

Teaching English in A Digital World: Mindful, Meaningful, and Joyful Learning

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly reshaped English Language Teaching (ELT), presenting both pedagogical opportunities and challenges related to learner engagement, attention, and well-being. While digital tools enhance access and interactivity, demanding educators to innovate pedagogical approaches. They also risk cognitive overload and emotional disengagement if not pedagogically grounded. This study aims to examine how mindfulness-informed digital pedagogy can support meaningful, joyful, and holistic learning in ELT. This paper employs a systematic literature review drawing on peer-reviewed 2018-2025 in the fields of digital pedagogy, mindfulness in education, and English language teaching (ELT). The review focuses on three thematic areas: (1) the role of mindfulness in sustaining attention and emotional regulation in digital environments; (2) instructional strategies that promote meaningful learning and reduce cognitive overload; and (3) digital tool and classroom designs that cultivate joy, motivation, and supports holistic student development in the digital era. The findings offer insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to reimagine English language education as a transformative process for nurturing well-being, engagement, and lifelong learning.

Keywords: *digital learning, English language teaching, joyful, meaningful, mindful.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has reshaped virtually every aspect of human life, including educational systems and language learning environments. The transformation of learning environments and reshaped the pedagogical landscape of English Language Teaching (ELT) has undergone a major transformation as digital platforms increasingly mediate communication, interaction, and instruction. Digital platforms such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), AI powered applications, video-based learning tools, and virtual collaborative spaces offer increased accessibility and flexibility (Hockly, 2018). Nevertheless, the shift to digital learning also introduces challenges such as digital fatigue, increased cognitive load, shortened attention span, and reduces emotional connection among learners (Pegrum, 2020).

A shift from traditional classroom-based learning hybrid and fully online formats has opened opportunities for flexible, personalized, and accessible learning. At the same time, digital learning introduces challenges such as fatigue, multitasking, cognitive overload, reduced social presence, and declining learner motivation (Rahimi

and Fathi, 2021). Digital platforms, artificial intelligence (AI), mobile assisted language learning (MALL), and multimodal learning environments have redefined how learners access, interact with, and internalize linguistic content. These transformations create opportunities for more flexible, interactive, and engaging instruction, yet they simultaneously present new challenges related to cognitive overload, digital distraction, superficial engagement, and emotional fatigue. In response to these emerging issues, current pedagogical discussions emphasize the need to integrate human centered approaches that not only leverage digital innovation but also foster well-being, deeper learning, and positive learning experiences. Within this context, the concepts of mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning become increasingly important for sustaining high-quality English language education in a digital world.

From a theoretical perspective, the integration of mindfulness in education draws from the work of scholars such as Kabat-Zinn (2003), Jennings (2015), and Shapiro et al. (2020), who argue that mindfulness improves attention regulation, emotional balance, and cognitive clarity. In digital environments that are highly saturated with distractions, mindfulness can serve as a pedagogical anchor that allows learners to stay present and engaged during online English learning activities. Meaningful learning, based on Jonassen's (2000) constructivist theory, emphasizes active knowledge construction, conceptual integration, and personal relevance. This concept aligns well with digital pedagogical approaches that encourage authentic communication tasks, problem-based activities, and multimodal meaning-making processes. Meanwhile, joyful learning is grounded in positive psychology, particularly the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which highlights how positive emotions enhance motivation, creativity, and resilience. In digital English language teaching (ELT), joyful learning can emerge from gamification, collaborative digital storytelling, interactive multimedia, and community-building platforms that promote social presence.

Although each of these three constructs—mindfulness, meaningfulness, and joy—has been widely explored in the field of education, there remains a lack of integrated studies that examine how they collectively support digital ELT environments. Furthermore, existing technological integration frameworks such as TPACK (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) and SAMR (Puentedura, 2013) primarily focus on pedagogical-technical alignment, but do not explicitly address learners' emotional and cognitive well-being. As a result, there is a theoretical gap regarding how digital English teaching can be designed to promote not only linguistic competence but also human-centered learning experiences that nurture focus, relevance, and enjoyment. Addressing this gap is essential to ensure that English learning in the digital era remains sustainable, learner-oriented, and psychologically supportive.

To contextualize the development of digital ELT research, Table 1 presents a selection of representative publications from 2018 to 2025. These studies highlight

major themes such as digital literacy, multimodal learning, AI-based instruction, hybrid classrooms, and learner engagement strategies. The growing diversity of research focus areas illustrates the dynamic evolution of the field and reinforces the urgency of examining pedagogical principles that align with current technological trends. The design of targeted professional development programs and underscore the need for policy frameworks that recognize the teacher as a central agent of peace-building in educational settings (Gifari et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, scholar argue for more holistic pedagogical approach that humanizes digital learning through the integration of mindfulness, meaningful learning, and joyful learning (Mercer and Gregersen, 2020). These three components support learners' emotional well-being, enhance cognitive engagement, and foster intrinsic motivation factors crucial for effective learning in digital ELT contexts. Mindfulness helps learners sustain attention, regulate screen-induced stress, and remain emotionally grounded (Shapiro, 2020). Meaningful learning ensures learners connect new content to prior knowledge and real-world contexts (Jonassen, 2000). Joyful learning contributes to positive emotions that broaden cognitive and creative capacities (Fredrickson, 2001). However, although each concept has been explored individually, fewer studies integrate these three constructs within ELT settings. Digital transformation in education is like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, technology brings opportunities to radically improve education systems. On the other hand, challenges related to access gaps, technological literacy, and ethics need to be addressed to maximize the benefits of this technology (Najmudin et al., 2025)

The review focuses on three thematic areas: (1) the role of mindfulness in sustaining attention and emotional regulation in digital environments; (2) instructional strategies that promote meaningful learning and reduce cognitive overload; and (3) digital tool and classroom designs that cultivate joy, motivation, and supports holistic student development in the digital era. By achieving these objectives, the study is expected to contribute valuable insights into human centered digital pedagogy and support the professional development of English teachers globally. It provides a theoretical foundation and practical guidance for designing digital English learning that is not only technologically enriched but also mindful, meaningful, and joyful. In the long run, the development of such pedagogical approaches has the potential to foster sustainable learner engagement, enhance learning outcomes, and promote emotional well-being in increasingly digitalized educational environments.

To address these challenges, educators increasingly integrate mindfulness, meaningful learning, and joyful learning into ELT. Mindfulness enhances learners' emotional regulation and focus, meaningful learning fosters deep understanding, and joyful learning supports intrinsic motivation and positive engagement. Although their importance, research integrating these three components within ELT in digital settings

remains limited. The important of teaching English in a digital world through mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning is the transformative process for naturing well-being, engagement, and lifelong learning.

2. METHODOLOGY

The roadmap that guides the plan researchers in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the information to answer the research reliably. The methodology includes detailed procedures for data collection, sampling techniques, data resources, characteristics of the reviewed studies, instruments used for analysis, and the analytical techniques applied. The SLR approach allows for a comprehensive, replicable, and transparent process of identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing research findings published between 2018 and 2025.

This study adopts a post-positivist research paradigm situated within a socio-educational perspective, recognizing that pedagogical knowledge is socially constructed yet can be systematically examined through rigorous and transparent procedures. Rather than seeking causal generalizations, the study aims to generate analytical generalizations by identifying recurring patterns, concepts, and pedagogical principles across empirical and conceptual literature. This epistemological stance is particularly appropriate for exploring mindfulness-informed digital pedagogy in English Language Teaching (ELT), a field characterized by contextual variability, learner diversity, and evolving technological practices. Accordingly, the study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the SALSAs framework (Search, Appraisal, Synthesis, and Analysis), which is widely used in education and social science research for theory-driven and thematic inquiry.

Search Strategy is a comprehensive and systematic search was conducted to identify peer-reviewed studies published between 2018 and 2025, reflecting recent developments in digital pedagogy and mindfulness-informed education. The search covered major academic databases commonly recognized by Scopus and Web of Science (WoS)-indexed journals, including scopus, Web of Science Core Collection, ERIC, and Goosle Scholar (for supplementary screening).

Appraisal (inclusion and exclusion criteria) is the Following the initial identification, studies were appraised using explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and methodological rigor. Inclusion criteria consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, published between 2018 and 2025, focus on ELT/EFL/ESL contexts, address mindfulness, learner well-being, meaningful learning, or joyful digital pedagogy, and employ qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, or conceptual approaches. Moreover, the exclusion criteria consist of conference proceedings, book reviews, editorials, and dissertations, studies unrelated to language education, articles lacking pedagogical or educational implications, and purely technical studies without

learning or teaching dimensions. Quality appraisal emphasized conceptual clarity, methodological transparency, and relevance to educational practice, consistent with Scopus/WoS expectations.

Synthesis is selected studies were subjected to thematic synthesis. Data extraction focused on research context and educational setting, theoretical frameworks (e.g., mindfulness, cognitive load theory, meaningful learning), pedagogical strategies and instructional designs, and reported outcomes related to engagement, emotion regulation, and learner well-being. Through iterative coding and comparison, recurring concepts and patterns were clustered into three overarching thematic categories, those are mindfulness and attention/emotional regulation in digital ELT environments, instructional strategies fostering meaningful learning and reducing cognitive overload, and digital tools and learning designs promoting joy, motivation, and holistic development.

Analysis is the final analytical stage involved interpretive and comparative analysis, aligning synthesized themes with broader socio-educational and post-positivist perspectives. Rather than aggregating effect sizes, the analysis sought to explain *how* and *why* mindfulness-informed digital practices function in ELT, identify pedagogical affordances and constraints across contexts, generate integrative insights for curriculum design, teacher education, and policy

This analytical approach strengthens the study's theoretical contribution while maintaining methodological transparency.

2.1. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative research approach using a systematic literature review design. This design is appropriate for identifying patterns, themes, and conceptual relationships across a body of published literature and for generating a theoretically grounded synthesis of pedagogical frameworks relevant to digital ELT. The systematic review followed four major stages: (1) identification of relevant studies, (2) screening and eligibility filtering, (3) quality appraisal and data extraction, and (4) thematic synthesis.

The identification stage involved structured searches across several academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), ERIC, and Google Scholar. The keywords used combined three conceptual clusters: (a) mindfulness (e.g., “mindfulness in education”, “attentional regulation”), (b) meaningful learning (e.g., “constructivist digital learning”, “deep learning in ELT”), and (c) joyful learning (e.g., “positive emotions”, “gamification”, “digital engagement”). The screening stage involved removing duplicates and excluding non-academic sources such as websites, editorials, and essays. Articles that did not focus on digital contexts or English language teaching

were also excluded. Only peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters published in English between 2018 and 2025 were considered.

This study adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) approach. Following guidelines by Kitchenham (2004), the review involved structured procedures of identifying, selecting, and synthesizing relevant academic publications on digital pedagogy through ELT, mindfulness, meaningful learning, and joyful learning. The SLR design was chosen because the research aims not to test hypotheses but to consolidate and interpret existing scholarship, identify research gaps, and generate pedagogical recommendation.

2.2. Participants of the Study

In an SLR, the participants are the sources of data academic publications themselves. Because this research is a literature review, the participants are the selected academic sources, not individuals. This review analyzed 65 peer-reviewed journal articles, 12 book chapters, 7 conference proceedings, and 4 systematic reviews Those are published between 2018-2025. The primary focus on recent digital pedagogy scholarship and several foundational works (e.g., Jonassen, 2000; Fredrickson, 2001). Those are including empirical studies in digital ELT, theoretical papers on mindfulness and learning psychology, book chapters on positive education, and systematic reviews on technology-enhanced learning.

2.3. Instruments

The key instrument was a Literature Review Matrix, which coded each study based on authors and year, research focus and themes, methodology used, and pedagogical implications for ELT.

The extraction matrix was created in a spreadsheet and was piloted using five randomly selected articles to ensure clarity, reliability, and consistency. The pilot test verified that all categories could be applied uniformly across studies; adjustments were made to include two additional columns: “theoretical basis” and “technology type” to enrich the depth of analysis.

2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

Describe how the data was analyzed in the study. Describe how the data was analyzed in the study. Describe how the data was analyzed in the study.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Those were including the initial coding of concepts related to mindfulness, meaningful learning, joyful learning, and digital pedagogy. Then, organization into thematic categories, cross-theme synthesis to identify connections across studies, and derivation of pedagogical principles relevant to ELT practitioners.

The data analysis process involved several stages, beginning with data organization through the extraction matrix, followed by coding, theme generation, and interpretative synthesis. Thematic analysis was employed as the primary analytical technique because it allows the identification of recurring patterns and relationships across diverse studies.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

The article conducts a systematic literature review (SLR) to synthesize pedagogical strategies and frameworks that support mindful, meaningful, and joyful English learning in digital era. Moreover, it is the key publications between 2018-2025 to synthesize best practice for cultivating mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning in digital English classrooms. The goal is not only to provide theoretical insight but also to purpose practical strategies aligned with technology enhanced pedagogy. It is in support of the English language education as a transformative process for naturing well-being, engagement, and lifelong learning.

The background and theoretical foundations above lead to several key problems addressed in this study. First, there is limited understanding of how mindfulness can be operationalized in digital English learning activities to reduce cognitive overload and enhance attention. Second, there is a need to identify effective strategies for fostering meaningful learning in technology enhanced ELT settings, especially when learners interact through multimodal texts and digital platforms. Third, despite the increasing availability of engaging digital tools, it remains unclear how joyful learning can be systematically incorporated into English instruction without compromising academic rigor. Finally, there is insufficient theoretical integration that connects these three dimensions mindful, meaningful, and joyful learning into a holistic pedagogical model suitable for the digital era.

To solve these problems, the present study proposes a systematic literature review that synthesizes empirical and conceptual research to examine the integration of mindfulness, meaningful learning, and joyful learning in digital English teaching. The review draws on publications indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar from 2018 to 2025. Through a structured selection and evaluation process, thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring patterns, pedagogical strategies, theoretical implications, and potential frameworks for implementation.

The Human centered digital ELT model illustrated in Figure 1 emphasizes the integration of three essential learning dimensions Mindfulness, Joyful Learning, and Meaningful Learning as the foundation for effective English language teaching in digital environments. Each dimension represents a core human need in learning, and their interplay creates a holistic approach that acknowledges learners' emotional, cognitive,

and motivational states. Rather than viewing digital learning merely as a technological process, this model positions the learner at the center, ensuring that pedagogical design supports well-being, engagement, and long-term development.

The first dimension, Mindfulness, focuses on cultivating learners' awareness, attention, and emotional balance during learning activities. In digital spaces where distractions are abundant, the ability to maintain concentration and regulate emotions becomes a critical factor for academic success. Mindfulness contributes to a stable psychological environment in which learners can process information more effectively, respond calmly to challenges, and sustain their focus throughout various tasks.

The second dimension, Joyful Learning, highlights the importance of positive emotions and intrinsic motivation in shaping learners' experiences. Joyful Learning acknowledges that students perform better when they feel enthusiastic, curious, and emotionally invested in the learning process. Through interactive digital tools, gamified activities, and supportive learning communities, this dimension strengthens learners' motivation and fosters an enjoyable atmosphere that enhances participation and persistence.

The third dimension, Meaningful Learning, ensures that classroom activities and digital materials are relevant, authentic, and deeply connected to learners' real-life experiences and goals. Meaningful Learning encourages deeper engagement by promoting critical thinking, contextual understanding, and purposeful use of language. When learners perceive tasks as useful and connected to their personal or professional lives, they are more likely to develop long-lasting competencies and engage in higher-order thinking.

At the intersection of these three dimensions lies Lifelong Learning, the ultimate goal of the model. Lifelong Learning emerges when students experience learning as enjoyable, relevant, and emotionally balanced. It reflects the development of learners who not only acquire language skills but also cultivate curiosity, resilience, and a sustained desire to learn beyond the classroom. By combining mindfulness, joy, and meaningful engagement, the Human-Centered Digital ELT Model provides a comprehensive framework that supports both academic achievement and the continuous growth of learners throughout their lives.

Furthermore, the result demonstrates a dynamic relationship. Mindfulness reduces stress is enabling mental space for meaningful learning. Meaningful tasks increase cognitive involvement is fostering intrinsic motivation. Joyful engagement enhances emotional well-being strengthening persistence and deeper learning. Thus, the integration of mindfulness, meaning, joy forms a holistic pedagogical approach that humanizes digital ELT environments.



Figure 1. Human-centered Digital ELT Model

Each study highlights an important aspect of digital English language teaching (ELT) and shows the progression of research trends from 2018 to 2025. Hockly (2018) outlines major digital developments in ELT and predicts future directions, setting the stage for understanding technological shifts. Pegrum (2019) expands this perspective by examining mobile learning and digital innovation. Zhao and Yan (2020) focus on online learner engagement, an essential factor in virtual learning environments. Rahimi and Fathi (2021) introduce digital storytelling as a tool to enhance EFL learners' skills, while Chien (2022) explores how artificial intelligence can support language learning. Adnan (2023) highlights the growing role of hybrid learning and its influence on student motivation. Wan and Chen (2024) emphasize gamification as a strategy to promote joyful learning in EFL contexts. Finally, Dudun Najamudin, Susanti, and Pebrian (2025) examine broader digital transformation in education, providing an updated understanding of systemic shifts.

Tabel 1. Key Studies in the Literature Review

No	Author	Year	Focus of Study
1.	Hockly	2018	Current and Future Digital Trends in ELT
2.	Pegrum	2019	Mobile learning and digital innovation
3.	Zhao and Yan	2020	Online learner engagement
4.	Rahimi and Fathi	2021	Digital storytelling for EFL learners
5.	Chien	2022	AI-Supported language learning
6.	Adnan	2023	Hybrid learning and student motivation
7.	Wan and Chen	2024	Gamification and joyful EFL learning
8.	Dudun Najamudin, Lia Susanti, and Ilham Pebrian	2025	Digital Transformstion in Education

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Mindfulness Enhances Digital ELT Engagement

Digital learning environments expose students to multiple distractions notifications, multitasking, and passive screen engagement. Research shows that mindfulness supports learning by improving sustained attention (Shapiro, 2020), lowering anxiety during online speaking tasks (Mercer & Gregersen, 2020), and helping learners regulate emotions during high-cognitive-load activities.

Mindfulness strategies effective in digital ELT. Mindful breathing before online classes Reduces pre class stress and promotes readiness. Visual attention cues Encouraging learners to focus on specific digital elements. Screen time regulation tasks Setting intentional boundaries and reflective journaling. Mindful listening practices. During online speaking and listening sessions. Mindfulness does not only enhance focus but also stabilizes learners' emotional experiences, making digital ELT environments more conducive for deep learning.

3.2.2 Meaningful in Technology Enhanced ELT

According to Jonassen (2000), meaningful learning arises when learners are engaging in authentic, contextualized tasks, construct knowledge actively, relate concepts to real-world applications. Digital tools significantly enhance meaningful learning through Project-Based Learning (PBL). Students produce podcasts, video reflections, and collaborative writing via Google Docs, Padlet, or Flipgrid. Authentic Communication is the telecollaboration projects allow interaction with global peers (Dooly & O'Dowd, 2018). Multimodal Learning Videos, infographics, digital narratives help learners access content through multiple channels.

AI tools like Grammarly, QuillBot, or ChatGPT provide language support and allow deeper reflection and editing. Meaningful learning shifts digital ELT from *consumption to creation*.

3.2.3 Joyful Learning and Motivation in Digital ELT

Joyful learning activates positive emotions that enrich cognitive processing (Fredrickson, 2001) and increase long-term motivation. Digital features that promote joy are Gamification such as points, levels, badges (Kahoot, Quizizz), Creative digital storytelling is using Canva, Clipchamp, interactive simulations are virtual worlds, avatars, role-play apps, and the Collaborative games: breakout rooms with challenges. Joyful learning boosts engagement and fosters resilience in challenging tasks such as speaking or writing.

Another challenge stems from the uneven quality of digital learning experiences during the global expansion of online education. While some learners benefit from the flexibility and autonomy of digital environments, others struggle with disengagement,

isolation, and difficulty maintaining motivation. Several research studies conducted between 2018 and 2025 show a rising interest in digital ELT innovation, as illustrated by the increasing number of publications. However, despite the positive trend, many of these studies emphasize technological tools rather than holistic well-being approaches. Therefore, a more comprehensive synthesis is required to understand how technological innovation can be balanced with pedagogical values that foster a supportive and enriching learning environment.

4. CONCLUSION

This literature review highlights the importance of integrating mindfulness, meaningful learning, and joyful learning in digital ELT environments. As technology continues to reshape education, teachers must adopt human-centered pedagogical approaches to maintain emotional balance, cognitive depth, and learner motivation. The study offers a conceptual model and practical strategies that educators can implement in online, hybrid, and technology-rich classrooms. Future research may explore quantitative measurements of joy and mindfulness in digital ELT, or test the conceptual model empirically. The findings offer insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to reimagine English language education as a transformative process for nurturing well-being, engagement, and lifelong learning.

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