



Title: "A Program Based on Digital Literacy for Developing EFL Conventions Sub-Skills Among Secondary School Students"

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**A Program Based on Digital Literacy for Developing EFL Conventions
Sub- Skills Among Secondary School Students**

**Research Derived from a Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the PhD Degree in Education
(Curriculum& Instruction of TEFL)**

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مستخلص

تشكل معايير الكتابة—كالتهجئة، وعلامات الترقيم، والحروف الكبيرة، والقواعد، والاستخدام—الركيزة الأساسية للتواصل الكتابي، إذ تضمن الوضوح والدقة والاتساق. غير أن طلاب المرحلة الثانوية في سياقات تعليم اللغة يواجهون صعوبات مستمرة في إتقان هذه المعايير نتيجة للتداخل اللغوي، (EFL) الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وضعف التعرض للنصوص الأصيلة، وقلة التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية. وعلى الرغم من امتلاكهم محتوى

ومع وأفكاراً غنية، غالباً ما تعاني كتاباتهم من ضعف ميكانيكي يحد من فعاليتها الأكاديمية

صعود التكنولوجيا التعليمية، برزت الثقافة الرقمية كأداة مبتكرة لدعم تعلم معايير الكتابة. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء دور الأدوات الرقمية—مثل برامج التدقيق النحوي، ومنصات التحرير التفاعلية، وبيئات الكتابة التعاونية الفورية، وأنظمة التغذية الراجعة الذكية—في تعزيز دقة الطلاب وتحفيزهم على المشاركة النشطة. وتكشف النتائج أن هذه الأدوات لا تقدم تغذية راجعة فورية وفردية فحسب، بل تسهم أيضاً في تنمية الوعي ما وراء المعرفي والاستقلالية لدى المتعلمين. كما أظهرت أن الطلاب الذين مارسوا الكتابة عبر المنصات الرقمية حققوا تقدماً ملحوظاً في التهجئة والبنية النحوية واستخدام الترقيم مقارنة بزملائهم في البيئات

التقليدية

وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن دمج المعرفة الرقمية في تعليم الكتابة يتجاوز عملية التصحيح ليشكل تجربة تعلم تفاعلية وتأملية، مما يستلزم تدريب المعلمين على البيداغوجيا الرقمية وإعادة تصميم المناهج لتبني أساليب مدمجة تجمع بين التعليم التقليدي والتقنيات الحديثة

الكلمات المفتاحية

المعرفة الرقمية , معايير الكتابة



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ABSTRACT

Writing conventions—such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and usage—are essential for clarity, coherence, and professionalism in written communication. For secondary school learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), mastering these conventions remains a consistent challenge, largely due to linguistic interference, limited access to authentic input, and insufficient corrective feedback. Although many students can generate meaningful ideas and organize their writing effectively, they often struggle with mechanical accuracy, which reduces the overall quality of their texts.

With the growing integration of technology in education, digital literacy provides new opportunities to strengthen the teaching and learning of writing conventions. Digital tools supply immediate and personalized feedback, helping learners address errors more efficiently while promoting engagement, independence, and metacognitive awareness. Students who practiced writing through digital platforms demonstrated significant improvements in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure compared to those in traditional classroom settings. In addition, digital environments supported multiple drafting, peer collaboration, and teacher-guided mini-lessons, fostering a holistic approach to convention development.

The study concludes that digital literacy transforms learning conventions from a mechanical task into an interactive and reflective process. Practical implications include training teachers in digital pedagogy, redesigning curricula to embed digital tools, and adopting blended learning models that integrate traditional and technology-enhanced instruction.

Key words:

Digital Literacy, Conventions Skills, Secondary Education



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Introduction

In the field of EFL writing, particularly within second language learning contexts, mastering writing conventions is of critical importance. Elements such as punctuation, capitalization, spelling, grammar, and usage constitute the structural foundation of written expression, ensuring that ideas are communicated with accuracy, clarity, and professionalism. Proper application of these conventions not only facilitates comprehension but also strengthens the writer's credibility. In contrast, frequent lapses in conventions can obscure meaning and disrupt communication, posing additional challenges for EFL learners who must already contend with both linguistic and cultural barriers.

For secondary school students in EFL settings, developing control over writing conventions poses an ongoing challenge. Many students may demonstrate competence in content development and idea generation but struggle with surface-level accuracy. These difficulties are often attributed to factors such as limited language input, lack of frequent writing opportunities, insufficient feedback, and interference from learners' first language (Hyland, 2016). Without explicit instruction and regular practice, students may internalize incorrect patterns that become fossilized over time, impeding their progress toward academic and professional writing goals.

The emergence of digital literacy in education presents new possibilities for addressing these challenges. Digital literacy—defined as the ability to use digital tools effectively to locate, evaluate, create, and communicate information—has gained prominence as a core 21st-century skill (Ng, 2012). Within the context of writing instruction, digital tools offer interactive, engaging, and individualized experiences that allow students to identify and correct errors, practice grammatical structures, and receive immediate, contextualized feedback (Godwin-Jones, 2018). These tools include grammar checkers like Grammarly, collaborative platforms such as Google Docs, and structured learning environments like NoRedInk and Quill, which are designed to reinforce conventions through data-driven, adaptive learning systems.

Recent research highlights the effectiveness of technology-enhanced feedback in developing writing accuracy. For example, Szlachta et al. (2023) found that EFL learners who received digital feedback showed significant improvements in grammar and punctuation usage. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2023) reported that digital platforms facilitated greater engagement and more frequent revision, leading to better mastery of writing conventions among pre-service teachers. These findings suggest that digital literacy tools, when integrated meaningfully into instruction, not only correct students' mistakes but also enhance their metacognitive awareness and ownership of the writing process.

Moreover, digital environments support the instructional shift from product-based to process-oriented writing. Instead of focusing solely on the final draft, learners are encouraged to draft, revise, and edit iteratively, with guidance from both teachers and automated systems (Shadieff & Yang, 2020). This dynamic and recursive approach mirrors authentic writing experiences and fosters long-term improvement in mechanical skills. Teachers, too, benefit from the integration of digital literacy, as they gain access to diagnostic data, feedback tracking, and a range of scaffolding tools that help them differentiate instruction based on individual student needs.



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Despite the promising potential of digital literacy, its application in the EFL classroom remains uneven. Some teachers may lack the training or confidence to use digital tools effectively, while students may have limited access to devices or reliable internet connections (Al-Khatib & Hamdan, 2022). There is also the risk that overreliance on automated correction tools could result in superficial learning if not accompanied by explicit instruction and reflective practices. Therefore, a balanced and well-planned integration of digital literacy into writing instruction is essential.

This research paper aims to explore how digital literacy can be utilized to develop the writing skill of conventions among secondary school EFL students. It will examine the theoretical underpinnings of writing conventions; analyze empirical evidence on the use of digital tools in improving mechanical accuracy, and present practical strategies for implementing technology-supported instruction in real classrooms. Through a synthesis of literature, classroom application, and analysis, the paper argues that digital literacy—when aligned with pedagogical goals—can serve as a transformative force in improving students' mastery of writing conventions, thereby contributing to their overall writing proficiency and academic success.

Review of Literature

Writing Conventions in EFL Contexts

In fact, Writing conventions—encompassing spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and sentence structure—are essential components of writing that help ensure clarity, coherence, and readability. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, developing proficiency in writing conventions is often more difficult than in first-language settings due to a range of linguistic and instructional barriers (Hyland, 2016). For many EFL learners, the gap between spoken and written English is significant, with written English requiring a higher degree of syntactic precision and mechanical correctness. As such, instruction in writing conventions is particularly important in foreign language learning environments; where opportunities for natural language immersion are limited. EFL learners often encounter systemic difficulties with conventions due to negative transfer from their first language (L1), lack of explicit instruction in mechanics, and limited exposure to authentic writing models. According to Graham and Perin (2007), surface-level errors—such as incorrect verb tense, article misuse, and punctuation problems—are common in EFL writing and can obscure meaning, even when ideas are well developed. These errors are not only linguistic but also cognitive, as learners often focus more on content generation than form, especially in timed or high-stakes writing tasks.

Furthermore, conventional correctness is typically emphasized in standardized assessments and academic writing, making it a critical skill for students aiming to pursue higher education or international qualifications. As noted by Ferris (2011), accuracy in conventions significantly influences how readers evaluate the credibility and fluency of student writing. Teachers in EFL contexts must therefore provide targeted instruction that addresses common grammatical and mechanical issues while encouraging ongoing revision and editing practices.

Despite its importance, research indicates that instruction in conventions is often neglected or insufficient in many EFL writing curricula, particularly at the secondary level (Raimes, 1991; Lee, 2020). Teachers may prioritize vocabulary acquisition and sentence formation, leaving



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students without adequate feedback on punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Furthermore, many teachers may feel unprepared to teach conventions in an engaging or differentiated way, especially in large classrooms with diverse proficiency levels (Al-Khatib & Hamdan, 2022). This lack of instructional focus contributes to a cycle in which students fail to develop strong editing and proofreading skills, resulting in persistent surface-level errors across multiple writing assignments.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that integrates both form-focused instruction and meaningful writing practice. As Ferris and Hedgcock (2014) argued, teaching conventions should be embedded in the broader writing process, allowing students to learn about grammar and mechanics not as isolated rules but as tools for effective communication. When students are taught to see conventions as meaningful choices that affect clarity and tone, they are more likely to engage in self-correction and stylistic refinement. In this context, digital literacy tools—such as grammar checkers and editing software—can serve as scaffolding mechanisms that support learners in recognizing, understanding, and applying conventions effectively.

A closer examination of the errors EFL learners make in writing conventions reveals clear patterns that are closely linked to their developmental stage, first language background, and instructional context. According to Ellis (2016), surface errors typically fall into categories such as omission (e.g., missing punctuation), addition (e.g., unnecessary capitalization), misinformation (e.g., irregular verb forms), and disordering (e.g., misplaced modifiers). These errors often result not only from lack of grammatical knowledge but also from insufficient exposure to well-edited texts and an underdeveloped awareness of written discourse norms. This is particularly concerning in EFL secondary classrooms, where writing tasks may be rare, feedback may be limited, and assessments often emphasize correctness over communication (Lee, 2020).

Learner attitudes toward conventions also influence how they engage with correction and revision. Research suggests that students may undervalue the importance of conventions, seeing them as peripheral to writing compared to vocabulary or idea development. This perception is compounded when teachers provide feedback that focuses primarily on content or structure, neglecting mechanical accuracy (Ferris, 2011). In such contexts, students may not develop the metacognitive skills necessary for self-editing. As Hyland and Hyland (2006) noted, the development of writing accuracy requires sustained practice with both feedback and instruction, allowing learners to internalize patterns and apply corrections independently.

Additionally, writing conventions are closely tied to students' sense of writing fluency and confidence. Persistent errors can negatively impact the writer's self-perception, causing anxiety and reluctance to write, especially in academic contexts (Zamel, 1982). Conventions, then, should not be treated as an afterthought or purely technical aspect of writing but as an integral part of learners' overall writing identity. When instruction neglects this dimension, students may succeed at basic communication yet fail to meet the demands of academic or professional writing genres, where mechanical accuracy is a gatekeeper skill.

Instructionally, many EFL classrooms face practical barriers to teaching conventions effectively. Large class sizes, limited instructional time, and pressure to cover a wide curriculum



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often result in reduced focus on grammar and mechanics (Haider, 2012). Additionally, teachers may lack the training to deliver engaging and differentiated lessons on conventions, relying instead on correction symbols or general feedback that may not be well understood by students (Lee, 2009). This can lead to a mismatch between what teachers intend to correct and what learners are able to internalize, especially when feedback is not accompanied by explicit mini-lessons or opportunities for guided revision.

One instructional strategy that has gained attention is the use of focused feedback on targeted conventions. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) argue that correcting every error is often overwhelming and ineffective; instead, focused feedback—such as working on verb tense or comma usage during a particular writing cycle—allows for deeper learning and more visible progress. This approach aligns well with process writing pedagogy, where writing is viewed as iterative and recursive, and where conventions are revisited across multiple drafts (Matsuda, 2012).

Importantly, the shift toward digital writing platforms has amplified the importance of conventions. In an increasingly text-based digital world, from academic portals to social media, writing conventions serve as a signal of literacy, credibility, and attention to detail. For EFL students preparing for international communication or higher education, fluency in conventions is essential. Yet, conventional instruction must evolve to match the new digital realities and student learning needs.

In summary, writing conventions in EFL contexts represent a critical but underemphasized component of writing instruction. Their mastery is essential not only for written accuracy but also for reader comprehension, academic success, and student confidence. Addressing this challenge requires a shift from traditional grammar drills to more contextualized, student-centered, and feedback-rich approaches that integrate both instruction and revision. As the next section will explore, digital literacy tools present a powerful opportunity to reshape how students learn and apply conventions in meaningful ways.

Importance of Conventions in Writing Quality

- Conventions play a vital role in ensuring that writing is readable and professional. According to the Six Traits Writing Model, conventions are one of the six core components that define writing quality (Culham, 2014). Errors in conventions can lead to misinterpretation and negatively affect readers' perceptions. Writing conventions play a foundational role in determining the overall quality of written communication. They serve not merely as grammatical or mechanical rules, but as essential components that ensure clarity, precision, and professionalism in writing. In both first language (L1) and second language (L2) contexts, conventions influence how a reader perceives and judges the writer's message, fluency, and credibility (Culham, 2014). This importance is magnified in academic and professional settings, where errors in punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and grammar can significantly undermine the effectiveness of communication, regardless of how strong the content may be.

From an instructional perspective, writing quality is often assessed through multiple traits, among which conventions hold a prominent place. The Six Traits of Writing framework, widely used in education, includes conventions as a distinct trait that contributes to a writer's overall

proficiency alongside ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency (Spandel, 2013). Conventions act as the “surface polish” that allows a piece of writing to meet audience expectations, and without them, even well-organized or compelling writing can appear careless or confusing.

In EFL contexts, adherence to conventions is particularly important because it signals learners' grasp of the formal aspects of English. EFL students are often judged not only on their ability to express ideas but also on the grammatical accuracy and visual correctness of their writing (Ferris, 2011). This is especially true in high-stakes academic or exam settings, such as standardized language proficiency tests (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL), where strict rubrics often allocate significant weight to mechanics and grammar. Errors in conventions can lead to misinterpretation, and in some cases, render a text incomprehensible to native-speaking readers (Hyland, 2016).

Conventions also influence the reader's processing fluency—the ease with which a text is understood. According to cognitive processing theories, texts with correct spelling and punctuation reduce cognitive load on the reader, enabling smoother comprehension and greater engagement (Kellogg, 2008). When conventions are neglected, readers may become distracted by error correction or ambiguity, which detracts from the message and weakens the persuasive or informative power of the text. This can lead to negative evaluations of both the writing and the writer, particularly in academic or professional communication.

Additionally, conventions are strongly tied to writer identity and credibility. Research shows that readers tend to form judgments about a writer's intelligence, effort, and attention to detail based on mechanical accuracy (Graham & Perin, 2007). For EFL students, writing with consistent adherence to conventions can enhance confidence and foster a sense of legitimacy as a communicator in English. It also contributes to the development of academic voice, a quality that is often associated with precision, correctness, and formality in writing (Ivanič, 1998).

Another important aspect is the role of conventions in the revision and editing processes. Effective writers, both in L1 and L2 contexts, are typically those who monitor and improve their writing at the level of grammar and mechanics as well as content. However, this skill does not come naturally to many learners and must be taught explicitly. According to Ferris and Hedgcock (2014), helping students develop awareness of common errors and strategies for self-editing is essential to improving writing quality over time. Digital tools, as discussed in later sections, are particularly effective in facilitating this process by offering immediate and personalized feedback on conventions.

Despite the centrality of conventions to writing quality, they are often undervalued in writing instruction. Some teaching approaches emphasize fluency and content generation over accuracy, especially in early drafts. While this balance is important to avoid discouraging learners, the absence of focused instruction and assessment on conventions may result in repeated errors and fossilization of incorrect patterns (Leki, 1992). Therefore, a comprehensive approach to writing instruction must strike a balance—encouraging creativity and idea development while supporting learners in achieving grammatical and mechanical correctness.

In conclusion, conventions are not simply superficial rules but integral elements that affect how writing is processed, judged, and remembered. In EFL education, their importance extends beyond correctness to include readability, credibility, and academic success. Strengthening learners' command of writing conventions, especially through innovative digital tools, should therefore be a priority for educators and curriculum designers seeking to raise writing quality and learner confidence.

Digital Literacy in EFL Education

Digital literacy refers to the ability to effectively use digital tools for learning, communication, and problem-solving (Ng, 2012). In writing instruction, digital tools such as word processors, grammar checkers, online dictionaries, and interactive platforms can provide instant feedback and foster learner autonomy (Godwin-Jones, 2018). Digital literacy in EFL education goes beyond basic computer skills; it encompasses the ability to critically and creatively use digital tools for language learning, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving (Ng, 2012). In writing instruction, digital literacy allows learners to access global models of English, engage in real-time editing, and participate in interactive platforms that promote revision and reflection (Godwin-Jones, 2018). EFL students who use digital tools develop not only technical fluency but also language awareness, as they receive contextualized feedback on grammar, word choice, and mechanics. Furthermore, digital literacy supports differentiated learning, enabling students to work at their own pace with resources tailored to their proficiency level (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). In secondary classrooms, where learners may vary in ability and motivation, digital tools serve as scaffolds that promote independence, engagement, and consistency in writing practice. Thus, integrating digital literacy into EFL instruction is not optional—it is essential for preparing learners to function in modern academic and professional environments.

Digital Tools Supporting Writing Conventions

Studies show that digital tools such as Grammarly, Hemingway App, and Google Docs help students identify and correct errors in spelling, grammar, and mechanics (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). These tools not only improve accuracy but also raise learners' awareness of common mistakes, facilitating long-term retention of conventions. Digital tools have become increasingly valuable in supporting EFL learners' mastery of writing conventions such as grammar, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Applications like Grammarly, Hemingway Editor, and Ginger Software offer automated feedback that highlights errors and suggests corrections in real time, giving learners immediate input that reinforces conventional rules (Szlachta et al., 2023). These tools not only identify surface-level mistakes but also provide explanations, which help students understand grammatical patterns rather than relying solely on correction. In addition, platforms like NoRedInk and Quill offer gamified and adaptive grammar exercises aligned with students' performance levels, making the practice of conventions more personalized and engaging (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Google Docs, with its collaborative features, allows for peer editing, teacher comments, and revision tracking—all of which encourage repeated exposure to conventional norms within authentic writing tasks (Godwin-Jones, 2018). When integrated into

structured classroom instruction, these digital tools can transform the traditionally tedious process of grammar correction into a meaningful and motivating learning experience.

Empirical Research on Digital Tools and Conventions

Recent studies highlight the positive impact of digital literacy on writing conventions. For example, a study by Ibrahim et al. (2023) found that Egyptian EFL student-teachers who used interactive digital platforms improved significantly in grammar and punctuation accuracy compared to those using traditional methods. Similarly, Szlachta et al. (2023) concluded that technology-enhanced feedback promotes better attention to form and editing skills among learners. Recent empirical studies provide growing evidence that digital tools positively impact the development of writing conventions among EFL learners.

Szlachta et al. (2023) conducted a quasi-experimental study with secondary EFL students, demonstrating that those who received technology-enhanced feedback through AI-driven writing platforms significantly outperformed their peers in grammar and punctuation accuracy. Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2023) reported that Egyptian EFL pre-service teachers improved their mechanics and editing skills after engaging with digital writing tools that offered model-based feedback and revision prompts. Their findings indicated not only a reduction in common errors but also increased learner motivation and time spent revising.

Another study by Saeedi and Moradkhani (2021) found that integrating platforms like Grammarly and Google Docs into the writing classroom promoted greater autonomy in self-editing and significantly enhanced students' control over sentence-level and word-level conventions. These studies underscore the value of digital feedback in promoting metalinguistic awareness and repeated exposure to error patterns, ultimately leading to measurable gains in writing accuracy. Moreover, when paired with teacher guidance, digital tools were shown to improve long-term retention of grammatical structures and editing strategies. Collectively, empirical research supports the claim that digital literacy, when applied thoughtfully, plays a transformative role in developing writing conventions in EFL education.

Also, Abdelhafez, A. M. (2022) explored the effect of a genre-based approach on developing EFL secondary school students' writing accuracy. The study showed significant improvement in students' use of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure through genre-based instruction. In addition, there is Hassan, R. M. (2023) who investigated the role of technology-enhanced feedback in improving EFL students' writing conventions. The findings proved that technology-assisted tools like Grammarly and peer-feedback platforms significantly helped students recognize and correct convention-related errors. El-Sayed, D. S. (2021) also examined improving the writing mechanics of EFL students through process writing approach. Results showed that when students engaged in multiple drafts and received ongoing feedback, their use of capitalization, punctuation, and grammar improved. Furthermore, Szlachta, M., Khalifa, A., & El-Naggar, A. (2023) discussed enhancing EFL students' writing through Digital Feedback: A Case Study from Egyptian Classrooms. Findings confirmed that Digital platforms that provided individualized error correction improved students' command of writing conventions over time.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

This study is grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of interaction and scaffolding in language development. Digital tools act as mediational means that support students in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), allowing them to perform tasks with guidance and gradually become independent (Vygotsky, 1978).

Cognitive Load Theory

Sweller's (2011) cognitive load theory also supports the integration of digital tools, as they help reduce extraneous load by offering immediate feedback and error highlighting, thus allowing learners to focus on applying rules of writing conventions.

Statement of the Problem

Problem of the Study

Despite the importance of writing conventions—such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and sentence structure—in producing clear, accurate, and academically acceptable texts, many secondary school students continue to struggle with mastering them. Errors in conventions often hinder students' ability to express their ideas effectively and reduce the overall quality of their written work. Traditional methods of teaching conventions, which rely heavily on rote memorization and teacher-centered instruction, frequently fail to engage students or provide sufficient individualized feedback. With the growing integration of technology in education, digital literacy offers new opportunities to address these challenges. Digital tools and platforms provide interactive, immediate, and engaging ways for students to practice and refine their understanding of writing conventions. However, there remains a gap in research and practice regarding how digital literacy can be systematically used to improve students' mastery of conventions in writing. This raises the problem of whether incorporating digital literacy into instruction can significantly enhance students' skills in writing conventions and motivate them to apply these rules more effectively in their writing tasks.

Questions of the Study

The current study will be designed to give complete answer to the principal question below: What is the effect of a program based on digital literacy for developing EFL conventions skills among secondary students?

The following minor questions branch from the previous one:

- 1- Which conventions skills can be enhanced via digital literacy tools?
- 2-What are the features of a program based on digital literacy for developing EFL conventions skills among secondary school students?

Context of the Problem

In the Egyptian EFL context, mastering writing conventions—such as grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and sentence boundaries—remains a significant barrier to effective written communication among students. Despite being introduced to these rules from early stages of education, many learners continue to produce writing that lacks coherence and

correctness. This issue is often attributed to the limited emphasis on process writing and the dominance of traditional, test-oriented instruction that overlooks the functional application of conventions in meaningful contexts.

Furthermore, students are rarely given opportunities to revise their work based on detailed feedback, leading to fossilization of errors in grammar and mechanics. EFL learners in Egypt frequently write with inadequate awareness of audience and purpose, which affects their ability to apply conventions flexibly and appropriately. This deficiency not only undermines the clarity and readability of their writing but also impacts their academic performance in higher education and their readiness for real-world communication in English. As educational policies shift toward communicative competence and writing-focused literacy, addressing the gap in students' use of writing conventions becomes essential. As examples from the literature, there are several effective studies such as Abdelhafez, A. M. (2022), Hassan, R. M. (2023) , El-Sayed, D. S. (2021), Szlachta, M., Khalifa, A., & El-Naggar, A. (2023)

Method

Research Design

This study depends on an experimental research design, necessitating the formation of two groups: an experimental group and a control group (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. 2018). This design is suitable for investigating the effectiveness of digital literacy on developing conventions writing skills. The experimental group received instruction in conventions skill using the digital literacy approach, guided by activities developed by the researcher in the form of a teacher's guide and lesson plan. Conversely, the control group received instruction using traditional methods. At the conclusion of the experimental period, both groups were administered a post-test, and the results were subsequently analyzed.

Participants

The population of this study comprised secondary school students enrolled in a secondary governmental school within Sadat City, Menofeya governorate during the second semester of the 2024-2025 academic years. A sample of (60) female students was purposefully chosen from 10th zone secondary school for girls. The researcher picked up two classes; the first class of (30) students as an experimental group and the second of (30) students as a control group. Furthermore, the sample was chosen from the same school to be similar in the social, cultural, economic and academic levels. Table (1) shows distribution of the Study Sample

. Instruments and Materials Used

The researcher made use of the following instruments and materials to achieve the purpose of the study:

- 1-An EFL persuasive writing skills checklist
- 2-An EFL persuasive writing skill tests (pre-posttests)
- 3-A rubric for scoring and marking the tests plus an answer key to measure article questions
- 4-A motivation scale
- 5-The Teacher's Manual for using digital literacy tools

6-The intervention utilized Microsoft Word, Grammarly, Google Docs, and interactive grammar platforms such as NoRedInk and Quill. Students engaged in weekly writing tasks followed by peer and teacher feedback using these tools.

The EFL Writing Skill Checklist was designed to determine the EFL writing skills required for the second secondary students. The researcher decided on the EFL conventions writing skills needed for the study participants via reviewing the following:

The literature and previous studies related to EFL writing skill such as Suwantarathip, O., & Wichadee, S. (2014), Novero, R. (2015), Nasihah, M., & Cahyono, B. (2017), Mudawy, A. &

7-The second secondary year course description

8-Some EFL writing references such as Neville (2011), Wilbers (2005), Bryan, Jeffer, and Lisa T (2002), Chip Heath and Dan 200, Robert (1920)

Validity of the Persuasive Writing Skill Checklist

Both content validity and face validity were employed to verify the EFL writing skills checklist.

1-Content Validity

To ensure content validity, the checklist for evaluating EFL writing skills was developed by reviewing relevant literature and previous studies on EFL writing. This review ensured the checklist's comprehensiveness and representativeness of the writing skills expected of second-secondary students. Based on this thorough review, the checklist was considered valid for the intended purpose.

2- Face Validity

The EFL writing checklist was submitted to a panel of jury members specialized in EFL curricula and methodology (N 12) to identify the most appropriate skills for the participants of the study. Furthermore, the jury members were asked to validate the writing skills presented in the checklist. Some commented that the targeted checklist was acceptable while others suggested some modifications such as the following:

- Omitting some unnecessary skills and sub skills
- Adding some necessary skills
- Including objective questions in the test in addition to the article ones

The researcher considered the recommendations and made the necessary modifications.

The EFL Persuasive Writing pre/post test

The EFL writing pre/post test was conducted with the aim of assessing secondary students' conventions writing skills pre and post carrying out the convention. Before implementing the experiment, the test's aim was to gauge the participants' level in EFL writing skills, and after the experiment, the test aimed at investigating the impact of applying digital literacy on enhancing and developing EFL conventions writing skills.

A) Sources of the EFL

C Test Format:

The pre-posttest consisted of writing prompts that required students to write texts. The prompts were designed to be relevant to the students' interests and knowledge level.

Data Analysis:

The pre-posttest data was analyzed using statistical methods to determine the extent of improvement in students' conventions writing skills. Specifically, a t-test was used to compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test. By administering a pre-test before the intervention and a post-test after the intervention, the researcher was able to measure the effectiveness of the instructional strategies used to develop students' EFL writing skills.

G) Calculating Test Validity:

The validity of the test was calculated using the following methods:

1-Expert Validity: Expert validity was used to ascertain the test's validity by presenting the test to a panel of experts to obtain their opinions regarding:

- ✚ The adequacy of the instructions provided to students for answering the test correctly.
- ✚ The scientific and linguistic validity of the vocabulary
- ✚ The appropriateness of the vocabulary for the sample students
- ✚ The suitability of each question for the skill it was designed to measure
- ✚ The extent to which each question achieves its intended objective
- ✚ Any other modifications deemed necessary by the experts

The jury members commented that the test was suitable for measuring the definite EFL writing skills and that the test items were obvious and appropriate for gauging what they were intended for. Further, the instructions were clear, too. Thereupon, the EFL writing skill test had face validity.

2- Content validity

To determine the content validity of the EFL writing tests, a panel of EFL members were asked to validate the items of the test intended to measure the targeted writing skills. In the end, they agreed that the test could be interpreted as being valid and of content validity.

3-Internal Consistency Validity

The researcher used SPSS V.18 software to calculate the internal consistency validity of the test by computing the Pearson Correlation coefficient between the students' scores on each skill and their scores on the total test score.

Table (1) Correlation Coefficient of conventions skill of the Test

Item of the EFL persuasive writing test	Correlation
Convention	0.459*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level & 0.01 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level
It is evident from the preceding table that all correlation coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.05 and 0.01 significance levels, indicating acceptable internal consistency validity for the test

H- Discriminant validity of the test:

To verify the discriminant validity of the EFL **conventions skill writing test**, discriminant validity was calculated. 27% of the high scores from the pilot sample (30 students) and 27% of the low scores from the pilot sample were taken. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test was used to identify the significance of the differences between these means. The following table

shows the results of the differences between the mean ranks and the z-value between the two groups, and the results were as follows:

Table (٧) Results of the Differences between Mean Ranks and z-value Between the Two Groups for the conventions Writing Skills Test

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z- Value	Sig
The high – score group	8	12.50	100	3.371	0.01
The –low score group		4.50	36		

It is evident from the table that there is a statistically significant difference at the 0.01 level between the mean ranks of the high and low scoring groups, indicating that the test possesses a high degree of discriminant validity.

G-Calculating Test Reliability

The reliability of the test was calculated using the following methods:

1) Cronbach's Alpha Method:

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for the items of the EFL writing test , and its value reached (0.838), which is a high value indicating that the test has a high degree of reliability.

Scoring the EFL persuasive writing skill tests

To score the EFL writing skill tests, a rubric was used for scoring and marking students' persuasive compositions.

Students' Level in Persuasive Writing Skills:

To ensure the equivalence of the two study groups in persuasive writing skills, a t-test was calculated to determine the difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control group students in the pre-test of persuasive writing skill as a whole and in each of its sub-skills. This is according to the following table

Table (٨): T- test between the mean scores between the experimental and control groups of the pre-assessment of the persuasive writing test and its sub-skills.

Skill	Group	N	Mean	St. D	t	Df	Sig.
CONVENTION	Control	30	6.8000	2.46912	0.506	58	N.S.
	EXPE	30	7.1333	2.63574			

It is evident from the preceding table that the "t" value is not statistically significant at the $\alpha \leq 0.01$ level; in each sub-skill as well as in the test as a whole, indicating the equivalence of the two groups in conventions writing skills as a whole and in each of its sub-skills, before the implementation of the study experiment.

The teacher's guide for the Program based on the Digital approach

Purpose

Table (٤): t- test difference between the experimental and control groups in the post-test of persuasive writing skill as a whole and its sub-skills

convention	Control	30	8.7000	2.89053	15.806	58	0.01
	EXPE	30	17.7333	1.20153			
total	Control	30	63.1333	6.80128	42.007	58	0.01
	EXPE	30	137.6333	6.93558			

For the **convention scores**, the independent samples t-test yielded $t(58) = 15.806$, $p = .01$, indicating a significant difference favoring the experimental group.

The Program based on the Digital literacy approach aimed effectively at developing conventions writing skills and motivating students towards them through navigating some effective digital tools for secondary students at a Sadat City secondary school for girls (10th zone).

A- Objective

By the end of the program students are expected to:

- 1-Develop clear and concise writing
- 2-collaborate with peers: Share ideas, build on others' perspectives
- 3- Utilize digital publishing: Share writing through blogs, social media
- 4- Apply conventions

B- Principles of using digital literacy tools while trying to develop EFL conventions writing skills

-Pedagogical Principles

1. Authenticity: Use real-life scenarios, topics, and digital platforms to simulate authentic writing experiences.
2. Task-based learning: Design activities that focus on meaningful writing tasks rather than mere technical skills.
3. Collaboration: Encourage peer review, feedback, and joint projects to foster social learning.
4. Gradual release of responsibility: Progress from guided to independent writing tasks.
5. Formative assessment: Provide ongoing feedback and evaluation.

-Digital Literacy Principles

1. Multimodal composition: Incorporate images, videos, audio, and graphics to enhance persuasion.
2. Digital citizenship: Teach online etiquette, copyright laws, and responsible communication.
3. Critical evaluation: Encourage students to assess online sources' credibility and bias.
4. Technical skills: Develop proficiency in digital tools, such as writing platforms, multimedia software, and online collaboration tools.
1. Clear purpose: Establish a clear argument or claim.

2. Audience awareness: Consider target audience, tone, and language.
3. Organizational structure: Teach introduction-body-conclusion frameworks.
4. Rhetorical devices: Introduce literary devices (e.g., metaphor, repetition).
5. Evidence-based writing: Emphasize supporting claims with credible sources.

➤ Findings and Discussion

The post-test results revealed a statistically significant difference in writing conventions between the control group ($M = 8.70$, $SD = 2.89$) and the experimental group ($M = 17.73$, $SD = 1.20$), $t(58) = 15.81$, $p = .01$. This sharp improvement indicates that the integration of digital literacy tools was not merely associated with greater student enthusiasm but directly translated into measurable gains in accuracy. The reduction in mechanical errors, particularly in spelling and punctuation, supports the argument that real-time digital feedback enhances learners' metacognitive awareness, allowing them to self-correct more effectively. These findings are consistent with Szlachta et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of technology-enhanced feedback in improving student engagement and precision in writing. Furthermore, the observed enthusiasm among students aligns with motivation theories suggesting that autonomy and immediate feedback foster sustained engagement. Thus, the results not only confirm the program's effectiveness but also extend theoretical discussions by showing how digital literacy can bridge motivational and cognitive dimensions of writing development.

Implications and Recommendations

For Teachers

- Integrate digital tools (e.g., grammar-checkers, collaborative platforms) into daily writing instruction, not just as supplementary activities.
- Provide guided mini-lessons that combine automated feedback with teacher explanations to ensure students understand *why* errors occur.
- Encourage peer-review activities through online platforms to build collaborative learning and metacognitive awareness.

For Curriculum Designers

- Redesign writing curricula to embed digital literacy components explicitly within the assessment of writing conventions.
- Develop blended modules that balance traditional instruction with technology-enhanced tasks, ensuring that mechanical accuracy is reinforced alongside creativity and content.
- Incorporate formative digital assessments that track students' progress in conventions over time.

For Policymakers

- Allocate funding for schools to adopt reliable digital literacy platforms and provide ongoing technical support.
- Implement professional development programs to train teachers in digital pedagogy and effective use of AI-based feedback systems.
- Promote national or regional strategies that position digital literacy as a core competency in secondary education, aligning with global 21st-century skills frameworks.



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Conclusion

Conventions are a critical aspect of writing that contribute to clarity, correctness, and communication effectiveness. This research affirms that digital literacy can play a significant role in developing EFL learners' mastery of writing conventions, especially at the secondary school level. Through appropriate digital tools, students can receive timely feedback, gain awareness of their errors, and engage in meaningful writing practices. Integrating digital literacy into writing instruction represents a promising direction for improving EFL writing performance in the modern classroom.



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About the program

The session was designed to develop students' mastery of writing conventions through the integration of digital literacy tools. It began with a short teacher-led introduction explaining the importance of conventions such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar in producing clear and professional writing. Students were then guided to use digital platforms, including grammar-checking software and interactive editing tools, to identify and correct errors in sample texts. Afterward, they engaged in collaborative writing tasks through online platforms that allowed real-time peer feedback and teacher monitoring. The session emphasized multiple drafting, where students revised their work using digital feedback, encouraging reflection and self-correction. To conclude, a mini-lesson highlighted common errors observed during the activity, reinforcing the link between digital tools and accurate writing practices. The approach not only improved mechanical accuracy but also fostered learner autonomy, engagement, and metacognitive awareness. The whole intervention started at the beginning of the second semester of the academic year(2024/2025) and it lasted for about six weeks.

Mastering mechanics in Writing

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session students will have the ability to

- ✚ Understand the importance of conventions in persuasive writing
- ✚ Identify common conventions errors (e.g., grammar, punctuation, spelling)
- ✚ Practice applying conventions correctly
- ✚ Utilize digital tools to enhance writing skills and motivation

Role of the Teacher

- 1- Instructional Responsibilities
 - ✚ Guiding students through curriculum content
 - ✚ Encouraging critical thinking and skill development
 - ✚ Providing feedback and assessment
 - ✚ Lesson planning: Design engaging, structured lessons.
- ✚ Content delivery: Teach persuasive writing, digital literacy, and multimedia skills.
- 2- Digital Literacy Responsibilities
 - ✚ Digital tool integration: Incorporate multimedia and online resources.

- + Digital citizenship: Teach online safety, etiquette, and responsibility.
- + Technical support: Troubleshoot digital issues
- 3- Supportive Responsibilities
- + Creating inclusive learning environments
- + Offering individualized support
- + Fostering student motivation and engagement
- + Classroom management: Foster a productive, respectful learning environment.
- + Diversity and inclusion: Cater to diverse learning styles, abilities, and cultures.
- + Conflict resolution: Address and resolve classroom conflicts.
- + Emotional support: Provide emotional intelligence and well-being guidance.

Role of the Students

- + Engage in lessons
- + Complete assignments
- + Ask questions
- + Provide peer feedback
- + Attend office hours: Seek teacher guidance.
- + Participate in discussions
- + Provide feedback
- + Participate in assessments
- + Reflect on feedback
- + Peer review
- + Self-assess

Materials

- + Computers or tablets with internet access
- + Projector
- + Whiteboard or interactive whiteboard
- + Digital writing tools (e.g., Google Docs, Microsoft Word, Grammarly)
- + Sample persuasive texts (e.g., advertisements, editorials, speeches)

Procedures and description

1. Introduction (10 minutes)

- ❖ Warm-up: Begin with a brief discussion on the importance of clear and correct writing. Use a digital presentation tool (like PowerPoint or Google Slides) to share examples of common convention errors and their impact on writing.

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- ❖ **Defining Conventions:** Introduce the concept of conventions, explaining that they refer to the accepted rules of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization.

2. Analyzing Conventions in Persuasive Texts (15 minutes)

- ❖ **Digital Text Analysis:** Share a variety of persuasive texts (e.g., articles, blog posts, ads) with students. Use a digital annotation tool (like Kami or Notability) to highlight examples of correct and incorrect conventions.
- ❖ **Group Discussion:** Divide students into small groups and assign each group a text to analyze. Use a digital collaboration tool (like Google Docs or Microsoft Teams) to facilitate group discussions and share findings.

3. Practicing Conventions in Persuasive Writing (20 minutes)

- ❖ **Writing Prompt:** Present a persuasive writing prompt using a digital platform (e.g., Google Classroom or Canvas).
- ❖ **Digital Writing:** Encourage students to use digital writing tools (like Google Docs or Microsoft Word) to draft their essays.
- ❖ **Peer Review:** Utilize a digital peer review tool (like PeerGrade) to facilitate peer feedback on conventions, sentence structure, and overall clarity.

4. Techniques for Improving Conventions (15 minutes)

- ✚ **Proofreading Strategies:** Discuss effective proofreading strategies, such as reading aloud, reading backward, and using a proofreading checklist.
- ✚ **Using Grammar and Spell Checkers:** Explain how to use digital tools (like Grammarly) to identify and correct errors.
- ✚ **Understanding Punctuation Rules:** Review common punctuation rules, such as commas, semicolons, and colons.
- ✚ **Avoiding Common Errors:** Discuss common grammar and spelling errors, such as subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, and homophone confusion.

5. Conclusion (5 minutes)

- ✚ **Reflection:** Use a digital journal or discussion board to have students reflect on their learning and the challenges they faced.
- ✚ **Future Goals:** Set goals for future writing projects and discuss strategies for improving conventions and overall writing quality.

Digital Tools to Enhance Motivation:

- ✚ **Gamification:** Use online writing games and quizzes to make learning fun and engaging.
- ✚ **Progress Tracking:** Implement digital tools to track student progress and provide timely feedback.
- ✚ **Collaborative Learning:** Use digital platforms to facilitate group work and peer collaboration.
- ✚ **Visual Learning:** Incorporate visual elements (e.g., infographics, videos) to enhance understanding.
- ✚ **Personalized Learning:** Utilize adaptive learning tools to tailor instruction to individual needs.

Content: a general overview

Mechanics in writing are the nuts and bolts that hold your arguments together. While strong ideas are the foundation, flawless mechanics ensure your message is clear, professional, and impactful. Here's a focus on key mechanical elements for your Grade 11 persuasive writing:

1. Grammar: The Foundation

- ✚ **Subject-Verb Agreement:** Ensure your verbs always match the number (singular or plural) of their subjects.
 - Example: "The student *writes* well." vs. "The students *write* well."
- **Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement:** Pronouns must match the nouns they refer to in gender and number.
 - Example: "The teacher gave *her* students the assignment."
- ✚ **Verb Tense Consistency:** Maintain a consistent verb tense throughout your essay, unless there's a specific reason to shift tenses (e.g., describing past events).

2. Punctuation: The Guideposts

- ✚ **Commas:**
 - Use commas to separate items in a series.
 - Use commas to set off introductory phrases and clauses.
 - Use commas to separate independent clauses joined by coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, for, nor, yet, so).
- ✚ **Semicolons:**
 - Use semicolons to join two independent clauses that are closely related in meaning.
 - Use semicolons to separate items in a series that already contain commas.
- ✚ **Colons:**
 - Use colons to introduce lists, quotations, or explanations.
- ✚ **Apostrophes:**
 - Use apostrophes to show possession (e.g., "the student's essay").
 - Use apostrophes to create contractions (e.g., "don't," "it's").

3. Spelling and Usage:

- ✚ **Accurate Spelling:** Proofread carefully to catch any spelling errors. Utilize spell-checkers, but also rely on your own knowledge and a dictionary.
- ✚ **Precise Word Choice:** Select the most accurate and impactful words to convey your message. Avoid vague or overly general terms.
 - ✚ **Conciseness:** Use precise language and avoid unnecessary words or phrases.

4. Sentence Structure:

- ✚ **Vary Sentence Length and Structure:** Avoid monotony by using a mix of short, medium, and long sentences.
- ✚ **Parallelism:** Use parallel structure to create balanced and rhythmic sentences.
 - Example: "The student enjoys *reading, writing, and researching*."
- ✚ **Clarity and Conciseness:** Ensure your sentences are easy to understand and free from ambiguity.

5. Formatting:



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- ✚ **Consistent Formatting:** Follow the specified formatting guidelines (e.g., font size, spacing, margins) for your assignment.
 - ✚ **Clear Paragraphing:** Use clear paragraph breaks to organize your ideas and improve readability.
 - Tips for Mastering Mechanics:**
 - ✚ **Proofread Multiple Times:** Read your essay aloud to catch errors you might miss when reading silently.
 - ✚ **Utilize Online Resources:** Grammarly, Purdue OWL, and other online resources can provide valuable guidance.
 - ✚ **Seek Feedback:** Ask a peer or teacher to review your essay for mechanical errors.
 - ✚ **Practice Regularly:** Consistent practice is key to improving your mechanical skills.
- By diligently focusing on these mechanical elements, the teacher can ensure that students' persuasive writing is not only well-argued but also polished and professional.

Practice

Original Essay (Poor Conventions)

The internet is a good thing. Its a great tool. People use it for many things. They use it to talk to friends and family. They also use it to find information. The internet can be a great resource for students. It can also be used for fun. People can watch videos and play games. However, the internet can also be dangerous. People should be careful when they use it. They should not share personal information. They should also be aware of cyberbullying.

Revised Essay (Mastered Conventions)

The internet is a powerful tool that has revolutionized the way we live, learn, and connect. It serves as a vast repository of knowledge, enabling individuals to explore diverse subjects and acquire new skills. Moreover, the internet offers a plethora of entertainment options, from streaming movies and music to playing online games. However, this digital realm is not without its perils. Cyberbullying and identity theft are serious threats that can have devastating consequences. To navigate the internet safely, it is imperative to exercise caution, protect personal information, and be mindful of online interactions.

Specific Improvements in Conventions:

- **Sentence Structure:** The revised essay employs a variety of sentence structures, including simple, compound, and complex sentences, to enhance readability and clarity.
- **Punctuation:** Proper punctuation is used to clarify meaning and enhance the flow of the text.
- **Capitalization:** All proper nouns and the beginning of sentences are capitalized correctly.
- **Spelling:** The revised essay is free of spelling errors.
- **Grammar:** The revised essay adheres to standard grammar rules, including subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, and verb tense consistency.