of stress, including physical, academic, environmental, and interpersonal stress. Specifically, mindfulness expressed strong negative correlations with physical and academic stress, moderate correlations with environmental stress, and weak with interpersonal stress.

Similar findings were reported by Vonderheyde (2017) that college students who have higher mindfulness were associated

with less stress. Some studies demonstrated mindfulness negatively correlated with stress and test anxiety, suggesting its potential to mitigate these issues (Laurent, et al., 2016; Brannon, 2010). Onem (2015) highlighted the significant effects of meditation on reducing anxiety and enhancing learning in foreign language settings, indicating its role in improving both emotional and academic outcomes.

Despite these benefits, Einabad, et al. (2019) noted that mindfulness did not properly predict academic procrastination beyond the impact of trait anxiety. These studies collectively emphasize the dual challenges of anxiety, and stress in educational settings. If the pre-service teachers experience anxiety during teaching practice, then this anxiety will be visible in-service too, so it should be reduced in pre-service itself so that it does not affect their in-service. Prospective teachers were chosen for this study because they are in a crucial phase of both academic and professional development. At this stage, they are not only acquiring subject knowledge but also developing essential teaching skills, including communication in a second language, which is often a significant part of teacher training in multilingual context like India. Some studies have been found on mindfulness which explain how it reduces the anxiety of learners and the promising role of mindfulness-based interventions in fostering better academic and emotional outcomes for students, but no study till now has been done related to the prospective teachers in India. So, the researchers conducted this study to explore the relationships, identify the connections, and assess the contribution of mindfulness towards learning and anxiety in L2 classrooms.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the level of second language classroom anxiety (SLCA) of prospective teachers.
2. To find out the level of mindfulness toward learning of prospective teachers.

3. To study the relationship between mindfulness toward learning and SLCA of prospective teachers
4. To study the contribution of mindfulness toward learning in predicting SLCA of prospective teachers

Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no significant relationship between mindfulness towards learning and SLCA of prospective teachers.

H₀2: There is no significant contribution of mindfulness toward learning in predicting SLCA of prospective teachers.

Methods

Research contexts, sample, and data collection

The sample of the research study was prospective teachers studying at the Central University of South Bihar (CUSB), Gaya, specifically the students pursuing the integrated BA BEd and BSc BEd programmes in their eight semesters. At the first stage, by employing purposive sampling technique, three semesters of BA BEd and BSc BEd programmes, i.e., II, IV and VI were selected as the students were studying 'Language Proficiency Course' in their earlier semesters. Then in the next phase, data was collected from all the students who were present at the selected semesters. The total sample included 200 undergraduate students, with 121 males and 79 females.

Measures

Mindfulness towards learning was measured by the Mindfulness towards Learning Scale which is a self-developed tool with 33 items across four dimensions – classroom tasks, self-study, continuous assessment, and informal learning. It includes seven negative items (6, 7, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20) and 28 positive items.

Second Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (SLCAS), originally developed by Horwitz,

Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and revised in 2014, was administered in the study to measure the anxiety levels among learners acquiring English as a L2. The tool, widely used in research, was originally designed to assess classroom anxiety in foreign languages such as English, French, or German. For this study, the term 'foreign language' was replaced with 'English language' or 'second language' to suit the Indian educational context. The SLCAS consists of 33 items grouped under four dimensions – communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and anxiety about English classes including general anxiety about participating in English language classes. Each item is a measure on five-point Likert scale, that is range from 'completely agree' to 'completely disagree'. It has a Cronbach's alpha reliability score of .93, indicating excellent internal consistency. Furthermore, test-retest reliability conducted over eight weeks yielded a reliability coefficient of $r = .83$ ($p < .001$), demonstrating its stability over time.

Statistical Analysis

The current study used descriptive and inferential statistical data techniques to analyse and interpret data. Descriptive statistics comprised the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and standard error. The mean, median, and mode were used as measures of central tendency, and standard deviation assessed data variability. The standard error estimated the precision of the sample mean in representing the population (Kothari, 2019). For inferential statistics, Karl Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient and regression analysis (Sansanwal, 2020) were used to explore the relation between mindfulness towards learning and SLCA among prospective teachers. These statistical techniques ensured a rigorous and comprehensive research data analysis, facilitating meaningful interpretation and conclusion.

Result and Discussion

To achieve the first objective, i.e., to find out the level of second language classroom anxiety of prospective teachers, the norms

mentioned in the manual were used. The following table and subsequent interpretation depict the extent of anxiety in L2 classrooms of prospective teachers studying at the Central University of South Bihar.

Table 1. Level of SLCA among prospective teachers

Level of SLCA	Prospective Teachers (No.)	Percentage
High (Above 112)	28	14%
Average (80-112)	141	70.5%
Low (Below 80)	31	15.5%

As per the table, it is evident that a small proportion, i.e., 14 per cent of prospective teachers experience a high level of anxiety in L2 classrooms, this indicates that a notable group may face significant challenges in managing anxiety when teaching or engaging in an L2 environment. In contrast, 70.5 per cent of prospective teachers possess an average level of SLCA. This suggests that anxiety in the second language classroom is moderate and may not pose a severe barrier to their teaching or learning process but still requires attention and management. On the other side, 15.5 per cent of prospective teachers have a low level of anxiety in second language classroom, that they may feel confident and less anxious when involved in L2 classroom environments. This group might be more proficient at coping strategies when learning or teaching second language. These findings highlight the diverse range

of anxiety levels experienced by prospective teachers, suggesting the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address these several levels of anxiety. The result indicates that in spite of having Yoga education, Fine Arts Education and Performing Arts Education as non-credit courses in BA BEd and BSc BEd programmes, a large proportion of the prospective teachers have average anxiety level in L2 classroom. Hence, serious attention should be paid on the practical interventions and other co-scholastic activities.

To achieve the second objective – to find out the level of mindfulness toward learning of prospective teachers – the standards established by the researcher have been used. The following table and subsequent interpretation depict the level of mindfulness toward learning of prospective teachers studying at Central University of South Bihar.

Table 2. Level of mindfulness toward learning of prospective teachers

Level of Mindfulness towards Learning	No. of prospective teachers	Percentage
Good (Above 137)	41	20.5 %
Average (90-137)	127	63.5%
Poor (Below 90)	32	16%

The data presented in Table 2 provides insights into the range of mindfulness

towards learning of participants. The result indicates varying degree of mindfulness

towards learning among participants, 20.5 per cent of prospective teachers exhibit a good level of mindfulness, demonstrating positive engagement and awareness in learning. 63.5 per cent of respondents have an average level of mindfulness towards learning, suggesting that most of the participants maintain a moderate level of focus and attention towards their academic activities while 16 per cent of respondents showed a poor level of mindfulness towards learning. These findings showed that a notable fraction of prospective teachers may struggle to maintain attention, focus or awareness in their educational pursuits. However, the fact that a majority exhibit only moderate mindfulness, and a significant minority show low levels, raises concern about the potential impact of limited self-regulation and present moment awareness on teaching-learning performance and stress management.

The reason may be attributed to various factors which are responsible for reducing mindfulness towards learning such as frequent use of social media, short memory span, avoidance of group work, less engagement in hands on activities and emotional exhaustion (Sriwilai & Charoensukmongkol, 2016). Ross, et al. (1999) found that different kinds of stress, like trying to balance academic and social pressure, getting used to new sleep schedules due to over work, completing assignments, and managing various other duties are responsible for low attention. The findings also reflect that majority of prospective teachers have average level of mindfulness towards learning, which may be affecting their academic success and professional development as future educators.

Hypotheses testing

Albeit the results of level of mindfulness towards learning and anxiety in second language classroom seems to inversely related to each other but to study the relationship between both of the variables statistically, Pearson correlation coefficient was computed by using SPSS.

Table 3. Correlations between mindfulness towards learning and SLCA

Variables	Mindfulness towards Learning	SLCA
Mindfulness towards Learning	1	r (-.84)
SLCA	-	1

The results obtained show a significant negative high relationship between mindfulness towards learning and SLCA ($r = -.84$, $p < 0.01$). It implies that an increase in mindfulness towards learning leads to the decrease of second language classroom anxiety of prospective teachers. A high negative correlation ($r = -.84$) which highlights the potential of mindfulness to reduce anxiety in language learning contexts, emphasizes the importance of integrating mindfulness strategies into educational settings for prospective teachers. The finding aligns with study of Gao (2024) found negative correlation of mindfulness with Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. Further, linear regression was used, as the correlation coefficient only showed the connection between the criterion variables, but to know how much contribution of mindfulness towards learning is in explaining or predicting SLCA. Here, SLCA was regressed by predictor variable, i.e., mindfulness towards learning to test hypothesis H_02 .

Table 4: Model summary of regression analysis

Predictor	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error	F change
Mindfulness	0.84	0.71	0.70	8.51	472.41

Table 4 shows that the coefficient of correlation among the variables is 0.84 and its square is 0.71. Thus, the $R^2 = .71$ depicts that the model explains 71% of variance in SLCA is explained by mindfulness towards learning in prospective teachers. It shows a strong predictive relationship between mindfulness and SLCA, which underscores the importance of mindfulness against anxiety and stress that are often experienced

in L2 classroom. Moreover, the remaining percentage of the variance is still to be accounted by the other variables, which are not included in the study. According to the study of Charoensukmongkol (2019) mindfulness does not directly reduce the anxiety of learners but it impacts anxiety directly by affecting psychological factors, such as psychological capital, which serves as mediators.

Table 5: Summary of ANOVA for Regression Analysis

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	34183.85	1	34183.85	472.41	.000
Residual	14327.27	198	72.36	-	-
Total	48511.12	199	-	-	-

In Table 5, F value ($F = 472.41$, $p < 0.001$) is significant at 0.01 level which indicates that mindfulness plays a significant role in reducing anxiety in L2 classrooms. Thus, the null hypothesis that “there is no significant contribution of mindfulness

towards learning in predicting SLCA of prospective teachers” is rejected. The result suggested that mindfulness plays a crucial role in alleviating anxiety among prospective teachers in L2 classrooms.

Table 6. Coefficients for Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	159.26	2.96		53.68	<.001
Mindfulness towards Learning	-.558	.03	-.84	-21.73	<.001

As per Table 6, Beta Coefficient for Mindfulness towards Learning is $-.84$, bearing t-value ($t = -21.73$, $p < 0.01$) showing a negative relationship that is significant at 0.01 level. It was noted that mindfulness towards learning contributes significantly to the prediction of SLCA. Therefore, the analysis indicated that promoting mindfulness in language learning environments could be an effective strategy for reducing anxiety. By focussing on mindfulness, learners may be able to manage stress and fear in their language learning classrooms. The findings of the current study are similar to the study of Gallego, et al. (2014) that revealed

mindfulness practices can assist learners to experience less stress and anxiousness. The programme ‘Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction’ (MBSR) also helps to reduce the causes of anxiety and improves focus and awareness (Song & Lindquist, 2015).

Conclusion

This study was designed to explore the link between mindfulness towards learning and anxiety experienced in L2 classrooms by prospective teachers. In relation to SLCA, the moderate anxiety levels reported by most prospective teachers imply that anxiety may

not be immediately devastating, it remains a crucial factor that could influence teaching confidence and classroom communication. Those who show high anxiety may still struggle with confidence, face problems like nervousness, being discouraged, demotivated, and feel inferior to others who know L2 well. At last, it may lead to low teaching efficacy and negatively affects emotional intelligence of learners. Therefore, there is need to emphasize on mindfulness-based interventions or training within teacher education programme. As mindfulness serves as a method to reduce anxiety and increase concentration, it may also help teachers and learners to understand the theory and science of mindfulness in second-language classrooms.

Policymakers should focus on creating a consistent space within the school and college schedule for mindfulness activities, like guided meditations and theoretical discussions, fostering a congenial academic culture that values self-care, acceptance, and empathy. Educators and administrators should ensure that teachers at various levels of teaching have enough time to engage in mindfulness practices like meditation, mindful listening, mindful reading. Teachers can also assist students to become aware of their emotions and feelings by promoting mindful practices and identifying ways to apply mindfulness to their daily lives. This approach is not only helpful for students to articulate and appreciate its purpose but also contributes to make a positive and compassionate academic environment.

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