| **RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Critical Digital Approach in EMI for Decolonizing Education

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| **ABSTRACT**

The hegemony of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in postcolonial education systems has always been a coercion in the reinforcement of linguistic hierarchies and marginalized local languages and, ultimately, the perpetuation of colonial legacies. In its dominance of the English language, social media, for example, has always been an illustration where of such dominance. Consequently, the article presents a theoretical account of how the Critical Digital Approach can be harnessed to challenge such trends and dismantle colonial heritage in EMI. In so doing, it appropriates diverse fields of study such as sociolinguistics, educational studies and postcolonial studies. It also attempts to investigate the pedagogical integration of social media as a space for marking linguistic diversity and voice-giving to dominated cultures. It also contains illustrative case studies to demonstrate how such sites can promote linguistic diversity and amplify marginalized cultural voices. By doing so, this article establishes a conceptual framework for mainstreaming Critical Digital Literacy (CDL) in EMI. Practical steps include promoting multilingual content creation, critically evaluating digital content, and mainstreaming local knowledge systems into curricula. This paper brings forth a discussion that aims to empower students and teachers in reclaiming digital places, promoting equality and inclusion in the use of EMI.

1. Introduction

The international diffusion of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) within postcolonial education systems is a direct consequence of colonial policies, which established English as the master language. English is now being extensively used for instruction at both the secondary and tertiary levels by numerous low- and middle-income countries with colonial histories (Milligan & Tikly, 2016). Critical English language education acknowledges that the international spread and dominance of English are complex phenomena. It argues that in order to understand this phenomenon, one must look at how these historical events, economic impulses, power structures, ideological beliefs, and questions of justice all converge (Hall & Eggington, 2000; O'Regan, 2021). This critical tradition perceives English as not only a teaching instrument, but also as a powerful driving force for neoliberal globalization policy (De Costa et al., 2016). This is due to the fact that such integration has ever been a source of tension. On the one hand, it opens up to world opportunity and membership, yet on the other, it has the danger of relegating local languages and cultures to the margins. Overemphasizing English can result in a hierarchy being created and local languages being debased, ultimately finding their survival threatened.

Such linguistic cultural hegemony is especially applicable when considering today's digital native youth. Their day-to-day experience of English-dominated social media spaces shapes their digital selves, including their understanding of culture and their place in society. This echo reflects the broader impact of EMI within and beyond schooling. The present paper therefore examines how social media platforms are being used to propagate both English and local languages and cultures and vice versa. Instead of simply assuming that social media amplifies the cultural dominance of English, it tries to explore the complex

relationship between them. The article proposes a critical digital approach to navigating and perhaps resisting the culturally positioned power dynamics inherent in social media that results in marginalized voices being silenced; it recognizes that these platforms are not exclusively set apart for purposes of mere communication; in many cases, they can be powerful tools to assist and revitalize indigenous languages and cultures.

2. Theoretical Background
2.1 Sociolinguistic Perspectives on EMI
The extension of EMI to primary and even pre-school levels, despite most students being non-native speakers of English, is occasionally accounted for by evoking the economic and administrative motivations of the colonial era. Crystal (2003) attributes this phenomenon to the widespread presumption that proficiency in English is a necessary indicator of economic development. He cites: "language dominance is a matter of political and especially economic influence" (p.26). By extension, such a recent revival of English's global dissemination, especially since 1950 (Crystal, 2003), testifies that EMI has far exceeded mere instructional practice; it is a highly complex sociocultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical endeavor (Block, 2021; Lanvers & Hultgren, 2018).

Moreover, in multilingual education systems, English has a complex and traditionally contentious position. It is both a tool for learning other subjects and a subject of study in its own right (Asharaf, 2025). Its prominence is largely owing to the fact that English is an international lingua franca for communication, scientific discovery, and commercial activity, and as such, proficiency in it has become a very desirable quality in the globally oriented current age. The majority of universities, particularly in non-English-speaking nations, utilize EMI to attract international students and offer access to a greater variety of academic materials. This is accomplished to make students internationally competitive in the labor market so that they are able to actively engage in international research activities. Moreover, the growing practice of countries making English language education compulsory at a young age reflects its perceived importance to success. This approach, however, has a double-edged sword. While the English language opens up channels for global interaction, it also threatens to dilute the status and dynamism of local languages and traditional means of living.

Phillipson's (1992; 2009) coined the term linguistic imperialism to describe the spread of English, more particularly through education, its function as a world language, and the reason why it is increasingly dominating. Linguistic imperialism "is the idea that there are certain languages that dominate over others internationally," he says. It is the way in which nation-states privileged one language, and often actively worked to suppress others, forcing their speakers to switch to the dominant language." The use of the term "linguistic imperialism," with the deliberate adoption of "imperialism," serves to highlight the theory's strong correlation with colonialism and its impacts. As has been discussed earlier, colonial powers historically imposed their languages on conquered peoples, often marginalizing or erasing indigenous languages in the process (Alshahrani, 2020). Building upon Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1971) and Galtung's structural theory (1980), Phillipson (1992) posits that linguistic imperialism is rooted in structural and cultural disparities between English and other languages.

Structural inequality refers to variations in material wealth, whereas cultural inequality is interested in non-material or ideational variations. This view is that English linguistic imperialism did not result de novo, but as a gradual and decentering process initiated in the United States following World War II. In addition, Phillipson (1992) outlines three stages of linguistic imperialism evolution: (1) imposition of colonizer's power and language; (2) formation of local elites who labor for colonizers' interests; and (3) ideological persuasion through media and technology. Having arguably passed the first two phases, particularly under the era of globalization, the continued validity of linguistic imperialism as the account of the current status of English remains under dispute, in consideration of the diminished status of Anglo-American colonial powers across Asia and Africa (Zeng et al., 2023).

2.2 Postcolonial Theory in Education
Focusing on the 18th to the 20th century, postcolonial theory provides a vital approach to analyzing the far-reaching effects of European colonialism. These involve its impact on political systems, art, economy, historiography, and interpersonal relations across the globe. At its core, postcolonial theory contends that the contemporary world is intelligible only through recognition of the long-term effects of imperialism and colonial governance. This necessitates a rethinking of traditionally established "European" fields of study, with the implication that European philosophy, literature, and history cannot be studied separately from Europe's colonial past and exploitation. Furthermore, it contends that the experiences of the colonized world are not marginal, but instead central, to the development of global modernity. Despite ongoing disputes regarding the meaning of the "post" in "postcolonial theory," it is necessary to recognize that it does not imply the end of colonialism. Indeed, most postcolonial writing deals with aspects in which colonial power continues after the formal end of empires. Finally, there are those theorists within the field who are actively involved in envisioning and creating a world actually devoid of the legacies of colonialism, a project that remains incomplete (Elam, 2019).

In the context of EMI, postcolonial perspectives are instrumental in understanding and challenging the dominance of English in education, which often perpetuates linguistic hierarchies and marginalizes indigenous languages and knowledge systems. Sah and Fang (2024) states that:

> There is an apparent need to decolonize EMI research and practices, which requires unsettling the relationship between coloniality and EMI by inviting different stakeholders to examine and critique unequal power relations manifested in language ideologies, language policies, language practices, and social groups in diverse educational settings. (p.6)

That is to say, the decolonial movement needs to care about how colonial power continues to influence the language, discourse, and regulations surrounding English as a Medium of Instruction. It needs to move beyond a surface agenda of simply promoting English use for teaching academic content. Instead, it needs to inquire into and deconstruct the embedded colonial assumptions and practices inherent in EMI itself.

In their decolonization of EMI, Sah and Fang (2024) argue that the interventions need to take place on multiple levels: research, policymaking, pedagogy, and activism. The interventions need to be conducted at various levels, ranging from grassroots ideological discourses and popular discourse to the functional use of EMI programs. Sah and Fang point out that the first and foremost task in any decolonial project should be to challenge and dismantle the troubling ideologies, subjectivities, and imagination presently shaping EMI research, policy, pedagogy, and advocacy. This requires researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to critically examine their own deeply held beliefs and biases about language. It means challenging the assumption that English is inherently superior or more valuable than other languages, and dismantling the lingering colonial idea that it is the sole property of "White colonizers." Crucially, it necessitates shifting the focus from abstract language concepts to the lived experiences and relationships of language users. This involves actively valuing local and Indigenous languages, working to create a more equitable linguistic landscape within EMI, and recognizing the compatibility of English with diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

2.3 Critical Digital Approach

The internet is increasingly evolving into a multifaceted platform that encompasses political discourse, social networking, professional endeavors, and community development. As a result, learning processes are also increasingly taking place within online spaces. For a growing segment of the population, the traditional distinctions between their physical selves and their online identities are becoming increasingly blurred, which challenges the binary separation of the "real" and the "virtual." Giroux (2020) says:

> Intellectuals have a responsibility to analyze how language, information, and meaning work to organize, legitimate, and circulate values, structure reality, and offer up particular notions of agency and identity. For public intellectuals, the latter challenge demands a new kind of literacy and critical understanding with respect to the emergence of the new media and electronic technologies, and the new and powerful role they play as instruments of public pedagogy. (p.73)

The uncritical adoption of digital technologies in education, particularly platforms with pre-determined constraints or those which reduce user activity to commodifiable data, represents a significant pedagogical challenge. Critical Digital Pedagogy provides a framework for addressing these challenges by prioritizing human agency and ethical considerations over technological determinism. Educational technology research and practice should prioritize the human element rather than beginning with the tool itself.

The essence of Critical Digital Pedagogy is rooted in Freire's (2014) philosofy of Critical pedagogy which stands in stark contrast to traditional "banking model" education. Where the latter prepares students for passive roles in the workforce, critical pedagogy empowers them to lead self-determined lives (Freire, 2019). As Galloway (2019) argues, "banking education" actively stifles genuine dialogue and undermines critical engagement with crucial social issues. This passive learning, according to Galloway, promotes a superficial understanding of the world, inhibiting students' ability to identify and challenge oppressive systems, and ultimately limiting their potential for meaningful social.

As such, our ability to effectively use technology is enhanced when we engage with it critically. This critical engagement stems from an understanding of digital technologies' inherent socio-political implications and their potential to drive social change. As Allan Luke (2012) defines it, critical literacy is "the use of the technologies of print and other media of communication to analyze, critique and transform the norms, rule systems and practices governing the social fields of everyday life" (p. 5).". Bacalja et al. (2021) identify two primary components of this definition: cultivating critical awareness and promoting agentic action. This perspective underscores the need to examine how digital technologies shape individual and collective identities within broader social contexts, and to explore how literacies can be utilized as tools for social justice and equity. Largou and Guermat (2024)

suggest that promoting global equity and internationalization in higher education requires a concerted effort to improve students' critical digital skills, which they regard as a crucial enabler of intercultural competence.

That is said, Critical Digital Pedagogy emerges as a response to specific needs and opportunities within contemporary educational spaces (Stommel, 2023). Its core practice is rooted in community building and fostering collaborative relationships among learners. Further, it acknowledges the importance of diverse, international perspectives, recognizing that meaningful engagement requires a constant reimagining of how communication and collaboration unfold across diverse cultural and political contexts. In resisting a singular, prescriptive definition, Critical Digital Pedagogy embraces a polyphony of voices and experiences. Finally, it extends its reach beyond the confines of traditional institutions, seeking relevance and impact within broader social spheres.

Critical Digital Pedagogy, then, should be understood as a commitment to social justice enacted through the medium of education, rather than simply as a set of instructional techniques. It is a politically charged purpose that views education as a tool for challenging inequalities and empowering marginalized communities. It does so through working on equipping students with the necessary critical digital skills to navigate the digital world.

3. The Role of Social Media in Linguistic Hegemony and Resistance

Hegemony describes a situation where one country holds power and influence over others, particularly in political, economic, and military areas. Italian thinker Antonio Francesco Gramsci developed the concept of "Cultural hegemony" to explain how a dominant group in society maintains control by shaping people's ideas, values, and beliefs to accept the ruling class's perspective as the norm. In essence, the dominant group influences how people think and see the world to maintain its power.

Social media's widespread adoption has made it a prominent mechanism in the reproduction of cultural power. However, this reproduction is not a simple replication of existing hierarchies; rather, social media also functions as a site of contestation in which it has facilitated the dissemination of counter-narratives and the mobilization of resistance, albeit within the constraints of its own architecture. Guswandi et al. (2017) contend that one of the languages through which dominant groups exert hegemonic influence is English. Its vast adoption across nations, coupled with its centrality in crucial domains such as technology, education, and communication, establishes its global reach. This influence is further reinforced through institutional structures, including educational systems and dedicated English language programs, as well as by the pervasive role of English in contemporary technological advancements, most notably the internet.

Social media provides a voice for cultural opposition by which it enables underrepresented groups to share their perspectives, challenge mainstream views, and organize collectively. This has been seen in events such as the Arab Spring in 2010–11 and the 2008 financial crisis that took place on social media sparked the rise of many activist groups, social movements, and political campaigns (Feltwell et al., 2017). These were largely ground-level efforts, driven by both dedicated activists and everyday citizens. Feltwell et al. (2017) observed that social media facilitate the emergence of novel spaces and forms for counter-discourse. The latter concept is rooted in the work of Foucault (2013) as an act of resistance enacted when those who are normally the subjects of discourse become the authors of their own narratives.

Giglietto and Lee (2015) analyzed the #JeNeSuisPasCharlie hashtag, a response to the dominant #JeSuisCharlie narrative that framed the Charlie Hebdo attacks as an assault on freedom of speech. They observed that #JeNeSuisPasCharlie created a counter-discourse, condemning the violence but rejecting endorsement of Charlie Hebdo's work, thus enabling users to express dissenting opinions within social media's constraints. Likewise, Rodgers and Scobie (2015) further illustrate the power of counter-discourse by examining the #sealfie campaign, where Inuit communities challenged a narrative promoted by a well-funded NGO. In response to Ellen DeGeneres's widely publicized "#selfie" at the 2014 Oscars, which coincided with her support for anti-seal hunting campaigns, Inuit individuals launched #sealfie. This initiative enabled them to reject the framing of seal hunting as "cruel" and "exploitative." The hashtag gained significant media attention and garnered support from other indigenous communities, demonstrating how grassroots counter-discourse can spark broader political dialogues.

4. Pedagogical Approaches to CDL in EMI

This paper posits the necessity of a paradigm shift in EMI and calls for the integration of critical digital pedagogy. The primary objective is to empower students to navigate the complex interplay of language, culture, and ideology that inheres within the English language. While acknowledging the pragmatic benefits of English fluency for participation in globalized knowledge economies, this paper contends that EMI, without critical engagement, risks perpetuating linguistic hegemony and silencing marginalized voices. To counteract this potential, this paper for advocate for equipping students with the necessary critical

digital skills to interrogate the underlying assumptions and power dynamics inherent in EMI practices. This approach aims to transform EMI from a potentially homogenizing force into a catalyst for intellectual autonomy and critical citizenship.

Modern educational systems are prioritizing the development of students' capabilities in the operation and application of digital tools. The absence of such technical skills is now widely considered a form of illiteracy, leading to a growing recognition of the importance of "digital literacy" (DL) as a core competency in contemporary education. Coined by Gilster in 1997, DL is defined as:

> …a set of skills to access the internet, find, manage and edit digital information; join in communications, and otherwise engage with online information and communication network. Digital literacy is the ability to properly use and evaluate digital resources, tools and services, and apply it to lifelong learning processes (p. 220).

These digital skills have become indispensable for effective participation in contemporary society. However, the rapid pace of technological advancement and the evolving nature of media necessitate a more critical approach than mere functional competence. As has been argued throughout this paper, online media are inherently ideological; every mediated representation, whether visual, auditory, or textual, is constructed with a specific audience and purpose in mind. The advocacy for EMI is no exception to this principle.

Therefore, to mitigate the ideological risks frequently associated with the implementation of EMI and to ensure inclusive learning environments, educators must actively foster students' cognitive skills in uncovering implicit biases and contesting dominant viewpoints. This includes the capacity to identify hidden ideologies and to challenge dominant narratives by acknowledging oppressed minorities and marginalized voices. Students must cultivate the skills necessary to discern these biases within written texts and, crucially, during interactions with online media. Consequently, the following theoretical frameworks are suggested as foundational for instructors when delivering EMI content.

4.1 Luke and Freebody (1990) Model of Critical Digital Literacy

Luke and Freebody's model offers a framework for critical text analysis that promotes engagement at multiple cognitive levels through defined learner roles. This four resources model expanded the understanding of reading from a simple decoding process to a model of meaning-making and contextual evaluation (Gee, 1996). As a foundational framework for critical literacy, it identifies four interconnected roles for readers. While initially designed for print literacy, its principles have been applied to digital contexts.

Within this model, critical literacy is achieved through the active engagement of readers in four distinct roles, each fostering a specific mode of inquiry:

1. Code Breaker: Readers inquire into the underlying structure and mechanics of the text, seeking to understand how it functions.
2. Text Participant (Meaning Maker): Readers actively construct meaning by exploring the relationships between ideas and considering the cultural contexts that shape potential interpretations.
3. Text User: Readers analyze the text's pragmatic dimensions, considering how its use is shaped by its intended audience and specific contexts.
4. Text Analyst: Readers critically evaluate the text's persuasive intent, questioning its underlying purpose and considering whose interests it serves.
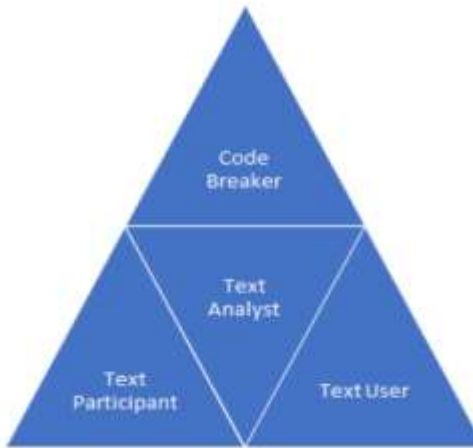
Figure 1: *The Four Resources Model: Adapted from Freebody and Luke (1990)*

Within our main context of EMI, this model allows us to move beyond simply using digital tools and towards critically analyzing how these tools can perpetuate or challenge colonial legacies. By framing the curriculum around the four roles: code breaker, text participant, text user, and text analyst, educators can guide students in deconstructing dominant narratives and amplifying marginalized voices. For example, by engaging with digital resources as code breakers, students can uncover the algorithmic biases that prioritize Western perspectives, while the roles of text participant and text user encourage them to create and share knowledge that reflects their own cultural and linguistic identities, actively resisting the dominance of English. As text analysts, students can learn to critically evaluate the historical and political contexts that shape digital content. Equipping students with this skill is essential for their development as scholars and thoughtful individuals. As those who now have the skill to more effectively understand power dynamics, this knowledge promotes a decolonized perspective on knowledge production.

4.2 Digital Media Literacy
Hobbs (2010; 2011) conceptualizes digital media literacy as a set of skills and principles essential for active participation in a democratic society. Beyond basic technical skills, it encompasses the ability to critically analyze the messages, sources, and potential biases encountered online. Hobbs emphasizes the importance of developing media literacy skills that allow individuals to navigate the digital landscape ethically, thoughtfully, and in ways that promote informed civic engagement and responsible online behavior. Hobbs (2011) identifies five core competencies of digital media literacy: access, analysis and evaluation, creation, reflection, and action. *Access* refers to the ability to find and use digital technologies and content effectively and equitably. *Analyze and evaluate* encompasses the critical thinking skills needed to assess the credibility, reliability, and potential biases of media messages. *Create* involves the capacity to generate original content and communicate effectively using various digital tools and platforms. *Reflect* highlights the importance of self-awareness and ethical consideration in one's own media practices and online interactions. Finally, *act* refers to the ability to use digital media for civic engagement, advocacy, and positive social change. These competencies, when cultivated collectively, empower individuals to become active, informed, and responsible participants in the digital world.

These competencies not only enhance individuals' engagement with information but also mitigate risks associated with digital media, including exposure to harmful content, unwanted contact, and unethical conduct (Li, 2020). Furthermore, Hobbs's digital media literacy competencies provide a roadmap for achieving a shift from passive consumption of English-language content to the active production of knowledge by students themselves.

In this context, *Access* goes beyond simply providing computers and internet access. It entails curating diverse digital resources that actively represent marginalized voices and perspectives, ensuring students encounter a plurality of viewpoints and challenge the dominance of Western-centric narratives. Students then need the skills to *analyze and evaluate* this content critically. This involves teaching them to recognize the subtle ways in which historical biases, colonial ideologies, and power imbalances are embedded within digital media, from the language used to the images selected. The real transformative potential, however, lies in the *creation* competency. Rather than passively consuming English-language content, students should be empowered to become active *producers* of knowledge in their own languages, using digital tools to tell their own stories, document their own histories, and express their own cultural identities. The *reflect* competency underscores the importance of self-awareness and ethical considerations, encouraging students to critically examine their own biases and assumptions as they create and share content. Finally, *action* empowers them to use digital media for advocacy, challenging stereotypes, and promoting social justice, both within the classroom and in the wider community. Integrating these considerations effectively disrupts the historic norms.

4.3 Interdisciplinary Approach to Multimodal Literacy

This paper contends that students need heightened awareness of how media engagement can perpetuate EMI's ideological agendas of linguistic imperialism. Given the focus on the linguistic aspects of decolonization, it is crucial that students develop the ability to identify and analyze linguistic components within all media messages.

One pedagogical approach to addressing this challenge lies in cultivating multiple literacies. Kellner (1998) emphasizes the multidimensionality of digital content, wherein text, graphics, images, and video often converge. Digital media, in their view, possess the capacity to integrate diverse forms of communication into a unified medium. From a social media perspective, multimodal literacy becomes crucial, as it draws attention to the holistic construction of meaning within a message (Talib, 2018). This approach transcends a singular focus on text to involve a comprehensive analysis of all potential means of communication, including emoticons, visuals, signs, and symbols, to understand their respective roles in shaping the message's overall meaning. O'Halloran and Lim Fei (2011) explain that:

> Multimodal literacy explores the design of discourse by investigating the contributions of different semiotic resources (for example, language, gesture, images) co-deployed across various modalities (for example, visual, aural, somatic) as well as their interaction and integration in constructing a coherent text. (p. 11)

Having a total understanding of the complexities of navigating the contemporary digital spaces, Saman Talib (2018), within her contribution "Social Media Pedagogy: Applying an Interdisciplinary Approach to Teach Multimodal Critical Digital Literacy," is an advocate for pedagogy that is focused on preparing students as critical producers and consumers of digital media. Her framework thoughtfully combines interdisciplinarity, multimodal literacy, and critical analysis in order to build learners' ability to respond critically to the diverse richness of communications that confront them on the internet. Multimodal critical digital literacy, Talib describes, is not merely the skill to read digital texts that integrate a range of modes – text, image, video, interactive elements – but also the skill to read their content and power relations critically. By broadening the context beyond sheer consumption, Talib seeks to equip students with the critical thinking abilities to deconstruct media narratives, identify the subtle biases, and penetrate the manipulative techniques that inform social media discussions, which in turn creates more active and informed citizenry.

Talib advocates an interdisciplinary approach, employing the knowledge of various academic fields like media studies, communication, education, and cultural studies. This approach allows students to learn about digital literacy that transcends the technical level, employing critical thinking and ethical considerations. One of the major components of Talib's approach is the use of the media studies theory of framing. Framing is the manner in which the media frames messages to impact public opinion. Through the study of how media sites frame news, events, and cultural narratives, students learn about media bias and ideological construction. Talib emphasizes that students should critically engage with digital texts by studying the framing practices of various media sites and how the frames produced construct discourse and public opinion.

Talib also integrates visual communication into his interdisciplinary framework. Digital literacy is greater than text-based reading and entails a sensibility about the ways in which images, video, and graphic design build meaning. By learning about visual rhetoric, color theory, and semiotics, students can learn to deconstruct visual media and become sensitive to its potential for persuasion. For instance, By decoding the prevalence of Western-centric perspectives in educational media, students can analyze how visual stories affirm or undermine dominant relations of power in global education.

Another crucial component of Talib's framework is user interaction design, which considers how social media sites and digital interfaces influence users' behavior. Talib emphasizes the need to know about algorithms, platform affordances, and engagement psychology. For example, students can use EMI-based online platforms as a starting point to investigate how online platforms include some design features that favor specific epistemologies, languages, and styles of learning. Through the analysis of how online learning environments extend or subvert colonial discourses in education, learners can be more critically aware of how interaction design influences access to knowledge and pedagogic inclusivity.

5. Conceptual Framework for CDL in EMI

To address the continued dominance of EMI in postcolonial contexts, this section proposes a structured framework for integrating CDL into EMI practices. The aim is to promote more inclusive, critical, and culturally responsive approaches to language education that acknowledge the realities of our digital age. This framework draws on insights from sociolinguistics, digital pedagogy, and postcolonial theory.

5.1 Critical Awareness

Central to CDL is the need to construct critical awareness on the part of both teachers and students regarding the operation of language and power in virtual spaces. EMI has occasionally been perceived as a disengaged medium of instruction; however, researchers have repeatedly criticized its uptake for typically exemplifying colonial continuities through favoring English over other epistemologies and identities (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1998).

Developing critical consciousness involves deconstructing such power relations and probing the ideologies embedded within digital content and spaces. Students, for example, can be guided to examine how Wikipedia entries, YouTube clips, or media news correspond to (or fail to correspond to) Global South voices. Such tasks align with what Kellner and Share (2007) define as "critical media literacy," which prepares learners to question the underlying values, assumptions, and purposes of media texts.

In EMI contexts, this could include:

a. Classroom discussion of how English conditions online access to information can shape.
b. Comparative media literacy across languages.
c. Reflective exercises in which students map their online language use and explore the dominance of English in their online worlds (Jenkins, 2006).

When these dynamics are made explicit, students are positioned to gain a clearer understanding of their own positioning within global linguistic hierarchies and to challenge them.

5.2 Digital Activism

The second half of the framework is devoted to the promotion of digital activism as pedagogy. The digital landscape is not only a site of consumption of information but also of production and protest. Warschauer (2004) has foregrounded that digital literacies cannot rest at functional levels of competency but should include civic and critical ones. In postcolonial EMI contexts, this means preparing students to use digital technologies to challenge monolingualism and promote cultural and linguistic justice.

Digital activism can occur in a number of different forms within the classroom. Students can:

a. Launch multilingual campaigns on social media.
b. Create blog posts, podcasts, or videos challenging stereotypes surrounding their cultures.
c. Produce online content that accepts and legitimises local knowledge (Androutsopoulos, 2013).

Current research in critical digital literacy has illustrated how these exercises enable learners to reclaim their voices and resist epistemic marginalization (Pangrazio, 2014; Rowsell et al., 2017). Rather than being an exercise in creativity for creativity's sake, such projects become exercises in agency and visibility, disrupting the English-dominated norms of dominant digital discourse.

5.3 Multilingual Engagement

The third pillar of the model encourages multilingual engagement, a principle founded upon the understanding that students' entire linguistic repertoires are not obstacles but enriching assets. However, EMI is likely to assume a subtractive model—where English replaces local languages—research in translanguaging and multilingual education suggests otherwise (Canagarajah, 2011). Allowing students to shift between languages, particularly in online spaces, enhances their expressive repertoire and facilitates deeper critical reflection.

This has practical ramifications in that:

a. We can encourage bilingual or multilingual digital projects and assignments.
b. We can invite the use of home languages in reflective writing or in peer group work.
c. We can ask students to do code-switching and translation exercises as a means to explore language politics and the audience.

Digital technology can facilitate this multilingualism by offering avenues for creative expression in various languages (Jenkins, 2015). In so doing, the classroom is one of linguistic inclusion rather than erasure. This practice is also in favor of calls to decolonize EMI and recognize the legitimacy of other knowledge systems (Smith, 2024).

6. Conclusion & Recommendations

This paper has discussed the main intersections of EMI, postcolonial legacies, and the new role of Critical Digital Approach in contesting highly entrenched linguistic hierarchies. Drawing on sociolinguistic, postcolonial theory, and digital literacy research, the paper has argued that EMI, as implemented in postcolonial contexts, has the tendency to replicate linguistic and cultural marginality. But when dealt with reflexively and critically, EMI can be turned into a space of inclusive and equal learning too, especially if blended with a critical approach targeting digital literacies.

The proposed conceptual model, through its emphasis on critical consciousness, online activism, and multilingualism, offers a vision for educators and institutions on how to employ online spaces not only for language learning but also for cultural validation and epistemic justice. Through model practices such as multilingual content creation, critical media literacy, and online storytelling, students are encouraged to challenge prevailing discourses, reclaim cultural identity, and engage fully in global dialogue.

To translate this framework into practice, several concrete steps are recommended. For educators, this framework calls for a pedagogical shift—from transmitters of English knowledge to facilitators of critical, multilingual, and digitally aware learning. As researchers like Lankshear and Knobel (2011) highlight, this calls for teacher competencies in the fields of critical media literacy and culturally responsive pedagogy. For curriculum designers, the model offers a rationale for incorporating digital literacy objectives into EMI programs themselves. This involves rethinking assessment, content design, and instructional goals to include linguistic diversity, cultural responsiveness, and student agency. CDL is not an add-on but an inherent component of 21st-century education. Finally, for policymakers, the model opens itself to broader attempts at decolonizing language policies in education. Rather than viewing EMI as the sole path to global competitiveness, the model encourages pluralistic policies that protect linguistic rights and provide equitable access to digital knowledge. This is the last but not least point.

In sum, this conceptual model positions Critical Digital Approach as a powerful tool for imagining EMI in postcolonial contexts. By foregrounding critical awareness, digital activism, and multilingualism, it seeks to reshape EMI from a monologic, English-dominant practice into a space of critical inquiry, cultural celebration, and digital interaction. The model responds to urgent calls for educational reform in the digital age wherein language, power, and identity intersect in increasingly complex ways.

Biography

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