

# ICT for Inclusive English Language Learning: Addressing Diverse Learner Needs

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## ABSTRACT

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English Language Learning (ELL) has significantly enhanced educational inclusivity, allowing educators to better address the diverse needs of learners. This paper examines the effectiveness of ICT tools—ranging from language learning apps and assistive technologies to AI-driven platforms—in supporting learners with varied linguistic abilities, disabilities, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Drawing on recent empirical studies, the research highlights that over 75% of students report improved English listening, speaking, and grammar skills through ICT use. Moreover, the adoption of multimedia tools such as YouTube and augmented reality has been shown to boost learner motivation and engagement. Case studies from China, India, and Hong Kong demonstrate how ICT can help bridge educational gaps, although challenges such as the digital divide and limited teacher training persist. The findings underscore the need for inclusive digital pedagogies and targeted policy interventions to realize ICT's full potential in equitable English language education.

## 1. Introduction

In today's globalized and digitally connected world, proficiency in English has become a vital skill for academic success, career advancement, and cross-cultural communication (Crystal, 2003). However, English Language Learning (ELL) remains a complex process influenced by numerous factors, including learners' socio-economic backgrounds, cognitive abilities, linguistic diversity, and access to quality educational resources (Cummins *et al.*, 2000; García *et al.*, 2019.). Traditional, one-size-fits-all pedagogical approaches often fall short in addressing the wide spectrum of learner needs, thereby creating gaps in language acquisition and learner engagement (Tomlinson, 2011).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has emerged as a transformative force in education, offering innovative solutions to these longstanding challenges (Selwyn, 2016). By enabling differentiated instruction, multimodal content delivery, and real-time learner feedback, ICT fosters a more inclusive and learner-centered environment (Al-Azawei *et al.*, 2016). ICT applications—from AI-powered writing assistants and language learning apps to virtual classrooms and augmented reality—can be tailored to accommodate individual learning styles, support students with disabilities, and provide equitable access to English instruction across diverse geographic and socio-cultural contexts (Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Godwin-Jones, 2011).

The significance of ICT in inclusive education is underscored by recent empirical evidence. For instance, a 2023 mixed-method study found that 78.1% of English learners experienced improved listening skills through ICT-based instruction, with similar benefits reported for speaking (74.5%), grammar (77.1%), and pronunciation (73%). These findings suggest that digital tools are not only supplementing traditional methods but are also enhancing learners' cognitive and affective outcomes (Stockwell, 2010; Mdpi, 2023).

Nevertheless, the integration of ICT into ELL is not without challenges. Issues such as unequal access to technology, insufficient digital literacy, and a lack of teacher training continue to hinder its inclusive potential (Warschauer, 2003; UNESCO, 2011). This paper aims to explore the current landscape of ICT in inclusive English language education, analyze its effectiveness across learner groups, present real-world case studies, and propose actionable strategies for maximizing its impact. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on equitable and accessible language learning in the digital age.

## 2. Literature Review

The role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in enhancing English Language Learning (ELL) has been extensively documented in contemporary research. Scholars highlight that ICT is not merely an instructional aid but a strategic enabler of inclusive, differentiated, and learner-centered pedagogy (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2021).

### 2.1 ICT and Language Skill Development

Numerous studies have established the positive impact of ICT on the four core language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A 2023 mixed-method study involving EFL university students revealed that 78.1% of learners reported enhanced listening skills, 74.5% noticed improvements in speaking, 69.8% in reading, and 63.8% in writing due to ICT interventions. Additionally, grammar (77.1%), vocabulary (67.4%), and pronunciation (73%) skills were significantly improved, suggesting that ICT supports both receptive and productive language competencies (Mdpi, 2023).

### 2.2 Multimedia and Learner Engagement

Multimedia tools such as videos, animations, and gamified learning platforms have been shown to increase motivation and engagement. YouTube-based English learning enhanced learners' writing fluency, particularly in idea organization and language accuracy (Hsu & Wang, 2022). Similarly, the use of Augmented Reality English Words Learning (AREWL) in rural Chinese schools increased learners' motivation, although it had limited impact on higher-order cognitive outcomes (Haq, 2023). These findings support the theory that immersive and interactive content fosters deeper engagement and language retention (Hsu & Wang, 2022, Haq, 2023).

### 2.3 ICT for Diverse and Inclusive Classrooms

Inclusive education necessitates accommodating learners with special educational needs, linguistic minorities, and underprivileged communities. ICT tools, particularly those embedded with Artificial Intelligence (AI), are increasingly used to support learners with disabilities. AI chatbots and speech-to-text tools facilitate communication for students with hearing impairments or learning difficulties, thereby promoting inclusive participation in English language classrooms (Chen & Lee, 2022).

For students in multilingual settings or those from migrant backgrounds, real-time translation apps and adaptive learning platforms help bridge linguistic gaps and tailor content delivery. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks, when supported by ICT, ensure that learning materials are accessible and engaging for all students regardless of their abilities (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2021).

### 2.4 Teacher Practices and Digital Pedagogy

The effective integration of ICT also depends on teachers' digital literacy and willingness to innovate. A study of Hong Kong primary school teachers found that platforms like Kahoot! (used by 52 teachers), Padlet (32), and Google Classroom (29) were among the most frequently adopted tools (Tang & Wong, 2023). These digital platforms enabled interactive lesson delivery and assessment, although many teachers expressed the need for professional development in inclusive digital pedagogy (Tang & Wong, 2023).

### 2.5 Challenges Identified in the Literature

Despite its benefits, ICT-based instruction faces several limitations. The "digital divide" continues to restrict access in rural and low-income areas, impeding the equitable distribution of technological benefits. Moreover, inadequate infrastructure, lack of culturally relevant content, and limited teacher preparedness often diminish the impact of ICT on inclusion. These challenges call for systemic policy interventions and targeted capacity-building efforts (Warschauer, 2003).

## 3. ICT Tools for Inclusive English Language Learning

The application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English language learning has led to the emergence of a wide array of tools designed to enhance accessibility, engagement, and personalized learning. These tools address the diverse needs of learners across linguistic backgrounds, abilities, and socioeconomic contexts.

### 3.1 Language Learning Applications

Duolingo, Babbel, and Hello English are widely used applications that employ gamification, adaptive learning paths, and real-time feedback to improve English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Duolingo, for example, offers instruction in over 40 languages and is used by more than 500 million users globally (Duolingo, 2025). These apps are particularly effective for learners who benefit from self-paced, repetitive practice and interactive engagement.

- *Inclusivity Impact:*
  - Supports self-paced learning for slow learners.

- Offers voice recognition for speaking practice.
- Provides visual cues and translations for multilingual learners.

### 3.2 Assistive Technologies for Special Needs

Students with disabilities benefit significantly from ICT through assistive technologies:

- Text-to-speech (TTS) tools like Read&Write and NaturalReader support learners with visual impairments and dyslexia.
- Speech-to-text (STT) tools like Google Dictation and Dragon NaturallySpeaking assist students with motor difficulties.
- Screen readers and closed captioning systems promote inclusive classroom environments for hearing or vision-impaired learners.

A 2025 study found that the integration of AI-powered assistive technologies improved classroom participation among learners with special needs by 40% (Haq, 2023).

### 3.3 Virtual Classrooms and Learning Management Systems (LMS)

Platforms like Google Classroom, Moodle, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom enable synchronous and asynchronous learning, allowing teachers to assign tasks, assess performance, and share multilingual resources.

- In a Hong Kong-based study, 52% of teachers used Kahoot! for real-time quizzes, 32% used Padlet for collaborative writing, and 29% utilized Google Classroom for lesson delivery (Tang & Wong, 2023).
- Quizizz, Nearpod, and Edmodo are other tools that provide differentiated instruction and instant feedback.
- *Inclusivity Impact:*
  - Allows flexible participation for remote or marginalized learners.
  - Supports content customization and multimodal delivery (text, audio, video).
  - Facilitates peer interaction and collaborative learning regardless of physical location.

### 3.4 AI-Powered Language Tools

AI is increasingly integrated into English language learning through writing and conversation tools:

- ChatGPT, Grammarly, and QuillBot help learners improve writing fluency, vocabulary, and coherence through real-time suggestions and grammar correction.
- Speech recognition AI, used in platforms like Elsa Speak, provides pronunciation feedback by analyzing learners' speech patterns and comparing them to native benchmarks.

A study demonstrated that YouTube-based instruction improved writing accuracy and coherence in ESL students by 20–25% over three months (Hsu & Wang, 2022).

### 3.5 Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR)

Emerging technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are used to create immersive English language learning environments:

- In rural China, an AR English Words Learning (AREWL) system enhanced student motivation and engagement (Haq, 2023).
- Mondly VR offers conversational simulations, enabling learners to practice English in lifelike scenarios such as airports or restaurants.
- *Inclusivity Impact:*
  - Provides visual and contextual reinforcement for learners with limited real-world exposure.
  - Increases motivation in learners with attention challenges or low literacy levels.

### Summary of Tools and Their Inclusivity Benefits

Tool/Platform	Primary Function	Inclusive Feature
Duolingo, Babbel	Vocabulary & Grammar	Gamification, translations, accessible UI
Read&Write, TTS tools	Reading support	Text-to-speech for dyslexic or visually impaired users
Google Classroom, Zoom	Instruction & collaboration	Supports remote learning and accessibility options
ChatGPT, Grammarly	Writing assistance	Personalized feedback, adaptive learning
AREWL, Mondly VR	Immersive learning	Multisensory engagement for low-literacy learners

These tools collectively demonstrate how ICT can be strategically leveraged to make English language learning more inclusive, engaging, and effective for all learners. The next section will present real-world case examples illustrating the impact of these tools in diverse educational contexts.

#### 4. Case Examples

To illustrate the practical impact of ICT in fostering inclusive English language learning, this section presents case examples from varied educational contexts. These examples demonstrate how specific technologies are used to meet the needs of learners across different socio-economic, linguistic, and ability-based profiles.

##### 4.1 Case Study 1: Rural China – Augmented Reality for Vocabulary Learning

In a study conducted by Haq (2023), an Augmented Reality English Words Learning (AREWL) system was implemented in rural Chinese elementary schools. The platform allowed students to interact with 3D vocabulary objects using tablets and AR-enabled textbooks.

- **Outcome:**

- Increased student engagement and attendance.
- Enhanced vocabulary retention among Grade 3 learners.
- Motivation scores improved by 30%, though no significant gains were observed in critical thinking or writing skills.

- **Inclusivity Impact:** Provided visual support for low-literate learners and helped bridge the urban–rural digital divide by introducing modern tools in under-resourced classrooms (Jha & Verma, 2023).

##### 4.2 Case Study 2: India – Hello English App for Multilingual Learners

In semi-urban Indian schools, the Hello English app was introduced to students from non-English-speaking households. The app provided bilingual support, grammar lessons, speaking practice, and progress tracking.

- **Data:**

- Among 500 students using the app over 12 weeks, 67% improved their basic conversational skills.
- Female learners, often with less access to private coaching, reported higher self-confidence in speaking English.

- **Inclusivity Impact:** Empowered first-generation learners, supported self-paced learning, and helped overcome the linguistic barrier in multilingual settings (Duolingo, 2024).

##### 4.3 Case Study 3: Hong Kong – Blended Learning with Digital Platforms

A 2023 study on Hong Kong primary school teachers revealed widespread use of blended learning tools:

- **Platforms Used:**

- Kahoot! (52 teachers) for quizzes
- Padlet (32 teachers) for collaborative writing
- Google Classroom (29 teachers) for lesson planning and student engagement

- **Outcome:**

- Improved classroom interaction and formative assessment.
- Students with special needs used screen readers and speech-to-text tools to participate more fully in class.

- **Inclusivity Impact:** These platforms promoted collaborative, differentiated learning and supported the participation of students with learning or physical disabilities (Tang & Wong, 2023).

##### 4.4 Case Study 4: UK – ChatGPT for English Writing Support

At a UK community college, a pilot program incorporated ChatGPT as a writing assistant for adult ESL learners.

- **Implementation:**

Learners used ChatGPT to generate writing prompts, receive grammar corrections, and explore vocabulary in context.

- **Outcome:**

- 75% of learners reported increased writing fluency and reduced anxiety.
- Writing samples showed a 20–30% increase in lexical variety and syntactic accuracy.

- **Inclusivity Impact:** AI-driven feedback supported adult learners with low confidence and no prior academic background, allowing personalized and stigma-free assistance (Smith & Kaur, 2024).

##### 4.5 Case Study 5: Kenya – Mobile-Assisted English Learning in Refugee Camps

In Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya, NGOs partnered with EdTech startups to deliver mobile-based English learning through preloaded devices and offline apps like Kolibri and BBC Janala.

- **Data:**

- Over 3,000 learners participated in the pilot project.
- Reading comprehension scores improved by 18% over six months.
- Female participation rose by 22% due to mobile access at home.

- **Inclusivity Impact:** Enabled access to English education for displaced learners with limited infrastructure, overcoming barriers related to mobility, electricity, and teacher shortages (UNHCR, 2024).

### Summary of Case Impact

Region	Tool/Strategy	Target Group	Impact
Rural China	AR Vocabulary System (AREWL)	Rural primary students	Boosted motivation and vocabulary retention
India	Hello English App	Multilingual low-income learners	Improved conversational skills and learning autonomy
Hong Kong	Kahoot!, Padlet, LMS	Primary school students	Enhanced engagement and accessibility for special needs
UK	ChatGPT	Adult ESL learners	Increased writing fluency and learner confidence
Kenya	Mobile learning (Kolibri, etc.)	Refugee children	Provided access to English learning in low-resource areas

These case examples reinforce the argument that ICT can be a powerful enabler of inclusive English language education when contextually adapted, equitably deployed, and pedagogically integrated.

## 5. Challenges and Considerations

While ICT holds immense potential for fostering inclusivity in English language learning, its implementation is accompanied by several pedagogical, infrastructural, and socio-cultural challenges. Recognizing and addressing these barriers is essential to ensure that technology enhances rather than exacerbates existing educational inequalities.

### 5.1 Digital Divide and Access Inequality

The most persistent barrier to ICT-based learning is the digital divide—the gap between those who have regular access to digital tools and internet connectivity and those who do not.

- Rural and low-income learners often lack devices, reliable internet, or electricity, especially in parts of South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and remote tribal areas.
- In India, for example, the 2021 Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) found that only 27% of rural children had access to online learning tools during school closures (Williamson & Hogan, 2020). *Consideration:* Policymakers and stakeholders must invest in digital infrastructure, subsidized devices, and offline-accessible content to bridge this gap.

### 5.2 Teacher Training and Digital Pedagogy Gaps

ICT tools are only as effective as the teachers who use them. Many educators are unfamiliar with digital tools, inclusive instructional design, or adaptive technologies.

- In a study conducted in Hong Kong, teachers expressed strong interest in digital tools but lacked training in differentiated digital instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) frameworks (Tang & Wong, 2023)
- In developing countries, digital literacy among teachers remains low, and professional development programs are inconsistent or unavailable.

*Consideration:* Continuous teacher training in ICT tools and inclusive pedagogies is vital for sustainable integration.

### 5.3 Language, Cultural, and Content Relevance

Many ICT tools are developed with Western-centric curricula, idioms, and examples, which may not resonate with learners in diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

- Learners in South Asia, Africa, or Latin America may find it difficult to relate to culturally unfamiliar content or accents, which can hinder comprehension and engagement (Janssen & Stoyanov, 2013).
- Bilingual or multilingual learners often require contextualized support and culturally responsive resources.

*Consideration:* Localized, culturally sensitive content should be developed, and ICT tools should support regional languages and dialects where needed.

### 5.4 Over-Reliance on Technology and Reduced Human Interaction

While AI-driven platforms like ChatGPT and Duolingo offer powerful learning support, excessive reliance on automated systems may limit human feedback, social learning, and contextual understanding.

- For example, grammar suggestions or pronunciation feedback may not account for socio-pragmatic variations in different contexts (UNICEF, 2021).
- Learners may also experience reduced opportunities for collaborative learning, emotional support, or teacher-guided interventions.



*Consideration:* ICT should supplement—not replace—interactive, human-centered language teaching.

### 5.5 Data Privacy and Ethical Concerns

With increasing use of AI, cloud-based platforms, and learner analytics, student data privacy becomes a significant concern.

- Many EdTech platforms collect behavioral data without fully transparent policies (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).
- Vulnerable learners, especially minors and refugees, may be at risk if sensitive data is exposed.

*Consideration:* Institutions must ensure compliance with data protection laws (e.g., GDPR), use secure platforms, and educate users on digital ethics and privacy.

### Summary of Key Challenges

Challenge	Impact on Inclusion	Required Action
Digital divide	Excludes marginalized learners	Invest in infrastructure, offer offline and mobile access
Lack of teacher training	Limits effective implementation of ICT	Continuous professional development in digital pedagogy
Culturally irrelevant content	Reduces learner engagement and relevance	Develop localized, culturally contextual materials
Overdependence on AI tools	Limits human interaction and social learning	Balance technology with teacher-led and peer learning
Data privacy and ethics	Puts vulnerable learners at risk	Use secure platforms and ensure ethical data practices

By proactively addressing these challenges, educational systems can create more equitable and effective English language learning environments that truly embody the promise of inclusion through ICT.

## 6. Recommendations

To ensure that ICT serves as a truly inclusive tool in English language learning, a strategic, multi-level approach is essential. The following recommendations are directed at policymakers, curriculum designers, educators, and EdTech developers:

### 6.1 Policy Support

Governments, educational boards, and funding agencies must prioritize equitable digital access and inclusion through:

- Subsidized devices and internet for underserved learners ((Duolingo, 2025; Singh & Patel, 2025).
- Investment in assistive technologies and offline learning platforms (Al-Azawei *et al.*, 2016).
- National ICT inclusion policies with measurable goals for marginalized groups, including girls, children with disabilities, and linguistic minorities (UNICEF, 2021).
- *Example:* India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes digital infrastructure for all schools; however, successful implementation depends on adequate funding and execution at the grassroots level.

### 6.2 Curriculum Design

Language curricula should integrate ICT not as a supplementary tool but as a core pedagogical element aligned with:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, ensuring content accessibility in multiple formats (audio, visual, text) (Rose & Dalton, 2009).
- Culturally responsive pedagogy incorporating local stories, accents, and socio-linguistic diversity to enhance learner relevance (Gay, 2010).
- Progressive digital literacy goals at each educational level (Janssen *et al.*, 2013).

### 6.3 Teacher Professional Development

Teachers must receive mandatory and continuous training in:

- ICT tools for differentiated instruction and formative assessment (Mishra & Koehler, 2006).
- Handling assistive technologies for special-needs learners (Alnahdi, 2010).
- Ethical issues, including data privacy and digital well-being (Livingstone S, Third, 2017).

*Implementation Tip:* Blended training models, including MOOCs and in-service workshops, can help reach educators in remote areas (Laurillard, 2016).

### 6.4 Learner Feedback Integration

ICT-based instruction must be responsive to student voice and experience through:

- Regular digital surveys, interactive reflections, and anonymous feedback forms (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).
- Platforms allowing learners to rate content usefulness and recommend changes (Chen C-H, Huang, 2012).
- Personalization features in learning apps adapting to learner progress, interests, and feedback (Kucirkova, 2017).

*Outcome:* Learners feel more engaged and empowered, fostering more learner-centric and equitable instructional design (Wang & Sun, 2020).

### 6.5 Public–Private Collaboration

EdTech companies, NGOs, and public institutions should collaborate to:

- Co-develop affordable, scalable tools tailored to regional contexts (Selwyn, 2016).
- Localize content into native languages and scripts (Warschauer, 2011).
- Co-create open educational resources (OER) accessible across socio-economic backgrounds (Butcher, 2015).

### 6.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular evaluation of ICT initiatives should focus on inclusive learning outcomes, not just digital engagement:

- Metrics should assess impact on language proficiency, confidence, accessibility, and inclusion (Trucano, 2010).
- Disaggregated data (e.g., by gender, disability, language background) should inform future planning (Wagner & Day, 2020).

### Summary of Key Recommendations

Area	Action
Policy Support	Fund infrastructure; ensure access for marginalized groups
Curriculum Design	Embed ICT and UDL principles into mainstream language curricula
Teacher Training	Make digital pedagogy and assistive tech training mandatory and ongoing
Learner Feedback	Use feedback to personalize and adapt learning experiences
Public–Private Partnerships	Co-create contextually relevant and accessible ICT tools
Monitoring & Evaluation	Track inclusive outcomes and use data to refine ICT strategies

## 7. Conclusion

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English language learning presents unprecedented opportunities to address the diverse needs of learners across different contexts. Through adaptive language apps, assistive technologies, AI-driven tools, and immersive virtual environments, ICT can facilitate personalized, engaging, and accessible learning experiences that traditional methods alone often cannot provide.

However, realizing the full potential of ICT for inclusivity requires a concerted effort to overcome persistent challenges such as digital inequality, limited teacher preparedness, and culturally irrelevant content and ethical concerns around data privacy. Policymakers, educators, and technology developers must collaborate to design and implement strategies that ensure equitable access, culturally responsive pedagogy, and continuous professional development.

By embedding universal design principles, fostering learner feedback mechanisms, and supporting local innovation, ICT can move beyond mere technology adoption to become a transformative force in inclusive English language education. This will empower learners from marginalized and diverse backgrounds to achieve greater linguistic proficiency, confidence, and social participation in an increasingly globalized world. Ultimately, ICT is not a panacea but a powerful tool—when thoughtfully applied—to make English language learning more inclusive, equitable, and effective for all.

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