

ICT for Enhancing Learner Agency and Inclusive Participation: Contributing to Justice in Nepali EFL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

The conventional practices of dominant cultural ideologies historically situated and reproduced in practice still prevail in education, and they can still be observed in the Nepalese English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. In this regard, this study explores the potential of ICT use for enhancing learner agency and inclusive participation in the EFL classroom with special reference to Nepal. Grounded in reflective experiential learning theory and critical pedagogy, it seeks to suggest ways to bring about changes in students' learning engagement and classroom participation. It illustrates how the use of ICT in the EFL classroom contributes to improving learning through the praxis of equality. Using autoethnographic reflection documented in the reflective journal, this study explores how the use of ICTs can prepare silent learners to amplify their voices, agency, and engagement to create a participatory classroom to challenge the hierarchical classroom practices where only the dominant groups prevail in the classroom. The findings suggest how ICT enhances students' learning competence as a means of enhancing learner agency and questioning hierarchies and the prevalent practices established on the prejudiced grounds of the sociopolitical system and ethnic subjugation and othering, to a majority of disadvantaged and silent students. This paper suggests that critical EFL teachers can use ICT to activate, motivate, and sensitize the majority of less participating and ignored students to build their agency and explore a just and democratic classroom where all students participate and contribute to classroom activities for learning. Teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers can benefit from this study by adapting the findings in their contexts.

Keywords: Ideological barriers, learner agency to amplify marginalized voices, praxis of equality and equity, pre-service teacher education, structural hierarchies.

INTRODUCTION

In the present world characterized by the complexities arising from accumulated critical discourses, the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) has entered culturally diverse, multiethnic, multilingual classrooms, reflected by cultural ideologies and dialectal relationships (Guo & Sidhu, 2024). These dominant cultural ideologies create an influence of the mainstream privileged culture over the subjugated culture of the underprivileged in every sociopolitical affair (Brown, 1993; Canclini, 1988; McCarthy, 2009; Siegel, 2006). It is replicated in the EFL classrooms as well. Consequently, it interferes with learner autonomy by creating an unfavourable environment for the underprivileged learners from the marginalized social

groups. In such an environment of subjugation and insecurity, EFL teachers can shape learner motivation and autonomy (Liyanage & Canagarajah, 2019). In this regard, Kumaravadivelu (2003) asserts that teachers' role has transcended from passive technicians to reflective thinkers and transformative intellectuals to decide and enact best for themselves and their students. As the classrooms also reflect the social and cultural institutions, learners' cultural sensibilities that are firmly implanted in their subconscious mind function as 'filters' in viewing the world (Bakhurst et al., 2001). When these filters are implicitly or explicitly active, learning remains incomplete, and sometimes it may appear disastrous. Therefore, an EFL teacher needs to redirect those filters and raise learners' cultural sensitivity to value self and

others equally to enhance their learning. It consequently leads to inclusive and participatory learning in their classrooms.

Inclusion refers to the commitment to equal participation for all people irrespective of their gender, race, colour, social rank, status, disability, socio-economic status, special needs, medical needs, etc. (April et al., 2023; Devarakonda, 2025; Ghosh & Galczynski, 2014; Mishra & Pettala, 2023; Yadavalli et al., 2025). It is a universal human right that assures the avoidance of othering, discrimination, and intolerance created by physical, ideological, intellectual, cultural, and emotional barriers. In ideal inclusive instruction, all the students benefit from the addition of resources and supportive techniques with collaborative feelings of solidarity, mutual respect, equal opportunities, and generosity, ensuring unity among diversity (Pradhan & Naik, 2024; Sapon-Shevin, 2010). The classrooms can be made inclusive if cordial friendship among diverse students in the classroom is encouraged. Sharing and caring among the students from different socio-economic backgrounds, including male, female, and third genders, students from different ethnic backgrounds, and from different mother tongues, students from different economic classes with varied professional inclinations of their parents, students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers, etc. strengthen the bond, agreement, and emotional union of the classmates.

It is claimed that students from highly marginalized communities, such as students possessing some sort of disabilities, Dalits, and even Janajatis in some cases, and students from other minority groups have fewer friends in class for interaction and are exposed to less interactive settings (Bhandari & Dhakal, 2022; Gandhari, 2021; Khanal, 2015; Khanal, 2017; Lamichhane, 2013; Pradhan, 2020; Sah, 2024). Thus, the teachers, whether they are pre-service teachers (PSTs) or in-service teachers, should know and try to enact inclusion in classroom instruction. According to Symeonidou (2017), for example, the approaches employed in teacher education (for student teachers) include three approaches viz. content-infused approaches (inclusion is incorporated inside the content implicitly), single-unit approaches (one separate unit of inclusion in a semester), and approaches incorporating school placement/ experience (supporting schools to conceptualize and implement inclusive education through the partnership between universities and schools to benefit both the teacher and student teachers). The teachers should be engaged in the participation of the students for positive inclusion and need to try different techniques for enhancing inclusion.

The relationship gap among the students can be mitigated with the use of ICT in the classroom. It is

advocated that ICTs are only the tools to bring changes in teaching and learning. Therefore, the change should be brought in the classroom by using them appropriately by the teachers and instructing the students to use them properly (Haleem et al., 2022; Vandeyar & Adegoke, 2024). ICT instruments are the tools in the hands of the teachers and the students to use for academic and social benefit regardless of their limitations. Researchers suggest that “ICT equipment needs to be maintained and that teachers must help each other in managing the challenges ICT brings into the classroom” (Postholm, 2007, p. 597). This points out that the operational gap does not extend within the peers or their classmates alone. Rather, it extends among the teachers, and between teachers and students as well.

Use of the ICT encourages hesitant, reluctant, and shy students, especially from those of disadvantaged groups, to come to the forefront and advocate for their civil and ethnic rights to participate meaningfully in the classroom and for other students to accept it as an essential task (Björquist & Tryggvason, 2023; Dias et al., 2025; Raza & Akhter, 2024). For instance, research has shown that “Female students have the highest level of utilization of ICT facilities compared to male students in tertiary institutions in Ondo State” (Victor & Bolanle, 2017, p. 2375), while it is the other way round in day-to-day interaction in the classroom in the Nepali context in most of the cases. However, ICT can also facilitate students to participate in shared events, sports and other extracurricular activities inside and outside the classroom (even school) premises.

Nowadays, many teachers and students use social media for personal, social, or academic purposes. They also use the media for teaching and learning as well as for professional learning purposes. Just by using social media alone, teachers can present the content much more effectively to the students. In the words of Allam and Elyas, “teachers around the world understand the impact of social media and the numerous advantages they can bring to the EFL classroom, especially the reading and writing skills” (2016, p. 7). The students may learn without even noticing that they are learning if social media is used for academic and instructional purposes.

Newer educational practices require the use of ICT for better and more effective teaching and learning. ICT in education has grown into an absolute necessity, possessing numerous advantages. In the Nepali context, the use of ICT has been an emerging trend in the field of teaching and learning. The government and its policies also vividly speak about it. This has been taken as a way to liberate teaching methods and techniques. We can easily notice that the policy of “the government of Nepal emphasizes the need to develop ICT competencies and suggests the use of ICT will transform traditional models

of teaching to ones that are student-centred” (Rana et al., 2018, p. 149). The schools and the classrooms are being made ICT-friendly slowly and gradually along this line. It enables educators to convey their exercises in an increasingly successful way, motivating the students through multimodal exercises. It upgrades joint effort in learning because the students get the chance of sharing their insights and tackling the issues through a self-guided learning approach.

The use of ICT also encourages independent learning on the part of learners, enabling them to think critically (Saud & Laudari, 2023; Shatri, 2020; Singun, 2025). Accordingly, ICT in the classroom builds positive learning among the learners and encourages them to use it elsewhere for learning. The use of ICT in instruction has been approved and acknowledged by policies and practices in Nepal (MoE, 2013; MoEST, 2019, 2021, 2022) and elsewhere (UNESCO, 2019, 2024). However, its success depends on various factors. Advantages like frequent communication with the teachers, peers, and parents pave better guidance and encouragement for the students. In this regard, Postholm mentions, “situations may arise that exceed the possibilities ICT offers, as when the pupil wanted to find information about his grandmother” (2007, p. 597). Moreover, students enjoy the ICT-integrated lessons. It allows them access to huge educational resources that cannot be easily accessed from book-based traditional libraries. It has encouraged the teachers to use ICT and internet-based resources for preparing their lessons and professional development. In a research carried out in the rural contexts in Nepal, the teachers “expressed concerns about lack of infrastructure, especially internet access, insufficient training, insufficient devices, as well as earthquake damage and future earthquake vulnerability” (Rana et al., 2018, p. 162). However, the use of ICT can help teachers induce student agency and help them bring change in their learning.

The literature discussed above illustrates that a lot has been explored on the use of ICT in education. However, studies on the use of ICT for promoting learner agency, inclusion, and justice in the South Asian contexts, especially in Nepal, are lacking. It implies the necessity to explore the potential of ICT use for deconstructing ideological dominance and helping students develop their agency to advance justice in the EFL classroom through the inclusive participation of the students by encouraging the dominated and ignored students to raise and amplify their problems and voices. In this regard, this study aims to observe how ICT works as the catalyst for developing learner agency in the EFL classroom, how it helps induce inclusive and experiential learning practices among the students by negotiating the ideological hierarchies in EFL classrooms, and how the

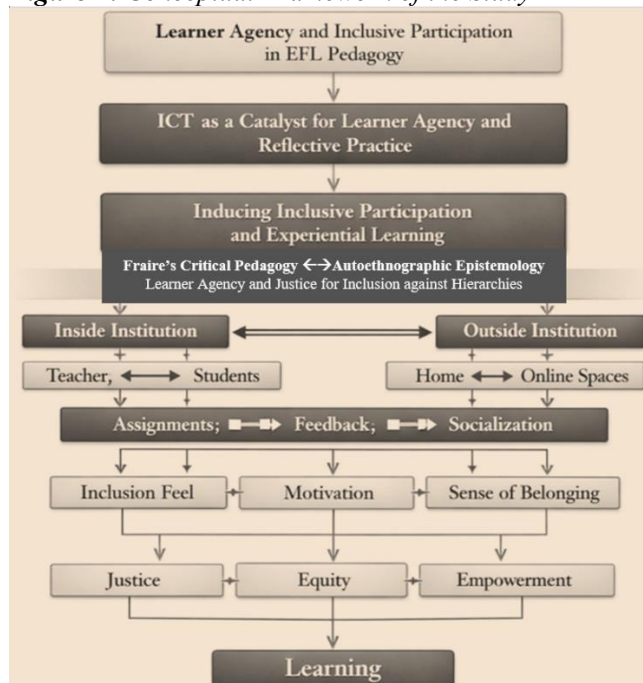
use of ICT advances learner agency and justice in the EFL classroom. This study is significant since it explores the issues that are not widely explored in the context of preservice teacher education programs in Nepal and elsewhere using the autoethnographic exploration of teacher educators.

THEORETICAL LENS AND FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in reflective practice and experiential learning theory. Together, they provide the conceptual lens for the study to interpret the context of EFL teaching and to suggest a way forward on the experience of using ICT in EFL instruction derived from long-term professional engagement. Moreover, it is guided by critical pedagogy (Freire, 1974, 2005), as the study aimed to enact learner agency in teacher education and make learning a practice of autonomy and an active process of affirming human dignity. It is guided by the principle that the acquisition of knowledge must lead to action through questioning, critical reflection, shared experiences, and transformative practice to develop critical and conscious awareness and an agentive role against injustice and inequality. In this regard, this study observes how the use of ICT contributed to encouraging and motivating EFL learners to enact their roles of conscious, aware, and critical learners. The foundation of reflective practice advocated by Schön (2019) is still relevant in education. It highlights the importance of reflection for continual professional development, critical identity construction, and methodological innovation in qualitative research (Brookfield, 2017; Tarisayi, 2023). Against this backdrop, experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2015; Kolb et al., 2001) provides a canonical lens for this study. It assumes the necessity and importance of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application. The study illustrates how experiential learning of EFL learners using ICT helped develop their critical awareness and learner agency, and their experiential insights are used to navigate EFL learning practices. Such practices illuminate tacit knowledge and the contextual implementations of possible strategies for improved teaching and learning English in various Nepali contexts (Ahmed et al., 2025; Kushnir, 2025).

Collectively, these frameworks legitimize researcher's decades-long teaching experiences in English language teaching and uninterrupted involvement in teacher training and supervision. By situating the reflective scholarly action into praxis, this study also integrates autoethnographic accounts of reflective and narrative stories to yield insider perspectives in educational research (Ademowo, 2023; Tarisayi, 2023). Based on the framework, Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



METHODOLOGY

English language teaching has come a long way both in its pedagogical approaches and its epistemological foundations. On the one hand, a series of changes in pedagogical approaches, ranging from behaviorist to cognitivist to socio-cultural approaches, has resulted in a battery of theoretical approaches and methods of teaching the English language to second language learners (Brown & Lee, 2025; Freire, 1974, 2005; Gan et al., 2026). On the other hand, the epistemological breakthroughs that occurred in disciplines of social sciences, ranging from positivism to interpretivism to criticalism to postmodernism, have changed our notions of what constitutes knowledge and how knowledge can be gained (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Pandey et al., 2026; Willig, 2013). These shifting epistemologies have, in turn, changed our notion of teaching and teacher education. More importantly, it has altered our notion of what it means to teach and how teaching should be conducted. It has had a more lasting impact in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The shifting foundations of the epistemology of teaching have created a situation wherein we, as English language teachers, are supposed to be constantly engaged in restructuring our experiences of teaching, of self and of the learning processes of our learners (Johnson, 2009). In this regard, this study adopted a qualitative self-reflective design informed by autoethnography. Autoethnography has been used as a rigorous methodology in education as it reflects the researcher's professional trajectory as a data

source and the subject of analysis (Ademowo, 2023; Tarisayi, 2023). Additionally, narrative stories recollected in the form of reflective journals complement this through the storied lived experiences of the researcher as a teacher, trainer, and supervisor (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Clandinin et al., 2007) under the umbrella of EFL teaching and learning.

Critical interpretivism was employed as the research paradigm with reference to the transformative and socio-cultural learning theories to explore how ICT enhanced learner agency and inclusive participation in the EFL classroom through my experiences. An autoethnographic design was adopted for the study to observe the critical inclusion and engaged and participatory EFL classroom environment. It led me to see how the use of ICT changed the classroom dynamics and sparked epiphanies among the preservice teachers (PSTs) (my students) and me as a teacher educator. It was evident after ICT was infused into the teaching and learning process that the PSTs contributed as active agents from passive learners by exploring different strategies for learning in collaboration without waiting for me to deliver the conventional lecture. As I entered the class, I could observe that most of the students were using their smartphones for learning, while only a few who own used their tablets and laptops. They also encouraged everyone in the class, regardless of any linguistic or other social hierarchies; usual performers waited till the end, while shy and hesitant PSTs were motivated to occupy the lead roles in the class. In this sense, it reframed the classroom environment and improved inclusion and ownership of learning.

The primary data source for the study consisted of the researcher's reflections gathered across more than fifteen years of experience in teaching English and preservice and in-service English teacher education. Specifically, the data for the study consisted of the narrative journals I prepared, images I captured, and the discussions in the Messenger and WhatsApp groups between 23rd May 2025 and 20th November 2025. However, I used the ten narrative journals (stories) that I prepared based on the teaching and learning, substantiated with the images I captured around my college and classroom and the interaction with and among the students in the social media groups I created for their interactive learning and sharing the resource materials. The reflective journalling was principally informed by the experiential learning theory and shaped through the lens of critical pedagogy.

For the analysis of the data, I used reflective thematic analysis (Ahmed et al., 2025; Braun & Clarke, 2016, 2023; Braun et al., 2019; Kushnir, 2025) of the data to derive the findings. For the comprehensive thematic

analysis, I first read the reflections repeatedly and achieved familiarity with the data. Then, I began initial coding and writing memos to capture emerging ideas and potential patterns of coding. Then, I coded all the reflective journals into 84 codes that represent the main ideas of the study. In the third stage, I compared, clustered, merged, edited and finalized them into 48 codes. After that, I organized the codes to form nine subthemes that represented learner autonomy, learner agency, reflective learning, ownership in learning, equal participation, inclusive collaboration, experiential learning, critical awareness, and justice through equal participation. Consequently, these nine subthemes were organized into four themes as discussed in the findings of the study. This thematic analysis gave a picture of how the autoethnographic journaling allowed the analysis of the data thematically in this study. The analysis acknowledged researcher subjectivity in meaning-making. Reflective journaling enhanced trustworthiness through thick description and methodological transparency. Ethical responsibility in the study was maintained by anonymizing the institutions, colleagues, and students mentioned in the study, even though the study primarily draws on the researcher's reflection.

Methodological Justification: Why this Design

In the past, teacher education had its epistemological roots in positivism, which advocates for certain patterns of good teaching. According to positivistic theories, teacher education needs to be objective, focusing on the dominance of teachers in imparting knowledge to the students, and the knowledge thus accumulated in the minds of the learners through prolonged repetition and practice is evaluated in terms of test scores. It does not emphasize creativity, context, students' needs, interests and levels. It is simply, as Freire (1974) calls it, 'a conduit of the banking system'. According to Freire (2005), such a model reinforces a lack of critical thinking and knowledge ownership in students. Darling and Nordenbo (2003) criticised it as mimetic learning, i.e. learning by imitating. It is more theoretical as well as lecture-based, which is applied outside the classroom. As it takes place outside the classroom, many questions emerge, such as these: Does teacher education only involve discovering and sharing just another banking model of education? Such depersonalized and de-contextualized teacher education and teaching cannot address the needs of the learners and second language acquisition to re-conceptualize teacher education in the newer light of epistemological breakthroughs and a new trend in teacher education.

Contrary to positivism, interpretivism posits that knowledge is not objective; it is subjective. To connect it

to teacher education, teacher education should not be objective; it should be subjective. As teacher education is to teach learners effectively, and in fact, it is to teach teachers the ways of addressing students' differences, scholars realized the need for change in the existing trend. Johnson (2009) focuses on socio-cultural practices in teaching and learning, and teachers' knowledge needs to be organized around making connections. Another trend is the reflective teaching movement, which calls on teachers to be researchers in the classroom. Their main job is to collect information from the classroom contexts and find viable ways to address the issues that arise in the classroom. It means that second language teacher education has more focus on training teachers to become action researchers.

Criticalism, on a distinct plane, advocates for raising critical sensibility in learners, much in the Freirean line of thought, and thereby transforming the lives of the individuals through engaging in a constant dialectical process. Thus, the true end of education from a critical perspective is the emancipation of the learners' lives and the transformation of the socio-cultural systems. Now, the second language teacher education has grown in scope and importance. Teaching does not mean what we teach; it means how students understand and learn. This is the key point to be considered while educating teachers. Besides, as Hawkins and Norton (2009) assert, social actions and educational changes are of paramount importance; teacher education indeed has to capture the way teachers should deal with students of different social, cultural and political backgrounds. Although the trend has changed from positivism to subjective relativism, the changes that are taking shape in teacher education are keeping abreast of the philosophical perspectives of multi-method critical pedagogy. And, with these changes, teachers are supposed to reconstruct their experiences by constantly engaging in dialogue with the learners, with the self and the socio-cultural milieu in which these changes are taking shape.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study's findings are discussed under four themes:

ICT as a Catalyst for Learner Agency and Reflective Practice

Reflection revealed that the use of ICT tools such as Google Classroom, online dictionaries, and other English language learning mobile apps enabled students to become more accountable and take ownership of their learning. It encouraged students' engagement and collaboration with friends. Students who were otherwise passive in the classroom engaged in interaction with the teacher and other students. It also sensitized them for

further exploration outside the classroom and further discussion with the mentors and colleagues. Students shared ideas and experiences of the learning through chats and emails. It showed their learning through digital media and their increased curiosity towards learning. My reflection reads:

All the students have downloaded offline dictionaries on their mobile devices nowadays. These digital dictionaries have helped them learn vocabulary more easily and accurately than their previous practices. They do not wait for my explanation. Instead, they use the term in their own sentences after learning the meaning, pronunciation, and spelling of the difficult terms. (Researcher's reflective journal)

At the surface level, the dictionary use may appear as a mere adoption of an ICT tool in learning English. However, their independent move to use dictionaries and other digital resources resists the reliance on teachers as the source of knowledge. It also allows them to negotiate meaning, embrace self-directed learning, and become active agents in classroom interactions. In this regard, dictionary use encourages the voice of learners in the classroom for fostering inclusive participation. In the Freirean term, it disrupted the 'banking model' of education and democratized participation and helped maintain justice in the EFL classroom. Use of ICT in this way has encouraged learners and synergized their practice. They have realized it on their own and reflected on further improvement in their learning strategies. It has developed their accountability, autonomy, and agency in learning and enactment of their own learning.

Inducing Inclusive Participation and Experiential Learning

ICT use in EFL teaching and learning has reduced the learning barriers of learners. It was evident that ICT contributed to reducing linguistic insecurity caused by superficial learning, shyness in performance and participation, and the classroom hierarchy of high-performing and low-performing learners. Quieter students also texted the answers in the online discussion forums. They did not hesitate to make mistakes while learning and even corrected their friends' mistakes without much interruption. Everyone contributed to the completion of the tasks assigned in the group, as it was visible for further feedback from the teachers. Many of the students shared that they learned implicitly without much cognitive effort in comparison to conventional teaching and learning when ICT was utilized in teaching and learning.

It is a better way of learning for the students because students who rarely spoke in the classroom, with the regular encouragement of the teacher, wrote very well in the assignment of Google Classroom. She also wrote queries for further clarification. The multimodal materials provided access to all learners in different modes and media that they received through different senses. This variation included students with different intelligences in dominance. We can take it as an inclusive or democratic practice of learning. (Reflective journal)

This illustrates that the use of ICT induced all students' participation, reflective practices, and encouraged them in their experiential learning. Additionally, the sharing of the trainees and the trainers was visibly reflective, experience-based, and critical regarding how their use of ICT encouraged them in learning English more than earlier during teaching, training, and supervision. They reflected increased and inclusive participation and experiential learning in the ICT used for teaching and learning. Also, they interpreted how this was different from their earlier practices.

Democratizing Access and Questioning Hierarchy in EFL Classrooms

My experiences and reflection showed that the use of ICT has helped negotiate and improve the traditional ideology of teacher-centred learning and regarding teachers as the sole source of authentic knowledge. Students also brought new resources and content into the classroom and shared it with teachers and colleagues. It was evidently visible in many classes which the researcher witnessed in his own and other mentees' classes. As the free online resources were accessible to everyone, they accessed the digital devices and basic knowledge of exploring them, and the use of ICT disrupted the hierarchical assumptions of teaching and learning. Everyone could engage with knowledge, learning and sharing beyond the printed textbook and teacher authority. It helped to shift the power dynamics towards every student regardless of their earlier performances in the classes, their leadership, and rapport with the teachers.

Use of ICT shifted the power dynamics in the EFL classrooms... from teacher to students... From particular students to everyone... Students have now learned that teachers are not only the creators or the distributors of knowledge. Rather, they are facilitators for students' learning. Their roles are to help students learn, assist them in exploring knowledge and

encourage them to practice. I observe that, now, its use has helped subvert the students' division in learning and sharing to a certain extent. Almost all students in our classes now use smartphones through which they can access the content that they have to study in their courses over the internet on campus. (Researcher's reflection note)

Students are growing faster in using ICT for learning, which has further dismantled the traditional ideology of senior-junior, teacher-student, and good-learners, poor-learners. The fact that the same hierarchy does not apply in all sorts of learning and sharing their learning has been reflected through this reflection. PSTs' practices of using self-searched literature and bringing them in discussion showed how ICT-enabled learning shaped their participation and agency. Additionally, it illustrated their active experimentation and collaboration in peer-supported learning. Consequently, it helped them to understand the process of knowledge construction and question the hierarchies prevalent in the EFL classrooms. It made their learning a practice of freedom and a search for emancipatory learning strategies.

Advancing Justice through ICT Integration

I have also experienced and realized that the use of ICT has contributed to advancing educational justice. At least, it has bridged the resource gap among the learners in the same class. It has fostered justice and equity as well because the printed materials were beneficial to only a few of them. It provided opportunities to the marginalized learners, too, to participate in learning meaningfully. Use of ICT has taught learners to be more critical, creative and collaborative. It has assisted the marginalised voices to be heard more loudly than earlier. From the above themes, it is also evident that the use has supported the learners who suffered from systematic or structural inequalities and injustice. The study witnessed that students from marginalized communities, genders, and groups participated better in the ICT-integrated classrooms. Girls, students from Dalit and Muslim communities, students with disabilities, including blind and low-vision, also participated equally when the teacher used ICT in the classroom and assigned them some tasks to complete on the digital platforms. It was found that they also took help from their friends, family members, and from other knowledgeable persons, which did not occur in the conventional assignment of reading and writing.

However, PSTs' limited digital literacy and the digital divide exhibited access inequalities. Some of them sometimes even talked of the resistance to ICT as they were feeling dizzy, bored, or their devices were not

charged. This often led to contradictory critical positionings. Finally, the data showed that advancing justice in the EFL classroom requires dynamic negotiation rather than following any fixed assertions. ICT use democratizes access to resources, amplifying more diverse voices to be heard more loudly only if sustained support, training, and critical reflection on their use are communicated before, during, and after the uses. However, justice is not just the presence or the availability of the tools. Rather, it depends on how the tools are used to maintain the dynamic understandings through the cycles of actions and reflections.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to observe how the teachers' use of ICT in the university's teacher education programs contributes to enhancing learner agency in EFL classes. Also, it evaluated how the use improved inclusive participation of the students and developed learner motivation and critical observation of their learning, and eventually enhanced equality and equity through inclusive interactivity in the PST education classes. The findings showed that the use of ICT dismantled ideological dominance in the classes and helped students develop their agency in their learning. It also established justice in the EFL classroom in the sense that it allowed inclusive participation of the students. Moreover, helped underprivileged students to raise and amplify their personal, social, and teaching-learning-related problems and voices. Consequently, this study reports how ICT as a catalyst helps students develop learner agency in the EFL classroom, informs them of the prevailing ideological hierarchies in society, and encourages them to enact justice and equal participation in all social affairs and classroom activities.

The findings of the studies showed that the use of ICT enhanced students' autonomy and self-directed learning, which consequently developed learning agency. It aligns with the studies that suggest using ICT for student empowerment and knowledge construction (Ahmed et al., 2025; Kushnir, 2025). It is also in line with Schön's (2019) reflective practice that advocates teachers' adaptability to facilitate learner agency through facilitative guidance while teaching. The findings also illustrate that the use of ICT encouraged students' inclusive participation in classroom activities and course requirements. It resembles the implication of Kolb's (2015) experiential learning, as the digital tasks, learning experiences, and learner reflections acknowledged the use for better democratic practice and learner engagement. Other studies also affirm that ICT can materialize democratic and participatory learning contexts to reduce structural inequalities (Ademowo, 2023; Tarisayi, 2023). It was evident that ICT helped to

question ideological hierarchies and the banking model of teaching, where the teacher imposes knowledge on the students. This resonates with critical pedagogy (Freire, 1974, 2005). It establishes that the use of ICT and digital tools can contribute to destabilizing traditional power relations and foster a better learning environment (Brookfield, 2017) among the students through self-reflective and experiential learning.

The study also showed that ICT in EFL instruction induced the critical use to interrogate inequalities and injustice in education. The use of ICT enhanced equity, inclusivity, and learner empowerment in EFL classes. In this regard, this study aligns with studies that argue for justice-oriented digital pedagogy in the Global South contexts (Ahmed et al., 2025; Kushnir, 2025). The findings of the study imply that the use of ICT has to be practiced in all three phases- pre-service, induction and in-service of teacher education for exploring its better use. Mergler and Spooner-Lane (2012) explicate that pre-service teacher education aims at training prospective teachers to become quality teachers to meet the increasing demands associated with the teaching profession. Induction, on the other hand, is the training for new teachers to orient them to adjust to new school environments, classrooms, students, and various teaching contexts (Jackson & Hogg, 2010; Johnson, 2009). And the third one, i.e. in-service teacher education, relates to the professional development opportunities provided to the working teachers. These three types of teacher education are the basis of teacher education where the integration of ICT can enhance learner agency (Norton, 2010). Consequently, the prospective teachers can use ICT in their teaching and thus help their students to develop informed learner agency in the classroom. And then, collectively, the schools and the educational institutions contribute to society through informed human agency (Bandura, 1977) in all aspects of social development. That is why it can be inferred that the quality of the teacher training can determine the success of an educational system.

In the case of EFL teachers and teaching, teacher education is the preparation of teachers so that they can work proficiently in their profession through their informed English language teacher identity (Norton, 2010, 2013). However, it is not simply a matter of deciphering philosophies of second language acquisition (SLA) in teachers' practices, but a dialogic progression of co-constructing knowledge that is located in and arises out of involvement in specific socio-cultural contexts. There is a shift in the perception and practices of teacher education from positivism to interpretivism, criticalism, and a multi-paradigmatic notion. This gradual shift in the epistemology of teacher education has created a series of

theoretical discourses that need to be revisited for developing newer insights in teacher education ahead.

CONCLUSION

Inclusion can be induced in EFL instruction through the use of ICT to a certain extent. But the technology alone cannot overcome all the inequalities prevailing in society. It can be better used as a tool to build a classroom incorporating all of the students. This study showed that careful integration of ICT in the Nepali EFL classrooms can change the traditional pedagogical practices by enhancing learner agency, inclusive and engaged participation, and justice-oriented democratic pedagogy. The study demonstrates that ICT is both a technical tool and a pedagogical catalyst to reshape the usual classroom dynamics, teacher-student relations, student-student relations, and the overall hierarchical categorization of teaching and learning. The study highlights the assistance of ICT to encourage the marginalized, less confident, and quieter learners. ICT enhances learner agency by motivating them to take ownership of their learning through self-directed exploration of authentic resources. It also helps disrupt wrong ideological and hierarchical creation that hampered learning. It also advances justice among the students by bridging the gaps in providing equitable opportunities in engaged classroom practices, as well as learning engagement outside the classroom.

This study contributes to the discipline of the use of ICT in education in general and in EFL teaching and learning in particular. It argues that ICT must be harnessed for minimizing inequalities and inducing inclusion in education. This study informs EFL teachers to 1) promote their students to use mobile dictionaries and enhance learner agency, 2) embrace collaborative platforms, such as Google Classroom, Google Docs, Padlet, closed WhatsApp/Messenger groups, and social networking forums, to democratize resource sharing and collaborative practices, and 3) integrate multimedia tools such as YouTube, Kahoot!, and other English learning sites to enhance learners self-regulatory learning. However, while using ICT in the EFL classroom teacher should be attention to the limitations and criticisms of using ICT, such as requiring a large expenditure, being mechanical, killing users' creativity, a waste of time, problems of being misguided with inappropriate content, a source of distraction, paving the way for cheating, cyberbullying, and killing socialization by disconnecting the users from the real-world social affairs, and such others and negotiate the most appropriate use possible for students' dynamic learning. As the study is rooted in the researcher's reflective practices, it does not include a wide range of research participants in different contexts. This context-sensitive study may not be generalizable to different contexts. Further studies, including the

experiences of other stakeholders in different contexts, can further explore the potentialities of ICT use in EFL instruction.

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