



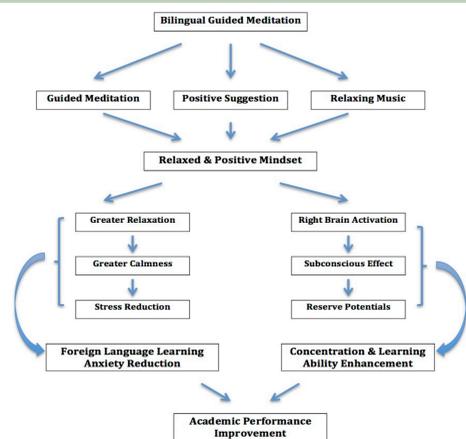
Bilingual Guided Meditation®: Academic Anxiety Reduction & Foreign Language Learning Enhancement

Qinghong Cai; Chieh Li; Edward Kimble

ABSTRACT

Bilingual Guided Meditation (BGM®) is a meditative practice designed to reduce college students' anxiety while learning a foreign language and to optimize foreign language learning in a relaxed and positive mindset. The BGM program is novel in its combination of bilingual positive suggestion with the benefits of guided meditation and relaxing background music. This exploratory study evaluates the acceptability and preliminary outcomes of the BGM. Participants were 130 undergraduate Chinese language learners who practiced the BGM as either a language class activity or a cultural class activity at an urban university in the New England area. The study utilized a mixed methods approach: The acceptability of the BGM was investigated by a qualitative method using a questionnaire to gain students' perspectives. Themes of student responses to the BGM program included (a) greater relaxation, calmness, (b) stress/anxiety reduction; (c) more confidence in their Chinese class performance; (d) enhanced learning (pronunciation, speaking, and listening) and (e) enhanced concentration abilities in the Chinese classroom. Most students responded positively to the use of the BGM program, showing appreciation and encouraging the continuation of BGM as part of their Chinese learning experience. Overall, students perceived the BGM as a good way to create a relaxed learning environment and positive mindset. The outcomes of the BGM were assessed by a quantitative method. Baseline and post-intervention anxiety levels regarding foreign language learning were compared. Reduction of anxiety was significant ($n=86, p < .001$). A randomized controlled trial was used to assess Chinese language skills at baseline and post-intervention. Results indicate significantly higher gains in Chinese language skills for the BGM group compared to the control group ($n=97, p < .05$). Findings suggest that the BGM is acceptable to students, and that it has a positive impact on anxiety reduction and academic enhancement.

MODEL



METHODS

► Participants included 130 undergraduate students, 68 female and 62 male, who enrolled in Chinese language courses at Northeastern University

► Method I: Language Class Activities

In the regular semester, we offer a five-minute meditation, which is a 3-minute BGM Practice at the Beginning of each Class; and 2 minute BGM practice at the End of Class for one beginner and one intermediate Chinese undergraduate course. The control groups receive the same Chinese language instruction without the 5-minute meditation practice.

► Method II: Cultural Class Activities

In the 5-week Summer II China Dialogue program, 20 NU's undergraduate students spend 4 hours per weekday morning studying Chinese in a university in China. On two afternoons, half of the students randomly assigns to a 30 minute BGM practice group, which includes a 10-minute BGM walking meditation and a 20-minute BGM sitting meditation) The other half of the students are in a comparative/control group learning Chinese folk dance as their culture activities.

INTEGRAL ASSESSMENT

	Interior	Exterior
Individual	Student Self-Assessment Each student (1) takes a self-assessment of anxiety 3 times to evaluate if meditation reduces his/her foreign language classroom anxiety level; (2) assesses own contemplative experience	Criterion Referenced Test Each student takes a placement test of Chinese written language (as a pre-test) before the courses start, and a final exam (as a post-test) when the semester ends. Tests will be scored by a third person, not the instructor, for objectivity.
Collective	Students' Assessment of Meditation Experience All students complete a questionnaire related to their reactions to the meditation practice; evaluators collect the groups' data to analyze group responses for all questions.	Groups' Experimental Results Evaluators compare the pre and post test results of the experimental group with the control group, to evaluate if the meditation enhances foreign language learning.

RESULTS

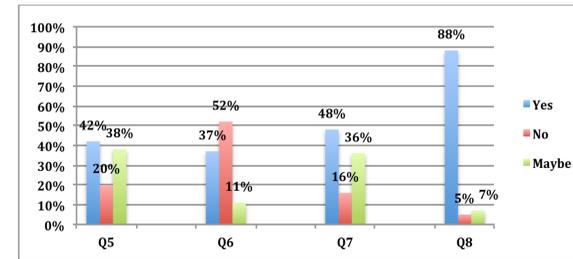
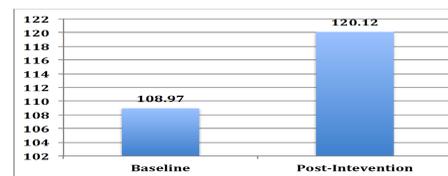


Figure 1. Effectiveness of meditation in-and outside of classroom learning (Q5-Q8) (Q5: Do you believe the anxiety reduction meditation technique affected your performance in your Chinese class. Q6: Do you feel any change in your life outside of Chinese class? Q7: Are you going to use the anxiety reduction meditation technique in the future? Q8: Would you recommend the use of the anxiety reduction meditation techniques to your friends?)

Student Comments on the Effectiveness of Meditation in their Chinese Class

Theme:	Percentage of Student Comments with this theme
1. Students reporting greater relaxation, calmness, and stress/anxiety reduction.	Total: 62% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater relaxation: 60% Greater Calmness: 18% Stress Reduction: 15% Anxiety Reduction: 7%
2. Students Reporting More Confidence in their Chinese Class Performance	10%
3. Enhanced Learning Abilities in the Chinese Classroom	Total: 28% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning ability (Speaking, Pronunciation, Listening, etc.): 57% Concentration ability (Centering, Focus, Clear Mind, etc.): 43%

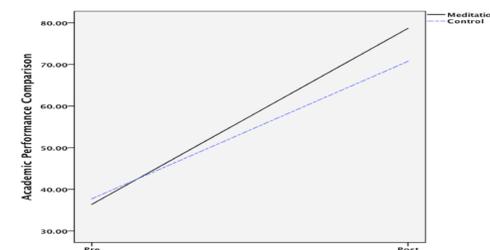
FLCAS Pre & Post Test Comparison (5 Semesters)



($n = 86, p < .001, \alpha = .05$)

(The higher the score is, the lower the anxiety level is)

Comparison between BGM and Control Groups on Pre and Post-Test Scores of Chinese Language Performance (5 semesters)



($n = 97, p < .05, \alpha = .05$)

CONCLUSIONS

► In the context of current literature, the present study was the first randomized controlled trial of a classroom-based bilingual guided meditation intervention for college foreign language learners. The findings suggest that the BGM intervention (1) is acceptable to participants in university settings and is likely to be attractive to students, and (2) show promise in reducing foreign language classroom learning anxiety, and (3) has the potential of facilitating a range of positive emotions and academic outcomes. This initial pilot study provides some support for building more effective college foreign language or other compatible curricula from a holistic approach that optimizes students' learning while nurturing their wellbeing.

► Since an increasing number of schools are searching for innovative ways to meet the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs of students (Wisner, Jones & Gwin, 2010), the findings of this pilot study provide a practical tool to help educators create a nurturing learning environment from a holistic approach, which optimizes student academic performance and promotes varying degrees of wellness outcomes in student populations. The BGM program could be easily adapted by other language instructors into their curricula for improving student learning experience in the classroom.

YOUTUBE BGM CHANNEL



For additional information please contact:

Qinghong Ann Cai
World Language Center
College of Professional Study
q.cai@neu.edu