

A Narrative Review on Digital Colonialism in Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI): Language in Focus

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Abstract

The rapid proliferation of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has fundamentally restructured the global architectures of knowledge production, pedagogical practice, and cross-cultural communication. While these technologies promise unprecedented democratization of information, they simultaneously risk entrenching long-standing patterns of linguistic imperialism. This review critically synthesizes the intersection of sociolinguistics and computational power, examining how the data-centric nature of Large Language Models (LLMs)—trained predominantly on Anglocentric datasets—reifies the hegemony of English within the digital and educational commons. Drawing upon frameworks of digital colonialism, epistemic violence, and technological determinism, this study interrogates the systemic biases embedded in AI-driven language tools and algorithmic learning environments. The researcher analyzed how these platforms serve as conduits for "Silicon Valley values," potentially flattening linguistic diversity and marginalizing indigenous ontologies. Conversely, the review evaluates the dialectical tension between AI as a tool for linguistic homogenization and its potential as a catalyst for hyper-personalized language acquisition and automated translation. The findings suggest that while GenAI enhances functional accessibility, it risks institutionalizing a neo-colonial linguistic hierarchy that prioritizes "high-resource" languages at the expense of local vernaculars. We conclude by advocating for a paradigm shift toward decolonial AI ethics and culturally responsive pedagogies. The study calls for a collaborative mandate among policymakers, developers, and educators to architect multilingual AI frameworks that prioritize linguistic pluralism over algorithmic assimilation, ensuring that the digital age of education does not become a mono-linguistic echo chamber.

Keywords: *Linguistic Imperialism, Artificial Intelligence, Language Education, English Dominance, Digital Colonialism*

Rationale

The concept of linguistic imperialism has remained a critical area of discussion in sociolinguistics, education, and globalization studies due to the increasing dominance of powerful languages over minority and indigenous languages. In modern educational systems, the English language has emerged as the dominant medium of instruction, communication, and digital interaction. According to Phillipson (1992), linguistic imperialism refers to the transfer and maintenance of unequal power relations through language dominance, particularly the expansion of English across political, cultural, and educational institutions. In the context of globalization and technological advancement, linguistic imperialism continues to evolve through digital communication systems, online educational platforms, and Artificial Intelligence-driven technologies.

The rapid advancement of AI technologies has transformed the educational landscape by introducing machine learning systems, virtual tutors, generative AI tools, automated translation systems, and algorithm-based learning platforms. These innovations have improved access to information and learning opportunities; however, they have also reinforced the dominance of globally powerful languages, especially English. Bernal et al. (2025) emphasized that the integration of Artificial Intelligence into education has reshaped educational practices and learning environments, creating both opportunities and ethical concerns related to digital dependency, inequality, and accessibility.

In the contemporary AI-generational world, language education is no longer confined to traditional classroom settings. Educational applications, digital learning management systems, online media, and AI-assisted instructional tools are now central to language acquisition and communication. Genelza (2023) discussed how digital platforms such as Quipper significantly influenced students' academic performance and engagement in language-related learning. While these technologies enhance educational accessibility, they frequently prioritize English-language content, thereby contributing to the normalization of English as the global language of knowledge and technological interaction.

The increasing reliance on English-centered AI technologies raises concerns regarding cultural preservation and linguistic diversity. AI systems are predominantly trained using large English-language datasets, making English the default language for digital communication and academic discourse. Consequently, learners from multilingual communities may experience pressure to prioritize English proficiency over their native languages. This phenomenon aligns with Phillipson's (1992) assertion that linguistic imperialism operates subtly through educational systems and technological structures rather than through direct political control.

Moreover, the prevalence of English in digital media and online educational environments affects language attitudes among younger generations. Exposure to English-dominated media platforms, educational videos, and social networking systems influences students' linguistic preferences, communication patterns, and cultural identities. Celada et al. (2025) explained that media exposure significantly shapes children's social development and communication behaviors. Similarly, AI-driven educational content may unconsciously promote linguistic assimilation by privileging English-language interactions over local linguistic practices.

The relevance of linguistic imperialism becomes even more apparent in multilingual nations such as the Philippines, where English serves as an official language and a primary medium of instruction in higher education. The educational system often associates English proficiency with intelligence,

employability, and academic success. Genelza (2022) found that English proficiency positively correlated with students' academic achievement, reflecting the institutional importance of English in educational advancement. However, this emphasis may unintentionally marginalize indigenous languages and local dialects within educational contexts.

In addition, AI-powered educational systems increasingly shape reading comprehension, language acquisition, and literacy development. Federe et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of contextualized literary comprehension among students through Philippine fable short stories. Nevertheless, many AI-driven educational resources prioritize Western literary content and English-language narratives, potentially limiting students' exposure to local literary traditions and culturally grounded linguistic experiences.

The present digital era has also intensified concerns regarding technological dependency and cultural homogenization. The spread of global media platforms and AI-generated content encourages standardized communication practices often rooted in Western linguistic norms. Similar to the social implications explored by Andamon et al. (2025) and Baldo et al. (2025) regarding internet exposure and social awareness, digital technologies can influence societal behaviors, ideologies, and educational values. Language use in digital spaces, therefore, becomes intertwined with power, identity, and cultural representation.

Despite these concerns, AI technologies also offer opportunities for linguistic inclusivity and multilingual education. Translation systems, speech recognition tools, and AI-assisted language learning applications can support language preservation and cross-cultural communication when designed ethically and inclusively (Cosal et al., 2026). Genelza (2025) emphasized the role of digital platforms such as YouTube Kids in English language acquisition, demonstrating how technology can facilitate learning when appropriately integrated into educational practices.

Given these developments, there is a growing need to examine how linguistic imperialism operates within AI-driven educational environments critically. This narrative review explores the intersection of language dominance, Artificial Intelligence, and education by synthesizing existing scholarly literature on linguistic imperialism in the digital age. Specifically, it aims to understand how AI technologies shape language education, reinforce or challenge linguistic inequalities, and influence cultural identities in contemporary global society.

Review of Related Literature

Linguistic imperialism was first extensively theorized by Phillipson (1992), who argued that the global spread of English reflects unequal power relations rooted in colonial history, political influence, and economic globalization. According to Phillipson, English language teaching functions not merely as an educational practice but as a mechanism for maintaining cultural and ideological dominance. The widespread use of English in academic institutions, international business, and technological systems perpetuates the superiority of English-speaking nations while marginalizing local languages and cultural identities.

Crystal (2003) explained that English achieved global status because of historical colonization, economic expansion, and technological advancement. The language became deeply integrated into

global communication networks, scientific publications, and digital infrastructures. In the age of AI and globalization, English continues to dominate technological platforms, online educational systems, and machine-learning databases. As AI technologies increasingly shape educational experiences, English becomes further institutionalized as the default language of digital interaction.

Canagarajah (1999) argued that linguistic imperialism affects not only communication but also cultural identity and educational equity. In many postcolonial societies, English proficiency is associated with intelligence, modernization, and social mobility. This perception often leads educational institutions to prioritize English instruction at the expense of indigenous and local languages. Consequently, students may experience linguistic insecurity and cultural alienation within educational systems that privilege Western linguistic norms.

The relationship between globalization and language dominance has been extensively discussed in sociolinguistic literature. Pennycook (2007) emphasized that globalization intensifies the spread of English through media, technology, tourism, and international education. English-language media platforms, online entertainment, and educational technologies normalize English as a universal standard of communication. This process contributes to what scholars describe as “digital colonialism,” wherein technological systems reinforce existing power structures through language and information control.

Digital colonialism refers to the dominance of technologically advanced nations over digital infrastructures, data systems, and online communication platforms. Kwet (2019) argued that global technology corporations shape digital experiences by controlling information systems, algorithmic structures, and language accessibility. Since most AI systems are developed in English-speaking countries and trained primarily using English-language data, AI technologies inherently privilege English communication patterns and Western cultural frameworks.

In educational contexts, AI technologies significantly influence teaching methodologies, student engagement, and language acquisition. Bernal et al. (2025) noted that Artificial Intelligence has transformed educational systems by introducing adaptive learning technologies, automated assessments, and personalized instructional strategies. However, the authors also highlighted concerns about digital inequality, ethical responsibility, and the overreliance on AI systems in academic settings. These issues become more complex when AI-driven education disproportionately favors dominant languages.

Research on educational technologies further demonstrates the growing dependence on digital learning platforms in language education. Genelza (2023) found that the use of Quipper as a learning management system positively influenced the academic performance of BSED English students during the new normal educational setting. The study illustrated how digital technologies support flexible learning and instructional efficiency. Nonetheless, reliance on English-language educational platforms may unintentionally reinforce English's dominance within academic institutions.

The role of media and online exposure in shaping linguistic behaviors has also been widely discussed. Celada et al. (2025) examined the drawbacks of media exposure on children's social development and emphasized the powerful influence of digital content on communication behaviors and social interactions. Since much online educational and entertainment content is produced in English, children and students are continually exposed to English linguistic structures and cultural narratives, which may influence their language preferences and identities.

The importance of English proficiency in academic achievement remains a dominant theme in language education research. Genelza (2022) identified a positive relationship between English proficiency and the academic performance of junior high school students. This finding reflects broader educational policies that associate English mastery with academic success and professional competitiveness. However, critics argue that this emphasis may perpetuate educational inequalities for learners whose first language is not English.

AI-assisted media platforms also contribute to language acquisition and linguistic exposure. Genelza (2025) explored how YouTube Kids functions as a network for English language acquisition among learners. The study highlighted the educational potential of digital media in enhancing vocabulary development, listening comprehension, and communicative competence. Nevertheless, the predominance of English-language media content raises concerns regarding linguistic homogenization and the gradual erosion of local languages.

Literary education likewise plays a critical role in language preservation and cultural representation. Federe et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of contextually relevant literary materials for improving students' comprehension and engagement. The use of Philippine fable short stories supports cultural relevance and appreciation of the local language in educational settings. However, AI-generated educational resources often prioritize Western literary materials, limiting opportunities for culturally responsive and multilingual instruction.

Scholars have also connected technological advancement with broader social and behavioral implications. Andamon et al. (2025) discussed how digital exposure influences children's and adolescents' consciousness and behaviors, while Baldo et al. (2025) emphasized the importance of awareness in addressing social issues through educational interventions. These studies suggest that technological systems significantly shape social attitudes, including linguistic preferences and cultural values.

Theories of critical pedagogy further contribute to discussions of linguistic imperialism in education. Freire (1970) argued that education should empower learners to critically examine oppressive social structures rather than merely reproduce dominant ideologies. Applying this perspective to language education suggests that educators should encourage critical awareness regarding the political and cultural implications of language dominance in AI-driven educational systems.

Similarly, Bourdieu (1991) introduced the concept of linguistic capital, explaining how certain languages acquire greater social and economic value within society. English functions as linguistic capital in global education and employment markets, enabling individuals with English proficiency to access greater opportunities. However, this dynamic also marginalizes speakers of less dominant languages, reinforcing social inequalities and educational disparities.

Contemporary scholars argue that multilingualism and culturally responsive education are essential in resisting linguistic imperialism. García and Wei (2014) promoted translanguaging practices that allow learners to utilize multiple linguistic resources within educational settings. Such approaches challenge monolingual ideologies and recognize the value of linguistic diversity in fostering inclusive and equitable learning environments.

The framework is anchored in Robert Phillipson's theory of Linguistic Imperialism, which explains how unequal power relations are maintained through language dominance. In the AI-generational world, English becomes institutionalized through educational technologies and algorithmic systems. This dominance is further reinforced by Digital Colonialism, as discussed by Michael Kwet, in which technologically advanced nations control digital infrastructures and information systems.

Consequently, educational inequalities emerge through linguistic homogenization, reduced visibility of minority languages, and unequal access to AI-powered educational technologies.

Methodology

This study employed a narrative review design to synthesize and analyze scholarly literature related to linguistic imperialism, Artificial Intelligence, and language education in the contemporary digital age. A narrative review approach was selected because it enables the integration of theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and interdisciplinary discussions concerning language dominance and educational technology. The review focused on literature on linguistic imperialism, globalization, English-language dominance, AI-driven educational systems, multilingualism, digital colonialism, and language acquisition.

Relevant peer-reviewed journal articles, books, educational studies, and contemporary research publications were gathered from academic databases and scholarly sources. Foundational theories from sociolinguistics, critical pedagogy, and globalization studies were incorporated alongside recent studies concerning AI integration in education and digital learning environments. The researcher's supporting studies were also integrated into the discussion to contextualize the review within current educational realities, particularly in relation to technology-assisted language learning and digital educational practices.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this narrative review indicate that linguistic imperialism remains highly relevant in the contemporary AI-generational world, particularly within language education and digital communication systems. The dominance of English continues to shape educational structures, technological platforms, and global communication practices. AI technologies, while offering educational accessibility and innovation, simultaneously reinforce linguistic hierarchies rooted in historical and socio-political inequalities.

Table 1
Summary of Major Themes and Findings on Linguistic Imperialism in the AI-Generational World

Themes	Key Findings	Supporting Authors/Studies	Educational Implications
English Dominance in AI Systems	AI technologies are primarily trained using English-language datasets, making English the	Robert Phillipson; David Crystal	Reinforces English as the dominant medium of instruction and

Themes	Key Findings	Supporting Authors/Studies	Educational Implications
	default language of digital interaction.		communication in digital education.
Linguistic Imperialism	English maintains unequal power relations through educational and technological systems.	Robert Phillipson	Marginalizes indigenous and minority languages within academic institutions.
Digital Colonialism	Technology corporations and AI infrastructures privilege Western linguistic and cultural frameworks.	Michael Kwet	Promotes dependency on Western-centered educational technologies and knowledge systems.
English Academic Achievement	English proficiency is associated with academic success and professional competitiveness.	Genesis G. Genelza	Encourages students to prioritize English over native languages for educational advancement.
Media Exposure and Language Preference	Social media and online educational content influence students' linguistic behaviors and communication styles.	Mark Warschauer; Celada et al. (2025)	Increases students' preference for English linguistic patterns and expressions.
AI and Cultural Bias	AI-generated educational materials often reflect Western cultural assumptions and standardized English norms.	Safiya Umoja Noble	Limits the representation of local cultures and indigenous linguistic identities in education.
Linguistic Homogenization	Excessive exposure to English-centric digital systems contributes to the decline in the use of local languages.	UNESCO	Threatens the preservation of indigenous languages and their intergenerational transmission.
Linguistic Capital	English proficiency functions as social and economic capital in global society.	Pierre Bourdieu	Creates educational and employment advantages for English-speaking individuals.
Identity and Language Learning	Language learning influences identity formation and cultural belonging.	Bonny Norton	Students may develop linguistic insecurity toward their native languages.
Multilingual and Ethical Responses	Translanguaging and culturally responsive pedagogies promote linguistic inclusivity.	Ofelia García; Li Wei; Paulo Freire	Supports equitable language education and preservation of linguistic diversity in AI-driven learning environments.

One major finding reveals that English functions as the primary language of AI development and digital communication. Most AI systems, machine-learning models, and online educational resources are developed using English-language datasets. Consequently, learners interacting with AI technologies are frequently required to engage with English linguistic structures and communication patterns. This

phenomenon supports Phillipson's (1992) argument that linguistic dominance is maintained through institutional and technological systems.

The review also demonstrates that AI-driven educational platforms contribute to the normalization of English as the global language of academic success. Digital learning management systems, online educational applications, and AI-assisted tutoring services often prioritize English-language instruction and content delivery. Genelza (2023) observed that technology-based learning platforms significantly enhanced educational engagement among English students. However, these systems may inadvertently strengthen English-language hegemony by limiting multilingual representation.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between English proficiency and academic achievement. Educational systems frequently associate English fluency with intelligence, competence, and professional success. Genelza (2022) confirmed that English proficiency positively influences students' academic performance. While English proficiency provides access to global opportunities, the educational emphasis on English may create disadvantages for learners from linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The review further indicates that AI-generated educational content often reflects Western cultural assumptions and linguistic norms. Since AI systems are trained using dominant online datasets, they may reproduce cultural biases embedded within digital information systems. This process contributes to digital colonialism, wherein technological infrastructures reinforce Western ideologies and marginalize local cultural perspectives.

Media exposure and online communication platforms also significantly influence language attitudes and linguistic behaviors among younger generations. Celada et al. (2025) explained that digital media affects children's social development and communication patterns. The widespread presence of English-language content across social media, streaming services, and educational platforms encourages students to adopt English expressions, accents, and communication styles as markers of social relevance and modernity.

Furthermore, the review reveals that AI technologies can contribute to linguistic homogenization. As learners increasingly interact with English-centered digital systems, local languages and indigenous dialects may experience declining educational visibility and social prestige. This phenomenon is particularly concerning in multilingual societies where local languages embody cultural identity, historical knowledge, and community traditions.

The educational implications of linguistic imperialism are especially evident in curriculum development and instructional design. Many educational institutions prioritize English-language materials, international textbooks, and Western literary content. Although such resources offer global perspectives, they may limit learners' opportunities to engage with local literature, indigenous knowledge systems, and culturally relevant educational materials.

Federe et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of contextually relevant literary materials for improving students' comprehension and engagement. The incorporation of Philippine fable short stories enhanced students' understanding and cultural connection. This finding suggests that localized, culturally

grounded educational content remains essential for resisting linguistic and cultural marginalization in AI-driven educational environments.

The review also identifies ethical concerns associated with AI integration in education. Bernal et al. (2025) argued that AI technologies create opportunities for personalized learning and educational efficiency while simultaneously raising issues concerning inequality, dependency, and academic integrity. Linguistic inequality becomes more pronounced when AI tools primarily support dominant languages while offering limited accessibility for minority language speakers.

Moreover, the review demonstrates that linguistic imperialism affects not only communication but also identity formation and cultural perception. Students who internalize the superiority of English may gradually perceive their native languages as less valuable or less academically significant. This perception can contribute to linguistic insecurity, cultural alienation, and reduced intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages.

The growing influence of digital platforms such as YouTube, educational applications, and AI-assisted language tools further intensifies English exposure among children and adolescents. Genelza (2025) noted that YouTube Kids supports English language acquisition by improving listening and vocabulary skills. While this supports educational development, excessive reliance on English-language digital media may erode local linguistic identities.

Additionally, technological accessibility remains uneven across educational communities. Learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may encounter difficulties accessing AI-assisted educational systems and digital learning resources. This digital divide reinforces educational inequalities, particularly in regions where internet connectivity and technological infrastructure remain limited.

The review likewise highlights the importance of multilingual and culturally responsive pedagogies in addressing linguistic imperialism. Translanguaging practices and multilingual instructional approaches allow students to utilize their native languages alongside English in educational settings. García and Wei (2014) argued that multilingual practices promote inclusive learning environments by validating students' linguistic identities and cultural experiences.

Critical pedagogy also emerges as a significant framework in resisting linguistic imperialism within AI-driven education. Freire (1970) emphasized that education should encourage critical consciousness and social awareness. Language educators, therefore, play an important role in helping students critically examine the relationship between language, power, technology, and globalization.

Finally, the review suggests that AI technologies possess both oppressive and transformative potential. Although AI systems may reinforce English dominance and digital colonialism, they can also support language preservation, multilingual translation, and culturally inclusive education when intentionally designed to value linguistic diversity. Ethical AI development, inclusive language datasets, and culturally responsive educational policies are therefore essential in promoting equitable language education in the digital age.

Another significant finding of this review is the emergence of algorithmic bias within AI-powered language systems. According to Noble (2018), digital algorithms often reproduce existing societal

inequalities because they are trained using historically dominant cultural and linguistic datasets. In language education, this means that AI tools may unintentionally privilege standardized English varieties while misrepresenting or excluding non-dominant dialects and indigenous linguistic structures. Such bias contributes to the perpetuation of linguistic inequality in digital educational environments.

The review additionally reveals that globalization and neoliberal educational policies have intensified the commodification of English in the digital era. Block, Gray, and Holborow (2012) argued that English has become closely tied to economic mobility, employability, and global competitiveness. Educational institutions increasingly market English proficiency as a requirement for success in international industries and technological fields. Consequently, learners may perceive local languages as less practical or economically valuable, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies within society.

Research further demonstrates that social media platforms significantly expand English linguistic influence among younger generations. Warschauer (2000) explained that online communication technologies shape literacy practices and language development by exposing users to globalized linguistic norms. Social networking sites, AI chatbots, and digital entertainment platforms largely operate in English, encouraging students to imitate English communication styles in both academic and informal interactions.

The review also indicates that indigenous and minority languages remain underrepresented in AI research and technological innovation. According to UNESCO (2021), thousands of languages worldwide face risks of extinction due to limited institutional support and inadequate digital representation. AI systems rarely prioritize endangered languages in speech recognition, translation tools, and educational applications. This lack of representation reduces opportunities for indigenous communities to preserve and transmit their linguistic heritage through technological means.

Another important discussion emerging from the literature concerns the psychological effects of linguistic imperialism on learners' self-perception and identity. Norton (2013) argued that language learning is deeply connected to identity negotiation, social belonging, and power relations. Students educated in English-dominant environments may feel pressure to conform to Western linguistic standards to gain academic validation and social acceptance. This may weaken confidence in their native languages and contribute to the gradual erosion of cultural identity among multilingual learners.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This narrative review concludes that linguistic imperialism continues to operate within contemporary educational and technological systems, particularly in the AI-generational world where English dominates digital communication, online learning platforms, and Artificial Intelligence technologies. The increasing integration of AI in education has intensified the global influence of English, reinforcing linguistic hierarchies and shaping language practices, educational opportunities, and cultural identities.

The review further concludes that while AI technologies offer valuable opportunities for language acquisition, educational accessibility, and global communication, they may also marginalize indigenous languages and perpetuate digital inequalities. English-centered AI systems and educational platforms

contribute to linguistic homogenization by prioritizing dominant linguistic norms and reducing the visibility of local languages and cultural narratives.

Moreover, educational institutions must recognize the importance of multilingualism and culturally responsive pedagogy in resisting linguistic imperialism. The inclusion of local literature, indigenous knowledge systems, and multilingual instructional approaches can help preserve cultural identities while promoting equitable educational experiences for linguistically diverse learners.

Based on the findings, this study recommends that policymakers and educational institutions develop language policies that balance global communication needs with local language preservation. AI developers and technology companies should also design multilingual AI systems that support diverse linguistic communities and reduce language-based inequalities in digital learning environments.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct empirical investigations concerning the impact of AI technologies on indigenous language preservation, students' linguistic identities, and multilingual educational practices. Further studies may also explore how culturally inclusive AI systems can promote ethical and equitable language education within increasingly digitalized societies.

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