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DECOLONIZING THE ENGLISH LITERATURE CURRICULUM IN SOUTH ASIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Ishrat Fatima

Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan

fatimabzu93@gmail.com**ABSTRACT**

The issue of decolonizing higher education curricula has become an important area of study in post-colonial societies, especially concerning the field of English literary studies. While the political decolonization of South Asian countries has occurred, university curricula on English literature are still dominated by Eurocentric literary canons, Western theories, and epistemologies of colonialism. This study critically explores the complexities and opportunities connected to decolonizing English literature curricula in selected public and private sector universities of Pakistan. Based on a qualitative multi-method design involving curriculum analysis, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews with academics, curriculum coordinators, and postgraduate students, the results have shown that English literature curricula are still dominated by British canonical literature, underrepresentation of regional literary traditions, academic and institutional resistance to changes in the curriculum, and linguistic domination of English language. At the same time, the research highlights some recent developments, such as comparative approaches to literature, inclusion of post-colonial literature, and increased interest from students in decolonial pedagogies. This study shows that the process of decolonization needs to go beyond mere tokenism into transformative epistemological reconfiguration of literary studies. As a consequence, the paper suggests that South Asian decolonial literary pedagogy be framed within four major themes, namely multivocality, comparative literary studies, vernacularization, and critical consciousness.

Keywords: Decolonization; English Literature Curriculum; South Asian Higher Education; Coloniality; Postcolonial Pedagogy; Literary Canon; Epistemic Justice; Curriculum Reform

1. Introduction**1.1 Background of the Study**

It is important to note that the study of English literature in South Asian higher education took place under the influence of colonialism in its broadest sense when education became a means of maintaining British imperial control. Throughout the nineteenth century, colonial administrators established English literature education on the Indian subcontinent to produce a class that would be compatible with their authority (Viswanathan 3). Thus, Thomas Babington Macaulay's famous document called "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) laid the foundation for the establishment of English literature as the superior and dominant form of knowledge in the British Empire.

The English education system introduced into the Indian subcontinent by the British colonialists had certain features characteristic of colonial ideology. On the one hand, it emphasized the works of British authors like William Shakespeare, John Milton, William Wordsworth, and Charles Dickens; on the other hand, it marginalized the indigenous literary tradition. According to Viswanathan, "the literary study of colonial India became a vehicle for

affirming English moral and cultural hegemony" (3). Thus, literature served as a medium for promoting colonial values, ideologies, and epistemology at the expense of indigenous intellectual culture.

After South Asian nations gained their independence from Britain, colonial education systems persisted in their respective universities. Many Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, and Sri Lankan universities retained their English departments focused mainly on British literature. Moreover, literature courses offered today still rely mainly on literary works created throughout the Renaissance, Romanticism, Victorian Age, and modernism periods; conversely, few syllabuses cover contemporary literature from the region or its vernacular traditions. Here, one may speak about the "coloniality of power," described by Aníbal Quijano (533), which refers to colonial structures and processes that exist outside colonial domination.

Nowadays, the trend of decolonizing education is gaining momentum both in national and international scholarly discourse. When discussing decolonial transformations, scholars often refer to Edward Said's postcolonial theory of Orientalism and emphasize its contribution to reproducing the "Oriental stereotype" in the Western world (2). In turn, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of "epistemic violence" explains colonial silencing of marginalized voices (280); at the same time, Walter D. Mignolo's concept of "epistemic disobedience" calls for resistance to Eurocentrism and recovery of marginalized discourses (9).

Notwithstanding the current interest in decolonial theory and practice, little research is devoted to the problem of decolonizing English literature curricula within South Asian universities. Studies on this topic focus mainly on general theoretical aspects, neglecting institutional practices and issues related to literary pedagogy in South Asia. For this reason, the present study examines how South Asian higher education literature curricula reproduce colonial knowledge production and epistemology. It also explores potential options for decolonizing English literature curricula.

2. Problem Statement

Even after gaining independence from colonial power, the syllabi of English literature taught in many South Asian universities still favor European literary traditions, Western critical approaches, and colonial epistemology at the expense of indigenous literary traditions and vernacular epistemology. Colonial education systems entrenched in English departments lead to epistemic discrimination, cultural estrangement, and inadequate representation of South Asian intellectual history. While international debates on decolonization in higher education institutions have become increasingly common in the past few years, there is a lack of empirical and theoretical work focusing on the prospects and issues that arise when decolonizing English literature education in South Asian institutions of higher learning. Consequently, a critical analysis is necessary to examine the ways in which coloniality informs literary syllabi and how decolonial approaches could enable a more representative and culturally sensitive education system.

3. Research Objectives

- 1) To examine the colonial foundations and Eurocentric structures embedded within English literature curricula in South Asian universities.
- 2) To investigate the institutional, pedagogical, and epistemic challenges that hinder curriculum decolonization.
- 3) To explore the representation of indigenous literatures, vernacular traditions, and regional epistemologies within English literary studies.

- 4) To analyze emerging decolonial approaches and transformative possibilities for curriculum reform in South Asian higher education.
- 5) To propose a South Asian decolonial literary pedagogy framework for inclusive and culturally responsive English literary education.

4. Research Questions

- 1) How do English literature curricula in South Asian universities reproduce colonial and Eurocentric epistemologies?
- 2) What institutional and pedagogical challenges obstruct the decolonization of English literary studies in South Asia?
- 3) To what extent are indigenous literatures and vernacular knowledge systems represented within English curricula?
- 4) What possibilities exist for developing decolonial and culturally responsive literary pedagogies in South Asian higher education?

5. Significance of the Study

The importance of the study lies in its relevance to current discussions about decolonization, curricula, and epistemological justice in higher education. The research enriches the body of post-colonial and decolonial scholarship by exploring the connection between the study of literature and colonialism in the South Asian context. Moreover, the study makes practical contributions by offering guidelines for policy-makers and curriculum designers interested in designing and implementing English literature curricula that are not only diverse but also relevant.

6. Scope of the Study

The research will look into the curricula for English literature taught at educational institutions in South Asia, especially in Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, and Sri Lankan universities. This includes the design of the curricula, literary texts required in the curricula, teaching methods, and institutional policies concerning English literature. The major theories used in this study include postcolonial theory, decolonial theory, and critical pedagogy.

7. Historical and Educational Context

7.1 Colonial Foundations of English Education in South Asia

In South Asia, the institutionalization of English education had close ties to the expansion of colonialism in the region throughout the nineteenth century. Colonialist education initiatives aimed at increasing literacy and exerting cultural and ideological control over the subjugated populace. As is evident from "Minute on Indian Education," authored by Thomas Babington Macaulay, colonialist educational policies emphasized the importance of English-language instruction. In addition, Macaulay believed that English literature and sciences offered superior knowledge compared to other literary traditions, which led him to promote the creation of a class of Indians who were to become "Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, morals and intellect" (Macaulay).

English literature became an important part of the colonial educational system because it was seen as the most effective means of cultural transmission. As is discussed by Gauri Viswanathan in her work "Culture and the Politics of the Colonized," the importance of literature for British colonialism consisted not so much in its academic qualities but rather in its potential to transmit imperialist ideas and values (Viswanathan 17). As a result, writers such as Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Dickens featured predominantly in the curricula of English colleges and universities across the British colonies.

Furthermore, the rise of English education played a role in creating an elite class whose members relied on their knowledge of English language and culture to attain social mobility.

Through the process of colonization, an epistemological hierarchy emerged that favored Western knowledge over local intellectual traditions.

7.2 Canon Formation and Literary Authority

The establishment of the English literary canon during colonial education was critical in maintaining British cultural superiority and ideology. The literary canons do not consist of randomly chosen texts. On the contrary, they are created based on power, representation, and exclusion. During colonial times, British literary works were considered universal standards of civilization, morality, and intelligence.

According to Said, Western representations of non-Western peoples served as one of the tools for dominating these societies through knowledge and discourse (Said 5). In educational settings, the literary texts used as canons would portray Europe as the center of civilization and rationality, while the colonized societies were characterized as backward and uncivilized. The latter created the notion that Europe is superior to other continents and cultures.

English literary canon authority was enforced using syllabuses, exams, and the educational system that privileged periods of literary works like the Renaissance, Romanticism, Victorian literature, and modernism. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o suggests that language contains culture, identity, and history (Ngũgĩ 13). Thus, the use of English literary canons implied superiority of linguistic culture and marginalization of native consciousness and epistemologies.

Also, the prestige of English language studies in the universities contributed to associating higher education with class privilege and professional career paths.

7.3 Postcolonial Continuities in South Asian Higher Education

While South Asia achieved its political freedom in the course of the twentieth century, some colonial models of education continued to operate in the system of higher education. The departments of English in South Asia remained predominantly Eurocentric with their curricula focusing on British classics and theories. English classes dealing with Shakespeare, Romantic poetry, Victorian literature, and modernism still predominate the courses offered both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, whereas indigenous literatures get considerably less exposure.

As Walter D. Mignolo claims, this is an example of continuity of the 'colonial matrix of power,' as epistemologically speaking, Western knowledge remains dominant despite the termination of colonialism itself (Mignolo 45). Globalization and neoliberal trends in the academic world have only strengthened this pattern, as studying in English is widely seen as a way of gaining international prestige and better job opportunities.

Epistemological dependency of South Asia can be witnessed through the dominance of theoretical frameworks like poststructuralism, psychoanalysis, or formalism used when analyzing works of literature. Other reasons include institutional inertia, absence of necessary translations, and insufficient education of specialists.

That being said, the increasing prevalence of comparative literature studies, multilingual approach in teaching, and cultural awareness is indicative of slowly emerging prospects of curriculum reform in the region.

8. Theoretical Framework

8.1 Postcolonial Theory and Literary Critique

Postcolonial Theory can be used to analyze the links between literature, colonialism, power, and representation. Postcolonial theories examine the effect of the colonial regime on culture discourse by marginalizing indigenous epistemology and discourses.

According to Edward Said in his *Orientalism*, the West produced narratives of the Orient in order to justify their imperialistic rule through discourse (Said 3). The Orientals in their view were inferior, irrational, and depended on the imperialists for development. This view in the literary world resulted in the dominance of the Western literary canon at the expense of other traditions.

In her "Epistemic Violence," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak discusses the exclusion and marginalization of voices from subaltern communities who have been silenced within the mainstream systems of knowledge (Spivak 281). In addition, Homi K. Bhabha uses concepts like hybridity and ambivalence in describing the cultural negotiation that occurs in postcolonial situations (Bhabha 112).

As seen from the discussion above, postcolonial theory has clearly shown that issues of power, identity, and legitimization play an important role in curriculum formation. This implies that the dominance of Western literary tradition in South Asian universities is an indication of postcolonial continuities.

8.2 Decolonial Theory and Coloniality of Knowledge

Decoloniality theory looks at the long-lasting structures of coloniality that continue to inform knowledge and power globally. Decoloniality differs from postcoloniality in the way that whereas postcolonial theory mainly criticizes the colonial past, decoloniality mainly emphasizes the continued persistence of colonial epistemology in contemporary institutions.

An example of a theory that helps to understand this situation is Aníbal Quijano's theory of "coloniality of power," which states that hierarchical colonial divisions of the world based on racism, ethno-linguicism, and sociocultural hierarchy persist today within educational institutions (Quijano 533). Higher education institutions continue showing coloniality by prioritizing Western literary traditions in their curriculum.

A similar approach by Walter D. Mignolo of "epistemic disobedience" helps us to understand decoloniality better. The theory calls for opposition against the hegemonic European knowledge systems (Mignolo 12). In relation to literary studies, it means challenging the Western literary tradition and incorporating vernacular literary productions into literary curricula.

This is important to understanding English literature curricula in South Asian universities.

8.3 Critical Pedagogy and Transformative Education

Critical pedagogy involves discourse, critical consciousness, and transformative education in learning environments. Freire's critique of the "banking model of education," which refers to passive acquisition of information by students, suggests that education ought to enable people to challenge structures of domination and facilitate social transformation (Freire 72).

In literature, critical pedagogy implies the practice of examining canonical texts, ideological constructs, and representation systems. Unlike the conventional perception of literature as established and absolute knowledge, critical pedagogy embraces interpretation and intellectual agency.

Bell hooks contributes to this theory by introducing the term "engaged pedagogy" as a form of learning that involves inclusiveness and engagement in classrooms (hooks 15). Engaged pedagogy is essential for decolonizing English literary education because such an approach opposes hierarchical modes of teaching associated with colonial control.

The application of critical pedagogy principles in curricula design can promote democracy, cultural responsiveness, and intellectual freedom in literary education at South Asian universities.

9. Literature Review

9.1 Decolonization of Curriculum

Decolonization of curriculum has emerged as a significant topic for debate in modern higher education discourse. Researchers have suggested that colonial history impacts the way educational institutions function, the ways they produce knowledge, and even their pedagogy. In essence, decolonization refers to efforts to resist Eurocentrism through the introduction of an inclusive curriculum that acknowledges indigenous epistemology.

According to Tuck and Yang, decolonization requires structural change and not merely token diversity efforts ("Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor" 2). On a similar note, Linda Tuhiwai Smith underscores the need for the recovery of indigenous epistemology and knowledge traditions repressed under colonialist knowledge production ("Introduction" 24). Contemporary scholarship has thus condemned modern university curricula for their Eurocentric biases.

9.2 Coloniality and English Literary Studies

Studies of English literary studies indicate that the field was always a form of oppression in colonial rule and imperialism. According to Viswanathan, English Literature was established in colonial India with the aim of creating British moral and ideological superiority rather than artistic instruction (Viswanathan 20). Similarly, according to Pennycook, the spread of the English language in the world had everything to do with colonization and hegemonic discourse (Pennycook 18).

Even contemporary writers criticize the existence of Eurocentric bias in the English curriculum. Mukherjee and Quayson maintain that the structure of English Departments is characterized by reproduction of colonial biases through the canon and pedagogy. Even as controversies on inclusivity and diversity increase, literary canonization of the British continues to be viewed as universal standards of literature.

9.3 South Asian Context and Research Gap

In terms of South Asia, there has been an emphasis by existing literature on postcolonial literary criticism and not curriculum transformation. For instance, Mukherjee, Ahmad, and Trivedi have explored the role of colonialism in the discourses of literature; however, little empirical research has been done on the extent to which departments of English perpetuate colonial epistemologies through their curricular designs and teaching.

There has also been limited scholarly attention paid to comparative analysis of literary curricula at South Asian universities using theoretical frameworks based on postcolonial theory, decolonial theory, and critical pedagogy. The need for such research becomes evident from this gap in existing knowledge.

10. Research Methodology

10.1 Research Paradigm

The present study operates within the framework of the critical-interpretive paradigm, which studies the connection between knowledge, power, ideology, and institutions. The use of such a paradigm in the study of coloniality and curriculum transformation is warranted by the fact that this paradigm not only involves interpretations of the educational reality but also involves criticism of the systems of domination hidden in institutional processes. In addition, the interpretive approach allows for exploring notions and experiences associated with literary representations, curricula, and teaching practices.

10.2 Research Design

For this research, a qualitative research design using multi-methods approach has been used to conduct a critical examination of the colonial legacies and possibilities of decolonizing

the English literature curriculum in universities in Pakistan. The reason for choosing the qualitative approach is that the study does not involve measurement but relies on interpretation and discourse.

10.3 Research Setting and Selection of Universities

This study was carried out in selected public and private sector universities of Pakistan that had programs of study in English literature at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Public and private sectors were selected for inclusion in the sample to bring into account the disparities between the curricula frameworks, teaching methodologies, and institutional perspectives that exist in the two sectors.

10.4 Sampling Strategy and Participants

Purposeful sampling strategy was used for selecting participants pertinent to the goals of this research study. These participants consisted of faculty members from English Literature, curriculum coordinators, and postgraduates studying literature in the curricular context. Eighteen participants took part in this research, which included ten faculty members, three curriculum coordinators, and five postgraduates.

10.5 Data Collection Methods

Data collection was done using curriculum analyses and semi-structured interviews. For curriculum analyses, data was gathered from course outlines, reading lists, departmental guides, and program structures to find patterns in regards to Eurocentrism, representation in the curriculum, and theories of English literature.

The second method used for collecting data was conducting semi-structured interviews where the issues under consideration included curriculum change, literary canon development, representation of indigenous literatures, and difficulties in decolonizing. Interviews were conducted physically and virtually based on availability for about forty to sixty minutes.

10.6 Data Analysis Procedure

Analysis of the collected data was done using thematic analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The application of thematic analysis helped to identify recurring themes in curricular documents and interview responses, whereas Critical Discourse Analysis focused on the role of literature selections and the institution discourse in maintaining cultural hegemony and epistemological supremacy. Themes analyzed include Eurocentric literary domination, marginalization of indigenous literatures, institutional resistance, linguistic hierarchy, and decolonizing pedagogy.

10.7 Trustworthiness and Research Rigor

In order to increase validity, the triangulation method was applied through the use of multiple sources of information such as interviews, curricula, and organizational documents. The use of reflexivity and documentation of procedures helped increase dependability and reduce researcher bias. Additionally, member validation was done on selected subjects.

10.8 Ethical Considerations

The research conformed to the ethical principles for conducting qualitative research. The participants provided informed consent before data was collected from them, and privacy was upheld throughout the entire research period. The participants were made aware of their rights to withdraw from participation in the study at any point during the research period without facing any repercussions.

11. Findings and Results

The analysis of curriculum documents, course outlines, prescribed reading lists, and semistructured interviews undertaken across selected public and private universities in

Pakistan highlights some clear patterns related to the continuity of colonial epistemologies in English literature curricula. Based on the findings, while there are some attempts towards diversification and inclusivity, there is no doubt that English literary studies in Pakistani universities are still very much dominated by Eurocentric literary canons, theoretical frameworks, and colonial era university infrastructures.

Thematic analysis and CDA analysis yielded five thematic areas: (1) dominance of the Eurocentric literary canon, (2) marginalization of local and indigenous literatures, (3) institutional and pedagogical resistance to decolonizing English literary studies, (4) linguistic hierarchy and epistemic subordination, and (5) decolonial possibility in teaching literature.

Table 1 Major Themes Emerging from Curriculum Analysis and Interviews

| Theme | Description | Key Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Dominance of Eurocentric Canon | Continued prioritization of British and Western literary traditions | Shakespeare, Romanticism, Victorian literature, and Western theories dominated curricula |
| Marginalization of Indigenous Literatures | Limited inclusion of regional and vernacular literary traditions | Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and Balochi texts remained underrepresented |
| Institutional Resistance | Structural and academic barriers to curriculum reform | Faculty conservatism, accreditation pressures, and lack of resources hindered decolonization |
| Linguistic Hierarchy and Epistemic Inequality | Privileging of English over local languages and knowledge systems | English remained associated with prestige, modernity, and academic legitimacy |
| Emerging Decolonial Possibilities | Growing awareness and reform efforts within universities | Comparative literature, postcolonial courses, and culturally responsive pedagogy were increasingly emphasized |

11.1 Dominance of the Eurocentric Literary Canon

Among other prominent results obtained during the study, the prominence of British and western literary canons within the scope of English literature was evident in curricula of selected universities. Analysis of both undergraduate and post-graduate syllabi showed that quite a number of texts recommended to be studied are written by authors representing British literary tradition of the Renaissance, Romantic, Victorian, or Modernist era.

The authors who play a pivotal role in course design include such canonical figures as William Shakespeare, John Milton, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, T. S. Eliot, and James Joyce. All mentioned authors play crucial role in the development of courses and are presented in a way that they represent literary canon and the highest level of intellectual engagement. On the other hand, Pakistani literature in English, local literary traditions, translated vernacular texts, or indigenous oral narratives are rarely found in the curriculum.

Thus, the analysis conducted reveals that the current literary curriculum organization confirms the belief that British literary traditions should be considered a basis for acquiring literary knowledge. According to many faculty members, canonical British texts are important for upholding academic rigor, global standards, and discipline's legitimacy. At the same time, some faculty members argue that eliminating or decreasing the number of canonical works may undermine international prestige of English programs.

The overemphasis on canonical western literature results in an imbalanced curricula in many cases. More than seventy percent of all prescribed literary texts belong to British or European tradition, while Pakistani and South Asian literary texts are presented either in electives or as supplementary literature. It means that current literary curricula continue to reflect superiority of western intellectual hierarchy in modern universities.

Moreover, Western critical and literary theories dominate the structure of curriculum in theoretical courses. Formalism, structuralism, psychoanalytic approaches, poststructuralism, and New Criticism are widely applied at the department of literature, while local interpretative techniques and south Asia-specific theories remain out of focus.

11.2 Marginalization of Indigenous and Regional Literatures

The second important discovery was associated with the scarce presence of indigenous, vernacular, and regional literary traditions in English literature curriculums. Indeed, some universities have started offering courses related to postcolonial literature and even Pakistani literature written in English; however, those additions appeared to be more tokenistic than structural changes implemented throughout the entire curriculum framework.

Through analyzing the existing English literature curricula, one could conclude that there was still no sufficient attention paid to the study of literature in languages like Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, etc., despite the rich multicultural literature legacy of Pakistan. Even when regional texts were present in curriculums, they were usually available only in English versions and with little consideration given to the linguistic, cultural, and philosophical context.

Some faculty participants admitted that literary curriculums of Pakistani universities fail to provide sufficient coverage to indigenous literary traditions, but mentioned several factors that hindered the integration of indigenous perspectives into existing syllabi: shortage of translated works, institutional obstacles, lack of qualified personnel, etc. Specifically, one participant from a public university stated that regional literature was often perceived as "supplementary cultural material" rather than "serious academic literature," which shows the hierarchies that prevail in today's academia.

It was found out that students also faced the problem of being disconnected from prescribed literary canons. In particular, postgraduate participants shared that, although they found it valuable to learn about different cultural experiences and literary schools represented in global literature, they often felt left aside as far as their own histories, languages, and cultures were concerned. In fact, they wished to focus on studying Pakistani literary voices, indigenous literary traditions, Sufi poetry, regional stories, and modern social reality of South Asia.

That type of marginalization constitutes one of the phenomena known as epistemic exclusion, where certain types of knowledge remain excluded from institutional legitimization process. The results of the research show that, in terms of literary education, western experiences still prevail over indigenous ones in Pakistan.

11.3 Institutional and Pedagogical Barriers to Decolonization

There are several barriers to curriculum decolonization in the university system of Pakistan, including both structural and pedagogical factors that complicate this process. Institutional resistance in the form of conservativeness of the English Departments and their curriculums is one of the main obstacles for curriculum decolonization that has been highlighted by participants. Faculty members, who have received classical education in literature based on Western canon, are concerned that extensive reform of the curricula can lower its quality and negatively affect the familiarity of the students with the internationally recognized literature.

In addition, there are other institutional factors that make curriculums conservative, such as the impact of accreditation programs, standardized examination system, and global standards in higher education. Universities need to meet these requirements for maintaining their competitiveness and ranking, which implies the need to align the structure of the courses to Western academic programs and thus limits opportunities for developing local curriculums.

The insufficient preparation of faculty members to decolonial pedagogy is also regarded by participants as a serious obstacle to this process. Participants admitted that the majority of professors, having received education based on Western-centric models, were not able to provide their students with proper understanding of indigenous methodology, comparative pedagogy, or the theories of decoloniality.

Resource limitations in the public sector universities constitute another barrier to decolonial curriculum transformation. Participants stated that in many cases, universities lacked adequate resources for implementing this process; for instance, there was no opportunity to include literature from the region because of the lack of translated literary works or funds for research projects.

Moreover, participant interviews have revealed that the dominant pedagogical practice in the field remains the teacher-centered approach characterized by memorizing texts and performing well at examinations. This approach hinders student participation in discussions about the content of literary works and challenges colonial narrative and canonical discourse.

11.4 Linguistic Hierarchy and Epistemic Inequality

In addition, it is clear from the findings that English maintains its supremacy within the higher education system of Pakistan, serving not only as the medium of instruction but also representing authority, prestige, and professional success. This linguistic dominance greatly influences curricula, university policies, and attitudes towards literature in different languages.

Throughout the study, participants perceived English language skills as indicators of one's ability to succeed on a global scale and find employment. As such, English literature classes were seen by many as an indicator of elite education. On the other hand, however, this status resulted in marginalization of vernacular languages and literary traditions of Pakistan.

A few participants noted that their peers often accepted certain stereotypes about the superiority of the English literary tradition as opposed to those of the regional varieties. Such views are indicative of broader hierarchies created by colonial history, which allows for cultural capital to be represented through the mastery of English. Thus, the dominance of English in education maintains epistemic hierarchies based on the devaluation of local epistemic systems.

In addition, it became clear that regional languages were seldom considered as viable vehicles for literary criticism. Although at times students worked with translations, there were rarely any attempts to conduct comparative analyses of different varieties of literary works in various languages, and little attention was paid to native literary traditions. It thus seems that the practice of privileging Western epistemology remains in place.

11.5 Emerging Decolonial Possibilities and Transformative Practices

Though there was evidence for colonial continuities, it is worth noting that efforts towards curriculum diversification and decolonial reform were identified in some of the selected institutions. For instance, the departments had started offering postcolonial literature classes, courses on Pakistani writing in English, comparative literature, and feminist literary studies. These efforts showed a growing recognition of the problem with exclusive eurocentrism in the curricula.

Furthermore, it is important to note that some instructors had started advocating for regional literatures, translations, and culturally-responsive teaching techniques. As noted above, students highlighted the importance of including South Asian experiences in mainstream literary curricula rather than in elective or optional courses. Comparative courses that put Western and South Asian literatures in dialogue with each other are likely to offer valuable opportunities to stimulate critical thinking.

As part of the research findings, an increase in student interest in identity-related topics, literary representations, language politics, and postcolonialism was observed. Students reported enjoying the courses that discussed social inequality and injustices, and indigenous literary traditions. The results indicate that curriculum change can facilitate greater relevance of literary courses and increase diversity and inclusiveness in curricula.

Moreover, several participants offered ideas about possible interdisciplinary and multilingual curriculum transformation. Some of these suggestions included incorporation of translated vernacular literature, use of oral storytelling tradition, development of regional literary archives, and introduction of courses on South Asian intellectual history. The suggestions reveal that decoloniality should not be perceived as a rejection of Western literature. Instead, it should be viewed as creation of more diverse and dialogic literary spaces.

In conclusion, it is necessary to acknowledge the fact that the English literature curricula at Pakistani universities remain colonially shaped and eurocentric. However, the identification of critical pedagogical strategies, comparative literary methods, and increasing demands for more cultural representation provides great opportunities for decolonization of literary studies in South Asia.

12. Discussion

As demonstrated by the findings of the current study, literary curricula in Pakistani higher education institutions continue to rely on epistemological frameworks that reflect colonial epistemology, Eurocentric literary hierarchies, and colonial educational structure. While reforms in university curricula have been initiated through postcolonial literature and comparative literature courses, the general arrangement in Pakistani literary curricula seems to favor Western literary traditions as the main source of legitimacy. These results corroborate the findings of postcolonial and decolonial literature, which emphasize that coloniality remains embedded in systems of knowledge production even after the official end of colonialism.

The reliance of Pakistani universities on British literary traditions as the source of legitimate knowledge in English literature classes confirms Edward Said's idea that there

exists the cultural aspect of imperial power, which consists of the establishment of western intellectual tradition as universal normative framework and the marginalization of any alternative to this epistemology (Said 7). Thus, the dominance of Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Dickens, and modernist writers in literary curricula demonstrates that literary education in Pakistan is still based on colonial models. Accordingly, the institutional perception is that Western literary traditions set the standard according to which all other literatures should be assessed.

These findings also confirm the idea that British literary education was initially designed not just as a subject but as an ideological tool used to consolidate the cultural hegemony of the colonizers (Viswanathan 20). Thus, the prevalence of Eurocentric syllabuses in postcolonial universities proves that educational structures of colonial past still regulate intellectual preferences and cultural priorities in contemporary educational institutions. Therefore, the curriculum represents an epistemic mechanism of regulating the kind of knowledge produced in educational space and accepted within an institution.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings is the fact that regional literatures are still marginal to the literary tradition taught in Pakistani universities. While the country has rich multi-lingual literary tradition, it continues to remain unrepresented in mainstream literary education. This phenomenon can be described with the help of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of 'epistemic violence,' which refers to the situation when mainstream epistemology silences or erases the voices of marginalized communities (Spivak 281). The marginalization of regional epistemologies from curricula causes cultural alienation and perpetuates intellectual dependency.

Decolonization of literary curricula in Pakistani higher education institutions appears to face a number of barriers, including conservative faculty views, global academic pressures, accreditation systems, and a lack of appropriate pedagogical skills among others. These findings correlate with Walter D. Mignolo's concept of colonial matrix of power, which illustrates the idea of colonial epistemology organizing modern institutional systems of knowledge production (Mignolo 45). Universities eager to gain international reputation tend to accept and reproduce the hierarchy criticized by decolonial theory.

Another problem associated with the decolonization of literary curricula is the relationship between language and epistemology. In many cases, the use of English remains associated with prestige, employment opportunities, and sophisticated thinking. This linguistic hierarchy serves as an element of broader systems of cultural capital, where vernacular languages are usually perceived as inferior. In his seminal work on linguistics and decolonization, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o emphasizes that language is closely linked to culture, memory, and identity (Ngũgĩ 16). These findings provide compelling evidence that the linguistic hierarchies established during colonial times continue to reproduce intellectual dependency.

The study has also revealed several positive trends related to decolonization of curricula in Pakistani universities. Growing interest in regional literatures, comparative models, and culturally sensitive pedagogy among students suggests that there is increasing awareness regarding the limitations of eurocentric curricula. The inclusion of postcolonial literature, feminist studies, and South Asian literary tradition in some curricula suggests that efforts to reform curricula become a part of the academic discussion in English literature departments.

Most importantly, the findings of this study do not seem to support the common misconception regarding decolonization as the total rejection of Western literary traditions. The results of this study suggest that the ideal decolonization of English curricula requires

engaging with western traditions as well as native epistemologies, regional literary tradition, and multilingual experience. Decolonization thus cannot be considered just a symbolic move. It involves structural changes and the rethinking of many aspects of pedagogical practice and academic research.

Based on these findings, the study proposes a “South Asian Decolonial Literary Pedagogy Framework” grounded in five interrelated principles:

- Multivocal literary canon
- Integration of vernacular and translated literatures
- Comparative and dialogic pedagogy
- Critical engagement with colonial history
- Student-centered and culturally responsive learning

This framework seeks to move beyond token diversity toward meaningful epistemic transformation within literary education. It recognizes that the future of English studies in South Asia depends not on abandoning global literary traditions but on creating equitable intellectual spaces where multiple knowledge systems can coexist critically and productively.

13. Implications of the Study

13.1 Theoretical Implications

The paper makes important contributions to postcolonial and decolonial studies by incorporating the issue of coloniality into the analysis of English literary education in South Asia. Although the current literature has analyzed colonial discourse and postcolonial literary studies extensively, there are few papers addressing how colonial epistemology is sustained through higher education programs. The paper thus adds theoretical insight on the connection between literature, education, and coloniality in postcolonial contexts.

Moreover, applying postcolonial theory, decolonial theory, and critical pedagogy to curriculum analysis allows the incorporation of multiple perspectives on curriculum reform. The proposed theoretical framework for a decolonial literary pedagogy in South Asia contributes a novel concept that can be expanded and used by future researchers.

13.2 Pedagogical Implications

The results indicate that it is imperative to implement educational reforms in English departments in Pakistani universities. An approach to teaching based on canonical memory does not allow students to critically engage with literature and limits opportunities for diversity of thinking. Thus, this research suggests incorporating dialogic education, comparison of texts, and culturally responsive teaching techniques.

Incorporating local literature, translation of regional literature, and stories of the native population into academic discourse can help build a connection between culture and literary studies. This educational change might also promote critical consciousness by questioning colonial beliefs contained in the classical curriculum.

13.3 Institutional Implications

This research suggests that any form of curricular transformation needs to come from institutions instead of just individuals themselves. Universities need to create curricular review boards whose task is to scrutinize colonial legacies in literary curricula. Moreover, training sessions for instructors on decolonizing pedagogies, comparative literature, and indigenous methodologies need to be organized.

Translation efforts, digitized literary archives, and multidisciplinary projects can be useful in this process.

13.4 Policy Implications

These results have significant consequences for policymakers in higher education and national curriculum development. Educational institutions need to rethink their traditional systems of literary education, which unduly favor the Western literary canon over local literature. Policy changes should promote diversity in curricula, comparative literary analysis, and incorporation of regional knowledge into the national educational system.

The higher education community could also provide research grants in the fields of indigenous literary criticism, translation work, and decolonization of education.

14. Recommendations

14.1 Curriculum Recommendations

It is suggested that universities need to modify the curricula on English literature to include both local and international authors, such as those from Britain, South Asia, Africa, and other regions around the world. Local languages like Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, and Balochi should also be introduced in the literature curricula through translation and comparative literary analysis. It is also essential to recognize the role of Pakistani literature in English as a fundamental part of literary studies instead of keeping it confined to electives only.

14.2 Pedagogical Recommendations

The English department must embrace dialogic and learner-centric pedagogies based on critical pedagogy. Professors must foster a culture of critically thinking about colonialism, the construction of the canon, representation, and epistemic dominance in literary analysis. The comparative teaching approach must also be incorporated to engage Western and indigenous literature through intellectual conversation. In addition, institutions must hold seminars, workshops, and scholarly discussions on decolonizing literary theory and pedagogies.

14.3 Institutional Recommendations

Universities must set up curriculum review committees to evaluate and question the persistence of colonial legacies in the field of English Literature. Similarly, faculty development initiatives in the areas of indigenous research methodologies, comparative literature, and decolonizing education need to become routine practice. Libraries and digital archives must make regional literary works and translations more accessible, and collaboration between disciplines like literature, history, linguistics, and cultural studies is to be encouraged.

14.4 Research Recommendations

Further research in the future could consider conducting comparative studies among different countries in South Asia to study regional differences in curriculum reform and decolonizing activities. Quantitative research could investigate students' opinions about the inclusiveness of curricula concerning their culture and experiences in literary education. Research could be done in order to understand the link between language policies and epistemological inequality in higher education institutions.

15. Limitations of the Study

Notwithstanding its significance, this study has a number of shortcomings. First, the scope of this investigation is confined to select public and private universities in Pakistan and thus cannot claim universality due to the sample chosen. Second, due to its qualitative approach, the study does not claim any generalization. Third, the study addresses only English literature departments without extending the scope to other disciplines in the humanities with regards to colonialism's legacy. Due to limited resources and time, the amount of participants as well as institutional documents involved in the study is reduced. Lastly, as

curricular transformation is an ongoing process, the results of the study represent a specific historical situation.

16. Conclusion

The current research provides an analytical discussion on the opportunities and obstacles of decolonizing English literature curricula in Pakistani higher education institutions. According to the results, English literature curricula have retained their colonial and eurocentric orientation and continue to promote colonial epistemology and British educational system values. In addition to this, the role of British literary traditions and Western theoretical approaches in curriculum design is much more prominent than that of the vernacular literature and regional cultural heritage.

It is concluded that the curriculum can be viewed as an area of ideological struggle where the processes of representation, legitimization, and intellectual power play an important role. Conservative tendencies, linguistic discrimination, and global educational system pressures prevent decolonization in English literature curricula in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the findings also point out the emergence of possibilities to implement curricular changes and develop culturally relevant and inclusive curriculum.

The study claims that decolonization of English literature does not involve the renunciation of Western literary traditions but instead calls for the creation of intellectually inclusive environment where multiple literary heritages exist critically and fruitfully together. Thus, the proposed model of decolonizing South Asian literature curricula highlights four main characteristics: multivocality, incorporation of the vernacular, comparative pedagogy, and critical awareness.

Finally, it should be stated that decolonization of English literary studies in Pakistan is not just an academic issue but also an epistemic necessity of great importance.

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