



## Research Article

# Re-thinking the Future of the English Preparatory Program in the Context of Higher Education in Kuwait

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the complex role of English within the context of Kuwait's higher education. The role of English as a mediator between Kuwait and the Western world has catalyzed the rise of institutions offering 'American-style' education across the region, leading to the proliferation of courses delivered in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Such institutions have adopted a monolingual policy with the intention of enhancing students' career opportunities through proficiency in English. At the same time, an 'English only' discourse seems to negatively affect local knowledge, language, and culture, leading to their marginalization. This study highlights the tensions between the global appeal of English for job market readiness and the local cultural and linguistic realities that are marginalized by an English-medium instructional policy. The article sets out to examine the dominant monolingual discourse at the English Preparatory Program (EPP) at one university in Kuwait, henceforth referred to as 'the university'. The study identifies several concerns, including the impact of globalization in promoting the misguided belief in English as the sole avenue to success, the cultural and linguistic disconnect in the curriculum, and the inadequacy of westernized teaching approaches. By drawing on theories of postmodernism and postcolonialism, this paper proposes strategies to disrupt colonial and neo-colonial frameworks within the EPP and suggests a more balanced approach to English language teaching that values both global and local perspectives.

**Keywords:** EMI, postcolonialism, English language teaching, glocalization, Western knowledge

## 1. Introduction

Since the establishment of the oil industry in Kuwait in the 1930s, the English language has played a pivotal role as a conduit that connects the Kuwaiti nation to the Western world. The status of English as a lingua franca driven by the forces of globalization led to the emergence of higher educational institutions in the Arabian Gulf region, where Kuwait is located, that offer 'American-style' education (Tétreault, 2010). The programs offered by such institutions are delivered entirely in English as a medium of instruction (EMI), reflecting the global shift towards English-centric education (Karmani, 2010; Tryzna & Al Sharoufi, 2017). The 'English-Only' instructional policy is meant to better equip Arab students for the demands of the job market (Al-Rubai, 2010).

Within this higher educational landscape, the English Preparatory Program (EPP) at the university in Kuwait is a prerequisite for students' successful enrollment in their chosen major. Derived from a Western model, the program demonstrates its strong commitment to standard academic language learning through the use of foreign textbooks,

teaching methods, and a monolingual learning environment that reflects a hegemonic knowledge discourse. At the same time, one of the university's missions is the appreciation and preservation of local cultural heritage.

## 1.1 Research problem

There are numerous tensions between these competing global-local strands where 'English only' discourse has a prominent winning power. First, the anglicized environment, influenced by western ideologies, as a form of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) represents a neglect for local culture and language. The mere existence of the university branding itself as 'western' underscores this point. Secondly, the idea of developing active knowledge of English translates to students as the misguided belief that English alone is the key to freedom, power, and prosperity. Finally, the EPP curriculum, with its heavy focus on Western teaching approaches and materials, is disconnected from the linguistic and cultural realities in Kuwait. Students coming from public schools encounter considerable difficulties integrating into the 'foreign' model of learning due to their inadequate English language proficiency. The reason is that for them, English was delivered by the local non-native teachers as a foreign language using the grammar-translation method. It explains why some students fail the exams or drop out after the first semester. Being taught by expatriate teachers who lack knowledge of the vernacular language and culture has made the situation more challenging. Cultural sensitivity training is not commonly offered by the university educational bodies. Another issue is that little consideration is given to the importance of localized orientation in the process of second language acquisition. As an example, the use of native language (L1) is strongly discouraged by language teachers as it may hinder students' progress in the second language (L2). This creates a stressful environment, contributing to students' feelings of anxiety (Alrabah et al., 2016) and being 'westernized' (Al-Hussien & Belhiah, 2016).

There are real causes for concern raised by numerous scholars (e.g., Najjar, 2005) that the 'Americanization' of education would lead to the marginalization of indigenous knowledge, language, and culture in the Persian Gulf countries. The major concern is that a notable preference for the English language would make Arabic a second language in these regions (Kirkpatrick, 2017). Considering the potential of English to dominate local cultural and linguistic assets, how reasonable is the promotion of English as a medium of knowledge transmission at the university?

Acknowledging English as the language of globalization (Pennycook, 2000), this paper seeks to interrogate its powerful discourse within the preparatory program of the university and "question[ ] dominant ways of understanding" (Edwards & Usher, 1994, p. 82) educational practices. First, I will discuss the status of English in Kuwait. Next, I will introduce the context within which this study was located. After that, I will problematize the EMI discourse through the lens of postmodernism and postcolonialism. I will then argue for strategies that could suggest solutions to destabilize and disrupt colonial and neo-colonial tenets that dominate the EPP's traditional English classrooms. Finally, I will provide an overview of preferred future directions for the EPP and the English language teaching (ELT) domain in general, where the imbalances between the global and the local could be redressed by including both perspectives into consideration.

## 2. The role and status of English in Kuwait

The spread of the English language and culture in Kuwait has a long history of socioeconomic, political, historical, and geographical factors. Nestled at the top of the Arabian Gulf, Kuwait has been enjoying a favorable position as a commercially important gateway between the Middle East and Europe since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when English was mainly used to facilitate merchant trade (Al-Rubaie, 2010). The vast expansion of the oil production industry in the post-World War II era elevated Kuwait into international prominence, which has resulted in attracting numerous Anglo-American corporations to operate in the region. At that time, English was assigned the role of a language for specific purposes, or the so-called 'petroleum-English' (Karmani, 2005). Al-Yaseen (2000), among others, suggests that this period marked the beginning of anglicization and, in the aftermath of 9/11, 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1983) of the Kuwaiti socio-cultural environment through the diffusion of Western values, consumer goods, and lifestyles. Others, Akbar (2007) and Dashti (2015), for example, maintain that the influence of English on the Arabic language has led to the replacement of some Arabic equivalents and the assimilation of borrowed terms.

The half-century of the British protectorate, from 1899 to 1961, further reinforced the position of English as a

powerful language of international affairs and politics, which left little choice as to which standard variety to speak and which educational model to establish in Kuwait. Since then, the ELT industry has attracted large investments from the government by privileging native English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers, foreign textbooks, methodologies, and curricula. The situation also created fertile ground for language and testing bodies like the British Council and other key players, making ELT a lucrative business in the region.

The Iraqi invasion in 1990 signaled yet another ideological shift in the Kuwaiti mindset towards the Anglophone world. English was no longer seen as a ‘foreign’ language but rather an essential tongue “to vocalize the shock and disbelief to the world” (Karmani, 2005, p. 45). This period coincided with the steadfast globalization movement, with its concentrated gaze on market ideology leading to the expansion of the private sector, including education. The need to compete successfully on the global arena necessitated the preparation of citizens capable of participating in the global economy through a good command of English. Championed by Western neoliberal ideologies, English as the language of globalization became a prestigious socioeconomic marker and a gateway to a better quality of life.

The present-day linguistic landscape in Kuwait, with approximately two-thirds of the workforce being expatriates who use English as a medium of communication, reflects the deeply rooted hegemonic position of English, which has detrimental effects on the vernacular literacies, values, and traditions. Heralded as the language of progress, science, and academia and a language of the present, English subjugated Arabic to a modest role as the language of religion and social communication or the language of the past, a concern raised by a number of critical voices over the past few decades (Ahmed, 2011; Al-Dhubaib, 2006; Hunt, 2012; Troudi, 2009).

The above overview indicates that Kuwait’s linguistic realities reflect a discourse that legitimizes the span of English portrayed by some scholars, such as Crystal (2012) or Graddol (2006), as natural, neutral, and beneficial, but as we shall see next, the picture is much more complicated than that.

### 3. The research context

The university under study was established in 2005 as one of the early private institutions in the country. It is affiliated with a Western-based university ranked among the top two hundred institutions nationally. It consists of two colleges: the College of Engineering and Technology and the College of Business Administration, alongside a Liberal Arts Department and an English Preparatory Program. Tailored to meet job market demands, the university provides a range of programs, including a Pre-College program, undergraduate degrees in fields like accounting and civil engineering, and a Master of Business Administration (MBA). It has the Engineering Research and Innovation Center and specialized labs, promoting a culture of innovation and research. Recognized as one of the top universities in Kuwait and ranking globally in the QS [QS World University Rankings assess global universities on performance metrics like academic reputation and faculty/student ratio, serving as a benchmark for educational excellence worldwide.] World University Rankings 2024, the university holds institutional accreditation from the Private Universities Council (PUC) of Kuwait and international accreditations for its academic programs.

All programs are taught exclusively in English. To meet the entry requirements, students must succeed in one of the three tests: the internal English Language Skill Assessment Test (180+ points), the TOEFL-IBT Exam (60 points or above), or Academic IELTS (6 points or above). Applicants who fail to meet these requirements can enroll in a non-credit-intensive English preparatory program.

#### 3.1 Students

The number of students that can enroll at the university has reached more than 11,000 since its opening. Out of them, around 1,500 students attend the preparatory English program. Notably, female students outnumber their male counterparts, a trend consistent with other higher educational institutions in the Gulf region. For instance, in the fall semester of 2022, 70% of students in the English preparatory program were female, while only 30% were male. About 90% of students who study at the university are Kuwaiti, with the remainder coming from other countries, mainly Arab nations such as Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. These international students are often the children of expatriates living in Kuwait. Additionally, around 90% of students who receive scholarships from the Private Universities Council (PUC) are also Kuwaiti, indicating a strong support network for local students. Students typically come from public schools, where

they have received their education in Arabic and where English has been taught as a foreign language through the use of their native language (L1).

### **3.2 Faculty**

The university faculty comprises individuals from over 60 different countries. In line with its commitment to high-quality education, the institutional policy mandates that instructors in the English Preparatory Program (EPP) hold MA degrees, while other faculty members are typically required to have PhDs. Furthermore, these qualifications must be obtained from reputable universities (preferably Western) that are recognized and approved by the Ministry of Higher Education. The majority of instructors who teach at the English Preparatory program are non-native English speakers with degrees in TESOL, TEFL, or other cognate fields of study. Additional certifications, such as Cambridge CELTA [CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) is an internationally recognized qualification for teaching English as a second or foreign language, offered by Cambridge Assessment English.] and DELTA [DELTA (Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) is an advanced language teaching certification for experienced English language teachers, offered by Cambridge Assessment English.] are highly encouraged.

### **3.3 EPP program evaluation**

The English Preparatory Program (EPP) is designed to meet the needs of Arabic-speaking students who do not meet the minimum scores on standardized English tests required for admission at the university. It is carried out through intensive exposure to skill-based learning, where English-medium teaching is an inevitable step towards fulfilling this mission adequately. It entails the use of English in educational settings where it is not the first language (Richards & Pun, 2022). In the context of the researched academic establishment, it means that all subjects are taught in English both in preparatory and undergraduate courses. One of its features is the development of language skills necessary for students' successful participation in the world economy (Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017). The program is structured around three core modules: Reading and Writing, Listening and Speaking, and Grammar, each taught by instructors specializing in these areas. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive enhancement of language competencies, preparing students for the challenges of higher education. The EPP extends over an entire year, consisting of two sequential semesters, namely Part 1 and Part 2, where completion of Part 1 is a prerequisite for Part 2. To successfully pass and proceed to enroll in the degree programs, students must achieve a minimum grade of 70% in each part. The American Psychological Association (APA) writing style is mandated across all academic programs.

### **3.4 Teaching approach and materials**

Teaching English in the EPP is realized through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which gives primary importance to fluency (comprehension and production) and secondary importance to accuracy (language form) (Spada, 2007). CLT classrooms are supposed to create environments that mimic real-life scenarios, enabling genuine communication opportunities. Prioritizing activities like creative role plays, simulations, dramas, games, and projects is crucial, as these encourage spontaneity and improvisation rather than mere repetition and drills. The goal of CLT is to teach 'real-life' language. One of the principles of CLT advocates for the minimization of using learners' native language where possible since the ultimate objective is to master the target language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011).

The teaching materials employed in the EPP have been chosen with adherence to the principles of authenticity described above. For the development of grammar skills, "Focus on Grammar" by Pearson, a UK company, is employed. For reading and writing, listening and speaking, the curriculum incorporates the "Pathways" series from the National Geographic Learning (NGL), a publisher based in the USA. This academic skills series is designed to equip students with the necessary abilities, language proficiency, and critical thinking required for academic achievement.

## 4. The power of English-medium discourse: A cause for concern

### 4.1 A regime of 'truth'

While the university's goal and efforts to equip their students with the western knowledge necessary to compete in the global job market are commendable, there are a few causes for concern. The first one deals with the dominant and universal nature of such knowledge, which, in Foucault's view, is inevitably infused with power (Edwards & Usher, 1994). Foucault challenges the hegemony of Western thought as a universal or absolute truth (Edwards & Usher, 1994). In the field of linguistics, hegemony is used to describe how a population adopts linguistic forms from another group without physical coercion (Gramsci, 1971). Eventually, the dominance of one language (English in this case) leads to the obsolescence of the other, local language. This view finds resonance with Foucault's (1979) ideas. Strongly criticizing the dehumanizing effects of globalization with its rational and goal-oriented outlook, he speaks against Eurocentric knowledge as assumed givens or 'grand narratives'. From this perspective, the English-medium learning environment at the selected educational entity, uncritically treated as desirable, constitutes a powerful knowledge discourse, or, in Foucauldian terms, a 'regime of truth' that reflects the hegemonic processes of English language domination. To repeat what I stated above, such power is non-coercive or repressive; it operates at the level of 'knowledgeable' practices (Edwards & Usher, 1994) in the process of *governmentality*. Governmentality refers to the conduct that regulates students' behavior through normalizing practices, thereby making them willing participants or 'docile bodies' and objects of knowledge (Foucault, 1979).

Drawing on Foucault's understanding, Pennycook (2006) came up with the idea of *language governmentality* as the process through which language policies steer the linguistic practices, thoughts, and actions of distinct individuals, collectives, and bodies. According to this view, one way such governance is achieved is through EMI, a covert form of language policy and governmentality erroneously viewed as necessarily beneficial and ideologically innocent (Shohamy, 2006). Arguably, 'McCommunication pedagogies' (Block, 2002), such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), considered as most advanced and effective teaching approaches, are far from neutral (Pennycook, 1989). Lin (2013) observes that these aspects are closely associated with shaping a specific type of student and worker identity, which is conducive to engagement in a particular kind of political economy.

What needs to be problematized is how and to what extent English language proficiency can improve students' life conditions, given the fact that most of them will seek employment in a government sector where Arabic-only discourse is ubiquitously present (Kelly, 2011). The need is, therefore, to question a widely held and rarely challenged assumption about English as the language of economic and scientific progress as it automatically places Arabic into an asymmetrical relation to its Anglophonic 'relative', assigning it roles such as the Quran, tradition, and family life. (Findlow, 2006). Such concerns, voiced by several scholars (Al Dhubaib, 2006; Troudi, 2009), are sounding warning bells that alert us to the accelerating erosion of Arabic language, values, and culture. In effect, English as a vehicle for scientific knowledge needs to be questioned, as Arabic is well adjusted to functioning as the language of science (Al-Rubaie, 2010). Therefore, students do not really have to rely on English or any forms of Western knowledge in terms of gaining relevant expertise in certain academic disciplines. This view also overlooks the many contributions Muslim scholars have made to the body of science across the spectrum of history. Finally, knowledge is not the product of one language alone; rather, it could be perceived as a human product of cultural and social constructs (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994).

A further difficulty with the 'English only' discourse is linked to the previous students' encounters with English as a foreign language in school settings. This is in contrast to the monolingual reality they face in the EPP, where mixing English and Arabic is discouraged by the official institution policies. Given the complexity associated with the nature of English language acquisition and students' lack of choice over the medium of instruction, it is, therefore, unsurprising that their learning is imbued with frustration, lack of motivation, fear, and even shame, a phenomenon Liyanage and Canagarajah (2019) thoroughly examined. In a similar vein, Pennycook (2017) comments on the pressure of achieving high competency in English for students and its connection to their visceral feelings, intensified by the burden of being "dependent on forms of Western knowledge that are often of limited value and extreme inappropriacy to the local context" (p. 20). Hence, my students' repeated use of their native language during the class can be seen as a form of counter-strategy and resistance to monolingualism.

## 4.2 *Not just a lingua franca but a colonial lingua franca*

Thus far, it has been argued that the choice of EMI at the university is justified by the global use of English as a world language for economic and communication purposes. Although not entirely untrue, it would be wrong to suggest that English hegemony is a merely natural reflex of ongoing global changes. In the same manner, we would do well to question the underlying assumptions of ‘Global English’ as a necessary basic and universal skill with its assumed neutrality, the view that continues to be endorsed by some scholars (e.g., Crystal, 2012; Graddol, 2006). Returning to the subject of English as a lingua franca, it is perhaps the right moment to move beyond its simplistic and universalistic outlook and account for its original sources of expansion in Kuwait in connection to colonization.

As mentioned earlier, for the past 200 years, Kuwait has been under the influence of European colonial powers, which imposed its linguistic parameters through a range of military, economic, cultural, educational, and social linkages. This imposition, described by Phillipson (1992) as *linguistic imperialism*, a term used to conceptualize the dominance of one language over the others, is particularly evident in the university’s educational logic through the adoption of EMI as a policy that authorizes the dominant elitist position of English. Phillipson (1992) argues convincingly that linguistic imperialism is a form of linguisticism that comes with considerable caveats or fallacies: the monolingual fallacy, the native speaker fallacy, the early start fallacy, the maximum exposure fallacy, and the subtractive fallacy. In summary, these fallacies suggest that the best way to learn a new language is through immersion in that language, facilitated by a ‘native’ speaker teacher. Indeed, the prevailing monoglossic ideology at the university and adherence to standardized language norms are assumed to contribute to better mastery of the language. In essence, such tenets are largely misleading and need to be confronted as those that support the hegemonic expansion of English as a type of imperialism.

The same is true of the textbooks and their attachment to an idealization of native-speaker norms and culture. What is more, the inclusion of neutrally portrayed international contexts reflects the cultural and linguistic discourses that emanate from the ‘West’. Remaining overwhelmingly Anglo-centric, they prioritize neoliberal values: competition, individualism, and consumerism (Bori, 2020) and depict globalization as a positive phenomenon (Gray, 2010). To illustrate, one might consider examining the subjects covered in the EPP textbooks. Namely, future living is associated with “many new and exciting opportunities” (Blass & Vargo, 2018b, p. 51), whereas in the world of future jobs, translation and interpretation services take second place after jobs in the online industry with foreign language expertise as the major skill (Blass & Vargo, 2018a, p. 184). Such textbooks, as Ellis (1990) points out, give little consideration to the socio-cultural contexts, particularly for the Muslim world.

Considering Phillipson’s (2016) position against English as a universal and ideologically neutral language, it should not be seen as discouraging the learning and use of English. A fundamental insight gleaned from his research is the critical necessity to grasp the process by which English achieved dominance over other languages through colonial impositions, the enduring marks of which are still discernible in the contemporary effects of neo-colonialism.

## 4.3 *Colonial legacy*

The cultural consequences of colonial legacies have been extensively addressed by postcolonial scholarship (e.g., Bhabha, 1994; Enslin, 2017; Freire, 1970; Mignolo, 2000; Rizvi, 2014; Said, 1978; Young, 2009). In Young’s (2009) terms, postcolonialism deals with “the aftermath of colonial” (p. 13). In other words, it involves analyzing the historically embedded political and cultural consequences of the hegemonic Western rule and the effects of new forms of colonial practices that came in the wake of globalization. Such views find resonance with the above discussion on power and Western domination that still exists in various realms, particularly in education. Much in Foucault’s spirit, Said (1978), for example, draws attention to the power-knowledge production by engaging the concept of *orientalism*. It is better understood as the system of representations where ‘the East’ or ‘Orient’ is inevitably seen by ‘the West’ as ‘weak’, ‘hostile’, ‘passive’, and ‘lacking subjectivity’ (Rizvi & Lingard, 2006, p. 296). Such stereotypical portrayals of the Arab, as he further argues, allowed the Metropolitan Center to have authority over ‘the periphery’ in a range of hegemonic ways. The ‘Metropolitan center’ here symbolizes the core of political, economic, and cultural power, often located in Western countries such as the USA and the UK. ‘Periphery’ refers to the ‘Outer Circle’ and ‘Expanding Circle’ countries (Kachru, 1985), where English was imposed as a result of imperialist influence from the ‘Center’. In recognizing the importance of resistance to ‘othering’, Said calls for a critical appraisal of the colonial legacies left on the world of the marginalized. In doing so, he invites us to resist the colonial discourse of Orientalist thinking (Ashcroft et al., 1995) and

the process of ‘othering’ as a preconceived ideology that is still at the heart of modern-day practices.

In my professional context, for instance, I regretfully observe such ‘othering’ narratives. Otherization occurs when instructors falsely accuse students of cheating on the assumption that all Arabs are ‘lazy’, ‘spoiled’, and like to cheat. Other forms of othering include cultural juxtaposing, when a teacher makes statements such as ‘in my culture, we don’t do it’, implicitly contrasting and devaluing the student’s culture. In other instances, the imposition of the teacher’s own value judgments on students and focus on differences create a boundary between the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’.

Pennycook (1998) strongly criticized such othering discourses, labeling them as colonial legacies. Rejecting a false claim of neutrality of the English language, he argues that the teaching of English played a vital role in colonial endeavors, noting that English “has been a major language in which colonialism has been written” (p. 9). Similarly, Canagarajah (1999) describes how TESOL pedagogical practices came to be framed as a result of colonial domination. Finally, Sherman (2023) posits that the expatriate English language teacher, whether native or non-native, is a “fundamentally Western figuration” (p. 245) who acts as a conduit of Western knowledge, thereby extending the colonial legacy into contemporary educational practices.

Young (2009) stresses the need to resist the universal or singular conception of Western knowledge. Instead, he proposes celebrating its plurality by seeking new knowledges that could revive the value of indigenous knowledge. Canagarajah (2016) expresses similar motivations toward resisting the monopoly of Western paradigms in periphery communities and reclaiming local knowledge. His words echo Kumaravadivelu (2016), who insists on the adoption of an action plan destined to “shake the foundation of the hegemonic power structure and move the subaltern community forward” (p. 66).

In making parallels between postcolonial scholars and sociolinguists, it is not my intention, however, to delve into the discussion at length. Rather, my point is to highlight the overlapping concerns and acknowledge their collaborative efforts to put forward solutions for a more justifiable future of education. Taken together, these developments may serve as my point of departure for envisioning a new postcolonial perspective of the EPP, to which I shall now turn to look in more detail.

## 5. The future of EPP: Challenges and choices

### 5.1 Using students’ L1

The first step in the direction of change could be through our active involvement with the idea of resistance as “oppositional behaviour” (Giroux, 1983, p. 285) that would challenge the dominant ideologies underlying the EPP practices. In ELT, the idea of resistance is well articulated by Canagarajah (1999), who believes “that pedagogies of resistance need to be rooted in our students’ everyday life” (p. 194). Going against the fallacies of linguistic imperialism, he advocates for the accommodation of translanguing practices (Canagarajah, 2013), namely code-switching as a form of resistance to established monolingual classroom practices. Indeed, the everyday mixing of English and Arabic in my classroom manifests itself through the use of ‘Allah lexicon’ (Morrow & Castleton, 2011), that is, words like *Wallah* (‘I swear to God, it is true’) or *Inshallah* (‘God willing, hopefully’). Another instance includes *Arabizi*, a hybrid version of Arabic and English (Palfreyman & Al Khalil, 2003), used primarily for texting but recently observed in students’ study notes (Hopkins et al., 2020).

Practices of mixing languages have been typically named *translanguaging* (García & Li Wei, 2014). Translanguaging is an approach that treats bilingual practices as “one linguistic repertoire” (p. 2) and that has the capacity to maximize students’ learning potential through a unique process of knowledge construction. Pennycook (2019), in articulating translanguaging, goes beyond “a dystopian approach to monolithic English and a utopian focus on varieties of English” (p. 174) and encourages a more nuanced awareness of translanguing practices. He adds another dimension called *translingual activism* (p. 170), aimed at “destabiliz[ing] the normative meaning of society” (p. 180). He further explains that translanguing activism in relation to English would mean decolonizing or ‘provincializing’ it through transformational practices that would challenge monolingual pedagogies. To him, the translanguing activist movement is not so much about reworking a curriculum around translanguing methodologies, but, as Lee (2018, as cited in Pennycook, 2019, p.181) asserts, “about rethinking politics and pedagogy along translanguing lines”.

In the spirit of this approach, conceiving a new perspective of the EPP through a translanguaging lens (Tian et al.,

2020) would seem to entail a shift from prioritizing EMI discourse towards recognizing the students' emergent linguistic repertoires and the dynamic and fluid nature of language practices. As evident from research (De La Campa & Nassaji, 2009), L1 can complement L2, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings where the teacher shares the same L1 background with the students.

## 5.2 Critical pedagogy

The recognition of L1 as a beneficial resource poses a considerable challenge to the universal hegemony of the CLT approach, which promotes English in its neutrality (Mignolo, 2009). From this point, what is much needed is a re-evaluation of pedagogical orientations favoring monolingual orthodoxy and their replacement with those that appreciate the plurality of knowledge. It would seem to imply the departure from the 'best method' (Prabu, 1990) as a viable construct towards redefining teaching approaches, collectively termed by Kumaravadivelu (1994) as *postmethod pedagogy*. Based on the principles of particularity, practicality, and possibility, such pedagogy sensitively responds to local knowledge, culture, and context. Local knowledge refers to the indigenous wisdom and practices of the learners' communities. It involves recognizing and utilizing the insights and experiences that students bring from their own life worlds, which are often overlooked by standardized curricula. Culture encompasses the shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that shape the identity of a community. Acknowledging culture means creating a classroom environment that respects and reflects the cultural backgrounds of the students. Context is a specific environment where learning takes place. Knowing it helps align teaching with the unique needs and realities of students and their community.

Giroux's (2004) insights on *critical pedagogy* as a moral, political, and transformative activity that challenges dominant modes of teaching as a neoliberal market-driven custom are noteworthy. Building on Freire's (1970), pedagogy of the oppressed, he suggests that critical pedagogy affords a greater understanding of the power-knowledge relationship within educational contexts and sets out to constitute students as informed subjects and social agents. Critical pedagogy also necessitates educational intellectuals' participation in critical dialog which requires them to dislocate themselves from familiar cultural and ideological spaces and become 'border crossers' to be able to address ongoing contradictions and imagine "new ends and opportunities" (Giroux, 1992, p. 18).

Similar interpretations of critical pedagogy related to English language teaching have been put forward by scholars in the field of sociolinguistics. Canagarajah (1999), for example, emphasizes the importance of pedagogies of resistance and their need to be embedded in the daily experiences of our students. In his recent discussion on translanguaging activism, Pennycook (2019) elaborates on the critical ELT pedagogy based on the idea of the Commons (shared knowledge, mutual help, cooperative work, common property). Central to such pedagogy is a collective awareness of neoliberalism as a form of governmentality and a common concern for its new modes. With regard to language, critical ELT pedagogy of the Commons works with the notion of resistance aimed to "unsettle the role of English" in the world and "delink it from the tentacles of neoliberalism" (Pennycook, 2019, p. 182).

## 5.3 Alternative discourses

These considerations prompt yet a further direction in redefining English as a language of globalization. Although the claims that the ability to speak English as an important resource that contributes to social and economic development are certainly not groundless, as the preceding discussions illustrate, such knowledge does not necessarily improve one's job prospects, particularly within the Kuwaiti local market. If we accept this argument, what seems to follow is that the university's EMI policy appears to hold relatively little value in this respect. Therefore, students do not need to learn Academic Standard English, as a specific type of register used in academic settings (Charles, 2012), in order to succeed in their life prospects. Instead, English as an International Language (EIL) could pave a more promising path to enhancing students' linguistic abilities. EIL is not a distinct language variety, but rather its manifestation in the plural form used for international communication (Marlina, 2017). Exposure to these varieties instead of focusing on one standard variety (British and American) should be encouraged. This way, students would be more prepared for the 'messiness' of English spoken in different parts of the world (Matsuda, 2017). Above all, EIL appreciates learners' linguistic varieties, making it a sensible choice for any institution that aims to prepare students for the realities of exchange.

It would be reasonable to suppose that re-imagining EPP's future assumes decolonization of the teaching materials.

In this regard, it is crucial that textbooks accommodate for the local by way of including “aspirational and educational topics which set these materials apart from the global coursebooks” (Gray, 2002, p. 165). By the same token, the role of language teachers in this decolonial project is not to be overlooked. As education is both a moral and political enterprise, no longer can language educators act as merely authoritative knowledge providers but as critical thinkers who are in continuous dialogue with their own assumptions. Giroux (2004) suggests that being ‘critical’ entails being “accountable for the stories they [teachers] produce” (p. 38). In other words, it is about being alert, responsive, and resistant to the fact that the knowledge educators transmit is always implicated in power. Teachers who embody such orientations would be committed to creating conditions that empower students to become critical citizens in a global world equipped to connect knowledge with social accountability and education with democratic societal transformation.

## 6. Between the global and the local: In search of equilibrium

The above point around global citizenship leads to the question, what is the place of local knowledge within the context of globalized realities? As previously discussed, the relationships between the global and the local are seemingly unequal. Connecting globalization with the processes of colonization, postcolonial theorists strongly criticize such unevenness and claim the retrieval of subaltern knowledge. In making a more pronounced space for local knowledge, however, they do not seem to discard the validity of modern-day education altogether. Instead, drawing from the limitations of postcolonial strategies to solve existing tensions, they propose equilibrium between the two forms (e.g., Adeyemi & Adeyinka, 2003). This could be done in a manner that recognizes that Western and indigenous knowledges can work together in equitable ways (Le Grange, 2017). Placed within a new paradigm, Western pedagogical traditions could help better understand “problems and location of students’ own society in a global context” (Enslin, 2017, p. 11). Consequently, Dieltiens (2008) contends that such education would only reinforce the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities, thereby providing a better response to their existing needs.

With respect to language education, such symmetry needs to be understood in terms of *glocalization*, which Robertson (1995) identifies as an interaction of both global and local forces in specific socio-cultural contexts. To him, the local does not exist outside the global; it is always produced in part in response to and through influences from the global. The above view then allows us to imagine ways to reconcile ‘universals’ with ‘particulars’, Western knowledge with alternative traditions. In this sense, a more glocalised future of EPP may unfold in a number of directions.

One way to balance Arabic and English would be to regard code-switching as an implicit norm in language classrooms. Establishing a new language policy is crucial for achieving this goal. There is no denial that knowledge of English is crucial for intercultural communication. Yet, individuals often find it more comfortable to interact with those who speak their language and share their cultural background. It becomes logical, then, to employ regional language teachers who represent a blend of local and global knowledges and who are ideally positioned to bridge cultural gaps. Another change should be made with regard to the Anglocentric EPP curriculum, which plays a role in promoting western culture and values among students. To preserve and facilitate a sense of Arab identity, its content should be crafted to meet the needs of local students, incorporating sufficient materials about their culture, heritage, and history. Such intermingling of Western and traditional ways of knowing will foster a more inclusive educational environment that celebrates cultural diversity, ultimately encouraging a richer, more nuanced understanding among students of their place in a globalized world.

Finally, it is crucial to recognize the role of students as agents of change within this context. Most of them are not in a position to give opinions about educational content and the methodologies employed in their learning. This limitation underscores the imperative for the university authorities to actively seek out and incorporate student feedback, thereby ensuring that their insights play a pivotal role in shaping a curriculum that is both pertinent and culturally responsive.

## 7. Conclusion

The picture of the postcolonial future of English language teaching and learning that emerges does, in fact, look hopeful. As has been argued throughout the paper, the work done by postcolonial scholars in various disciplines has

much to offer when it comes to imagining a different vision of education. In keeping with its pursuit to restore a balance between the hegemonic ‘global’ and subjugated ‘local’, postcolonialism seeks to unsettle the legacies of the colonial assumptions and practices that continue to shape much of the contemporary educational discourse. Combined with the postmodernist ideas on the knowledge-power interplay, their thoughts are particularly encouraging as they illuminate numerous tensions across the uneven terrain of ‘battles for truth’. These relationships have been complicated within the framework of globalization, whose roots are deeply entrenched in European imperialism. Hence, decolonizing proposals like critical pedagogy of resistance as a counter-hegemonic response to neoliberal influences may hold great promise for those whose knowledges have been placed at the end of the center-periphery margin.

Such promises are crucially needed to challenge and withstand the monolingual orthodoxies, which permeate the current Middle Eastern educational landscape and the TESOL field in general. In that regard, glocalization as a pedagogical approach has the potential to decolonize the ELT matrix and reorient it towards a more humanizing perspective that recognizes local knowledge as a significant resource. Most notably, a translanguaging lens makes visible what is otherwise camouflaged-how ideologies associated with language contrive the socio-political fabric that creates unequal opportunities for students’ participation in society.

As promising as it might look, however, there are still questions to be answered for those working in language education who will choose to engage themselves in uncovering and disseminating decolonial methodologies. One set of questions pertains to developing and legitimizing teachable translanguaging strategies and ways of assessing their effectiveness. Another question is if English remains the language of power and prestige, how beneficial is translanguaging competence for students’ educational and social prospects? And yet a larger concern is, as Canagarajah (2017) cautions, how these new modes of knowledge can be appropriated by neoliberalism for its own purpose.

In addressing these questions, we would need to find ourselves at odds with our espoused beliefs about what we do as language teachers. To do so, we should develop a curiosity to cross various ‘borders’ on our way to discover a new space where students’ and our own narratives and identities can be confronted, negotiated, and transformed. Perhaps this is when a more equitable future for the EPP and language education in general will be possible.

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