



# The Need for Critical Digital Literacies in the Age of Generative AI

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**July 11, 2025 (Friday)**

**12:45 – 14:00**

**Room 408-410, Meng Wah Complex, HKU**

***Chair: Professor George Jiang***



**Registration:**

[https://hkuems1.hku.hk/hkuems/ec\\_regform.aspx?guest=Y&ueid=101911](https://hkuems1.hku.hk/hkuems/ec_regform.aspx?guest=Y&ueid=101911)

## **Abstract:**

As generative AI (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT become increasingly integrated into educational contexts, there is a pressing need to develop critical digital literacies that account for the sociotechnical dynamics shaping their use. This lecture proposes a framework for understanding the power relations that undergird human-AI interactions in language learning by drawing on Darvin and Norton's (2015) model of investment and a sociomaterial lens (Fenwick, 2015). These tools do not merely assist learners but actively shape the production of knowledge and discourse by privileging particular logics, genres, and norms. Learner agency is thus distributed—mediated, constrained, and sometimes amplified by platform design, algorithmic functionalities, and access to resources. Issues of positioning, ideological reproduction, and material inequality emerge in these interactions, as learners navigate the affordances and constraints of GenAI. To invest meaningfully in agentic digital practices, learners must not only recognize how GenAI steers cognition and language but also resist the full delegation of meaning-making to automated systems. Cultivating critical awareness of these dynamics is essential for promoting more equitable, inclusive, and reflexive approaches to language teaching and learning in the GenAI era.

## **About the speaker:**

Ron Darvin is an Associate Professor in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at UBC. His current research examines how learners of unequal material, cultural, social, and linguistic resources develop diverse digital practices, and how sociotechnical structures and algorithmic processes of various technologies shape online language practices.

Ron has been recognized among the world's top 2% most-cited scientists according to Stanford University's [2023](#) and [2024](#) List based on the Elsevier Data Repository. He is best known for the [model of investment in applied linguistics](#) (Darvin & Norton, 2015), which has been used as a theoretical framework for various studies and dissertations that examine issues of identity and inequality. His article on [online genres and the genre continuum](#) (Darvin, 2023) was awarded the inaugural Best Paper Award of English for Specific Purposes.

~ All are welcome ~

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