# Emancipatory Learning Strategies in English Language Teaching: Insights from Indonesia

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**Abstract**

As English language teaching (ELT) evolves to address global and local demands for equity and critical engagement, emancipatory learning strategies (ELSs) have become increasingly relevant. This study investigates ELSs employed in ELT in the context of Indonesian higher education. The purpose is to explore how ELSs are implemented in ELT in Indonesian universities, how lecturers exercise their agency in implementing the strategies and what factors support and inhibit such exercises of agency by lecturers in using these strategies. Drawing on emancipatory pedagogy theory and the ecological model of teacher agency, this research analyses qualitative data from classroom observations, interviews, and teaching materials at a purposively sampled university in Indonesia. The study found that lecturers implemented several of ELSs in pre-activities, main-activities and post-activities of ELT classes by using real-life tasks, collaborative activities, and flexible assessments, often grounded in students' lived experiences. These strategies reflected key principles of humanisation and critical conscientisation, as lecturers sought to create inclusive spaces where students could voice their perspectives and engage with social realities through English language learning. Problem-based learning was frequently used to develop both linguistic competence and critical awareness. The lecturers dominantly dedicated themselves to emancipatory pedagogy, adapting or modifying the strategies according to local contexts, personal values and professional identity and commitment to socially engaged teaching. the study also found that the attitudes of the national policy, institutional culture and lecturers' professional stance towards ELSs have enabled such practices, while constraints like unclear curriculum guidelines, lecturers' overload with accreditation and administrative works as well students' inability to fully operate as expected by emancipatory principles posed challenges. This research contributes to broader discussions on teacher agency and the democratisation of English learning in postcolonial contexts.

**Keywords:** emancipatory pedagogy, teacher agency, critical pedagogy, education policy

## 1. Introduction

Education is widely recognised as the key to improving social, economic, and political success in contemporary knowledge-based societies. Quality education equips learners with, knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for them to participate fully in workplaces, and in the long run contribute to the development of their communities. . Traditional educational paradigm, however, is often inadequate in fostering this quality education practice and there is an urgent need for a new educational practice which liberate learners at personal level and fulfilling to the need of global workforces.

Framed by neoliberal ideologies, the traditional education systems, according to Gray et al. (2018) and Kutay (2023), have been widely shaped by the need for global market forces which in the view of Savage (2017) align knowledge and skills with the demands of the evolving global economy. The alignment of this goal is documented in the form of nationally standardised controlled curricula. Under such education systems, standardised curricula have been promoted only to fulfill global competitiveness but, as Slater & Griggs, (2015) have argued, failed to meet the wellbeing of individual learners and neglected democratic and emancipatory potential values of education. These values are the core of the current educational paradigm at least in the context of Asia in general and Indonesia in particular.

Contemporary education institutions are now facing drastic changes where the economy, the market and competitiveness are no longer unified and global but diverse and localised in nature, requiring a new and locally unique educational paradigm. In the field of economics there has been a shift from macro to micro economics due to localised nature of economic challenges and growth (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2015; Vlachou & Christou, 1999; Kockel, 2019; Porter, 2000). Though promising, gloalisation and global markets, as Vlachou & Christou (1999) argue, have opened up opportunities for local forces and resources to venture into the global competitiveness. Thus, local as local players, are required to make use of local ways, local skills, local commodities (Carvalho & Rodrigues, 2015), local cultures (Kockel, 2019), requiring local ways of responding to the global challenges (Dulbecco, 2003). Consequently, the notions of global economy, globally and nationally standardised curriculum, learning resources, learning strategies and learning assessment is no longer applicable, replaced by a new flexible paradigm where the curriculum, the learning strategies and assessments are localised relying on the agencies played by the learners, the teachers, the schools and the communities. Thus, in the new paradigm, the control of curriculum, learning strategies and learning assessments lies on the hand of the schools, the teachers and the learners and their professional agencies rather

than declining are indeed increasing (Winter, 2017). Local conditions are not seen as inequal and misaligned resources to the global needs (Joshi, 2024; Rasmussen, 2022), but rather as local potentials. This belief has underscored the new pedagogical frameworks works that are emancipatory, locally and culturally relevant, and sustainable.

The need for the paradigm shift in Indonesian context is related to a number of other geopolitical and socio-cultural factors. In the first place, there is a great discrepancy between rural and urban schools in terms of quality education, resources and opportunities (Hayashi, 2023). Secondly, being multilingual and multicultural, Indonesia is in need for critical language awareness and intercultural competence in multilingual workplaces required for the nationalistic and unified but culturally multiethnic Indonesia (Yulianti, Mayuni, & Muliastuti, 2020; Mariyono, 2024). Thirdly, being superdiverse, borrowing Zein's (2020) terminology, Indonesia with over 744 languages and local cultures, has to acknowledge these cultural groups into its education system not only for inclusive pedagogy but also for more varied, diverse cultural wisdoms and identities. Inclusion of these diversities is crucial for preparing learners to thrive in a globalised world and, in the long run, to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Responding to this shift, the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology introduced the Merdeka Belajar (Emancipated Learning) policy to higher educations. This policy aims at increasing the global competitiveness of the country's higher education institutions by fostering student-centred, flexible, and contextually relevant pedagogies, which, according to OECD (2024), essential for developing critical thinking, creativity, and global competencies. Transformed in the Ministerial Regulation Number 53 Year 2023 and then renewed in the Ministrial Regulation Number 39 Year 2025, the policy emphasises on accommodating learners' rights for student-friendly education practices and internationally-standardised quality education. With ths latest regulation, the national standards for higher education have undergone a fundamental change: the sources, the courses and the assessments of learning are no longer singularly and nationally prescribed but they become varied and multiple following the choices that the learners, the lecturers and the institutions collaboratively make for the accumulation of competencies relevant with the learner's targeted choice of profession. Crucially, the regulation mandates learning environments that are inclusive, collaborative, creative, and supportive of lifelong learning. Lecturers are tasked with designing pedagogical strategies that foster these principles. Marking a paradigm shift, this regulation grants higher education institutions greater autonomy to differentiate their missions and innovate in improving the quality of educational services in ways that suit their local contexts. Nevertheless, the autonomy granted to higher education institutions is relative (Ali & Hamid, 2018), as universities remain accountable to national competency standards and international aspiration, ensuring alignment with graduate outcomes. Implemented nationally within the last ten years, this policy has been reported to be successful at macro=national levels (see Hariyadi et al, 2023; Rpsidi, 2020) and at meso-institutional levels (Defrzal et al, 2022) where positive mindset and active roles of stakeholders are seen as the contributing factors. Nonetheless, reports on what happens at micro-departmental-and-course-unit levels have been very few, if any and this in itself deserves a critical scrutiny, a scientific void that the current study intends to fill.

Within this new framework, emancipatory learning, rooted in Paulo Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, is implicitly endorsed as an effective approach to balance localised institutional flexibility with nationally accredited and standardised educational priorities. Unlike the traditional "banking" model of education, which treats learners as passive recipients of knowledge, emancipatory learning empowers them to critically engage with knowledge-content, social realities and professional skills, promoting more exercises of agency and transformation on the parts of the learners. This paradigm, in the views of Biesta (2017), Cappiali (2023) and Priestley et al (2015), has led teaching and learning practices to center on critical reflections, dialogues, and actions that have transformed and emancipated learners in several marginalised groups. In essence, the practices are, in the words of Nouri and Sajjadi (2014), enacted in three main strategies. Firstly, in the humanisation strategies, learners are provided with personalised learning challenges enabling them to be active and creative and connecting the localised challenges to the globalised life opportunities for them in the future. Secondly, the critical conscientisation strategies develop learners' growing understanding and conscious awareness of socio-educational realities by continuously reflecting on how learning activities and experiences are connected with life skills that they assign for themselves or that are assigned by the schools, the curriculum, the government and the global communities upon them. Finally, these complex life skills can only be acquired with hands-on experience where problem-solving skills are learned and developed. The learners should be exposed to innovative, context-sensitive learning activities that address real-world problems where critical thinking skills are required for learners to arrive at the practical solutions.

A number of studies have reported successful application of such strategies and other emancipatory educational practices in various geopolitical contexts. Sidebottom (2019), for an instance, reports how emancipatory learning has successfully facilitated education of British feminism. Wals et al (2008) looks at emancipatory learning in environmental education and Laughlin (1994) examines how it is effective in mobilising women to participate in social actions. In African contexts, several studies have shown implementation of emancipatory learning to solution of the country's impending problems (for examples, Nigerian democracy (Biamba et al., 2021), South African racial justice and social movement (Burth et al., 2018; Čubajevaitė, 2015) and Gulf-Arab's social repositioning (Hurley, 2024). Interestingly, in Asian contexts, emancipatory learning is seen as Asian in origin (Wang & King, 2008) and as a de-imperalising education strategy (Kuk, 2024). These indicate that the majority of the works on emancipatory pedagogy remains Western-centric, with insufficient attention to other sociocultural contexts. In Indonesian contexts, emancipatory learning has been limited at private schools (Habibi & Sundari, 2014) and in teacher education (Winarti, 2018) in maor cities on the major island of Java, while implementation in other contexts and other purposes is not yet known. The current study is expected to fill this gap by investigating how emancipatory learning strategies are implemented in English language programs at a public university on the tourism island of Lombok and how learners and lecturers

there exercise agency within the evolving policy frameworks. While the Indonesian Emancipated Learning Program promotes autonomy and learner-centeredness, empirical studies are scarce on how lecturers exercise agency to navigate the opportunities and constraints of this reform, especially in English language teacher education.

Learner and lecturer agency has been conceptualised as a dynamic, contextually situated process through which educators interpret, negotiate, and sometimes resist policy demands to align with their beliefs, expertise, and students' needs and context (Priestley et al., 2015; Yusra, Lestari & Hamid, 2022). Research in higher education has shown that this agency manifests in several ways, including implementing creative teaching practices (Cong-Lem, 2024), taking stances on teaching on specific teaching approaches or methodologies (Biesta, Priestley & Robinson, 2015), curriculum adaptation (Tao & Gao, 2017; Yusra, Lestari & Susanti, 2023), and innovating classroom practices (Cong-Lem, 2024; Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015) to tailor reforms to local contexts while contributing to broader educational goals (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016; Safari, 2017).

Empirical studies demonstrate that when teachers exercise agency effectively, they can transform policy intentions into meaningful classroom practices that enhance critical thinking (Vu, 2020), inclusivity (Crandall, 2021), and learner empowerment (Duckworth & Tett, 2019). However, learner and lecturer agency is influenced by multiple factors, including institutional support, leadership, personal beliefs, and professional competencies, which can either enable or constrain educators' capacity for change (Cong-Lem, 2024). Although there is increasing acknowledgement of teacher agency worldwide, the majority of research has concentrated on Western contexts, with few studies examining Asian higher education environments, especially in Indonesia. This gap underscores the need for context-specific investigations into how Indonesian university students and lecturers exercise agency in implementing emancipatory learning education within evolving policy frameworks.

This study builds on these earlier works by situating emancipatory pedagogy within Indonesia's unique socio-cultural and policy contexts, focusing on an English education study program at a government university in West Nusa Tenggara. Three research questions are of concern: (1) How are ELSs implemented to facilitate learning outcomes at the study program? (2) In what ways do lecturers exercise their agency in using these ELSs? (3) What factors support or inhibit exercise of agency by lecturers in using these strategies? Nouri and Sajjadi's (2014) practical framework grounded in Paulo Freire's concept of emancipatory education (Freire, 1970) and contemporary conceptualisations of teacher agency as a dynamic, contextually situated capacity to interpret and enact educational reforms (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015) serve as an analytical foundation for responding to the research inquiries posed in this study.

## 2. Method

### *2.1 Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore how emancipatory learning strategies are implemented and how leaners and lecturers exercise their agency. This design is particularly appropriate for this research because it allows an in-depth, contextualised examination of complex educational phenomena in their real-life setting, where the boundaries between the phenomena and the contexts are not clearly defined (Yin, 2018). This design enables the researchers to investigate the dynamic interplay between emancipatory pedagogy (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014) and all dimensions of learner-lecturer agency (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015).

### *2.2 Participants and Data Collection*

The population and the samples of this study include students and lecturers from the English Education department at a government university in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), Indonesia. All six classes of 180 students in language skills-related units and six lecturers convening the units were purposively selected as the samples of the study: 2 language-skill units for each level (*freshmen*: Intensive English Course (IEC) & Basic Oral Communication (BOC); *sophomore* (Advanced Oral Communication (AOC) & Critical Listening (CL); *junior* (Critical Reading (CR) & Argumentative Writing (AR); *senior* (no classes were drawn as samples because no language-skill units were on offer at this level). Data were gathered by collecting policy and teaching documents, by interviewing and distributing survey questionnaires to students and to lecturers, by observing classes, by collecting lecturer's teaching journals, by downloading lecture notes from the university's learning management system (LMS), and by examining students' classroom works. The documents were in the form of lesson plans, syllabi, institutional policies, and student artifacts such as projects and reflective journals. Classroom observations were in non-participant mode with video recording instruments Semi-structured interviews with learners, lecturers and the head of the department were administered before and after observations to explore their perceptions, experiences, and reflections on implementing emancipatory strategies and enactment of agency. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### *2.3 Data Analysis*

The data in the forms of policy and teaching documents and interview transcripts above were analysed by coding key notions informed by d by the integrated theoretical framework. The codins followed, firstly, Nouri and Sajjadi's (2014) emancipatory strategies where key words associated with "humanisation", "critical conscientisation+, and "problem-solving skills" were digitally collected in Microsoft Excel program for further descriptive qualitative analyses in order to examine how ELSs have been implemented to attain the aims of the study program. Secondly, the data were analysed in order to tease out how agency has been exercised in the implementation of ELSs by both lecturers and learners. For this purpose, the key notions in Priestley et al.'s (2015) concept of agency were used: "iterational", "projective" and "practical-evaluative". Finally, the interview transcripts were analysed to determine key contributing and inhibiting factors to the agency exercises and the factors in Cong-Lem's (2024) concept were utilised for coding: "institutional support",

"leadership", "personal beliefs", and "professional competencies". The accumulated information was then analysed in descriptive qualitative perspectives to identify the dominant contributing and inhibiting factors in the agency exercise. Triangulation across the data sources and analyses is expected to enhance the validity, reliability, and generalisability of the findings.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The implementation of ELSs, the exercise of lecturer agency in this implementation, and the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing the agency exercises are the three main research questions of the study. The findings and discussion can then be organised into three sections, each corresponding to one of these categories.

### *3.1 Implementation of Emancipatory Learning Strategies*

To a great extent, ELSs have been thoroughly implemented in the classes understudy and this is indicative in these stages of the lectures: pre-activities, main-activities and post-activities. From class observation notes, teaching journals and LMS lecture notes, we have been able to accumulate a total of 1919 activities classifiable according to lecture stages (i.e., pre-activities, while-activities and post-activities). Figure 1 summarizes these activities as the implementation of ELSs.

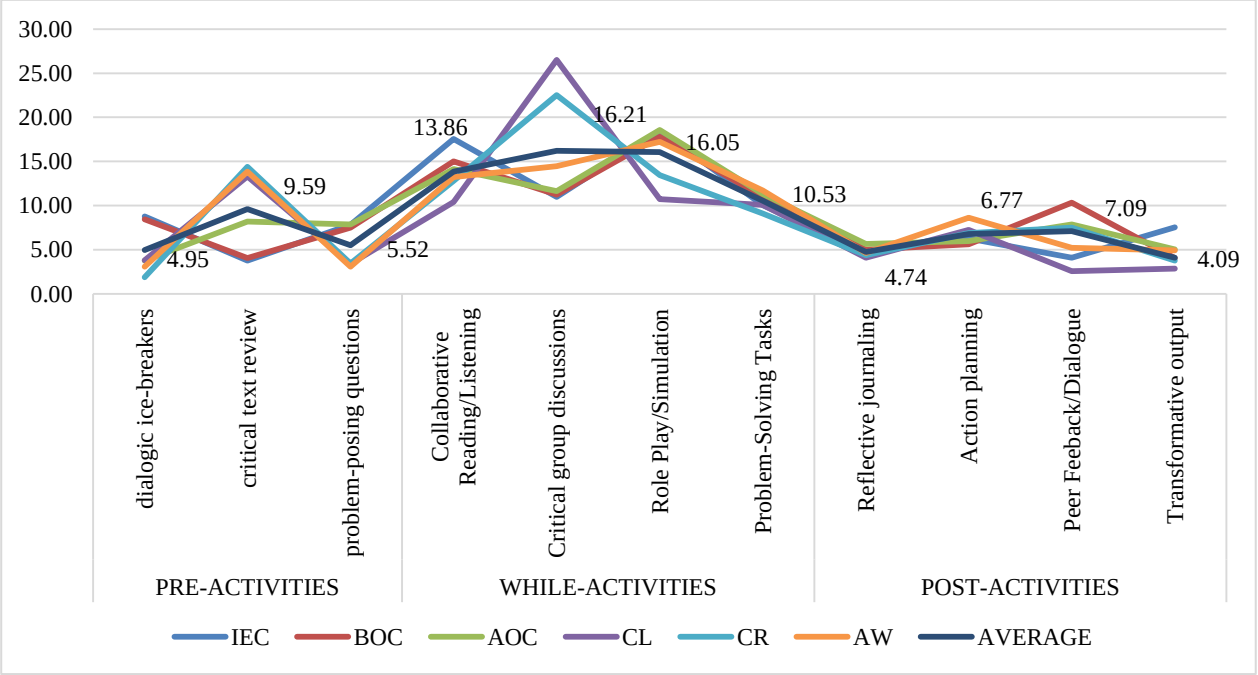


Figure 1. Implementation of ELSs

Firstly, in the design of the course content and in the pre-activities, there has always been a balanced dialectical relation between local, national and global orientation, providing rooms for learners and lecturers to reflect on learning from perspectives of their own socio-cultural concerns. In Basic Oral Communication course unit, for an instance, the lecturer (Yana) encouraged learners to critically analyse the modeled dialogues from the perspectives of the student's native culture (i.e, the Sasak culture) and the national culture (i.e. the Indonesian culture) before indulging in the learned culture of English. In another basic course like IEC, the lecturer (Tita) has always encouraged her students to critically analyse lessons from their own perspectives and not to accept them as fixed knowledge. In sophomore and junior units like AOC, CL, CR and AW classes, the lecturers fulfilled the need for criticality by assigning the learners with further readings from multiple and diverse perspectives, enabling them to obtain richer information, facilitating them to engage in critical discussions, and encouraging them to challenge the dominant narratives within or beyond the learning sources. Consequently, as Figure 1 indicates, significantly more frequencies of critical text review at these levels compared to the freshmen level where ice-breaking activities in the forms of modelled dialogues were more common. Nonetheless, the frequencies of questions being used to raise problems for further class discussions were not significantly different at all levels. In general, these activities constitute around 20% of the class activities.

Secondly, in the main activity phases, the lecturers have democratically treated the learners in the classroom practices by allowing them to actively engage in group and class dialogues. In all levels of the courses, collaboration in listening to or reading of dialogues, texts or problems appear to be initial stage of main class activities and these constitute less than 15% of classroom activities. At the freshmen level, however, significantly more time was spent for role-play and dialogue simulation (around 20% of time) than in the sophomore and junior levels where group discussions on critical issues were significantly more dominant (nearly 25% of the class time). This difference is due to

the difference in the goals of each unit: the freshmen courses require more speaking practices while the sophomore and the junior courses need more time for students' criticality. However, although there is a sharp contrast, the figure indicates a striking similarity that each activity constitutes more than 15% of the class time.

As the main phase of ELSs implementation and consuming more than 55% of time allocation, more should be elaborated classroom activities at this stage. The learners at all levels were empowered not only to critically contest course content and knowledge but also raised locally relevant social issues and collaboratively seek for relevant solutions to the problems. These classroom activities can lead to socially meaningful individual, group and collective actions from the learners but the activities have even extended the students' engagement to other problems in other social contexts requiring for further readings for the problems and the contexts and the students have consequently involved in agency and transformation exercises.

This student-centred and active learning is evidenced across all observed classrooms, where students have been actively engaged in critical discussion, collaborative meaning-making, and authentic communication tasks. In CL, for example, the students were assigned to work in groups to evaluate persuasive speeches, identifying emotional appeals, rhetorical devices, and unsupported claims. During a group work activity, the lecturer, Tria, was noticed to say,

> "You don't have to be convinced. Let's ask—what's missing from this argument?" (Tria, 52, female lecturer, our translation)

The group work activities and the lecturers' invitations above have exemplified ELSs as such that learning experience have positioned students not as passive receivers of knowledge, but as active evaluators of discourse and creative agents of critical thought. As proponents of ELSs, these are, in essence, the true implementation of emancipatory education. Note, however, these are not isolated observation and such practices can be confirmed in other units of courses. In CR course unit, students were assigned to interrogate media bias, identifying the sources and dangers of such biases and devising ways of avoiding such biases for themselves in the future. In AOC, they delivered and debated arguments on locally, national and globally relevant social topics. In AW class, they developed creative ideas and critiqued claims grounded in real-world issues. Even in lower-level classes such as BOC, CR, and IEC, students were given tasks to connect their personal stories and experiences to learning materials content, showing that critical engagement is not limited by proficiency level.

The lecturers were also observed to consistently emphasised contextualisation by using local issues, student interests, real-world topics as entry points for language learning. One lecturer Yana, recalled,

> "When we discussed gender roles, I asked students to reflect on their own community norms." (Yana, 32, female lecturer, our translation)

This emphasis was evident in every observed class. In CL, for instance, students were given a task to evaluate arguments on social media addiction using their own experiences as part of their analysis. In CR, students were to relate a simple story about missing a bus to their routines. In BOC, students were asked to introduce themselves through life goals, such as becoming a lecturer or starting their own business. The principle of humanisation is clearly evident in these English language classroom practices as the content and the instructional methods are relevant to students' proficiency level, experience and cultural context.

Humanisation principles was also evident in practice where lecturers viewed learners not simply as language users, but as individuals with ideas, histories, and futures. Rulshah, who taught BOC shared that learning English helped students express his political views more clearly. This was mirrored in his classroom activity, where students responded to the prompt, "Who are you becoming?" and were supported in expressing identity through emerging English skills. In IEC, students shared personal narratives, and in CR, learners related story content to their lives, laughing and reflecting as they connected reading to experience. In all cases, students were invited to participate as full human beings, not as grammatical subjects.

Lecturers also intentionally aligned language instruction with critical reasoning and civic thinking, which is the key element to critical conscientisation. For example, Tika, the lecturer responsible for teaching AOC, stated,

> "We had a project where students researched local water issues and presented their findings in English." (Tika, 27, female lecturer, our translation)

This ethos was apparent in several classes, such as in the CL task, where students critiqued arguments using phrases like "There is no clear evidence" and "This speaker appeals to emotion…". In CR, students asked, "Whose interests are being served?" In AOC, students critiqued and built persuasive claims. In AW, they learned to construct counterarguments. These language classroom activities reveal that English was not taught in isolation, but rather integrated into broader context of thought, communication and social interaction (Choudhary, 2016).

Lecturers also recognised that student engagement in learning is driven by meaningful content and authentic tasks and interactions. Lecturer Tita noted,

> "Students become more fluent when the content which are related to them..." (Tita, 47, female lecturer, our translation)

This was observable in all courses. In CL, students used personalised examples to challenge persuasive techniques. In CR, learners enthusiastically requested more stories related to their life and context. Across all levels, students were not merely practising language.

Humanisation and reflection ELSs implemented during the main activities have been directed towards the ultimate goals of classroom sessions, that is, solving problems raised for each session. As shown in Figure 1, these constitute around 10% of the classroom activities, manifested in various project-based tasks in the courses. This Freirean emancipatory principle is practised through learning strategies where

students actively find solutions to real-world problems using their English language skills. Classroom observations confirm that these strategies are genuinely implemented. For example, in a CL class, students collaboratively analysed the emotional appeals and potential biases in selected media clips, fostering both critical thinking and active discussion. In one observed CR class, learners worked in small groups to read a current event article, and then determine the important facts and use them to write a brief report or present solutions for a related local issue. In this way, both comprehension and personal connection are promoted. In AW courses, students were observed using writing to solve real-world problems by forming arguments based on evidence. Accordingly, students not only do writing practice, but also write to propose, defend, or challenge solutions to meaningful problems. Similarly, BOC classes featured interactive tasks and small groups to discuss causes and brainstorm solutions. Such group discussions encourage collaboration, critical thinking and fluency, aligning naturally with both problem-based learning strategies and communication skill goals.

Finally, the post-activities constitute more than 20% of the class time were spent for refection and transformation purposes. Figure 1 shows four ways through which reflection and transformation have been implemented: asking students to reflect in written or digital forms (around 5%), assigning them with individual, group or class project actions (almost 7%), giving oral or written feedbacks on peer performances (around 7%), and transforming the learned skills into making new language products (less than 5%). Though similar in percentages, there is, nonetheless, a sharp contrast in the use of peer feedback, action planning and transformative actions in the freshman units and those in the sophomore and the junior units. In the freshmen units (IEC & BOC), students providing feedbacks, assessment and lessons learnt from peer performances were more dominant (around 10%), while in the sophomore (AOC & CL) and the junior (CR & AW) units, the students reflected on learning by planning more actions to increase learning further and around 8% of classroom activities were spent for this purpose. In the freshmen units, transformation was implemented by assigning students to practice language skills in self-made scripts while in the sophomore and the junior units, it is mainly for students responding to locally, nationally and globally relevant issues.

As part of these reflective and transformative stages, the opinions of the students as well as others on the implementation of the ELSs in the units are worthy of scrutiny. In our survey (using student survey questionnaire in Appendix 1), we found that a significant majority of students perceive their English classes as spaces for voice, engagement, and relevance. As seen in Figure 2, 85% of students feel encouraged to express opinions and think critically, and 80% report engaging in real-life or social issue discussions. Furthermore, 82% see the learning content as relevant to real-life situations. These indicators suggest strong alignment with emancipatory learning principles, following Biesta (2017) and Cappiali (2023) where learners are positioned as active participants in meaning-making rather than passive recipients (Nouri & Sajjadi (2014).

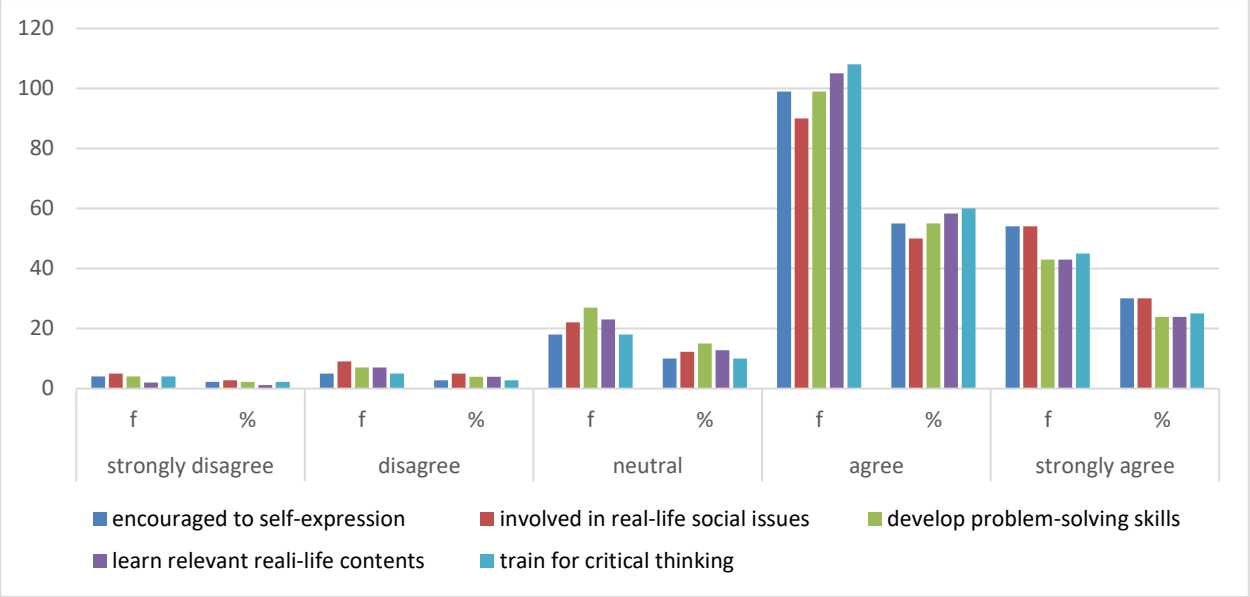


Figure 2. Students' perception of emancipatory learning strategies

The learner survey is convincingly supported with findings from interviews with lecturers. Six out of six lecturers confirm that the positive outcomes above are not coincidental but, rather, intentional and reflective of the pedagogical design of the courses which are rooted in emancipatory education. Across all interviews, the lecturers described to have organised and designed the course content and activities grounded in participatory, inquiry-based, and contextually relevant methods. One of the lecturers, Rami, shared:

> "In my classes, I avoid using the traditional lecture format lessons. Instead, I organise students to work in small groups of four or five to analyse issues like media representation or local environmental challenges." (Karti, 35, female lecturer, our translation)

Investigating six different classrooms and learning contexts, these findings confirm that emancipatory learning strategies rooted in humanisation, critical conscientisation, and problem-solving development (Nouri and Sajjaddi's, 2014) are being effectively implemented

in English language education department. These strategies facilitate students to develop language proficiency through meaningful and thoughtful interactions with self, society, and the systems of meaning that shape and are shaped by their realities.

The HD supported the use of the strategies, articulating a departmental vision that encourages transformative and locally relevant pedagogy. While the term "emancipatory learning" is not codified in official education policy documents, the institution endorses teaching practices that foster student voice, contextual relevance, and critical thinking. As the HD explained,

> "We don't officially use the term 'emancipatory learning,' but we absolutely support what it stands for. Our lecturers are encouraged to design lessons that connect with students' lives—culturally, socially, even politically. The goal is not just fluency, but critical engagement. We want our graduates to be the kind of English lecturers who don't just teach language, they help students think, question, and grow into informed citizens." (AR, 46, male lecturer, our translation)

Thus, emancipatory strategies are understood not just as pedagogical techniques but as essential to preparing globally competent yet socially rooted English educators. This vision, however, depends greatly on lecturer agency in implementing such transformative learning experiences which is explored in the following section.

*3.2 Lecturer Agency in Implementing Emancipatory Pedagogy*

The section above has shown how ELSs have been implemented and this raises another question how the lecturers have exercised their agency in such implementations. This is the focus of this subsection.

All the 1919 classroom activities are classifiable in four main categories of agency exercises. Firstly, the lecturers directly uptake ELSs as intended by emancipatory pedagogical frameworks. We label this agency exercise as dedication or adoption. In pre-activities, for example, the lecturers started classes by addressing issues of current students' concern or by giving critical feedbacks on students' homework and journals or by posing intriguing questions for the students discuss. During main-activities, lecturers' dedication to ELSs can be seen in their efforts to engage students in collaborative listening, reading, discussion, role-playing or problem-solving. In post-activities, such dedication can be seen in the forms of students transforming newly learnt skills into new contexts, giving feedbacks to peer participation, planning immediate actions or writing journals of the day's learning. Our survey indicate that these exercises were reflected in almost 70%

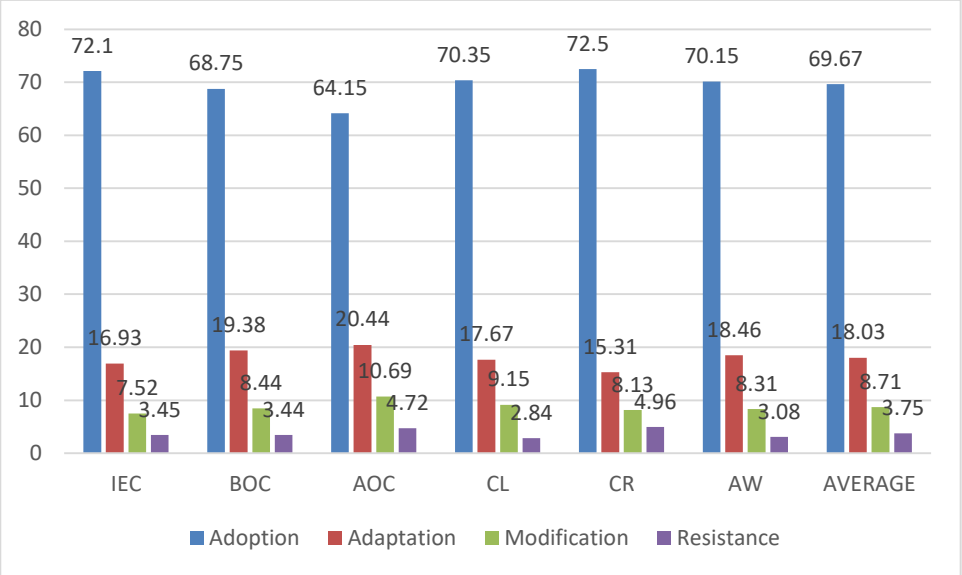


Figure 3. Types of lecturer agency exercises

The second type of agency exercise is adaption where lecturers adjust ELSs with local conditions (e.g. class size, institutional policy, or cultural expectation). In pre-activities, they might conduct reflective, critical and problem-posing activities in groups or classical forms due to large class size. In main-activities, they might integrate collaborative reading with info-gap listening activities, engaging learners in emancipatory and skill learning at the same time. In post-activities, due to time limit. they might assign reflection, action plan, peer feedback or transformational activities as home-assignment for later submission in the university's LMS. As shown in Figure 3, these exercises were found in more than 15% of the classroom activities.

The third type of agency exercise is when lecturers modify ELSs to fit personal beliefs, institutional pressures or diluting the emancipatory aims of the lesson. In pre-activities, lecturers might alter the reflection, critical reading and problem-posing activities with question and answer to individual students while they are being called out for attendance check in the university's LMS. In main-activities, lecturers might modify collaborative listening or reading with comprehension check, thus allowing more time and exercises for slow learners to catch up and collaborate with others. In post-activities, lecturers might combine collection of students' reflection and feedback with tests of comprehension and skills. In our data, these exercises include less than 10% of the class activities.

Finally, there is resistance to ELSs when lecturers abandon ELSs consciously or unconsciously in favour of their own traditional lecture style. In pre-activities, these can be seen when lecturers spent all the time calling the class roll and filled in the university's LMS with lecture notes as required. In main-activities, they spent time in teacher-led activities of students working individually on class modules without group collaboration or discussion whatsoever. In post-activities, no reflection, action planning, peer feedback or transforming activities were made but rather closure of the class with a promise to see them in the following sessions. In our data, these practices were found in less than 5% of class activities.

These findings on the dedication of the lecturers to ELSs are strongly supported in or survey to students as well as interviews with lecturers and the HD. The analyses indicate that lecturers exercise a strong sense of agency in implementing ELSs. As shown in Figure 4, the results of the student questionnaires reveal strong perceptions of lecturer creativity and adaptability, with nearly 85% of students agreeing that lecturers employ innovative methods and 83% acknowledging that lecturers adapt to their needs.

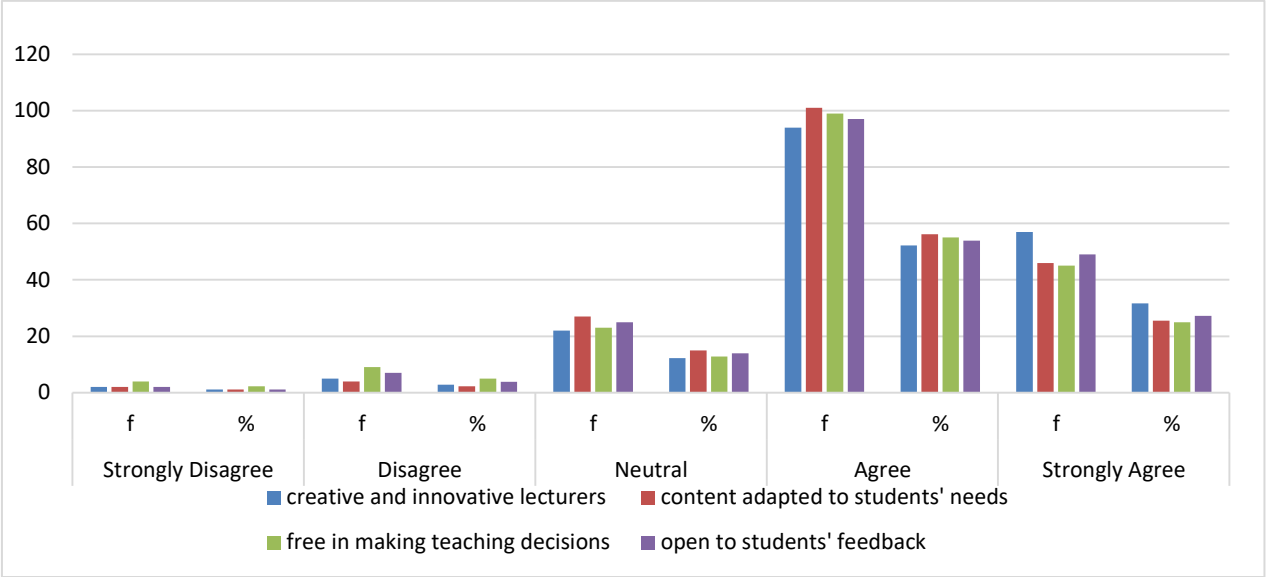


Figure 4. Students' perception of lecturer agency

These results are reinforced by qualitative data from both lecturer interviews and classroom observations. Lecturers reported high levels of autonomy in content selection, material development, and instructional design. Tika, one of the lecturers, explained,

> "I often design my own materials based on what's happening locally. If students are talking about a recent event or issue, I try to bring that into the lesson the next day." (Tika, 27, female lecturer, our translation)

Another lecturer, Rulshah, added,

> "We're encouraged to be flexible in teaching. But being flexible doesn't mean being unstructured, but it means being ready to modify the lesson plans. If something isn't working, I adjust the teaching methods and strategies, shifting the activity mid-lesson or bringing in something more relevant to students' needs and classroom situations." (Rulshah, 40, male lecturer, our translation)

Classroom observations provide clear evidence of teaching adjustment made by the lecturers. In the CL class where students were supposed to listen to a political speech and analyse the speaker's persuasive techniques, the lecturer noticed most students were struggling to identify rhetorical devices. Some are even zoning out. The lecturer immediately adapted by playing a short commercial or social media influencer clip with clear visuals, prompting students with questions like: "Who is the speaker? What are they trying to make you feel? What kind of appeal is being used?"

In BOC class, there was an observed situation in which students were found to struggle with a formal presentation format. As a response to this, the lecturer took a flexible action by shifting to story-telling, as a less formal activity, before turning to structured speeches. This flexibility not only enhances engagement but also aligns with broader pedagogical goals of humanising instruction. These examples of flexible teaching actions show that lecturers resist the fixed syllabi but dedicate to students' need, linguistic readiness, and classroom dynamics in real time. Such strategic teaching flexibility emphasises that the lecturers are not passive implementers of education policy (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016), but make intentional pedagogical choices in line with their pedagogical goals and the specific contexts of their students. This strategic action reflects the "practical-evaluative" and "projective" dimensions of lecturer agency Priestly et al. (2015). The lecturers also described how their agency was shaped by both personal teaching philosophies and lived experiences.

Rulshah, for example, narrated,

> "I think a big part of how I teach now comes from my own experience as a learner. I know what it feels like to sit in class and not fully understand the 'hidden rules' of academic life. That background really drives me to make my classes more inclusive and supportive. I don't want my students to feel the same isolation I once did." (Rulshah, 40, male lecturer, our translation),

Similarly, Tika described her personal and teaching philosophy,

> "My teaching philosophy has always been rooted in empathy and equity, and that definitely shapes the decisions I make in the classroom. The institution gives us some flexibility, and I try to use that space to be creative—whether it's allowing alternative assessment formats or integrating real-life tasks that reflect their lived realities. In that sense, my agency is both personal and political—it's not just about teaching English, it's about giving my students a voice." (Tika, 27, female lecturer, our translation)

From an institutional perspective, the HD confirmed this agency exercise by lecturers. He noted,

> "We believe our lecturers to make the right decisions in their classrooms. They know their students best. The department supports lecturers through curriculum review forums, team-teaching opportunities, and professional development initiatives." (AR, 46, male lecturer, our translation).

However, the HD also acknowledged that not all lecturers equally exercise their agency, citing factors such as limited confidence, resistance to change, and unfamiliarity with critical pedagogy. This variability suggests that while institutional structures promote agency, individual uptake is shaped by lecturers' pedagogical beliefs, experience, and supporting as well all constraining factors in implementing emancipatory education.

*3.3 Enabling and Constraining Factors in Implementing Emancipatory Strategies*

The implementation of ELSs in the department can be shaped by a complex array of enabling and constraining forces operating at institutional, policy, and classroom levels. These conditions significantly influence how lecturers interpret and enact critical pedagogies in practice.

To measure which of the factors are influential to agency exercises, we distributed agency measuring instrument in Appendix 2 asking the 6 lecturers to order reasons for the exercises from 1 to 12. Assigning the highest score (i.e., 12) to the highest rank (i.e., 1), we can come up with the factors with high or low scores. Using the mean score of 6 as the median rank, we could establish the significant ($p < .05$) and the non-significant ($p > .05$) enabling factors as shown in Table 1. Though simple, this descriptive consensus of ranking has been found to be consistent when compared with non-parametric measures of the data (e.g., Friedman test and Kendall's W-test) conforming respondent consensus agreement in the supporting factors.

Table 1. Enabling factors

| No | Factors | Sum of Score | Mean score | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Institutional tolerance to collaborative1 teaching | 72 | 12 | p <.05 |
| 2 | Lecturers' Professional Autonomy | 66 | 11 | |
| 3 | Institutional openness to academic culture | 60 | 10 | |
| 4 | institutional tolerance to collective agency | 54 | 9 | |
| 5 | ELS as national educational orientation | 48 | 8 | |
| 6 | Flexibility in the national education policy | 42 | 7 | |
| 7 | Student factors | 36 | 6 | p > .05 |
| 8 | Collegial supports for ELS | 30 | 5 | |
| 9 | ELS as personally preferred teaching method | 24 | 4 | |
| 10 | Lecturer's self-efficacy in ELS | 18 | 3 | |
| 11 | ELS as personal belief in teaching | 10 | 2 | |
| 12 | Implementing ELS is a personal role | 9 | 1 | |

As the table shows, several supportive institutional factors emerged from the data. A relatively open academic culture, opportunities for curriculum review, and a strong tolerance for innovation in assessment design were highlighted as key enablers. According to the HD, the program's leadership encourages academic freedom, trust, and experimentation, particularly when innovation demonstrably enhances student learning outcomes. Lecturers described feeling empowered to design learning experiences that prioritise student voice, contextual relevance, and critical engagement. Collaborative teaching cultures, including team teaching, peer mentoring, and curriculum discussions, further strengthen professional autonomy and collective agency.

The table also indicates that policy-level frameworks, especially the Emancipated Learning initiative, Ministerial Regulation No. 53 (2023) and Ministerial Regulation No 39 (2025), have also contributed to this environment by promoting student-centred, flexible, and globally relevant pedagogies. Many lecturers perceive these reforms as legitimising the use of emancipatory practices and providing a policy framework that supports local innovation, especially in skills-based and elective courses.

In particular, the lecturer interviews suggest that ELSs are not only understood conceptually but are also valued and actively applied. Lecturers are not passive recipients of top-down directives (Hamid & Nguyen, 2016; Yusra, Lestari & Susanti,2023). Rather, they function as engaged professionals who adapt pedagogy to their students' sociocultural context, prioritise empowerment over rote delivery, and critically mediate between institutional policy and classroom realities. This form of lecturer agency manifests in personalised tasks, contextually embedded themes, and efforts to encourage reflective engagement with real-world issues.

Nevertheless, several factors thought to be essential are not significantly influential. These include student factors, collegial supports, personal preference and belief on ELS as an effective teaching procedure, and lecturers' self-efficacy and role on emancipating students in learning.

The study has also identified several factors constraining successful implementation of ELSs. With the agency measuring instrument (see Appendix 2), we asked the lecturers to rank factors inhibiting them from emancipating learners. Converting the ranks to scores as above, we can list constraining factors with high or low scores. Using the mean and the median scores of 6 as the cut-off rank, we could establish which factors are significantly constraining ($p < .05$) and which are not ($p > .05$). The results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Constraining factors

| No | Factors | Sum of Score | Mean score | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Rigid curriculum guidelines | 72 | 12 | $p < .05$ |
| 2 | Heavy demand on national accreditation | 66 | 11 | |
| 3 | Pressure for international accreditation | 60 | 10 | |
| 4 | Administrative workload | 54 | 9 | |
| 5 | Academic workload | 48 | 8 | |
| 6 | Student readiness | 42 | 7 | |
| 7 | Teaching workload | 36 | 6 | $p > .05$ |
| 8 | University evaluation system | 30 | 5 | |
| 9 | University policy on ELS | 24 | 4 | |
| 10 | ELS's incompatibility with national curriculum | 18 | 3 | |
| 11 | ELS as global trend | 10 | 2 | |
| 12 | Technological factors | 9 | 1 | |

Table 2 presents several significant constraints that complicate the consistent implementation of such practices. Lecturers described national curriculum guidelines, particularly for core or compulsory subjects, as often rigid and difficult to adapt. These guidelines tend to emphasise coverage and standardisation, limiting opportunities for contextual or student-led exploration. Additional structural barriers include the heavy demands of accreditation systems at national levels (i.e., BAN-PT and LAMDIK) and at international levels (i.e. British Council, Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training, ESL, and Accreditation International), which require strict adherence to documentation protocols, measurable outputs, and uniform standards. These processes often leave little room for pedagogical flexibility or risk-taking.

Administrative workload was also cited as a major challenge. In addition to teaching, lecturers often manage multiple layers of responsibility, including research, community service, and institutional reporting. This high workload limits time for reflective planning, innovation, or peer collaboration.

The HD confirmed the existence of these constraints, noting that despite the department's supportive stance, broader systemic conditions still influence what is realistically possible. He emphasised that while curriculum design and teaching strategies are largely delegated to individual lecturers, structural expectations from external accrediting bodies and policy regimes cannot be ignored. The HD also recognised that not all lecturers feel equally confident in exercising their professional agency especially those who are unfamiliar with critical pedagogy or are hesitant to deviate from conventional methods.

Another recurring challenge is student readiness. Many lecturers observed that while senior students often engage well with dialogic and reflective activities, first-year students tend to be more passive, sometimes expressing confusion or discomfort when confronted with non-traditional learning formats. This observation was echoed by the HD, who acknowledged that a gap persists between the ideals of participatory, student-driven pedagogy and the expectations that students bring with them from their prior schooling experiences. This disconnect can create tension in the classroom, requiring instructors to carefully scaffold learning and gradually build student confidence and autonomy.

In theory, several factors are assumed to inhibit agency exercises but the current study has shown that these factors are not proven to be less influential: overbearing teaching workload that lecturers might have, test-based evaluation system that a university might have, university policy which might disfavour ELS, the national curriculum which disregards ELS as a potential approach, ELS as a global trend and barriers in the university's ability to provide required learning technologies. These dimensions might be essential in other contexts, but in the context of the current study, they are not statistically proven to be significant.

Constraints also come from students. The student survey data shown in Figure 5 reflect these nuanced dynamics. While a large majority, nearly 90%, reported that their classrooms supported active participation, 60% indicated that institutional rules sometimes limited creativity. Furthermore, 70% of students noted that disengagement from peers occasionally hindered the effectiveness of group work. These findings suggest that even in environments that promote innovation, student experiences can vary depending on peer interaction, classroom culture, and how well learning strategies are aligned with their readiness and expectations.

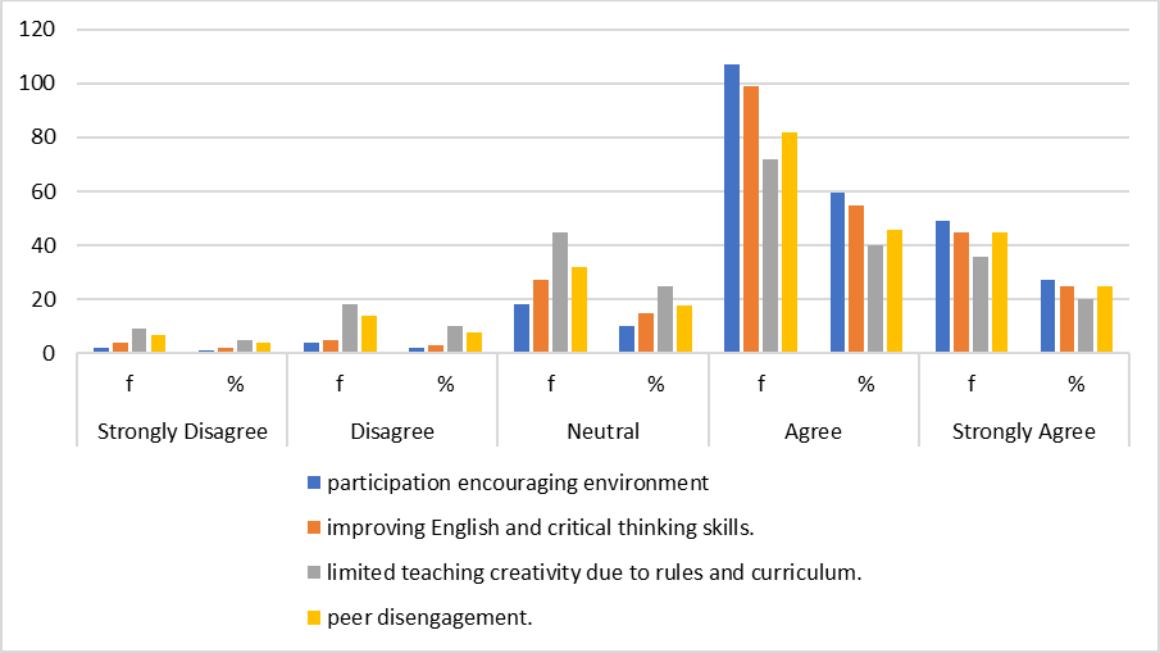


Figure 5. Perceived supportive and inhibiting factors

Additional constraints emerged around language ideology and assessment. Some lecturers expressed frustration with the ongoing emphasis on native-like English proficiency and standardised testing. These pressures often stem from curriculum standards or broader institutional goals related to international ranking and graduate competitiveness. However, such priorities may conflict with the aims of emancipatory pedagogy, which values communicative effectiveness, identity affirmation, and critical language awareness over formal perfection. These dimensions as well as others also deserve further and deeper scrutiny.

**4. Conclusion and Recommendation**

Based on the results and discussion above, the research questions can now be briefly summarised. The study shows that ELSs have been implemented in all activities of the language-skill units. In pre-activities, the lessons have always started with dialogic ice-breakers, critical review of texts and practices in previous sessions, and raising questions and cases for later intense discussions. In the main activities, the classes have always involved in collaborative listening, reading and group discussions of texts which are then followed by simulation, role play and problem-solving activities. The sessions have usually ended in similar fashions where the students reflect on the class sessions in oral or written reflective journals, write plans for actions, provide oral or written feedback on peer performances in the sessions, and design individual, group or classical projects transforming the learned competencies in real-life contexts.

The study has also shown how lecturers have exercised agency in the implementation of ELSs. The majority of the agency exercises fall in the forms of dedication where the lecturers in the majority of their classroom actions adopt the emancipatory pedagogic principles and devote themselves in the implementation of ELSs. In some situations, lecturers must adapt the ELS activities to class size or class conditions. In morning sessions of small classes, critical discussions are more common while in tiring afternoon classes group role plays or dialogues are often used. There is also another type of agency exercise where lecturers modify the emancipatory pedagogy with non-emancipatory activities, for example, by calling the class roll using the university's LMS. Though limited, lecturers have also been found to have resisted emancipatory pedagogy when, for example, they spent the class time lecturing or making the students dwell into grammar exercises.

Several factors have been found to significantly support the agency exercise: institutional tolerance to collaborative teaching, professional autonomy of the lecturers, institutional openness to emancipating academic culture, institutional tolerance to collective agency, ELS being the main orientation of national education and flexibility in the implementation of the orientation. Other factors have been found to interfere with emancipatory pedagogy: unclear curriculum guidelines, lecturers' overload with accreditation and administrative works as well students' inability to fully operate as expected by emancipatory principles.

While the scientific void has been filled, there are nonetheless recommendations for future studies on emancipatory learning. The study has looked into agency exercises by using questionnaires and interviews to lecturers and students and their answers, in addition to low rate of return, might have been to a certain extent affected by the relationship between the researchers and the respondents. Thus, use of more independent and reliable means of data collection, for example, teaching and learning journals from the lecturers and the students can reveal what actually happen in their mind. The study focuses limitedly on course units related to language skills and researching content and theoretical units might enlarge our horizon of emancipatory leaning. Finally, success or failure in the implementation of emancipatory pedagogy lies very much on the awareness of both lecturers and the students and collaboration of both is highly required. However,

personal, institutional and cultural conditions may come into play and thus regular meetings of the lecturing team could help shape and reshape the team's mood back into its original state. Such agency exercises as well as many potential others deserve research attention with diverse epistemology and methodology.

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**Authors' contributions**

Conceptualization, YBL and KY; study design, YBL; methodology, YBL; data collection, YBL and NMS; assisting in data collection, MH and ENW; analysing and tabulating data, YBL, KY, and NMS; assisting in data analysis, MH, ENW; software, NMS and MH; validation, YBLand KY.; formal analysis, KY.; investigation, YBL.; resources, YBL and KY; data curation, YBL; writing—original draft preparation, YBL; writing—review and editing, YBL and KY; finalising the the manuscript, YBL; visualization, MH; supervision, KY; project administration, KY and NMS; funding acquisition, YBL. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.



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**APPENDIX 1, SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please respond to the questions below according to your understanding, observation or situations. There is no right or wrong answer and whatever your response is will be treated rightfully as valid and correct information.

1. Name: _____
2. Gender:
   - Male
   - Female
   - Undisclosed
3. Occupation:
   - Student
   - Lecturer
   - Head of Department
4. Have you heard Emancipatory Learning Strategies (ELSs) before?
   - Yes, indeed
   - Not Sure
   - No, not at all
5. In your opinion, which of the followings are essential for Emancipatory Learning Strategies (ELSs)?
   - Pedagogic creativity
   - Student-centeredness
   - Contextually relevant
   - Empowering students
   - Active student participation
6. In your opinion, which of the following skills are crucial in implementing Emancipatory Learning Strategies (ELSs)?
   - Human capital skills
   - Critical thinking skills
   - Problem-Solving skills
   - Communication skills
   - Collaboration skills
7. In your opinion, which of the followings are important for emancipating EFL learners into active learning in English classes?
   - Integrate learner's interest or hobbies
   - Integrate learner's lived experiences
   - Make use of learner's cultural background
   - Identify learner's preferences in learning
   - Include learner's ambition in the materials
8. How often are listening, speaking, reading and writing skills integrated in your classes?
   - Very often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Seldom

- Never

9. How often are real social problems involved in your English classes
   - Very often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Seldom
   - Never
10. How often is Emancipatory Learning implemented in your classes?
   - Very often
   - Often
   - Sometimes
   - Seldom
   - Never
11. What is your perception of Emancipatory Learning?
   - It encourages self-expression
   - It involves real-life issues
   - It develops problem-solving skills
   - It present learners with real-life course contents
   - It trains learners for critical thinking
12. What is your perception of your lecturer's exercise of agency in the classes that you enrolled in
   - They are innovative and creative lecturers
   - They relate course content with my personal and social needs
   - They professionally free to make content of the lesson
   - They are democratically open to our feedback

**APPENDIX 2. RATING SCALE FOR AGENCY FACTORS**

The questions are meant to collect your opinions about reasons for the activities that you have done and have not done in your classrooms and they will be used only for research purposes.

Name : …… (Please type your name)

Position : Lecturer

Name of course unit : …… (Please type name of the unit)

These factors BELOW have **enabled** me in implementing Emancipated Learning and creatively engaging students in the classes that I teach at the university. Please rank the options by writing number in the box provided based on the order of importance. Number one (#1) is the highest in the rank and number twelve (#12) is the lowest.

| **Rank** | **Statement** |
|---|---|
| ,,,,,,,,, | As a transformative intellectual, I always challenge traditional methods with new creative ways of teaching |
| ,,,,,,,,, | Emancipated learning can balance lecturer-student relation and this can promote effective learning. |

,,,,,,,,, I personally believe that I am capable of handling emancipatory learning in my classes.

,,,,,,,,, I personally believe that the best way to educate students is by emancipating them in learning.

,,,,,,,,, My colleagues and teaching communities are supportive of my emancipatory learning endeavour.

,,,,,,,,, The current national policy of education enables the implementation of Emancipated Learning.

,,,,,,,,, The current national policy of education encourages Emancipated Learning for internationalization Indonesian education.

,,,,,,,,, The students are ready and willing to engage in emancipated learning.

,,,,,,,,, The university advocates collective agency of lecturers and students,

,,,,,,,,, The university encourages lectures to be innovative in the teaching procedures.

,,,,,,,,, The university guarantees the right of every lecturer for professional autonomy.

,,,,,,,,, The university highly values collaborative teaching methods over individual lecturing styles.

These factors BELOW have **disabled** me in implementing Emancipated Learning and creatively engaging students in the classes that I teach at the university. Please rank the options by writing number in the box provided based on the order of importance. Number one (#1) is the highest in the rank and number twelve (#12) is the lowest.

**Rank** **Statement**

,,,,,,,,, Doing research and community services as well as publishing articles spares no time for student emancipating services

,,,,,,,,, Emancipated learning is the current education trend of the world.

,,,,,,,,, Materials and technological resources at the university does not enable me to implement emancipated learning.

,,,,,,,,, My teaching workload does not allow me to be more emancipating to my students learning.

,,,,,,,,, The cultural learning attitudes of my students does not support more active and critical learning.

,,,,,,,,, The current national education policy does not promote emancipatory learning.

,,,,,,,,, The curriculum guidelines are not compatible with the policies in national education accreditation.

,,,,,,,,, The curriculum guidelines do not follow dimensions of international accreditation system

,,,,,,,,, The guidelines of the current national education policy are too rigid to implement at my locality.

,,,,,,,,, The university does not allow experimentation and innovation in teaching procedures

,,,,,,,,, The university highly values standardised testing and emancipatory practices like portfolios, journals or projects are not legitimised.

,,,,,,,,, Working on my administrative tasks have hindered me from emancipating my students in learning.