

The role of english as a foreign language (EFL) in dismantling colonial narratives: A literature review

El papel del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en el desmantelamiento de las narrativas coloniales: una revisión bibliográfica

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Abstract

This integrative literature review aims to fill a gap in EFL research by exploring how it can be used to disrupt colonial narratives in a broader social context, an issue of critical significance in contemporary education. The articles selected were organized in specific key topics as follows: decolonial theories in EFL application, teacher training programs, practical examples, and the role of EFL in power dynamics. The findings showed that EFL decolonial practices need spaces to develop, teacher training programs, EFL materials elaboration, and a change in power dynamics. The development of decolonial EFL practices is the possibility to start a change that may bring intercultural interchange and equal opportunities for learners, and a more realistic approach to generate intrinsic motivation.

Keywords: Decoloniality; English; EFL; colonial narratives; PRISMA

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Resumen

Esta revisión bibliográfica con enfoque integrador busca cubrir una brecha en la investigación del Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (ILE), explorando cómo puede utilizarse para romper con las narrativas coloniales en un contexto social más amplio, un tema crucial en la educación contemporánea. Los artículos seleccionados se organizaron en torno a los siguientes temas clave: teorías decoloniales en la aplicación del ILE, programas de formación docente, ejemplos prácticos, y el papel del ILE en las dinámicas de poder. Los hallazgos mostraron que las prácticas decoloniales del ILE requieren espacios para su desarrollo, programas de formación docente, elaboración de materiales de ILE y un cambio en las dinámicas de poder. El desarrollo de prácticas decoloniales del ILE ofrece la posibilidad de iniciar un cambio que genere dinámicas de interculturalidad e igualdad de oportunidades para los estudiantes, así como un enfoque más realista para generar motivación intrínseca.

Palabras clave: Decolonialidad; inglés; ILE; narrativas coloniales; PRISMA

Introduction

The role of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in shaping educational and social dynamics has been extensively examined in the context of colonial histories and power relations. The spread of English, as both a global language and a symbol of historical colonialism, has been a central theme in the field of language education (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Phillipson, 2012). Scholars have noted that the widespread teaching of English has often linked with maintaining colonial power structures as it continues to shape educational systems and reinforce hegemonic practices. Recent studies have highlighted the role of English in perpetuating these colonial legacies, with growing calls for a critical examination of its place in post-colonial societies (Kubota, 2022). In particular, there has been increasing interest in how EFL education can contribute to dismantling colonial narratives by developing critical pedagogy and promoting decoloniality (Becerra, 2024). The concept of decoloniality in education, especially in relation to language teaching, has gained significant attention in recent years (Mignolo, 2011; Santos, 2014). Scholars argue that integrating decolonial perspectives in EFL education could challenge the view of English as the dominant language and promote a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to teaching (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). However, despite the growing discourse, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies that synthesize the theoretical, practical, and pedagogical aspects of decolonial perspectives in EFL classrooms, something important to create tools to analyze colonial narratives in language teaching (Grass, 2022). Some literature focuses on theoretical implications (Kubota, 2022), gathers research on practices (Banegas & Sánchez, 2024), or describes isolated educational examples or attempts (Carvajal et al., 2022). The key of this integrative research is to elaborate a critical approach with the various decolonial EFL pieces of research and their application in educational communities.

Moreover, it is necessary to consider some concepts to understand in a proper way this literature review. First, decoloniality in an educational context, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), relates to a practice/theory-intervention concerning the colonial past of education. This requires decolonising the structures of power that undergird colonial relationships, not least

the unchecked hegemony of Western knowledge formations. Hence, decolonial approaches in EFL pay particular attention to the critique of Eurocentric epistemology and promote teaching practices that are inclusive, culturally sensitive and socially just (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). This view calls for the validation and acceptance of community epistemologies, values, and rituals, redefining educational contexts based on the histories and identities of students of marginalised communities.

The second term is plurilingual or plurilingualism. This concept, which has gained some traction recently, describes people's ability to use different languages for different purposes or in different domains. This opposes the ideologies and assumptions guiding the lexicon of EFL education by putting forward the use of students' entire linguistic repertoires that challenges the monolingual frameworks of teaching practices. This method aligns with the linguistic justice, acknowledging all languages in the learning process, making sure we do not fall into the domination of a single language (usually the English) as the standard. Plurilingualism not only promotes a more inclusive classroom environment but serves to protect and revive indigenous languages as part of a larger commitment to cultural diversity and equal access to education (Herath, 2024).

Finally, translanguaging is also anmed in the context of EFL decolonial theory and approaches. It can be defined as combining several languages interchangeably within one communication context; enabling learners to untap their diverse language sources. It also helps recontextualise oppressive colonial narratives in EFL education by destabilising monolingual education policies and highlighting the necessity of embracing multilingualism in the classroom in order to establish inclusivity and participatory learning opportunities (Wang, 2022). It permits students to employ their native languages in addition to English, which enriches understanding of both languages and cultures. Translanguaging in multilingual classrooms is therefore critical; it validates all aspects of language forms, while creating connections between a student's native tongue and the foreign language being taught (Barbosa, 2023).

This literature review aims to fill this gap by systematically exploring how decolonial perspectives are integrated into EFL education. The primary research questions guiding this review are: 1. How are decolonial theories applied in EFL teaching practices? 2. What are the characteristics and experiences of decolonial teacher training programs? 3. What practical examples of decolonial approaches can be found? 4. How does EFL contribute to or challenge colonial power dynamics in educational settings? By synthesizing research from 2010 to 2024, this review provides a comprehensive understanding of how decolonial approaches can reshape EFL education. The findings offer actionable insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers seeking to promote cultural relevance and equity in language teaching. Ultimately, this review contributes to the advancement of decolonial pedagogy in EFL, providing a theoretical and practical framework for the future.

Methodology

Data sources and strategies

The literature review kept an integrative approach according to the parameters exposed by Snyder (2019). The search strategy followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). A search was conducted in academic databases, including SCOPUS, JSTOR, and ERIC. After the first screening, it was decided to include other articles taken from citations. The keywords “decoloniality,” “EFL education,” “colonialism in language teaching,” “critical pedagogy” and related terms were used. Inclusion criteria included peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2010 and 2024 that focus on decolonial perspectives in EFL. Exclusion criteria removed non-academic sources, articles unrelated to EFL contexts, and works published in languages other than English. The study involved 23 articles after finishing the PRISMA process.

The PRISMA process involves the following steps:

- Identification: Initial database search yielding a broad set of studies.
- Screening: Removing duplicates and screening titles and abstracts based on inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Eligibility: Full-text assessment of potentially relevant articles.
- Inclusion: Final selection of articles meeting all criteria.

Keywords to be used for the search

“Decoloniality,” “EFL education,” “colonialism in language teaching”

Table 1. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Focus of the article	Decolonial Perspectives in EFL	Articles that do not cover decolonial perspectives in EFL
Publication date	2010 - 2024	Articles published prior to 2010
Publication type	Scholarly, peer-reviewed articles	Conference papers, theses, book chapters, technical reports or discussion papers that do not include a discussion of the procedures of the study or data analysis.
Language	English and Spanish	Other languages were not included

Source: own elaboration

Review protocol and data analysis

The review was conducted in five phases:

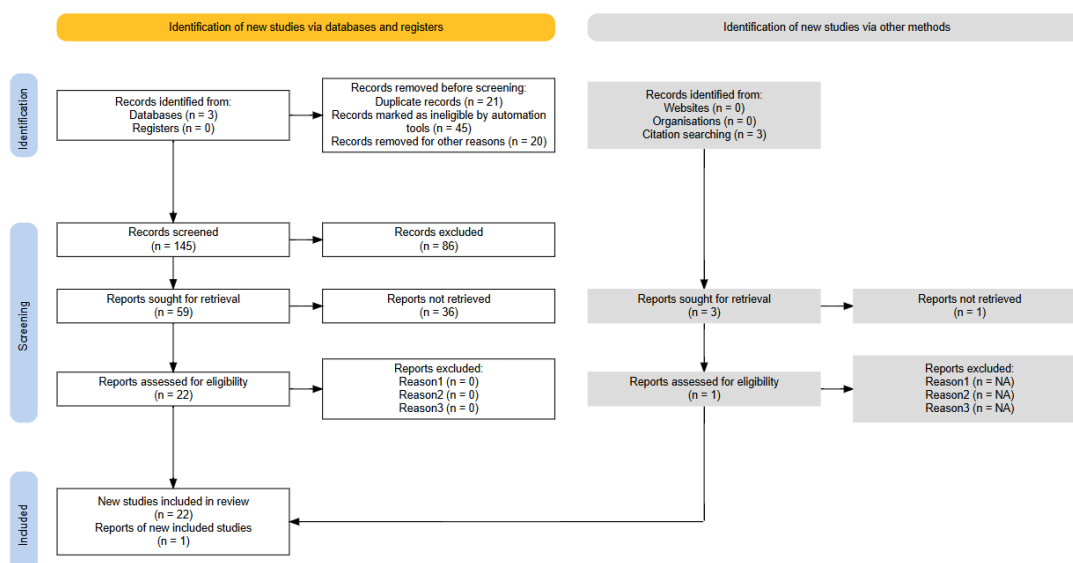
- 1. Preparation:** development of research questions, keywords, and a search protocol based on Snyder's integrative literature review guidelines.
- 2. Search and selection:** literature search following PRISMA criteria. Titles, abstracts, and full texts are reviewed using predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- 3. Data extraction:** key information was extracted using a standardized form.
- 4. Thematic analysis:** data organized into themes. This involves identifying patterns, gaps, and trends in the literature.
- 5. Synthesis and presentation:** results are synthesized into narrative summaries and presented in tables and figures for clarity and transparency.

Development

Findings

After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 23 out of 145 articles were selected to be analyzed. Several records were excluded by reasons of duplication, automation tools, and other reasons like ambiguous ideas.

Figure 1. PRISMA Method



Source: Page et al. (2021).

Application of decolonial theories in EFL

In Table 2, it is shown decolonial research on developing a critical decolonial awareness among language teachers, particularly in the Latin American context. It encourages educators to confront the colonial legacies that often shape language teaching practices and curricula. In these articles, it seems that the aim is to integrate social justice approaches into language teaching to create more equitable and inclusive educational environments.

Table 2. Decolonial Theories

Strategies	Authors	Findings
Critical decolonial awareness in language teaching	Banegas & Sánchez (2024).	Social justice approach to language teaching in Latin America
Epistemic justice and curriculum decolonization	Song (2023).	Strategies to decolonize knowledge production and promote epistemic justice
Colonial and decolonial narratives in EFL	Zapata et al. (2024).	Analyzing colonial vs decolonial narratives in English learning
Decolonial Option by the Subaltern Action	Kumaravadivelu (2016).	Only a collective, concerted, and coordinated set of actions carries the potential to shake the foundation of the hegemonic power structure and move the subaltern community forward.

Source: own elaboration

Decolonial theories have increasingly gained attention in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, offering a critical lens through which to examine how colonial legacies continue to shape language teaching and learning. These theories call for a shift in how English is perceived globally, advocating for a more inclusive, culturally relevant approach that challenges historical and ongoing power imbalances in language education.

The research indicates that integrating decolonial theories into EFL practices allows educators to confront the colonial narratives embedded in traditional teaching methods. For example, Banegas & Sánchez (2024), highlight the importance of critical decolonial awareness in Latin American EFL contexts, where the social justice approach to teaching emphasizes not just linguistic skills but also broader social issues. This approach calls on educators to help students understand and critique the inequalities and injustices perpetuated by traditional, Eurocentric language education systems. Banegas and Sánchez stress that teaching a critical consciousness among students can empower them to challenge existing power structures and engage with English in ways that respect their cultural identities and histories.

In a similar vein, Song (2023), explores the concept of epistemic justice in the context of decolonizing curricula. By recognizing and promoting diverse epistemologies, particularly those of marginalized communities, Song (2023), argues that education systems can provide a more

equitable learning environment. The decolonization of knowledge production within EFL involves confronting the hegemony of Western knowledge systems and ensuring that alternative ways of knowing—particularly those from postcolonial or Indigenous perspectives—are included in the curriculum. This epistemic justice approach allows students to recognize the value of diverse cultures and intellectual traditions, which are often silenced or marginalized in traditional educational settings.

Zapata et al. (2024), analyze how decolonial narratives challenge the hierarchical position of English and advocate for a more inclusive approach to language education, one that respects all languages and cultures equally. By embracing decolonial narratives, educators can help students recognize that language learning is not solely about acquiring a global lingua franca but also about valuing linguistic diversity and resisting the imposition of colonial language ideologies.

Carvajal et al. (2022), highlight the pedagogical and curricular colonialism in regions like Colombia, where foreign methodologies and global language policies often overshadow local knowledge and realities. These studies criticize the widespread adoption of methods like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which, while globally recognized, are often disconnected from the socio-cultural contexts in which they are implemented. This disconnection reinforces the status of English as a dominant language, sidelining local linguistic practices and cultural narratives. By promoting decolonial pedagogies and incorporating local knowledge into teacher education and curriculum design, these studies advocate for a more culturally relevant approach to EFL teaching that resists the imposition of foreign educational models.

These theories emphasize the need to dismantle colonial structures in language teaching, promote linguistic justice, and ensure that all languages and cultures are treated as equally valid (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). By integrating these perspectives into teacher training programs, curricula, and classroom practices, EFL education can become a more inclusive, empowering space for students from diverse backgrounds. The findings from these studies underscore the importance of critical awareness, challenging dominant narratives, and embracing a more pluralistic approach to language education that reflects a diverse world.

Decolonial teacher training programs

In Table 3, key strategies for integrating decolonial approaches into language teaching are highlighted. These strategies aim to challenge and transform traditional educational practices that are often rooted in Eurocentric, colonial ideologies. The strategies discussed involve promoting linguistic justice, creating inclusive learning environments, and encouraging teachers to critically engage with their identities and teaching methods.

Table 3. Teacher Training Programs

Strategies	Authors	Findings
Teacher Agency in reproducing translanguage as a strategy for linguistic justice	Putra (2024).	Teachers use agency to construct translanguage spaces for inclusive learning
Autobiographies as decolonizing tools	Herath (2024).	Teachers reflect on identities to decolonize English language teaching.
Conflict resolution and decolonizing pedagogies	Aguirre-Garzón et al. (2022).	Teachers challenge traditional English teaching paradigms to humanize education
Local Communities Knowledge	Quintero & Olarte (2023).	Decolonizing EFL teacher education requires epistemological moves to re-signify the plurality of local knowledge and praxis.
Interconnectedness and relationality	Carvajal et. al. (2022).	The results suggest the need to re-signify EFL pedagogical and educational practices beyond neoliberal agendas which propose rankings, individualism, and competition.
Decolonialty praxis	Vilarinho et. al. (2020).	To face the decolonial challenge, EFL teachers must dare to live language teacher education <i>otherwise</i> , which means accepting the challenge to resignify our praxis taking into account that it needs others to exist.
Interrogating U.S. cultural representations in EFL	Massó (2023).	Critique of colonial representations in U.S. short stories in English teacher education in Argentina

Source: own elaboration

The role of teacher training programs in decolonizing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education is pivotal in shifting the discourse from traditional, Eurocentric methodologies to more inclusive, equitable, and culturally relevant pedagogies. The effectiveness of such programs depends largely on how well they integrate decolonial perspectives and show the power imbalances that are often inherent in language teaching and learning.

One critical area where decolonial theories have been applied is in the integration of local knowledge and community-based pedagogies. According to Quintero & Olarte (2023), decolonizing teacher education involves reimagining the traditional, Eurocentric models of teaching and replacing them with pedagogies that honor the diverse ways of knowing, being, and living in the world. In Colombia, for example, pre-service teachers in EFL programs have increasingly incorporated knowledge of local communities as a resource for teaching (Carvajal et. al., 2022). This shift acknowledges the richness of indigenous epistemologies and community-based practices that have often been neglected or marginalized in formal education. By engaging with the ecology of knowledge, these teachers are better equipped to break away from the standardization of knowledge and embrace a more pluralistic approach that empowers students to draw from their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Quintero & Olarte, 2023).

Teacher agency also plays a critical role in these training programs. Putra (2024), emphasizes that teachers who are empowered with agency are more likely to challenge raciolinguistic ideologies and create classroom spaces where translanguage can flourish. In multilingual classrooms, teachers who understand the value of students' full semiotic repertoires can construct translanguage spaces that facilitate meaningful communication and learning (Putra, 2024). This form of agency helps teachers navigate and challenge monolingual policies that often dominate education.

nal settings, allowing them to have more inclusive, democratic learning environments that resist the hegemonic imposition of a single language or culture.

Moreover, Herath (2024), discusses the potential of autobiographical creation in teacher training as a decolonizing tool. By engaging in autobiographical reflection, teachers can critically examine how their personal and professional identities shape their pedagogical practices. This reflective process encourages teachers to engage in critical self-reflexivity, which is central to decolonizing their teaching. By exploring their own language-learning experiences, teachers gain a deeper understanding of how their identities inform their approaches to language education, particularly in the context of plurilingual classrooms. Autobiographies serve as a creative, personal method of unlearning colonial educational practices and reimagining more inclusive and empathetic pedagogies that are aligned with decolonial principles (Herath, 2024).

In regions where coloniality continues to influence educational systems, community-based pedagogies have proven effective in bridging the gap between formal education and local knowledge. Aguirre-Garzón et al. (2022), discuss how teachers in Bogotá, Colombia, are incorporating pedagogies of reconciliation and conflict resolution in their teaching practices. These pedagogies, rooted in decolonial thought, promote dialogue between Western educational practices and local, non-Western pedagogies, helping to dismantle colonial structures within the classroom. Teachers who embrace this approach move beyond traditional methods, allowing them to have a more humanizing education that acknowledges the complexities of students' social and cultural identities.

Additionally, Borelli et al. (2020), suggest that decolonial pedagogies in teacher education can help educators challenge the deeply ingrained Eurocentric structures that dominate language teaching. Their research stresses the importance of decolonial praxis, which includes practices like critical pedagogy, that actively challenge the status quo of language teaching, encourage plurilingual practices, and allow for more inclusive and culturally sensitive teaching methods. The findings indicate that when teachers-in-training are exposed to decolonial theories and are given the tools to apply them in their classrooms, they become more capable of transforming their teaching practices and creating more equitable learning environments.

Teacher training programs that incorporate decolonial principles are effective in transforming both educators' mindsets and their classroom practices. These programs enable teachers to critically examine their roles within the education system, challenge the dominance of colonial knowledge, and integrate local, marginalized knowledge systems into their teaching (Vilarinho et al., 2020). The key to their success lies in empowering teachers to exercise agency, embrace multilingualism, and elaborate environments that value linguistic diversity and cultural relevance. As evidenced by these studies, such approaches can significantly contribute to creating more inclusive, socially just, and decolonized classrooms (Massó, 2023).

EFL decolonial experiences in practice

In Table 4, a set of examples of decolonial approaches is shown, with the objective of decolonizing foreign language teaching, particularly in contexts where dominant languages impose a Eurocentric worldview. The strategies include the use of translanguaging, integration of Indigenous epistemologies, and critique of the texts and materials used in language teaching. The articles outline key strategies for integrating decolonial approaches into language teacher education and the materials used for teaching English. These strategies aim to challenge traditional educational practices that often reflect Eurocentric and hegemonic perspectives, and instead promote inclusive, culturally responsive, and equitable teaching methods.

Table 4. EFL Decolonial Experiences

Strategies	Authors	Findings
Translanguaging as decolonial approach	Barbosa (2023).	Translanguaging questions power relations and the subalternization of knowledge
Decolonizing English language teaching materials	Kim (2023).	Use of a socio-material approach to create decolonial relationships in the classroom
Translanguaging as a decolonial approach	Wang (2022).	Integration of Indigenous epistemologies in language teaching through translanguaging
Multimodal discourse in English language textbooks	Smith (2021).	Critique of “innercircleism” in EFL textbooks, marginalizing non-hegemonic cultures
Decolonizing EFL materials in Colombia	Charry Londoño et al. (2024).	Use of digitized English materials from a decolonized perspective to foster intercultural competence in children

Source: own elaboration

Practical applications of decolonial strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms have gained momentum in recent years, with educators actively working to dismantle the colonial structures that have historically shaped the field. Decolonizing the EFL classroom goes beyond theoretical frameworks, calling for tangible changes in teaching practices, materials, and methodologies. This section examines several concrete examples of decolonial approaches that have been implemented or advocated for in EFL contexts, drawing on research from different regions.

A major area of focus in the decolonization of EFL is the revision of teaching materials. Kim (2023), advocates for a socio material perspective on EFL materials, arguing that learning should not be seen as the mere transmission of knowledge from textbooks to students. Instead, learning emerges from the interactions between the prescribed materials, the classroom environment, the teacher, and the students themselves. Kim’s work demonstrates how even commercially published textbooks, which often reflect dominant cultural norms, can be reconfigured into decolonial tools. In her study, she shows how textbooks can act as springboards for translanguaging and the inte-

gration of multimodal materials, creating a more inclusive and culturally relevant classroom experience. This perspective encourages EFL educators to engage critically with the materials they use, incorporating resources that reflect students' linguistic and cultural repertoires.

Similarly, Wang (2022), extends the application of translanguaging to the integration of Indigenous epistemologies into language teaching. By incorporating Indigenous knowledge systems, Wang argues that translanguaging can facilitate a pluriversal epistemological stance, one that honors the coexistence of diverse ways of knowing. This approach is decolonial in its very nature, as it rejects the colonial imposition of Western knowledge and instead allows space for Indigenous perspectives to inform the learning process. For example, in New Zealand, the integration of Māori epistemologies into language curricula through translanguaging has been shown to help bridge the gap between students' linguistic practices and the formal language policies imposed in classrooms.

Another key area where decolonial approaches are being implemented is in the critique of inner-circle English norms in EFL textbooks. Smith (2021), critiques how many widely used EFL textbooks continue to center English as spoken in the inner-circle countries (For example, the US, the UK), marginalizing non-native English varieties and reinforcing hegemonic cultural norms. His study of a popular EFL textbook demonstrates how these materials often promote innercicism, a tendency to present English in a way that reflects the cultures of native speakers as the norm, while other cultural perspectives are sidelined. Smith's work calls for a rethinking of these textbooks, urging educators to adopt more inclusive practices that value all varieties of English and reflect the cultural diversity of global English speakers. By incorporating a wider range of cultural narratives and linguistic forms, these textbooks could better serve the diverse needs of EFL learners, moving away from the dominance of Western-centered perspectives.

In addition to translanguaging and community-based pedagogies, plurilingualism is increasingly being recognized as a powerful decolonial strategy in EFL education. Barbosa (2023), explores how plurilingual teaching challenges the hierarchical treatment of languages and promotes a more inclusive view of linguistic diversity. By allowing students to use their entire linguistic repertoires, rather than restricting them to a single language, teachers can explain linguistic justice and social equity in the classroom. Plurilingualism also provides an opportunity to challenge the dominance of a single linguistic ideology, particularly the Western, monolingual paradigm that has historically shaped language education. This approach not only decolonizes language teaching but also contributes to the revitalization of Indigenous languages and cultures by recognizing their equal importance in the classroom.

Finally, decolonizing the role of English requires not only dismantling the power dynamics tied to its use but also reconceptualizing its place within intercultural communication. As Charry Londoño et al. (2024), demonstrate in their work on decolonizing EFL materials in Colombia, one

effective strategy is the creation of digitized, decolonized materials that emphasize intercultural competence (ICC). These materials reflect the unique cultural contexts of learners while helping them improve skills for cross-cultural communication. By focusing on the local needs and the diversity of the learners' backgrounds, EFL programs can contribute to a more equitable and culturally inclusive educational environment. This approach positions English not as a tool of cultural imperialism, but as a medium through which global communication can be enhanced while honoring local cultural knowledge.

Role of EFL in Power Dynamics

In Table 5, the results show a series of articles that analyze strategies focused on decolonizing the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The strategies range from rethinking cultural representations to using new pedagogical frameworks that promote inclusion, empowerment, and critical engagement with colonial legacies in education. These approaches aim to challenge the historical dominance of Eurocentric perspectives and create more equitable, culturally sensitive learning environments.

Table 5. Power Dynamics

Strategies	Authors	Findings
Undoing coloniality in multilingual teaching	Maddamsetti (2023).	Focus on decolonizing affects a'd the expression of subaltern bodies in English teaching.
Redefining EFL within a left-wing ideological frame	Canale (2015).	Ideological shift in Uruguay about English teaching, focusing on empowerment pedagogy and criticism of imperialism
Pluriversal literacies for decolonizing EFL policies	Becerra-Posada (2024).	Framework of pluriversal literacies as an alternative to transform English teaching in Global South contexts
Epistemological Perspectives and Discursive Alternatives	Fandiño (2021).	Colombian ELT community needs to first deconstruct dominant structures and strategies that enact epistemic and cultural dominance of the global north, and then construct alternative discourses and practices that acknowledge and disseminate the singularities of its knowledge and culture.
Ideological and Hegemonic Practices	Gökhan Ulum and Köksal (2019).	It can be said that each culture has its own ideological practices that are visibly reflected in EFL textbooks. Therefore, it is not unusual to say that textbooks cannot be neutral. Even global EFL textbooks tend to support their inner circle cultural aspects by ignoring alternative cultures that may be called outer circle, owing to the possible effect of post-colonialism.
Coloniality and Emergent Decoloniality	Nuñez (2022).	Developing EFL materials from a decolonial perspective contests the commercial, standardized, and colonized textbooks.

Source: own elaboration

The role of English within global power dynamics has been a critical point of analysis in decolonial scholarship, as it serves both as a tool for global communication and as a marker of cultural and ideological dominance. The interplay between English, imperialism, and the global neoliberal project is central to understanding the power relations that continue to shape language education, particularly within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

In many regions, especially in Latin America, English has been co-opted as a symbol of progress and modernization, but also as an instrument of neoliberal agendas. Canale (2015), discusses the ideological struggles surrounding English in Uruguay, where the rise of neoliberal policies in the 1990s associated English with economic advancement and global integration. In such a context, English became not merely a language, but a commodity, something essential for participation in a globalized world. However, as the political landscape in Uruguay shifted towards more left-wing policies in the 2000s, English was reexamined through a decolonial lens, revealing its colonial undertones. While the neoliberal narrative used English as a tool for individual empowerment, the left-wing critique redefined English as a tool of imperialism. This ideological conflict reflects broader global debates about the role of English, where its promotion often masks the colonial histories it carries, continuing to reproduce global power imbalances.

The globalization of English and the dominance of native-speaker norms in EFL textbooks also perpetuate a form of cultural hegemony. Ulum and Köksal (2019), identify how EFL textbooks, whether locally or globally written, often privilege cultures from the inner circle (The U.S. and The U.K.) while marginalizing non-Western cultures, including those of outer circle and expanding circle countries. Their study reveals how this imbalance not only affects the cultural narratives students are exposed to but also solidifies the worldview that Western norms are superior. This reinforces ideological hegemonies through the curriculum, where global education systems continue to propagate Western ideals, often ignoring or distorting non-Western histories, cultures, and epistemologies.

The critique of English in relation to power dynamics is particularly important when considering multilingual and multidialectal students, who often experience the imposition of a single narrative about what “proper” English should be. Maddamsetti (2023), explores how the coloniality of affects (emotions and experiences shaped by colonial histories) manifests in English learning for multilingual students. In classrooms where English is taught as a singular standard, students’ own linguistic identities are often invalidated. This approach not only marginalizes their emotional experiences but also silences their multilingual capabilities, forcing them into a mold that aligns with colonial expectations. The decolonial stance, therefore, involves reclaiming the affective space for multilingual identities, recognizing the emotional and intellectual contributions of non-native speakers of English (Núñez, 2022).

In Colombia, the decolonization of English has involved a focus on integrating local knowledge and cultural practices into the EFL curriculum. Fandiño (2021), argues for a shift away from the imposition of global norms and the promotion of localized pedagogies that resist the hegemony of the North. This includes revisiting how English language teaching (ELT) is framed within the local context and how local languages and epistemologies can be integrated into the curriculum. The idea is to create a more empowering form of language teaching that resists the standardization of knowledge and practices imposed by global forces, offering students more meaningful ways to engage with English while respecting their local realities.

Discussion

The integration of decolonial perspectives into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has garnered significant attention in recent years, and the findings from the reviewed studies offer a compelling case for the continued evolution of EFL teaching practices. The core focus of this research lies in the decolonization of EFL, which involves challenging the historical, cultural, and social power dynamics that have shaped language teaching. As the results show, a decolonial approach to EFL aims to empower students, respect linguistic diversity, and deconstruct colonial narratives embedded in educational systems. The findings discussed in this section highlight key insights into the role of teacher training programs, the use of decolonial materials, and the shifting global power dynamics that shape English language education.

How are decolonial theories applied in EFL teaching practices?

Decolonial theories have been successfully applied in EFL education, particularly in regions like Latin America and Southeast Asia. Research highlights that decolonial perspectives encourage a shift from Eurocentric teaching methods to more inclusive, culturally sensitive approaches. For instance, in Latin American contexts, educators are incorporating social justice into their curricula, promoting the idea that language teaching should engage with broader social issues (Banegas & Sánchez, 2024). Additionally, decolonial theories challenge the perception of English as a superior language, advocating for the recognition of all languages and cultures equally in the classroom (Zapata et al., 2024).

In the context of the global role of English, findings suggest that English continues to function as both a global tool for communication and a symbol of cultural imperialism. Research by Massó (2023) and Maddamsetti (2023), reveals how English, while facilitating cross-cultural communication, also upholds colonial power dynamics. The imposition of English as the primary language of instruction in many postcolonial societies often disregards the linguistic and cultural diversity of students, forcing them into monolingual molds. These findings are consistent with Becerra-Posada

(2024), who calls for the recognition of pluriversal literacies that embrace the diversity of linguistic forms and knowledge systems present in EFL classrooms. By acknowledging the global dominance of English while promoting linguistic diversity, educators can challenge the hierarchical structure that positions English as the only legitimate medium of global communication.

What are the characteristics and experiences of decolonial teacher training programs?

The practical examples discussed in this section demonstrate that decolonial approaches in EFL are not just theoretical ideals but tangible practices that can transform the classroom environment. From translanguaging and community-based pedagogies to the decolonization of EFL materials, these strategies challenge the colonial legacies that have shaped language education and offer more inclusive, socially just alternatives. By implementing these approaches, educators can create spaces where all languages and cultures are valued, empowering students to engage with English in ways that are meaningful, relevant, and decolonized. These efforts represent a significant step toward rethinking the global power dynamics embedded in language teaching and more equitable educational practices.

Several practical examples illustrate the application of decolonial approaches. In teacher training, the integration of local knowledge and community-based pedagogies has been transformative, empowering educators to create learning environments that reflect students' cultural identities (Quintero & Olarte, 2023). Translanguaging, the use of multiple languages in the classroom, is another widely used decolonial strategy that improves inclusivity and social justice (Putra, 2024). Additionally, critiques of English language materials that reflect only Western cultural norms demonstrate a commitment to diversifying the curriculum and challenging cultural hegemony (Smith, 2021).

What practical examples of decolonial approaches can be found?

Teacher training programs that incorporate decolonial frameworks have proven effective in transforming educators' mindsets and practices. Studies by Putra (2024) and Herath (2024), suggest that programs promoting translanguaging and critical self-reflection can empower teachers to create inclusive, decolonized classrooms. These programs encourage teachers to challenge the status quo of language education, create linguistic justice, and engage with students' full linguistic repertoires. However, there is still a need for further development in these programs, particularly in regions with limited access to resources, to ensure they reach a broader range of educators.

The findings from this study resonate strongly with the existing literature on decolonial theory in education. Scholars such as Mignolo (2009), have long argued that the colonality of knowle-

dge continues to shape modern education, particularly in the way that Western epistemologies dominate the curriculum. This research builds on their work by demonstrating how decolonial pedagogies in EFL can actively resist the dominance of Western knowledge and promote a more inclusive, localized curriculum. The incorporation of local knowledge and multilingual practices in teacher training programs is a direct response to the calls for epistemic justice outlined by Song (2023), who emphasizes the need for educational systems to give space to marginalized knowledge systems.

How does EFL contribute to or challenge colonial power dynamics in educational settings?

A significant finding concerns the decolonization of EFL materials. Research by Kim (2023) and Charry Londoño et al. (2024), illustrates how the use of digitized materials and a socio-material approach allows educators to break free from the constraints of traditional EFL textbooks, which often reflect Western-centric ideologies. These studies emphasize the importance of creating multimodal materials that reflect the cultural diversity of students and promote intercultural competence. The globalization of English has often been tied to the spread of Western ideals, but decolonial approaches to material design seek to subvert this trend by integrating local knowledge and cultural practices into the curriculum. The use of local knowledge in EFL materials also serves as a powerful tool for empowerment, as it allows students to see themselves reflected in the learning process, rather than feeling marginalized by foreign cultural paradigms (Charry Londoño et al., 2024).

The role of English in perpetuating colonial power dynamics remains prominent. Research has shown that English, as the dominant global language, often marginalizes local languages and cultures, reinforcing a form of cultural hegemony. However, decolonial approaches in EFL education challenge this narrative by promoting multilingualism and emphasizing the importance of local knowledge in language teaching (Charry Londoño et al., 2024). By integrating these perspectives, EFL education can play a pivotal role in dismantling colonial structures developing a more equitable, pluralistic environment for students from diverse backgrounds.

This study confirms that decolonial approaches to EFL can challenge the monolithic narrative that English is the only valid language for global communication. The findings suggest that a multimodal approach that incorporates diverse forms of knowledge can enrich the learning process, making it more reflective of the diverse linguistic and cultural realities of students worldwide (Smith, 2021).

In sum, the role of English in global power dynamics is multifaceted and deeply tied to colonial histories. Whether through its promotion as a neoliberal commodity, its dominance in global educational materials, or its exclusion of non-Western languages and cultures, English continues to serve as a powerful tool for maintaining cultural hegemony. However, decolonial approaches

offer a way to challenge these power dynamics by reclaiming local languages, epistemologies, and affective experiences, and by reimagining English education as a site of empowerment rather than subjugation. Through localized pedagogies and the integration of diverse cultural perspectives, English can be transformed from an instrument of empire into a tool for global solidarity and social justice.

Future Research Directions

An unexpected result from this research was the emphasis on emotional decolonization in language teaching, particularly in the studies by Maddamsetti (2023) and Herath (2024). These studies highlighted how the emotional aspects of language learning, such as identity and self-expression, are deeply impacted by colonial histories. Maddamsetti's exploration of the emotional experiences of multilingual students challenged traditional views of language learning as a purely cognitive endeavor, showing that the emotional and cultural dimensions of language are just as significant in the decolonization process. This finding suggests that affective decolonization, or the emotional re-empowerment of students, should be a more central focus in decolonial teaching practices.

Future research could explore several areas related to the findings of this study. One potential direction is the exploration of student agency in the decolonization process. While this study emphasizes teacher-led interventions, future research could focus on how students themselves engage with decolonial practices and whether they actively challenge the monolingual, Eurocentric frameworks that dominate language education. Another avenue for future research is the long-term impact of decolonial pedagogies on students' language learning outcomes, particularly in terms of self-esteem and identity formation.

Decolonization of English as a Foreign Language education represents a significant shift towards more inclusive, culturally relevant, and empowering pedagogies. By incorporating translinguaging, local knowledge, and multimodal materials, EFL educators can create classrooms that resist the colonial legacies embedded in traditional language education. This research confirms that decolonial practices in teacher training and material design can challenge the hegemony of English and promote a more equitable and inclusive approach to global communication. While there are challenges in implementing these practices, particularly in terms of resources and teacher preparedness, the findings of this study suggest that decolonial EFL is not only necessary but also possible, offering a path forward for the transformation of language education globally.

Conclusion

The integration of decolonial approaches into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education represents a transformative opportunity to reshape global educational practices. EFL, traditionally viewed as a tool for economic mobility and cultural dominance, has been intrinsically tied to colonial histories that perpetuate power imbalances. By adopting decolonial perspectives, EFL education can move beyond its Eurocentric foundations and create more inclusive, culturally relevant, and socially just pedagogies. Decolonial approaches challenge the very foundation of language education by promoting linguistic justice, embracing multilingualism, and integrating local, indigenous knowledge into the curriculum. This shift opens the door for a more pluralistic educational environment, where students' cultural identities are valued, and their linguistic repertoires are respected.

In this sense, decolonial EFL serves not only as a tool for language acquisition but also as a vehicle for social change, analyzing inequalities, and promoting critical thinking. Moreover, decolonial pedagogies empower teachers to critically examine their roles within the educational system, encouraging them to question colonial legacies and transform their teaching practices. By studying critical consciousness and engaging students in meaningful dialogue about power, identity, and language, decolonial EFL has the potential to challenge global power dynamics that have historically marginalized non-Western cultures. Ultimately, the decolonization of EFL education is not just a theoretical concept but a practical framework with the power to transform classrooms worldwide. It offers an opportunity to rethink the global role of English and reframe its use as a tool for equity and solidarity, rather than domination. Through these efforts, education can become a more inclusive, empowering space that reflects the diverse world in which we live, contributing to a more just and equitable global society.

Teaching English in the current terms simply has not worked out. It does not take into account the different socio-economic and cultural learning conditions, and usually it is based on a product brought by a publisher that is then promoted in the media as the solution to the needs of the different language centers. Even those educational institutions with positive results (often private centers) do so through pure immersion in the language, without necessarily promoting critical thinking.

Teachers reproduce a system of teaching-learning English in which English is necessary to enter a global system of work or study opportunities. However, a significant number of students do not have the resources to afford travel or higher-level studies. The sum of these conditions causes a negative context that produces poor results overall, and completely leaves aside learners' material conditions.

The focus of this article, the decolonial approach, must be based on the understanding of an education that is provided in conditions of inequality. Teaching English, therefore, cannot be an automated scheme of grammar, skills, and knowledge, but rather a critical composite that involves the material conditions of the educational community, that is, its culture and socio-economic reality.

This article showed that any decolonial English learning structure must be managed in at least four spaces: the decolonial understanding of the educational space, decolonial teacher training programs, development of EFL materials, and the constant development of decolonial practices in all learning areas. If some of these elements were missing from the decolonial structure, any possibility of decolonial English learning would collapse in the short or long term period.

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