

# Mindful, Authentic, Strong Voice: Constructing A Mindfulness-Based Classroom Materials for EFL Poetry Learners

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**Abstract.** Constructing mindfulness-based learning in the pandemic of covid-19 is a strategy to overcome the learning crisis especially in EFL poetry context. Online learning has replaced offline learning which makes a big shift in the learning process. The crisis happens due to the different mediums of teaching. Mindfulness is needed in this shift. Mindfulness takes place when crisis of learning happens, also for teachers in both designing and creating a proper material for the learners especially in EFL poetry classroom. This study attempts to investigate the construction of poetry learning materials in EFL context to enable the learners explore their truest self, the voice that they own but never shared. The previous research done on mindfulness rarely talked about the development of material in the EFL poetry context. This research tries to give new insight on how to develop an EFL poetry mindfulness-based learning material. The mindfulness-based learning and narrative inquiry are applied to gain the best understanding of what is needed by the students in the EFL poetry classroom. The data are gained from the mindfulness-based intervention, narrative inquiry-based instrument, and poetry scoring rubrics to identify the invention of the language identity. The findings revealed that the materials should stimulate the learners to be: open to new things, flexible to context, flexible to wider point of views, and create something new.

**Keywords:** poetry writing, EFL poetry, mindfulness, narrative inquiry, language identity

## 1 Introduction

In the education field, mindfulness has been widely applied in the classroom. Since first introduced by Langer in 1989, mindfulness has become one of the ways to stimulate creative thoughts and works of art. Mindfulness is the enhanced awareness, a greater look at something new. It fulfills the idea of noticing novelty in everything, finding something different to look at,

having a closer perspective and at the same time deeper understanding of things. (Langer, 1989) [1] stated that the main idea of mindfulness is to notice something new in everything, which then expands the way of seeing things. Later (Langer, 2000) [2] (Langer, 2016) [3] developed four main principles of mindfulness; novelty seeking, perspectives building, context bounding, and producing. It creates a whole new point of view where there is a flexibility of thought, the growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset. Mindfulness is the new wave in education context since it starts the change of education point of view, from repetition to compassionate learning, from a mindless education to mindful one. When mindfulness is applied in EFL context, the learning has an ultimate goal to be more aware of four things; noticing something new, flexible point of view, appropriate to context, and creating new categories. (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) [4] supported that mindfulness enriches and refines the insights by adding more clarity of moment to moment experience. By implementing mindfulness, our awareness is activated and enhanced and refined everytime. According to (Nagata, 2002) [5], self-refinement is the result of self-awareness and lived experiences which are interactively exchanged. In relation to this, (Buttle, 2013) [6] convinced that mindfulness practice can make us more attentive to new habits instead of repeating the same habit, and in the context of research it can lead to richer data. (Brown, Ryan, and Creswell, 2007) [7] suggested that the nature and effects or influence of mindfulness should be explored more for a greater view of mindfulness research.

In the context of EFL especially, mindfulness is very relevant to be applied since it stimulates openness to something new, a flexible point of view, context-based thinking, and creative ideas of learning a new language. With mindfulness, language learning is not only for the learning itself but to find the true voice of the EFL learners. With mindfulness they express their ideas, their voice, their identity. Through poetry, they write their perspective of the world, the new thing, the context they live in, and create a new category.

Poetry is the medium of expression where it can represent the real and true voice of the poets, something that is rarely heard in real life. It enhances the way we look at things, the way we do and the way we react to something. Poetry brings about the new horizon in life, the new ideals that are born from individual perspectives. In the context of EFL, poetry becomes the voice of identity, the authentic point of view of EFL learners.

(Hanauer, 2012) [8] found that EFL poetry learning is a practice of meaningful literacy because when you write your own experience in a second language, you find a new perspective, a new point of view that enriches the previous one. There is a new meaning created in it. There is a freedom of choice in using the new language and therefore it can enrich the perspective in the new language. (Langer, 2016) [3] also found that when freedom of choice is given to the learners, they learned to be mindful and learned to be better observers. (Piscayanti, Ratminingsih and Utami, 2020) [9] made a research on how mindfulness could make learners write EFL poetry based on their own story of life. (Skelly and Estrada-Chichon, 2021) [10] found mindfulness as a coping strategy in EFL learning as to make a great improvement in EFL achievements as a result of reduced stress and anxiety in learning.

However not many researches show how mindfulness based learning materials are developed and structured. Therefore this research aims to show how mindfulness based material could be developed and structured, as expected to give benefit to improve learners' quality in writing EFL poetry. This research will look at deeper on how materials are structured, composed, and developed. Through the mindfulness process which stimulates the ability to see novelty in everything, to look at things from different points of view, creating a context where ideas are born, and creating something new.

The novelty of this study is that it explores more on how authentic and mindful teaching materials can be arranged, structured, and produced based on mindfulness-based approach and narrative inquiry. Authentic materials are those which are composed based on originality of the students' works, unique, different, and new.

## 2 Methods

The methods of this research are qualitative research methods with mindfulness-based intervention and narrative inquiry. Mindfulness-based intervention was done to explore the students' experience and stories behind them. It is to stimulate their power to share their stories. Then, through narrative inquiry, the stories are interpreted and analyzed because this is the way how the data is gained through narratives, the knowledge from which the invention of new knowledge is born. The subjects are 15 EFL learners who have undergone mindfulness-based intervention. The procedure is as follows. First, mindfulness-based intervention is applied to EFL poetry class. In the class, mindfulness practice is applied to gain their perspective of poetry, the novelty they see in everything, the context they build to face the challenges, and the creative solution that could help them invent themselves. The instruments used are interview guide, mindful journal, and poetry rubrics. The data is analyzed using descriptive qualitative approach and triangulation was used to cross check the learners' data and the authentic process they undergo in mindfulness intervention. From series of interviews, journals, and poetry data, it was revealed that mindfulness make the learners more aware of their surroundings and especially to themselves. From the interview, it was also revealed that the students need contextual issue that is relevant to their issues, that is to grow their mindful ideas, to develop their language productivity, and to enhance their creativity. From the result of the data collection, there are four things that are found here which are the core of mindfulness elements; first that the learning material should encourage learners to open to new things, flexible to context, flexible point of view, and produce new things.

## 3 Discussion

The first finding in this research is that the material should encourage learners to open to new things. Based on the interview with one of the students (Adisaptha, interview on March 10, 2022), it was revealed that mindfulness open up his minds on his memory of finding himself as the one who has trauma of people wearing masks. He does not trust masks and people behind it. He defines his trauma as a long term trauma, but with mindfulness, it can be reduced and decreased since he accepted that as a past and redefining it with other forms of creativity. Therefore the mindfulness based learning material should empower learners to embrace their truest self and refine their past as a moment to be more open to new version of self. The material could be arranged as relaxing, embracing, and calming. One of the instruction given could be as follows.

*Good morning students. Thanks for joining this class. Today we will be learning with mindful state. Now, breathe in. Breathe out. Please repeat. Breathe in, breathe out. Slowly close your eyes. Be mindful. Be open to your mind. Imagine one peaceful place and find yourself there. Be open to the surrounding and get inspired. Find something you haven't*

*seen before, imagine something you want to see. Embrace yourself and get into the peace, observe what your five senses can feel.*

Next the activity can be about time transition, where they were, where they are, where they are going, where they think they will be. The instructions can be done as follows.

This can be considered as the whilst-activity.

*Let us begin with breathing exercise, breathe in, breathe out. Breathe in, breathe out. Now put yourself in the past, allow stories in the past to be the part of your story today. Think mindfully. What has been changed. How was it changed. Now how do you want it to change.*

*You can tell stories about the now. Your experience, your feeling, your ideas. How do you see it different.*

*You can tell stories about the future too. How do you see the future. How do you think your now contribute to your future and how do you think you can make it.*

*Now share your perspective about past, present, and future. Imagine you are somewhere in between. What will you do and how do you want it to believe it can change you now.*

From this activity, mindfulness will be stimulated and they will constantly think about the enhanced awareness about many things. They will be more sensitive, flexible, contextual, and productive.

The second finding is that the mindfulness based learning material should appropriate to the context. The following poetry is one of the findings that could best represent real context, which means in the learner's context.

This is the authentic poetry materials written by learners. Authentic poetry in this context means poetry that is written by the learners in EFL poetry classroom. The examples of EFL poetry written by learners are as follows.

### **Poetry 1**

My Brother

By Emilia

Behind the window I see the eyes of a very beautiful brother  
But silence obscures me and the door of my heart begins to open  
On the way, a brother when he is sleepy just says "I am sleepy"  
Like the sun that has begun to twilight, it chooses to sink and becomes a quiet night  
It's a brother's job if you are sleepy then don't get sleepy  
Like the sun that begins to twilight and begins to sink, it must turn into the moon that  
illuminates the night

The next duty of an older sister is to become the backbone of a family  
Like a wooden branch that is starting to grow and is ready to support the leaves and the birds  
The next duty of an older brother is to become a priest when Father is far overseas  
Suppressing the lonely longing in a faceless house

The exercise that can be discussed is about the followings.

1. Why does the poet write about her younger brother?
2. What does the poetry mean for the poet?
3. How does the brother make the poet happy?
4. What are the ideas behind this poetry?

Next poetry is as follows.

## Poetry 2

God's Blessings

By Wirantini

People state that life is like a wheel.  
Sometimes it paints the town red  
Sometimes a dump in the throat.  
Whether you are prepared or not  
Either be pleased or hurt  
You should come with grips  
Grapple with the many storms of life.  
You live with faith.  
In an overcast sky, there is a silver lining.  
You'll find an effulgence in the blackness.  
People will either keep abreast or shove you off.  
Even if you make an obtuse verdict  
God's remission could accompany you.  
Storms will turn you into a herculean.  
Trust your heart  
Distribute your vibrancy with bells on.  
God's compassion will always hug you.

The discussion could be:

1. How is this poetry meaningful to you?
2. What point of view that you have after reading this poetry?
3. How can this poetry make you aware of yourself better?
4. How do you think you can write other poetry that responds this poetry?

The post activity that can be done after the pre-activity and whilst activity. It can be in form of reflection, as it can cover many questions such as follows.

1. What can you learn from the poetry that you have read?
2. How can you widen and deepen your perspective after reading the poetry?
3. How can you write a poetry as a response of your own experience?
4. How far poetry can represent your voice?

Third finding of this research is that the learning material should stimulate flexible point of views. In this research, narrative inquiry based material is used to gain flexible point of views. Narrative inquiry is the way we find stories on our own. On the road to the discovery of narrative, this instrument is used to explore the narrative of EFL learners. Narrative inquiry is the best way to represent identity. In this context, poetry is identity and narrative inquiry opens the door for the identity to be heard. Bryne stated that the idea of narrative to explain factors of identity and representation is still contested. However in the context of poetry, poetry is the expression of identity (Byrne, 2015) [11]. Furthermore, mindfulness and narrative inquiry together can create better awareness and awakening processes in learning (Wang et al., 2017) [12].

In this following instrument, a narrative-mindful journal is aimed at exploring the stories from the past, present, and future. It is a mindfulness-based narrative that shapes the new perspective of the learners. In the aspect of language, language creativity and language invention are two things that are born from this mindful journal. According to (Wang and Liu, 2016) [13] through mindfulness, the voice of identity is revealed and it benefits the language learner in the context of language creativity and invention.

**Table 1.** Narrative Mindful Journal

Data	Narrative-Mindful Journal			
Moments	Past	Present	Future	Poetic moments
Contents	Stories from the past	Stories from the present	Stories for the future	Poetic moments captured
Language	Specific language memory	Language creativity	Language invention	Figurative language found

Then after the journal has been written, the stories have been told, poetry comes into existence. Poetry is an expression of verbal art. In the context of EFL poetry, using poetry in a foreign language classroom is also done by (Titus, 2017) [14]. He found that the benefit of writing poetry in foreign language is that it can stimulate motivation of learners to learn about language especially grammar and vocabulary in context and culture.

Poetry in the context of culture, is the identity of society in which it represents the voice of society (Gustafson, 2005) [15]. Considering that view, poetry is not merely a product of writing however it is a portrait of the feeling of society. It is the representation of the society emotions. It is the language of the society. In this context, poetry should be written with some creative process. The process of writing poetry can be done through stages as Hanauer's principles in EFL writing principles (2012) [8] as follows

1. Personal experience writing – here poetry is used to express personal stories, personal feelings, and memories as it can create self-context culture
2. Feeling writing – here poetry is used to express emotional state and exploring the voice of identity
3. Personal insight – here poetry is used to convey personal meaning construction, personal ideas and issues
4. Authentic public access – here poetry can be seen by public as it can give inspiration to others.

Last finding of this research is that the instrument should stimulate new creation. The learning material that is suitable is the poetry rubrics that assesses all the elements of good poetry. There are many elements of poetry including figurative languages of poetry that should be considered while writing poetry namely denotation and connotation, imagery, symbol, allegory, allusion, tone, rhythm and meter (Perrine, 1982) [16]. The higher the creativity of learners the better poetry will be. The implementation of mindful and creative learning of EFL poetry has been done by (Piscayanti and Utami, 2020) [17], in which the learning employs a mindfulness stage of creative writing process, reflection, and revision until the poetry is finalized. There are some elements of poetry that should be considered in the creative writing process and should be carefully examined through rubrics as follows.

**Table 2.** Elements of poetry rubrics

Elements of Poetry	Elements of Mindfulness Principles			
	Scoring (20-25) for each element			
	Novelty	New Point of View	Contextual	Produce new category
Ideas				
Words				
Lines				
Stanza				

Figurative languages				
Language invention				

From the table above it can be seen that each element is assessed by the mindfulness principles. It is to show that every aspect of an element should be mindfully measured to make sure that they are novel, flexible, contextual, and create something new.

From those elements and process it is expected that the EFL learners gain understanding of how important is mindfulness in writing process, to stimulate creativity and productivity. By having the courage to find something novel and create something new EFL learners are able to not only making meaning but also making new understanding of the world. (Shapiro, 2001) [18] found that poetry and mindfulness together are medicines of learning since the learners are the creator of knowledge. (Davenport and Pagnini, 2016) [19] also support this by saying that with diversified point of views the language learners can face the world with many possibilities. They are ready to face changes, adaptive, and survived.

#### 4 Conclusion

Mindfulness-based classroom materials are developed through mindfulness-based intervention. It creates mindful, rich and authentic materials that are engaging, involving, and stimulating EFL learners to be more creative, productive, and positive. With mindful material they are exposed to natural and organic process to be a poet, a soul with identity that is rarely heard, the identity that strongly attached to them through EFL poetry writing. From this research we can learn that mindfulness-based learning material could stimulate openness, flexibility to context, flexibility to point of views, and productivity. However, more research could be done further to explore more possibilities of implementing mindfulness in different context of EFL learning.

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