

Guided Meditation and Vocabulary Acquisition in the English Language Classroom: A Case Study

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Introduction

Over thousands of years in ancient India, China, Japan and Korea, meditative practices have existed in different cultures of those countries (Johnson, 1986; Wynn, 2007). Their practices and techniques have varied due to diverse purposes to pursue their religious beliefs in general life. The followers of Hinduism and Buddhism ‘meditation’ incorporated in day-to-day life to purify their thoughts from external disturbances. Especially in Buddhist Philosophy, there are two major meditation practices, such as Samatha and Vipassana. The practice of Vipassana meditation leads to purify one’s mind, liberating from all defilements leading to the ultimate goal of Nibbana. Modern mindfulness meditation is derived from insight (Vipassana) meditation, which seeks insight into the true nature of reality (Swanson, 2024).

At present, many researches have drawn their attention to explore how to reduce second language learners’ mental distractions, anxiety and stress in the language classroom. In the presence of the class, students feel many things due to using social media, sophisticated technological devices, having much work in class, diverse extra-curricular activities, extraordinary homework and facing a lot of family and personal issues. Hence, these disturbances have affected students’ minds to get stressed, and cause negative behavioural changes rather studying and concentrating towards the teacher in the class.

Neuroscientists have investigated that when one’s mind is relaxed, the brain can absorb information and retain memory. Hence, one can improve his or her memory and attention. Swanson (2024) identifies three benefits of meditation practices incorporated into the brain: (a) Cognition and memory: meditation improves attention regulation, problem-solving and working memory (b) Performance: a side effect of meditation is better work and sport performance – often beyond what people imagine (c) Creativity: meditation enhances creative thinking and problem-solving.

Based on the above scientific studies and research findings, the researcher drew his attention to investigate how well guided meditation affects students in learning English vocabulary as second language learners.

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Research Questions

1. Why is it difficult for L2 learners to acquire English vocabulary?
2. How does guided meditation affect English vocabulary acquisition in L2 learners?
3. How effective is guided meditation in facilitating English vocabulary acquisition among L2 learners?

Significance of the Study

The research explores how second language learners' distractions, anxiety, stress and personal disturbances are overcome and focuses on studies across mindfulness meditation in the class. The guided meditation will be applied to acquire English vocabulary and enhance students' skills further. Through practising guided meditation, all peers can preserve their cooperation, rapport and teamwork where they work together in a school environment. The findings may assist English language teachers in integrating guided meditation into vocabulary instruction.

Further, the researcher expects that the research will benefit for L2 learners to learn vocabulary without any hesitation to improve their English language.

Objectives

1. To explore the extent to which L2 learners encounter difficulties acquiring English vocabulary.
2. To examine the effectiveness of guided meditation for L2 learners' acquisition of English vocabulary.
3. To examine appropriate methods for facilitating English vocabulary acquisition among L2 learners.

Methodology

The research utilized the qualitative research method and the instruments used to collect data were interviews, questionnaires and observations.

Research Area

The research was carried out with the grade ten students who studied at Sri Dewananda Sunday Dhamma School in Sri Sudarshanarama Maha Viharaya, Dodamgoda, Kalutara-South.

Sources of Data

1. Primary Sources

Primary data were obtained through a combination of the following techniques, such as interviews, questionnaires and observations.

As the primary sources of this research 36 students (males and females) have been selected from those who studied in the second and third terms of the year 2025 at Sri Dewananda Sunday Dhamma School.

2. Secondary Sources

For the secondary data, information was collected from both printed and electronic sources such as books, journals, research studies, the internet, websites, online materials and e-journals. Special attention was drawn to literature reviews in research studies to gather information about the research.

Participants

The participants of the research were 36 students (males and females) who studied in the second and third terms of the year 2025 at Sri Dewananda Sunday Dhamma School. Those students were the age of 15 from non-English speaking backgrounds and their first language was Sinhala.

Tools of Data Collection

Interview Technique

Selected sample students were interviewed and given a questionnaire to gather data relating to the research. The semi-structured interview was carried out by the researcher with the help of two teachers in the classrooms and the questionnaire was examined by the researcher in his free time.

Case Study

Following the case study methods, data were gathered from semi-structured interviews, direct observations and documentary evidence and maintained a chain of evidence.

Method of Data Analysis

Krashen's (1982) 'low affective filter' theory was involved to identify students' stress, personal and classroom anxiety. At the beginning of the class, mindfulness meditation was conducted to tame the students' thoughts to focus on classroom activities and remember information.

Teacher conducts the following steps (Jenkins, 2015) before starting the meditation: Choosing a word (happiness) along with its definition, producing several example sentences including the selected word, using the board, using a picture to introduce the focus word, playing a piece of relaxing music (ocean waves), reading out the word loudly with its definition and sentences with students, using a spoken script to guide the students into meditation.

Results and Discussion

For the research, 36 students participated voluntarily from three parallel classes. They have been practising meditation since their Dhamma school enrolment, and from time to time they have meditated in their school settings across special programs. According to the attendance of students, 34 attained to their class daily before time and they were very enthusiastic to participate in the class to learn English vocabulary through guided meditation. Those students revealed that it was a great opportunity for them to learn English and concentrate their thoughts towards other subjects daily. 2 students did not attend their classes regularly, and they did not face the interview.

As students revealed that they were reluctant to memorise English words since their childhood. Hence, syllables of words were also difficult for them to keep in mind, and they had a lot of issues in writing. The majority of students told how well they learned and studied vocabulary that they forgotten them instantly. 32 students explained that they did not have sufficient time to read additional English texts or other sources during their busy schedule.

Except 2 students, the rest showed their willingness, positive views and progress pertaining to learning the English vocabulary through guided meditation in the class. 33 students revealed they can easily remember English words and their meanings with some pictures. As most learners 33 mentioned, that they made it easy to remember the focused word by using several example sentences. Some students happily said that practising in guided meditation led them to study other subjects fruitfully and peacefully in school and in their homes. 30 students revealed that as a result of practising meditation, they were able to maintain rapport and cooperation among friends to engage in class activities and in extra-curricular activities effectively.

According to 31 students' views, they have explored that they were able to acquire English vocabulary through the guided meditation instructions and the way of practice. Only 3 students said that it was difficult for them to follow the meditation instructions in English. 23 students suggested that they can apply these meditation techniques to study unfamiliar words in other subjects too. Both 4 male students and female students said that the method of guided meditation

was a bit time-consuming work, and it took them a considerable time to learn about a single word.

Conclusion

Buddhist meditation can be applied in every task of human life to work peacefully and it greatly helps to control one's stress, anxiety, depression, anger and mental distractions. By taming thoughts through practising meditation, every student can maintain the rapport and cooperation as he or she studies together in their respective classroom. Especially, in students' life span they can engage in mindfulness meditation to control their thoughts from external disturbances and focus the mind towards the lesson at the beginning of class. While guided meditation can be used in the process of learning to reinforce English vocabulary whatever they read in books or other materials. In brief, students felt happy and acknowledged the teacher for encouraging them towards practicing guided meditation to enhance their vocabulary acquisition related to English and other subjects.

Keywords - English Language Classroom, Guided Meditation, Mindfulness Meditation, Second Language Learner, Vocabulary Acquisition

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