

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Fostering Critical AI Literacy through a Decolonial Use of ChatGPT in ESL/EFL Classrooms

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Abstract: This article examines the potential and risks of integrating AI tools, such as ChatGPT, into ESL/EFL classrooms from a decolonial perspective to enhance vocabulary instruction. Centering on eighteen English words from an English textbook designed for school education, the study examines how ESL/EFL vocabulary can be taught using ChatGPT to encourage students to engage with and critically reflect on its outputs. Employing the method of strategic prompting and qualitative content analysis of ChatGPT responses, the article explores how students' first languages (L1) can be meaningfully connected to English (L2) using ChatGPT as a pedagogical tool, particularly within a multilingual and multiethnic educational context. The study demonstrates that a decolonial approach to AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can enhance ESL/EFL pedagogy by promoting linguistic inclusivity and fostering critical AI literacy among students. Hence, the article contributes to the emerging conversations on decolonial ESL/EFL pedagogy and critical AI literacy by positioning AI tools, such as ChatGPT, not as a neutral source of information, but as a tool to enhance language learning in diverse linguistic contexts with a higher degree of human intervention.

Keywords: ChatGPT, critical AI literacy, decolonial education, ESL/EFL pedagogy

1 Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools and large language models (LLMs) have sparked growing interest in research, education, and pedagogy since the release of ChatGPT in 2022. This article extends these discussions by bringing decoloniality and critical AI literacy into conversation, exploring how ChatGPT can be used in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms to foster both vocabulary learning and critical awareness about the use of AI tools. It argues that ESL/EFL teachers can adopt a decolonial intervention to the use of ChatGPT, promoting both vocabulary learning skills and critical digital literacy among students. The article focuses on the Nepali school context, where English is a second or foreign language amid immense linguistic and cultural diversity. According to [National Statistics Office \(2023\)](#), Nepal is a multilingual, multiethnic, and multireligious country with 142 castes and ethnicities, 10 recognized religions, and 124 mother tongues—25 of which are spoken as second languages and 27 as ancestral languages. The five most spoken mother tongues are Nepali (44.86%), Maithili (11.05%), Bhojpuri (6.24%), Tharu (5.88%), and Tamang (4.88%); only 1323 people have reported English as their first language in Nepal. English is both a second and a foreign language since it is the fifth most spoken second language, and it is spoken as an ESL/EFL only by 102561 (0.35%) of the total population. Therefore, in the Nepali school education context where English is compulsory school subject, English functions as both ESL and EFL. In this context, this article explores how ChatGPT can be utilized decolonially to foster critical AI awareness while supporting ESL/EFL vocabulary learning, answering the following research question:

In what ways can ESL/EFL teachers utilize ChatGPT decolonially to enhance vocabulary learning and promote critical AI literacy in their students?

There are many possible approaches to answering this research question; however, my discussion primarily focuses on Nepal's ESL/EFL context, specifically the *English Grade 10* textbook (2023). This textbook introduces students to the growing popularity and rapid advancement of artificial intelligence. For example, as shown in the screenshot, in the first lesson of the first unit, named "Current Affairs and Issues", showing four visual artefacts related

to artificial intelligence, students have been asked to ponder upon two questions: “What do you know about artificial intelligence (AI)? How do you think AI has changed the world?” (Figure 1). Thus, selecting eighteen different English words from this textbook, I explore and discuss the possibility of using ChatGPT decolonially to raise critical AI awareness while teaching ESL/EFL vocabulary.



Figure 1 Textbook Prompting Students to Discuss AI

2 Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted examining the use of AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, in English language classrooms. AI tools, such as ChatGPT, have been shown to serve as pedagogical tools (Papadakis et al., 2023; Aravantinos et al., 2024; Tolstykh & Oshchepkova, 2024; Liu & Ma, 2024; Muniandy & Selvanathan, 2024; Ghimire et al., 2024; Lo et al., 2024; Lavidas et al., 2024). According to Lampropoulos and Papadakis (2025), AI tools can be used to design “intelligent tutoring systems” across diverse learning contexts to “improve educational effectiveness” (p. 8). Tolstykh and Oshchepkova (2024) encourage students to use AI tools that can become a learner’s companion, a reviewer of vocabulary or grammar structure, and a language translator. Moreover, Liu and Ma (2024) argue that learners with positive attitudes toward the usefulness of AI-powered tools, such as ChatGPT, are more likely to use these tools in English language learning modules outside the classroom. In the same vein, Muniandy and Selvanathan (2024) argue that ChatGPT has the potential to create fun and satisfaction for ESL learners, as it generates responses that are clear, straightforward, and comprehensive, thereby motivating them to increase their interest in speaking skills. Lo et al. (2024) offer a balanced perspective, foregrounding the lack of accuracy, difficulties in obtaining a desirable output, and a lack of skillful prompting, which necessitates training to foster students’ ability to craft effective ChatGPT prompts. Pandey and Bhusal (2024) have discussed four ChatGPT literacy of prompting—literacy of prompting, hooking and specifying, qualifying, quantifying, and rhetorical situations—in fostering ESL/EFL writing skills in various educational contexts. In the same vein, Balci (2024) concludes that “ChatGPT is a promising tool that can support both EFL students’ learning experiences and teachers’ instructional activities both in and out of class. (p. 77). These conversations imply that the intersection of education and AI technology like ChatGPT has been instrumental in shaping “smart education, including smart students, smart pedagogy, and smart [learning] environments” in the world (Papadakis et al., 2023, p. 7).

Moreover, scholars argue that within Nepal’s multilingual education context, English is playing an encroaching role by marginalizing other national languages, necessitating a decolonial turn. Gautam (2021) asserts that multilingual realities have not been promoted and enhanced in Nepal due to the government’s lack of a concrete plan for developing the ethnic languages. As a result, the education system has created spaces for the predominance of English and Nepali in school curricula across the country. Within this language debate, Saud (2025) reflects on his observations and experiences as an educator, referring to parents’ choices of language education

for their children. He writes that even Nepali parents prefer English language education over their local languages. To address the interests and aspirations of parents and students, dual or parallel mediums of instruction—Nepali and English—are growing in Nepal. Within this context, while some advocate for English as an official language, others resist its encroachment, reflecting ideological tensions (Giri & Gnawali, 2025). In Nepal, this discussion intersects with longstanding calls for decolonizing English education, as scholars argue that existing English language pedagogy continues to reflect colonial legacies and monolingual nationalist policies that suppress Indigenous languages and worldviews (Bhusal & Baral, 2025; Poudel et al., 2022; Rapacha, 2024; Adhikari, 2024; Gautam, 2025; Sah & Li, 2022). Advocates of a decolonial approach propose localizing English instruction to center Indigenous epistemologies and challenge linguistic hierarchies that place English at the top and mother tongues at the bottom. Despite these emerging discourses, there is limited scholarship exploring the decolonial use of ChatGPT in ESL/EFL classrooms through the lens of critical AI literacy, marking a research gap that this article aims to address.

3 Materials and Methods

This study is an exploratory investigation into the potential and limitations of utilizing AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in ESL/EFL classrooms within secondary school settings in Nepal. In this study, I used three data collection and analysis methods: collecting vocabulary, prompting ChatGPT, and content analysis of ChatGPT-generated responses.

3.1 Collecting Eighteen ESL/EFL Words

In Nepal, in the context of school education, educational authorities design and prescribe textbooks. The Curriculum Development Center, a government body, prepares and prescribes school textbooks to be used nationwide. For this study, I selected and examined the *English Grade 10* (2023) to examine what English vocabulary it aims to teach. The book has eighteen units, and all units expect students to learn specific English words. All the English words that students are expected to learn their meaning have been highlighted in pink throughout the textbook. For this study, I chose one word from each unit. While selecting the words, I chose a pink highlighted word from each unit that corresponded with the unit number. For example, from unit one, I selected the first pink highlighted word, “glare,” and the eighteenth highlighted word, “secular,” from unit eighteen. Thus, throughout this study, “eighteen words” means the following words from *English Grade 10* (2023):

Table 1 Units and Selected Words

Units	Word	Units	Words	Units	Words
Unit 1	Glare (p. 2)	Unit 7	Munching (p. 104)	Unit 13	Peak (p. 208)
Unit 2	Bum-first (p. 18)	Unit 8	Appreciate (p. 121)	Unit 14	Encounter (p. 226)
Unit 3	Fantastic (p. 35)	Unit 9	Conferred (p. 128)	Unit 15	Misfortune (p. 243)
Unit 4	Pleaded (p. 52)	Unit 10	Stew (p. 156)	Unit 16	Revenge (p. 259)
Unit 5	Vapor (p. 69)	Unit 11	Blows (p. 173)	Unit 17	Snug (p. 283)
Unit 6	Squid (p. 86)	Unit 12	Constraints (p. 193)	Unit 18	Secular (p. 292)

I have explored the meaning of these eighteen words using ChatGPT, demonstrating how ESL/EFL pedagogy can be designed for decolonial conversations and critical AI awareness.

3.2 Prompting ChatGPT

In this study, the method of data generation was prompting ChatGPT. A prompting method includes defining the purpose, simplifying, specifying, fine-tuning, and re-evaluating (Pandey & Bhusal, 2024; Durieux, 2024). For this study, I prompted ChatGPT, collected its responses—words, sentences, images—and then analyzed and interpreted them. I used a total of fifteen prompts and generated fifteen responses with ChatGPT. My prompting, nevertheless, was a more exploratory and contingent, meaning one ChatGPT-generated response led to another; I did not have prompts prepared in advance for this study. It helped me to avoid potential biases and preconceptions. The prompt types and ideas I used in this study can be visualized as follows.

ChatGPT responded to all my prompts, and I used those prompts as my qualitative data. In the discussion, I have copied the responses directly from ChatGPT to maintain the credibility of the conversation. I have also used some screenshots of the dictionary meaning of the English

Table 2 A Glimpse of ChatGPT Prompts Used in This Study

Prompt Number	Prompt Types	Prompt Ideas Used
1	Word meaning	Meaning of the English Word ‘Glare’
	Word meaning elaboration	Elaboration of the meaning of the English word ‘Glare’
2	Multilingual meanings	Meaning of the eighteen different words in six different languages: English, Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Tharu
3	Multilingual meanings	Meaning of the eighteen different words in six different languages: English, Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Tharu. This time, I prompted using my different Gmail account.
4	Two different languages/scripts within one, Tamang	Meaning of eighteen different words in the two different Tamang languages and their pronunciation in the Devanagari script
5	Languages and scripts	Meaning of the English word ‘speak’ in two different Tamang languages, the Devanagari script, and the Roman script.
6	Word meanings in a sentence	Use of eighteen different words in sentences
7	Cultural meaning of words	Cultural meaning of the English word ‘glare’ in five different languages: Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, and Tamang
8	Cultural meaning of words	Cultural meaning of the Word ‘Appreciate’ in five different languages: Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, and Tamang
9	Scriptural confirmation	The ability of ChatGPT if it was unable to produce sentences in the Tamang scripts
10	Human intervention	If its users could assist ChatGPT in becoming proficient in the Tamang script by providing the Tamang vocabulary and grammar
11	Word meanings with images	Images for eighteen different English Words
12	Word meanings with cultural images	Images for the cultural meaning of the English word ‘Glare’ for five different linguistic communities: Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, and Tamang
13	Confirmation inquiry	If ChatGPT had any information about the Tamang culture

word ‘glare’ and ChatGPT responses, as screenshots serve as a data collection method that offers an opportunity for human interaction with technology through the content they anchor (Cramer et al., 2023), bringing “visual elements into documentation” (Clark, 2020, p. 205). In the discussion, for coherence and uniformity purposes, I have used the word ‘figure’ in the caption to all screenshots, tables, and images.

3.3 Qualitative Content Analysis

In this study, all ChatGPT responses were collectively analyzed and interpreted using qualitative content analysis (QCA). As an analytical and interpretative method, QCA offers “replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff, 2019, p. 24). QCA is an interpretative act that allows researchers to add “their own values and beliefs” during data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Ryan, 2018, p. 17). While utilizing the QCA method, the ChatGPT responses were manually coded in two phases, pattern coding and thematizing, drawing on coding insights from Saldaña (2021).

In the initial pattern coding, all the words and their meanings were observed, and a pattern in ChatGPT responses was tracked. The key patterns identified in the ChatGPT responses included literal and cultural translation, multilingual potential, overgeneralization, generative biases, and a lack of specificity. Then, while critically examining those patterns from a decolonial and critical AI literacy perspective, the following seven themes were generated.

- (1) ESL/EFL Vocabulary: Pedagogical Possibilities;
- (2) ESL/EFL Vocabulary and a Decolonial Use of ChatGPT;
- (3) Decolonial AI Literacy through ChatGPT in ESL/EFL Classrooms;
- (4) Use of ChatGPT in Decoloniality-Informed ESL/EFL Pedagogy;
- (5) Decolonial ESL Pedagogy: Connecting L1 and L2 Using ChatGPT;
- (6) Critical AI Literacy: A Decolonial Human Intervention;
- (7) Teaching Word through Image: Decolonial Use of ChatGPT in ESL/EFL Settings.

All these themes have been discussed in the “Results and Discussion” sections. As reflected in the themes, two theoretical lenses—decoloniality and critical AI literacy inform this study.

4 Theoretical Frameworks

This article incorporates two theoretical frameworks: Critical AI literacy and decolonial philosophy of education. Since these two concepts are emerging but distinct, I have discussed them in subtopics.

4.1 Critical AI Literacy

Critical AI literacy refers to a critical and reflective engagement with AI tools, focusing on understanding their biases, inaccuracies, and socio-political implications. It involves scrutinizing how AI systems – especially generative models like ChatGPT – can reflect algorithmic and contextual biases due to the limitations of their training data and design. As [Dobrin \(2023\)](#) asserts, one challenge is “algorithmic bias” or “machine learning bias,” where “a Gen AI exhibits as a result of the ways its algorithms were written” (p. 105). Particularly relevant is the notion of “outputs with contextual bias,” where AI fails to account for the complexities of diverse social and cultural settings (p. 106). Dobrin explains that “Gen AI algorithms are typically designed and trained to operate within the perspective of a single generic context. As such, their outputs are often unable to reflect the nuances, complexities, and variabilities of different social groups and settings” (p. 106). This cultural insensitivity, as [Poucke \(2024\)](#) notes, stems from “pre-existing ideological bias,” a form of “training data bias” (p. 15). Thus, critical AI literacy is not merely about identifying these flaws but also about actively seeking their reform through pedagogical and ethical interventions. [Gupta et al. \(2024\)](#) emphasize that critical AI literacy should foster students’ agency and ethical discernment, advocating for “thoughtful and student-centric decision making” rather than “outright implementation or rejection of these tools” (p. 40). In this study, decolonial pedagogy becomes the mode of such action—challenging the cultural blindness of AI by introducing diverse epistemologies into its use. Ultimately, critical AI literacy means not only interrogating AI systems but also contributing to more inclusive and context-aware AI development.

4.2 Decolonial Education

The theoretical framework applied in this article is rooted in the decolonial philosophy of education, which is deeply connected to the concept of decoloniality. Decoloniality, as an epistemological stance, challenges colonial conditions and aims to revitalize the cultures, knowledge, and identities that were colonized ([Mignolo, 2007](#); [Quijano, 2007](#); [Mignolo & Walsh, 2018](#)). As [Mignolo \(2007\)](#) explains, decolonization involves not only confronting these colonial legacies but also celebrating the validity of colonized knowledge systems and local wisdom. A decolonial perspective in education seeks to foreground these alternative forms of knowledge as valid philosophical approaches to knowledge production ([Makoe, 2021](#); [Winkler, 2024](#), p. 3). In this framework, decolonial pedagogy, particularly in English language teaching, offers a counter-narrative to the dominant Euro-Western English pedagogical practices that often suppress local languages and knowledge systems ([Mignolo, 2007](#); [Kalyanpur et al., 2022](#)). According to [Abdi \(2011\)](#), the philosophy of decolonial education challenges the monopoly of any one group or region over education and promotes learning that is socially relevant, culturally viable, and developmentally empowering: “These should not be the monopoly of any group, region or continent” (p. 4). He outlines three premises central to this philosophy: first, education must revalue indigenous and local ways of knowing; second, it should minimize deculturating schemes; and third, it must foster international and national spaces that are culturally enriching and historically authentic. Thus, decolonial English language teaching involves harmonizing the English language with local epistemologies and knowledge systems, creating a more inclusive and equitable educational experience.

5 Results and Discussion

In this section, I present the study process, the outcome, and the findings of my study. The discussion has been structured into seven thematic subheadings.

5.1 ESL/EFL Vocabulary: Pedagogical Possibilities

Teaching vocabulary is one of the initial pedagogical steps in ESL/EFL school classrooms. It is argued that “if ESL teachers are attuned to effective strategies for teaching vocabulary, they could facilitate students’ proficiency in the four [listening, speaking, reading, writing] skills” ([Tham, 2010](#), p. 127). One standard method for teaching ESL/EFL vocabulary is to use an

English dictionary. In my study, I utilized the *Oxford English Dictionary* in its online version and ChatGPT to determine the meanings of all eighteen words. As an example, the dictionary meaning of the word 'glare' has been presented in Figure 2.

c1250-	glare, v. To look fixedly and fiercely. Const. at, on, upon. View entry
c1540-	glare, n.¹ A fierce or piercing look. View entry
1567-	glare, n.² U.S. A sheet of ice. View entry
1856-	glare, adj. Smooth and bright or translucent, glassy. Chiefly... View entry
c1386-	glare, variant of glair, n.¹ The white of an egg; frequently in full the glair... View entry

Figure 2 Dictionary meaning of the word 'glare'

I clicked the first meaning of the word 'glare', and the dictionary took me to another page, which was more detailed in Figure 3.

The screenshot shows the Oxford English Dictionary entry for 'glare'. The top navigation bar includes tabs: Factsheet, Etymology, Meaning & use, Pronunciation, Frequency, and Compounds & derived words. The 'Meaning & use' tab is active.

What does the verb *glare* mean?
There are **five** meanings listed in OED's entry for the verb *glare*. See 'Meaning & use' for definitions, usage, and quotation evidence.

ENTRY STATUS
OED is undergoing a continuous programme of revision to modernize and improve definitions. This entry has not yet been fully revised.

[See meaning & use >](#)

How is the verb *glare* pronounced?

BRITISH ENGLISH	U.S. ENGLISH
/gle:/	/gle(ə)r/
glair	glair

[See pronunciation >](#)

Where does the verb *glare* come from?

EARLIEST KNOWN USE
Middle English

The earliest known use of the verb *glare* is in the Middle English period (1150–1500). OED's earliest evidence for *glare* is from around 1250, in *Kentish Sermons*.
Activate Windows
Go to Settings to activate Windows

How common is the verb *glare*?
About **4** occurrences per million words in modern written English

Figure 3 Meaning elaboration in the dictionary

The screenshot shows that a dictionary, such as the *Oxford English Dictionary*, offers layers of meanings of a single English word by associating it with etymology, historical uses, pronunciation, frequency, and phrasal uses.

Then, I used ChatGPT for the meaning of the same word, 'Glare'. When I prompted ChatGPT, it generated the response as presented in Figure 4.

As a noun:

1. A strong, bright, and harsh light
2. A fierce or angry look

As a verb:

1. To shine with a strong, harsh light
2. To look at someone in an angry or fierce way

Figure 4 ChatGPT-Generated Meaning of the Word 'Glare'

The ChatGPT meaning was less elaborated compared to the dictionary response. Therefore, I asked ChatGPT to provide more detailed elaboration, and it generated the response as shown in Figure 5.

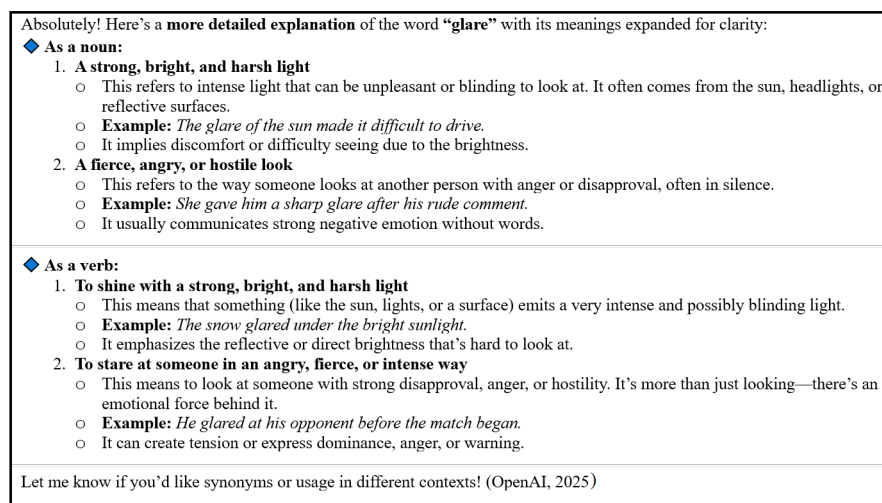


Figure 5 ChatGPT generating a detailed meaning of 'glare'

The ChatGPT response does not include additional aspects—etymology, pronunciation, historical uses—about the word. Additional prompts are needed to generate all those aspects of the word. The difference between the dictionary meaning and ChatGPT's meaning can be visualized as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Dictionary and/versus ChatGPT in Finding Word Meaning

Meaning of the word 'Glare	Dictionary Use	ChatGPT Use
Literal meaning given	Yes	Yes
Parts of Speech specified	Yes	Yes
Word used in a sentence as an example	Yes	Yes
Possibility for further exploration	Yes	Yes
Links attached for more meaning	Yes	No
Etymology	Yes	No
History	Yes	No
Pronunciation	Yes	No
The possibility of finding meaning in students' first language	No	Yes/No
Possibility to pose further inquiries/questions	No	Yes

The comparison, as shown in the table, suggests that using a dictionary may be more reliable and explanatory while teaching ESL/EFL vocabulary, even though all the available dictionaries may not be as detailed as the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Using dictionaries and ChatGPT in ESL/EFL classrooms helps students to learn ESL/EFL vocabulary, but a comparative approach enables students to think critically about AI tools like ChatGPT. They can evaluate both the potential and limitations of using AI. However, an English dictionary provides meaning only in English and not in other languages. Thus, while using an English dictionary, ESL/EFL students will be transferred to many other English words to understand the meaning of a word. It creates an English-only chain of words, causing students to travel from one word to the next without necessarily providing a precise meaning in their native language. In the context of Nepal, English is a second (or third or fourth) language for schoolchildren; therefore, an English-only dictionary may not always address their ESL/EFL needs. In ESL/EFL pedagogy, it is beneficial if an English teacher can teach the English language (L2) in relation to the students' mother tongue. In such exigencies, AI tools like ChatGPT may become a valuable ESL/EFL pedagogical tool, surpassing English-only dictionaries if an ESL/EFL teacher uses them in a decolonial manner. Hence, a critical and decolonial approach to using English dictionaries and AI tools enhances ESL/EFL pedagogy.

5.2 ESL/EFL Vocabulary and a Decolonial Use of ChatGPT

A decolonial approach in ESL/EFL pedagogy encourages students to discover the meaning of English vocabulary by connecting it to their local wisdom and linguistic diversity. An

English-only dictionary cannot offer such meanings, but AI tools like ChatGPT may serve as a translator. In this study, I prompted ChatGPT to translate the eighteen English words into five different languages twice. I prompted ChatGPT twice with two different Gmail accounts. In both responses, ChatGPT produced identical meanings of the eighteen different English words for the first four languages: English, Nepali, Maithili, Bhojपुरi, and Tharu. However, it produced two completely different scripts regarding the meaning of all those English words in the Tamang language. The prompts were the same, but responses were different. I have included one of ChatGPT’s responses, along with two different ChatGPT-generated Tamang scripts from the two different ChatGPT references, in [Table 4 \(OpenAI, 2025\)](#).

Table 4 ChatGPT-Produced Multilingual Vocabulary Sheet

Word	English	Nepali	Maithili	Bhojpuri	Tharu	Tamang 1	Tamang 2
Glare	1. A strong, harsh light 2. An angry stare	चम्किलो प्रकाश, रिसाएको दृष्टि	तेज रोशनी, क्रोधयुक्त नजर	तेज उजास, गुस्सेल नजर	तेज बत्तीयाँ, रीसको नजर	ཁ་ལ་མཁུ་, ཁ་ལ་ཤུག་	गुण गुण
Bum-first	With the buttocks coming first	पिठ्युँ पहिले	पाछा पहिने	पाछा से पहिले	पाछा पहिलका	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་ལ་	छुलाउलाउ
Fantastic	1. Extraordinary 2. Imaginative or fanciful	अद्भुत, कल्पनाशील	अद्भुत, कल्पना भरल	कमाल के, अजब गजब	अनौठ, कलपना भरल	འཇུག་མཁུ་, ཁ་ལ་མཁུ་	गुच्छ ग्लेहे
Pleaded	1. Begged emotionally 2. Presented a case in court	विनती गर्‍यो, मुद्दा राख्‍यो	निवेदन केलक	मिनती कइलक	बिन्ती करल	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་ལ་, མཁུ་ཁ་ལ་	गुपचगुप
Vapor	1. Steam or gas form of liquid	वाष्प	बाफ	बाफ	वास	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་	अझिउझु
Squid	A sea creature with tentacles	स्किड (समुन्द्री जनावर)	समुन्द्री जीव	समुन्द्री जीव	समुन्द्री जीव	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་	छुलाउलाउलाउ
Munching	Chewing steadily or vigorously	चपाउँदै	चबाइत	चबावत	चबाइत	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་	चोर्चो
Appreciate	1. Recognize the value of 2. Be thankful for	मूल्यांकन गर्नु, कदर गर्नु	सराहना करब	कद्र कइल	सम्मान करल	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་	चुल्चु
Conferred	1. Granted or gave 2. Discussed formally	प्रदान गर्‍यो, छलफल गर्‍यो	देल गेल, विचार भेल	दिहल गइल, बातचीत भइल	देल, बिचार भइल	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་, ཁ་ལ་ཁ་	झुल
Stew	1. A type of dish cooked slowly 2. Worry or fret (informal)	मासुयुक्त झोल, चिन्ता गर्नु	झोलदार खाना, चिन्ता	सूप, टेंशन	मासु झोल, चिन्ता	ཁ་ལ་མཁུ་	चुल्चु
Blows	1. Strikes or hits 2. Currents of air	प्रहार, हावा	मार, पवन	धूँसा, हवा	धक्का, हावा	མཁུ་ཁ་	झुल
Constraints	Limitations or restrictions	सीमाबद्धता	रोक	बाधा	रोक-टोक	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་	झुल
Peak	1. Top of a mountain 2. Highest point	चूचो, उच्चतम विन्दु	चोटी	चोटी	पर्वत टप	མཁུ་མཁུ་	झुल
Encounter	1. Unexpected meeting 2. Conflict or battle	अप्रत्याशित भेट, झगडा	भेट, मुठभेड	टकराव	भेट, झगडा	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་	झुल
Misfortune	Bad luck or unfortunate event	दुर्भाग्य	कुसमय	बुरा किस्मत	अभाग	ཁ་ལ་ཁ་	झुल
Revenge	Retaliation for harm	बदला	बदला	बदला	बदला	ཁ་ལ་མཁུ་	झुल
Snug	1. Comfortable and warm 2. Fitting closely	आरामदायक, टाँसिएको	सुगंधर	आरामदायक	चिपका	ཁ་ལ་	गुपचि
Secular	Not connected with religion	धर्मनिरपेक्ष	धर्मसंग असंबंधित	नधार्मिक	धर्म अलग	ཁ་ལ་ ཁ་ལ་	झुल

The responses of ChatGPT, as presented in the table, show that English can be taught by translating English words into many languages. ChatGPT can assist ESL/EFL teachers in translating the meaning of L1 into L2. Nevertheless, it has limitations: ChatGPT generated two different responses or translations of the Tamang script without specific instructions in prompting. Thus, the ChatGPT-generated vocabulary table suggests two key points: ChatGPT can be utilized decolonially in ESL/EFL classrooms to bridge L2 and L1, even if the teacher is not multilingual, and it can be used to raise students' awareness of potential inconsistencies and inaccuracies in ChatGPT responses. In this context, an ESL/EFL teacher can encourage students to critically think about how their first language has been (mis)represented in the ChatGPT responses. They can even resist ChatGPT responses, point out its flaws, and provide additional information, thereby contributing to the decolonization of AI tools.

5.3 Decolonial AI Literacy through ChatGPT in ESL/EFL Classrooms

The decolonial and critical use of ChatGPT indicated that ChatGPT is a valuable tool, but its information is not always reliable. However, this study reveals that one intriguing aspect of ChatGPT is its ability to confirm or validate its responses. In this study, I prompted ChatGPT to generate scripts of the two different Tamang scripts in Devanagari, the script of my first language, Nepali, so that I could determine whether they read or sound similar or different. Here, I accept my limited linguistic competence. As a response to my prompt, ChatGPT generated two other responses, which I have attached in [Table 5](#) and [6](#) (OpenAI, 2025).

Table 5 Tamang Script 1 Transcribed in Devanagari Script by ChatGPT

English Word	Tamang (Original Script)	Tamang (Devanagari Script)
Glare	°A° -ΔA °nF	साम बा सकर
Bum-first	na°°° °A na°°	कासम मा कसम
Fantastic	°AΔna Fna	°Aनक रक
Pleaded	°A naFna	सा करका
Vapor	naA°° °°na	कासम समक
Squid	°A°na na°°	सामक कसम
Munching	°AΔna na°°	सानम कम
Appreciate	A naFna °naF	ाकरक सकर
Conferred	naA°°° na°°	कासम कम
Stew	°A-Δna	साबका
Blows	-ΔA°°°	बासम
Constraints	°A°F	सामर
Peak	-ΔAΔna	बानक
Encounter	°A°na	सामक
Misfortune	°AΔF	सानर
Revenge	°naAΔ°	सकान
Snug	°A na°°	साकस
Secular	naA °naF°	का सकरम

Table 6 Tamang Script 2 Transcribed in Devanagari Script by ChatGPT

English Word	Tamang (Tibetan Script)	Tamang (Devanagari Script)
Glare	ལྷ་ཁྱུ་	ल्हाक्-ल्हाक्
Bum-first	ཕུག་མཐོའུ་	प्युग्-मथोड
Fantastic	ཏཱ་ཅན་རྒྱུ་རྩེ་	हाचाङ्-न्यिङ्-रजे
Pleaded	ཐུབ་པས་པ་	झु वा बतब
Vapor	འཕྲིལ་ལུག་	खिल-लुग
Squid	ཐུ་མཚན་མར་མོ་	ग्या-त्सेन्-मर्-मो
Munching	བཞོན་པ་	बर्कोल वा
Appreciate	བསུ་བ་	ब्सु वा
Conferred	རྒྱུ་པ་	प्रे पा
Stew	བསུས་པ་	ब्सुस् पा
Blows	ཐུག་པ་	ग्यग् पा
Constraints	ལྷན་དཀའ་	छुल्-दका
Peak	རི་ཆེ་	रि-रत्से
Encounter	ཐུག་པ་	थुग् पा
Misfortune	མྱོན་	क्योन्
Revenge	ལུན་ལོག་	लेन्-लोग्
Snug	ཐུབ་མེད་	खब-मोड
Secular	ཆོས་མེད་པ་	छो मेद् पा

After reading the two Tamang scripts in the Devanagari script, it confirmed that the Tamang scripts generated by ChatGPT were not compatible in terms of script and sound; they were different. Here, the important point to remember is that ChatGPT addresses the ambiguities and inconsistencies found in the responses it generates. It implies that ChatGPT can be utilized for various decolonial purposes with critical awareness, although I do not claim that its self-validating responses are always accurate.

To understand it further, I then asked ChatGPT if there exist different scripts within the

Tamang language, and it answered that Tamyig and Tibetan scripts are used within the Tamang language. Then, I asked ChatGPT to generate the difference between these two versions by referencing one English word, and it generated the response translating the meaning of the English word ‘speak’ as follows (Table 7) (OpenAI, 2025).

Table 7 Two Different Tamang Scripts for the word ‘speak’ Generated by ChatGPT

Script	Usage Context	Example in Script	Devanagari	English
Tamyig	Cultural, religious, experimental	འཕྲིལ་པུ་	बोले	Speak
Devanagari	Most widely used in daily life	बोले	बोले	Speak
Tibetan	Religious texts, Buddhist influence	བོད་ཡིག་	बोड यिग	Tibetan script
Roman	Informal, online, linguistic study	bolnu	बोलुनु	To speak

The responses confirmed that ChatGPT produced two Tamang scripts in my responses from two Gmail accounts. However, I did not specifically instruct ChatGPT to produce any script; I was unaware of that. If so, why did ChatGPT generate two different scripts, though it was not specified in the prompt? One reason might be due to my lack of prompting skills. If I had instructed ChatGPT to create a specific version of the Tamang script, it might have generated what I needed. I realized I needed proper prompting skills to use AI tools like ChatGPT. On the other hand, it was the contextual bias of ChatGPT to generate responses without correctly understanding or confirming what I was looking for. Therefore, in an ESL/EFL classroom, a teacher has the opportunity to engage students in a game of prompting and doubting. Such prompting and doubting create cross-linguistic dialogues and foster critical awareness about the potential and limitations of AI responses in learning ESL/EFL vocabulary.

5.4 Use of ChatGPT in Decoloniality-Informed ESL/EFL Pedagogy

One effective technique for teaching English vocabulary is using words in sentences. Therefore, in my experimentation with ChatGPT, I prompted it to generate the meaning of eighteen words by using them in sentences. ChatGPT generated responses, which I have presented in Table 8 (OpenAI, 2025).

Table 8 ChatGPT Using Words in Sentences

Words	ChatGPT-Generated Sentences
Glare	The teacher gave me a glare when I was talking in class.
Bum-first	He fell bum-first into the muddy puddle, laughing all the way.
Fantastic	The view from the mountain top was absolutely fantastic.
Pleaded	She pleaded for another chance to explain her actions.
Vapor	The hot tea created a cloud of vapor when I took a sip.
Squid	The squid can change colors to blend into its environment.
Munching	He was munching on an apple while watching TV.
Appreciate	I really appreciate your help with the project.
Conferred	The committee conferred before making the final decision.
Stew	My grandmother made a delicious beef stew for dinner.
Blows	The boxer received several hard blows during the match.
Constraints	The budget constraints made it difficult to complete the project.
Peak	We reached the peak of the mountain after a long hike.
Encounter	I had a surprising encounter with an old friend in the supermarket.
Misfortune	His misfortune was that he missed the last train home.
Revenge	The hero sought revenge for the wrongs done to his family.
Snug	The blanket felt snug and warm on a cold winter night.
Secular	The country is secular, meaning it does not favor any religion.

This ChatGPT response suggests that ChatGPT helps students understand the meaning of words by reading them in context through sentences. However, one of the limitations is that these sentences do not respond to the diverse nuances of the Nepali linguistic and cultural

communities for Nepali ESL/EFL students. They do not connect English words to the local culture; the word and world are disconnected. In a decolonial English language classroom, an instructor's responsibility is to connect the English language with diverse Nepali students. However, it is unlikely that an ESL/EFL teacher can be proficient in students' L1 and familiar with the local ethnic diversity. In such exigencies, ESL/EFL teachers can utilize AI tools like ChatGPT to familiarize themselves with the culture that every ESL/EFL student brings into the classroom. With this decolonial insight, I asked ChatGPT if it could create sentences using the eighteen words while addressing the cultural diversity of the five different ethnic and linguistic communities. It replied positively. When I prompted ChatGPT to generate sentences incorporating the cultural nuances of those five communities, it generated elaborate responses. I have copied the ChatGPT-produced cultural meaning of the first word 'glare' in Figure 6.

Absolutely! Here are **cultural examples** for each language—**Nepali, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Tharu, and Tamang**—based on the vocabulary words we have. These examples reflect the unique traditions, beliefs, and practices within each culture:

1. Glare

- **Nepali:** In Nepali culture, when a **parent** gives a "glare" to a child, it usually signifies disapproval, especially in the context of respecting elders **during festivals like Tihar**.
- **Maithili:** A "glare" from an **elder** in Maithili culture **during Chhath Puja** can be a silent reprimand for not following the traditional rituals properly.
- **Bhojpuri:** In Bhojpuri culture, a "glare" is often seen during weddings when the bride's family looks sternly at the groom's side to ensure they respect customs **during the Baraat procession**.
- **Tharu:** The "glare" in Tharu culture can be seen during traditional dance performances, where the elder women glare at younger performers to encourage precision in moves **during festivals like Maghi**.
- **Tamang:** In Tamang culture, a "glare" from the **village elder** during religious ceremonies might signal a reminder to stay focused **on the Shakyamuni Buddha prayers**. (OpenAI, 2025)

Figure 6 ChatGPT generating cultural meaning of 'glare'

The ChatGPT response, as it claims, writes the meaning of the word 'glare', connecting it to five ethnicities. While doing so, it can be observed that ChatGPT added the names of the festivals as part of culture and generated them in bold. The ChatGPT responses suggest that an ESL/EFL teacher can utilize ChatGPT to gain familiarity with students' cultures and communities. Nevertheless, upon closer examination of the ChatGPT responses, I have highlighted some limitations in red. First, there is almost the same pattern of references in all sentences. For example, ChatGPT added major festivals from all linguistic communities and used the word 'glare' to symbolize anger on those festive occasions. However, it can be argued that glaring does not necessarily need a festive occasion; any cultural occasion may trigger glaring if someone does something wrong. Therefore, in a decolonial ESL/EFL classroom, an instructor can encourage students to rewrite and revise ChatGPT-generated sentences, adding their own cultural or ethnic meanings. For example, I can revise the ChatGPT-generated response decolonially: "In my community, glaring at parents is understood as a lack of discipline in all contexts because we believe that parents are the human manifestation of God, goodness, and sacrifice." In this example, I am expressing the meaning of the word 'glare' associated with my culture. Hence, an ESL/EFL teacher can encourage students to use ChatGPT decolonially while learning vocabulary with a critical awareness.

5.5 Decolonial ESL Pedagogy: Connecting L1 and L2 Using ChatGPT

ESL/EFL teachers are unlikely to be proficient in their students' native languages. Therefore, there is always a risk of monolingual instruction and English-only ideology in ESL/EFL classrooms. However, using AI tools like ChatGPT, teachers can create opportunities to teach ESL/EFL vocabulary in students' first languages. In this study, I prompted ChatGPT to translate the cultural examples of 'glare' into five different languages for all eighteen words, but I have copied the ChatGPT-produced meaning of the word 'appreciate' in Figure 7 (OpenAI, 2025).

Word: Appreciate

English: To recognize the value of something.

Nepali: तिहारमा सासू-ससुराले बुहारीको कामको प्रशंसा गर्छन्।

Maithili: मैथिली गीत-संगीत में कलाकारक सराहना होइत अछि।

Bhojpuri: भोजपुरी नाच देखिके लोग ताली बजाके सराहना करेला।

Tharu: थारू संस्कृति में पाहुनक स्वागत के बहुत सराहना होला।

Tamang: तामाङहरू बुद्धको शिक्षाको कदर गर्छन्। (Open AI, 2025)

Figure 7 Meaning of the Word 'Appreciate' in Five Different Languages

ChatGPT's responses demonstrate that even a monolingual ESL/EFL teacher can initiate

multilingual conversations using AI tools. With such multilingual responses, the teacher can engage students to connect the meaning of English (L2) with their mother tongue (L1) with critical awareness. I am pleased that ChatGPT provided the meaning of the English word 'appreciate' in my first language, Nepali. However, the ChatGPT-generated response sounds funny, and the example is less culturally relevant. For instance, the Nepali meaning of the word can be translated as "*mother-in-law and father-in-law appreciate the work of the daughter-in-law during Tihar*," a Hindu festival. In my culture, Tihar is a festival that prioritizes the pure and divine bonding between brothers and sisters. It falls once a year and is the only occasion when sisters worship and bless their brothers. Therefore, referencing father-in-law, mother-in-law, and daughter-in-law in the sentence is a deviation from the cultural ethos of Tihar. In this context, the instructor's role in an ESL/EFL classroom is to encourage students to identify and correct inaccuracies and misrepresentations, and provide culturally relevant examples to support AI in becoming more inclusive. Thus, when students work with AI tools like ChatGPT in ESL/EFL settings, discussing their limitations and possibilities fosters their critical AI literacy and connects them with their language and culture.

5.6 Critical AI Literacy: A Decolonial Human Intervention

While generating the meaning of the English word 'appreciate' in five different languages, as shown in Figure 7, ChatGPT could not generate sentences in the Tamang script in this example. Reflecting on it, I asked ChatGPT if it was unable to produce sentences in the Tamang script. ChatGPT responded as follows:

You're right, I don't have the ability to write in **Tamang language** (a Tibetic language) accurately, especially given the complexities of its script and grammar. Tamang is often written in **Devanagari** or **Tibetan script** depending on the region, and I don't currently support generating text directly in those scripts. However, I can assist in offering translations or phonetic writing in **Romanized Tamang**, based on the information I have. (Open AI, 2025)

Then, I asked ChatGPT if its users could assist ChatGPT in becoming proficient in the Tamang script by providing Tamang vocabulary and grammar. It replied:

Yes, if you provide me with Tamang vocabulary and grammar details, I can store that information and use it to rewrite sentences or translate based on the provided rules and vocabulary. If Tamang speakers share specific vocabulary, grammatical structures, and their proper usage, I can learn from that and generate Tamang-based sentences or examples accordingly. Feel free to share any Tamang vocabulary or grammar rules, and I'll store it to help with future tasks. Let me know how you'd like to proceed! (Open AI, 2025)

The conversation with ChatGPT implies both the limitations and potential of AI tools. ChatGPT has not developed a comprehensive linguistic repertoire in many languages worldwide. However, it has the potential to be trained further. Therefore, ChatGPT requires decolonial human intervention and intelligence. It suggests that ESL/EFL classrooms can play a role in the decolonization of AI tools by encouraging students to share their linguistic knowledge with AI tools. When such decolonial praxes occur in ESL/EFL classrooms, ESL/EFL teachers can encourage students to protect and promote their language and culture by engaging in dialogue with AI tools.

5.7 Teaching Word through Image: Decolonial Use of ChatGPT in ESL/EFL Settings

ESL/EFL pedagogy involves teaching vocabulary through translation and concepts. Sometimes, teaching the conceptual understanding of specific L2 vocabulary can be complicated and tricky. To partially address this issue, an ESL/EFL teacher can utilize AI tools like ChatGPT. In this study, I prompted ChatGPT to generate images to conceptualize the eighteen English words. It agreed, and I input those eighteen words. In response, ChatGPT generated an image response that contained all eighteen words along with their meaning in Figure 8 (OpenAI, 2025).

The images next to the words demonstrate a compatibility between the words and their visual meanings. However, there are some inconsistencies. For instance, in the visual representation of the word 'conferred,' the image does not resemble a conferring incident; it seems to depict a person giving suggestions or counseling to another person. In this context, ESL/EFL teachers can engage students in discussions about the opportunities and limitations of ChatGPT's responses, thereby sparking critical awareness of AI. From a decolonial perspective, the images fail to



Figure 8 ChatGPT-generated Images for Eighteen English Words

represent the ethnic and cultural diversity of any location or nation. They include children and adults, but there is a lack of diversity. It indicates that ChatGPT-generated images generalize or universalize human identities. Dobrin (2023) writes that AI tools have “visual bias” that includes “the algorithmic privileging of certain skin tones, facial features, body shapes, and beauty standards” (p. 106). In the images above, the people depicted do not hint at the cultural diversity of the world. In my reflection, the potential causes behind it might be the way ChatGPT has been trained and my lack of prompting skills. Following this reflection, I prompted ChatGPT to generate images visually representing the cultural diversity of Nepal’s five linguistic communities, while illustrating the meaning of the word ‘glare’. Then, ChatGPT generated in Figure 9 (OpenAI, 2025).



Figure 9 ChatGPT-generated Images for the Cultural Meaning of the Word ‘Glare’

In the illustrations, the background, clothing, and facial expressions convey a sense of ethnic diversity in Nepal. The meaning of the English word ‘glare’ has been contextualized and localized with different ethnic groups. However, there exist biases in illustrations. One bias in the images is the term ‘Nepali’ and its consequent image. All the ethnicities represented are Nepali, and ChatGPT has produced an image of a Brahmin-Chhetri wearing a cap, commonly known as the *Nepali topi*. It might be because the first language of most Brahmin-Chhetri in Nepal is Nepali, and ChatGPT might have collected that information. Additionally, the images of females in Nepali and Maithili, as well as those of males in Bhojpuri and Tharu, are the same; they do not appear different. Therefore, to confirm to what extent ChatGPT is informed of a particular ethnic identity, I asked ChatGPT how the image of the woman in the fifth image represents the Tamang identity. I have copied its response in Figure 10.

The final image represents **Tamang culture**, which you can recognize through:

- **Traditional Tamang attire:** such as the *Tamang ghalek* (vest), *bhoto*, and *Bakkhu* or woolen shawls, often worn with belts and jewelry.
- **Himalayan highland setting,** often mountainous or forested, reflecting Tamang settlements.
- **Facial features and expressions** stylized in ways common to Tamang portraiture.
- **Cultural expression of “glare”** is likely depicted through an intense, silent exchange rather than dramatic gestures, which are more common in Tamang storytelling. (OpenAI, 2025)

Figure 10 ChatGPT justifying its sense of Tamang culture

This response suggests that ChatGPT possesses information about Tamang culture that an ESL/EFL teacher may not be familiar with. Nevertheless, in real ESL/EFL classroom settings,

the teacher can invite students to engage in a conversation about how ChatGPT represents their language and identity. Thus, (mis)representation can be one of the potential decolonial and critical AI literacy topics in ESL/EFL classrooms.

6 Conclusion

This study affirms that a decolonial ESL/EFL pedagogical approach offers an opportunity to explore the possibilities and limitations of utilizing AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in the context of teaching and learning ESL/EFL vocabulary. A decolonial approach to integrating students' first languages (L1) and cultural knowledge into English vocabulary learning through the use of ChatGPT not only enhances students' vocabulary acquisition skills but also challenges colonial language hierarchies in ESL/EFL classrooms. To do so, ESL/EFL students require decolonial and critical AI literacy insights when using AI tools like ChatGPT to resist potential biases and inaccuracies. Pedagogically, encouraging students to use ChatGPT decolonially and critically, ESL/EFL teachers can connect English (L2) with students' L1 more responsibly. Additionally, this approach encourages teachers and students to refine, review, and revise AI-generated content and its (mis)representation, then return it to AI to decolonize how AI tools collect and store information about local languages and cultural contexts. Hence, with the growing availability of AI affordances, the interventionist role and responsibility of human intelligence on artificial intelligence are ever-increasing. To address these needs, ESL/EFL teacher education programs need to introduce critical AI literacy and decolonial pedagogies to prepare responsible ESL/EFL educators. That being said, allowing and encouraging both teachers and students to use mobile devices responsibly and ethically in ESL/EFL classrooms, connected to a sustainable network, is equally necessary. Hence, the study opens the avenues for empirical research to understand how ESL/EFL students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds experience and navigate AI tools critically and decolonially in different parts of the world.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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