

# **COLLABORATIVE AND PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING IN PROMOTING INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS' LEARNING AUTONOMY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

There is an indispensable need for language teachers to promote a more specific breakthrough in diverse wide-ranging Indonesian EFL classroom contexts. One of the efficient teaching-learning strategies worthwhile to achieve this holistic educational major objectivity is to promote student-centered learning approaches in which all learners are capable of constructing a vast array of knowledge jointly with their trusted learning companions. Responding to the resurgence of this learning strategy, both collaborative and problem-based learning enterprises can potentially breed more proficient, critical, creative, and autonomous L2 academicians. These positive matters may be due to the considerable number of precious learning opportunities imparted for learners to enrich each other's existent understanding in the light of meaningful sharing as well as intimate cooperative networking. This study was conducted by using a library approach to reveal the renewable findings out of the observed phenomenon. Thus, 30 collaborative along with problem-based learning studies conducted in Indonesian EFL learning contexts were overviewed in this study. Generally speaking, two specific major themes strongly suggested Indonesian EFL teachers incorporating collaborative and problem-based learning approaches in their multiverse second language classroom settings to promote more fruitful learning outcomes that suit learners' real-time life experiences.

**Keywords:** collaborative learning, problem-based learning,  
library study, learning autonomy

### ABSTRAK

Ada sebuah kebutuhan yang sangat krusial bagi para guru Bahasa untuk membawa sebuah terobosan yang spesifik di dalam keanekaragaman pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris konteks negara Indonesia. Salah satu dari strategi pembelajaran yang efektif untuk mewujudkan nilai holistik pendidikan ini adalah menerapkan metode pembelajaran berbasis *student-centered* dimana semua pelajar dapat memperkaya diri mereka dengan berbagai macam pengetahuan bersama-sama dengan rekan-rekan pembelajaran yang dipercaya. Berkenaan dengan kebangkitan dari strategi pembelajaran ini, pembelajaran berbasis kolaboratif serta pemecahan masalah berpeluang menghasilkan cendekiawan Bahasa kedua yang lebih cakap, kritis, kreatif, dan mandiri. Hal-hal positif dari pembelajaran ini barangkali disebabkan oleh banyaknya ketersediaan dari kesempatan belajar yang berharga ditujukan kepada para pelajar untuk memperkaya pemahaman mendasar mereka satu sama lainnya melalui *sharing* yang bermanfaat dan kerjasama kooperatif yang intim. Penelitian kualitatif ini menerapkan metode studi pustaka dengan meninjau hasil-hasil yang berarti dari 30 penelitian pembelajaran berbasis kolaboratif dan pemecahan masalah. Secara umum, 2 tema utama yang spesifik dengan kuat menganjurkan para guru Bahasa Inggris untuk menerapkan pembelajaran berbasis kolaboratif dan pemecahan masalah didalam konteks pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris yang beraneka ragam untuk mempromosikan pembelajaran yang lebih bermanfaat sesuai dengan konteks kehidupan sehari-hari para pelajar.

**Kata Kunci:** pembelajaran kolaboratif, pembelajaran berbasis pemecahan masalah, tinjauan pustaka, kemandirian belajar

### Introduction

In Indonesian educational contexts, the teacher-centered approach had been one of the prevalent educational enterprises plied by a considerable number of educationalists resulted in the rigid teaching-learning processes, passive learning conducts, and one-way

knowledge transmission. This fact is in concord with the finding of a previous study about Indonesian educational systems unearthed by Lengkanawati (2016) acclaiming that most Indonesian teachers were more liable to promote a teacher-centered learning approach as one of the classroom teaching strategies to transfer the knowledge dominantly to learners. In a similar vein, Yuliani and Lengkanawati (2017) also exclaim that Indonesian educators have more tendency to apply a teacher-centered approach in their diverse wide-ranging classroom contexts resulted in the learners' undecidedness to foster their learning autonomy, responsibility, and active participation.

Anchored on those aforementioned educational issues, the notion of learning autonomy had been one of the pivotal matters that should be inculcated earlier at the commencement of the Indonesian educational venture. Learning autonomy can be defined as the learners' capabilities of stipulating their predetermined learning objectives, managing their learning time judiciously, strategically incorporating a wider range of learning approaches, and rigorously striving amid laborious learning challenges to reach their targeted learning outcomes successfully. All these explanations seem to concur with the theory of learning autonomy postulated by Barillaro (2011) mentioning that learners inculcating a higher degree of learning autonomy will be better in exerting more potent controls over their ongoing learning dynamics through the well-planned selections of learning goals, strategies, and outcomes to be achieved soon.

Historically, the term learning autonomy was strongly grounded on the concept of a long-life education defined by Nasir et al., (2017) and Waseso (2018) stating that the major objective of a long-life education is to enable human beings to experience more holistic independent self-development processes by continually discovering a vast range of contextual knowledge or developing the targeted competencies throughout their lifetime. In correlation with Indonesian EFL learning contexts, second language teachers in this 21st-century era are commissioned to rejuvenate their roles as supportive learning facilitators for their learners to breed more qualified future academicians mastering problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. Widiawati et al., (2018) argue the integration of 21st-century skills comprising of problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and self-reliance should be well-nurtured in a vast range

of Indonesian classroom contexts to fully breed more competent academics.

To activate Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy, teachers need to provide varied engaging student-centered learning activities constantly. There are many types of student-centered learning activities appropriate with our learners like collaborative, cooperative, and problem-based learning. These potential learning activities are closely intertwined with the common practices of learning autonomy adduced by Riskiyana, Claramita, and Rahayu (2018) as well as Benson (2011) believing that learning autonomy can be well-established within diverse second language learning circumstances by honing learners' critical thinking, learning responsibility, and collaborative learning skills concurrently. In the light of this current study context, there are two major student-centered approaches believed to increase Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy namely collaborative and problem-based learning approaches. These two approaches are chosen to be overtly overviewed by the researcher since learners will potentially transform into more self-regulated, self-confident, self-reliant, proficient, and creative future L2 academicians due to the intense exposure to discovery learning processes and mutual social interactions with other learning members.

To reiterate, it is inescapable for Indonesian EFL teachers to continuously entrench more cogent constructions of learning autonomy through a wide array of meaningful, enjoyable, and transformative second language teaching-learning activities. Dealing with this objectivity, one of the effective 21st-century teaching-learning approaches worthwhile to be internalized in multiverse second language learning vicinities is collaborative learning. Through collaborative learning processes, it is strongly believed that learners will not merely infuse more robust establishment of learning autonomy but also other indispensable modern life competencies such as social, affective, collaborative, and cooperative skills. This may be due to the emerging needs for them to accomplish the challenging group learning projects given by their teachers by persistently erecting more intimate, mutual, and positive rapports with other group members to obtain the predetermined learning objectives successfully. The brief depictions of collaborative learning nature are inextricably associated with the theory of collaborative learning approach propounded by Jacobs and Shan (2016) averring that the primary objective of collaborative learning

activities is to allow all learners to work hand-in-hand in accomplishing the targeted learning tasks, maintain a higher level of cooperation with other learning companions, and cultivate a higher degree of learning commitment to achieve similar learning outcomes as a solid group. To actualize all of these positive collaborative learning impacts in EFL learning contexts, teachers are advocated to play less-domineering roles while supervising the group learning dynamics by creating a more pleasant, encouraging, and relaxing learning atmosphere in which learners have more precious opportunities to enrich each other's existing understanding of the specific learning topics possibly done through meaningful sharing resulted in the significant enhancement of learning autonomy and higher-order thinking skills. These rewarding second language occurrences are in partnership with the further theory explorations of collaborative learning approach declared by Lin and Lin (2019), Rokhaniyah (2016), and Togatorop (2015) stating that through the intimate relationships and intense cooperation everlastingly taking place among group collaborative learning members, learners will eventually reap more fruitful learning outcomes in terms of subject-mastery skills, the successful acquisition of higher-order thinking skills as well as learning autonomy.

In keeping with what had been delineated before, other possible advantages of ingraining collaborative learning habits in the existence of multiverse Indonesian EFL learning contexts are learners can transform into more mature academicians due to the contradictory perspectives held by other group learning members, the compassionate heart of learners was forged efficiently since they are commissioned to provide continual learning assistances for other struggling learning companions, and the holistic learning values will be fully attained since all learners are striving and thriving in equity during the long-lengthy learning processes. These line of argumentations lend further support from the theory of collaborative learning approach set out by Rokhaniyah (2016) articulating that learners possessing distinctive learning proficiency, interests, and preferences are prompted to work together with other learning counterparts in collaborative learning voyage finally transfigure them into more caring, critical, proficient, and outgoing figures. In a specific investigation on the impacts of collaborative learning strategy for the advancement of EFL learning contexts, Loes (2019) also encouraged EFL educationalists worldwide to incorporate the use of collaborative learning strategy in their second language classroom

surroundings since it promoted more authentic, exhilarating, and meaningful learning experiences for both teachers and learners where they could perhaps transform into more skilled academicians who are aware of the prevalent life issues pervasive in their daily basis.

This set of advantageous values promoted by the utilization of collaborative learning strategy offer richer avenues for the future advancement of EFL teaching-learning enterprises happening in Indonesian contexts. In collaborative learning processes, learners can potentially transfigure into more open-minded academicians embracing all of the uniqueness as well as contradictory views proposed by other learning community members. This matter is specifically true since learners consistently made proactive learning attempts to renew their prior, existent, and future perspectives in accord with other learning peers' saying, which in turn, significant for improving their overarching learning comprehension. Sembiring (2018) has likewise noted that through enlightening collaborative learning discussions, learners will be able to gain a more robust comprehension of the subject-specific matters since the group-oriented knowledge discovery was mutually made by all group learning members. Principally, the term collaborative learning approach was potently embedded in the three major preceding student-centered learning theories namely cooperative learning, constructivism, and zone of proximal development.

In a cooperative learning approach, learners are assigned to continually invest cooperation with others to broaden their existing understanding richly, Lee et al., (2014) argue that the major idea of enacting a collaborative learning strategy derived from cooperative learning wherein all learners' knowledge are mutually interconnected and disseminated for the betterment of learning dynamics. Similarly, constructivism can be deemed as an independent learning trajectory demanding learners to proactively construct ample knowledge since they are the main actors of their learning journeys. While teachers only act as their supportive learning facilitators. This definition was strongly espoused by the assertion of Piaget (1983) propounding that learners are inquired to be more proactive and autonomous knowledge discoverers in constructivism learning vicinities, while at the same time, teachers play renewable roles as their supportive learning facilitators (as cited in Lefa, 2014). In the ultimate seminal theory, zone of proximal development urged more proficient learners along with teachers to appropriately scaffold other developing learners' learning competencies

until they reached the targeted learning levels set out by the educational institution or classroom policies. This explication can be interwoven with the zone of proximal development theory invented by Vygotsky (1978) articulating that the mutual collaboration and problem-solving activities had been the main features forming the zone of proximal development practices which lead learners to acquire more privileges to achieve similar gratifying learning outcomes as well as competencies as their classroom learning peers did. Regarding all of these in-depth depictions of the three theories, it is fair to be accentuated here that the collaborative learning approach is a mutual learning encounter where all learners synergize cooperatively with other learning counterparts to broaden their current understanding of the subject-specific matters more expansively, unearth a substantiate number of new knowledge autonomously, and provide continual learning assistances for others to induce more striking learning progression.

The second 21st-century learning strategy which also indispensable needed in Indonesian EFL classroom vicinities is manifested in the form of a problem-based learning approach. Specifically, learners will be more spirited to continue uncovering a vast range of truth, efficient learning strategies, and out-of-the-box problem-solving strategies in problem-based learning activities. These three matters will continuously exercise by learners due to the contextual and real-life-based learning issues that need to be overcome at each phase of learning dynamics. This basic conception is germane with the theory of problem-based learning adduced by Bell (2010) affirming that the major learning duties shouldered by learners in problem-based learning activities are to work more cooperatively with other group learning members to overcome the assigned learning problems, jointly stipulate efficient learning strategies applicable with their group learning projects, and forge their creativity to accomplish the real-life problems bringing into their classroom contexts. During the pursuance of authentic second language learning assessments, problem-based learning activities can also act as a rewarding means to bring both teachers and learners to undergo more tangible teaching-learning experiences through some critical, encouraging, and meaning-making solutions discovery. In the pursuance of authentic second language learning tasks, problem-based learning is also beneficial in providing more tangible and contextual language learning assignments

commissioning learners to hone their critical thinking skills, learning autonomy, and creativity to proffer well-planned solutions in resolving the taxing learning challenges altogether as a solid learning group. This rewarding value is resonated well with the theory of collaborative learning tasks put forward by Aghayani and Hajmohammadi (2019) emphasizing the indispensable need for EFL teachers to integrate more authentic second language learning experiences manifested in the form of real-life based learning tasks potentially intriguing their learners to generate more high-quality learning products by the end of learning dynamics. The further incorporation of problem-based learning activities is also considered essential for the striking enhancement of EFL learners' critical thinking skills development. As already alluded to, problem-based learning dynamics demand each learner to construct a more constructive framework of perspectives to be further harnessed in overcoming the given learning issues addressed by their teachers. More crucially, learners can also better construct more pleasurable second language learning enterprises through these learning trajectories since they are capable of maintaining positive interactions with other learning companions reciprocally affecting their critical thinking as well as social skills growth. Dole, Bloom, and Doss (2017) postulate that the accurate integration of problem-based learning activities will bring about significant transformation for learners' critical thinking, social, and independent learning skills. In a similar perspective, Shehadeh (2011), as well as Dobao (2012), also prompted EFL teachers to actualize problem-based learning dynamics mutually associated with learners' self-discovery, social interactions, and seamless group learning interactions to extensively enhance their critical thinking along with learning autonomy skills.

Concerning the exhaustive explications regarding the significance of collaborative learning and problem-based learning approaches in sustaining Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy, this present library study was designed to further impart more obvious and authentic overviews concerning the paramount roles of these two 21st century teaching-learning strategies for the successful inculcation of learners' learning autonomy.

### **Research Questions**

- a. To what extent do collaborative learning activities promote Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy?



b. To what extent do problem-based learning activities promote Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy?

### **Research Methodology**

This present qualitative study was conducted by using a library study approach to provide a strong emphasis regarding the pivotal roles of collaborative and problem-based learning approaches in promoting Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy. To fulfill this primary research objectivity, 30 prior studies delving more exhaustively about the rewarding merits of incorporating both collaborative and problem-based learning approaches would be elaborated in the further subsections to impart more trustworthy evidence that these two student-centered learning approaches had benefited Indonesian EFL teaching-learning enterprises holistically. These 30 prior studies were derived from varied accredited journal articles in Indonesia. Thus, the researcher subsumed each research finding in some specific themes to provide more robust data argumentations in the later section. After conducting an in-depth categorization, 2 specific themes emerged namely: (1) Collaborative learning activities yield more fruitful EFL learning outcomes and (2) problem-based learning activities increased learners' life problem-solving capacities.

### **Findings and Discussion**

As mentioned in the prior subsection, this current section aimed to give more overt delineations concerning the important roles of collaborative learning and problem-based learning approaches in promoting Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy. By subdividing the data into the aforementioned 2 themes, the researcher was capable of creating more obvious discernment for the readers regarding the significance of these 2 student-centered learning approaches to be applied in our ELT learning climates. To comply with this specific research objective, the major findings obtained from the previous 30 studies of collaborative and problem-based learning strategies will be further elaborated in this section to strongly encourage Indonesian educationalists to cultivate these 2 student-centered learning approaches continuously in their diverse wide-ranging EFL classroom circumstances. For the effectiveness of the data gathering argumentations, the researcher is going to sort out these 30 studies in the forms of the excerpts in order to ease readers to comprehend the major research results. With regard to the limitations of space in this

article, the researcher also decided to select 13 out of the 30 studies to be overviewed in order to avoid unintended bias.

**Table 1.** Collaborative learning activities yield more fruitful EFL learning outcomes

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| Theme 1   | Evidence Taken from the Articles   |
|---|--|
| Collaborative learning activities yield more fruitful EFL learning outcomes | <p>Findings taken Wiraningsih and Santosa (2020): Indonesian EFL experts, practitioners, policy-makers, and educators need to incorporate collaborative learning activities in order to promote learning autonomy.</p> <p>Findings taken from Budiarta and Vanessa (2021): Collaborative learning activities fostered both Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy and writing skills at the same time.</p> <p>Findings taken from Arifin and Asad (2019): Collaborative learning activities promoted significant benefits for Indonesian EFL learners' communicative competencies and learning autonomy behavior.</p> <p>Findings taken from Rokhaniyah (2016): More positive collaborative learning activities improved Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy and innovative thinking skills.</p> <p>Findings taken from Sanjadireja (2019): Collaborative learning activities promoted a higher degree of learning autonomy proactive learning behaviors.</p> <p>Findings taken from Sembiring (2018): Collaborative learning activities heightened Indonesian EFL learners' social, affective, and L2 learning skills.</p> |

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Findings taken from Azis and Husnawadi (2020): positive collaborative learning vicinities allowed Indonesian EFL learners to produce more qualified writing products.

Findings taken from Lubis, Lubis, and Purba (2020): The internalization of collaborative learning enterprises transformed Indonesian EFL learners into more autonomous and proficient L2 speakers.

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Based on table 1, it can be parsed that collaborative learning activities enable Indonesian EFL learners to gain more fruitful language learning outcomes. This successful gain is influenced by life-long learning endeavor, positive group networking, and supportive learning surroundings designed by each learning community member eventually leading them to reap more gratifying learning outcomes through collaborative learning activities. This first finding is closely interlinked with collaborative learning finding discovered by Wiraningsih and Santosa (2020) prompting Indonesian EFL educators to consistently implement collaborative learning activities in their variegated second language vicinities to breed more autonomous language learners. Similarly, Budiarta and Vanessa (2021) also revealed that the majority of Indonesian EFL learners had successfully developed their academic writing skills through the inducement of meaningful collaborative learning activities. In an identical previous study, Arifin and Asad (2019) encouraged Indonesian EFL teachers to design more contextual collaborative learning activities in varied speaking classroom contexts to provide more extensive opportunities for learners to rehearse their second language communicative competencies more efficiently resulted in robust learning autonomy development.

Besides transfiguring into more competent and critical second language academicians, collaborative learning activities also empower Indonesian EFL learners to be more creative, sensible, and innovative thinkers embracing a vast array of diverse learning members' perspectives surrounding their learning journeys. These aforementioned attributes are inextricably associated with learning autonomy since autonomous learners can be deemed as respectful, responsible, and

mature academicians willing to expand their learning development. These positive values strengthened a collaborative learning study conducted by Rokhaniyah (2016) unearthing that collaborative learning dynamics allowed Indonesian EFL learners to elevate their learning autonomy and innovative thinking skills concurrently in pleasurable learning vicinities. Sanjadireja (2019) also advocated Indonesian EFL teachers to promote more encouraging collaborative learning dynamics where learners can hone their learning autonomy and proactive learning characters simultaneously.

To release these above-mentioned rewarding learning merits, it is of critical for Indonesian EFL learners to establish more positive social interdependence, mutual cooperation, and good communication with other learning counterparts in order to altogether obtain similar rewarding learning benefits. Sembiring (2018) averring that mutual collaborative learning activities would allow Indonesian EFL learners to improve their social, affective, and target language learning competencies into the fullest potentials. Azis and Husnawadi (2020) prompted Indonesian EFL learners to create more positive collaborative learning activities in writing classes in order to jointly generate high-quality writing products. Lubis, Lubis, and Purba (2020) also encouraged Indonesian EFL teachers to promote more interactive collaborative speaking learning enterprises in order to progressively develop their proactive learning behavior as well as communicative language competencies.

**Table 2.** Problem-based learning activities increased learners' life problem-solving capacities.

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| Theme 2  | Authors   |
|--|---|
| Problem-based learning activities increased learners' life problem-solving capacities. | Findings obtained from Mali (2016): Problem-based learning activities allowed positive springboards for Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy and problem-solving skills.              |
|  | Findings obtained from Putri, Artini, and Nitiasih (2017): Problem-based learning activities strongly encouraged Indonesian EFL learners to expand their target language skills constantly. |

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Findings obtained from Murniati (2016): Problem-based learning activities transfigured Indonesian EFL learners into more autonomous and strategic target language academicians.

Findings obtained from Affandi and Sukyadi (2016): Indonesian EFL learners were capable of resolving their learning impediments independently after being exposed to problem-based learning activities.

Findings obtained from Yuliani and Lengkanawati (2017): Indonesian EFL learners were adept in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning progression in the light of problem-based learning activities.

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As can be discerned in table 2, the integration of the problem-based learning approach is also indispensably important to increase Indonesian EFL learners' problem-solving capacities. These problem-solving activities are jointly connected with learning autonomy since learners possessing a higher degree of problem-solving capacities will be more capable of inventing various efficient solutions to resolve their targeted learning impediments as well as tangible real-life issues. This basic characteristic is in line with the primary finding of a previous problem-based learning study unfolded by Mali (2016) advocating Indonesian EFL teachers to implement problem-based learning activities at the commencement of second language learning venture in order to enable learners to elevate their learning autonomy as well as problem-solving skills intensively.

There are a vast range of requirements for Indonesian EFL teachers intending to breed more autonomous learners implanting problem-solving skills namely creating more student-centered learning environments in which learners' life-long learning characters are continuously thriving , exposing learners to a wider range of challenging learning activities shouldering a higher level of learning responsibility, and creating more pleasurable learning dynamics useful for learners to progressively increase their language learning competencies. These 3 requirements were accorded by Putri, Artini, and Nitiasih (2017)

avowing that more meaningful problem-based learning dynamics nurture Indonesian EFL learners' strong learning endeavor to continually foster their target language learning skills. Murniati (2016) also discovered that problem-based learning activities successfully transfigured Indonesian EFL learners into more self-reliant and strategic target language academicians. On beneficial action Indonesian EFL teachers can carry out to release these advantageous problem-based learning values is to rejuvenate their roles as supportive learning facilitators for their learners.

In addition, it is also worth advocating for Indonesian EFL learners to deepen their existing knowledge and cultivate their second language skills insistently to ingrain more robust learning autonomy development. This contention is closely intertwined with the problem-based learning finding unearthed by Affandi and Sukyadi (2016) displaying that the majority of Indonesian EFL learners transfigured into more creative, innovative, independent, and competent second language academicians through more mutual problem-based learning enterprises. This main finding is contingent on the results of another problem-based learning study unveiled by Yuliani and Lengkanawati (2017) confirming that Indonesian EFL learners had become more independent knowledge seekers by planning, monitoring, and evaluating their second language learning processes in the presence of problem-based learning activities

## **Conclusion**

Given this complex picture, it can be phrased that the richer cultivation of Indonesian EFL learners' learning autonomy can be efficiently built up under the precise integration of collaborative as well as problem-based learning approaches. As a brief overview, these two student-centered learning strategies are inextricably interwoven with 21st-century skills since learners progressively transformed into more critical thinkers, independent knowledge discoverers, creative conception interpreters, efficient problem-solvers, prudent decision-makers, and proactive knowledge disseminators. The results yielded by this current library study allow for further encouragement for Indonesian EFL experts, policy-makers, practitioners, and educators to specifically enact more contextual collaborative learning activities transferable to diverse wide-ranging EFL classroom settings to ascertain

that the full promotion of transformative learning enterprises was extensively experienced by all learning community members. Further future library studies are advocated to be run to delve more profoundly into the advantageous values of these two student-centered learning approaches when implanted in one of the four language skills; listening, speaking, reading, and writing to generate more durable and generalizable research findings significantly contributable for the advancement of Indonesian future EFL teaching-learning practices.

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