

ABSTRACT

Muhammad Dava Hidayatullah, 2026. "INTEGRATING MINDFULNESS INTO EFL TEACHING: EVIDENCE FOR TEACHER DEVELOPMENT FROM AN INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP IN THAILAND" Thesis, English Education Study program, faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Muhammadiyah Bengkulu. Supervisor: Ria Angraini, M.Hum.

Teaching in a cross-cultural EFL context requires preservice teachers to respond to unfamiliar linguistic, cultural, and classroom situations. This study investigated how mindfulness was integrated into the teaching practices of Indonesian preservice EFL teachers during an international teaching internship in Thailand. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected from 11 participants through open-ended questionnaires and short classroom teaching videos during a four-month internship in Loei Province, Thailand. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis adapted from Naeem et al. (2024) through identifying, organizing, and interpreting recurring patterns. The findings revealed five interconnected analytical categories: classroom awareness, pedagogical responsiveness, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, and emotional regulation. Participants demonstrated mindfulness by attending to students' responses, adapting instruction to students' needs, maintaining supportive classroom conditions and interactions, and regulating their emotional responses. Overall, mindful teaching was manifested as an interconnected and context-sensitive process that supported participants in responding adaptively to cross-cultural EFL classroom situations.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Mindful Teaching, Preservice EFL Teachers, Cross-Cultural EFL Teaching, International Teaching Internship

ABSTRAK

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Mengajar dalam konteks EFL lintas budaya menuntut guru prajabatan untuk merespons situasi linguistik, budaya, dan kelas yang belum familiar. Penelitian ini menginvestigasi bagaimana mindfulness diintegrasikan ke dalam praktik mengajar guru EFL prajabatan Indonesia selama magang mengajar internasional di Thailand. Dengan menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari 11 partisipan melalui kuesioner terbuka dan video singkat pembelajaran selama magang empat bulan di Provinsi Loei, Thailand. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik yang diadaptasi dari Naeem et al. (2024) melalui proses mengidentifikasi, mengorganisasi, dan menginterpretasikan pola yang berulang. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan lima kategori analitis yang saling berkaitan: kesadaran kelas, responsivitas pedagogis, manajemen kelas, interaksi guru–siswa, dan regulasi emosi. Partisipan menunjukkan mindfulness dengan memperhatikan respons siswa, menyesuaikan pengajaran dengan kebutuhan siswa, mempertahankan kondisi dan interaksi kelas yang suportif, serta mengatur respons emosional mereka. Secara keseluruhan, mindful teaching termanifestasi sebagai proses yang saling berkaitan dan peka terhadap konteks yang mendukung partisipan dalam merespons situasi kelas EFL lintas budaya secara adaptif.

Kata kunci: mindfulness, mindful teaching, guru EFL prajabatan, pengajaran EFL lintas budaya, magang mengajar internasional.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the background and rationale of the study by discussing the importance of mindfulness in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching, particularly within the context of international teaching internships. It presents the research gap that forms the basis of the study and explains the objectives of the research. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the research questions, the limitations of the study, the significance of the study, and the operational definitions of the key terms used throughout the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

Contemporary education requires teachers not only to deliver academic content but also to manage diverse classrooms, support students' social and emotional development, and make immediate instructional decisions. These demands require attentiveness, emotional stability, flexibility, and responsiveness. Within this context, mindfulness has gained attention as a pedagogical competence that enables teachers to maintain present-moment awareness, observe classroom situations objectively, and respond thoughtfully rather than automatically (Hidajat et al., 2023; Barata-Gonçalves et al., 2025).

Mindfulness is particularly relevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching because language learning involves cognitive, emotional, and communicative challenges. Students may experience anxiety, fear of making mistakes, limited confidence, and communication difficulties that reduce classroom participation. Mindful teachers can recognize students' verbal and non-verbal responses and adjust their instruction through simplified explanations, visual support, repetition, interactive activities, or other appropriate strategies. Such responsiveness enables teachers to address students' immediate learning needs while maintaining positive classroom interaction (Jin et al., 2021; Huang, 2022).

Mindfulness also supports teachers in regulating their emotions when dealing with unexpected classroom situations, such as disruptive behaviour, communication barriers, or unsuccessful instructional activities. Previous studies indicate that mindfulness is associated with stronger emotional regulation, resilience, work engagement, and professional well-being while reducing stress and emotional exhaustion (Hidajat et al., 2023; Barata-Gonçalves et al., 2025). These competencies are especially important in multilingual and cross-cultural classrooms, where differences in language, educational culture, and classroom expectations require greater flexibility and intercultural sensitivity (S. Chen & Tang, 2024; G. Xu et al., 2026).

For preservice teachers, developing these competencies is an important part of professional preparation. They are still learning to translate pedagogical knowledge into authentic classroom practice while developing their professional identity, classroom management skills, and instructional confidence. This transition may involve uncertainty and emotional pressure. Mindfulness can support preservice teachers by strengthening self-awareness, emotional regulation, resilience, reflective decision-making, and professional motivation during their early teaching experiences (Zhu, 2022; Li & Lv, 2022).

These demands become more complex during international teaching internships, where preservice teachers must teach while simultaneously adapting to an unfamiliar linguistic, cultural, and educational environment. In the context of this study, Indonesian preservice EFL teachers teaching in Thailand encountered differences in language, classroom culture, communication styles, student behaviours, and educational expectations. These cross-cultural differences made familiar teaching assumptions and communication strategies not always directly applicable in the Thai classroom. Consequently, participants needed to pay closer attention to students' verbal and non-verbal responses, interpret unfamiliar classroom behaviours, adjust their instructional strategies, and manage their own responses to unexpected situations. This cross-cultural context therefore provides

an important setting for examining how mindfulness is manifested in actual teaching practice.

During the internship, linguistic differences became one of the most immediate cross-cultural challenges because English functioned as a foreign language for both the Indonesian preservice teachers and many Thai students. The participants could not always rely on their familiar linguistic and communicative practices when explaining materials or interpreting students' responses. Teachers therefore needed to use simplified English, gestures, visual materials, demonstrations, repetition, games, songs, and collaborative activities to facilitate understanding and participation. These situations required continuous attention to students' verbal and non-verbal responses and immediate pedagogical adjustment, illustrating how mindful teaching became particularly relevant within a multilingual and cross-cultural EFL classroom (Huang, 2022; G. Xu et al., 2026).

International teaching internships also provide opportunities for preservice teachers to connect theoretical knowledge with authentic classroom experience and develop professional identity and intercultural competence. Teaching in an unfamiliar environment encourages teachers to reflect on their instructional practices, communication strategies, and emotional responses while developing greater confidence, adaptability, and professional awareness. In this context, mindfulness can support preservice teachers in responding to classroom challenges as opportunities for reflection and professional learning (Alhebaishi, 2019; Wu & Qin, 2025).

Despite growing research on mindfulness in education, previous studies have primarily focused on psychological well-being, stress reduction, student engagement, or experienced teachers in domestic educational settings. Comparatively limited attention has been given to how mindfulness is enacted as a practical teaching competence by preservice EFL teachers who are simultaneously navigating linguistic, cultural, and educational differences during an international teaching internship. This gap is particularly important because cross-cultural

teaching requires preservice teachers not only to adapt instruction but also to interpret unfamiliar student responses, negotiate communication barriers, manage classroom differences, and regulate their own responses in situations that may differ from their previous teaching experiences. Therefore, qualitative evidence showing how mindfulness is manifested in the actual classroom practices of preservice EFL teachers within multilingual and cross-cultural settings remains limited (Braun et al., 2024; Wu & Qin, 2025).

To address this gap, the present study investigates how Indonesian preservice EFL teachers integrated mindfulness into their teaching practices during an international teaching internship in Thailand. The international and cross-cultural context is central to this investigation because participants were required to teach while navigating linguistic, cultural, communicative, and educational differences. Guided by the mindful teaching framework, the study examines five dimensions: classroom awareness, pedagogical responsiveness, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, and emotional regulation. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were obtained through open-ended questionnaires and short classroom video observations. The study therefore provides contextual evidence of how mindfulness was manifested in authentic multilingual and cross-cultural EFL teaching practices and contributes to the understanding of mindful teaching in preservice teacher development (Jennings et al., 2013; Wu & Qin, 2025).

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the research background and the identified research gap, this study focuses on the implementation of mindfulness in the teaching practices of Indonesian preservice EFL teachers during their international teaching internship in Thailand. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question:

How is mindfulness integrated into the teaching practices of Indonesian preservice EFL teachers during their international teaching internship in Thailand,

particularly in relation to classroom awareness, pedagogical responsiveness, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, and emotional regulation?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the research question, this study aims to investigate the implementation of mindfulness in the teaching practices of Indonesian preservice EFL teachers during their international teaching internship in Thailand. Accordingly, the objective of this study is:

To investigate how mindfulness is integrated into the teaching practices of Indonesian preservice EFL teachers during their international teaching internship in Thailand, particularly in relation to classroom awareness, pedagogical responsiveness, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, and emotional regulation.

1.4 Limitation of the Study

This study was limited to eleven Indonesian preservice EFL teachers from English Language Education programs who participated in a four-month international teaching internship in public schools in Loei Province, Thailand. Therefore, the findings represent the participants' teaching practices within this specific cross-cultural educational context and are not intended to be generalized to all preservice teachers, institutions, countries, or internship programs.

The study focused on five analytical categories of mindful teaching: classroom awareness, pedagogical responsiveness, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, and emotional regulation. These categories were developed for the present study with reference to the mindful teaching principles reflected in Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) theoretical framework. The study did not examine students' perceptions, learning outcomes, institutional policies, or long-term professional development after the internship. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the study relied primarily on open-ended questionnaire responses supported by short classroom video observations; consequently, the

findings should be interpreted within the scope, participants, and data sources of the present study.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the field of English language education, particularly in relation to mindful teaching and international teaching internships.

1. Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on mindful teaching by providing empirical evidence from Indonesian preservice EFL teachers participating in an international teaching internship in Thailand. While previous studies have largely focused on in-service teachers or domestic educational contexts, this study examines mindfulness in authentic multilingual and cross-cultural EFL classrooms. Drawing on the theoretical perspective of Jennings and Greenberg (2009), the study examines mindful teaching through five analytical categories developed for the present study: classroom awareness, pedagogical responsiveness, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, and emotional regulation.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, the findings may inform teacher education institutions, teacher educators, supervisors, preservice teachers, and future researchers. Teacher education institutions and supervisors may use the findings to strengthen preparation and mentoring for cross-cultural teaching and international internships. Preservice teachers may gain greater awareness of the importance of attentiveness, instructional flexibility, supportive interaction, classroom management, and emotional regulation during teaching practice. The study may also provide a reference for future research on mindful teaching in different educational contexts and populations.

1.6 Operational Definitions of Terms

To avoid ambiguity and ensure consistency throughout the study, the following key term is operationally defined as it is used in this research.

1. Mindfulness in Teaching

Mindfulness in teaching refers to teachers' awareness of present classroom experiences and their capacity to respond to students and classroom situations with attentiveness and emotional awareness. The concept is informed by Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) theoretical perspective on teachers' social and emotional competence and classroom outcomes, together with relevant literature on mindfulness in teaching (Song & He, 2021). In this study, mindfulness in teaching is examined through five analytical categories: classroom awareness, pedagogical responsiveness, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, and emotional regulation.

2. Preservice EFL Teachers

Preservice EFL teachers are undergraduate students in English Language Education programs who are preparing to become professional English teachers through teacher education and practicum experiences (Li & Lv, 2022; Zhu, 2022). In this study, the term refers to eleven Indonesian preservice EFL teachers who participated in an international teaching internship in Loei Province, Thailand.

3. International Teaching Internship

An international teaching internship is a structured teaching practicum conducted in an overseas educational institution where preservice teachers apply pedagogical knowledge and develop professional and intercultural competence through authentic classroom experience (Wu & Qin, 2025). In this study, it refers to the four-month internship conducted from June to September 2025 in public schools in Loei Province, Thailand.

4. Cross-cultural EFL Classroom

A cross-cultural EFL classroom is an English as a Foreign Language learning environment in which teachers and students have different cultural

and linguistic backgrounds while English is used for instruction (N. Wang, 2022). In this study, it refers to Thai public-school classrooms where Indonesian preservice EFL teachers conducted English lessons during the internship.

5. Mindful Teaching Practices

Mindful teaching practices refer to teaching behaviours involving attentional awareness, responsiveness to classroom situations, emotional regulation, and supportive teacher–student interaction, informed by the theoretical perspective of Jennings and Greenberg (2009) and relevant mindfulness literature (Huang, 2022). In this study, these practices were analyzed through five analytical categories: classroom awareness, pedagogical responsiveness, classroom management, teacher–student interaction, and emotional regulation.

