

THE MINDFUL LEXICON: WEAVING EASTERN CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITIONS INTO ATTENTIVE EFL READING

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual paper discusses the adaptation of techniques used in the contemplation traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism for application in English as a foreign language, focusing on mindful reading. Drawing on the Bhagavad Gita's principles of anāsakta karma (detached action) and samatva (equanimity), together with Buddhist teachings of Sati (mindfulness) and Vipassanā (insight meditation), this paper discusses methods for cultivating deep, focused, and reflective engagement with texts. A Mindful reading can be integrated to remind the students to direct both cognitive and emotional faculties towards learning by enhancing it and reducing stress and anxiety during performances. Guided meditation, reflective journaling, group discussion, creative assessment, affirmations, and individualized learning paths are some of the pedagogical applications designed to enhance a holistic approach that responds to moral, cognitive, and emotional development. This paper proposes a two-way shift in direction, whereby the result-oriented approach to reading will be discouraged and an active form of contemplative learning will be adopted by combining the best of traditional practices with the best of contemporary academic enquiry. It recommends further empirical studies to investigate the efficacy of mindfulness-based pedagogy in classrooms across multiple contexts of EFL settings and to identify its possible contributions to promoting language proficiency, resilience, critical thinking, and humanistic growth.

Keywords: *Bhagavad Gita, cognitive engagement, contemplative pedagogy, EFL reading, mindfulness, vipassanā*

Introduction

Studying EFL as a foreign language entails the application of linguistic, cognitive, and cultural skills by the learner. Among our top activities to do is reading, as it is one of the most effective methods for acquiring new words, learning grammatical structures, exploring other cultures, and developing critical thinking skills. On the other hand, reading in a foreign language isn't something that one can do without thinking about it. It entails considerable mental work, such as deciphering the meaning of new words, drawing conclusions, inferring indirect meanings, and connecting the information scattered throughout the book (Al-Khreshah and Ben Ali, 2023; Zeilhofer, 2025). Although reading is a significant part of learning a

language, in most EFL classes, it is taken up as a more practical task, such as achieving test scores or meeting specific curriculum requirements, rather than a task that involves sufficient mental and emotional energy (Nazarieh, 2025; Rui, Zhang, & Jin, 2025). This attitude of being instrumental-minded encourages readers to skim or scan reading material in search of solutions without necessarily engaging with the language and ideas.

Mindful reading is a form of reading that can greatly contribute to learning and self-awareness, involving the whole cognitive-emotional system of the learner. It is achievable by attentively listening, continuously following up on the process, and maintaining a non-judgmental attitude with an open and aware mind. This method arouses curiosity, inspires challenge, and deep thinking that goes beyond gathering information to become an academic and personal pursuit, enabling readers to become more educated and intelligent (Fan & Cui, 2024; Gao, 2023). However, one cannot easily teach students to read consciously in a modern EFL classroom because students might feel intimidated by the fact that they are expected to learn new words, elaborate grammar, obscure expressions, and cultural allusions that can confuse or cause hesitation. Due to the pressure of critical standardized tests, students concentrate on completing tasks quickly and accurately, which leads to increased stress and anxiety, causing them to employ superficial reading strategies to find the correct answers rather than recognizing them (Nazarieh, 2025). On the same note, digital distractions will constantly be present, rendering learners unable to concentrate over extended time frames (Rui et al., 2025).

Mindfulness is a new, effective method of teaching that can be applied in this scenario, as its practice is rooted in contemplative traditions with a long history spanning several centuries and is now supported by modern science. It means "paying attention in a certain way: on purpose, in the present moment, and without judging" (Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Mindfulness may help students concentrate their thoughts and feelings as they arise, reflect on what they read and understand it, become aware of language structure and flow, and reflect on what has already happened. The shift in focus between the tasks and processes should also make learning more approachable, easier to grasp, and more pleasant. Studies demonstrate that mindfulness is beneficial for school-age children, as it has been shown to enhance emotional regulation, cognitive flexibility, and working memory, all of which are essential for reading (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Khosravi & Khajavy, 2024; Fan & Cui, 2024).

It is possible to understand it even deeper with the help of the philosophical and moral principles presented in the Bhagavad Gita, as it tends to emphasize the principle of detached action (*anasakta karma*) and psychological equanimity (*samatva*), which are similar to the principles of mindfulness practice. The Gita

instructs learners not to look at the result, and this complicates matters when things are not working out. Buddhist concepts, such as *Sati* (mindfulness) and *Vipassana* (insight meditation), allow students to be mindful of the present moment and analyze their thoughts, which are the primary skills of close reading.

This article presents a comprehensive approach to teaching EFL reading through a combination of traditional instructional methods and research on teaching methodology. This approach to reading transcends mere language practice, becoming something that can help learners become more attentive, relaxed, and empathetic human beings. It, in this way, entails the mental, emotional, and moral elements of learning a language, which gives the students the competencies that allow them to connect to literature.

Literature Review

Over the past few decades, there has been a tremendous interest in integrating mindfulness into the curriculum. Emphasis has been placed on enhancing students' cognitive, affective, and metacognitive skills. Based on studies in educational psychology and language learning, a case study is the way Kabat-Zinn (1990) defines mindfulness: paying attention in a certain way, in a deliberate manner, in the present, and without judgment. It is the framework where the role of mindfulness in working memory, attention control, emotional state, and cognitive shifting (all of which are important in the reading comprehension process) has been discussed (Zhou and Zeilhofer, 2025; Khosrowavi and Khajavy, 2024).

Mindfulness has also been beneficial in the process of SLA, as demonstrated by learners through high levels of emotion control, reduced anxiety, and increased focus. Language learning is a complex process that presupposes a variety of cognitive tasks, including the need to listen to and comprehend complex grammatical structures and semantic patterns in cultural messages across different discourse layers. The effectiveness of mindfulness lies in training learners to respond to their inner experience of frustration and confusion without judgment. This can help learners incorporate the best meta-cognitive approaches, which, in turn, can help them remain focused and tenacious on challenging tasks. Research also supports this claim, stating that reading comprehension in EFL students can be improved with the help of mindfulness meditation, especially when affective barriers occur and the intrinsic motivation of students is low (Wang, Wang, and Li, 2023). Likewise, other research studies have also demonstrated that mindfulness in clinical psychology can increase attention, emotion regulation, and stress control in children of school-going age. The advantages of mental capabilities aid in completing schoolwork, especially in the reading area, where a high level of concentration is required for effective thinking.

The psychological attitude of students, aimed at self-directed learning and awareness, enables them to recognize what they need to change in their work and improve their methodology (Zhou and Zeilhofer, 2025; Khosravi and Khajavy, 2024). The cognitive psychology employed by Zhou and Zeilhofer (2025) and Khosrowvand Khajavy (2024) aims to enhance knowledge and awareness, which, in turn, leads to an improved capacity of the cognitive process. Being mindful, learners are more skilled in self-observation, paying attention to lapses in concentration, becoming disoriented, or feeling nervous during the reading process. More particularly, the mindful stance of not judging can become working with reality with a level of best curiosity. Such controlled Connective thinking and questioning keep me mentally strong and flexible, and encourage deeper semantic or associative reading and re-reading, which is quite different from the shallow level of reading most standardized examinations assess.

Building on the body of the statement, in the field of educational research, the integration of mindfulness with questioning techniques is advocated for improving reading skills, to foster patient reflection and dialogue. Mindfulness, for instance, is about reorienting the centre of instruction from evaluating the level of accomplishment attained in the process to the level of engagement of the learners, which enables them to spend their time more meaningfully in the reading process.

Integrating technology, along with constructivist learning paradigms, promotes active engagement and meaning-making rather than rote learning (Nazarieh, 2025). Research on education and second language acquisition (SLA) has paid considerable attention to mindfulness, primarily within the framework of Western psychological paradigms. There is a lack of mindful approaches that draw directly from Eastern contemplative traditions from which mindfulness is derived. The principles of mindfulness in the Bhagavad Gita, as in Buddhist traditions, have not been thoroughly investigated in the context of language teaching. The mindfulness of such traditions stems from their non-attachment, peacefulness, and present-moment awareness, which extends beyond the conventional understanding of awareness (Cheng and Singh 2023; Narayanan 2021). The combination of Eastern and Western philosophies of contemplation can be applied to broaden studies on the role of mindfulness in teaching EFL reading. From a Western psychological perspective, mindfulness is an asset to the person on both the cognitive and affective levels. Whereas Eastern contemplative philosophies deepen the understanding of mindfulness to include ethical, self-development, and compassion cultivation. These are all of which are increasingly essential for sustainable learning environments (Cheng & Singh, 2023; Narayanan, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This part outlines the major theory guiding the approach to mindful reading in EFL contexts.

Bhagavad Gita teachings, as well as Buddhism philosophies, give a guideline on how to incorporate spiritual knowledge with cognitive understanding in learning the language. These philosophies expound on the issue of detachment and the imperativeness of developing intensive detachment in conscious pedagogy.

Insights from the Bhagavad Gita: Detached Action and Mental Equanimity

The Bhagavad Gita is an intense conversation in search of answers to the moral, spiritual, and mental issues that arise from being human. It is believed to be one of the most applicable Hindu books in philosophy, not only covering religious theology but also providing useful guidance and counsel on how to act, control the mind, and develop equanimity. Such principles do not conflict with the modern thinking in the field of cognitive psychology and philosophy of education. These principles align with recent thought in contemporary cognitive psychology and the philosophy of education. The teachings provided in the Gita can offer EFL students and teachers a way to help them concentrate, become stronger, and think more critically about what they are studying, particularly in complex aspects of reading.

Karma Yoga forms the central theme of the Gita, which is the practice of action without selfish or ambitious attachment, which is the lesson as Krishna tells Arjuna in Chapter 2, Verse 47: "You have a right to perform your duties, but you have no right to the fruits of action" (Easwaran, 1985). This order contradicts the goal-oriented thinking atmosphere that is currently popular in schools. Learning institutions emphasize that learners meet certain standards, often by achieving good results in their exams or by demonstrating their ability to perform. This is a normal level of attention, but it may cause students to become anxious, less engaged, and less motivated, resulting in shallow learning. Readers have stopped considering reading an end-based activity, but instead, they believe that reading is a process endowed with curiosity, inquisitiveness, and long-term commitments, as opposed to short-term results.

Rather than relying on standardized testing or repetitive memorization, educators can implement this shift in the classroom by providing students with problems that require reflection, creative interpretation, and individualized responses. For instance, reflective journals help students note how their knowledge, feelings, and questions vary as they read, enabling learners to be more conscious of their thoughts and feelings and how they can manage them. The students' opinions can be expressed through free-response comments, mind maps, mini-projects, and

projects that will be detached from action. The strategies help the students think about the reading process as an activity of great importance, which should be ongoing and not overwhelming. When the students do not fear doing something new anymore, they will be in a better position to do so, and that would be equal to the teaching described in the Gita in the sense of samatva or mental tranquility.

It is a condition described in Chapter 2, Verse 48, where Krishna states that one should work without attachment to the result (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1944). It is advice that must be written irrespective of the circumstance. All the challenges, cultural barriers, and the impossibility of perceiving the world fully are characteristics that EFL students possess, which can help them overcome stress and avoid exhaustion, allowing them to proceed with their cumulative work and practice samatva. The Gita also states that we must listen and should have an end in mind as we study. "Wherever the mind wanders, agitated and scattered in its search for fulfilment without, lead it within; train it to rest in the Self" (Easwaran, 1985, 6.26).

Teachers can apply mindfulness practices during reading, such as breath practice, guided meditation, and non-judgmental refocusing of the mind, to help students stay focused when they seem to be dwelling in the past or projecting outside of the reading, bringing them back to the text. Such exercises facilitate less engagement with the ego of the students, allowing them to read without fear of failure or criticism. It makes the classroom a pleasant place to study, and further complications arise in the teaching structure of the svadharma, which teaches that everyone has an individual responsibility or way. This is a desirable concept in EFL learning sessions since it considers the diverse abilities, backgrounds, and orientations of students. In Chapter 3, Verse 35, it mentions: "Better is to work in one's own dharma, than to work in the dharma of another" (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1944). Composing the reading materials and assignments that suit each student is a means of respecting the aspect of svadharma and enabling them to become self-oriented and independent. It allows a student to embrace their language learning process, which reduces concerns of comparing themselves to others and builds more confidence.

Principles from Buddhist Philosophy: Sati and Vipassanā

Buddhist practice, in particular, mindfulness (Sati) and concentration and insight meditation (Vipassanā) are practical techniques of clearing the mind, controlling emotions, and staying aware of the moment. These activities can be employed to stimulate careful, thoughtful reading in English in an EFL setting quite effectively, as they deal with both the cognitive and emotional aspects of learning.

The Pali word, Sati, denotes remembering or being aware, which not only means watching something, but it also means to give active, constant, judgment-free attention to what is happening at the moment (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1975). Sati is not identical with distractedness or responsiveness because it refers to an awareness of what takes shape and dissolves from moment to moment. This increased awareness helps students in observing their thoughts and feelings during reading, enabling them to determine when they are bored, puzzled, angry, or tired without feeling too disturbed or condemning themselves.

When Sati has students read a line at a time and internalize the information, she is teaching them to slow down, not only to focus on the meaning of the words they read, but also to pay attention to the feelings and mental responses that the text evokes. Involvement makes students more mindful of their thought processes and, therefore, enables them to become more aware of whether they are truly listening or not. For instance, a student may realize that they get distracted every time they encounter difficult words, or other students may find themselves annoyed when trying to understand matters that do not make sense to them. The student does not skip or race through; instead, they balance these things and move back to continue reading, which helps maintain their concentration longer.

While practising Sati, or Vipassanā, students learn about the impermanence of thoughts and feelings and how they are conditioned. Similarly, Vipassanā meditation fosters a meta-cognitive stance, in which learners perceive their thoughts, feelings, and experiences from a distance and with a clear perspective, recognizing that these phenomena are transient and not enduring realities (Bodhi, 2016). This understanding simplifies emotional control and enhances cognitive flexibility, which are essential for circumventing the typical challenges of language learning, such as fear, self-doubt, and information overload. Indicatively, students with low English fluency, who face complex words or ideas new to them, struggle to maintain concentration and may become frustrated, often blaming themselves during the practice of Vipassanā. They realize that it is only a fleeting thought of indecision, frustration, or self-criticism. Such a way of thinking makes them less emotional, less prone to feeling that they have failed, and they can approach the subject with kindness and calmness.

Buddhism is based on compassion (karuna), which shares much with mindfulness, as it teaches to be considerate and empathetic to themselves and others as they learn. Compassion in EFL classrooms will create a more conducive environment for the mind, minimize performance anxiety, and foster student collaboration. Students are advised to address their weaknesses and should not be too critical of themselves. Compassion and mindfulness training help students become more patient, present, and emotionally aware, contributing to a better classroom learning

and teaching environment. It creates a classroom where quiet thinking, careful questioning, and stillness are also significant as a result of being mindful teachers. They demonstrate to students how to behave so that they can enhance their thinking and moral capabilities. These instructors not only share a language with their learners but also create moral individuals.

The concept of anatta, or non-self, and the understanding that all things are not constant but change and evolve, is even more applicable in the case of a learner and their identity. Mindfulness also allows the learner to eliminate fixed beliefs towards themselves, e.g., “I am a bad reader, because their mind and abilities can be changed, and will not always be there” (Deka, 2024).

Methods and Procedures

The conceptual research design was employed in this study, as opposed to an empirical research design. It aimed primarily to integrate philosophical reflections and pedagogical actions into a cohesive conceptualization of contemplative pedagogy applicable in the teaching of the English language in Nepal. The research was conducted in a qualitative, conceptual study, which relied on theoretical discussions of philosophical and other scholarly literature to develop arguments and make recommendations for the classroom.

The study has employed two types of sources: classical Eastern philosophical texts, including the Bhagavad Gita, and Buddhist texts, along with other related meditation methods, were read to discern the principles underlying the guiding beliefs of mindfulness, self-reflection, and equanimity. The current academic materials, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and research articles in English language teaching, contemplative pedagogy, and psychology, provide a contemporary basis for correlating ancient philosophical values with contemporary classroom practice. It was achieved by determining the basic philosophical elements, researching the literature, and reviewing the current research on ELT through the thematic analysis, which led to the development of a conceptual framework comprising philosophical knowledge and pedagogical practices. The practices of this framework, which focus on classroom practice, include guided meditation, reflective journaling, mindful reading, and group work.

Such methodology is suitable since contemplative pedagogy is based on philosophical and reflective traditions, rather than purely empirical measurement, and conceptual analysis is an adequate direction for relating theory to classroom practice.

Pedagogical Applications

This section expands on the principles from the Bhagavad Gita and Buddhist philosophy to give a complete and extensive set of teaching approaches for promoting mindful, focused reading in EFL classrooms. These are all techniques for staying focused on what we are reading, coping with our emotions, and thinking critically about the material. They assist learners in overcoming the many mental and emotional setbacks that occur when reading literature that is not easily accessible and contains cultural references. Teachers can help students develop emotional strength and moral consciousness by educating them to be aware of their reading.

Mindfulness Exercises to Center Attention

Mindfulness activities are a brilliant and engaging practice that prepares individuals to become present and aware of what is happening in the moment. Breath awareness exercises, progressive muscular relaxation, and body scans are brief practices that enable students to transition from a distracted state, focused on something external to themselves, into one of focus and calmness. For example, a brief meditation lasting two to five minutes, which requires practitioners to emphasize the rhythmic cycle of their breathing, can help them relax and clear their minds in preparation for in-depth thinking (Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009).

The drills also allow students to learn how to become aware when their thoughts have wandered as well as how to bring their minds back to the reading activity calmly. It resembles the Bhagavad Gita, which speaks about a clear goal, and Buddhist Sati meditation. With constant practice of these means, control over attention, working memory, and stress resistance in a learner is also enhanced over time, which are important skills that enable students to be more accurate in longer or more taxing readings. These mindfulness pauses can be integrated into the classroom routine by teachers as a time at the start of the daily lesson, after selecting reading passages, or before an issue arises (Bodhi, 2016; Cheng & Singh, 2023).

Reflective Journals to Enhance Meta-Cognitive Awareness

Personal journaling is a great technique for fostering metacognition, the process of becoming aware of one's thoughts and emotions, as well as their management. During reading sessions in class and between sessions, students are asked to make brief remarks regarding their anticipation, what they did not understand, their feelings, and how their knowledge has changed. Not only does this approach keep students engaged in the learning process, but it is also what the Gita means by

vairagya, which is to see the issues without being overly judgmental or being attached to quick solutions (Al-Khresheh & Ben Ali, 2023; Cheng & Singh, 2023). They can use queries borrowed from ancient wisdom to guide them in writing their journal. For example, "What were my feelings about today's text? On what distractions did I have to focus, and how did I refocus?" Such regular self-reflection can help students gain a deeper understanding of themselves, develop stronger resilience skills, and adopt a growth mindset, which allows them to recognize problems as an inevitable part of progress (Gao, 2023).

Collaborative Learning and Group Discussions

Reading circles, peer feedback sessions, and group annotation projects are all collaborative learning activities that also allow students to feel safe enough to contribute their ideas, to grapple with uncertainty, and even to co-determine what something means. Such discussions create in students a desire to be more inquisitive and caring (*karuṇā*), and as a result, they support one another in understanding their thoughts and feelings (Huang, 2022; Fayerberger, 2023).

The group activities also provide students with essential social and emotional skills, like listening, expressing empathy, and resolving disagreements respectfully. These competencies support the concept of mindfulness, which contributes to the classroom becoming a domain where everyone feels heard and valued, and where students are taught how to work with uncertainty and complexity, both in texts and within themselves (Hoseini et al., 2023; Rui et al., 2025).

Individualized Learning Materials and Pathways

Svadharma, discussed in the Bhagavad Gita, means that everybody has their own path. Pedagogical differentiation is a response to a student's individual needs, interests, and goals, adapting the reading material and assignments accordingly. Intrinsic motivation and relevance are enhanced through the use of books of varying difficulty levels, employing stories that students can relate to in their culture, as well as allowing them to choose what they learn (Rui et al., 2025). For instance, providing students with a list of books related by theme, yet with different levels of language difficulty, allows them to choose novels that are challenging yet manageable. Incorporating multicultural books in the classroom will also teach the students more about different cultures and make them feel proud of their own (Fayerberger, 2023; Nazarieh, 2025).

Individuals' paths also facilitate independence and motivate them, reducing the tension that comes with different expectations. Teachers can assign various activities to the students to exercise their abilities, including writing, convening, or creating (Fan & Cui, 2024; Zhou & Zeilhofer, 2025).

Teacher Mindfulness Training and Professional Development

Mindfulness reading will never be effective and sustainable unless teachers also mindfully conduct their own lives. The theoretical and practical knowledge that teachers can obtain at professional development seminars includes mindfulness and reflective teaching, as well as ways of creating classrooms as safe emotional spaces (Hoseini et al., 2023).

Reflective teachers are thoughtful, open, and guided, and contribute to building classes in which inquiry, compassion, and endurance are fostered. They also need educators to share their problems, successes, and innovations in the peer support groups/reflective practice circles that meet regularly (Fayerberger, 2023; Huang, 2022). Teachers can become more aware of themselves and learn how they can support their students more effectively, avoid burnout, and start to enjoy the teaching experience (Cheng and Singh, 2023; Narayanan, 2021).

Institutional Support and Curriculum Integration

For contemplative pedagogy to be practised in schools, it must be supported systemically. Schools and municipal governments are incorporating mindfulness activities into their curricula and evaluation criteria, in addition to providing professional development programs by setting aside part of the classroom for mindfulness focus and including mindfulness fitness in evaluation criteria (Fan & Cui, 2024; Zhou & Zeilhofer, 2025). When schools and other institutions embark on the contemplative path, they move beyond the tunnel vision of single-person ideas and into the stream of leading teaching strategies, which yield a teaching/learning environment that fosters mental and emotional well-being, strength, and moral growth in students, teachers, and the broader community. The administrators, policymakers, teachers, and parents need to cooperate so that the support and resources necessary for the long-term implementation of functional can be provided to them (Fayerberger, 2023).

Conclusion

The paper explains how the Bhagavad Gita and Buddhist mindfulness practices can be applied to supplement EFL reading instruction. It enables a shift from result-oriented reading to mindful, observant reading, emphasizing detached action, mindful equanimity, present awareness, and the principles of insight meditation. The study highlights the significance of experience-based learning and the development of self-awareness, drawing on both empirical and philosophical studies.

It recommends that further studies be conducted to investigate the classroom efficacy of those strategies in non-homogeneous EFL contexts. When applied with

attention, mindfulness-based pedagogy can significantly enhance cognitive performance, language proficiency, resilience, critical thinking, and the humanistic development of learners.

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