



Review article

Mitigating EFL students' academic disengagement: The role of teachers' compassion and mindfulness in China

Chunmei Xue

School of Foreign Languages, Sias University, Xinzheng, Henan, 451100, China

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ABSTRACT

There has newly been a lot of interest in higher education literature and policy on the notions of learner engagement and disengagement. Learner disengagement is a continuous difficulty in academic circumstances. To mitigate learners' disengagement, some factors seem interesting to be taken into consideration by scholars. One of them is mindfulness, defined as a resting strategy that is related to constructive influences when utilized as a coping mechanism for anxiety and apprehension. Furthermore, compassion is another factor that is regarded as a central dimension of the exercise of mindfulness. It refers to understanding how to be available, compassionate, and sympathetic towards oneself and others. Regarding the significance of these factors, the objective of this review is to investigate the role of mindfulness and compassion in reducing learners' educational disengagement in language education. Finally, future directions as well as educational implications for educational stakeholders are introduced following this review.

1. Introduction

Learners often undergo elevated degrees of apprehension, tension, and sadness, boredom, and they document a great degree of deconstructive thoughts and feelings [1,2,3]. Some of those challenges show themselves in the shape of long-term educational setbacks, discerned educational anxiety, and a lack of ability to conform to the educational and societal environment, which regularly comes to a climax once students leave school [4]. A great number of learners have individual and contextual motives for leaving school and this is a sign of disengagement from school and is a quickly developing occurrence [5] while it is a critical problem that ought to be taken more seriously. Engagement in the educational environment is vital [6,7,8]. Indeed, engagement is a crucial concept connected to education and educational achievements like better scores, frequencies of completion, and success test results [9]. Constructive psychologists attempted to enhance the awareness of the way common people have higher progress in conditions without threatening to accelerate a shift in awareness priority from merely focusing on substituting the unrighteous issues in lifestyles to forming positive greatness [6,10]. The engagement concept has multiple constructs including behavioral, affection, cognition, and agency factors, the first one of which, i.e. behavioral engagement is considered crucial in second language classes [6,11,12]. Nevertheless, disregarding its background, engagement has considerably become prevalent in academic research established within PP [11]. Considering that engagement is a precondition for influential education, the absence of it which represents fatigue [13,14], may turn into a danger to academic achievement and any type of learning, namely, second language education [15]. [16] enlighten that language educators should determine elements that influence their learners' need to study by recognizing this; they can create successful strategies to constructively motivate them to study again. Thus, teachers should be aware of how engaged learners are with their education.

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Mindfulness strategies have been proven to enhance educational presentation, as well as test presentation, by lowering levels of stress and enhancing coping techniques [3,17]. Throughout recent years, mindfulness-based interferences have been verified as a way to support learners in dealing with anxiety and in enhancing their socio-emotive functioning [18]. Interferences that are planned to improve mindfulness try to enhance learners' helpfulness, consideration, psychological health, and well-being by utilizing meditation and other techniques to elevate recognition in the current instant; to control difficult thoughts and emotions; and to embrace oneself, others, and the globe in an unbiased manner [19]. Indeed, Mindfulness entails two basic mechanisms, namely, self-regulation of attention and nonjudgmental consciousness of experience. The former enhances consciousness of one's experience in terms of affection, cognition, and body as it takes place each moment, and the latter features inquisitiveness, openness, and recognition of the experience, which can enhance managing by reducing reactivity [20].

Numerous motives exist to include mindfulness exercises in higher education, ranging from affective and physiological advantages to enhancing the general health of educators and learners, and improving memory capacity and learning that results [21]. The mindfulness approach has a global attraction, highlighting the fostering of higher consciousness, resilience, and affection regulation whilst cultivating engagement, constructive relations, and fulfillment [22,23]. Additionally, learners who exercise mindfulness have been demonstrated to attain better results on exams than learners who do not [24]. Mindfulness, taken from traditions of centuries many years ago and instructed in a secular method, is connected to elevated activity in mental areas in charge of adjusting focus and constructive emotional moods such as empathy and similar prosocial feelings [25]. Learners' stress could be greatly lessened and their attention span can be elevated with the aid of mindfulness. Therefore, mindfulness is a beneficial technique to have learners engage in the educational cycle because it has been proven that many learners cannot concentrate in class [26]. Moreover, mindfulness has been demonstrated to elevate learners' positivity and positive emotion, rendering them capable of taking pleasure in the class since they can discern the educational cycle more optimistically [27]. As an element related to mindfulness, self-compassion could provide learners with more assistance.

In line with [28]'s Broaden-and-Build theory, positive emotions akin to compassion could enable greater imaginative intellectual processing; therefore, leading to better educational presentation. This theory contends that positive emotions strengthen physical and mental well-being, thereby elevating engagement [29,30]. Mindfulness elevates and enhances one's focus on matters and others, making them more compassionate. Consequently, by expanding this positive emotion, they are prone to be more engaged and ultimately enhance their educational presentation [31]. Compassion is especially vital for educators' recognition of learners' requirements, inquiries, and ambiguities when attempting to study new things and for educators' competence to look beyond learners' problematic conduct and at the hidden reasons, which regularly include requirements of security, consideration, consolation, or determining restrictions. Furthermore, it is crucial for educators' capability of creating and sustaining rather long-lasting connections with learners and peers, in which arguments cannot be avoided [32].

One could regard mindfulness and compassion conceptually as exercises and innate individual characteristics that could be further built and fostered throughout life [33]. In other words, mindfulness and compassion may be defined as (1) brief, periodic conditions of recognition, (2) greater persistent, characteristic-like attributes of recognition, or (3) a group of exercises that increases the growth of disconnected conditions of mindfulness and compassion for a mindful and sympathetic lifestyle [34]. To manage the needs of education, mindfulness is suggested as a form of expert development. Numerous applications provide such a form of education, but, there may be a need for more accurate empirical studies on this sphere [21].

An increasing body of scientific evidence exists that recommends mindfulness as a crucial life competence for the entire learners [35,36,37]. The technique of mindfulness similarly assists concentration and increases the learner's health potential [38]. Mindfulness exercises focus on the mind, body, and affection awareness and therefore lead to the improvement of the entire individual. Each of the comparative and experimental research firmly states that mindfulness helps the learners' intellectual well-being. Interventions based on mindfulness on college learners affect decreasing dejection, tension, pressure, and affective dysfunction and increase self-efficacy and self-respect [39]. Also, some fields such as philosophy, well-being, social care, parenting, and management have largely covered compassion [40]; However, to the best of researcher's knowledge, recently, educators are getting inquisitive about investigating the usage of mindfulness-based methods to getting to instruct and learn a foreign language, because through such methods they tend to decrease tension, increase and enhance the class environment, and aid learners to concentrate or even have clearer contemplation to be involved more in the classroom [41].

2. Review of literature

2.1. Disengagement

Learners' engagement is largely essential within class teaching and instruction, and when estimating the learners' success, it is one of the major factors [42]. Learners' engagement features positive power in the form of the bodily and intellectual aspects of learners to achieve academic experience as part of class teaching and instruction. Instructional engagement may provide a beneficiary environment and also presents a potential for the learners to find out their viewpoint [43]. A considerable attempt should be done to improve learners' academic engagement, which incorporates improving the education quality, performance of educators, and instructional assignments. The development of students' training related to the cycle of education and academic tasks affects their memory and could finally affect academic outcomes and learners' quality [44]. The period in which students are efficiently engaged in their class tasks and practices is called engagement [45] which is characterized by the extent to which students are keen on the traditional education cycle and refers to the effort, time, and power they put on educational learning tasks [46,47].

Student engagement or disengagement is considered a multidimensional construct that embraces behavioral, affective (emotional),

intellectual (cognitive), and agentic [45]. Behavioral disengagement means being distracted within the class, being effortless, and stop attempting fast [48]. Learners who are behaviorally disengaged refrain from the learning task (commonly through performing some other things), delaying, doing just to get rid of the task, and attempt withdrawal (giving up, quitting) when encountering challenge, difficulty, failure, or confusion. Affective disengagement means experiencing negative hedonic tone and power-emptying (being sad) or power-disordering (stress) feelings in a learning task. Learners who are emotionally disengaged have a bad, conflicting, or effectively submerged when engaging with the learning task. Cognition disengagement means using just disorganized and unscheduled tactics whilst entrusted with doing or learning a thing. Learners who are agentially disengaged receive teaching as it is provided passively and unilaterally [49]. Learners who are agentially disengaged perform according to what is told them, with no presentation of the input, conversing with the English setting provider or lesson personalization attempts to be tailored to their favorites, purposes, and desires. In the same way, disengagement is also recognized pertaining to this componential feature focusing on decreased engagement with the maximum adverse impact on the learning procedure. The problems of disengagement and engagement, both regarding the learners as well as educators, were indeed recognized as vital factors associated with boredom in the procedure of mastering a language. Learners who have no engagement are disruptive, and may not aim for higher academic targets, score lower, and may drop out of school. Such learners are more passive and cannot cope with boredom, anxiety, or even anger about being within the class [50]. As the signs of disengagement begin in students' lives, they can hamper their abilities to deal with the emotional difficulties in a way that leads to the growth of engagement [51]. Mindfulness can be effective in inspiring students' engagement and it can help them with enhanced learning situations, so empowering them to be more involved in the process of their learning [52,53].

2.2. Mindfulness

Mindfulness" literally originates from the Sanskrit term 'Smṛti' literally translated to "something remembered [54]. Thus, mindfulness is explained as recalling to focus on the current time that has three main characteristics, namely, goal, presence, and admittance and the definition of mindfulness is "constant awareness", a condition of physical liberty, or constant awareness of individuals' unbiased experience [55]. It encompasses deliberately focusing our attention, which refers to paying attention to the current time and having an unbiased attitude to anything that happens in the present time. Mindfulness is specifically popular in the area of constructive mind study with essential advantages, namely, enhancing active memory, improving well-being, decreasing tension, etc. [56].

Mindfulness incorporates three crucial elements: intention, attention, and attitude [57]. Mindfulness instruction is believed to initiate attention or intentionally focus on something and is the basis of mindfulness [58]. This is the planned act of concentrating on fleeting thoughts, emotions, and actions [20]. Intention alludes to knowing what is done, the reason behind it, or the final objective or vision. Attention involves concentrating wholly on the current instant as opposed to contemplating what has passed or what is to come. Attitude offers the capability of remaining sympathetic, receptive, and inquisitive. All three are interrelated and intertwined during mindful exercises. The promotion of youngsters' immune functions, intellectual growth, attention abilities, and emotive control are advantages of exercising mindfulness [59].

In addition, mindfulness advances contentment and could elevate sensitivity in some youngsters. By exercising it daily, one can build a feeling of stability and a tranquil, focused mind that is competent in imagination, creativity, contentment, endurance, and compassion [60]. For instance, when learners have the chance to exercise mindfulness in a class, they could have a greater possibility of attaining a particular objective and characterizing their target abilities or determining material domains to concentrate on by being more inspired and engaged [20]. declared that mindfulness is focusing both on the goal and the current instant in an unbiased manner. Mindfulness coaching in attention is believed to elevate emotive and intellectual resilience, enabling practitioners to build unbiased recognition. Unbiased recognition alludes to focusing on the present encounter and not having an opinion regarding it. Unbiased recognition results in non-responsiveness, or not responding to that present encounter, rather accepting that it has taken place and letting it go.

Mindfulness alters the learning set within a class, by facilitating contemplation, building meaning, and taking advantage of learning. In a desirable mindful classroom, the educators assist their learners to reconstruct meaning, contemplate the experience of learning, and take the most advantage of the process of learning [61]. Based on the research conducted, mindfulness is an efficient tactic for lowering concern and tension, managing concentration distractions, and enhancing the general mental health of university learners [62,63]. Mindfulness has additionally been useful to cause healthy reactions to anxiety and has lessened self-harm [64] that is an effective strategy that enhances focus and recognition in schools and allows educators to utilize their time more productively. Mindfulness also helps kids enhance their recognition of the current instant. It paves new roads for the mind to build self-recognition [65]. Moreover, through mindfulness practice, the development of compassion begins with learning to relate to oneself with greater acceptance and kindness [66].

2.3. Self-compassion

Self-compassion as a concept is more or less novel in Western psychological literature but is increasing in importance as a significant mechanism for alteration that includes being receptive to and affected by one's own struggling, encountering emotions of concern and sympathy toward oneself, having a considerate and unbiased demeanor toward one's defects and setbacks, and understanding that one's involvement is part of the regular human experience [67]. Self-compassion is generally characterized as sympathizing with and being considerate of oneself when encountering struggles, regarding one's setbacks as part of the human state, and possessing a well-balanced recognition of unpleasant thoughts and feelings [67]. Compassion is characterized as being responsive to the struggling of oneself and others and with a profound resolution to attempt to avert and mitigate them the advantages of building

compassion are extensively documented in Buddhist psychology and are considered crucial to well-being [68].

67 theorized self-compassion concerning three main attributes, namely, self-sympathy, shared kindness, and mindfulness. The core dimension of self-compassion includes being sympathetic towards oneself during downfalls. For example, when self-compassionate individuals have setbacks or make big mistakes, they are prone to being more sympathetic, kind, and compassionate towards themselves and criticize and become mad at themselves less as opposed to individuals with a low level of self-compassion. Also, self-compassion includes encouraging instead of criticizing oneself when wrong things happen [68]. Behaving sympathetically with oneself may be represented in obvious measures, namely, allowing oneself to indulge in the emotional break or in intellectual loving actions consisting of engaging in positive self-speaking, inspiring, and pardoning. Another characteristic of self-compassion or usual humanity includes understanding that the experiences of individuals, regardless of their degree of pain, are integral to the usual experiences of humans.

Consistent with 40, compassion is a relational cycle concerning awareness, feeling, making sense, and performing that reduces the struggle of someone else. Self-compassion can be characterized as encountering one's personal struggle via emotions of sympathy towards oneself and with a mindful recognition and perception that one's encounter is a component of the regular human experience [67]. A self-compassionate individual witnesses issues, weak points, and defects in a precise manner but responds with sympathy and kindness as opposed to self-censure and cruelty. People with a great degree of self-compassion might process more successful emotional control techniques, especially when encountering bad occurrences, than those with a low degree of self-compassion [69].

At the time of human failure, they experience damage or refusal, humiliation, or encounter different negative incidents, they usually sense their experience is individual and special, however, people can experience issues and difficulties in reality. Human beings' feelings of isolation decrease and their compatible dealing is enhanced when they come to the understanding that other people also have such experiences and taking a moderate viewpoint of one's conditions such that one is not overwhelmed with affection is the third characteristic of self-compassion [67]. Those with low self-compassion tend to live with negativity and get immersed in their feelings when faced with tests and distress. On the contrary, individuals who are capable of keeping an attitude when encountering pressure and getting close to the situation with mindfulness can manage it with higher success [56].

Regarding the recent studies in this domain, 70 has done research on the role of EFL teachers' mindfulness and compassion in fostering students' enjoyment. They have proved the influential role of teachers' mindfulness and compassion in decreasing students' destructive moods, heightening their constructive feelings, and consequently increasing their enjoyment. In addition, there is another study by 71 who examined the impact of mindfulness and resilience on the EFL learners' engagement and they concluded that there was a significant relationship among these three concepts and they also proved that mindfulness and resilience are predictors of engagement.

3. Conclusion, pedagogical implications, and future direction

School principals, educators, and educator trainers may use the results of this study in various ways. Initially, the significance put on the significant mindfulness-compassion relationship has that educators, educator trainers, and schools have to compare how both those notions could be incorporated into the learning process to address the engagement of the students in the class. Based on the literature review, for mitigating disengagement, both of these aspects should be employed. The main dimensions of one's capability to deal with and become aware of the desires of others are referred to as mindfulness and compassion and it is assumed to aid educators' capability to build settings satisfying learners' demands [72]. In conclusion, it can be said that mindfulness has a positive relationship with the affective and behavioral engagement of learners, class attachment, participation, appreciation, and educational self-efficacy [73,74]. Based on the evidence, educating mindfulness allows learners to lessen pressure, stress, and deep thinking and enhances their health and educational confidence [75]. Mindfulness can be a strong method for enhancing concentration and recognition in schools and allows educators to efficaciously use their time which also assists learners to enhance their consciousness of the current time. This issue also enables finding new ways of growing self-awareness in the mind [65].

Compassion can be associated with well-being and engagement by enhancing a sense of proximity, connectedness, faith, and societal help [76]. Different mental hypotheses have highlighted the significance of societal relationships, empathy, and compassion for engagement, health, and well-being; that is, compassionate conduct links individuals mentally and enhances the standard of connections between colleagues, which enhances individuals' well-being [77]. The outcome is important to students because motivating particular habits and constructive conduct [like mindfulness and compassion] during the educational process can enhance their behavior in their professions in the future. And as it is proved that mindfulness and compassion appear to be effective in strengthening engagement, they must be reinforced in colleges to make learners ready to deal with career life with all the instruments that the community seeks for them.

To present learners with an efficient tactic for coping and to have a clearer understanding of mindfulness, interferences can be designed to university/program directions, courses, and tasks beyond the curriculum; allowing them to better comprehend themselves and other people and have an enjoyable and glad life. Indeed, mindfulness-based treatments or interferences could be effortlessly integrated into courses with a fleeting contemplation session before the start of every educational course. While these seem like arrogant objectives, they could hypothetically develop accomplishment, reduce attrition, and expand educational accomplishment by lessening anxiety and apprehension. The mindful learner which indicates better awareness, consciousness, and admittance to the existing time task difficulty will additionally reveal higher power, commitment, and engagement (absorption) in the school; which shows the incentive and relationship with the liveliness of their function, as opposed to burnout.

Greater degrees of mindfulness is related to lower degrees of sadness, stress, and apprehension and could promote a set of well-being results, namely, lower awareness of anxiety and greater utilization of adjustive coping techniques [78]. Through inspiring

attention to tasks and even considering them in innovative ways, mindfulness may have a positive association with engagement. It also can nurture compassion, which closes individuals and engages them in their tasks with others. Compassion and mindfulness are effective boosters of engagement, and therefore, they ought to be taught in schools to make learners ready to encounter the busy globe along with all the instruments that are demanded by society. To be compassionate, the teacher should provide learners with a safe platform, helps them to improve their experience and be more motivated, along with nurturing their advancement in learning [79].

Teacher trainers must be conscious of how to be more compassionate in the classroom, thereby advancing and reinforcing learners' engagement and ultimately their success. An educator's manual and relevant coaching plans can be built-in advancing compassion and mindfulness abilities to be utilized in various syllabus plans. Consequently, it appears vital for teachers to teach them in such matters, both in theory and in practice. By doing so, learners would realize and understand that being mindful and compassionate makes them more engaged and improves their educational presentation. About all the evidence that backs the mindfulness advantages and the teaching potential to increase mindfulness quality, the present study determined that teaching mindfulness may be used as interference which may assist learners to have higher engagement within the class and enhance their capability to achieve success in English learning. The review is beneficial for teacher educators who need to be conscious that teachers' mindfulness and compassion help learners in decreasing the destructive impacts of negative feelings and improving constructive feelings that result in engagement. Also, it is worthwhile for administrators to suggest appropriate courses to encourage EFL teachers' mindfulness and compassion at the beginning of their job since they assure learners' engagement.

Faculty members need to incorporate mindfulness into each second of the class, not like something extra. Programs of mindfulness applications in educator training can enhance mindfulness application in schools in the future [80]. Mindfulness application has recently gained great interest in studies. Mental intervention practices can also employ it as a beneficial method for coping with tension and growing health and engagement in various environments. Whilst employed as an intervening technique in a third environment, mindfulness could therefore assist learners to enhance competencies in life and studying that help constructive learning and health results.

Based on the review of literature, the tension and stress that EFL learners experience while using the language at all competency levels can prevent their general function and engagement, and learners with great mindfulness levels, also reported less anxiety throughout language learning [81]. Interferences hindering despair and improving mindfulness and self-compassion may be specifically useful within the process of language, therefore, such interventions should be made and examined through experimental research to verify this finding. Also, in further research, the relationship between mindfulness, compassion, and academic success can be examined. More investigations should highlight other factors such as motivation that is a sign of learners' engagement or scrutinize the cause-and-effect correlation of teachers' mindfulness and compassion with other constructs such as well-being, perseverance, and resilience, along with examining the interaction of numerous variables, and its effect in language education.

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