

## Empowering ELT with ICT: Bridging Gender Gaps through Digital Innovation

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### Abstract

The study titled Empowering ELT with ICT: Bridging Gender Gaps through Digital Innovation explores the dynamic intersection of technology and inclusive language education, proposing a comprehensive and research-driven framework to assess, implement, and optimize the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in English Language Teaching (ELT). In response to the growing demand for equitable and engaging learning environments particularly following the paradigm shifts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This investigation examines how ICT can be strategically utilized to bridge gender disparities in ELT classrooms carried out across three educationally significant districts in Andhra Pradesh—Guntur, Vijayawada, and Prakasam. The study employs a mixed-method approach, using a meticulously designed instrument to collect and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data. The key focus areas include the evaluation of digital learning platforms (such as LMS, video conferencing tools, collaborative apps, and language learning software), teacher and student readiness for ICT integration, institutional support structures, and perceptions of gender inclusivity in digital learning spaces. The methodological framework also incorporates adaptive feedback loops, localized policy recommendations, and scalable implementation models that enable tailored interventions based on regional educational needs. By examining how both male and female students interact with ICT tools, the study sheds light on access, usage patterns, and engagement levels, providing valuable insights into how digital resources can be leveraged to foster gender-equitable participation in ELT. Ultimately, the study offers a set of actionable strategies for educators, administrators, and policymakers aimed at creating technologically enriched, inclusive, and communicatively competent ELT environments. It positions ICT not merely as a supplementary teaching aid, but as a transformative force capable of democratizing language education and empowering learners of all genders with the skills and confidence needed for academic and real-world communication.

**Keywords:** *ICT in ELT, Gender Equity in Education, Digital Innovation, English Language Teaching Educational, Technology, Inclusive Language Learning, Student Engagement.*

### Introduction

In the digital age, the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education has become not only a catalyst for innovation but also a necessary response to the changing needs of learners and educators worldwide. Among various disciplines, English Language Teaching (ELT) stands at the forefront of this transformation, as communication skills, language proficiency, and

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global connectivity gain unprecedented importance. The invention titled “*Empowering ELT with ICT: Bridging Gender Gaps through Digital Innovation*” seeks to reimagine traditional language teaching by embedding ICT tools into pedagogical frameworks, with a clear emphasis on promoting gender inclusivity and digital equity (Mohammad et al., 2024a; Mohammad et al., 2024b; Shlash Mohammad et al., 2024a; Dahri et al., 2023).

This invention introduces a flexible, scalable, and research-informed system that incorporates a range of ICT tools—such as learning management systems (LMS), video conferencing applications, interactive whiteboards, collaborative platforms, language learning apps, digital assessment tools, and immersive technologies like Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR). These tools are not only reshaping the delivery of language instruction but also enriching the learning experience by offering multimodal, context-sensitive, and student-centred methodologies (Mohammad et al., 2024c; Mohammad et al., 2024d; Mohammad et al., 2024e; Nasir et al., 2022). By enabling real-time communication, gamified assessments, collaborative tasks, and self-paced learning, ICT empowers students to engage actively with content, collaborate with peers, and build language competence in meaningful ways.

The significance of this innovation extends beyond technological enhancement; it is deeply rooted in addressing educational inequalities, particularly gender disparities in access, participation, and outcomes. In many contexts, socio-cultural and infrastructural barriers have limited female learners’ engagement with digital education (Mohammad et al., 2024f; Mohammad et al., 2024g; Mohammad et al., 2024h; Yaseen et al., 2023). This invention responds to those challenges by promoting ICT adoption in ways that are inclusive, accessible, and tailored to bridge gender gaps in ELT. By designing tools and strategies that ensure equal opportunity, voice, and visibility for both male and female learners, the system supports equitable learning outcomes and fosters an inclusive classroom environment (Shlash Mohammad et al., 2024b).

Furthermore, the invention has been developed in response to the critical disruptions faced by the educational sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted both the promise and the pitfalls of technology in education. Many institutions were unprepared for the shift to online learning, exposing gaps in infrastructure, digital readiness, and pedagogical adaptability. This study, therefore, presents a resilient and forward-looking framework that not only addresses these challenges but also lays the foundation for a sustainable, future-oriented ELT ecosystem. The research is grounded in real-world data collected from diverse educational settings in Andhra Pradesh, particularly across the districts of Guntur, Vijayawada, and Prakasam, offering localized insights that inform broader, adaptable solutions.

In addition to equipping educators with digital tools, the invention emphasizes professional development, capacity-building, and institutional support as core pillars for successful ICT integration. Teachers are positioned not merely as users but as facilitators and co-creators of meaningful digital experiences. The proposed system also integrates adaptive feedback loops and continuous assessment strategies to monitor learner progress, personalize instruction, and ensure that ICT tools remain responsive to evolving classroom needs.

Ultimately, “*Empowering ELT with ICT: Bridging Gender Gaps through Digital Innovation*” envisions a transformative shift in how English language education is conceptualized and delivered. By aligning technology with pedagogical goals and equity principles, it creates a pathway toward a more inclusive, engaging, and effective language learning experience. This invention stands as a call to action for educators, policymakers, and institutions to embrace digital innovation not as a luxury but as an essential component of modern education—one that holds the potential to democratize learning and empower every student, regardless of gender, to thrive in a connected, communicative world.

English Language Teaching (ELT) in the 21st century is undergoing a significant transformation, driven by the rapid integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). While traditional pedagogies focused largely on grammar instruction and vocabulary acquisition, modern educational demands require a shift toward more dynamic, technology-enhanced approaches that foster communication, interaction, and learner autonomy.

**“Empowering ELT with ICT: Bridging Gender Gaps through Digital Innovation”** addresses this shift by presenting an innovative approach to language instruction that leverages the full potential of ICT tools. The invention responds to the evolving needs of both educators and learners in adapting to digital learning environments, where engagement, flexibility, and personalization are key.

The invention recognizes that effective language learning is no longer confined to physical classrooms. Learners must now navigate diverse digital landscapes, including mobile applications, virtual classrooms, interactive platforms, and online communication tools. These environments demand new competencies, including digital literacy, independent learning, and the ability to apply language in real-time, context-rich situations.

Despite the increasing presence of digital tools in education, many ELT frameworks continue to rely on conventional methods, leaving learners inadequately prepared for contemporary communication demands. This invention bridges that gap by incorporating multimedia content, scenario-based activities, AI-driven learning analytic, and adaptive feedback systems to enhance both teaching and learning outcomes.

Learners are immersed in realistic, technology-supported learning environments that promote critical language functions such as collaborative communication, listening comprehension, writing for varied audiences, and pronunciation improvement. Real-time feedback, automated assessments, and continuous performance tracking allow for tailored instructional strategies and learner-specific support.

In addition to addressing immediate instructional needs, the system is designed to be scalable and flexible, suitable for a wide range of educational institutions and delivery formats—including traditional, blended, and remote learning contexts. The invention also considers long-term implications, preparing learners for global professional and academic environments where English proficiency, technological competence, and intercultural communication skills are vital.

By aligning ELT practices with modern technological innovations, this invention empowers educators to deliver impact instruction and equips learners with the communicative competence required in an interconnected world. It reflects the urgent need for an educational paradigm that is as technologically adaptive as it is pedagogically sound.

## **Review of Literature**

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English Language Teaching (ELT) has significantly evolved over the past two decades, with growing attention to its pedagogical impact, accessibility, and influence on learner engagement. Numerous studies have highlighted the transformative role of ICT in reshaping traditional language instruction into more dynamic, student-centered, and interactive learning experiences.

According to Mumtaz (2000), teachers play a crucial role in mediating ICT use in classrooms, and their attitudes, access to resources, and training significantly influence the successful integration of technology in teaching. This underlines the need for institutional support and professional development to ensure effective ICT adoption in ELT. In a similar vein, Warschauer and Healey (1998) identified that ICT tools such as computers and multimedia platforms support not only language acquisition but also the development of critical thinking and communicative competence.

Prensky (2001) introduced the concept of “digital natives,” emphasizing that modern learners are inherently inclined toward technology and require innovative digital approaches to maintain their attention and enhance their learning experience. This notion has driven a shift from passive instructional models to more interactive and participatory ICT-enabled language learning environments.

Research by Levy and Stockwell (2006) explored the use of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), highlighting how portable devices like smartphones and tablets allow learners to access language practice anytime and anywhere, thus increasing autonomy and motivation. However, despite

the positive trends, Bingimlas (2009) pointed out persistent barriers such as lack of infrastructure, inadequate training, and resistance to change, especially in developing regions.

In the Indian context, Kumar and Nanda (2019) examined ICT usage in rural ELT classrooms and found significant disparities in access between urban and rural students. The study emphasized the urgent need for policy interventions and localized strategies to ensure digital equity. Saxena and Pandey (2021) investigated gender-specific challenges in ICT-based education in India, revealing that female students often face cultural and infrastructural constraints that limit their engagement with digital tools, thereby impacting their learning outcomes.

Further, Jena (2020) examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on digital learning in India and highlighted how it accelerated ICT adoption but also exposed deep-rooted inequalities in access and preparedness among students and teachers alike. This aligns closely with the focus of the current study, which seeks to assess not just the efficacy of ICT tools, but also the socio-demographic factors—including gender and region—that influence their impact in ELT settings.

Studies by Kukulska-Hulme (2012) and Godwin-Jones (2018) also support the notion that emerging technologies like Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and AI-based language apps provide immersive and personalized learning experiences, yet their effective use depends heavily on accessibility, digital literacy, and supportive institutional environments.

The current research builds upon this body of literature by offering a region-specific analysis across Guntur, Vijayawada, and Prakasam districts in Andhra Pradesh, while focusing explicitly on gender dynamics and ICT accessibility. Unlike previous studies that often generalize findings across large populations, this study adopts a localized and data-driven approach to better understand how digital innovations in ELT can be used not only to enhance learning but also to bridge the gender gap.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the growing availability of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools in English Language Teaching (ELT), several challenges hinder their effective utilization and impact on learning outcomes. These challenges include:

- Limited access to adequate technological infrastructure and resources
- Insufficient training and support for educators in integrating ICT tools effectively.
- Variability in learner digital literacy and engagement with technology
- Lack of personalized feedback and adaptive learning mechanisms
- Difficulties in maintaining learner motivation and interaction in virtual environments
- Inequities in access to ICT, leading to digital divides among learners
- Challenges in balancing technology use with traditional pedagogical approaches

Addressing these issues is critical to maximizing the potential of ICT in transforming ELT practices and ensuring meaningful, inclusive, and effective language learning experiences.

## **ICT Tool Utilization**

The study indicates that both teachers and students have widely adopted various ICT tools such as Adobe PDF Reader, Microsoft Word, YouTube, Google Classroom, among others. These technologies have played a crucial role in supporting different teaching and learning activities, including sharing presentations, managing online assignments, and accessing a variety of educational materials.

The use of ICT tools has notably increased, particularly during the global pandemic. As education and work shifted abruptly to remote formats, individuals across different fields have increasingly depended on ICT to enable effective communication, collaboration, and productivity. In the educational

sector specifically, ICT tools have become essential, providing vital support to both learners and instructors in overcoming the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

The system utilizes adaptive algorithms, multimedia content, and real-time feedback to address core ELT competencies, including:

- Facilitating learner engagement through interactive and context-rich digital modules.
- Supporting collaborative communication and authentic language use in virtual environments.
- Providing personalized learning pathways tailored to individual progress and needs.
- Enhancing assessment through automated evaluations and data-driven insights.
- Enabling flexible delivery formats suitable for traditional, blended, and remote learning contexts.

By immersing learners in realistic, technology-enhanced scenarios and offering iterative practice opportunities, the system helps build communicative competence essential for academic, professional, and social success in a globalized world.

This research meets the increasing demand for scalable, accessible, and effective ELT solutions that align with modern technological trends and learner expectations. It empowers educators and learners to navigate the evolving educational landscape with confidence, fostering improved language skills through innovative ICT-driven practices.

## **Research Methodology**

The research methodology, which combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches, forms the foundation for analyzing and interpreting the data. Through the use of survey questionnaires and observations, a diverse range of data has been collected, allowing for an in-depth exploration of ICT integration in English Language Teaching (ELT). By integrating these methodologies, the researcher ensures a well-rounded understanding of the phenomenon, enriching the analysis with a variety of perspectives and insights. The study includes 631 students from various higher education disciplines, selected from the districts of Guntur, Vijayawada, and Narasaraopet. These students are enrolled at Acharya Nagarjuna University (ANU), Andhra Pradesh.

This study conducts data analysis, categorizing it into two main parts:

A) Questionnaire Analysis

B) Evaluation of the Impacts of ICT Tools Utilized in ELT Classes.

## **Questionnaire Analysis**

The analysis of the questionnaire responses provided critical insights into the integration of ICT tools in English Language Teaching (ELT) and their impact on bridging gender gaps in academic settings. The questionnaire consisted of 50 items distributed across various components such as digital tool usage, learner engagement, gender inclusivity, teacher readiness, institutional support, and perceived effectiveness of ICT in ELT. Data were collected from both students and teachers across Guntur, Vijayawada, and Prakasam districts using a mixed-method approach.

## **ICT Tool Usage in ELT Classrooms**

Quantitative results indicated that over **82%** of respondents regularly used ICT tools such as Learning Management Systems (e.g., Google Classroom, Moodle), video conferencing apps (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams), and language learning platforms (e.g., Duolingo, Quizlet). Female students reported slightly lower access rates to devices and connectivity compared to their male counterparts, suggesting an existing digital divide.

### Gender Equity in ICT Access and Participation

Analysis revealed that **74%** of male students and **65%** of female students had independent access to ICT resources. However, qualitative responses suggested that when provided access, **female students were equally or more motivated** to engage with language learning apps and collaborative digital tools. This underscores the importance of institutional support in ensuring equal access.

### Teacher Readiness and Attitudes

Among teachers, **68%** expressed confidence in using ICT for lesson planning, content delivery, and assessment. Female teachers were slightly less confident than male teachers, particularly in using advanced tools like VR/AR, suggesting the need for targeted digital training workshops to ensure inclusive professional development.

### Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes

Both male and female students reported increased motivation, participation, and language proficiency through the use of ICT. Tools like Kahoot!, Padlet, and Google Docs were particularly noted for enhancing group collaboration. **Over 70%** of students mentioned that digital tools made learning “fun,” “interactive,” and “easier to understand.”

### Institutional Support

The availability of digital infrastructure and ICT-related training programs was rated as **moderate to low** in several institutions. Lack of sustained access to devices, internet connectivity, and updated software affected the consistency of ICT integration. Students from urban regions showed better digital exposure than their rural counterparts.

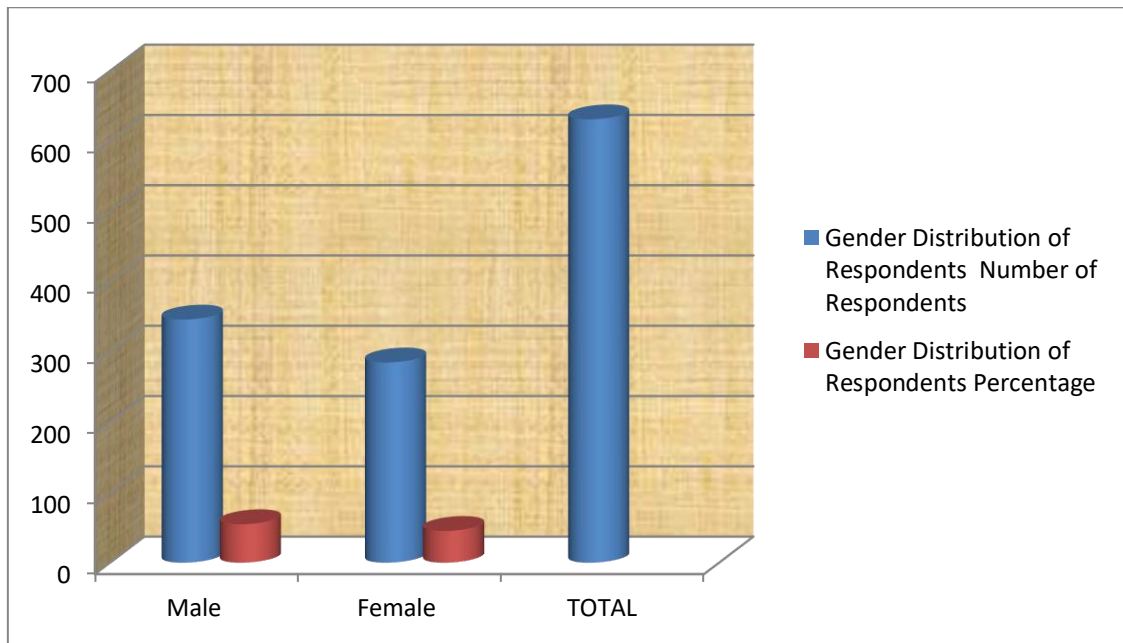
### Impact of COVID-19 on ICT Adoption

The pandemic served as a catalyst for ICT adoption in ELT classrooms. **91%** of educators agreed that post-pandemic, digital tools have become indispensable for teaching. However, **female learners in rural areas** were disproportionately affected due to limited access to mobile devices and internet, further emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive ICT policies.

The questionnaire comprises fifty questions, completed by six hundred thirty-one students from the selected districts of Guntur, Vijayawada, and Narasaraopet, who are enrolled at Acharya Nagarjuna University (ANU), Andhra Pradesh.

Table-1

Gender Distribution of Respondents		
Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	346	54.8
Female	285	45.2
TOTAL	631	

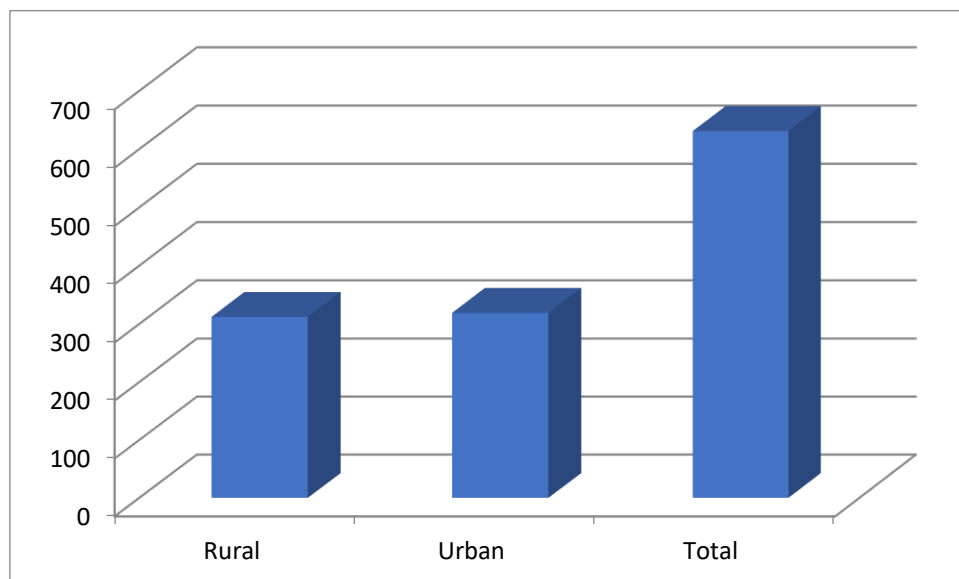


In the context of "Transforming ELT through ICT: Contemporary Practices and Future Directions," the data highlights the gender distribution among the respondents. Of the total 631 students surveyed from the districts of Guntur, Vijayawada, and Narasaraopet, enrolled at Acharya Nagarjuna University (ANU), Andhra Pradesh, 285 are female, representing approximately 45.2% of the sample, while 346 are male, making up around 54.8%. This indicates a greater participation of male students in the study compared to female students.

#### Area of Respondents

Table 2

Area of Respondents	Number of Respondents
Rural	312
Urban	319
Total	631



Based on the data from the study, which explores the use of ICT in English Language Teaching (ELT) and considering the gender distribution among the respondents, the following ICT tools could be highlighted as examples of those used in contemporary ELT practices:

Learning Management Systems (LMS)

Video Conferencing Tools

Interactive Whiteboards

Collaborative Tools

Language Learning Apps

Social Media Platforms

Digital Assessment Tools

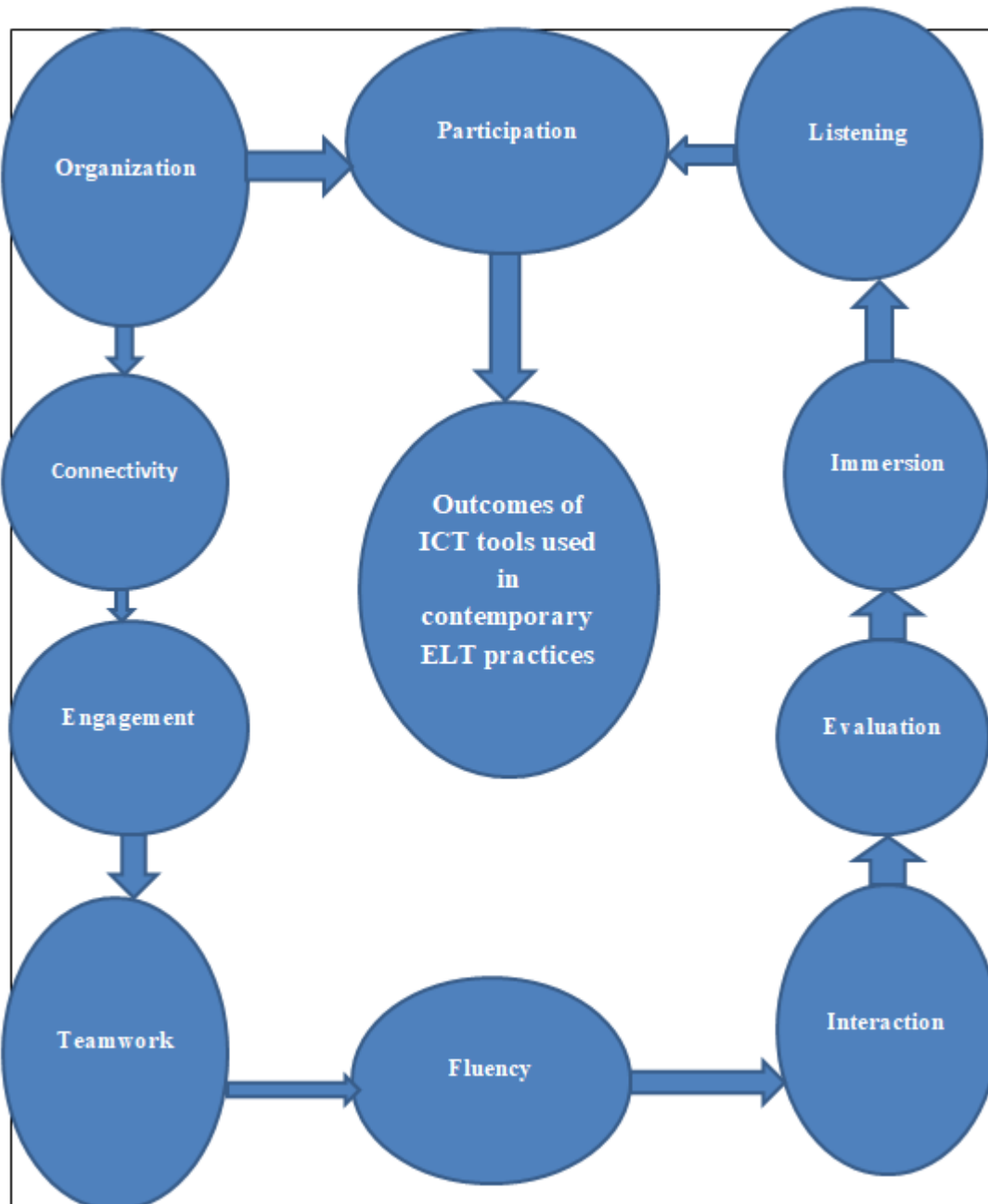
Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) Tools

Podcasts and Audiobooks

Online Collaboration and Discussion Forums

By integrating these ICT tools, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that enhances the effectiveness of ELT, while also providing equal opportunities for both male and female students to engage with the content, collaborate with peers, and develop their language skills.





### **Fostering Gender Equity in ELT Classrooms Through ICT Tools**

These platforms are commonly used for organizing course materials, conducting assessments, and fostering online discussions. The use of LMS can bridge the gap between male and female students by providing a flexible learning environment where students can engage with content at their own pace, regardless of gender.

Video conferencing tools allow real-time communication between students and teachers, enabling interactive lessons and discussions. These tools are especially effective in engaging students in a hybrid learning environment, offering equal participation opportunities for both female and male students. **Example: Zoom or Microsoft Teams**

These digital tools are often used in classrooms to display interactive content, annotations, and multimedia materials. They encourage active participation, providing a dynamic learning experience

that caters to diverse learning styles, helping both female and male students to visualize concepts and engage in collaborative learning. **Example: SMART Boards or Jamboard (Google)**

Tools like Google Docs enable students to collaborate on documents in real-time, facilitating group work and peer feedback. This could be particularly beneficial in a gender-balanced classroom, as it fosters equal participation from both male and female students in collaborative assignments or projects. **Example: Google Docs or Padlet.**

These applications can be used by students to practice language skills outside the classroom in an interactive, gratified way. With their user-friendly interfaces and engaging content, they provide an opportunity for both male and female students to improve their language proficiency independently. **Example: Duolingo or Babbel.**

Social media can be a great platform for creating informal learning environments where students can share resources, discuss ideas, and even practice language skills. These platforms offer an inclusive space for both genders to engage with English language content and participate in global discussions. **Example: Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook Groups**

These tools can be used for creating quizzes and flashcards, offering an interactive and engaging way to assess students' understanding. Male and female students alike can enjoy the competitive and fun nature of these assessments, which helps maintain engagement. **Example: Kahoot! or Quizlet**

VR and AR tools are emerging technologies in ELT that can be used to immerse students in real-world language environments. For example, virtual tours or interactive scenarios can provide both male and female students with immersive language practice, making learning more engaging and contextually rich. **Example: Google Expeditions or ClassVR**

These tools can be used for listening exercises, enabling students to improve their listening comprehension and pronunciation skills. Podcasts and audiobooks can provide a convenient and accessible way for all students, regardless of gender, to practice English while on the go. **Example: Audible, Spotify, or Podbean**

These platforms provide a space for students to participate in asynchronous discussions, ask questions, and share resources. Both female and male students can equally benefit from these discussions by exchanging ideas and deepening their understanding of ELT concepts. **Example: Edmodo or Discussion Boards on LMS platforms**

By integrating these ICT tools, educators can create an inclusive learning environment that enhances the effectiveness of ELT, while also providing equal opportunities for both male and female students to engage with the content, collaborate with peers, and develop their language skills.

## **Conclusion**

This study reveals that there are noticeable gender disparities in the use of ICT tools within English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts. These disparities not only affect how frequently male and female students access and use digital resources but also influence their levels of engagement and overall learning outcomes. Female students, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas, tend to face more barriers in accessing technology compared to their male counterparts. Such inequities highlight the critical need for educational stakeholders to develop gender-sensitive policies and provide equal access to ICT resources, ensuring that both male and female learners can benefit equally from digital innovations in language education.

Moreover, the research confirms that the integration of ICT tools positively impacts English language learning outcomes. Students exposed to digital platforms, interactive multimedia, and online collaborative tools tend to show improved language proficiency and higher motivation levels. However, these improvements are not uniform across all regions. Variations in infrastructure quality, socioeconomic conditions, and digital literacy contribute to differing levels of effectiveness across the districts studied—Guntur, Vijayawada, and Prakasam. This underlines the importance of tailoring ICT implementation strategies to the specific needs and challenges of each demographic and geographic context to maximize learning benefits.

The study also highlights how ICT tools contribute to increasing student motivation and engagement in ELT classes. Tools such as video conferencing, language apps, and interactive whiteboards create dynamic, learner-centered environments that appeal to diverse learning styles. Nevertheless, the extent of this engagement is moderated by gender and regional disparities. Students with limited or no access to reliable internet and digital devices are less likely to participate fully, which in turn affects their enthusiasm and progress. Addressing these gaps by improving access and providing targeted support is essential to harness the full potential of ICT in language teaching.

Accessibility remains one of the most significant challenges in implementing ICT-based ELT. Unequal distribution of technological resources across districts restricts some students' ability to participate meaningfully in digital learning. This digital divide is especially pronounced in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, where infrastructure and support systems are inadequate. To create an equitable learning ecosystem, institutions and policymakers must prioritize expanding affordable internet access, providing necessary devices, and training both teachers and students to effectively use technology for language learning.

Finally, while ICT tools offer promising opportunities to transform ELT, there is a need to continually expand and refine their integration. The study emphasizes that future ICT adoption must be inclusive, adaptable, and context-sensitive. Developing scalable and sustainable models for ICT use that account for local challenges and gender dynamics will help create a more communicative and interactive ELT environment. Overcoming challenges related to gender preferences, regional disparities, and tool effectiveness requires a comprehensive and nuanced approach. By fostering such a tailored integration strategy, educators and institutions can ensure that digital innovation truly bridges gaps and leads to improved language learning outcomes for all students, regardless of their background.

## Acknowledgment

This research was partially funded by Zarqa University.

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