Similar Foci, Different Lenses: Literacy Education Beliefs and Practices of Chinese and U.S. Teachers

Yang Hu
Hunter College of the City University of New York

Beifei Dong
East China Normal University

The differences in literacy education practices between China and the United States are often attributed to their different educational, sociocultural, and historical contexts. However, this sweeping view offers little to help literacy educators in both countries understand the beliefs behind literacy instructional practices and how different or similar these beliefs are. This study examines key characteristics of how Chinese (n=40) and U.S. (n=44) literacy teachers (Pre-K-8th grade) articulate their beliefs about literacy education, delineating their differences and similarities. An inductive content analysis of teachers' self-reported written narratives about their beliefs and practices in literacy education, along with double coding, reveal that the teachers' espoused disciplinary beliefs focus on similar themes for the most part. However, their lenses were markedly different, tinted by both the substance and style of their literacy instruction contexts, as well as their cultural epistemological foundations. Inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices manifested differently in the two groups, but they reflected similar sources. Understanding these varying and nuanced beliefs in cross-cultural contexts can inform teacher education and education reform and counter the insularity of educational research.

Keywords: cross-cultural study, teacher beliefs and practices, literacy teacher education, comparative education, international comparison, United States, China

> "I love the idea of differentiated literacy instruction. But I don't think it is realistic for my class of 54 kids. I can see how it could be done in the U.S. with 20 or 25 kids in a classroom."

> "I think differentiated instruction has more to do with the cultural value of individualism in the U.S. When they value the individual, they would make it possible to differentiate, including having small class sizes."

> "But differentiated instruction has been in the Chinese educational thought for more than two thousand years. Our Confucius believed that teaching should be tailored to students' intelligence. But to date we haven't gone very far with it at all."

These comments from Chinese literacy teachers attending the first author's talk on U.S. literacy education raise profound questions about the complex interplay between

teachers' beliefs, cultural contexts, and educational practices. They highlight a critical gap in our understanding of how teachers across different cultures conceptualize and implement literacy instruction, particularly in the face of varying systemic constraints and cultural values.

The important role of teachers' beliefs in shaping their instructional practices has long been recognized in teacher education (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992). However, much of this research focuses on teachers from single cultural contexts, leaving a significant gap in our understanding of how these beliefs and practices might vary across different cultural and educational systems (Hoy et al., 2006). The last two decades have seen an increase in research studies comparing teacher education in China and the U.S., including examinations of teachers' beliefs and practices in mathematics (Correa et al., 2008), early childhood (Wang et al., 2008), English language (Clark-Gareca & Gui, 2019), and pre-service teacher education (Richardson, 2003). These studies have provided valuable insights into cross-cultural similarities and differences in various educational settings. However, a notable gap remains: the comparison of beliefs and practices among literacy teachers across these two cultural contexts.

By situating our investigation in a global context, we seek to contribute to the growing body of literature on cross-cultural teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012) and to counter the insularity often found in educational research (Tierney & Kan, 2016). Our study's findings have the potential to inform researchers, educators, and policymakers about the complex interplay between cultural contexts, teacher beliefs, and instructional practices in literacy education.

Given the lack of comparative studies of U.S. and Chinese teachers' beliefs in literacy education, the research reported in this article will begin the conversation in this area by investigating and comparing how a group of Chinese and U.S. teachers describe their literacy education beliefs and practices. Specifically, we seek to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers in China and the U.S. articulate their beliefs about literacy education?
2. In what ways are teachers' espoused beliefs and practices similar or different?

In the following sections, we will begin with a brief comparison of educational contexts in the two countries. We will then review relevant studies and explain our study's theoretical framing, methodology, and analysis procedures. Following this, our findings and discussion will illuminate important insights gleaned from this study.

Literacy and Literacy Education in China and the United States
The Chinese National Curriculum Standards for Literacy (NCSL) define literacy as "the most important tool for communication… a significant component of human culture" (Ministry of Education, 2022, p.1). While the Chinese definition of literacy emphasizes what literacy is, the U.S. definition highlights what literacy does. According to the International Literacy Association, "Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context" (2017). Understanding the differing definitions of

literacy is crucial for accurately interpreting and contextualizing the beliefs and practices of teachers from both countries in a comparative study.

China's education system is highly centralized, characterized by teacher-centered instruction, structured learning environments, and whole-class-level teaching (Simnacher-Pate et al., 2011). China has been using national curriculum standards for literacy since 1902. Schools in China are required to use textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education. The U.S. educational system is decentralized. Not all 50 states have adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) since they were released in 2010. While NCSL covers grades 1-9, which is compulsory education in China, CCSS is for K-12. Both sets of standards recognize the communicative function of literacy and the developmental nature of literacy learning. NCSL (2022) is unique in four distinct ways: (1) Ideological dispositions are emphasized, such as patriotism, moral values, and cultural aesthetics. (2) Literacy is seen as an embodiment of cultural heritage and a conduit for learning cultural values. (3) Quantifiable learning outcomes are included in each developmental stage aims. For example, in Grades 3-4, students are expected to recognize 2,500 characters, write 1,600 of them, recite 50 of the best literary essays/poems, and write 16 compositions annually. (4) There is an emphasis on skills training, memorization, and recitation.

Differences in literacy curriculum standards reflect the economic infrastructure and society of each country. Quantifiable learning outcomes, emphasis on memorization and knowledge accumulation in NCLS serve China's manufacturing economy which requires skilled workers and literate farmers (Hu, 2004). In the U.S., CCSS befits the information/service-based economy, setting standards to educate a workforce that can process, comprehend, analyze, evaluate, and present information. These words illustrate an emphasis on cultivating analytical and critical thinking abilities to express opinions, in keeping with the U.S. democratic tradition that has long claimed to value freedom of speech (Hu, 2004).

Among other differences, Chinese elementary school teachers are subject area specialists. The literacy teachers only teach literacy to several classes in one grade during a school day. Whereas the U.S. elementary school teachers are generalists, teaching all subjects to one group of students.

Literature Review
In the past 20 years, cross-cultural studies comparing teacher beliefs and practices in China and the U.S. have concentrated on math education (An et al., 2004; Correa et al., 2008; Perry et al., 2006), early childhood education (McMullen et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2008), pre-service teachers (He et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2012; Richardson, 1996, 2003), and EFL education (Clark-Gareca & Gui, 2019). When comparing Chinese and U.S. math teacher beliefs, studies have uncovered that teachers' beliefs are embedded in their cultural contexts and are developed over time (Correa et al., 2008; Perry et al., 2006). Early childhood educators from both China and U.S. share similar beliefs on integrated child-initiated learning, but Chinese teachers are "more likely to endorse teacher-structured, practice-oriented instructional approaches," while their U.S. counterparts tend to favor

"less formal, less structured, child-initiated learning approaches" (Wang et al., 2008, p. 247). When comparing pre-service teachers' beliefs, more Chinese teachers endorse a unified curriculum, standardized testing, and a focus on content delivery as the main goals of instruction. In contrast, U.S. teachers are more critical of the increasing requirements for standardized testing and are concerned about the pressure it puts on their instruction and on students (He et al., 2011).

To date, little research has been conducted comparing Chinese and U.S. literacy teachers' beliefs and practices in literacy education. However, we can draw on studies about literacy education beliefs in each country. In the U.S., the literature for literacy education widely acknowledges that literacy teachers' beliefs of literacy instruction influenced their classroom practices (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013; Cash et al., 2015; Richardson et al., 1991). For example, Bingham and Hall-Kenyon (2013), in surveying 581 teachers, reveal that the teachers' beliefs about code-based literacy skills influenced how they implemented literacy curriculum. In another survey study of 262 pre-school teachers, Cash et al. (2015) find that these teachers' beliefs in literacy education predicted their students' learning outcomes in vocabulary skills and print knowledge. In addition, literature reviews and case studies show that encouraging teachers to articulate and examine their beliefs leads to professional growth and more deliberate decision-making in instruction (Basturkman, 2012; Farrell & Ives, 2015). These findings underscore the importance of examining teacher beliefs in literacy education across different cultural contexts, as the demonstrated impact of beliefs in classroom practices and student outcomes in the U.S. raises intriguing questions about how teacher beliefs may similarly influence literacy education in China and how these beliefs and their effects might compare between the two countries.

In the Chinese context, articles of teacher beliefs have emerged since the turn of the millennium in response to the new curriculum reform launched by the Ministry of Education. The reform aimed at moving away from traditional "exam-oriented education" toward "quality-oriented education" (Ministry of Education, 2001, p.1). Among the analytical and argumentative essays, Tan (2015) and Tan & Chua (2015) argue that Chinese teachers' beliefs on the nature of teaching and learning have deep cultural and epistemological roots in the Confucian pedagogic culture, leading teachers to pedagogical preferences such as transmission teaching, teacher- and textbook-centered approaches, and a focus on content mastery. In addition, literature reviews show that inconsistencies are common between teachers' self-reported progressive beliefs and their use of traditional practices (Hu, 2002; Liu & Feng, 2005). Aligned with this finding is Li et al.'s qualitative study (2011) of 10 classrooms and 20 teachers, where they find significant gaps between teachers' progressive beliefs and their use of traditional practices. Similarly, Sang et al (2009), after surveying 820 primary school teachers, find that there is a range of beliefs along the constructivist-traditional continuum, and economic and geographic factors impact teachers' beliefs. In addition, a survey study of 582 teachers by Dai et al (2011), finds that the teachers believe that the most obvious constraint for student-centered learning is the pressure imposed by high-stakes tests for entrance into college. Tan's literature review study (2016) echoes this finding.

Theoretical Framework
We interpret teachers' self-reported beliefs and practices through the lens of established concepts about teacher beliefs and teacher knowledge. According to Pajares (1992), beliefs and knowledge are seen as inseparable, even though some researchers view beliefs as reflections of attitudes, values, and ideologies, whereas knowledge is viewed as a teacher's factual understanding of the subject matter (Meijer et al., 2001). We agree with Pajares' view and believe that both beliefs and knowledge are important in allowing us to account for teachers' explicit value statements about literacy education as well as descriptions of literacy practices that may reflect their beliefs indirectly.

Teacher Beliefs
Studies of teacher beliefs in the last 30 years have invariably drawn from three substantial sources: Kagan (1992), Pajares (1992), and Fang (1996). Kagan's work regards teachers' beliefs and knowledge as interchangeable from a cognitive perspective and critical to education because teacher belief "lies at the very heart of teaching" (Kagan, 1992, p. 85). Kagan's view is important to our study as we examined and compared teacher beliefs to determine similarities and differences central to literacy instruction. Fang's comprehensive review of research on the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices reveals that while some studies supported the notion that teachers' theoretical beliefs influence their teaching (De Ford, 1985; Richardson et al., 1991), others point out inconsistencies between teachers' espoused beliefs and their classroom practices, often because of contextual variables, such as curriculum mandates (Bennet et al., 1984; Desforges & Cockburn, 1987). These studies on belief-practice (in)consistencies provided a framework for our analysis, which revealed similar gaps between teachers' professional beliefs and their described classroom practices.

Pajares' work offers one of the most comprehensive reviews on teacher beliefs (1992). Drawing on the work of prominent scholars (e.g., Bandura, 1986; Clark, 1988; Dewey, 1933; Nespor, 1987; Rokeach, 1968), Pajares defines beliefs as "an individual's judgment of the truth or falsity of a proposition" (p.316). He examines key studies in teacher beliefs and the meaning they give to beliefs as "the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (1992, p. 307). For example, Nespor's study (1987) concludes that beliefs are far more influential than knowledge in determining how teachers organize tasks and problem-solve and are stronger predictors of behavior. In short, Pajares' review suggests that teachers' beliefs influence their classroom instruction and decision-making because beliefs act as filters through which teachers interpret new information and experiences (1992). This has implications for our study because even when participants didn't explicitly state their beliefs about literacy education, the examples of their literacy instruction were indicative of their beliefs.

Studies on teacher beliefs not only highlight (in)consistencies in teacher beliefs and practices but also address sociocultural and political factors that influence teacher beliefs and practices rather than viewing them as individual and personal. The culture of a school, curriculum requirements, and policy mandates also influence teachers' beliefs and practices (Davis et al., 1993). In addition, the dominant values at the time of teachers' induction into teaching, teaching experience, and self-efficacy all influence teacher beliefs

(Fullan & Hargreaves, 1994). Different sources of influence on beliefs helped us speculate that differences are a function of the sociocultural and/or political influence in the two countries. No matter how the teachers described their beliefs, they did so in their sociocultural contexts which both gave rise to and influenced the beliefs. Therefore, in our analysis, we systematically identified and interpreted how sociocultural and political contexts might influence teachers' beliefs about literacy education in China and the U.S., providing a robust foundation for our comparative findings.

Teacher Knowledge
In our study, when participants were asked to explicitly state their beliefs about teaching literacy, their responses encompassed pedagogical content knowledge. For this reason, we drew on the work of Shulman (1986, 1987) and Grossman (1990) and their conception of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK).

Shulman (1986) introduces the concept of PCK as a type of teacher's knowledge that is specific to teaching a particular subject matter. Later, Shulman expands his vision of teachers' knowledge base to include: PCK, knowledge of content, general pedagogy, curriculum, learners, educational contexts, and philosophical/historical aims of education (1987). He posits that PCK "represents the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, and issues are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (1987, p.8). Since then, PCK has been built upon both as a theoretical concept and by empirical research. Grossman (1990) expands PCK to include knowledge and beliefs for teaching a particular subject and knowledge of students' understanding of a subject matter, and of curricular and instructional strategies. The concepts of PCK provide a framework for understanding how teachers' subject-specific knowledge, pedagogical skills, and beliefs intersect in literacy instruction, allowing us to explore nuanced differences in how literacy education is conceptualized and implemented across the two distinct educational systems.

Today, Shulman's conception of PCK has been widely accepted as a crucial knowledge base for teachers, and it has been extensively cited and used, particularly in mathematics and science education (Ball et al., 2008; Evens et al., 2015; Magnussom et al., 1999). Despite minor variations, all PCK models contain these important components: instruction, student, curriculum, and assessment knowledge within a subject matter (Kind, 2009). The definition of PCK has also evolved over time. The most recent comes from leading scholars in science education, regarding PCK as the knowledge of, the rationale behind, the planning for, and the act of teaching a subject matter using specific methods for specific students to promote student learning (Carlson et al., 2015).

The development and expansion of PCK show that it is not a static construct. Reviews of international studies using PCK as a construct have agreed on the subject-specific nature of PCK (Gess-Newsome, 2015; Kind, 2009). As such, PCK reflects common professional practice in specific subjects while simultaneously capturing diversity in teaching approaches arising from individual teachers' beliefs, personal experiences, and constraints of social and cultural contexts (Dapaepe et al., 2013; Hashweh, 2013). For

example, studies using PCK as a construct to compare U.S. and Chinese math teachers' beliefs not only illustrate teachers' collective wisdom but also reflect variations in PCK for different cultural and epistemological contexts (An et al., 2004; Correa et al., 2008).

Although our study did not focus specifically on PCK, and despite the lack of literacy-specific PCK models, Shulman's PCK framework and its later variations informed our coding and data analysis. The limited and preliminary research base of PCK in literacy education also warrants additional in-depth studies of PCK in literacy education in the future.

Methods
This qualitative study uses open-ended survey questions to elicit teachers' narrative statements about their literacy education beliefs and practices. We employed content analysis to qualitatively examine and compare self-reported beliefs and practices about literacy education. The study focuses on two groups of literacy teachers: one from a graduate program in the U.S. and another from China, where the authors teach and work, respectively.

Participants
Our participants consisted of 44 U.S. teachers (USTs) and 40 Chinese teachers (CTs). They were selected through convenience sampling since they studied in our respective graduate programs. At the time of data collection, most participants were in their mid-20s and enrolled in their respective graduate literacy programs for 1-2 years. This sampling approach, while practical, may introduce potential limitations to our study. The teachers in our graduate programs may not be representative of the broader teacher population in each country, as they likely have higher levels of motivation for professional development and may be exposed to specific pedagogical philosophies.

The 44 USTs were three cohorts of in-service teachers, studying towards a master's degree and a state professional certification in Childhood Literacy Education. Most of them were females (98%). Besides one participant who hadn't begun teaching, and two with 13 years of teaching at pre-K levels, the majority had been teaching for 1-3 years as generalists in urban public elementary schools. Their graduate program is housed in a large urban public university. They were admitted having met the following admission criteria: initial state teacher certification, undergraduate GPA of 3.0 or better, passing scores on the in-person interviews and the written test administered by the graduate program.

The CTs were from one cohort of 40 teachers enrolled in a graduate program in literacy education, at a large urban university in Southeast China. 95% of this group were females. Half of them were within the first two years of college graduation and therefore had little teaching experience. The other half had teaching experience ranging from 1-10 years as literacy specialists in grades 1-8. The university is considered highly selective in China, attracting students nationwide. The students were admitted after passing the National Master's Program Unified Admission Examination, in-person interviews, and a written examination administered by their Teacher Education College.

Author and Researcher Positionality
The authors are literacy teacher educators in the graduate programs that our participants were enrolled in respectively. Since both authors are native speakers of Chinese and fluent in English as a second language, no outside translations of the data were needed. Even though we were trained in different countries as researchers and literacy teacher educators, our paradigms as researchers are similar. We believe that teacher beliefs and knowledge are multidimensional and subject-specific.

Data Sources
Data consisted of participants' written narratives in response to the following prompts: write a 2–3-page narrative of your philosophy of literacy education addressing these key questions:

      1. What is your belief about literacy education?
      2. How do you enact your belief about literacy education in your classroom practice?

The 44 USTs' narratives were part of their program portfolio, which was an ungraded exit requirement. The narratives were written during the final semester of their two-year graduate studies. For the 40 CTs, their narratives were ungraded course assignments written after one year of graduate studies in a two-year program.

Data Analysis
We used inductive content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) for data analysis. Our process involved four phases of analysis, often including several iterative processes, to allow codes, categories, and themes to emerge from the data without preconceived notions.

During Phase 1: Initial Coding, after several readings to become familiar with our datasets, we entered the narratives into a spreadsheet. We each independently coded our own teachers' narratives. Approaching the data with an open mind, we coded the datasets at the conceptual level to let the categories emerge organically. We used a constant comparative process, continually comparing data against data to ensure fit within the emerging categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We then swapped and analyzed each other's dataset using the same inductive process. By the end of this phase, we came up with 45-50 initial codes for CTs dataset and 109-145 for USTs dataset under 18-19 emerging categories for CTs and 14-16 for USTs. (Table 1).

During the initial coding, we noted a pattern in the language used by CTs and USTs to describe their beliefs about literacy education: teachers from each cultural context tended to use specific terms that were prevalent in their educational discourse. For example, CTS frequently used the term "situational teaching," and USTs talked about using "interactive activities." We recognized that while these terms might have conceptual overlap (e.g., situational teaching likely involves interactive elements), they represented distinct cultural-linguistic expression of pedagogical beliefs. Therefore, to preserve the cultural nuances in our data, we decided to maintain separate codes and categories for these culturally specific terms even when they appeared to have similarly underlying concepts. This would allow us to explore how similar concepts might be articulated differently in different cultural-educational contexts.

Table 1
Double Coding Results of Data Analysis Phase 1 and 2

Data Analysis	Researchers	Number of Initial Codes		Number of Emerging Categories			
		CTs (n=40)	USTs (n=44)	CTs (n=40)	USTs (n=44)	CTs (n=40)	USTs (n=44)
Phase 1: Initial Coding	Researcher 1	50	109	18	14		
	Researcher 2	45	145	19	16		
		Number of Primary Belief Codes		Number of Consolidated Categories		Number of Examples	
Phase 2: Re-coding	Researcher 1	41	47	11	8	55	86
	Researcher 2	42	50	11	10	51	91

In Phase 2: Recoding and Consolidating, we began by comparing our initial independent coding and categorization of the datasets. A notable observation was that our initial codes for UST dataset more than doubled those of CTs. We attributed this to differences in writing styles: most CTs' narratives followed a clear structure (brief statement of belief, supporting theories/standards, classroom examples), while some USTs' belief statements were more general (for example, "literacy is fundamental"), often followed by numerous tangentially related examples, resulting in more initial codes. To address these issues, we unified the coding rules as follows:

1. Adding prefixes to codes to distinguish primary beliefs and examples of literacy instruction: "PB" for primary beliefs and "Eg" for examples. The prefixes also helped to clarify that most of the participants had one primary belief, and CT4, CT19, UST12, UST25 and UST42 each stated two primary beliefs.
2. Retaining most of the emerging categories, consolidating and renaming a few to best represent the data. For example, in the CT dataset, there was a category called "literacy assessment." Upon close examination of CT40's narrative, which was the only one in this category, we realized that even though CT40 used the words "classroom assessment," she was substantiating that teachers should provide positive feedback to encourage student talk instead of judging if the answers were right or wrong. We agreed to eliminate "literacy assessment" category and added her primary belief to the category "use positive teacher feedback to motivate students."

We then re-coded both datasets to apply the new coding rules, verifying coding congruence throughout. This re-coding led to 41-42 primary codes for CTs and 47-50 for USTs, grouped under 11 categories for CTs and 8-10 categories for USTs. Each dataset was coded at least twice and verified once by each researcher to increase trustworthiness. During this phase, we also tabulated examples of literacy instruction the participants had provided to support their beliefs in literacy education (Table 1).

During Phase 3: Theme Emergence, we first independently analyzed each dataset, writing each primary belief code on a Post-it note. Next, we grouped similar primary beliefs from each dataset into categories based on their conceptual similarities. For example, "read beyond textbooks" and "include media literacy in literacy curriculum" were grouped together because they both answer the question "what should be taught?" We then examined these groups to identify overarching themes and noted that most of them were aligned with the PCK framework along the lines of "how literacy should be taught" (pedagogical knowledge), "what should be taught" (content knowledge), and "who are the students" (knowledge of the learner). We noted that most categories related to literacy pedagogy, such as "connect literacy instruction with reality" and "use interactive activities." Other categories emphasized the learners, such as "literacy instruction must be student-centered" and "focus on students, trust and respect their agency." The remaining categories relate to the literacy curriculum or more abstract conceptual literacy understanding.

Following our independent sorting, we shared our sorting results and discussed beliefs that could fit under more than one theme. For example, "differentiated instruction" and "use positive teacher feedback to engage students" could go either with literacy pedagogy or about students. Eventually, we agreed to put them under the theme of literacy pedagogy because the participants' primary emphasis was on teaching, and the intended target of teaching was students. When we encountered beliefs that didn't fit into existing themes, we discussed whether to create a new theme or to broaden the definition of an existing theme. For example, belief statements such as "literacy is foundational" and "literacy is a tool for communication" do not fit under the theme of pedagogy or students. We created a new theme encompassing these beliefs called "conceptual literacy understanding."

In Phase 4, we looked across the datasets to investigate differences and similarities in how the two groups of teachers articulated their literacy beliefs and which examples each group used to illustrate their beliefs. We each wrote memos to capture our own insights and interpretations and then compared them.

Findings
From a constructivist perspective, we conceptualized teachers' beliefs about literacy education as philosophical, cognitive, and pedagogical views about literacy teaching and learning, including but not limited to answers to such questions: what is literacy and its functions? What are optimal literacy curriculum, instructional approaches, and conditions for student learning literacy?

Our findings are organized by the themes we identified in each group of teachers' beliefs about literacy education (Table 2): *literacy pedagogy, students,* and *literacy curriculum* for CTs and *literacy pedagogy, students, and conceptual literacy understanding* for USTs. While the first two themes, accounting for over 80% of each group, are similar across the two sample groups, the last two themes, *literacy curriculum* and *conceptual literacy understanding*

are unique to each group. These themes are all central to the original and expanded PCK frameworks (Carlson et al., 2015; Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1987).

Table 2
Themes/Categories in Literacy Education Beliefs of Chinese and U.S. Teachers

Themes	Categories	Primary Beliefs		Total
		CTs n=40	USTs n=44	
Literacy Pedagogy Focused	Use interactive activities	0	9	9
	Connect literacy instruction to reality	6	5	11
	Teach literacy as tool for communication/expression	6	0	6
	Situational teaching	5	0	5
	Use print-rich, literature-rich classroom environments	0	4	4
	Differentiated instruction	0	4	4
	Teach literacy as aesthetics and culture	3	0	3
	Use positive teacher feedback to motivate students	3	0	3
	Build highly effective lesson structure	2	0	2
Student Focused	Student-centered instruction	11	0	11
	Literacy gives students opportunities in life	0	9	9
	Literacy gives students voices and power for social justice	0	8	8
Literacy Curriculum Focused	Include media literacy	2	0	2
	Read beyond textbooks	2	0	2
	Using texts with similar themes/topics	1	0	1
	Teaching reading and writing separately	1	0	1
Conceptual Literacy Understanding	Literacy is foundational	0	4	4
	Literacy is a tool for communication/expression	0	4	4

Theme 1. Literacy Pedagogy Beliefs

We conceptualized literacy pedagogy beliefs as those focusing on instructional approaches and practices for facilitating literacy teaching and learning, similar to Shulman's PCK (1987). As shown in Table 2, the beliefs of 25 (60%) CTs and 22 (47%) USTs focused on this theme. Within this theme, about two-thirds of each sample group shared similar instructional preferences for delivering literacy content to students – albeit through different lenses – while the pedagogical foci for the remaining one-third of each group uniquely reflected the different cultural and educational contexts of participants.

Chinese Teachers' Literacy Pedagogy Beliefs
Of the 25 CTs who upheld literacy pedagogy beliefs, 17 emphasized decreasing the distance between the text and students' life experiences and teaching literacy as a tool for

communication and expression. We categorized these beliefs as *connecting literacy instruction to reality, teaching literacy as a tool for communication/expression,* and *situational teaching*. The significance of these beliefs seems to illustrate the challenge of teaching classic texts and their unfamiliar contexts, which account for an increasingly significant portion of literacy readers as children move up grade levels.

Those who believed in *connecting literacy instruction to reality* provided examples such as encouraging students to write for real-world audiences and purposes, role-play, debate, and oral rehearsal before writing. Several CTs provided examples of teaching traditional Chinese classics, such as using multimedia to facilitate students' visualization of poetry or stories that take place in unfamiliar settings, necessitated by limited illustrations in the required Chinese literacy textbooks.

Six CTs beliefs focused on the importance of *teaching literacy as a tool for communication/expression*, emphasizing student expression and using literacy as a vehicle for communication and knowing the world. The examples in this category ranged widely from encouraging small group discussion, visualizing, writing for real world audiences and purposes, to focusing on answering text-based questions to improve test scores. Given the predominant emphasis on testing in Chinese education, we were surprised to find only three participants in this category mentioned testing (out of four total CTs across all categories), in the context of helping students use models to answer text-based questions correctly to improve test scores.

Situational teaching was another way to bridge the unfamiliar texts and students' realities. Half the examples in this category used role-play, and the other half used multimedia to recreate a situation from the text. CT21 described situational teaching as "creating a context that allows students to visualize and experience the situation/setting of the text to deepen students' comprehension and understanding." CT35, after illustrating how she used pictures and music to help students feel the emotion of classic poems, wrote, "…creating a beautiful, enjoyable context allows students to immediately place themselves in the scenery so that the poem can bring them an aesthetic experience." These teachers' emphasis on creating immersive contexts reflects their belief that comprehension of texts requires students to form personal, experiential connections with texts rather than encountering them as distant artifacts.

The remaining eight CTs' beliefs were unique to the CTs, whose primary beliefs were *teaching literacy as aesthetics and culture, using positive teacher feedback to motivate students,* and *building highly effective lesson structures*. We believe that these beliefs reflected Chinese cultural and contextual influences. For example, the articulation of *teaching literacy as aesthetics and culture* echoed the Chinese NCS, which emphasizes literacy as an embodiment of culture and the cultivation of aesthetic taste and emotion through reading literature. Three CTs articulated this belief and provided examples such as reciting classic texts with expression, studying authors' lives, and incorporating Chinese calligraphy, which requires practice and appreciation of calligraphy as an art form. CT9 wrote, "The humanity aspect of literacy stems from its function in passing down the Chinese language, characters and culture." CT18 stated, "To help students appreciate the aesthetics of the

text, teachers should guide the students to feel, understand, appreciate, critique and create in order to mold their temperament, train their character, so that they form their noble aesthetic taste." The tendency to focus on aesthetics and culture reflects the Chinese classic tradition of literature studies, which accounts for 30% of the texts in 6th grade literacy readers and regards aesthetic appreciation as the highest form of learning.

All three CTs who believed in *using positive teacher feedback to motivate students* described applying this strategy to help students answer questions confidently. Granted, it is a common approach for teachers to provide positive feedback to motivate students. But in the Chinese context, it is challenging, particularly for novice teachers, to teach in quiet classrooms where the predominant learning mode is non-verbal, and students don't speak unless being called upon (Wang & Chang, 2013). In addition, with the predominant mode of whole-class instruction, when students do speak up, they must do so in front of 45-55 fellow students (Gu, 2006; Tan, 2015). Given this backdrop, it is evident how the cultural context influenced CTs' belief of providing positive feedback in order to motivate students to speak up without fear of being judged in front of their peers. CT30 wrote, "If the student didn't provide the correct answer, instead of judging whether the answer is right or wrong, I provide positive feedback that leads the student to self-assess to protect her confidence."

Finally, as lesson study is common practice in Chinese schools, two CTs' beliefs focused on *building a highly effective lesson structure,* though each had a different emphasis. CT36 focused on planning lessons to allow time for student cooperative learning; and CT32 advocated for modules in lesson planning, with each module focusing on one essential question instead of the more question-answer recitation style throughout a lesson.

Given the large class sizes in China, we were interested to see if CTs mention small group activities. We found two CTs who used examples of small group work to support their literacy pedagogy beliefs (a third one was found in Theme 2). In the Chinese classroom, where whole-class teaching was the norm, these three cases stood out. These CTs described forming small groups in literacy class by asking students in alternating rows to turn around to face students behind them. This seemed to be the most convenient way to form small groups in Chinese classrooms, which are usually packed with wall-to-wall rows of desks to accommodate the average class size of 45-55 students (Hu, 2004; Pratt, 1992). However, these two cases of small group work took place peripherally – putting students in small groups before or after the lesson to preview the text or answer questions. Only one CT (whose belief was categorized in Theme 2) discussed integrating small group work in the lesson and intentionally coaching students to work collaboratively in small groups, reflecting a deeper understanding of the central role of students in small group work.

U.S. Teachers' Literacy Pedagogy Focused Beliefs
While 25 (60%) CTs' beliefs were literacy pedagogy-focused, 22 (47%) USTs' beliefs illustrated this theme, and more than half of them believed *in using interactive activities* and *connecting literacy instruction to reality*. To substantiate these beliefs, they named twice as many varieties of classroom social interactive activities for literacy instruction when

compared with the CTs' example. These include cooperative learning, guided reading, book clubs/literature circles, buddy reading, role play, turn-and-talk, and peer editing—all reflecting the influence of common U.S. literacy practices. UST7 wrote, "An integral part of my teaching….is to set up cooperative learning groups so that my students can participate in the process of finding answers instead of waiting for their teacher to tell them the right answers." In addition, the USTs emphasized more ways to connect literacy instruction to students' lives, such as student ownership and choices in books/writing topics; writing for real-world audiences and purposes; making text-to-self connections; using field trips and the arts to make learning authentic; applying culturally relevant practices; and integrating curriculum that allows students to see themselves and their communities represented in the literature. In the words of UST18, "…the ideal setting for teaching literacy includes their [students'] culture, home life, family, and neighborhood. Including these factors in my curriculum and classroom allows me to best connect with my students and they also make my students feel safe and comfortable." Examples like this reflected the multicultural and multiethnic nature of USTs' urban school populations.

The remaining two categories in USTs' literacy pedagogy beliefs were unique to them. These beliefs, *using print-rich, literature-rich environments,* and *differentiated instruction,* reflected the realities of the U.S. classrooms as well as an emphasis on individual students instead of treating them as a uniform collective. The inclusion of print and literature in the learning environment reflected the multipronged approaches in literacy instruction beyond reading from textbooks. This learning environment stood in contrast to the typical Chinese classroom setting, where large class sizes and space constraints often prevent the inclusion of libraries and activity centers, leading to an environment more conducive to teacher- and textbook-centered instruction. USTs illustrated how they labeled the objects in the room and used word walls, learning centers, and class libraries as integral parts of literacy education.

They also taught children to recognize and use different genres, lent books to children to take home, and used culturally relevant books, among other examples. UST19 wrote, "Within the learning centers in my classroom, I intentionally create low-risk learning opportunities that scaffold students' learning and offer them choices and a variety of ways to interact among themselves to construct knowledge, and to promote self-confidence and ownership." It was interesting to note that in all, while 15 USTs included differentiated instruction to illustrate their beliefs in literacy education, only four USTs specifically chose *differentiated instruction* as their primary belief. UST44 explained her choice this way, "I am keenly aware that children enter my classroom with different learning needs and therefore, my literacy instruction must be differentiated appropriately for them to meet their needs. One-size-fits-all instruction won't work." USTs offered many examples to illustrate how they provided differentiated instruction, including: assessments to inform instruction, guided reading groups, reading/writing conferences, differentiated learning tasks, scaffolded instruction, and progress monitoring. The focus on creating a literacy-rich environment and offering differentiated instruction highlights a fundamental difference in approach between U.S. and Chinese classrooms, reflecting distinct educational philosophies and practical constraints.

Theme 2. Student-Focused Beliefs

Participants whose literacy education beliefs focused on student-centered instruction are grouped in this theme, which accounts for 11 (26%) CTs' and 17 (36%) USTs' beliefs. However, their lenses couldn't be more different: while most CTs advocated for allowing students to play an active role in literacy learning inside the classroom, the USTs focused on ways literacy impacted students' lives beyond schools.

Chinese Teachers' Student-Focused Beliefs

Against the predominant mode of teacher- and textbook-centered instruction in Chinese schools (Gu, 2006; Tan, 2015), 11 (26%) CTs' student-focused beliefs stood out. It was interesting to note the uniformity of their stances: almost all placed student learning at the center of their beliefs, emphasizing various approaches that would center students' needs and voices in literacy classrooms. Their examples included: respecting students' agency and interests; listening to students' feedback on the lessons; trusting students' initiatives; encouraging student ownership in writing; reaching out to connect with students; helping students answer questions correctly and speak up with confidence; and emphasizing students' character education. Four CTs provided anecdotes of winning the trust of one of their students who struggled with learning or behavior. CT16 wrote, "Literacy education should move beyond simply focusing on passing on knowledge and skills. Instead, the humanistic value of literacy demands that we focus on students, trust and respect their agency, and motivate them to participate actively in learning." Among the 11 CTs', we found four who provided critiques of rote learning and teaching to the test, believing that these practices deprive students of their active role in learning. This sentiment is reflected in CT29's remark, "Teachers need to stop overshadowing the central role of students and spoon-feeding instruction. Teachers should consider, from students' perspective, how to motivate students and foster their initiative."

Seven CTs in this category specifically mentioned Western educational psychologists and educators such as Jean Piaget, Carl Rogers, and John Dewey, and constructivist principles, to support their student-centered beliefs. However, their views of the Western constructivist theories seemed to remain largely conceptual, as their examples spotlighted the students rather than the teacher or textbooks, yet none of them provided any specific examples of what constructivist practice looked like in the classroom or in literacy practices. Even though three CTs acknowledged that students are different in learning, none provided specific ways to assess or teach students with different learning needs. The absence of concrete examples in their responses suggests that while these CTs embraced the conceptual framework of student-centered learning, they were unable to envision its practical implementation within their familiar educational environment. This gap between theory and practice is further exacerbated by the lack of specific strategies for differentiation despite acknowledging individual differences among students.

U.S. Teachers' Student-Focused Beliefs

Unlike the CTs' student-focused beliefs that shifted the focus from teachers and textbooks to students, USTs' student-focused beliefs were expressed using a wider lens that captured the potential impact of effective literacy instruction on students' lives beyond the classroom. Our data analysis suggested two different ways the USTs expressed their

student-centered beliefs. Of 11 (36%) USTs with student-focused beliefs, a little over half emphasized that *literacy gives students opportunities in life*. To achieve this goal, USTs described using effective literacy instruction that included relatable and culturally relevant literature and pedagogy; engaging students in interactive activities to make connections between literacy and students' lives; differentiated instruction and progress monitoring; including families as partners and students' cultures in the classroom; giving students choices in learning; and motivating and engaging students. Their emphasis on the students was highlighted in UST28's narrative:

> Literacy instruction can't be effective if we only focus on the curriculum. We must teach the person, and the person must be seen as part of their community because their identity not only encompasses who they are, but also their parents and culture. When we teach the whole learner, we can help facilitate authentic learning experiences that will allow the learner to make connections, infer, reason, and think critically about the world around them. They would have a better chance to succeed in life.

The remaining USTs with student-focused beliefs maintained that *literacy gives students voices and power for social justice*. They felt that literacy instruction should empower students, encourage critical thinking, connect to students' lives, cultures, and identities, use culturally relevant books and approaches, and encourage students to play an active role in learning. Several teachers illustrated this belief in their examples. UST43 wrote that "literacy is a vehicle for students to discover and develop their own voices, agency, and autonomy." UST26 shared that "my role as a teacher should be more than just a conveyor of information but a facilitator of critical thinking processes." Finally, UST32 felt that "…[teachers should] help students develop ownership of their reading and writing through authentic learning so that they think critically about the inequities around them and contribute to building a just world." The views expressed here emphasized student empowerment and critical thinking, suggesting that these USTs viewed literacy not just as a set of skills to be mastered but as a tool for personal and societal transformation. Their perspectives have important implications for curriculum design, instruction, and broader goals of education in a diverse and rapidly changing society.

Theme 3. Curriculum-Focused and Conceptual Literacy Understanding Beliefs
The third theme of teachers' literacy beliefs was unique to each sample group. 6 (14%) CTs focused on literacy curriculum while 8 (17%) USTs emphasized conceptual literacy understanding.

Chinese Teachers' Literacy Curriculum Beliefs
CTs' curriculum-focused beliefs all emphasized what should be taught in literacy. They were expressed in four ways: *include media literacy*, because it helps to "train students' to process information" and "present learning outcome"; *read beyond textbooks* (e.g., "[students should] read whole books instead of texts in a textbook" and "[I have] established a book corner in the classroom so that students can bring books from home and swap books with other students"); *use texts with similar themes and topics* (e.g., "connect new text with past texts by theme or author so that prior knowledge can help deepen

learning"); and *teach reading and writing separately* "to allow writing as a curriculum in school instead of assigning writing as homework"(CT8). These curriculum-focused beliefs reflected a broadened view of literacy curriculum that extends beyond traditional textbook-based learning. These CTs seemed to think out of the box and consider literacy as a complex set of skills that the textbook itself and traditional reading-centered approaches could not offer.

U.S. Teachers' Focus on Conceptual Literacy Understanding
For the 8 (17%) USTs whose beliefs are categorized here, their beliefs were skewed towards what literacy is rather than literacy education. Their narratives seemed to begin by asserting an understanding of what literacy is, such as "literacy is foundational," followed by many examples that were loosely connected to their beliefs. These beliefs fall into two categories: *literacy is foundational,* and *literacy is a tool for communication/expression*. Three out of the four USTs who believed that *literacy is foundational* seemed to view literacy as a set of foundational skills rather than as a social practice. UST9 shared that "Literacy offers students foundational skills, such as comprehension and vocabulary. It's essential for building a solid foundation to learn all other subjects." Similarly, UST24 articulated that "In order for students to be successful with learning in school, they need to have strong literacy and language skills." USTs provided classroom examples such as differentiated instruction, using assessment for progress monitoring, using a balanced literacy curriculum, explicitly modeling, guided reading, and using culturally relevant books.

While these USTs recognized the importance of literacy for overall academic success, their focus on foundational skills suggested a somewhat narrower view of literacy compared to those who saw it as a social practice or tool for empowerment. Interestingly, despite this skills-oriented belief, their reported classroom practices include elements of more contemporary approaches, such as differentiated instruction and culturally relevant materials. This discrepancy between stated beliefs and described practices highlights the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of teachers' beliefs about literacy education, as well as the potential influence of teacher education programs and current educational trends on their instructional choices.

The remaining three USTs emphasized that *literacy is a tool for communication/expression*. Unlike the CTs, who believed in teaching literacy as a tool for communication and expression, the USTs stressed the inherent communicative function of literacy itself, with no mention of its implications for literacy pedagogies. Their statements seemed to be marooned in abstraction, such as, "Literacy helps humans to communicate with others," (UST6) and "Literacy is what enables humans to interact and function in the world" (UST42). They provided these examples to illustrate their beliefs: use interactive activities and differentiated instruction, including arts and technology in instruction; write for real-world audiences/purposes; and consider students' interests and choices. While the USTs' beliefs about literacy's role appear somewhat abstract, their examples suggest a more nuanced understanding of how this concept might translate into classroom practice. There seems to be a disconnect between their theoretical understanding and its explicit connection to pedagogical strategies. This disconnect might be attributed to the USTs'

developing teacher identities and evolving understanding of how to bridge theory and practice in literacy instruction. This points to a potential area for growth in teacher education programs, suggesting a need for more explicit guidance in translating broad literacy concepts into concrete, purposeful instructional strategies that fully embody the communicative nature of literacy.

Discussion

This study was designed to understand literacy education beliefs espoused by the 40 Chinese and 44 U.S. literacy teachers who were chosen through convenient sampling. Existing cross-cultural comparative studies of Chinese and U.S. teachers' beliefs focus on teacher efficacy or subject areas such as math or science education (e.g., Ball et al 2008; Gess-Newsome, 2015), and very little has been done to compare literacy education beliefs. We believe that our cross-cultural comparison provides a nuanced understanding of teachers' literacy education beliefs within their sociocultural contexts. First, by identifying the ways in which teachers espoused beliefs and practices are similar or different across cultures, this study can help bridge gaps between theory and practice, especially in China's efforts to study Western educational theories and adapt Western curriculum models. In addition, our findings illuminate how sociocultural contexts shape teachers' beliefs and practices in literacy education. This can guide the adaptation of educational theories and practices to fit local contexts, ensuring that reforms in both countries are meaningfully integrated rather than superficially adopted. Finally, in comparing literacy education beliefs across cultures, our study provides U.S. educators with a better understanding of the literacy education background of their students from China. This can inform the development of targeted support strategies for Chinese students in U.S. schools.

The most interesting comparison is that while the literacy education beliefs of the two sample groups focused on similar themes such as literacy pedagogy and students, the lenses with which they viewed these themes were very much tinted by each country's social, cultural, and educational traditions. For example, the literacy practices that CTs provided to illustrate their beliefs tended to revolve around the most salient literacy practices specific to the Chinese classrooms, such as making classic texts relevant to students and encouraging students to speak up in class. Similarly, USTs' beliefs reflected dominant values and practices in US literacy education, such as meeting students' individual needs, differentiated instruction, using print- and literature-rich classroom environments, and promoting student interaction. For those teachers whose beliefs focused on students, the CTs emphasized turning students into more active learners in the classroom, whereas the USTs focused on ways literacy education could impact students' lives beyond schools, such as creating more opportunities to center students' voices and power for social justice. Each group seemed to focus on what they consider to be the most pressing issues in literacy education: moving towards student-centered pedagogies for CTs and addressing student diversity and social issues for USTs.

We also noted how few USTs (18%) referred to CCSS, compared to 58% of CTs in the sample who referenced the Chinese NCSL. However, only three CTs' beliefs directly echoed the standards that view literacy education as a conduit for the transmission of

culture and a path to cultivating students' aesthetic appreciation and emotion. We believe that the differences in how the teachers from our samples related to standardized expectations have to do with how the standards are implemented in the two different sociocultural contexts. China's national curriculum standards tend to be more centralized and prescriptive, while U.S. standards allow for more local and state-level interpretation and adaptation (Ding & Chen, 2017). In addition, in a country where Confucian traditions emphasize respect for authority and standardized knowledge (Luo & Qiao, 2021), CTs generally adhere more strictly to national standards, whereas USTs have more flexibility in implementation. We also speculated that in the U.S. educational culture that values individualism and diverse learning experiences, teachers are more likely to prioritize their own beliefs and their students' needs rather than strict referencing external standards.

A third significant comparison is that the narratives of both groups contained inconsistencies between participants' espoused beliefs and self-reported classroom practices. This echoes previous studies' (Fang, 1996; Li et al., 2011; Perry et al., 2006) findings about (in)consistency between teachers' beliefs and practices and how these (in)consistencies stem from contextual factors. However, our qualitative data analysis revealed valuable and nuanced insights: the inconsistencies between teachers' beliefs and practices manifested in opposite ways with the two sample groups. 80% of our CTs' expressed theoretical underpinnings included Western cognitive and constructivist theories. However, their views of these theories remained largely conceptual, evidenced by a lack of what constructivist literacy practice looked like in the classroom. For example, of the four teachers who provided examples of using small group activities, only one appeared to focus on empowering the learner to use the small group discussion for discovery learning. The rest reported using small groups for task-oriented purposes, and they took place peripherally.

Even when some CTs expressed student-centered beliefs, they still illustrated such beliefs with examples that aimed at raising students' test scores, such as using formulas for students to answer test questions. In addition, some CTs recognized students' individual differences in learning even though the predominant view of students was still collectivist. Despite this, no CT substantiated their views with classroom practices that address these individual differences. Hence, CT's self-reported practices seemed to show that contextual factors, such as national unified and mandated curriculum and testing, and large class sizes outweigh their training and exposure to cognitive and constructivist theories in their graduate courses. This finding is meaningful to Chinese teacher educators and teacher education programs as it highlights several critical areas for consideration. First, it underscores the need to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in literacy instruction. Second, it emphasizes the importance of adapting Western educational theories to fit the unique challenges of the Chinese educational system. Third, the findings could inform curriculum reform efforts, highlighting the need for greater flexibility in national curricula and assessment methods for more constructivist and individualized approaches to literacy instruction.

In contrast, USTs' inconsistencies between beliefs and practices manifested in opposite ways. USTs provided more than twice as many examples of student-centered interactive

activities to illustrate their beliefs as the CTs did. However, only half as many of them cited theorists as the CTs did. Despite this, their expressed pedagogical content knowledge seemed to illustrate a strong tendency for constructivist and student-centered practices that they themselves had experienced in their own schooling. The USTs in our study, growing up in a culture that values individualism, entered elementary schools in the late 1990s, after the dominant theories of teaching and learning had shifted from transmission perspectives to more cognitive, constructivist perspectives (Schon, 1987). We considered the history of their schooling: during their K-12 years, they experienced constructivist approaches themselves, in multifunctional classrooms and heterogeneous student groupings. By the time they entered teacher education programs in the 2010s, teacher education in the US had undergone a reform in recognition of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are important for teacher education in the 21st century. For example, the new framework for understanding teaching/learning included knowledge of learners and their development in social contexts, of subject matter and curriculum goals, and of teaching in light of the content and learners (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

This led us to believe that the USTs' literacy education beliefs and practices reflected their own schooling and the new knowledge framework in their teacher education programs. Once again, this shows that teachers' beliefs were impacted more by contextual factors and personal experiences than their training and exposure to educational theories in their teacher education programs. Richardson's research (1996, 2003) also finds that the most impactful source of teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning came from their personal experiences with their K-12 schooling and instruction.

Finally, it was noteworthy to discover that, against a backdrop of uniform, teacher- and textbook-centered pedagogy that is historically, culturally, and educationally rooted (Gu, 2006; Tan, 2015), 25% of the CTs in our study demonstrated a critical stance towards the dominant trend of test-driven and spoon-feeding style of instruction. These CTs expressed discontent with the futile call for student-centered learning, since they were still forced to teach mandated textbooks in an educational system that is heavily driven by testing, echoing previous studies of Chinese teachers' beliefs about high-stakes testing (Dai et al., 2011; Tan, 2016). Some were concerned that attention on test scores deprives students of opportunities to appreciate the beauty of language and literature. However, they provided little evidence of how to teach against these trends in literacy education.

Limitations and Future Directions
One limitation of our study stems from the single data source of self-reported teacher beliefs and practices. Future studies of teacher beliefs and practices should include multiple data sources from classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions to better gauge teacher beliefs and how they relate to classroom practices. For example, we could interview teachers in our graduate programs and conduct classroom observations to further compare and ascertain how teachers' beliefs relate to their practices, and to what extent sociocultural factors influence their beliefs.

Another limitation is that the participants' teaching experiences and phases in the graduate programs vary, making it difficult to pinpoint how these factors impact their beliefs. In addition, it is important to recognize the limitations of the small convenience sample in our study to avoid generalizing about the beliefs of the broader populations of teachers in China and the U.S. However, the themes and categories our study revealed about beliefs in literacy education can inform the future development of questionnaires or surveys to test larger samples of teachers from both countries.

Conclusion

Our study adds literacy teachers' beliefs and practices to the growing body of cross-cultural studies comparing teacher beliefs in China and the U.S., allowing us to speculate ways to address teachers' belief-practice gaps. Since teacher beliefs often guide their professional learning and teaching practices, it is important to address teacher beliefs in literacy education programs and school-based professional learning opportunities. For example, for Chinese teacher education programs, it is important to include both conceptual and practical knowledge to address the belief-practice gap. For U.S. teacher education programs, it's important to encourage teachers to examine and make less tacit their existing beliefs and connect them to new knowledge in graduate programs, as well as their practices. We hope this line of inquiry will start a conversation in cross-culture comparison of literacy instruction and teacher education, as well as lead to more future comparative studies of literacy education.

Yang Hu *is an Associate Professor of Literacy Education at Hunter College School of Education, the City University of New York. Her principal research interests include literacy teacher learning and development in urban schools, arts-based inquiries in literacy teachers' professional learning, and cross-cultural studies in teacher education.*

Beifei Dong *is a Professor of Chinese Language Education at the School of Education of East China Normal University. Her scholarly work focuses on the psychology in Chinese language teaching, and implementation of small class teaching (SCT) through the Chinese Model with a focus on curriculum studies and pedagogical approaches.*

References

An, S., Kulm, G., & Wu, Z. (2004). The pedagogical content knowledge of middle school, mathematics teachers in China and the U.S. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*, *7*(2), 145-172. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JMTE.0000021943.35739.1c

Ball, D. L., Thames, M. H., & Phelps, G. (2008). Content knowledge for teaching: What makes it special? *Journal of Teacher Education, 59*(5), 389-407.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.

Basturkmen, H. (2012). Review of research into the correspondence between language teachers' stated beliefs and practices. *System, 40,* 282-295.

Bennett, N., Desforges, C., Cockburn, A., & Wilkinson, B. (1984). *The quality of pupils' learning experiences*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bingham, G. E., & Hall-Kenyon, K. M. (2013). Examining teachers' beliefs about and implementation of a balanced literacy framework. *Journal of Research in Reading, 36*(1), 14-28.

Carlson, J., Stokes, L., Helms, J., Gess-Newsome, J., & Gardner, A. (2015). The PCK summit: A process and structure of challenging current ideas, provoking future work, and considering new directions. In A. Berry, P. Friedrichsen, & J. Loughran (Eds.), *Re-examining pedagogical content knowledge in science education* (pp. 12-27). Routledge.

Cash, A. H., Cabell, S. Q., Hamre, B. K., DeCoster, J., & Pianta, R. D. (2015). Relating prekindergarten teacher beliefs and knowledge to children's language and literacy development. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 48*, 97-105. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.02.003

Clark, C. M. (1988). Asking the right questions about teacher preparation: Contributions of research on teaching thinking. *Educational Researcher, 17*(2), 5-12.

Clark-Gareca, B., & Gui, M. (2019). Chinese and American EFL teachers' beliefs about curricular and pedagogical practices: Cross-cultural similarities and differences. *Language and Intercultural Communication, 19*(2), 137-151.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage Publications.

Correa, C.A., Perry, M., Sims, L.M., Miller, K. F., & Gang, G. (2008). Connected and culturally embedded beliefs: Chinese and US teachers talk about how their students best learn mathematics. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*, 140-153.

Dai, D. Y., Gerbino, K.A., & Daley, M. J. (2011). Inquiry-based learning in China: Do teachers practice what they preach, and why? *Frontiers of Education in China, 6*(1): *139-157*.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. Jossey-Bass.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Lieberman, A. (2012). Teacher education around the world: Changing policies and practices. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203817551

Davis, M. M., Konopak, B.C., & Readence, J.E. (1993). An investigation of two Chapter 1 teachers' beliefs about reading and instructional practices. *Reading Research and Instruction, 33*(2)105-133.

De ford, D. (1985). Validating the construct of theoretical orientation in reading instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *20*(3), 351-367.

Depaepe, F., Verschaffel, L., & Kelchtermans, G. (2013). Pedagogical content knowledge: A systematic review of the way in which the concept has pervaded mathematics educational research. *Teaching and Teacher Education. 34*,12-25.

Desforges, C., & Cockburn, A. (1987). *Understanding the mathematics teacher: A study of practice in first schools*. Falmer.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think*. D. C. Heath.

Ding, H., & Chen, A. (2019). Instructional and learning outcomes in China and the USA as policy implications. *European Physical Education Review, 25*(1), 21-34. https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X17700

Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008). The qualitative content analysis process. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *62*(1), 107–115. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

Evens, M., Elen, J., & Depaepe, F. (2015), Developing pedagogical content knowledge: Lessons earned from intervention studies. *Education Research International*, p.1-23. http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2015/790417

Fang, Z. (1996). A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research*, *38*(1), 47-56.

Farrell, T.S.C., & Ives, J. (2015). Exploring teacher beliefs and classroom practices through reflective practice: A case study. *Language Teaching Research*, *19*(5), 594-610.

Fives, H., & Buehl, M. M. (2012). Spring cleaning for the "messy" construct of teachers' beliefs: What are they? Which have been examined? What can they tell us? In K. R. Harris, S. Graham, T. Urdan, S. Graham, J. M. Royer, & M. Zeidner (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook, Vol. 2. Individual differences and cultural and contextual factors* (pp. 471–499). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/13274-019

Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1994). The teacher as a person. In A. Pollard, & J. Bourne (Eds) *Teaching and Learning in the primary school* (pp. 67-72). Routledge.

Gess-Newsome, J. (2015). A model of teacher professional knowledge and skill including PCK. In A. Berry, P. Friedrichsen, & J. Loughran (Eds.), *Re-examining pedagogical content knowledge in science education* (pp. 28-42). Routledge.

Grossman, P. L. (1990). *The making of a teacher: Teacher knowledge and teacher education*. Teachers College Press.

Gu, M. (2006). An analysis of the impact of traditional Chinese culture on Chinese education. *Frontiers of Education in China*, *1*(2), 169-90.

Hashweh, M. (2013). Pedagogical content knowledge: Twenty-five years later. In C. J. Craig, P. D. Meijer, & J. Broeckmans (Eds). *From Teacher Thinking to Teachers and Teaching: The Evolution of a Research Community* vol. *19* (pp. 97-113). Emerald Publishing Ltd.

He, Y., Levin, B. B., & Li, Y. (2011). Comparing the content and sources of the pedagogical beliefs of Chinese and American pre-service teachers. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *37*(2), 155-171.

Hoy, A. W., Davis, H., & Pape, S. J. (2006). Teacher Knowledge and Beliefs. In P. A. Alexander & P. H. Winne (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 715–737). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Hu, G.W. (2002). Potential cultural resistance to pedagogical imports: The case of communicative language teaching in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 15*(2): 93-105

Hu, Y. (2004). The cultural significance of reading instruction in China. *The Reading Teacher, 57*(7), 632-639.

International Literacy Association. (2017). *What is literacy?* https://www.literacyworldwide.org/about-us

Kagan, D.M. (1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist*, *27*(1), 65-90.

Kind, V. (2009). Pedagogical content knowledge in science education: Perspectives and potential for progress. *Studies in Science Education*, *45*(2), 169-204. doi:10.1080/03057260903142285.

Li, H., Wang, C., & Wong, J. M. S. (2011). Early Childhood curriculum reform in China: Perspectives from examining teachers' beliefs and practices in Chinese literacy teaching. *Chinese Education and Society*, *44*(6): 5-23.

Lin, E., Shi, Q., Want, J., Zhang, S., & Hui, L. (2012). Initial motivations for teaching: Comparison between preservice teachers the United States and China. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *40*(3), 227-248.

Liu, Y., & Feng, X. X. (2005). Kindergarten educational reform during the past two decades in mainland China: Achievements and problems. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, *13*(2), 93-99.

Luo, L., & Qiao, F. (2021) Comparison and reflection on basic education teaching management between China and America from a cross-cultural perspective. *Open Access Library Journal, 8,* e7112. DOI: <u>10.4236/oalib.1107112</u>

Magnusson, S., Krajcik, J., & Borko, H. (1999). Nature, sources and development of pedagogical content knowledge for science teaching. In J. Gess-Newsome, & N. G. Lederman (Eds.), *Examining Pedagogical Content Knowledge* (pp. 95-123). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Meijer, P.C., Verloop, N., & Beijaard, D. (2001). Similarities and differences in teachers' practical knowledge about teaching reading comprehension. *The Journal of Educational Research, 94*(3), 171-184.

Ministry of Education (2001). *Compendium of curricular reform for basic education (Trial).* Retrieved from http://www.moe.gov.cn/ srcsite/A26/jcj_kcjcgh/200106/t20010608_167343.html

Ministry of Education (2022). *National curriculum standards for literacy: Compulsory education.* Beijing Normal University Press.

McMullen, M., Elicker, J., Wang, J., Erdiller, Z., Lee, S. M., Lin, C. H., & Sun, P. Y. (2005). Comparing beliefs about appropriate practice among early childhood education and care professionals from the U.S., China, Taiwan, Korea and Turkey. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 20*(4), 451-464.

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 19,* 317-328.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62*(3), 307-332.

Perry, B., Wong, N., & Howard, P. (2006). Comparing primary and secondary mathematics teachers' beliefs about mathematics, mathematics learning and mathematics teaching in Hong Kong and Australia. In F. Leung, K. D. Graf, & F. Lopez-Real (Eds), *Mathematics education in different cultural traditions: A comparative study of East Asia and the West (*pp, 435-448). Springer.

Pratt, D.D. (1992). Chinese conceptions of learning and teaching: A Westerner's attempt at understanding. *International Journal of Lifelong Education, 11*(4), 310-319.

Richardson, V., Anders, P., Tidwell, D., & Lloyd, C. (1991). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction. *American Educational Research Journal, 28*(3), 559-586)

Richardson, V. (1996). The rile of attitudes and beliefs in learning to teach. In J. Sikula (Ed), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 102-119). Simon and Schuster/ Macmillan.

Richardson, V. (2003). Pre-service teachers' beliefs. In J. Raths, & A. AcAninch (eds), *Teacher beliefs and teacher education: Advances in teacher education* (pp. 1-22). Information Age Publishers.

Rokeach, M. (1968). *Beliefs, attitudes, and values: A theory of organization and change.* Jossey-Bass.

Sang, G., Valcke, M., Braak, J., & Tondeur, J. (2009). Investigating teachers' educational beliefs in Chinese Primary schools: Socioeconomic and geographical perspectives. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 37*(4), 363-377.

Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. Jossey-Bass.

Shulman, L.S. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(2), 4-14.

Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review, 57*(1), 1-22.

Simnacher-Pate, R., Ortlieb, E., & Cheek, E.H. (2011). Comparing literacy instruction within China and the United States. *English Language Teaching, 4*(4), 3-9.

Tan, C. (2015). Education polity borrowing and cultural scripts for teaching in China. *Comparative Education, 51*(2), 196-211.

Tan, C. (2016). Constructivism and pedagogical reform in China: Issues and challenges. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 15*(2), 238-247. DOI: 10.1080/14767724.2015.1105737.

Tan, C., & Chua, C. S. K. (2015). Education policy borrowing in China: Has the west wind overpowered the East Wind?" *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education. 45*(5): 686-704.

Tierney, R., & Kan, W. (2016). Knowledge globalization within and across the People's Republic of China and the United States: A cross-national study of internationalization of educational research in the early 21st century. *American Educational Research Journal, 53*(6), 1759-1791.

Wang, J., Elicker, J., McMullen, M., & Mao, S. (2008). Chinese and American preschool teachers' beliefs about early childhood curriculum. *Early Childhood Development and Care, 178*(3), 227-249.

Wang, A. Y. & Chang, W. (2013). Cultural characteristics developed through Chinese literacy instruction. *US-China Foreign Language*, *6*, 433-446.