

# DIGITAL COLONIALISM IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: FROM THE GLOBAL NORTH'S CELEBRATORY DISCOURSE TO CAPITALIST COLONIZATION OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

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**Abstract:** Western epistemological approaches in language education have traditionally constructed a celebratory discourse on technological development by promoting “hyperbolic narratives of the big data revolution” (Milan; Treré, 2019, p. 320). This dominant epistemological approach is contextual and it is designed to serve the interests of the industry, governments, and science of the geographical place in which it is framed - the Global North. In this paper, we call for an epistemological change in the positivist take on Big Data, and we challenge its seemingly universal and beneficial mindset. We seek to show that the theories on digital literacies - although considered to be critical of traditional literacies - have not touched upon the realities of digital capitalist colonization of the Global South. The article tackles digital colonization by presenting and analyzing the coloniality of knowledge, power and being in the Global South.

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The coloniality of knowledge manifests itself through the colonization of education and common sense in the Global South. The coloniality of power emerges in the form of digital capitalism, platform capitalism and surveillance capitalism. And finally, the coloniality of being takes the shape of digital influencers who market themselves. We seek to contest and de-Westernize the discourses on digital literacies in language education classrooms by revealing the power's opacity they create.

**Keywords:** Digital epistemologies. Critical data studies. Hegemonic perspectives on innovation. Language education.

## Introduction

Over the past 40 years, Internet use has become increasingly widespread. During the pandemic, whose worst period lasted from the beginning of 2020 to the end of 2022 and “stopped the world”, digital infrastructure and Internet connections were given to students of basic and higher education so that they could study at home, and to employees of companies making it possible for them to turn their private space into a home office. However, as Avila (2020, p. 47) warns us, “over the past nearly fifty years, the architecture of the Internet has changed from a largely democratic network of autonomous nodes to a distributed feudal structure, which centralises flows of data into a few hands” (p. 47). If one believes that the digital connection provided through the world of the Internet has been a revolution in social interaction, one needs to acknowledge that not everyone can access this revolution.

In the 90s, during the primordial forms of the Internet, the ideals of liberty and equality seemed to be fulfilled during the evolution of the digital space. However, “what used to be open, anti-authoritarian and flexible, such as the Internet during the 1990s and early 2000s, has become more controlled, hierarchic and regulated” (Bäcke, 2022, p. 74). The Big Techs in the Silicon Valley, large companies named by the acronym GAFAM (Google/Alphabet, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft), and the four biggest tech firms in China, usually referred to as BATX (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent and Xiaomi),

have gained “ownership and control of the three core pillars of the digital ecosystem: software, hardware, and network connectivity” (Kwet, 2019, p. 2). In this sense,

Software is the set of instructions that define and determine what your computer can do. Hardware is the physical equipment used for computer experiences. The network is the set of protocols and standards computers use to talk to each other, and the connections they make. Domination over these three elements – software, hardware, and networks – provides a great source of power over people (Kwet, 2019, p. 6).

Coleman (2019, p. 436-437) explains that “the cost for running centralized social networks is extremely expensive. A company must pay for costly cloud infrastructure, find and pay skilled programmers, and be able to pay for quality data collection and storage in a way that adheres to data privacy law standards”. Although institutions of higher education provided professors and students with the cloud storage and drives they needed to go through the pandemic, recent decisions made by these same institutions to not renovate contracts with Google and Microsoft have left them in a catch-22. They cannot individually buy extra cloud space because of the company contract while, at the same time, they are being told that those whose accounts exceed data would lose their emails and files in the drive. Curiously, neither these educational institutions nor the Big Data companies were able to reveal the criteria for erasing somebody’s personal files and emails.

Moreover, although there are projects, as are the ones in South Africa (Kwet, 2019, p. 2) and in Brazil<sup>3</sup>, that seek to furnish poorer populations with laptops, desktops and Internet access, the fact is that, still, most users in Brazil and in other countries in the Global South access social media and the Internet mainly

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3 Projeto um computador por aluno (UCA), for more information see <https://www.fnde.gov.br/index.php/programas/proinfo/eixos-de-atuacao/projeto-um-computador-por-aluno-uca>

on their cell phones and, many times, they lose this access at the end of the month because they have spent all their data plan. Research conducted in 2022 by the Consumer Protection Institute and the *Locomotiva* Institute found that a quarter of the Brazilian population spends the equivalent of one week without access to the Internet every month. This happens because 45% of the poorest users (classes C, D and E) have mobile phone plans that run out before the month ends. The average duration of a plan is 23 days, but it reaches 19 days among the most vulnerable<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, the Big Techs are selling their products without giving access to the centralized control of digital ecosystem. Thus, the “Northern digital ecosystem”, by training users in the Global South “in ‘digital literacy’ for assimilation into US products” (Kwet, 2019, p. 3), establishes a digital colonialism that the Free Software Movement has been warning about for a long time.

If, on the one hand, the Internet promotes the unprecedented dynamization of remote interactions and the exponential increase in access and production of content, on the other hand, there is a fierce dispute in its environments for attention (and adherence), which is revealed as concentrated on a limited range of platforms, websites and applications<sup>5</sup> (Evangelista, 2018, n.p).

Digital culture is constituted, in most cases, by celebratory discourses of equality, diversity, freedom of speech and democracy. We observe, though, that the digital age is characterized, many times, by opposing tendencies. On the surface level, there are the common-sense, celebratory discourses of innovation,

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4 See <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2021/12/55-milhoes-de-brasileiros-ficam-uma-semana-sem-internet-todo-mes.shtml>

5 Our translation. Original text: “Se, por um lado, a internet promove a dinamização sem precedentes das interações remotas e o exponencial incremento do acesso e da produção de conteúdo, por outro, nota-se em seus ambientes uma acirrada disputa pelas atenções (e adesões), que se vão revelando concentradas em um leque limitado de plataformas, sites e aplicativos.”

sharing, convergence and a sense of networked community. On the deep level, the epistemologies of Digital Literacies seek to go beyond these idealist discourses by promoting research on the colonality in the digital space. They do this mainly by investigating the transformation of an environment that was previously considered as a space that stimulates autonomy, the epistemology of performance, ubiquitous learning and social inclusion in a colonized environment structured in a way that centralizes the flow of data in a few hands. In an identifiably distinctive manner, there has been a constant colonization of human experience that is claimed as raw material and is turned into behavioral data (Zuboff, 2019) by the surveillance that algorithms create.

Those corporate actors, such as Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, Tim Cook, executive president of Apple, Sundar Pichair, executive president of Alphabet, Elon Musk, chief executive of Twitter, and Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, have amassed an absurd amount of power not only on the international market, but also on nations and people since digital information is different from any other resource. It is extracted, refined, valorized, bought and sold in an unprecedented manner (Evangelista, 2018). Moreover, Google, Facebook and all the Big Data companies have centralized control of services by controlling the source code. Kwet (2019, p. 8) warns us on the ways Google and Facebook platforms promote right-wing neoliberal politics:

These two firms filter search results and news feeds with proprietary black box algorithms, granting them enormous power to shape who sees which news. Leftist outlets have published data suggesting that Google censors socialist views, while Facebook has been found to favor mainstream liberal media.

Borges (2021) explains that colonality is the continuation of colonialism and the permanence of its logic in structures, institutions and subjectivities. Thus, digital colonialism perpetuates

the coloniality of knowledge, power and being by using epistemologies that seek the concentration of digital expertise in very few places, such as the Silicon Valley, while countries in the Global South pay to simply be users of the platforms and softwares whose source code and algorithms they are forbidden to know.

This paper, inspired in the pedagogies of multiliteracies, “reiterates Freirian thought (Monte Mor, 2021), through premises such as awareness, emancipation, the relationship between the concepts of oppressor/oppressed and colonial dynamics, in addition to the call for educational reform”<sup>6</sup> (Mendonça, 2024, p. 38). Thus, it first investigates the coloniality of power that refers to “the interrelationship among modern forms of exploitation and domination”<sup>7</sup> (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 130-131). In other words, the colonial matrix of power is supported by a “complex structure of intertwined levels”<sup>8</sup> (Mignolo, 2010, p. 12), which encompasses the control of economy, authority, nature, natural resources, subjectivity, knowledge, gender and sexuality. The digital, in spite of its global widespread reach, has changed nothing in relation to the hierarchies and power relations among different racial groups, the distinct gender and sexual identities and the dominant rule of ableism; platformization is just an extension of the colonialities lived in the non-digital world. Then, we tackle the coloniality of being that is manifested through our cognitive colonization, which accepts the epistemological inferiority attributed to the Global South since our episteme is marked as inferior because it frequently emerges from our lived

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6 Our translation. Original text: “retoma o pensamento freiriano (Monte Mor, 2021), por meio de premissas como a conscientização, a emancipação, a relação entre os conceitos de opressor/oprimido e a dinâmica colonial, além do chamado para a reforma educacional”.

7 Our translation. Original text: “...la interrelación entre formas modernas de explotación y dominación”.

8 Our translation. Original text: “...una estructura compleja de niveles entrelazados”.

experiences in a locus of oppression, marginalization and subjugation. Last but not least, we discuss the coloniality of knowledge that perpetuates a *modus operandi* that turns subjectivities in the Global South into mere users of theories produced in the Global North who apply practices and ideologies developed elsewhere. This article – based upon theoretical and philosophical perspectives – discusses these colonialities and pushes for education on digital literacies that emerges from the Global South and its epistemologies.

### **The colonization of education and common sense in the Global South: coloniality of knowledge**

US tech products have been planted in schools in the Global South for the last decade (Kwet, 2019). In Brazil, for example, since 2013, SEDUC-SP, the Digital School Bureau of São Paulo State, has established partnerships with Google and Microsoft, showing the neoliberal tendencies on a state level as well. This trend was intensified, during the COVID pandemic and the ensued isolation, in the public school system in São Paulo State. Therefore, the privatization of education, which promotes the selling and buying of educational services developed and produced in the Global North, was given a boost during the pandemic.

The Edu-Business giants have been working towards the construction of huge conglomerates and the offer of edu-business to other businesses. In Brazil, and probably elsewhere as well, the pandemic was taken up as a pretense for the lobbying of educational companies that advocate for the massification of Distance Education in the public school system, to advance their interests. For these companies, the pandemic was perceived as a chance to earn money without having to defend themselves against the political and ethical resistances that would arise in non-pandemic times. In this sense, the pandemic has intensified the monetization and neoliberal (precarious) practices in the

area of education. These practices have already gradually been implemented in recent decades, as revealed by Seki's (2019) studies. Thus, in this spirit, SEDUC-SP, during the pandemic, signed partnerships with big Technology Businesses - Google and Microsoft - that sell educational services in order to implement the Educational Media Center of São Paulo (CMSP).

This is also the case of UNIVESP (State Virtual of São Paulo) and USP, which are institutions that also have partnerships with one of the GAFAM. This seems to be the case of many other public higher education institutions in Brazil. However, the tools offered by these companies promote exchanges based on business and not educational environments. For instance, the CMSP was implemented in April 2020 and made available digital contents for teachers and students of state schools and has various partnerships and an investment of 45 million reais annually.

Evidently, US tech products that intend to incorporate Big Data surveillance across the entire education system are being planted inside the classrooms in the Global South, while there is no public debate on Global Surveillance Capitalism (Kwet, 2019). A huge quantity of data on educators and students from the Global South is being collected by surveillance while those companies monetize their users' data as their main profit source. Thus, they can predict and, at the same time, influence their users' behavior. What was offered as free in the beginning of the pandemic is, in fact, a huge source of profit.

Research shows that more than 65% of public education institutions in Brazil — universities, federal institutes, state education departments and municipal education departments in cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants — are exposed to the so-called “surveillance capitalism”, a term used to design business models based on extensive extraction of personal data via artificial intelligence to obtain predictions about user behavior and, therefore, offer products and services.



This colonization of education has been finding resistance in mobilizations, such as *Educação Vigiada*, an initiative by academics and members of social organizations that aims to alert about the advance of the monetization logic of large companies named by the acronym GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft) on Brazilian public education. It provides data from the research entitled *Surveillance Capitalism and Public Education in Brazil* with the intention of encouraging a debate in society regarding the social impacts of surveillance. The objective is to draw the attention of people involved in educational processes - teachers, administrators, parents and students - as well as researchers and the community in general to the problem of privacy, surveillance and data security of students, teachers and researchers in public educational institutions in Brazil<sup>9</sup>.

Moreover, since the beginning of 2023, Artificial Intelligence and its ability to facilitate human-like interactions between humans and machines have become central topics in educational research discussions. According to Mendonça (2024, p. 75):

The complexity of Generative IA is established in its development, which comes from the data feed and the probability that is being built, often without transparency. The opacity of probabilistic models is a reality. Another important consideration ... is that the field of AI is not structured from a theory. It is a field that advances from empirical models<sup>10</sup>.

As Kwet (2019, p. 14) warns us, “education offers the ultimate breeding ground for Big Tech imperialism – product placement

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9 See <https://educacaoovigiada.org.br/>

10 Our translation. Original text: “A complexidade da IA Generativa se estabelece no seu desenvolvimento, que se dá a partir da alimentação de dados e das probabilidades que vão sendo construídas, muitas vezes sem transparência. A opacidade dos modelos probabilísticos é uma realidade. Outra consideração importante...é que o campo da IA não se estrutura a partir de uma teoria. É um campo que avança a partir de modelos empíricos.”

in schools can be used to capture emerging markets and tighten the stranglehold of Big Tech products, brands, models, and ideology in the Global South”. Students develop skills by using the products and services imported from the Global North, and entire populations passively adapt to the technology offered to them “for free” by Big Data companies. All of this happens without any competition from smaller digital companies. These are new forms of colonization of educational systems in the Global South.

Google Classroom now has 170 million users in different countries. As product manager for the company’s education sector, Zach Yeskel, Google Classroom creator, is on a mission to continue expanding the platform. The current challenge, according to him, is to adapt several tools that were not originally designed for teaching over the Internet to meet the growing demand of students and teachers<sup>11</sup>.

Besides the colonization of education in the Global South, there is the colonization of our common sense that is performed through the filter bubbles, echo chambers, confirmation bias, algorithms, fake news, conspiracy theories and post-truth. The learning resources of Miami Dade College reveal that

Online services like Google and Facebook use computer programming algorithms to determine what information to deliver to you. Your “filter bubble” (a term coined by internet activist Eli Pariser) refers to the idea that this automated personalization, though helpful in some ways, can isolate you from other information. Sometimes referred to as an “echo chamber,” the filter bubble created by your online activity can limit your exposure to different points of view and weaken your ability to avoid fake news and bias<sup>12</sup>.

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11 See <https://www.uol.com.br/tilt/noticias/redacao/2021/12/13/entrevista-zach-yeskel-google-classroom.htm>

12 <https://libraryguides.mdc.edu/FakeNews/FilterBubbles>

Furthermore, people have the propensity to believe in Fake News because of the principle of confirmation bias or, in other words, the tendency that people have “to accept information unquestioningly when it reinforces some existing belief or attitude”<sup>13</sup>. Confirmation bias suggests that we are picky on the information we accept as true and that we make choices based on predispositions or beliefs that we like to hold as legitimate and truthful. The digital infrastructure, with its algorithms, creates the affordances for digital populism, fake news, conspiracy theories and pseudoscience by promoting “an environment of growing informational entropy, stemming from the double process of extensive (global) and intensive (personalization) digitalization and neoliberalization<sup>14</sup>” (Cesarino, 2021, p. 73), and this has unfortunately contributed to elections processes in Brazil and many other countries in the world (also, Brexit in the UK).

### **Digital capitalism, platform capitalism and surveillance capitalism: coloniality of power**

Digital capitalism, platform capitalism and surveillance capitalism are neologisms that complement each other and give us a picture of the ways digital ownership, digital structure and its purposes are entangled. The digital clearly adopted the capitalist ideology, by authorizing only few actors to take ownership of the digital infrastructure and by creating the belief that reminds us of Thatcher’s declaration that “there is no alternative<sup>15</sup>” to the centralized control of the GAFAMs of software, hardware and the Internet.

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13 <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/defining-confirmation-bias>

14 Our translation. Original text: “um ambiente de entropia informacional crescente derivado da intensificação extensiva (global) e intensiva (personalização) do duplo processo de digitalização e de neoliberalização.”

15 Thatcher declared in the 1980s that there is no alternative to capitalism which became a dominant and common sense discourse of capitalism (CHUN, 2017).

Platforms, such as Google and Facebook, proved that through the “culture of intimacy and sharing, it would be possible to use behavioral surplus not only to satisfy demand but also to *create* demand” (Zuboff, 2019, p. 92). Google’s parent company Alphabet, for example, earns its bulk of revenues from targeted advertising programs, such as AdWords, by processing the search queries of users.

Platform capitalism started being shaped as surveillance capitalism from the moment it functions as the “Like” button on Facebook, which was perceived “as a powerful source of behavioral surplus that helped to ratchet up the magnetism of the Facebook News Feed, as measured by the volume of comments” (Zuboff, 2019, p. 428). Moreover, “actions are signals like ‘following,’ ‘liking,’ and ‘sharing,’ now and in the past. The circle widens from there. With whom did you share? Who do they follow, like, and share with?” (Zuboff, 2019, p. 429). Surveillance capitalism turns us into monitored beings whose personal information is constantly followed by apps that disclose our data to companies, businesses, governments and institutions:

Tech giants have also been providing digital infrastructure to dozens of governments, ranging from cloud services to entire mail and office suites. Amazon and Microsoft have led this process, followed closely by Facebook and Google. The fact that an entire nation delegates its digital services to a company based in Silicon Valley is alarming. The company is then in a position to handle not only highly sensitive government documents, but also is in possession of critical information relating to the entire country (Avila, 2020, p. 49).

Big data violates individual and state privacy because platforms are designed to do so. By extracting the users’ data, their friendships, their consuming preferences, their reading and game playing habits and any other information that is tracked, classified and stored, digital colonization works for the profit of big corporations by predicting the consumer needs of platform

and software users. “Surveillance capitalism thus presents society with an unethical privacy downgrade that leaves the Global South disadvantaged” (Kwet, 2019, p. 10).

Social media platforms perpetuate colonialism through the digital infrastructure by design since they are built “for the express purpose of harvesting data, churning a profit, and/or storing the data as raw material for predictive analytics” (Coleman, 2019, p. 422), most of the times conducting the extraction of data without the explicit consent of the users since the terms and conditions of use of any platform are usually lengthy and not always intelligible to the common user eager to access the desired platform or internet site.

Furthermore, Free Basics, or the offering of access to basic online services without data charges, claims to work towards bridging the digital divide between the Global North and the Global South, while the reason behind the offer is the extraction of data of future consumers and the predictive analytics the Big Data companies can offer to advertisers. Coleman (2019) points out that nation-states are working towards data protection regulation. The European Union, for example, has published the GDPR, General Data Protection Regulation, which “is applicable as of May 25th, 2018 in all member states to harmonize data privacy laws across Europe”<sup>16</sup>. Countries in the Global South are also moving towards this direction: Kenya’s Data Protection Act, which came into effect on November 25, 2019, and is now the primary law on data protection in the country,

will give Kenyan citizens a series of rights including: 1) the right to ask companies to clearly explain, using accessible language, how their personal data is being collected, used, and stored; 2) the right to request that their personal data be deleted; and 3) the right to object

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16 See <https://gdpr-info.eu/>

to their personal data being used for specific purposes like targeted advertising (Coleman, 2019, p. 433).

Those legislations pursue the protection of user data in an increasingly digitally-dependent society that contributes to the maintenance of social inequalities and leaves little space for social transformation. Technology should not be judged as a neutral instrument when it reproduces relations of dominance and oppression and considers users as consumers of ready-made products.

### Digital influencers and the marketing of the self: coloniality of being

Schünke, Andretta, Schreiber, Schmidt, and Montardo (2021) agree with Karhawi (2017) and Ishida (2018) that the term “digital influencer”

emerged strongly in Brazil in 2015, designating the practice of content production, simultaneously and in a coordinated manner, across multiple platforms (YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, among others, and, more recently, TikTok). One of the characteristic aspects of this activity is sharing content about oneself, in terms of reports about one’s life in the form of routine publications in these platforms (Schünke *et al.*, 2021, p. 234).

The capitalist design and structure of the digital empire through its platformization creates the demand for its users to become content creators. The discourses of capitalism (Chun, 2017, p. 104) gain new force and impetus through the design of the platforms that turns users into capitalist beings that believe that their subjectivity and their projection on the different platforms is their individual business. As such, social media hobbyists look for ways to turn their clips viral in order to gain thousands or millions of views and followers<sup>17</sup>. Chun (2017, p. 104) argues that

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17 For more information, see <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycou->

this model perpetuates “a common-sense definition of a capitalist being” as a self-made person who runs her or his own individual business by selling her/his acting talents in the mold of “the entrepreneur of the self” (Foucault, 1988). Bäcke (2022, p. 71) points out that apps like TikTok seem to empower users since “users gain freedom and joy from being creative, becoming seen and heard, and interacting with people online”.

Users usually do not question how they need to adapt their behavior and models of interaction with their public to the structure of each platform and the wishes of their followers. The dominant capitalist take on influencers is that they are acting out their freedom to project identity as a business and, thus, provide a better standard of living for themselves and their families. The self becomes a product whose engineering is the constant business of digital influencers. Through brand sponsorship and influencer marketing, they can profit without investing big amounts of money while generating significant revenues. This has become the fastest growing type of small business,<sup>18</sup> and it moves the creator economy, sustained by the people that produce and post content on social media, making the platforms profitable. Nevertheless, the “job” of content creator is a precarious one, since they don’t receive any support neither legal nor financial by the digital company for which they generate profit.

Technology turns consumers into collaborators without having to pay salaries, health care or give market share to the creators and influencers. Although platforms usually give prevalence to the democratic, agentive and entrepreneurial aspects of these self-marketed platform users, the small number of platforms where this business occurs and the absence of any contract

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[ncil/2021/12/22/the-rise-of-digital-influencer-marketing-and-the-importance-of-intuition/?sh=11e23b17fa52](https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/22/the-rise-of-digital-influencer-marketing-and-the-importance-of-intuition/?sh=11e23b17fa52)

18 For more information, see <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/infinite-scroll/what-the-creator-economy-promises-and-what-it-actually-does>

between tech giants and the user/consumer/creator/influencer signal a colonization of the digital.

Digital Entrepreneurship, or the use of social media by influencers that are not, in principle, celebrities, made social media traffic increase and e-commerce skyrocket with an approach that was directed to the consumer. While the Pedagogies of multiliteracies (The New London Group, 1996; Cope; Kalantzis, 2000) seek the agency of the digital subject in meaning-making processes that occur in diverse contexts where there is cultural and linguistic plurality and plurality of social practices, the paradigm that emerges from the platformization of the Internet, namely the influencer marketing industry, does not target digital literacies and social inclusion through the development of dynamic and diversified digital skills, but promote the generation of content as a means for the content creators to construct relationships of commercial nature<sup>19</sup> with their followers. Lopes (2020, p. 1122) describes these marketers of themselves:

Seen as autonomous and responsible for themselves, the individuals now present themselves as entrepreneurs of themselves. They are available on the market to the extent that they are “equipped”, through their own effort and merit, with skills and tools that will make them more or less valuable. At the same time, they become expendable and replaceable by any other individual who demonstrates equivalent value<sup>20</sup>.

This coloniality of digital identities calls for a rethinking of how we evaluate the affordances of digital platforms whose

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19 For more information, see [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/703350/IPOL\\_STU\(2022\)703350\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/703350/IPOL_STU(2022)703350_EN.pdf)

20 Our translation. Original text: Visto como autônomo e responsável por si mesmo, o indivíduo se apresenta agora como empreendedor de si mesmo. Encontra-se disponível no mercado na medida em que se “equipa”, por esforço e mérito próprios, de habilidades e ferramentas que o tornarão mais ou menos



structure and source code turn content creators and influencers into agents of capitalism. Moreover, this capitalist architecture of the Internet limits the imaginaries of the agencies we can develop in the social contexts we move and curbs the heterogeneity of practices that the digital infrastructure should be promoting.

## Conclusions

In this article, we show that the ongoing process of digitalizing the universe and its citizens is entangled with and led by the logic of colonialism and its ensuing coloniality of power, knowledge and being (Mignolo; Walsh, 2018). According to Mignolo (2010), the colonial matrix of power is sustained by a complex structure of intertwined levels of control: the control of economy, of authority, of nature and natural resources, of subjectivity, knowledge, gender and sexuality. The coloniality of knowledge, moreover, is revealed in the learning of theories and practices in the Global South that have emerged from the experience and problems of a particular region of the world (the Global North), with its very particular spatial/temporal dimensions, and “apply” them in other geographic locations, even if the spatial/temporal experiences of these are completely different from those mentioned previously (Grosfoguel, 2016). Last but not least, the coloniality of being refers to the process of “cognitive colonization” of the lived experience and “its impact on language” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 130-131). Grosfoguel (2016) suggests that the other face of epistemic privilege is the epistemic inferiority that imposes itself on knowledge produced from the experiences of the South.

On top of that, the treatment of large amounts of data that allows the automated processes to categorize people by creating what is called profiling (BORGES; FALEIROS JÚNIOR, 2021, p. 43)

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valioso. Ao mesmo tempo, torna-se dispensável e substituível por qualquer outro indivíduo que demonstre valor equivalente.

colonizes the experiences we have on the web. Critical data studies should advance digital literacies from the South and promote the legislation and regulation of the Web. Raising awareness on the contextual nature of the dominant epistemological approach to digital literacies involves an understanding that the digital space has been designed to serve the interests of the industry, governments and science of the geographical place it is framed, that is, of the Global North. Bäcke (2022, p. 72) defends that “citizens must be able to ask questions such as “why is this service free?” and “who gains from my participation?” (p. 72). We haven’t been raising those questions recently.

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**COLONIALISMO DIGITAL NA EDUCAÇÃO LINGUÍSTICA: DO DISCURSO CELEBRATÓRIO DO NORTE GLOBAL À COLONIZAÇÃO CAPITALISTA DO SUL GLOBAL**

**RESUMO:** Abordagens epistemológicas ocidentais na educação linguística tradicionalmente construíram um discurso celebratório sobre o desenvolvimento tecnológico ao promover “narrativas hiperbólicas da revolução de Big Data” (Milan; Treré, 2019, p. 320). Além disso, essa abordagem epistemológica dominante é contextual e desenhada para atender aos interesses da indústria, dos governos e da ciência do local geográfico em que é formulada, ou seja, o Norte Global. Neste artigo, defendemos uma mudança epistemológica na abordagem positivista do Big Data e desafiamos sua lógica aparentemente universal e benéfica. Procuramos mostrar que as teorias sobre letramentos digitais, embora tenham sido consideradas críticas aos letramentos tradicionais, não abordam as realidades da colonização capitalista digital do Sul Global. O artigo versa sobre a colonização digital apresentando e analisando a colonialidade do conhecimento, do poder e do ser no Sul Global. A colonialidade do conhecimento se manifesta através da colonização da educação e do senso comum no Sul Global. A colonialidade do poder emerge na forma de capitalismo digital, capitalismo de plataforma e capitalismo de vigilância. E, finalmente, a colonialidade do ser se materializa na forma de influenciadores digitais que estão se tornando empreendedores de si mesmos. Procuramos contestar e desocidentalizar os discursos sobre letramentos digitais nas salas de aula de educação linguística, revelando a opacidade do poder que eles criam.

**Palavras-chave:** Epistemologias digitais. Estudos críticos de dados. Perspectivas hegemônicas sobre inovação. Educação linguística.