

## An Argument for Including Critical Media Literacy in EFL Curriculum and Pedagogy

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The purpose of this paper was to provide a theoretical outline of why critical media literacy (CML) should be included in Korean English education teaching practices and teacher training curricula. CML is a pedagogy designed to sensitize students to ideological meanings embedded in media that socialize people into specific values, beliefs, and behaviors. This paper begins with a review of theoretical foundations of CML including the symbolic nature of human consciousness signification and the processes of socialization, which are theoretically encapsulated within the dialectic among post-structural theories of discourse and representation. A review of literature on CML and its application to English as a foreign language (EFL) is then presented. Applications of CML include situated inquiry, discussion, creation of group multimodal projects suggests, how it fosters the development of critical thinking skills, the acquisition and use of new vocabulary idioms, and transforming student perceptions of themselves and their society.

**Key words:** critical media literacy, critical literacy, EFL, signification, socialization, representation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many scholars have reported with growing alarm the increasing nationalism taking place internationally and its concomitant erosion of democracy since the beginning of the millennium. Many of these scholars theorize that the growth of neoliberalism through globalization as a major contributing factor to this phenomenon (Beiber, 2018; Castells, 2015; Giroux, 2015). Of course, such literature not only attributes the rise of nationalism and the erosion of democracy to neoliberalism, but also to the phenomena of increasing income inequality, racism and ethnic violence, gender bias, rampant consumerism and other social ills facing societies today. The recent and continuing problems facing America in these areas is perhaps the best example of what is currently occurring in many nations across the world (Keeley, 2015; OXFAM, 2017). The point of raising these issues here is not to theorize and discuss the nature of these phenomena, but to investigate, discuss, and suggest possible educational solutions to these socio-political problems. The fundamental question that arises when confronting these issues is why citizens in many democratic nations continue to vote for politicians who obviously favor policies that are against their interests and wellbeing. Theorists that study these phenomena relate that people are socialized into their beliefs through social contacts, education, and the media (Giroux, 2019; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Luke, 2013).

Critical media literacy (CML) is a form of pedagogy designed to sensitize students to the ideological meanings embedded in media that socialize people into specific values, beliefs, and behaviors that may not benefit them or their society (Kellner & Share, 2007). In doing so, CML also fosters the understanding of what social groups and corporate or government entities benefit to these meanings, thus enabling a deeper understanding of the workings of society (Beach, 2007; Kellner, 2020). The genesis of CML is generally attributed to the Neo-Marxist critical theory of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, 1991; Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972; Marcuse, 1964) and was further developed through theories within cultural studies (Giroux & McLaren, 1994; Hammer & Kellner, 2009), and critical literacy (CL) (Beach & Myers, 2001; Giroux, 1989). Post-structural theories of discourse and textuality expanded the theories of the Frankfurt School regarding the power of the 'culture industry' by theorizing that textuality and meaning (representation) resides in in all forms of human signification (Bakhtin, 1990; Hall, 1997). These understandings of textuality and representation resonated with theories of critical literacy which has also included CML within its theoretical and pedagogical corpus (Beach, 2007; Beach & Myers, 2001; Kim, 2018b). Indeed, it is easily seen how the theoretical foundations and practices of CML and CL have elided to the extent that they are often seen as the same thing. Thus, both CML and CL pedagogical practices are similar as various forms of situated inquiry are used. These forms of pedagogy view inquiry as situating social issues within multiple contexts such as ethnicity, age, gender,

culture, and other social groups to better understand issues of power and inequality in various textual forms. As such, CML has become relevant to diverse fields of study including political science (Schmitt, Rieger, Ernst, & Roth, 2018), social studies (Harshman, 2017), journalism (Clark, 2013), and English as a foreign language (EFL) (Kim, 2005, Yeh, 2010).

Of particular interest to the issues presented in this paper is the general absence of CML in public education and the ubiquity of information communication technologies (ICT) such as the internet, cell phones, and social networking services (SNS). One does not require an empirical study to understand the great influence ICT has on contemporary people as the simple observation of everyday public contexts clearly demonstrates to anyone paying attention that most people are usually engaged with their cell phones as if there is an umbilicus connecting the two. Indeed, on a Korean subway it is difficult to spot someone who is not engaged with their cell phone. The lack of CML in public education is more important today given how many studies have shown how the growth of ICT has demonstrated the power that media representation has on individuals and societies (Castells, 2015, Harvey, 2020). Even given a rudimentary understanding of the nature of socialization it is difficult to understand why some form of media literacy is generally not included in educational curricula, particularly as the pedagogical uses of multimodal texts in the classroom continues to increase over time (Share, Kellner, & Funk, 2016; Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016).

While the general absence of CML in kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school public education (K-12), and post-secondary educational curricula exists, it is also uncommon in EFL curriculum. Even when it is conceptually included in EFL curricula, it is generally used to focus on the form of language, not to gain a critical understanding of the representational meanings embedded within the multimodal texts (Kellner & Share, 2007). The relevance of CML to EFL may be seen in the importance of understanding the target culture in communicative language teaching (CLT) (Kramsch, 1993; Savignon, 1991), the increasing use of multimodal texts and intertextuality (Van Leeuwen, 2015; Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016), multiliteracies (Lee, Lo, & Chin 2021; New London Group, 1996). In addition, CML's use of multimodal texts represents a modern use of schema theory as such texts, by nature, are useful in activating the background knowledge (texts) of students (Kachru, 2003; Widdowson, 1980). Studies within EFL and English as a second language (ESL) also claim that the use of multimodal texts fosters the development of error correction, motivation, oral proficiency, learner autonomy, and critical thinking skills (Choudhury & Share, 2012; Kim, 2018a; Kung, 2016; Vargas, 2006). It is also worth noting that the close theoretical and pedagogical relationship between CL and CML is important given the Korean national English curriculum's (KNEC) inclusion of many CL concepts such as critical thinking, communication, and creativity (Pederson, 2019). Thus, CML's relevance to EFL exists within multiple theoretical and pedagogical frames.

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate why CML is both relevant and important to EFL practices and to further scholarly research and debate regarding the possibilities of including CML into Korean English education practices. In order to do so, the theoretical analyses included in this paper begin with an analysis of how the symbolic nature of human consciousness and signification leads to theories of discourse that explain how human meaning is encoded into representations of meaning and propagated through discourse. This dialectic among consciousness, signification, discourse, and representation is followed by a theoretical analysis of how this dialectic defines the mechanisms through which people are socialized into specific ideologies and behaviors. These analyses are necessary as they demonstrate the theoretical foundations for curriculum designers and teacher educators within Korean English education. These analyses are followed by an analysis of current theories and practices of CML and an analysis of how CML is currently being practiced in EFL. In doing so, this paper hopes to further the discussion of CML in Korean English education and help to lay a foundation for its incorporation into Korean education, EFL curricula, and teacher training.

## 2. HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS AND SIGNIFICATION

To fully understand the nature and importance of CML in education and EFL it is necessary to have a greater understanding of human consciousness and signification. While many theories of human consciousness exist within the social sciences and humanities, those that theorize consciousness as being representational are most applicable to the analyses included in this paper (Lacan, 1964; Stavrakakis, 2007; Tye 1995). As the analyses covered in this paper focus on the nature of language, signification, and discourse, only theories that follow such lines of reasoning will be included. Lacan's (1964) work is perhaps most appropriate to begin this analysis as his theory of consciousness is intimately connected on the relationship between the symbolic nature of language and consciousness. According to Lacan, people are born with an animal consciousness that reflects *jouissance*, which is the pure joy in experiencing life. Stavrakakis (2007) relates that Lacan's (1964) theories explicate how entrance into the symbolic realm of language alters human consciousness through the construction of conceptual maps, or mental representations, of the myriad physical objects in our environment as well as the concepts we use to navigate our environment. This baptism and continuing emergence into the symbolic world form a consciousness that is continually be shaped by symbolic interactions means that human perception and thought are symbolic in nature (Stavrakakis, 2007; Tye 1995). It also means that introduction into the symbolic world means the loss of *jouissance*. Even emotions, which are instinctive in nature and often come to us without symbolic definition, are soon

symbolically defined. Yet even emotions are, to some extent, symbolically re-defined through social experiences and the processes of signification (Lacan, 1964; Stavrakakis, 2007; Tye 1995). As such, people think and communicate to each other symbolically. Vygotsky (1978) adds to this line of reasoning by theorizing human consciousness as being symbolic in nature as well as it being a symbology shared with other humans. This shared symbology is important to understand as it not only means that the mental representations constructed within human consciousness are a learned phenomenon, but that they are also shaped by the historical nature of human communication. Thus, consciousness is an individual manifestation of symbolically shared knowledge and experiences.

Language is commonly referred to as a symbolic system in the social sciences. Saussure (2012) theorized language as being comprised of a system of *signs* that is a dialectical relationship between the *signifier* (a word, concept, or physical object) and the *signified* (the mental representation of the *signifier*). Hall (1997) clarifies the nature of this relationship by stating that the sign is a "...union of a form which signifies (*signifier*)...and an idea signified (*signified*)" (p. 30). Saussure (2012) theorized that the production of meanings within language were organized according to the differences between signifiers. Thus, it is the differences between signified understandings which signifies meaning. While Saussure's theories are not specifically about human consciousness, they are similar to Lacan's (1964) in that signs become conceptual maps that are fixed, or negotiated, into human consciousness as cultural codes. As such, the nature of signification is specific to each culture. In addition, Saussure also theorized that such cultural codes were not historically fixed and were thus subject to ongoing cultural change. Thus, dialectic between language and culture are fluid and may never be fixed within time.

Saussure's (2012) theories led to and were further developed by the field of semiotics which added the theoretical construct of the *interpretant* to the sign. The interpretant is theorized as a being fundamental aspect of a sign that functions as a mediating factor between individual and group interpretations of a specific sign (Eco, 1984; Freadman, 2004; Hawkes, 1977). It is worth noting that Saussure envisioned the existence of the interpretant but refused it in the end as he believed that it could not be fruitfully studied by the positivistic scientific methodologies used in linguistics at the time (Hall, 1997). The function of the interpretant is commonly referred to as representation in the social sciences. This understanding of representation refers to the conceptual map of how a sign is interpreted in the individual mind and within social groups and cultures (or discourses). Representations, then, are significations of ideas and concepts through texts, such as the written and spoken word, art, and media specific to the individual, or social group that signifies them, and other individuals and groups who interpret them. As such, representations are not fixed and are constantly changing as they are differently interpreted by individuals and social groups (Hall, 1997; Hawkes, 1977). The growth of human societies over time necessarily means that the

meanings taken from representations differ and grow as well. In addition, this means that dominant and alternative meanings coexist within and among societies. Thus, understanding representational theory greatly expands our understanding of the functioning of human signification in the social world.

The dialectical nature of social signifying practices encompassed within theories of semiotics and representation informed the development of post-structural theories of discourse as previous theories did not adequately address how signification, or the right to signify, was inextricably bound to social relations of power. While the general understanding of discourse in linguistics and language studies is often understood as the examination of discrete chunks of language (Fairclough, 1995), Gee (1989) refers to this limited understanding as [d]iscourse, whereas post-structural theories of [D]iscourse theorize a *discursive*, or mutually co-constructive conception of discourse that is a dialectical relationship among language, social practices, knowledge, and power (Foucault, 1984; Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1993). In addition, discourses are theorized to be hierarchical in nature, which means that within a singular discourse there are counter-discourses that have their own social signifying practices, behaviors, and norms. As such, some discourses will be both aligned with, and at odds with, other discourses within the overall discourse (society). This fractious nature of discourse also means that within a hierarchy of discourses, there are always dominant discourses as well as counter discourses that are in dissent against some of the ideologies and social practices of the dominant discourse in a society, corporation, or other social grouping (Gee, 1996). As such, representations circulating with a society also have dominant and alternative meanings and interpretations (Hall, 1997; Hawkes, 1977). In these ways discourse determines the distribution of the different forms of power within human societies as well as the right to signify (Foucault, 1984). Bourdieu and Waquant (1992) summate the nature of this power by stating that “To try to understand linguistically the power of linguistic expressions, to try to ground in language the principle and mechanisms of the efficacy of language, is to forget that authority comes to language from outside” (pp.167-168), that is, from discourse. It is this dialectical relationship between signification and power that is of specific interest to the theoretical discussions in this paper.

Understanding the dialectical relationship among symbolic consciousness, signification, representation, and discourse gives insight into how CML is relevant to EFL practices. Besides the necessary relationship between the target language and culture that is a fundamental part of CLT (Kramersch, 1993; Savignon, 1991), current social issues such as gender equality (Jung, 2013; Kim, 2021), elitism, and consumerism (Kim, 2020; Yoon & Seok, 1996) are representations that are embedded in western as well as Korean media platforms. As such, CML would facilitate deeper understandings of the target culture and how such representations affect Korean culture. Thus, CML practice facilitates language development as well as cross-cultural understanding.

### 3. SOCIALIZATION

The predominant means of understanding the processes of socialization in the social sciences lies in post-structural theories of discourse (Hall, 1997). Foucault (1984) theorized that it is not people who speak, but discourses that speak through people. While this may not equate to a theory of consciousness, it clearly theorizes that what people think and believe is acquired through discourse beginning with their entrance into the symbolic world and continuing throughout their lives. Foucault's conception of discourse also theorizes that nothing exists outside of discourse. Of course, this does not mean that existence lies solely within human understanding, but that all human meaning resides within discourse. Similarly, Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* defines how meaning within an individual's mind is a product of how many discourses a person has acquired and that the only means of thinking outside of this box is through the acquisition of what Gee (1989) calls *secondary* discourses. According to Gee everyone has a primary discourse that is acquired through a person's family and immediate community and that a myriad of secondary discourses are acquired through social interactions, education, and the media. Thus, socialization is a process of acquiring new, or transformed, representational maps through a process of the acquisition of secondary discourses. A simpler way of understanding the relationship between discourse and socialization is the understanding that people are socialized through the institutions of society such as education, government, and media.

In order to understand the nature of representation and discourse it is also necessary to understand the nature of textuality. While most people understand textuality as the written word, scholars like Bakhtin (1990) and Street (2007) define textuality as anything that can be 'read' by people, such as written text, media representations, art, clothing, and facial expressions, to name a few. Although, it is easily seen how these differing textual forms create and are identified as representational maps within human consciousness, and thus discourse, it must also be recognized that the nature of how textuality is represented through discourse has greatly changed through the development of modern ICT and how this has also changed the nature of socialization. Rideout's (2013) study reporting that American children, from the ages of 8 through 18, spend ten hours a day on ICT gives much weight to this issue. Castells' (2015) theory of *The Network Society* perhaps best explicates how the increasing development of ICT has altered the processes of socialization. Castells theorizes that socialization has always occurred through social networks. From the genesis of *Homo Sapiens Sapiens*, people have always been socialized through social contact with people from their own, and other, groups. Thus, social networking is synonymous with discourse. The achievement of Castells' theory lies in how he explicates how ICT has exponentially increased the speed and range of human communication, and subsequently discourse and socialization. While most people may view this as miraculous and of great advantage to

humanity, it is also recognized to be fraught with danger as it raises the questions of who controls the content (or knowledge) within these representations, what social groups benefit from them, and are they pro or anti-democratic in nature? As CML is not included in most educational curricula and people from all age groups, particularly the young, are spending an increasing amount of time on ICT, it is clear that people are being passively socialized into ideologies, desires, and beliefs that may not be in the best interests of themselves or their societies (Apple, 2010; Beach, 2007; Giroux, 2019).

Understanding the processes of socialization illustrates how Korean English education is strategically placed for CML education given the increasing Americanization or Westernization of Korean society (Kim & Kwon, 2017; Park, 2009), universal English education and the importance of the test of English for international communication (TOEIC) (Shin, 2010), the continuing growth of Korea as an economic and technological powerhouse (Bahk & Shin, 2012), and the ubiquity of access to English ICT (Castells, 2015). Indeed, it may be seen that Korean English education's natural use of English multimodal texts uniquely places it as a field of study aptly suited for the application of CML practices.

#### **4. CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY**

The purpose of CML is to sensitize students to the presence of embedded ideologies within media representations. The reason why many scholars deem CML is necessary to include in education is that people tend to passively accept these embedded meanings. In specific terms, ideologies are coded into media representations through a combination of visual and audio inputs, which people often decode in the ways that the producers of a specific representation intend. This means that people are being socialized into that affect their world views, which is a specific aspect of the nature of discursive relations of power. By exposing students to the ways in which media representations present meaning, it allows students to discover why and how they are being manipulated to believe and behave in specific ways. Doing opens opportunities for students to transform their understanding of themselves and the society they live in, engage in democratic processes, and opens possibilities for positive social change (Beach, 2007; Kellner, 2020).

CML is generally considered to have begun in the academic field of cultural studies and had its origins in Marxist theory and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. The foundational theories of CML theorized that the rise of media culture increasingly transmitted ideological representations to passive audiences which often undermined issues of social justice, democratic principles, and constructed desires that fed rising consumerism (Beach, 2007; Kellner & Share, 2007). British scholars at Birmingham University extended these initial conceptions to theorize that the nature of individual social positioning, such as



race, class, and gender, mediated the interpretation of media representations in ways that could enable people to rethink socially unjust ideologies (Buckingham, 1996; Gauntlett & Hill, 1999). In simple terms, this means that media representations are not neutral and need to be critically examined. CML theory has since been further developed by the addition of theories from feminism, post-structuralism and postmodernism, queer theory, and semiotics (Kellner, 2020). In addition, these theories have been taken up by the pedagogical move towards multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996). CML is also often elided with CL as they share the same theoretical views on the necessity of situated, or critical inquiry, dialogism, and social justice, as well as publishing the results of student inquiries. A simple review of the best-known literature on CML reveals that not only is Freire's (1970) name mentioned, but the nature of his theories of CL as well. Indeed, it could be argued that the theories of CML and CL are almost synonymous as they both share the same extended view of textuality and pedagogical schema as well as their development through neo-Marxist theory (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Indeed, they both share a similar pedagogical process that leads to the development of a 'critical consciousness', or the ability to 'read the word and the world' (Freire, 1970), which enables students to recognize, resist, and transform the ideological representations embedded in all forms of representation. Both pedagogies apply forms of situated inquiry that fosters students' understanding of the different ways in which meaning is represented regarding a specific social issue and how it affects their lives and the lives of others. The only recognizable difference between the two is that CML primarily focuses media representations. It is also necessary to point out that both CML and CL are designed to be transformational pedagogies. That is, both pedagogies foster the development of students to become social agents capable of changing their own lives as well as contributing to positive societal change.

A review of relevant literature also reveals many related theoretical and pedagogical approaches to media such as multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996), media literacy (Beach, 2007; Kellner & Share, 2007), multimodality (Van Leeuwen, 2015; Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016), technological literacy (Muller-Hartmann, 2006; Zarei & Parhizari, 2017), and many others that appear to be in line with CML. However, a closer analysis of these other approaches to meaning and media often do not include the primary focus of the development of critical thinking skills that enable students to recognize, resist, and transform the ideological representations contained in media messages. A good example of this is technological literacy, which often focuses on the technical skills necessary to access the various platforms of ICT (Muller-Hartmann, 2006; Zarei & Parhizari, 2017). Yet often these other approaches bear a close resemblance to CML. In addition, a review of CML literature reveals that much of the literature focuses on the bias and stereotyping of race, class, gender, and sexual identity, while not specifically tying these issues to the principles of a free democracy (Beach, 2007; Kellner, 2020). Although these treatises are very useful in terms

of issues of social justice and add to the overall literature of CML, they do not directly address the underlying issues of these phenomena such as how neoliberalism exacerbates the social injustices through control of the major media corporations while also fomenting nationalism and authoritarian policies in democratic nations (Castells, 2015; Harvey, 2020).

Though many pedagogical schemas exist within CML literature, they all share similar ideas about media representations which include understanding that all media representations are constructed, use language creatively to fulfill the purposes of its construction, that people decode media representations differently, that specific ideologies are always embedded within media representations, and that media representations are always constructed for the purposes of power (Kellner & Share, 2005). It is also necessary to understand that such pedagogies differ in terms of student level. Examples of this are the use of simple teacher questioning of a specific representation to make students aware of different ways people are represented (Suh & Jung, 2012), as opposed to the situated inquiry used in middle and high school courses (Beach & Myers, 2001; Kim, 2017). In simpler terms this means that media representations have embedded ideologies that creatively use language, visual and audio effects, to gain some profit of power, be it economic, social, or political. In essence, this means that media representations are designed to socialize viewers in specific ways that benefit the producers. In addition, while CML is generally situated and discussed in terms of theories of representation, CML theory is nonetheless an aspect of post-structural theories of discourse as is semiotic theory (Beach, 2007).

Of course, while CML schemata tend to cover the necessary understandings of how to deconstruct media representations and the how's and why's of how people are socialized through media representations, it surprisingly does not include the necessity of Freire's (1970) final pedagogical goal of publishing. This final aspect of CML, which is included in some CML literature (Beach, 2007; Beach & Myers, 2001), is the necessity for students to create and publish counter-representational multimedia texts. This last pedagogical aspect is necessary for students to become active agents of social change as well as for CML to become a transformational form of pedagogy (Share, et al., 2016). It is also necessary to point out that CML pedagogies usually are done as group projects as the dialogism (discussions) that occur after situated inquiry are necessary for the transformation of static knowledge into new forms of knowledge (Beach, 2007; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Share, et al., 2016). Finally, it needs to be stated that CML is not widely applied in public or tertiary education (Apple, 2010; Kellner, 2020), which is often attributed to the continuing growth of meritocratic forms of education best exemplified by high stakes testing regimes (Jin, 2011; Min, 2008; Shin, 2010).

## 5. CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY IN EFL

The relevance of CML to EFL may be seen through its historical theoretical and epistemological development. Beginning with English literature and the grammar translation method (GTM) (Pennycook, 1998) through the theories of Saussure (2012) and Chomsky (1984), second language acquisition (SLA) has been traditionally positivistic in theory and practice (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Kramersch, 1993). This domination of positivism in SLA was ruptured with Hymes' (1967) seminal work of *Why the Linguist Needs the Sociologist* which theorized that linguistic meaning could not be understood in purely linguistic terms. Subsequently, Hymes' theory of *communicative competence* led to the development CLT (Canale & Swain, 1980; Savignon, 1991). Since its conception, CLT not only changed theoretical and pedagogical perspectives in EFL, but also developed into many different pedagogies such as task-based learning and teaching (TBLT), which is generally considered to be an 'offshoot' of CLT (Ellis, 2008; Nunan, 2005). However, many scholars question the actual existence of CLT given its vast array of pedagogical practices and the continuing dominance of the GTM and the audio-lingual method (ALM) in EFL curricula and practices (Jin, 2011; Min, 2008; Shin, 2010). Nonetheless, the emergence and development of CLT is fundamentally based on the necessity of including the dialectical relationship between language and culture within EFL theory and pedagogy. Kramersch (1993) best exemplifies the necessity of this dialectic by her assertion that language is taught through culture. That culture and ideology are firmly embedded in all forms of textuality is generally accepted in the social sciences (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1984; Hall, 1997; Kellner, 2020). In other words, students are passively exposed to the cultural aspects of language (representations) without considering the implications they have on themselves, their society, and the increasingly globalized world. Thus, the implications of the dialectic between language and culture is now generally accepted within the field of EFL.

The past twenty years has also seen an increasing the appropriation and application of theories from other fields of study such as sociology (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1984), psychology (Bakhtin, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978), and CL (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1989). These appropriations of external epistemologies and theories has also led to the development of socio-cultural theory (SCT) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007), plurilingualism (Lin, 2013; Taylor & Snodden, 2013), and post-structural theories of identity (Norton-Pierce, 1995) within EFL. This move away from positivistic epistemologies to social constructivism, post-structuralism, and critical epistemologies is best summated by Kramersch's (1993) recognition of the evolution of applied linguistics from modernism to post-modernism. In simple terms, this means that the field is transitioning from teacher-centered methodologies to student-centered pedagogies. In addition, the appropriation of these external epistemologies and theories has led to an increasing interest in critical (Luke, 2013; Pederson, 2019; Pennycook, 2001) and

multiliteracy/modal (Ajayi, 2009; Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016) pedagogies as well as acknowledgement of the need for students to apply what they are learning to socio-educational contexts in creative ways. Indeed, these movements are easily seen in the current Korean national curriculum (KNC) and KNEC (Pederson, 2019).

CML is fundamentally related to CL in many ways, such as the developing critical thinking skills through situated inquiry of textual representations. The purpose of this inquiry is to gain a 'critical consciousness', or a greater understanding of the workings of society in terms of social justice for the purpose of society equality through democracy. CLs genesis in Freire's (1970) seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which then became a Pan-American theory and pedagogy within English education through scholars such as Giroux (1989), Lankshear (1993), Apple (2010) and many others. In Korea, CL has been applied to elementary through tertiary teaching contexts. Huh and Suh (2021) applied critical literacy to engage students to better understand the social issues embedded within American history texts in a fifth-grade elementary English class. Shin and Crookes (2005) reported on the possibilities of applying critical literacy to Korean English education through a case study of critical reading and discussion in junior and senior high school English classes. Suh (2019) reported on the positive effects of the application of critical reading in a Korean university English class. Given the rising interest in CL in Korea, it is not surprising that Korean scholars have begun to apply CML in English education as well (Cho & Johnson's 2020; Kim, 2005; Kim 2018a, 2018b).

The potential benefits of the application of CML pedagogies to EFL students are many. As culture is an indelible part of language learning, sensitizing students to the embedded meanings in media representations will foster a better understanding of the target language's culture, as well as fostering a greater understanding of the embedded ideologies in their own society's media representations. The incorporation of CML pedagogies to EFL classrooms does not necessarily mean that the entire pedagogical schema should be applied in toto. Obviously, student grade levels affect the probabilities of full implementation. Nonetheless, even elementary level students could be initially sensitized to the embedded meanings in media representations through teacher questioning (Giroux, 1989; Luke, 2013). For example, showing students a television commercial of a young mother and asking the simple question: 'Does your mother dress or look like that?' can open young minds to the conclusion that mothers do not usually dress or look like the women in the television commercial, as well as wondering why this is. Sensitizing students to the embedded meanings in media representations fosters the development of students' critical thinking skills and Freire's (1970) concept of conscientization.

The application of CML to EFL pedagogies may also foster language acquisition, student engagement, and creativity. As CML scholars report that that the processes of situated inquiry and dialogism would necessarily lead students to the discovery and use of new

vocabulary related to the issue under inquiry, as well as use in culminating individual and group projects (Beach, 2007; Kellner & Share, 2007). As many scholars posit that situated pedagogies and the use of ICT lead to increased levels of student engagement (Barton & Hamilton, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991), applications of CML to EFL pedagogies should enhance student motivation. It is interesting to note that theories of situated learning are also related to schema theory in that both theories view personal experiences, such as social interactions and other forms of representations, intertexts that allow us to make connections in learning to better understand new information (Kellner, 2020; Pederson, 2019). Moreover, CML's culminating pedagogical task of students creating and publishing their transformed understandings of an issue under study fosters student creativity as becoming change agents in the development of their society. Finally, it needs to be stated that implementation of CML in Korean EFL classrooms would contribute to the goals of the KNEC as it promotes communication, creativity, and critical thinking as well as moving away from high stakes testing as it fundamentally allows/requires alternative forms of evaluation (Pederson, 2019).

Of course, one must address the question of why attempts to use CML in EFL have essentially failed to fulfill the theoretical promises of EFL. This failure is most often attributed to students' low levels of linguistic competency that limits their ability to fruitfully engage in such complex pedagogy (Al Aafi, 2020; Fajardo, 2015). It is worth noting that it is not student intelligence or interest in media representations and culture[s] that is under question. The obvious point here is that EFL practices tend to follow an English only approach in classroom interactions (Shin, 2010). However, many studies cite that native language (L1) use in the EFL classrooms facilitates collaborative dialog, problem solving, and scaffolding which in turn promotes second language (L2) production (Forman, 2010; Ghorbani, 2012). In addition, recent theoretical and pedagogical moves towards plurilingualism, which favors the pedagogical use of all cultural and linguistic resources of students within the classroom, has been increasingly used in applied linguistics theory. The actual unfolding application of CML can be a process taking place over an entire semester, courses, or years: particularly in elementary education (Beach, 2007; Kellner, 2020).

As CML is not widely practiced in English education in native speaking nations, it is logical to assume that it is more infrequently applied to EFL practices as they tend to focus on form and proficiency. Nonetheless, the scholarly research conducted for this manuscript found thirty-three recently published articles regarding the use of CML in EFL and English ESL practices. Given the increasing use of CL in second language pedagogy, and its close affinity with CML, this finding should perhaps not be surprising. It must also be noted that the basic concepts of CML are often elided into other terms such as critical media awareness (Benesch, 2006; Dominguez, 2019), critical media analysis (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2012), critical media engagement (Huang, 2015), modal pedagogies (Van Leeuwen, 2015; Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016), and multiliteracies (Ajayi, 2009; Ntelioglou, 2012). Thus, the steady

increase of interest in, and application of, CL theories and pedagogies appears to have concomitantly spurred interest in possible pedagogical applications of CML in EFL.

Analysis of the articles attempting to apply CML to ESL and EFL pedagogies revealed that very few approached the theoretical ideals of CML. It must be noted that most studies analyzed in this paper primarily used written texts for CML analysis followed by discussion and individual essays (Grigoryan & King, 2008; Yeh, 2010), used CML theories for teacher training (Dominguez, 2019; Torubara, 2019), or employed surveys attempting to understand students understanding of Media literacy (Alagöz, Koc, Erg, & Bagatur, 2019; Luan, Liang, Chai, Lin, & Dong, 2020). The four studies that most closely aligned with CML theories and practices were Huang's (2015) research into gender identity and bias in a freshman English course in a Taiwan university and Da Silva, Farias, and De Ferrax's (2017) research how a Brazilian high school English class were able to critically analyze and respond to representations of African peoples on magazine covers. Huang's (2015) study involved critically examining various media representations of the 'fairy tale' marriage and lives of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, including photos and two fairy tale animations of their story which purported to promote the empowerment of the princess. Students wrote and shared individual fairy tales that represented their own understandings this issue as well as working in groups to produce another fairy tale representation. The class culminated with students writing essays discussing their understandings of the ideologies represented in the media texts. Da Silva et al.'s (2017) study had students discuss what meanings they took from the representations of African people on magazine covers and tell stories of people in their own communities in juxtaposition. In doing so they challenged the stereotypes embedded in the magazine covers in ways that could transform their understandings of their own communities and others. Students were then asked to write stories that represented their new understanding. Similarly, Lee and Suh (2022) used Disney film characters to critically examine the representation of gender and Suh and Jung (2012) used television cartoons sensitized students to the power of popular culture while improving their language skills. It is also worth noting that Suh and Jung's study also found that students tended to passively accept the ideological meanings embedded in media representations. All these studies, teachers led students to examine and question the ideologies and stereotypes embedded in media texts for the purposes of developing critical thinking skills which would afford the possibility of transforming student views and lives. However, these pedagogies did not take the final, and necessary, step of CML entailing the creation of their own media/multimodal texts that show their transformed understandings and serves as alternative representations to be 'published' on ICT.

The literature reviewed in this paper only found four studies on media literacy conducted in Korean classrooms. Two studies by Kim (2018a, 2018b) reported on how the use of media texts enhanced low proficiency English university students oral and listening skills through

the theoretical lens of media literacy. Kim's (2018b) study had two student groups watch videos chosen from a selection of websites chosen by the instructor that followed five differing chapters of their course textbook. Students randomly chose to view the film with or without soundtracks. Students then discussed their thoughts on the videos and made digital storytelling videos on web-based platforms. Analysis of this study revealed that very little critical thinking was involved in students' tasks and that the primary purpose of the study focused on improving students' oral proficiency, not a better understanding of the meanings embedded in media representations. Similarly, Kim's (2018a) study focused on oral proficiency using movie clips yet had evinced minimal critical thinking or the understanding of media representations. Cho and Johnson's (2020) study on critical race media literacy was done in a Korean private Christian girls' high school in an English class focusing on individual presentation skills with a native speaking English teacher. Student pairs engaged in individual research projects on topics of racism and gender bias in movies, culminating with multimodal presentations of their findings. While this study appeared to be critical in nature, the actual practices of the students and instructor were unclear. In addition, in their presentations students only showed slides from specific movies as opposed to making multimodal representations that showed their transformed understandings of their topic or issue. Ironically, it is Kim's (2005) study on the lack of criticality of an NS teacher's pedagogy in a class focusing on the use and understanding of multimodal texts that best illustrates the nature of CML practices in Korean English education pedagogies. Her research noted that the instructor, who purported to be teaching critical literacy, primarily focused on form and student competencies. The findings of her study illustrated how students were not taught, or encouraged, to understand media representations but rather focused on language proficiency. Interestingly, her research enabled Kim to understand the necessities of applying CML practices to Korean EFL pedagogies while also recognizing that it is the focus on form and proficiency within Korean English curricula and teachers practices that impede such critical reflections on media representations.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The question of why CML is necessary to all levels of education and is relevant to EFL is complex as it involves a dialectic of theories of human consciousness, semiotic representation, discourse, which leads to a deeper understanding of how we are socialized into individual and social identities that encompass our values, beliefs, ideals, and desires, all of which are indelible aspects of discourse (Foucault, 1984; Kellner, 2020; Lankshear, 1993). While this paper is an analysis of why CML should be included in EFL practices, the underlying issues in this analysis are that: 1) we are socialized through social interactions,

education, and media representations, 2) specific ideologies are always embedded within all forms of representation (Beach, 2007; Hall, 1997; Kellner, 2020), 3) we are increasingly bombarded with media representations with the continuing expansion of ICT (Castells, 2015; Giroux, 2019), 4) EFL essentially ignores the meanings embedded within media representations (Beach, 2007; Giroux, 2019; Kellner, 2020), 5) most people passively accept the ideological meanings embedded within media representations (Giroux, 2019; Kellner, 2020), and 6) applications of CML in EFL practices encourages critical thinking, discovery and use of new vocabulary and idioms, the application and use of all forms of signification, and raises the potentials of transforming student perceptions and fostering active participation in democratic processes for the purpose of positive social change (Guerrettaz & Zahler, 2017; Kellner, 2020). Cumulatively, these issues not only lead us to a better understanding of the how's and why's of the positive and negative aspects of societies and the relations between them, but also cast much of the blame for man's inhumanity against man on education and yet suggest a means for fomenting positive social change.

The literature reviewed in this paper elucidates the general conclusion in the social sciences that people are socialized into their values beliefs and behaviors through the institutions of government, education, and media representations (Bourdieu, 1991; Giroux, 1989; Hall, 1997). In simpler terms, this process may be viewed as occurring through common social interactions within discourse (Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1993). This understanding is relevant to EFL as the methodologies of GTM and ALM continue to dominate EFL practices internationally and within Korea (Shin, 2010). While the Korean Ministry of Education has slowly affected positive movement towards student-centered and critical forms of education, as is seen in the KNC and KNEC (Pederson, 2019) and the recent directive on implementing micro-teaching in teacher education (Ministry of Education, 2022), GTM and ALM remain dominant. In addition, it has been shown how socialization through the cultural and ideological representations embedded within the various platforms of ICT has become a primary means of socialization in terms of the Westernization, or Americanization, of Korean culture into a hybrid culture (Kim & Kwon, 2017; Park, 2009) as well as the growth of elitism and consumerism (Kim, 2020; Yoon & Seok, 1996) and the meritocracy of high stakes testing (Jin, 2011; Min, 2008; Shin, 2010). These social phenomena are particularly relevant to EFL given the global proliferation of EIL and the subsequent domination of English in ICT representations (Castells, 2015; Dewi, 2012; McKay, 2002). As such, EFL is uniquely placed to begin addressing these issues given the continuing growth of multimodal, multiliteracies, and critical literacy approaches to Korean English education.

The need for CML in education is particularly poignant as the consensus in the social sciences is that people tend to passively accept media representations (Castells, 2015; Giroux, 2019; Harvey, 2020; Kellner, 2020). While education generally ignores the fundamental



importance of this means of socialization, EFL is equally culpable in allowing the young to be socialized into beliefs and behaviors that may not benefit them or their societies. The literature regarding the applications of CML in EFL contexts cited within this paper show how even though the necessity and potential transformative beneficence of CML is recognized by various EFL scholars (Cho & Johnson, 2020; Kim, 2005; Kim, 2018a, 2018b), it is commonly diluted by the traditional dictates of dominant methodologies. It has been shown how CML practices in EFL foster critical thinking skills and the acquisition of new vocabulary and idioms through multimodal texts (Guerrettaz & Zahler, 2017; Kellner, 2020; Kim, 2005). In addition, it has been shown that CML is relevant to EFL in terms of similarity to schema theory for the activation of background knowledge and increased engagement through multimodality and intertextuality (Kachru, 2003; Pederson, 2012; Van Leeuwen, 2015; Widdowson, 1980; Yi & Angay-Crowder, 2016). It is also crucial to note that as with critical literacy, the primary purpose of CML is to promote deeper understandings of the workings of society for the purposes of fostering social justice and positive social change through more active participation in democracy (Beach, 2007; Buckingham, 1996; Gauntlett & Hill, 1999; Kellner, 2020). It is reasonable to assert that the situated inquiry of CML is needed in EFL. As critical literacy developed through trans-American English education and is closely related to CML, it is reasonable to assert that EFL is a proper academic field to foster the use of CML. Thus, it is clear that while curricular and pedagogical change towards critical/transformational pedagogies is occurring in Korean English teacher education programs, greater scholarly research and debate is required for them to be more widely accepted and practiced.

Any reasoned consideration of the current beliefs and behaviors of individuals, societies, and the relationships among societies must conclude that while there are many positive aspects of social behavior, there are also many negative, or anti-humanist phenomena occurring throughout the world. In the social sciences these negative aspects are mostly referred to as racism, gender bias, the economic inequality (Giroux, 1989; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997). Many scholars attribute the recent rise of these negative aspects of social behaviors to the rise and globalization of neoliberalism (Castells, 2015; Giroux, 2015). As neoliberal ideologies favor the goals of capital accumulation through tax cuts for the rich and corporations, the deregulation of capital markets, opposition to collective labor relations, reduction of social welfare programs, and meritocratic educational curricula, it is not surprising that neoliberalism is cited as the major ideology behind recent waves of nationalism and autocracy in many nations (Castells; 2015 Giroux, 2019). The issue here is not that these ideologies are occurring, but what the underlying causes are and how they may be changed. The theoretical analyses in this paper suggest that to understand these phenomena is necessary to have a better understanding of how people are socialized into the values, beliefs, and ideals. There is general agreement in the social sciences that attribute the

process of socialization to social interactions, education, and media representations (Bourdieu, 1991; Giroux, 1989; Hall, 1997). However, it has been shown that to understand the nature of socialization, one must first understand the symbolic nature of human consciousness and the nature and function of discourse in human relations.

Post-structural theories of consciousness theorize that it is the symbolic nature of language, which begins with the creation of ‘conceptual maps’ for physical things and mental concepts, that baptizes us into a symbolic understanding of our existence (Lacan, 1964; Stavrakakis, 2007). The fundamental aspect missing from this basic understanding of our entrance to the symbolic world is that language does not reside within an individual, family, tribal, or societal manner. That is, the conceptual maps an infant begins to form do not come only from the nuclear family surrounding her, but from those in social communication with them as well. Thus, an individual’s baptism into a symbolic existence is also a part, and function, of discourse. (Foucault, 1984; Gee, 1996; Hall, 1997). Post-structural theories of discourse theorize that an individual acquires an initial, or primary, discourse from his family and community and continues to acquire additional discourses throughout his life. In order to be a member of a specific discourse one must speak the same dialect, dress, behave, and think in similar ways to the other members of the discourse. Discourses are also hierarchical in nature, which means that there are always dominant discourses within a society as well as counter-discourses. As such, discourses within society, and an individual may be aligned or in opposition to other discourses. (Gee, 1996; Lankshear, 1993). This is easy to understand as an individual may hold liberal social views but must behave otherwise while working in a corporation or speak and behave differently with friends as she does with her family. In these ways an individual’s consciousness may be defined as a compendium of discourses that will differ from a specific compendium within another. Thus, discourse encompasses all forms of human signification, meaning, and behavior. Foucault’s (1884) admonitions that nothing exists outside of discourse and that it is not people who speak, but discourse that speak through people provides a haunting and powerful summation of the nature and power of discourse.

Common sense tells us that the continuing expansion of ICT also increasingly captivates the time and attention of people around the world. Many studies confirm this common-sense conclusion, but also stress the harmful socioeconomic outcomes and potential consequences of ideological meanings embedded in media representations as well as their potential to affect positive social change (Castells, 2015; Giroux, 2019; Kellner, 2020; Pennycook, 2021). While an increasing amount of literature promoting pedagogies focusing on the development of critical thinking has been published over the past 30 years, such as CL, CML, multiliteracies, and applied linguistics, many scholars within these fields of study conclude that although some progress has been achieved, these forms of education are mostly not practiced (Giroux, 2019; Pennycook, 2001; Shin, 2010). Indeed, within education in general,

as well as applied linguistics, the international trend is towards meritocratic forms of education dominated by high stakes testing regimes. Scholars grounded in critical epistemologies often attribute this movement to neoliberal socio-economic and political ideologies that educate/socialize students to passively accept their essentially pre-ordained socio-economic positions (Apple, 2010; Giroux, 2019; Shin, 2010). These reproductive forms of education not only determine social positioning, but also solidify existing socio-economic inequalities within societies. While it cannot be true that alarming socio-economic inequalities exist, and may be increasing with the expansion of ICT, it is also clear that progressive social movements also exist. Nonetheless, the culpability of education in the reproduction of existing socio-economic inequalities cannot be denied, which leads educators to question the various purposes of education.

Thus, the need for the inclusion of transformative pedagogies (CL, CML, and multiliteracies) in education is necessary not only for positive social change, but to educate citizens that are able to better understand the ideologies that bombard them on ICT so that they can actively participate in democratic societies. As a better understanding of a target culture[s] is a crucial aspect of EFL, and as media or textual representations are the foremost way that EFL students gain their understandings of culture[s], it is logical to conclude that CML pedagogies should be included in EFL practices. It needs to be pointed out that while the various forms of transformative pedagogies are not widely used internationally, this appears to be changing in Korean education as both the KNC and KNEC guidelines stress the importance of communication, inquiry, the application of knowledge, and creativity (Pederson, 2019). However, it is crucial to understand that the situated inquiry that is fundamental to CML pedagogy is applied according to the grade level of students with simple teacher questioning in elementary levels and more in-depth inquiry in increasing grade levels (Beach & Meyers, 2001; Lee & Suh, 2022; Suh & Jung, 2012). All these issues also logically point to the need for EFL teachers in training to be exposed to these forms of pedagogy as well as theories of signification (semiotics), discourse, representation, and CML. It also follows that they should also include these pedagogies in the micro-teaching projects that the Korean Ministry of Education recently requires in English education major courses (Ministry of Education, 2022). Of course, it is also necessary to recognize that the theoretical intricacy of the dialectic within human discourse of symbolic consciousness, language, representation, and socialization is mainly meant for scholars and curriculum designers. However, it is also clearly necessary for teacher's in training to have a basic understanding of this dialectic in order to understand the potential benefits of applying CML pedagogy to their teaching practices. Finally, it needs to be noted that the conclusions of CML scholars that the situated inquiry at the heart of CML pedagogy fosters the development and use of new vocabulary as well as the development of critical thinking skills, student engagement, and creativity (Beach, 2007; Kellner, 2020). It is reasonable to theorize

similar positive effects will be seen within EFL classrooms.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The need for the inclusion of transformative pedagogies (CL, CML, and multiliteracies) in education is necessary not only for positive social change, but to educate citizens that are able to better understand the ideologies that bombard them on ICT so that they can actively participate in democratic societies. As a better understanding of a target culture[s] is a crucial aspect of EFL, and as media or textual representations are the foremost way that EFL students gain their understandings of culture[s], it is reasonable to conclude that CML pedagogies should be included in EFL practices. In addition, that the inclusion of situated inquiry within CML pedagogy should lead to the acquisition and of new vocabulary, and therefore increased communicative proficiency in students is key to allowing the application of CML to EFL pedagogy. It also needs to be pointed out that while the various forms of transformative pedagogies are not widely used internationally, this appears to be changing in Korean education as both the KNC and KNEC guidelines stress the importance of communication, inquiry, the application of knowledge, and creativity. All these issues also logically point to the need for EFL teachers in training to be exposed to these forms of pedagogy as well as theories of signification (semiotics), discourse, representation, and CML. It also follows that they should also include these pedagogies in the micro-teaching projects that the Korean MOE recently requires in English education major courses.

Applicable levels: Secondary, tertiary

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