



Integrating Task-Based Language Teaching with Digital Tools to Enhance Writing Skills in EFL Classrooms: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This study is a systematic literature review that aims to evaluate the effectiveness of integrating Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with digital tools in enhancing students' writing skills in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. TBLT is recognized as a communicative approach that emphasizes the use of authentic tasks to promote meaningful language use and learner engagement. This review analyzed 25 empirical studies published between 2016 and 2025 from Scopus, DOAJ, and Google Scholar, focusing on the implementation of digital tools-supported TBLT in writing instruction. The findings indicate that the integration of TBLT and digital tools significantly improves students' writing performance, with reported gains ranging from 15% to 30% in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, paragraph organization, and text coherence. In addition, this approach fosters learners' motivation, collaboration, creativity, and digital literacy in completing writing tasks. However, several challenges were identified, including limited teacher training, inadequate technological infrastructure, and gaps in students' digital competence. This study highlights the importance of institutional support, pedagogical adaptation, and continuous professional development to ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of TBLT integrated with digital tools in EFL writing instruction.

Keywords: *Task-Based Language Teaching, Digital Tools, English Foreign Language, Writing Skills, Systematic Literature Review.*

Introduction

Writing skills play a crucial role in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, being essential for both academic success and professional communication (Ilham, 2022, 2023, 2024; Ilham et al., 2025). However, writing remains one of the most challenging productive skills. A 2023 British Council survey found that 68% of EFL learners struggle with grammar, vocabulary, and coherence, while 54% report low motivation and anxiety when expressing ideas in English. These difficulties stem from the need to master multiple linguistic and cognitive components simultaneously, including grammar, vocabulary, and organization, alongside limited opportunities for authentic practice (Ahmed, 2019).

Despite its importance, writing instruction in EFL classrooms still faces major pedagogical challenges. Low student motivation, limited feedback due to time constraints, and overreliance on repetitive or model-based methods often hinder creativity and meaningful communication (Amalia, 2021; Salayev, 2024; Yan, 2024). These issues highlight the need for more interactive, student-centered approaches that engage learners in authentic communication.

In addressing these challenges, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) emerges as a relevant pedagogical approach. TBLT refers to a language teaching framework centered on the completion of communicative tasks that reflect real-world language use, emphasizing meaning over form (Somawati et al., 2018). Through authentic tasks such as composing reports, letters, or presentations, learners are encouraged to use language functionally and purposefully (Muhammad & Rahman, 2025). This method promotes natural language acquisition and enhances learners' engagement, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Armansyah et al., 2024).

Alongside pedagogical innovation, digital tools have transformed language education. Digital tools refer to technological platforms or applications such as Google Docs, Padlet, and Grammarly that facilitate collaboration, feedback, and autonomous learning in digital environments (Estrella, 2025; Nasri et al., 2022). These tools enable learners to receive instant feedback, engage in online collaboration, and access diverse digital learning resources (Syathroh et al., 2021). However, their effective integration depends on teachers' technological literacy and pedagogical adaptation, since technology functions as a support mechanism rather than a replacement for human instruction.

Considering the strengths of both approaches, integrating TBLT with digital tools represents a promising strategy for enhancing EFL writing instruction. This integration fosters contextualized, engaging, and learner-centered environments aligned with 21st-century learning needs (Aziz & Husnawadi, 2022). Studies have shown that digitalized TBLT improves grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, coherence, and collaboration (Angraini et al., 2024; Ramamuthie et al., 2022). Moreover, it cultivates digital literacy and learner autonomy, encouraging students to become reflective and independent writers (Mccallum, 2022; Mudinillah et al., 2024).

However, previous reviews have mainly examined either TBLT or digital tools separately, leaving a research gap in understanding how their integration specifically enhances EFL writing outcomes. To date, few studies have synthesized pedagogical strategies, outcomes, and implementation barriers of combining TBLT with digital tools in a comprehensive way. Therefore, a systematic review is required to map existing evidence, identify emerging trends, and propose practical recommendations for educators and policymakers.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on synthesizing empirical findings on TBLT-digital integration specifically in writing instruction, bridging the gap between technological innovation and task-based pedagogy within EFL contexts. Moreover, this study analyses research published between 2016 and 2025, a period selected to capture the evolution of digital-assisted learning, spanning early adoption of online platforms to the post-pandemic expansion of AI-based tools in education.

Therefore, this study aims to systematically identify and analyse the effectiveness of integrating TBLT with digital tools in EFL writing instruction. Specifically, it seeks to map the instructional strategies and digital tools commonly used in TBLT-based writing instruction, evaluate their effects on the cognitive and affective aspects of learners' writing skills, identify the major challenges and proposed solutions in implementing TBLT-digital integration, and explore research trends and development patterns from 2016 to 2025. Based on these aims, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What instructional strategies and digital tools are most frequently integrated within TBLT-based EFL writing instruction?
2. How does the combined TBLT-digital tools affect students' writing performance and engagement?
3. What challenges and solutions are reported in implementing this integrated approach?

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach utilizing the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to examine the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with digital tools in enhancing students' writing skills within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. The main objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the integration of TBLT and digital technologies contributes to writing development, identify common strategies and tools used in this integration, and uncover the pedagogical outcomes and challenges reported in the literature.

Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted between March and July 2025, focusing on three major academic databases: Scopus, DOAJ, and Google Scholar. The search process used Boolean operators to ensure comprehensive retrieval of relevant

studies. The search string employed was “Task-Based Language Teaching” or “TBLT” and “digital tools” or “technology” or “ICT” and “writing skills” or “writing ability” and “EFL” or “English as a Foreign Language”.

This combination was designed to capture both theoretical and empirical studies related to the integration of TBLT and digital technologies in EFL writing instruction.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria consisted of:

1. Peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2016 and 2025.
2. Studies written in English.
3. Empirical research examining the use of TBLT combined with digital tools to improve writing skills in EFL contexts.

The exclusion criteria included:

1. Conceptual papers, editorials, reviews, and conference abstracts.
2. Studies not focusing on writing or not integrating TBLT with digital tools.
3. Duplicates or inaccessible full-text articles.

Screening and Selection Process

The initial database search identified 248 articles. After removing 37 duplicates, 211 titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Of these, 64 articles were selected for full-text review, and after applying the inclusion criteria, 25 studies were included in the final synthesis. The entire selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 framework, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

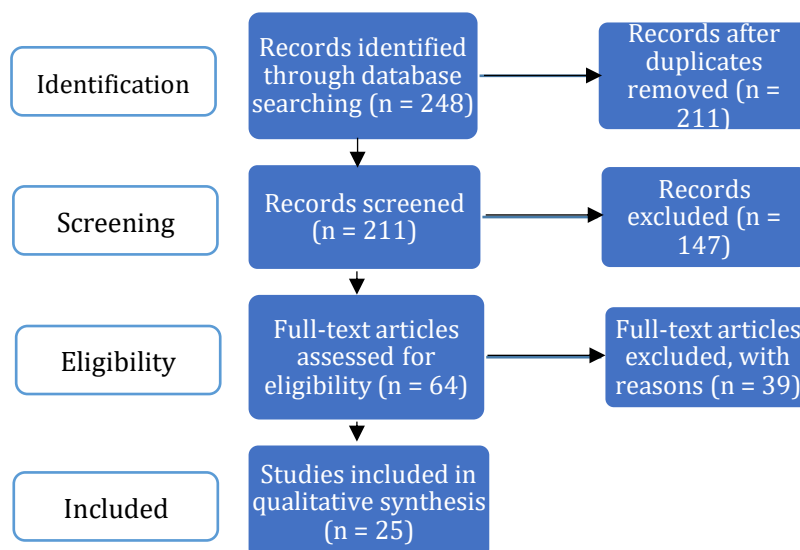


Figure 1. Diagram of the Study Selection Process

Quality Assessment

To ensure credibility, the quality of the included studies was assessed using an adapted version of the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist. Each study was evaluated based on five criteria: (1) clarity of research objectives, (2) methodological rigor, (3) validity of data collection and analysis, (4) transparency of findings, and (5) relevance to research objectives. Studies scoring above 70% on these criteria were included in the synthesis. Inter-rater reliability was established by involving two independent reviewers in the screening and coding processes. The level of agreement between reviewers was measured using Cohen's Kappa, yielding a coefficient of 0.86, indicating a strong level of consistency in inclusion and coding decisions.

Data Extraction and Analysis

Data extraction was carried out using a standardized data extraction form developed in Microsoft Excel to maintain consistency and reliability. Each study was coded for the following variables: author(s), publication year, country or context of study, research design, type of digital tools used, TBLT implementation strategies, key findings, and pedagogical implications. The data were analyzed thematically, focusing on linguistic outcomes (grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and organization), affective outcomes (motivation, engagement, and collaboration), and contextual challenges (infrastructure, teacher competence, and digital literacy). Divergent findings among studies were compared through cross-case analysis, enabling synthesis of contrasting results to identify moderating factors such as educational context, task type, and digital tool features.

Bias and Limitations

Although this review applied a rigorous search and evaluation procedure, several limitations must be acknowledged. The focus on English-language and open-access articles may have excluded relevant studies published in other languages or subscription-based journals, introducing a potential publication bias. Additionally, while double-coding was implemented to minimize subjectivity, interpretation of thematic patterns may still involve a degree of researcher bias. To mitigate this, all inclusion decisions were documented, and discrepancies between reviewers were resolved through discussion until full consensus was achieved. It is also possible that publication bias favored studies reporting positive outcomes, which may overrepresent the effectiveness of TBLT-digital integration in the synthesized findings.

Overall, this SLR systematically synthesizes empirical evidence on the integration of TBLT and digital tools to enhance EFL writing instruction. The methodological process ensures reliability, transparency, and reproducibility, providing valuable insights to guide future research and pedagogical innovation in technology-enhanced, task-based writing instruction.

Results and Discussion

Recent empirical studies have provided substantial evidence on the role of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) integrated with digital tools in enhancing EFL students’ writing performance. This integration promotes linguistic accuracy and writing structure. It also enhances engagement, collaboration, and creativity in technology-mediated settings. Furthermore, research has explored the pedagogical strategies commonly employed, the perceived affordances of digital media, as well as the challenges and solutions associated with implementation. To present a structured overview of these findings, the following table categorizes the studies based on research focus, contributing authors, and key insights or investigated variables.

Table 1. Thematic Classification of Reviewed Studies on TBLT-Digital Integration in EFL Writing Instruction

No	Research Focus	Authors	Research Design	Sample/Context	Key Insights
1	Enhancement of EFL students’ writing skills through TBLT and digital tools (n=5)	(Ilham, 2023; Irwandi et al., 2024; Nugrahani, 2024; Susanti et al., 2023; Wen, 2024)	Experimental & Mixed Methods	University students	Integration of TBLT with digital tools improved grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, paragraph organization, coherence, collaboration, and creativity.
2	Effectiveness of TBLT-based digital storytelling and AI-assisted tools (n=3)	(Satya et al., 2024) (Azennoud, 2024; Susanti et al., 2023)	Experimental	Secondary & tertiary students	TBLT combined with AI tools and storytelling platforms outperformed conventional approaches, enhancing rhetorical structure and creativity.
3	Instructional strategies and digital tools applied in TBLT implementation (n=4)	(Anshary et al., 2019; Fonseca & Sarmiento, 2022; Hidayah & Irawati, 2024;	Qualitative	Classroom-based EFL contexts	Real-world tasks, Google Docs collaboration, grammar tools, and multimedia use increased participation and

		Kassim et al., 2024)			accommodated diverse learning styles.
4	Utilization of digital tools in language teaching contexts (<i>n=3</i>)	(Noviska et al., 2021; Pratiwi et al., 2021; Septiari et al., 2024)	Descriptive & Survey	Schools and universities	Tools such as Google Docs, Padlet, and LMS platforms enhanced motivation, interaction, and teacher perception of pedagogical usefulness.
5	Challenges in implementing TBLT and digital technology in EFL writing instruction (<i>n=4</i>)	(Abalkheel, 2022; Dewi et al., 2024; Indriani et al., 2021; Suwartono & Asfi, 2018)	Qualitative	Teachers and EFL learners	Main barriers: limited training, poor infrastructure, low digital literacy, weak internet connectivity, and writing anxiety.
6	Proposed solutions to overcome implementation challenges (<i>n=5</i>)	(Abalkheel, 2022; Dewi et al., 2024; Indriani et al., 2021; Satya et al., 2024; Subroto et al., 2023)	Mixed Methods	Teachers and EFL learners	Recommended strategies: professional training, improved infrastructure, digital mentoring, and integration of mobile applications.

Based on Table 1, the reviewed studies reveal that integrating Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with digital tools significantly improves students' writing performance across linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions. Most research reported notable gains in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, organization, and creativity, particularly in higher education contexts. The use of digital storytelling, AI-assisted platforms, and collaborative tools such as Google Docs and Padlet enhanced engagement, motivation, and real-time feedback in writing activities. Despite these benefits, common challenges persist, including limited teacher training, inadequate infrastructure, and gaps in digital literacy. To overcome these barriers, studies recommend continuous professional development, improved technological access, and the integration of mobile applications to ensure the sustainable implementation of TBLT-based digital writing instruction.

A. Interpretation of Findings

The integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with digital tools has been proven to significantly enhance EFL students' writing skills, particularly in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, coherence, and paragraph organization. Digital tools provide instant feedback, allowing learners to correct errors in real-time and engage in collaborative learning through active interaction (Wen, 2024). Multimedia resources further enrich vocabulary acquisition Irwandi et al. (2024), while context-based tasks encourage the use of more precise and relevant language (Ilham, 2023). Empirical evidence demonstrates that this integration leads to substantial improvements in writing performance. For instance, digital storybooks grounded in TBLT have been shown to outperform traditional teaching methods Satya et al. (2024), while structured feedback and AI-based tools contribute to linguistic accuracy and rhetorical organization (Azennoud, 2024). Furthermore, TBLT integrated with technology fosters creativity in developing innovative materials (Susanti et al., 2023) and positively correlates with motivation and writing proficiency (Nugrahani, 2024).

Overall, these studies affirm the pedagogical potential of combining TBLT with digital tools to create an interactive and meaningful learning environment that enhances both cognitive and affective dimensions of writing. Cognitively, digital tools strengthen grammar, vocabulary, and paragraph organization through real-time feedback and interactive media, whereas TBLT provides authentic contexts for language use. Affectively, it promotes motivation and engagement through relevant, task-based learning. However, the success of this integration depends on effective task design, teachers' technological competence, and adequate infrastructure. Some studies report limited or statistically insignificant improvements, suggesting that digital integration alone cannot ensure success without strong pedagogical design. As highlighted by Long (2016), poorly designed tasks may overlook essential linguistic elements. Therefore, careful task scaffolding and in-depth analysis of digital tools are crucial to optimizing the effectiveness of TBLT-technology integration in EFL writing instruction.

B. Comparison with Previous Reviews

Compared with previous systematic literature reviews focusing on technology-enhanced language learning, this review emphasizes how TBLT serves as a strong pedagogical foundation for improving writing instruction. Earlier studies mainly focused on general language skills, but this synthesis highlights that digital integration within TBLT provides measurable improvement in writing outcomes. Unlike traditional approaches, TBLT's task-driven nature aligns well with digital tools that promote collaboration, feedback, and authentic communication. The reviewed studies show more

consistent and positive effects than many prior works, indicating that recent advances in AI-assisted tools and interactive platforms have strengthened learning outcomes. These results align with the growing body of research suggesting that task-based frameworks, when supported by digital resources, can effectively enhance language performance in EFL writing.

C. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The positive effects observed can be theoretically explained by social constructivism, which emphasizes that knowledge is co-constructed through social interaction. In this case, TBLT encourages learners to negotiate meaning collaboratively, while digital tools facilitate this process by providing interactive spaces for communication and revision. Additionally, from the perspective of cognitive load theory, digital tools reduce cognitive overload by offering scaffolds such as grammar correction and multimedia examples, which help learners focus on content and structure rather than mechanics. In practical terms, teachers can use these findings to design task-based writing instruction supported by accessible technologies such as Google Docs, grammar checkers, or learning management systems. Continuous professional development is also vital for teachers to master the pedagogical use of digital tools and to ensure equitable access to technology for all learners.

D. Equity, Context, and Sustainability Issues

Despite these advantages, the integration of TBLT and digital tools raises challenges related to equity, context, and sustainability. Lack of educator training in the use of digital tools leads to difficulties in integrating technology into learning effectively (Suwartono & Asfi, 2018). Infrastructure limitations, such as unstable internet access and inadequate devices, are also a major obstacle to implementation, with 65% of respondents reporting connectivity issues (Abalkheel, 2022). Teachers also face difficulties in maintaining students' motivation in digital environments and integrating digital literacy effectively, influenced by both internal and external factors (Dewi et al., 2024). On the learners' side, anxiety in digital writing and low digital literacy hinder learning effectiveness (Indriani et al., 2021). Addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies, including professional development for educators, improved infrastructure, and student mentoring programs that strengthen digital literacy and writing skills. In addition, cultural and contextual differences across institutions and countries influence how effectively TBLT can be integrated with technology. Equity in digital access must be considered to avoid widening educational gaps between well-resourced and under-resourced contexts.

E. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This review has several limitations. First, there may be language bias, as most of the analysed studies were published in English. Second, the geographical scope is limited, with many studies focusing on Asian contexts, particularly Indonesia and China, while research from other regions remains underrepresented. Third, grey literature such as theses or conference papers was not systematically included, which could limit the comprehensiveness of findings. Furthermore, the heterogeneity of study designs, from small-scale classroom research to experimental studies, may limit comparability. Although some research includes quantitative data such as improvement rates or statistical significance, most studies remain short-term. Therefore, longitudinal and comparative studies are needed to examine the long-term impact and scalability of digital-based TBLT. Future research should also explore contextual differences, such as urban and rural implementations, the cost-effectiveness of digital integration, and comparative analysis of which tools yield the highest impact on writing performance.

Research on the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with digital tools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instruction has shown notable progression in recent years. This combined approach has been recognized for promoting meaningful language use, improving writing performance, and enhancing student engagement through authentic tasks supported by technology. Studies have evolved from identifying basic implementation challenges to exploring specific digital platforms, cognitive and affective outcomes, and comprehensive strategies for overcoming barriers.

The integration has also increasingly focused on developing 21st-century skills, such as digital literacy, collaboration, and autonomous learning. Over the reviewed period, the research progression can be categorized into four major phases: (1) 2017–2018, emphasizing early adoption and infrastructural barriers; (2) 2019–2020, focusing on institutional transition and adaptation; (3) 2021–2022, highlighting pedagogical engagement and affective dimensions; and (4) 2023–2024, marking a phase of technological advancement and pedagogical innovation. The following mind map presents the key developments of research variables related to the implementation of TBLT with digital tools in EFL writing contexts from 2017 to 2024.

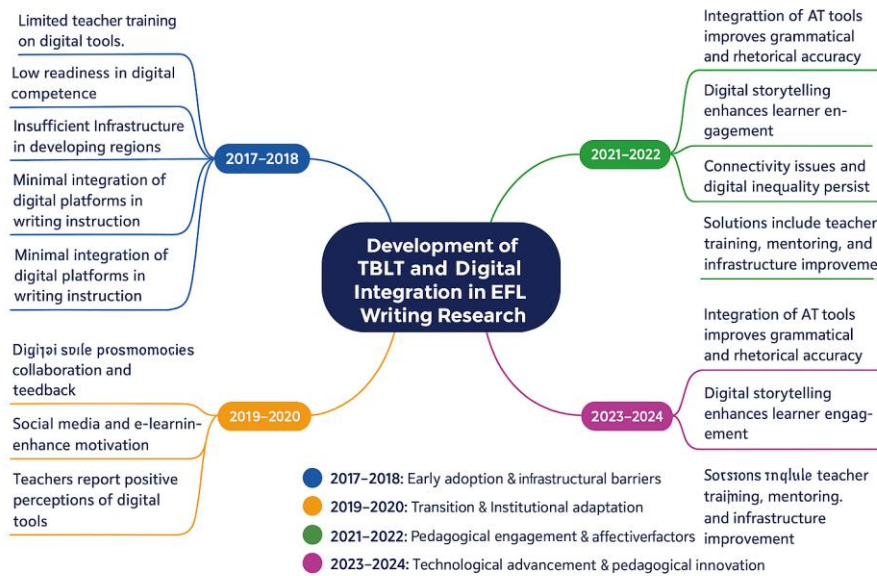


Figure 2. Development of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Digital Integration in EFL Writing Research

Figure 2 illustrates the progression of research variables related to the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and digital tools in EFL writing instruction from 2017 to 2024. In the 2017–2018 period, studies primarily highlighted initial implementation challenges, including the lack of teacher training, low digital readiness, and limited integration of technology in pedagogical practices. During 2019–2020, research began identifying factors influencing technology adoption, such as teachers' pedagogical beliefs, digital competencies, and the availability of infrastructure. By 2021–2022, the focus shifted to the impact of specific digital tools such as Google Docs, learning management systems, and social media platforms, as well as emerging issues like students' writing anxiety and unequal levels of digital literacy.

In the 2023–2024 period, research increasingly emphasized comprehensive strategies combining TBLT with digital innovation to enhance linguistic accuracy, writing organization, creativity, and learner motivation. These studies also addressed ongoing challenges related to infrastructure, teacher training, and institutional support. Overall, this progression indicates a shift from exploratory and problem-identification stages toward more mature, solution-oriented research that integrates pedagogical theory with digital practice. Consequently, TBLT integrated with technology has evolved into a more context-sensitive and learner-centered approach, one that demands pedagogical expertise, technological fluency, and sustainable systemic support to ensure long-term effectiveness in EFL writing instruction.

Conclusion

Based on the evaluation of the development of research on the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with digital technology in writing learning for EFL learners, it can be concluded that this approach is generally effective in improving linguistic competence, student engagement, and mastery of 21st century skills. The integration of TBLT and digital tools creates an interactive, contextualized, and collaborative learning environment, which encourages students' cognitive and affective engagement in the writing process.

However, the effectiveness of its implementation is strongly influenced by teacher readiness factors, the availability of technological infrastructure, and the level of students' digital literacy. Although various digital tools have been innovatively utilized, the adoption of technology in learning practices still tends to be teacher-cantered and has not fully encouraged students' learning independence. Moreover, differences in institutional policies, cultural contexts, and access to digital resources also affect the consistency of implementation outcomes across educational levels. A limitation found in this study is the limited number of longitudinal studies that evaluate the long-term impact of the integration of TBLT and digital technology on the development of students' writing skills. In addition, most of the reviewed research was concentrated in Asian contexts, with limited representation from other regions, which may lead to geographical bias in understanding the global application of digital-based TBLT.

In practical terms, teachers should integrate accessible digital tools such as Google Docs, Padlet, or Grammarly within TBLT frameworks to enhance learners' writing interaction and feedback opportunities. Meanwhile, institutions and policymakers need to provide continuous professional training, adequate infrastructure, and equitable access to digital resources to ensure the sustainable implementation of this innovation across educational contexts.

Based on the identified findings and limitations, it is suggested that future research should focus on longitudinal studies that are able to evaluate in depth the long-term impact of the integration of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and digital technology on the development of EFL students' writing skills. These studies are expected to enrich the theoretical and practical foundations of implementing task-based writing instruction in the digital era, as well as support the continuous improvement of learning quality and promote more equitable access to digital literacy in EFL classrooms.

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