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Inequities in Public Scholarship during the Pandemic: Who Made Predictions about the Future of Higher Education?

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Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, commentators in broadly accessible media have offered a surfeit of predictions about the future of higher education. Due to the absence of accountability mechanisms, however, the accuracy of these claims has been heretofore unknown. Research shows that op-eds and other forms of public scholarship influence public policy, heightening the significance of predictions. This paper asks who makes predictions about higher education, in what venues they issue them, on what topics they make predictions, and how accurate they are. It answers these questions by drawing from an original data set of 91 distinct predictions issued by 22 unique authors in 31 separate texts across a 19-month time span from March 2020 to October 2021. It finds that predictions most often appeared in op-eds written by senior academic white men in higher education trade journals. More than half of predictions could not be evaluated a year or more after they were first issued. Still, predictions with determinable outcomes tended to bear out accurately. Enrollment patterns and teaching modalities were the most common topics. Women and people of color were significantly under-represented among predictors. The paper concludes with suggestions for improving equity and performance.

Keywords: Covid; academics; women; people of color; representation.

Introduction

Scholarship during the Covid-19 pandemic yielded a glut of predictions about the future of higher education. In national news outlets, domestic and international trade publications, and blogs, experts and non-experts alike forecasted a wide range of changes in the sector. They prognosticated on how the pandemic would impact enrollment, mobility, and modality as well as financing, technology, and curricula. Yet it is unclear which and how many from this dizzying array of predictions were hitting the mark. When communicating with the public, academics experience considerably fewer accountability measures than when they communicate with peers in scholarly journals (Posner, 2001). Indeed, even evaluation of publicly espoused predictions is rare. When it does occur, the results are superficial, providing only a high-level account of general themes (June & O'Leary, 2021), not specific predictions from individual authors.

The absence of rigorous evaluation of publicly issued predictions is a problem for three reasons. First, pandemic-inspired predictions have turned out to be wrong in many

domains, from housing to jobs to state budgets (Demsas, 2022). We should not expect different results in the higher education sector. Second, inaccurate predictions can still influence public policy. While earlier scholars doubted the impact of academic discourse on public opinion and public policy (Posner, 2001), more recent research has shown that scholars can indeed move the needle when communicating with the public through op-eds (Coppock et al., 2018). Third, without measurement, there can be no improvement. Higher education commentators can better serve the public by reflecting on their predictive performance.

Our paper identifies and analyzes predictors and their predictions about higher education made during the first year and a half of the Covid-19 pandemic in the United States. While journalists, policy analysts, and junior academics, among others, also offer predictions, we find that prediction-making is generally a pursuit of senior academic white men. They typically opine about topics like enrollment trends or technology changes in open-access higher education trade journals such as University World News. Their predictions often appear incidentally in op-eds prompted by the latest pandemic-related news concerning higher education. But it is difficult to determine the quality of these predictions. Indeed, it was still too early to judge the accuracy of more than half of the predictions made during our data collection period after a year had passed. In instances where we can determine their accuracy, predictions have turned out correct at an astonishingly high rate of 83 percent.

Our findings contribute to national conversations about public trust in higher education as well as diversity, equity, and inclusion. We discover that non-academic thought leaders make more predictions in mainstream media than academic experts who communicate more regularly in trade publications. Consequently, outsiders have greater opportunity to influence the national narrative about higher education at a time when the public is losing confidence in the sector. Further, we notice the relative absence of women and people of color from the prediction phenomenon. The dearth of predictions by experts with these perspectives limits the quality of information the public receives. We conclude with suggestions for improving equity and overall performance vis-à-vis publicly espoused predictions.

Literature Review

This paper contributes to a relatively small but fast-growing literature about higher education and the Covid-19 pandemic. Since 2020, many peer-reviewed journals have dedicated special issues to this subject (Burkholder & Krauskopf, 2021; Davenport & Holland, 2021; Ghosh & DeMartino, 2022b; Green et al., 2020; Ho Mak & Montgomery, 2021; Huang et al., 2022; Husain, 2021). Bozkurt (2022) used data mining to identify three broad themes in Covid-19 higher education research: "(1) educational crisis and higher education in the new normal: resilience, adaptability, and sustainability, (2) psychological pressures, social uncertainty, and mental well-being of learners, and (3) the rise of online distance education and blended-hybrid modes" (1).

But scholars have used the lens of the global pandemic to explore nearly all aspects of higher education from global knowledge production (Ghosh & DeMartino, 2022a) to online teaching (Chan et al., 2021; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021) to student perceptions (Choi Fung Tam, 2022; Sharaievska et al., 2022) to well-being and support (Slack & Priestley, 2022; Aquino & Scott, 2022) to students' experiences with racism and discrimination (Koo et al., 2023) to financial aid (Gurantz & Wielga, 2021) and enrollment challenges (Prescott, 2021). Researchers have also examined the impact of the pandemic on specific types of institutions like historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) (Lucas & Felton,

2022) and community colleges (Floyd et al., 2022). Limited mobility, especially during the early phases of the pandemic, inspired calls to rethink campus internationalization policies (Ammigan et al., 2021; Whatley & Castiello-Gutierrez, 2022). Indeed, a particularly popular approach in this emergent tradition acknowledges the need to innovate or reimagine higher education in the wake of the pandemic (Long, Streitwieser, & Fisher 2021; McKeown et al., 2021; Nakra, 2021; Neuwirth et al., 2021).

The pandemic has also afforded an opportunity to extend theory. Numerous analysts have observed policy responses exacerbating the inequalities engendered by neoliberalism (Ahmed, 2022; Jayasuriya, 2021; Le Grange, 2020; Pan, 2020) or "disaster capitalism" (Vujnovic & Foster, 2022). In the United States, the disparate impact of the pandemic on communities of color extends to the implications of university reopening plans on racial equity (Harper, 2020). We are also learning more about psycho-social factors. Research shows that higher education students are more susceptible to psychosocial problems and experience racism at higher rates than the general public and that the pandemic has exacerbated these issues (Akin-Odanye et al., 2021; Koo et al., 2023). Studies show that peer and family support can help mitigate the harmful effects, but that virtual learning environments have typically engendered conditions of isolation, especially for rural and international students (Omodan, 2020; Wilczewski et al., 2021).

Methods and sources vary widely, but there are not many surprises. Interviews with students, faculty, and staff are common (Bergerson & Coon, 2022; Kee, 2021; Knight et al., 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021; Yu, 2021). These populations also constitute survey samples for research on how the pandemic has impacted teaching and learning (Johnson et al., 2020; Tsang et al., 2021) or the student experience (Aristovnik et al., 2020; Aucejo et al., 2020; Martin et al., 2021). Others leverage large-scale datasets to analyze topics ranging from student enrollment (Baer, 2021) to institutional responses (Marsicano et al, 2020) to the impact of campus closures on mortality rates (Mangrum & Niekamp, 2022). Reliance on secondary sources is also common, especially for discourse analysis (Belluigi et al., 2022; Kee-Ming Sia & Abbas Adamu, 2021; Kele & Mzileni, 2021).

The preceding review demonstrates that, since 2020, studies examining the impact of Covid-19 on various aspects of higher education have highlighted themes such as resilience and adaptability in education, psychological pressures on learners, and the rise of online and blended learning. There is a gap in the literature about public scholarship during the pandemic. Despite evidently growing interest in Covid-19-inspired higher education research, we are unaware of any studies that have explored academic communication about the sector with the public during the pandemic, let alone attempts to analyze predictors or evaluate predictions about the future of higher education.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of the conceptual framework is to introduce ideas that will assist analysis and discussion of the findings. In this section, we therefore introduce the concepts of professional legitimacy, public intellectuals, thought leaders, experts, forecasting, and foxes/hedgehogs.

There are power dynamics inherent in public scholarship. Institutionalized features of the academy influence who among its members communicates with lay audiences. Writing for the public is an important way to enhance professional legitimacy—a condition that reflects one's alignment with professional norms (Gonzales & Terosky, 2016)—especially if the message contains policy implications (Sommer & Maycroft, 2008). Professional legitimacy is how academics obtain and exercise power. For example, a timely op-ed in

The New York Times can amplify a Congressional hearing, leading to increased coverage of a researcher's ideas. This shrewd demonstration of the potential for policy influence could appeal to funders, which in turn could bring in more resources to an institution, leading to still greater professional legitimacy for that researcher. Yet, studies show that women, people of color, and non-tenure track faculty perceive constraints on their abilities to achieve professional legitimacy that their tenured white male counterparts do not (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; De Welde & Stepnick, 2015; Lester, 2011; O'Meara et al., 2018). For most faculty, professional legitimacy comes primarily from the volume and impact of original research in peer-reviewed publications, and to a lesser extent teaching (Gonzales & Terosky, 2016). For those belonging to non-dominant identities, other opportunities for professional legitimacy are beyond the pale.

Works on academic communication with the public and philosophy of science provide helpful concepts to analyze predictions (see Table 4 in the Appendix for a definition of the key terms used in this paper). Texts in these fields assist in understanding who makes predictions and why, whether prediction is possible, and if so, how to do it well. They also show how to evaluate predictions, among other uses. Academic communication with the public has traditionally been the purview of public intellectuals. These individuals, the jurist Richard Posner (2001) tells us in his authoritative study, "address nonspecialist audiences on matters of broad public concern" (35). Examples of current public intellectuals include Cornel West, Jill Lepore, and Larry Summers. The public looks to them to identify and synthesize trends, to link to relevant academic research, and to tell us what will happen next. Public intellectuals build trust with their audiences by staking their reputations on their claims (Parks & Takahashi, 2016). This kind of work has therefore been regarded as a form of public service.

But scholars have increasingly observed that the influence of public intellectuals is waning (Drezner, 2017; Murphy & Costa, 2019). According to the political scientist Dan Drezner (2017), this is happening because the marketplace of ideas has evolved into an industry of ideas. This new public sphere, he contends, is bigger, louder, and more lucrative than ever before. With the advent of the internet, the number of platforms, forums, and outlets eager to broadcast provocative ideas has exploded. And so, today's thought leader has come to replace the public intellectual of yore. Drezner further distinguishes thought leaders from academic experts, yet another group declining in public esteem (Nichols, 2017). Experts are less effective in the marketplace of ideas, Drezner argues, because they tend to focus on why policies will not work. Thought leaders, on the other hand, are eager to explain to the public why their idea will work. Drezner derisively refers to this latter group as "intellectual evangelists." Today's thought leaders pursue the same audience as public intellectuals always have, but now they have a much more singular agenda. Examples of these new evangelists include figures like Adam Grant, Clayton Christensen, and Tom Friedman.

The philosophy of science includes a tradition exploring the possibility of prediction (Forster, 2008). On one end of the spectrum is chaos theory, which posits that the world is too random and uncertain to render prediction a viable intellectual pursuit. In other words, a true science of prediction is not possible. On the other end, probability theory contends that we can apply mathematical reasoning to available information to generate a numerical likelihood of something happening. The science of prediction—also known as forecasting—has become a fixture in the physical sciences, especially in fields like meteorology. And even though the weather forecast may inspire us to leave our umbrella at home on the wrong day, predictions of the physical world can reach remarkable levels of accuracy. The same cannot be said for the social world, where the variables are

exponentially more diffuse, and thus the potential for improvement is significantly more limited (Makridakis et al., 2020). Even the big data revolution, which has drastically increased the availability and volume of social data, has had a limited impact on forecasting events in our social world with any measure of greater accuracy (Hosni & Vulpiani, 2017).

But that does not mean that forecasting in the social world is impossible or futile either. Research shows that some individuals are particularly good at making predictions and can improve their abilities to prognosticate over time (Tetlock & Gardner, 2015). A groundbreaking study at the dawn of the 21st century demonstrated that the average expert was no better at predicting political outcomes than a dart-throwing chimpanzee (Tetlock, 2005). But later works since then have been able to identify that certain non-experts who use a three-part forecast-measure-revise technique can significantly out-predict experts who may even have access to better information. Unfortunately, this rigorous approach is practiced exceedingly rarely. Even though prediction is "the stock in trade of the public intellectual" (Posner, 2001, 128), consumers of forecasting do not generally demand accuracy (Tetlock & Gardner, 2015). Consequently, there is no sustained interest in measuring the accuracy of predictions. Nor do the predictors therefore have any great incentive to revise their forecasts. Consumers of their predictions are in turn less able to rely on the validity and veracity of suggested prognostications. In short, if we cannot feel confident in the validity of the predictions made by our so-called intellectuals and experts, then what value can they really hold for us?

In the absence of measurement, we still have some expectations for the relative performance of public intellectuals and thought leaders. There are decades of peer-reviewed research about making informed predictions (i.e., forecasting) and even a large-scale government-funded predictions tournament. Scholar Phil Tetlock and journalist Dan Gardner (2015) draw from these sources in a bestselling book about predictions. In it they employ a classic metaphor when exploring who is better at predicting the future: foxes or hedgehogs. Foxes know many little things, while hedgehogs know one big thing. According to the authors, foxes are much better predictors. But hedgehogs are better storytellers and are more likely to say that something definitely will or will not happen. Counterintuitively, Tetlock and Gardner found that when authors who are hedgehogs predicted outcomes in their area of expertise, their accuracy declined. Yet more vexing, there is even an inverse correlation between fame and accuracy: the more famous an expert is, the less accurate he or she became. Tetlock evaluated predictions that included confidence intervals and timelines. But predictions issued in the public domain do not often have these characteristics. This is where our study comes in.

Research Questions

Our project stems from 'Re-imagining Higher Education Worldwide after Covid-19,' a series of three internally funded seminars held in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021. The seminars provided a platform for higher education experts in different parts of the world to reflect on how the pandemic would impact the future of the sector. Getting a taste of the predictions made by our expert participants, and the audience's reaction to them, laid the seed for our subsequent study and is the subject of this paper. The predictions study that resulted from the initial seminar series includes four broad questions:

1. Who makes predictions about higher education to nonspecialists?
2. In what venues do they make these predictions?
3. On what topics do they make predictions?
4. How accurate are predictions about higher education inspired by the pandemic?

Methodology

Constructing the Data Set: Sources and Methods

To answer these questions, we constructed a data set of all the predictions we could find. Construction of original datasets out of news media is an increasingly common practice in education research, especially for frame or discourse analysis (Coe & Kuttner, 2018; Coe et al., 2020; Long & O'Connell, 2022). This was a multi-stage process. We define a prediction as a statement expressing that an occurrence, phenomenon, or change would or would not happen in the future. When initially collecting predictions, we erred on the side of inclusivity and gathered as many statements that approximated this definition as possible. We used a combination of snowball and purposive sampling to generate an initial corpus of English language texts from the popular press and higher education trade journals that included predictions about the future of higher education intended for nonspecialists, i.e., public consumers of higher education content. Because their primary audience is specialists, individuals with extensive knowledge, expertise, and experience in the higher education industry, we excluded peer-reviewed journals. We also excluded podcasts because they generally do not come with transcripts. We conducted Google searches for relevant terms such as "Covid-19," "pandemic," "predictions," "impact," "higher education," etc. We also sought out predictions from specific analysts known to address higher education issues publicly, including Philip Altbach, Anthony Carnevale, and Scott Galloway, among others.

After compiling an initial list of texts, we then identified the portions of them that potentially contained testable predictions. Approximately one in four texts contained a prediction. In instances where a single text included multiple predictions, we created separate entries for each prediction. This resulted in an initial data set of 115 entries. Next, we cleaned the data set by removing entries that did not pass a basic definitional test of a prediction after further scrutiny. We did not require entries to have confidence intervals or timelines or even unambiguous verbiage. Instead, we put to each entry a simple question: is this a prediction? A prediction states that some occurrence, phenomenon, or change would or would not happen in the future. Claims that did not meet this definition and appeared unverifiable due to a lack of specificity or testable statement were excluded. Through this process, we removed 24 entries, more than a fifth of the original data set. Discarded claims were unverifiable and often comprised opinions, summaries of trends or popular opinion, advice, statements of fact, or a call to arms, rather than a prediction. Commentators often discuss how trends could play out in the future, but ultimately refrain from committing to a single expected outcome. For example, the following claim was removed from the dataset because it fails to specify what will happen in the future: "It is likely that heightened student awareness and organizing, and some bitterness and estrangement, will be ongoing legacies of the pandemic period" (Marginson, 2021).

Next, we categorized the entries in multiple ways. The first step was to identify the content area of the prediction, which we then used to categorize the predictions' content into codes. We applied one of seven inductive codes to each prediction that allowed us to sort them by shared content. Based on the data, we developed the following codes (Table 1).

Table 1
Content Area Codes and Descriptions with Sample Predictions

Content Area Code	Code Description	Sample Prediction
Corporate entities	Predictions that address the role of the private sector and nontraditional higher education providers.	"Enrollments in Google Career Certificates and Microsoft's global skills initiative, among others, will increase" (Dennis, 2021).
Enrollment	Predictions pertaining to the future of student demand either in the United States or globally.	"The economic recovery between now and 2030 will only increase demand for postsecondary education" (Carnevale, 2021).
Finance	Predictions that consider changes to higher education institutions' or systems' revenues and/or expenditures.	"It is likely that there will be a highly restrictive fiscal climate, because of the public debts incurred by the government during the pandemic. The potential for one more autumn shutdown of the country, and the universities, is real" (Marginson, 2021).
Health	Predictions about the implementation of higher education policies and/or practices to minimize the community impact of Covid-19.	"Students, faculty and staff will travel with Digital Health passports, verifying their COVID-19 test results" (Dennis, 2021).
Inequality	Predictions that highlight the widening gap between privileged and underprivileged higher education systems and institutions in the United States or abroad.	"Because of severe economic downturns as a result of the pandemic, research funding will probably shrink further in lower- and middle-income countries, where it is already limited. An exception may be China" (De Wit and Altbach, 2021).
Landscape	Predictions that concern the viability, market position, or governance of a large collection of institutions.	"The movement toward economic transparency and accountability is gradually shifting from the degree level toward the program level as well. We will almost surely end up with more transparency and accountability on completion, employment, and earnings for all postsecondary programs" (Carnevale, 2021).
Online/hybrid	Predictions about the future of digital modalities in higher education.	"We doubt that there will be a profound and lasting 'technological revolution' in higher education. But the COVID-19 crisis will significantly expand the use of distance education" (Altbach and De Wit, 2020b).

We then generated categories for author and source types as well as timelines and verbiage. We determined role categories for prediction authors and applied labels to each individual author and author combinations, borrowing "thought leader" (e.g., Scott Galloway) and "expert" (e.g., Anthony Carnevale) from the literature and adding

"journalist" (e.g., Jon Marcus) and "aspirant" (e.g., Scott Van Pelt). We apply the "thought leader" label to individuals employed in the private sector or who regularly advocate "disruptive innovation" in higher education. In our dataset, "experts" are tenured research faculty or senior leaders of higher education organizations. Notably, we observed individuals beyond thought leaders and experts making predictions. We therefore developed two additional categories inductively. The "aspirant" label describes non-tenured or practice-oriented faculty as well as mid-level researchers at education-oriented think tanks or international organizations. We apply the "journalist" label to individuals employed by media organizations. None of the authors in our data set qualify as public intellectuals as defined above. When an expert made a co-authored prediction (i.e., alongside one or more aspirants, experts, and/or journalists), we labeled that category "Expert+."

We coded each prediction with Y or N to denote if it included a timeline or not. For example, Simon Marginson provided a timeline in this prediction: "The overall position for international education is that it's going to take a massive hit. I think that we're looking at at least a five-year recovery period in terms of the global numbers of people who move between countries for education" (quoted in Bothwell, 2020). Further, we coded each prediction's verbiage as "definite" or "indefinite." Predictions in the former category definitively state that something will or will not happen. Indefinite predictions state that something will "probably" occur, is "likely" to happen, "could" transpire, or "might" unfold, etc.

Finally, we evaluated each prediction by assigning it one of four outcomes. First, we determined whether the prediction was bearing out accurately or second, whether it was demonstrably false. For entries in which we could not evaluate the outcome, we noted third, whether this was due to a lack of information (i.e., there was not enough data) or fourth, because the prediction itself included a timeline—implicit or explicit—beyond the evaluation period (i.e., it was too soon to tell). We also used a four-phase system to evaluate the predictions in September 2022 and March 2023. The first phase involved graduate research assistants who helped us to locate evidence that supported or refuted the predictions before assigning one of the four evaluation outcomes noted above. In the second phase, we solicited the pro bono services of a professional higher education research analyst from the private sector who checked the work of the graduate student assistants. Finally, in our third and fourth phases, the study's authors reviewed the overall evaluation results again in September 2022 and March 2023. In September 2022, authors reviewed all predictions in the dataset. At that time, they determined that 49 predictions (over half of the full dataset) were "too early to tell" or there was "not enough data" to conclude its accuracy. Six months later, they re-evaluated those same 49 predictions to determine if enough additional time had passed or if there were newer data sources available. This process resulted in updates to evaluations of six predictions: two predictions changed to either "not enough data" or "too early to tell" and four changed to either "bearing out accurately" or "demonstrably false."

Findings

The final data set included entries for 91 predictions. Each entry included the prediction, the prediction category, the title of the text, the link to the text, the publication source, the category of the publication source, the publication date, the name(s) of the author(s), the number of authors, the author type, timeline, verbiage, the evaluation, the evaluation evidence, and the link to the evaluation source.

The 91 predictions resulted from 31 texts that were published in fairly even intervals across a 19-month time span from March 2020 to October 2021. Fifteen texts first appeared in 2020. Sixteen texts surfaced in 2021. Texts came from 20 unique source publications. Nearly two-thirds (64.0 percent) of predictions appeared in trade journals. EdSurge (2), Inside Higher Ed (3), The Chronicle of Higher Education (2), Times Higher Education (2), and University World News (7) all had more than one text in the database. More than a third (34.5 percent) of all predictions appeared in University World News. Approximately one in five predictions (22.0 percent) appeared in the popular press (e.g., Forbes, New York Magazine, etc.). Blogs (8.8 percent) and NGO reports (5.5 percent) accounted for the remaining predictions.

Most texts (67.8 percent) and predictions (64.8 percent) were authored by a single individual. More than a quarter of the predictions (26.4 percent) were authored by two individuals. Less than a tenth (8.8 percent) of the predictions came from three individuals writing together. No texts—and therefore no predictions—were authored by more than three individuals. The data set included predictions from 22 unique authors. In four of the texts, the individuals who issued predictions did not have a byline but were instead quoted as experts. We treated them as authors because they were authors of the prediction, even if they did not author the article in which the prediction appeared.

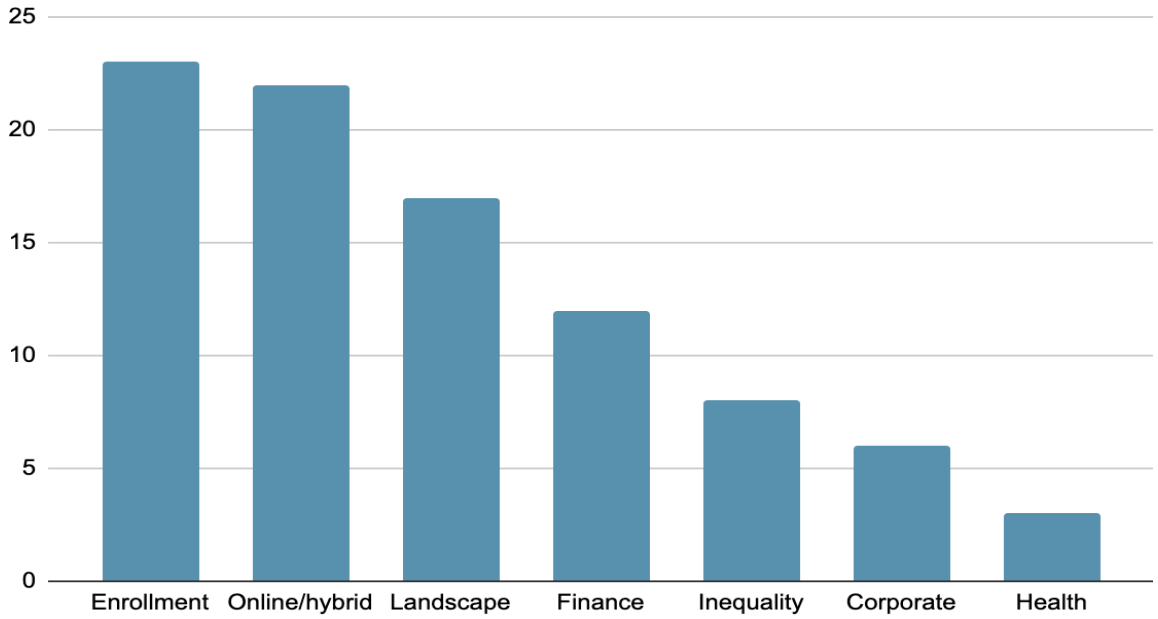
Most predictions were made—at least in part—by experts. They were involved in 73.6 percent of predictions. A plurality of predictions was made by individual experts (38.5 percent). The next most common author type, accounting for 35.2 percent of predictions, came from the Expert+ group (i.e., co-authored predictions that included at least one expert). Eighty-four percent of expert and Expert+ predictions appear in trade journals. Only four predictions across these two groups appeared in the popular press. Thought leaders made nearly a quarter (24.2 percent) of all predictions. All thought leaders in the data set worked alone. Their predictions were over-represented in the popular press. Of the 20 predictions in this source type, 14 were issued by just two thought leaders—Brandon Busteed and Scott Galloway. Michael Horn was the only thought leader in our data set to issue predictions in a trade journal—EdSurge.

The average number of predictions per text was 2.9. There is generally no discernible difference in the number of predictions by the number of authors. However, two different solo-authored texts each included a data set maximum of 11 predictions. Less than a quarter (22.7 percent) of the predicting authors were women. Only one text had a woman first author—Marguerite Dennis. Predictions pertain to both domestic U.S. higher education and global higher education but skew toward the former. Most authors were based in the United States (81.8 percent).

Relatively few predictions included a timeline (7.7 percent). Definite verbiage (e.g., "will") was more common in predictions (79.1 percent). However, even when predictions stated that something definitely will happen, they lacked specificity. For example, five predictions stated that a phenomenon "will increase" without qualifying how much. Indeed, it is characteristic of this dataset for a prediction to state definitively that a phenomenon will happen but without a timeline and without specifying by how much.

Authors made predictions on a variety of topics. A plurality (25.3 percent) of predictions pertained to enrollment. Of these, nearly three-quarters (73.9 percent) concerned international enrollment. The remainder (26.1 percent) addressed domestic U.S. enrollment. Predictions about online/hybrid modalities (24.2 percent) as well as about the broader landscape for higher education (18.7 percent) were also common.

Figure 1
Distribution of Predictions by Category



Overall Accuracy

Our analysis found that a plurality (41.8 percent) of the 91 predictions bore out accurately (see Figure 2). Although, when considering only predictions with determined outcomes (i.e., bearing out accurately or demonstrably false), this figure rises to 82.6 percent. An example of an accurate prediction came from Philip Altbach and Hans de Wit. On May 2, 2020, they predicted, "It is likely international students will postpone starting their studies as long as institutions only offer online instruction." According to later IIE data, indeed, international student enrollments in the United States fell by 15 percent in Fall 2020 when most universities were primarily online. However, by Fall 2021, when they had reopened, enrollments rebounded, increasing by four percent. Enrollments of new international students increased by 68 percent.

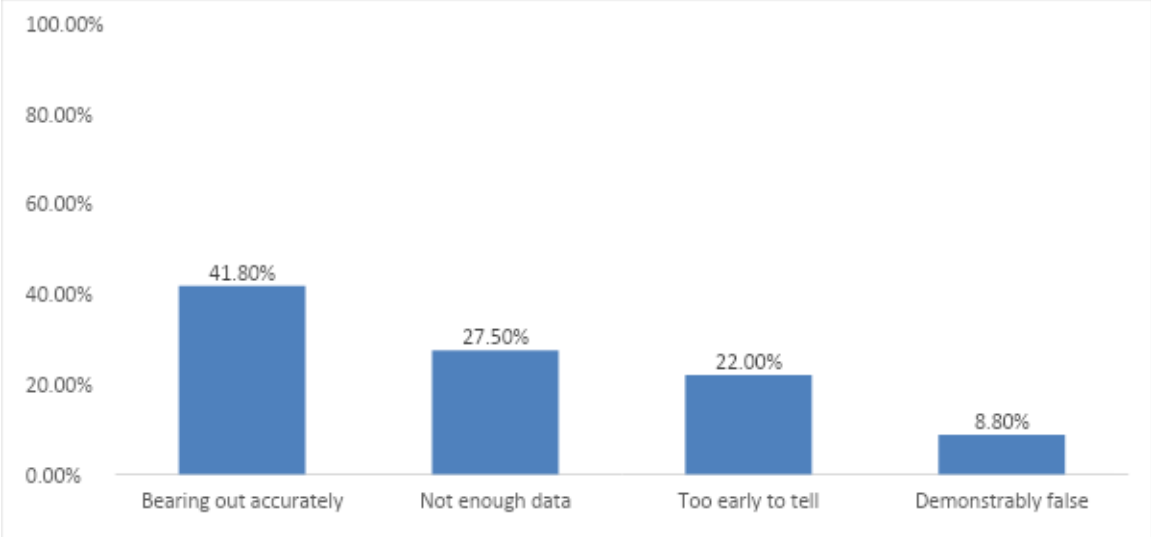
Only 8.8 percent of predictions turned out to be demonstrably false. An example of an inaccurate prediction came from Richard Garrett. On January 12, 2021, he said to "Expect a fall 2021 enrollment recovery, especially at four-year schools." According to National Student Clearinghouse data, however, Fall 2021 enrollment declined by 2.7 percent for all students. Further, enrollment declined at four-year schools, as well. At public four-year institutions, enrollment dropped by 3.0 percent. At private nonprofit four-year institutions, enrollment fell 1.6 percent. At private for-profit four-year institutions, enrollment tumbled 9.3 percent.

More than half of all predictions in our data set could not be fully evaluated, either because it was too early to tell (22.0 percent) or there was not enough data (27.5 percent). An example of the former comes from Carnevale et al. (2020). On July 8, 2020, they predicted that "[many colleges will] scale back the support services that many disadvantaged students need." Institutions report data to IPEDS, a system that collects data from all institutions of higher education and technical and vocational schools that receive federal student financial aid, on academic and institutional support as well as student service expenditures. However, at the time of evaluation, data for FY 21 were not yet available and it was therefore too early to tell if this prediction was bearing out accurately or was demonstrably false.

An example of a prediction that could not be fully evaluated due to a lack of data came from Marguerite Dennis, who on January 9, 2021, predicted that "an increasing proportion of higher education enrolments will come from company-sponsored, short-term certificate programmes and boot camps." We were unable to locate a credible data source for company- sponsored, short-term study to confirm or deny the accuracy of her prediction.

Figure 2

Distribution of Overall Prediction Outcomes



Accuracy by Author Type

There is essentially no impact of author type on accuracy (see Table 2). Single-author experts were somewhat more likely to be correct than co-authoring experts (i.e., Expert+) or thought leaders, but the difference is not significant.[1] Among the three author categories, co-authoring experts were most likely to make predictions that cannot be evaluated in the short- term. Thought leaders were most likely to make predictions that can be evaluated now. The Expert+ group had a minor advantage in avoiding being wrong.

Table 2
Distribution of Prediction Outcomes by Author Type

Author Type	Accurate	False	Too Early	Lacking Data
Expert (n=35)	45.7%	11.4%	20.0%	22.9%
Expert+ (n=32)	37.5%	3.1%	28.1%	31.3%
Thought leader (n=22)	45.5%	13.6%	13.6%	27.3%

Author types vary when considering specificity of language. Expert+ predictions were more likely to use indefinite language. Nearly two in five (37.5 percent) of their predictions used "might," "likely," "probably," etc. compared to 11.9 percent of the rest. Thought leaders were the opposite. There was only one instance of a thought leader using indefinite diction. Ten of 19 (52.6 percent) indefinite language predictions bore out accurately. This represents a higher percentage than definite language predictions that bore out accurately (38.9 percent).

Accuracy by Content Category

Table 3 shows the outcomes of the two highest volume categories. Predictions about enrollment were more likely to be correct (52.2 percent) than the aggregate of predictions in other categories (38.2 percent), but the difference is not significant.[2] Thirty percent of enrollment predictions require more time to pass before evaluating their accuracy. This outcome contrasts sharply with the aggregate of all other predictions, only 19.1 percent of which are too early to tell. Only one (4.4 percent) of the enrollment predictions fell into the not enough data category, compared to 35.3 percent of other predictions. Notably, five of the seven predictions in the entire data set that included timelines concerned enrollment.

Only 18.2 percent of predictions about online/hybrid developments bore out accurately. The aggregate accuracy rate of predictions in all other categories was 49.3 percent. This category's comparatively low accuracy rate is due in large part to the fact that nearly three in four of its predictions required data to verify that was not publicly available at the time of writing. Still, none of the online/hybrid predictions were demonstrably false either. Notably, no predictions about online/hybrid issues included timelines.

[1] The Kruskal-Wallis test is a nonparametric alternative to one-way ANOVA. It is useful for determining the significance of variance for three or more groups with categorical data. This test showed no significant differences among the three author types, $H(2, n=89) = 0.9864$, $p = .61066$.

[2] Chi-square = 1.373, $p = .241304$.

Table 3
Distribution of Prediction Outcomes in Select Categories

Category	Accurate	False	Too Early	Lacking Data
Enrollment	52.2%	13.0%	30.4%	4.4%
Online/hybrid	18.2%	0.0%	9.0%	72.7%

Four prediction categories had accuracy rates of 50 percent or higher: health (67 percent), finance (50 percent), inequality (50 percent), and corporate entities (50 percent). However, these were generally lower volume categories.

Discussion

The Covid-19 pandemic—especially prior to the development of vaccines—was a trepidatious one for higher education. It was hard to know if some changes would be fads or take root. This meant there was much to discuss. The ideas industry that had sprung up in the years prior created an infrastructure for those discussions to occur increasingly in public view. But the ideas industry has changed the way specialists communicate with nonspecialists.

A feature of many predictions made in the public sphere is that they are not capable of being evaluated for many years or are being made in areas where there is no expectation for measurement. But when they are testable, they are often right. This finding contradicts Tetlock's claims to the contrary. Notably, though, our predictors operated under different conditions (e.g., no confidence intervals or timelines). Experts in our data set admit uncertainty, primarily through indirect verbiage. They hedge their bets. Further, their predictions are rarely the aim of the text, but rather a by-product. Still, they operate as a mirror into their level of confidence.

Our findings also indicate a splintering along fox and hedgehog lines. The general public—to the extent that it hears any predictions about the future of higher education—hears them more from thought leaders than academic experts. That is because, as our findings indicate, the popular press publishes thought leaders; trade journals publish experts. Publication venues reflect incentive structures. Experts in research professorships earn greater pay and prestige by publishing for other experts in peer-reviewed journals. Thought leaders outside academic research roles earn acclaim by disseminating their ideas to broader audiences. Crossover is rare and typically only occurs when experts have advanced to the highest levels of their fields. In these instances, traditional academic incentives are no longer as potent and reaching new audiences becomes more appealing. This means that experts do not really communicate to the mainstream public per se. With four out of every five of their predictions appearing in trade journals, experts may not exactly be preaching to the choir, but they are still focusing on the congregation. They are not out evangelizing like the thought leaders.

This is a problem for at least a couple of reasons. First, public opinion data show that the public is losing trust in higher education (Fischer, 2022). Yet the sector's interlocutors with the public are seldom experts. Second, our data suggest that experts—especially when co-authoring—may be wrong less often than thought leaders. That means the public is at greater risk of getting bad information—and using that information to inform how they vote, and, in turn, what policies will shape the sector in the years ahead. We argue that the academy needs to re-prioritize communication with the public. Tenure committees should count it as service and doctoral programs should teach future faculty how to do it well.

Further, the academy would do well to incentivize participation in the ideas industry by all its members. Our study finds that senior academic men over-participate in this activity. An important corollary is the apparent under-representation of women. Why are there so few of them in our data set? An initial approach to answering that question must start by observing that the supply of potential women authors is lower than men. According to IPEDS, in Fall 2020, 48 percent of all faculty in U.S. postsecondary institutions were women. But among tenured faculty, this figure drops to 41 percent. And among those who hold the title of full professor, only 35 percent are women. None of the women authors in our data set have held faculty positions, let alone tenure-track or tenured positions. Whereas nearly half of the men in our data set have been full professors.

The disparity compounds when you consider that women write op-eds at much lower rates than men. In 2008, the OpEd project began raising awareness about this issue when it found that 80-90 percent of newspaper op-eds were penned by men. Its 2012 Byline Survey found that two in three op-eds about education had male authors. Since then, figures have improved, but women still lag men. A 2016 study found that men authored 81 percent of op-eds on foreign policy in the The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and Los Angeles Times (Bayrasli & Radin, 2018). In 2019, The New York Times started the Women's Project to achieve greater gender parity in its letters page. After a year, it had increased the percentage of published letters from women writers, but the percentage of overall submissions remained static. Only 25 to 30 percent of all potential letters were written by women (Feyer, 2020). In February 2020, the Times implored more women to write. Then the pandemic arrived.

During the height of the pandemic, women bore the brunt of household work, especially managing children's schedules and activities (Barroso, 2021; Kasymova et al., 2021). Consequently, women academics fell behind on research (Davis et al., 2022; Pebdani et al., 2022; Skinner et al., 2021). If they had less time for research, it should not be surprising that they would have less time for engaging with the public. Indeed, women academics tweeted less due to increased parenting responsibilities, which hit junior academics particularly hard (Kim & Patterson, 2021). But what is somewhat surprising is that women do not appear in our dataset even as quoted experts. This finding suggests that during a critical time when the public and policymakers were looking for insights about the future of higher education, they were not getting them from women. The paucity of their input likely impacted the content of predictions. We did not see predictions about issues in

higher education that impact women the most (STEM enrollments, research support policies like family leave, tenure clock extensions, etc.).

We similarly, and disappointingly, observe that none of the authors in our data set appear to be people of color. The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on racial and ethnic minorities, especially Black Americans (Peek et al., 2021). Research indicates that the academic careers of minority faculty were more likely to be disrupted than those of their white colleagues (Carr et al., 2021; Krukowski et al., 2022). The absence of people of color in our data set points to the public's deprivation of access to valuable perspectives on the future of higher education, particularly during a time when the nation was also grappling with racial injustice. Academic leaders should develop support structures to ensure that their voices are heard (Njoku & Evans, 2022). Until then, public scholarship as a path toward professional legitimacy will remain a luxurious pursuit, further entrenching inequality in the professoriate.

We also want to recognize another possibility: predictions may not be a desirable intellectual product of potential suppliers beyond senior academic white men. Perhaps the prediction, like the public intellectual, is a dying breed, too. It might be that there are other ways of engaging the public better suited for our era. The next generation of academic experts might prefer to spend the time their forebears did on op-eds instead on community engaged research (London et al., 2022; Warren et al., 2018). Even so, the ideas industry will carry on—with or without academic experts. Op-eds and the predictions they contain will continue. We contend that it is in the best interest of the academy to participate. And to do so better with more voices and more accountability.

Limitations

We acknowledge several important limitations to our study. The first is that not enough time has passed for sufficient data to emerge that would help us to evaluate fully the accuracy for half of the predictions we collected. Second, the online/hybrid category concerns content that analysts could measure—and may in fact be measuring now—but standard measures have not been developed and research lags. Third, we only looked at English language sources. Predictions surely occur in non-English sources, but we did not collect or analyze them for this study. Fourth, due to Google's search algorithm, we likely missed some media outlets that included predictions. Finally, we were unable to measure the relative impact of sources and texts. We do not have data on clicks, views, or readership. Consequently, all predictions are treated as having equal impact.

Conclusion

This paper is the first exploration of academic communication about the higher education sector with the public during the pandemic. It establishes benchmarks for predictor attributes and prediction performance. It finds that predictions often appeared in op-eds in higher education trade journals. They tended to be issued by senior academic white men. Half of predictions could not be evaluated over a year after they were first issued. Although, predictions with determinable outcomes tended to bear out accurately. Predictions covered a range of topics, but enrollment patterns and online/hybrid teaching modalities were most common. The results point to a silo-ing of public discourse in which

non-academic thought leaders are the primary prognosticators of higher education futures to the general public through mainstream media. Academic experts speak to lay, but informed, audiences through higher education trade journals. Women and people of color are significantly under-represented among predictors.

If academic experts continue to participate in the ideas industry via prediction, they ought to do so in a way that allows for their claims to be evaluated. Predictions should use definite verbiage and include timelines and confidence intervals. Issuers should make a smaller number of carefully considered predictions and revisit them to reflect on their accuracy. Broader application of Tetlock's forecast-measure-revise technique would be a good starting point. Further, predictors could evaluate others' predictions when making their own to build broader public knowledge. Finally, academic leaders should foster more inclusive participation in faculty communication with the public. Doing so would have salutary consequences for both intellectual equity and the quality of public information.

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Appendix-I

Table 4

Definitions of Key Terms

Term	Definition
Prediction	A statement expressing that an occurrence, phenomenon, or change would or would not happen in the future.
Nonspecialist	Member of the-public who engages higher education content.
Specialist	Individual with extensive knowledge, expertise, and experience in the higher education industry.
Thought Leader	Individual employed in the private sector or who regularly advocates some aspect of "disruptive innovation" in higher education
Public Intellectual	Individual who addresses nonspecialist audiences on matters of broad public concern, identifying and synthesizing trends.
Expert	Category of predictor referring to tenured research faculty or senior leader of higher education organization.
Aspirant	Category of predictor referring to non-tenured or practice-oriented faculty as well as mid-level researchers at education-oriented think tanks or international organizations
Expert+	Category of predictor referring to a group with at least one expert and one or more experts, aspirants, and/or journalists
Journalist	Category of predictor referring to an individual employed by a media organization

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

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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.

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The Development of Intercultural Competence for Teachers of English as a Foreign Language through an Instructional Design Project

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Most teaching pedagogies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes prioritize linguistic skills development over exploring how cultural factors shape language interpretation. To address the gap, this study developed and evaluated an instructional design project using the attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS) motivational design model combined with critical pedagogy through computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools. The purpose of this research is to enhance EFL teachers' intercultural competence. Multimedia resources were used to capture participants' attention, and news articles were selected to connect to their lived experiences. Online forums were used to build their confidence, and intercultural activities provided satisfaction through practical engagement. Critical literacy pedagogy guided the design of questions to encourage EFL teachers to explore assumptions, challenge perspectives, and critically analyze language. Data from 16 EFL teachers' questionnaires, online comments, and interviews indicated that task attractiveness and the online environment motivated EFL teachers to develop critical literacy skills. Future studies could explore additional strategies for integrating intercultural competence into EFL teaching and examine how cultural dynamics within groups influence online communication.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, computer-mediated communication, ARCS motivational design model

Introduction

In recent years, the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom has become an important place for developing intercultural competence due to its possibility to allow students to explore diverse identities and cultures. However, traditional language acquisition approaches focus on linguistic competence, such as reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills, which cannot capture the complexity of sociocultural perspectives of language learning (Ohta, 2000). To bridge this gap, O'Dowd (2013) suggests that "online cultural exchanges" can be a great model to emphasize linguistic and intercultural competence. Consequently, many training programs for EFL teachers have adopted computer-mediated communication (CMC) to foster international dialogue and overcome the challenges of limited access to target cultures.

To support teachers' engagement in these training programs, the attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction (ARCS) model developed by Keller (1987) is popular in both educational research and practice, and there is a growing interest in applying this model in technology-enhanced learning environments (Ma & Lee, 2021). The ARCS model's

emphasis on maintaining attention and relevance, boosting confidence, and fostering satisfaction plays a crucial role in sustaining EFL teachers' active participation. However, fostering intercultural competence requires more than motivation. Deeper engagement with content that challenges perspectives and promotes critical thinking is necessary.

To achieve this, critical literacy pedagogy was incorporated to facilitate authentic communication within the online module. Critical literacy pedagogy, rooted in the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire (1970), has evolved to become an integral component of EFL instruction. Introduced in the 1990s as an innovative approach, critical literacy pedagogy has gained significant attention from scholars who advocate for incorporating social and political contexts into language curricula (Pennycook, 2001). This approach prompts EFL teachers to move beyond simple information exchange and progress more along the lines of thinking, "Why do we want to communicate?" This method encourages participants to think critically about language choices and their implications, promoting awareness beyond literal meanings.

Recognizing the gap in traditional EFL teaching pedagogies, which predominantly focus on linguistic skills without adequately addressing the influence of cultures on language interpretation, this study develops and evaluates an online professional development module aimed at integrating language learning and intercultural competence through CMC tools. The two research questions that guide this research are:

1. How do the online modules influence participants' motivation?
2. How do the online modules influence participants' intercultural competence?

This study seeks to address these questions by examining the effectiveness of an online professional development module in enhancing EFL teachers' motivation and intercultural competence.

Instructional Design Project

To begin, I developed an online professional development module on the free website builder Wix. The module incorporates diverse voices and narratives, guided by critical questions designed to prompt reflection and deeper engagement. By presenting varied perspectives, the module provided EFL teachers with opportunities to broaden their understanding of intercultural competence, fostering a more nuanced comprehension of language in both personal and societal narratives. By analyzing the participants' experience in the module, this study seeks to expand knowledge of integrated language learning and intercultural competence, to demonstrate how EFL modules can be effectively implemented using CMC tools.

The ARCS model was developed and validated more than 30 years ago in both face-to-face and online environments, and the online module was developed with an eye to the components of ARCS. The module captured EFL teachers' *attention* using multimedia materials, including international news articles, social movement photos, and short clips. To ensure *relevance*, lesson content featured stories sourced from newspapers, making it more applicable to EFL teachers' experiences. By sharing collective knowledge on the

public forum, participants are expected to build *confidence* in integrating intercultural topics into EFL classes and to find *satisfaction* in interacting with peers from different countries. Images that can convey the project's key ideas were selected. For instance, McArthur's Universal Corrective Map of the World (1979) illustrated how visual representations and textual information construct our perspectives.

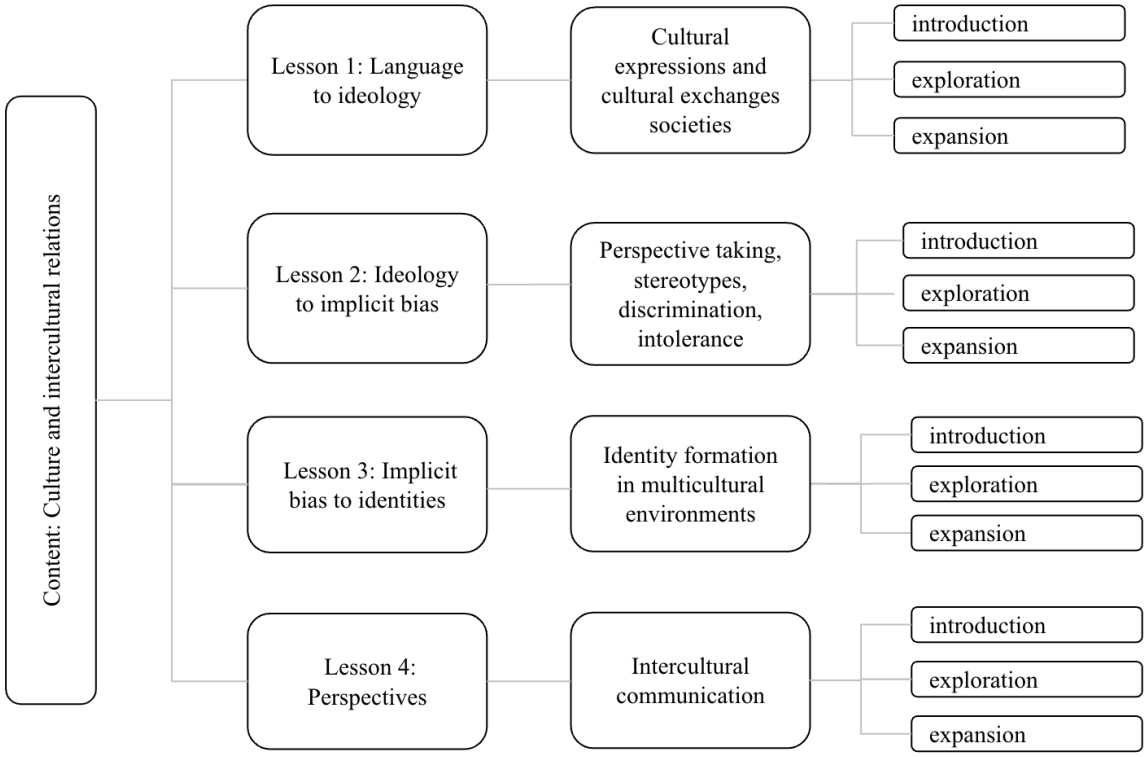
Each lesson in the module opens with an introduction, leads participants through an exploration of materials, and closes with an expansion of lessons learned. Different purposes and objectives were broken down for participants to achieve (Figure 1). The objectives of the lessons on intercultural competence for EFL teachers are as follows:

- Lesson 1-Language to ideology: Determine how languages influence ideologies
- Lesson 2-Ideology to implicit bias: Determine how ideologies influence implicit bias
- Lesson 3-Implicit bias to identities: Determine how implicit bias influence identity
- Lesson 4-Perspectives: Recognize how cultures influence language interpretation to the same information

Each lesson is structured in three phases: Introduction, exploration, and expansion. In the introductory phase, visual images and tutorials get participants' attention. In this phase, the key learning goals are to (1) recognize how language is influenced in dominant and non-dominant cultures and (2) identify how language and identity are constructed. In the exploration session, theoretical concepts are delivered through academic readings. The learning goals in the exploration phase are to (1) identify the impact of explicit and implicit bias and (2) determine how implicit bias is formed through reading. The expansion session provides a real-life news event for participants to apply concepts from the lesson. In this phase, the goals are to (1) explore the idea that languages sometimes encode meanings that can be difficult to access in other languages from a news article and (2) evaluate how cultural values guide people to form different communication norms.

This online module aims to explore how questions grounded in critical literacy pedagogy can facilitate meaningful online communication among EFL teachers. This approach enables EFL teachers to adopt an active role in the reader-author relationship, fostering deeper understanding from a critical perspective that questions, examines, and disputes the power relations between readers and authors (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). For example, the first lesson introduced the word "oriental," followed by a tutorial about why this word had a negative connotation and was removed from the federal law. In the exploration session, participants explored the difference between "exotic" and "Asian" through images. Another lesson involved an academic reading on implicit bias and how language reflects one's mind. During the expansion session, participants analyzed the usage of the term "immigrant" after reading two authentic news articles, one from Taiwan and the other from Germany, which was followed by online discussions. Throughout these lessons, analyzing and interpreting the textual and visual content presented in this module is viewed as a process of interaction not only between the reader, the author, and the information but also between the reader and society. This approach allows for a more engaging method of fostering cultural understanding and communication.

Figure 1.
Content Map



Literature Review

Intercultural competence is widely recognized as an individual's capacity to operate effectively in diverse cultural contexts (Chen & Starosta, 1998). Hammer et al. (2015) describe it as the capability to think and act in ways appropriate to different cultures. Jia (1997) suggests that intercultural competence is sensitivity and tolerance to cultural differences, dealing with cultural differences flexibly, constructing awareness and competence of the target culture, and helping participants communicate appropriately in an intercultural setting. Intercultural competence is paramount for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, as it involves understanding, respecting, and effectively communicating with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. This intercultural competence enables EFL teachers to create inclusive learning environments that acknowledge and celebrate cultural differences, thereby offering an alternative model in language education (Fang & Baker, 2018) and enriching the educational experience for students.

Previous materials for EFL teachers' education tend to focus on cultural knowledge such as literature, artwork, customs, history, or taboo. Disregarding their unique cultural differences, these stereotypical and generalized cultural facts may lead to the pre-judgment and categorization of individuals, resulting in misunderstandings and potential conflicts as it overlooks the complexities and nuances of individual cultural identities (Cojocaru, 2023). Therefore, instructional designers should incorporate authentic situations into lessons and encourage EFL teachers to explore intangible cultural aspect

such as attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, perceptions, norms, and values in their EFL classes (Chlopek, 2008). Effective implementation of intercultural competence for EFL teachers can be accomplished using computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools to foster online intercultural communication and intercultural communicative competence (Bennacer, 2019). This increased engagement through CMC tools is attributed to the shift in participants' roles from passive recipients to active topic contributors, negotiators, and information providers (Yandell, 2013).

To sustain such engagement, one critical component is motivation, which drives participants to fully and effectively engage in intercultural exchange. Motivation itself comprises both internal factors as well as external factors. Gardner and Lambert (1972) identify two key motivation types in foreign language learning. Integrative motivation is driven by the aspiration to become a member of society, and instrumental motivation is motivated by practical goals such as securing a desirable job and gaining social recognition. Lalleman (1996) criticizes this binary classification of motivation, arguing that it oversimplifies the concept. Madrid (2021) further refines the definition, describing motivation as a series of processes that stimulate, direct, and maintain behavior. It is a dynamic, cyclical, and process-oriented model of motivation, which takes into account three motivational phases (preactional, actional and postactional). Warschauer (1996) highlights several motivational factors associated with using CMC tools, including the ability to communicate with speakers of diverse mother tongues, feeling empowered and less threatened interacting with others, and making students feel more control over their learning. Meunier (1998) extends this analysis by examining motivation in online chat sessions, considering elements such as anxiety, risk-taking, reaction to teaching styles, and motivation. This research aims to identify factors that motivate EFL teachers to engage in authentic online communication and explore evidence that demonstrates the development of intercultural competence. Understanding motivation's multifaceted role in intercultural exchange and language learning is key to developing effective teaching and engagement strategies. By leveraging insights into how motivation operates within different educational and communication contexts, educators can better design activities and interactions that sustain long-term involvement.

Among current motivational models, Keller's (1984) Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction (ARCS) model offers a comprehensive framework for understanding motivation by encouraging active participation and meaningful learning. It has been frequently used in web-based, online, and blended learning (Aşıksoy & Özdamlı, 2016; Mirzaei et al., 2024) and emerged as a mainstream method in the post-pandemic era. Fang et al. (2023) reviewed Garzón et al.'s (2020) classification of pedagogical strategies within the context of the ARCS model, identifying five types of pedagogies: (1) collaborative learning, (2) inquiry-based learning, (3) situated learning, (4) project-based learning, and (5) multimedia learning. The review indicated that the majority of the studies (77%) implemented multimedia learning to facilitate student learning. For example, Lin and Wang (2023) explored the impact of integrating the ARCS model into a flipped classroom for EFL learners' writing. The experimental group used a hybrid and face-to-face approach, while the control group implemented face-to-face instruction. Results showed that the ARCS-flipped group performed better in writing and reported higher motivation.

Learners appreciated the flexibility, learner-centeredness, interactivity, and collaboration of the flipped model, which enhanced their engagement and writing performance. Based on the previous review, this self-designed module incorporates multimedia learning to enhance motivation.

While fostering motivation through CMC tools enhances engagement, achieving intercultural competence requires strong media literacy to critically evaluate and engage with content in a meaningful way. In the digital era, participants may struggle to identify credible information and thoughtfully engage with diverse perspectives. Zuckerman (2014) introduces the concept of "participatory civics," a framework where individuals use participatory media to engage in civic activities. His research highlights that individuals often prefer engaging with like-minded online groups, which can limit exposure to differing opinions and reduce acceptance of alternative viewpoints. This presents challenges for fostering meaningful civic engagement in a diverse and competitive online landscape. To address these issues, this study's online module is designed not only to impart structured knowledge but also to help EFL teachers perceive the dynamic nature of reality across different cultural contexts. Through cultural comparisons, EFL teachers can potentially become more aware of the cultural components embedded in language and imagery, thereby enhancing their intercultural competence through critical literacy pedagogy. Originating from critical social theory, critical literacy pedagogy encourages students to engage with texts in an active and reflective manner, fostering a deeper understanding of power dynamics, inequality, and social justice issues present in human interactions.

Critical literacy pedagogy has recently been considered an inclusive educational approach (Sullivan, 2017) and has gained increasing attention. Critical literacy involves reading and understanding content as well as analyzing, critiquing, and responding to it in a way that considers multiple viewpoints and cultural nuances. Such an approach might reduce anxiety by reinforcing the social dimension of learning (Selinger, 1998). Researchers have further supported critical literacy pedagogy, advocating for its integration as a tool to promote social justice in language education (Riasati & Mollaei, 2012). The main difference between critical literacy pedagogy and other dominant pedagogies lies in their conceptualization of language, knowledge, module, and content. Mainstream pedagogies often regard language as a direct reflection of reality and view knowledge as universal. The module content is typically determined by the author's authority This often results in presenting information in binary terms: such as right or wrong, fact or opinion, neutral or biased. On the other hand, critical literacy pedagogy argues that language shapes the lenses through which reality is understood. If the perception of language changes, the concepts of identity, culture, and communication also change. This approach views knowledge as inherently incomplete since each person makes sense of the world through their different cultural backgrounds and experiences. The content of this study's module aims to help EFL teachers explore the underlying assumptions and implications of the text. In Table 1, Andreotti (2009) presents general differences in question types between traditional and critical literacy pedagogies in EFL classes, emphasizing the need for more critical and reflective approaches.

Table 1.
Question Types

Traditional pedagogies	Critical literacy pedagogies
Does the text represent the truth? Is it fact or opinion? Is it biased or neutral? Is it well-written/clear? Who is the author, and what level of authority/legitimacy does he or she represent? What does the author say?	How are words interpreted differently? What are the assumptions behind the statements? Where are they from? What/whose understandings do they present? How was this understanding constructed? Who decides what is real in this context? In whose name and for whose benefit?

Note. Adapted from Andreotti, V. (2009). Global education in the 21st century': Two different perspectives on the post-of postmodernism. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning, 2*(2), 5-22.

Gustine (2018) conducts a mixed-methods study involving a survey and follow-up focus group discussions to examine English teachers' understanding of critical literacy pedagogy. The study sample includes 21 English teachers from a teacher education university. The quantitative data from the questionnaires provide an overview of the teachers' knowledge of critical literacy as an approach to English language teaching, and the qualitative insights from the focus group discussion reveal that experienced teachers lack sufficient knowledge of critical literacy as a methodological approach. Overall, the research shows that incorporating critical literacy pedagogy into their classrooms can enhance their students' engagement with texts and foster critical thinking skills. Asanti and Syamdianita (2017) examine how extensive reading is a supplementary activity that can enhance students' critical literacy in an EFL context. The guidance through critical pedagogy motivates students to engage with texts, question assumptions critically, relate content to global issues, and develop a nuanced understanding of human perspectives and textual intentions.

Intercultural competence is vital for EFL teachers to foster inclusive learning environments. While motivation through the ARCS model supports engagement, strong media literacy is needed for critical content analysis. To explore how these concepts can be effectively implemented for EFL teachers, the following methods section outlines the design and approach used to integrate the ARCS model and media literacy strategies into the instructional framework.

Methods

Recruitment and Participants

The goal of this research is to evaluate the impact of the self-designed professional development online module on participants' intercultural competence and motivation. This research targeted a specific group: EFL teachers at secondary schools. EFL teachers were recruited via recruitment email and confirmation email with a consent form and an

in-person invitation. The recruitment process for this study was carried out using convenience sampling, an approach selected for its efficiency in achieving the required sample size. This method facilitated a relatively quick and straightforward process of gathering participants. I had access to several academic listservs through my affiliation with the University of Hawaii (UH), where these academic listservs serve as vital platforms for connecting scholars, students, and educators across disciplines. Emails were sent to potential participants, and all the teachers who agreed to participate in the study did so willingly, ensuring an ethically sound approach to recruitment. The inclusion criteria (Table 2) were centered on the professional status of the participants, specifically selecting EFL teachers. This criterion was crucial to ensure that the participants had a direct and practical understanding of the challenges and nuances of teaching EFL.

Table 2.
EFL Teachers' Inclusion Criteria

Cognitive	Physiological
• Has basic computer literacy skills • Has little to no knowledge about incorporating the English language with intercultural competence • Has moderate comprehension of the English language • Has knowledge and/or experience completing online surveys	• Is over the age of 18 years old • Can be any gender • Is physically and mentally able to use computers
Affective	**Social**
• Mentally prepared to participate in professional development • Open to possibilities to innovate English classes	• Able to engage and communicate with the researcher • Can test an online module individually

The selection was based on criterion sampling, as per Dornyei (2007), focusing on participant teachers who met predetermined criteria relevant to our study. These EFL teachers were over 18, and the cognitive, physiological, affective, and social domains were used to screen the target population's characteristics. Sixteen voluntary EFL teachers (14 females and 2 males), mostly aged 25-30, were recruited from the Second Language Studies Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. These participants came from six different countries: Taiwan (4), Japan (3), China (2), Korea (1), Vietnam (1), and the USA (5). Two do not have teaching experience, nine have 1-5 years of teaching experience, three have 6-10 years of teaching experience, and two have more than 10 years of teaching experience. Two participants joined one-on-one sessions with me, while the other fourteen tested the online lessons individually.

Procedures

The participants were contacted via recruitment email. After they replied to the email, the researcher sent the confirmation letter to arrange a mutually agreed time to meet on the UHM campus. The link to the website, the consent form, and the purpose of the research were also included in the confirmation letter. When the researcher met with the participants, they opened the website link using their personal computers. Each participant was guided to click on the pre-lesson questionnaire to fill out their data. The consent form attached to the pre-lesson questionnaire informed participants about the steps, the intent of the study, and potential risks. Once the participants hit the "next" button, it implied that they understood and agreed to participate in the research. The personal data were used specifically to determine the impact of this online module and for educational purposes only, and it will be kept private. After participants completed the questionnaire, they spent around 45 minutes finishing the three lessons and interacting with other international participants online. At the end of the lesson, retrospective survey questions were used to examine participants' motivation in achieving intercultural competence. The researcher also interviewed participants for any feedback regarding online lessons.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted both in person and remotely, accommodating the varying circumstances and locations of the participant teachers. This approach was crucial in ensuring a broad and inclusive collection of data. This research was designed to delve deeply into the teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding the online professional development module and their intercultural competence.

Evaluation Instruments

It is important to unpack the complexities of motivation because the course design and learning environment should all be considered. This research utilized quantitative and qualitative measurements to examine which factors increase or decrease motivation. A pre-lesson questionnaire with eight questions and a retrospective survey with 20 questions developed through Google Forms were used to evaluate the impact of this online module on motivation. The retrospective assessment tool was used to decrease the "response-shift bias" in pre-post surveys and effectively eliminate incomplete data sets that usually occur in pre-post tests (Pratt, McGuigan, & Katzev, 2000). The study employed a pre- and post-test design; however, the instruments used in these stages differed significantly. The pre-test comprised a concise questionnaire, whereas the post-test utilized a more extensive survey. This discrepancy raises concerns about the comparability of the data collected, particularly regarding the measurement of ARCS factors. This research collected information from one-on-one interviews, online comments, and open-ended questions. Data access was restricted to the researcher, and all qualitative responses were anonymized by removing any identifying details to ensure individual responses could not be traced back to participants. This approach safeguarded participant privacy while allowing analysis of demographic trends in teaching practices.

Results

Most participants understood that the English language could incorporate intercultural issues (4.9/5). However, when it comes to inviting students to join social events, EFL

teachers scored the lowest (3.4/5). To understanding this result, it is useful to reference Nõmm's three components in achieving intercultural competence: cognitive, affective, and operational (2012). Cognitive components focus on cultural differences and their impact on intercultural interaction. Affective components are empathy and the ability to see the world from different perspectives and overcome stereotypical reactions to another culture. Operational components are the ability to help solve the failure in intercultural communications. Like mainstream teaching pedagogies, the result showed that participants focused more on the cognitive domain (i.e., English can incorporate intercultural issues. I incorporate intercultural issues into English classes), while skill and affective domains were focused less upon (i.e., I taught students how cultures influence opinions. I invited students to participate in social events. I encourage students to comment on the news.)

Motivation in Incorporating Intercultural Issues in EFL Classes

This research explores to what extent this online module influences participants' motivation to become interculturally competent. In the overall module design, most participants thought this module was presented in an interesting manner (4.6/5) however, when asked if they felt prepared to incorporate intercultural issues into their English classes, the score was relatively lower (4/5). This may result from the fact that this online module was designed for professional development rather than a teaching resource website.

Much of the existing motivation research focuses on teachers' roles and responsibilities in stimulating students' motivation. In contrast, this self-paced professional development module is designed to empower teachers to incorporate intercultural issues in EFL classes. This study utilized the ARCS model to determine whether participants increased their attention to intercultural issues, relate these issues to their lives, be confident in promoting intercultural issues, and feel satisfied during the process. The result showed notable improvements in all ARCS model domains from pre- to post-assessment. The attention domain demonstrated the most significant increase, rising from a pre-score of 4.1 to a post-score of 4.7, representing a 14.6% increase. The relevance domain showed substantial improvement, moving from a pre-score of 3.8 to 4.4, marking a 15.8% increase. In the confidence domain, scores increased from 3.75 to 4.6, a 22.7% increase, indicating that participants felt more assured in discussing language and identity after engaging with the module. The satisfaction domain, while scoring the lowest, still increased from 3.7 to 4.2, showing a 13.5% increase. These findings illustrate overall growth in participants' motivation and readiness to engage with intercultural content after completing the module.

These post-test results illustrate how participants' engagement with the module translated into tangible improvements across all domains. The high score in the attention domain (4.7/5) was evident in their active participation and thoughtful comments during online discussions, showcasing an increased focus on intercultural issues. For instance, participants used nuanced language and demonstrated awareness in their responses, reflecting their attention to detail and understanding of complex cultural topics. The

strong relevance score (4.4/5) was supported by participants' ability to connect the module's content to their personal experiences. This was exemplified by responses regarding "Asian food." One participant mentioned that "Asian food" in the United States often refers to Chinese cuisine, whereas in England, it usually means Indian food. The confidence score (4.6/5) suggested that participants felt more empowered to discuss intercultural topics. This newfound confidence could be seen in their willingness to contribute diverse viewpoints and initiate conversations on language and identity, indicating that the module effectively bolstered their confidence in navigating intercultural dialogue. The satisfaction domain, which scored the lowest (4.2/5), reflects that as a motivational component, it often deepens over time with continued practice and reflection.

In the qualitative analysis, data were clustered into recurring patterns. Task attractiveness and the online environment emerged as important themes in the feedback. This research initially focuses on comments related to the overall attractiveness of the task, as attractive tasks are known to enhance intrinsic motivation. One participant indicated that the module was well-designed and expressed favorable attitudes toward learning other topics such as language and gender equality. Another participant shared that the module encouraged deeper reflection on often-overlooked issues and expressed interest in adapting content from the website for personal use. Besides module design, participants offered suggestions specifically on the instructions provided within the module that can support a more effective learning experience:

> I think it would be good to start with a very simple, factual definition first--one with no inherent positive or negative biases--and then elicit opinions or imagery from the students to identify any biases or preconceived notions they may have.

Participants not only commented on the overall website design but also actively engaged in thinking about how to make these ideas applicable in the EFL classroom.

Secondly, the online environment is crucial in discussing sensitive intercultural issues and investigating the roles of confidence and anxiety in this online setting. MacIntyre et al. (1998) determine that confidence or a perceived lack of confidence can influence willingness to communicate. For example, one participant mentioned that the anonymity of online comments allows them to conceal their identity, thereby increasing their confidence when discussing sensitive issues. On the other hand, another participant mentioned that the lack of identifiable context made it difficult to fully understand others' perspectives. This data shows that participants were concerned about the safety and trustworthiness of this online group, contributing to a certain level of anxiety in interacting with others. Interestingly, one participant stated that as an EFL teacher, they feel obligated to think the right way, deterring them from exchanging their genuine viewpoints. The participant shared, "I am not sure whether people will judge me the way I think. As an EFL teacher, I feel that I need to be the model of my students and convey the right concepts." This anxiety may have been exacerbated by the absence of an online

team-building activity prior to the module. To address these concerns, future research could incorporate critical literacy pedagogy that encourages learners to share their constructed knowledge with peers.

Enhanced Learning of Deep Culture

This online module utilized two international news articles and images about immigrants from Taiwan and Germany as authentic teaching materials. International news draws on stories from diverse and global sources, which can lead learners to identify deep-rooted social aspects and social struggles that they may not be aware of (Frank, 2013). Visual and textual materials with different political or cultural perspectives can be a rich source to promote interculturalism. To arouse participants' attention to assumptions and implications, critical literacy pedagogy was used in designing questions. The guiding questions focus on discovering where the assumption comes from instead of a fixed statement. For example, the instructional design asked questions like "How is the word immigrant interpreted differently in different countries' contexts?" rather than "Does the text represent the truth?" and "What are the assumptions behind the use of the word immigrant?" instead of "Is this statement a fact or opinion?" The questions interestingly illicit participants' multiple perspectives:

> In the Taiwanese news article, the word immigrant was neutral and portrayed as the correct technical term. However, in the German news article, Ozil felt immigrant was othering and it threatened his identity as a German.
>
> ... I don't see these two interpretations as very different. In both cases, people labeled as immigrants are viewed as perpetual foreigners… It isn't necessary to label them as immigrants every time we refer to them.

Bartlett (2005) describes this type of critical dialogue as a "pedagogical process" where participants actively engage in learning through discussion and debate of sociopolitical realities. This highlights how an online forum can expose participants to diverse perspectives through international dialogue. Another participant compared cultural differences,"Calling someone an immigrant might be disrespectful, but I always remember feeling distinctly bothered when I learned the color black in Spanish, was the word "negro" For a comprehensive education on the word, it is not complete without the proper context." In this example, "negro" in Spanish refers to dark color rather than a negative connotation. This illustrated how a particular worldview was constructed by language and history. These insights modify "the interactional habits that enact authoritarian relations," (Shor, 2012) and make critical literacy possible. This online intercultural setting allowed participating EFL teachers to communicate with others whose first language, culture, and ethnicity were different from their own, and it enhanced their intercultural competence. Still, language learning may include both word and contextual levels, and it can be challenging to design materials to capture the complexity of deep culture. Two participants mentioned,

> Although it is important to use politically correct language in EFL classes, what's more important is the language user's intention. That is, it would probably be fine if sometimes politically incorrect language is used without the intention to degrade others.
>
> ...I would tell students that "African American" is correct and "Black" is also correct. Different people want to be called different things. Also, it is okay for some people to use a word and not for others because context matters. Some words are just simply outdated, like "stewardess" instead of flight attendant...

Besides using interactive dialogic approaches to engage participants online, future research might consider creating flexible tasks and tools for knowledge sharing. As it is not realistic for an instructional designer to develop materials that can cover different cultural components, it is important to give participants more control in contributing their own cultural knowledge to this module.

Raised Attention to Language Choices

According to Dörnyei (2001), one self-motivational strategy is metacognitive control. This refers to conscious techniques used by the learner to monitor their own learning. This module designed several tasks for participants to reflect upon the topic of language and identity to motivate them to pay greater attention to language choices. For example,

> Japanese, especially older people regard the term "immigrant" in a negative way. They view immigrants as outsiders coming into Japan, but this is just personal observation.
>
> I think in the same way as you did. When I studied History, I learned that I am an immigrant, and Taiwan is an immigrant society. Although I am quite aware that no picture will be able to depict the immigrants, the education and advertisements in Taiwan might shape my image of an immigrant.

Human relations are built around language, and EFL class is about using English that enables relations with others who are different from us. Therefore, EFL classes should provide opportunities to reflect on the language we use and its effect on others. The conversations above provide evidence that participants have become more aware of their linguistic choices. For example, one participant from Japan pointed out that he can't speak for all Japanese people to avoid overgeneralization. Another participant mentioned that her viewpoints may be shaped by advertisements in the media. These participants reflected on their feelings and tried to establish fair relationships by choosing proper language. The attitude people have when they interact with each other also serves as evidence of learning about deep culture.

Raised Attention to Teaching Intercultural Issues

EFL teachers also became more mindful of intercultural issues in EFL classes. After the module, participants admitted to not paying attention to these intercultural issues enough in EFL classes. Three speakers stated that helping students become more aware of other cultures is important:

> It's important to teach the most commonly used politically correct words, but even more so to teach the reasons behind why certain words are used or not used--particularly when a word is acceptable to some groups but politically incorrect when used by others.
>
> Normally I've seen EFL teachers often just explain the meaning of the word, but don't go further into the contexts (good and bad) where the words are used.
>
> It is necessary to teach students politically correct words for the purpose of broadening their knowledge. However, it is necessary to inform students about the possible confusion and the unintended consequences that these words might bring in a real conversation.

The data indicates that EFL teachers have become more mindful of incorporating intercultural issues in their classes. The attention serves as a safeguard against potential negative attitudes students may encounter when they are exposed to a new set of norms and helps them appreciate cultural differences.

Discussion and Implications

This instructional design project aimed to motivate EFL teachers to cultivate intercultural competence through an online module, so content and concepts related to values, attitudes, and actions are provided. By integrating the ARCS motivational design model into an online professional development module, the study provides a unique approach to cultivating EFL teachers' intercultural competence. Korkmaz and Korkmaz (2013) suggest that decontextualized practices cannot effectively achieve language acquisition. Creating context helps take learners' attention to the lesson. Therefore, teachers can incorporate lessons from these online modules to perceive language holistically, advocating for meaningful contexts that enrich language practice.

In answering the first research question, the results show that two factors impacted participants' motivation for this online module: task attractiveness and the online environment. Using authentic materials enabled EFL teachers to relate intercultural issues to EFL classes. Multi-dimensional resources such as textual, audial, and visual information were used to fit the needs of learners in the digital era. After taking this module, the result of the ARCS model showed that this module drew participants' attention, related their experiences, and improved their confidence and satisfaction in incorporating English language and intercultural issues, thereby fostering a deeper understanding of cultural dynamics in language learning. As for the online environment, the online module maximizes participants' opportunities for intercultural learning by

using CMC tools to overcome distance and construct social environments. Foreign language learners have limited opportunities to interact with people from the target culture (Jin, 2015), so CMC tools can facilitate a shift in focus from formal traditional classrooms to long-distance, informal, and intercultural collaboration. These studies collectively highlight how CMC tools and online modules can maximize opportunities for intercultural learning in English language acquisition, facilitating the development of intercultural competence. With the possibility of constructing knowledge online, this interactive instructional design may decrease participants' anxiety about online tools and contribute to their intercultural competence.

The second research question, which focuses on participants' intercultural competence, is crucial to understanding how different values can shape English language interpretation. To explore this, this research used critical literacy pedagogy to design guiding questions for discussion. Critical literacy pedagogy is closely connected to intercultural learning, as both approaches emphasize engaging with and questioning diverse perspectives. Although it is regarded as an inclusive educational method for understanding media sources meaningfully, critical pedagogy is often under-practiced in EFL settings (Gustine, 2018). In this research, participants compare other's viewpoints to their own culture's viewpoint. Rather than focusing on the surface definition of the words "orient," "exotic," and "immigrant," critical literacy pedagogy encourages participants to explore underlying assumptions, implications, and socio-cultural contexts of language use. For example, "How do different usages of the word immigrant affect me?" or "Where do I see evidence of this intercultural issue in my community?" Unlike traditional EFL teaching methods primarily focusing on enhancing linguistic skills, this study explores the intersection of culture, politics, and language interpretation. Through critical dialogue, participants could capture the non-tangible intercultural components and examine themselves from multiple perspectives. Integrating critical literacy pedagogy into EFL instruction not only improves linguistic competence but also promotes intercultural competence. It encourages learners to critically analyze and question language, viewing it as a tool for conveying cultural and social meanings.

This research paper contributes to the existing literature on critical literacy pedagogy in EFL classes on intercultural competence. This research can prepare teachers to talk about intercultural issues in their English classes and make language input more relevant to learners through contextualization. Moreover, it is important for teachers to refine their pedagogies and practices to meet the academic and social needs of a culturally diverse student population. This refinement process involves a deep understanding of the cultural dynamics within the classroom (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Newton (2016) introduces intercultural communicative language teaching as a culturally responsive, socially sensitive pedagogy oriented towards making the most of linguistic and cultural diversity in the EFL classroom. This research encourages teachers to reflect on languages and cultures to effectively address interculturality in their teaching practices. This approach emphasizes the role between languages and cultures, thereby enhancing students' comprehension of cultural similarities and differences. It requires a reflective approach that shifts the emphasis away from transmitting cultural facts and towards

exploring how culture is embedded and expressed in communication.

Limitations

One limitation of this research is the recruitment and sampling strategy employed. While it is efficient to gather participants using convenience sampling, it may not provide a comprehensive representation of the broader EFL teacher population. This approach could potentially limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or populations. Furthermore, the participant demographic, primarily consisting of teachers from a specific academic institution with varying teaching experience, introduces another layer of constraint. Their experiences and perceptions might not fully encapsulate the diverse challenges and opportunities EFL teachers face in integrating intercultural competence into their teaching practices. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported measures for evaluating changes in motivation and intercultural competence might introduce biases, as participants' responses could be influenced by their perceptions of social desirability or their interpretation of the questions. Lastly, while the instructional design project aimed to enhance intercultural competence and motivation through carefully curated content and activities, the short duration of the intervention and the online mode of delivery may not fully mimic the complexities and dynamics of real-world classroom interactions, potentially influencing the depth of the intercultural learning experience. The field continues to explore new ways to effectively integrate intercultural competence into EFL teaching, such as using literary texts in virtual spaces (Sharma et al., 2023), which has implications for understanding how online interactions influence students' cultural perceptions and identities.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on the integration of critical literacy pedagogy in EFL classrooms to enhance intercultural competence. By developing an online module that blends the ARCS motivational design model with CMC tools, this research demonstrates that the module effectively increased EFL teachers' attention, relevance, and confidence, and provided a basis for satisfaction in addressing intercultural issues in their teaching. Through guided questions and reflective tasks, teachers were prompted to consider underlying assumptions and cultural nuances, encouraging them to view language as more than just a set of linguistic skills but as an embodiment of cultural and social perspectives. Feedback from EFL teachers via questionnaires, online comments, and interviews indicated that task attractiveness and the online setting were key motivators for critical literacy development. It also highlights the use of multimedia elements to capture participants' attention and the importance of fostering motivation for intercultural competence among EFL teachers.

Despite the positive outcomes of this research, this research acknowledges its limitations in fully capturing the motivational spectrum and suggests further investigation into how cultural dynamics within groups might shape online intercultural communication. This project offers preliminary results to help EFL teachers from different countries examine the assumptions and beliefs in the English language that are often hidden. This module is expected to raise participants' attention to their language choice and illuminate the intercultural issues that are present in learning the English language. By doing so, it can

be a good start to make the world a more inclusive place.

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In Conversation: Mother Tongue Education and Civic Engagement amongst Ga Youth

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The role of language in education policies and the importance of civic engagement are well documented. What is less clear is how they converse with one another to inform how to develop active citizens who are empowered in their mother tongues. Building on a conceptual framework of civic engagement and linguistic injustice, this article asks: After the implementation of the 1971–1994 and 2004 medium of instruction education policies in Ghana, what language did Ga youth learn in, in practice? What are the intersections between Ga youths' relationship to language and civic engagement participation? Together, these questions inform understanding of youth educational experiences, Ga people's perception of the vitality of their language, and their responsibility to the community. In interviewing 22 Ga people in Ghana during the summer of 2022, I find that despite policy encouraging mother tongue instruction, most participants learned in English during primary school. Additionally, contrary to the notion that there is a disinterest in civic engagement amongst Ghanaian youth, findings show Ga youth find part of their civic responsibility to lie in passing on the Ga language to preserve their culture, land, identity, and the future of their community.

Keywords: language in education policy, Ga youth, civic responsibility, language injustice, social mobility

Introduction

As the longest-lasting contemporary democracy that has avoided major violent conflict in West Africa, Ghana provides an interesting case for understanding youth civic engagement. On the eve of Ghana's independence, the first Prime Minister, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, stated, "Ghana will be a pacesetter for all to know that the Blackman is capable of managing his own affairs." Following independence in 1957, Dr. Nkrumah was committed to utilizing the education system to "instill a sense of loyalty to Ghana" (Harber, 1989, p.154). However, post-colonial thinkers argue that in reshaping the education system, there needed to be a "decolonization of the [Ghanaian] mind" to support nation-building (Dei, 2005). A consequence of not following this advice is seen through the rejection of local languages as the medium of instruction (MOI) in lower primary schools (Arnot et al., 2018). As a multilingual nation-state, Ghana has seen a constant fluctuation in the language of instruction policy from 1952-2004. The Ghana Ministry of Education (MOE) released a report in 2002 that emphasized the importance of cultivating "attitudes of good citizenship and patriotism and […] the nation's cultural heritage by promoting national languages" as a national education objective (Government of Ghana, 2002, p.15). In practice, there has been a disconnect.

In 1971 and 2004, the government developed MOI policies that encouraged students to learn in their local language. However, English is used more widely across the education system (Adika, 2012), with roughly 80% of the country being literate in English (World Bank, 2020). Still, there is concern that many people lack the English proficiency needed for meaningful participation in national discussions (Anyidoho, 2018). In the context of education, Piller (2020) notes that where language barriers exist, they are an injustice. If extended to the context of civic engagement, a lack of English proficiency may serve as a barrier, too. While studies discuss potential barriers to Ghanaian civic engagement, such as young people not being regarded as having enough life experience to contribute politically (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014) and Ghanaians having a lack of trust in and willingness to confront the government (Asante, 2020; Sam et al., 2019), they neglect to consider the role that language may play.

A critical component to understanding civic participation lies in understanding the role of culture and by extension—language. When a high linguistic proficiency in both a home and school language is not acquired, minority youths can miss out on economic opportunities (Piller, 2016). While Ghana's capital city, Accra, is the center of economic growth (Accra Metropolitan Assembly, 2020), poverty is still prevalent, and the region's highest poverty rates are in predominately Ga communities (Sewidan, 2015). Children who attend school in a different language face the challenge of learning in a new language while also trying to acquire the language. For minority language children, this challenge may be exacerbated by living in a low-income family and can result in school dropout (Ball, 2010). Given that linguistic marginalization is both a cause and consequence of political and socio-economic marginalization (Stroud, 2002), using one's home language in schools can effectively increase social mobility for minorities facing social and economic disadvantages (Ball, 2010). When students can learn in their home language, they are better able to grasp the curriculum and, in turn, utilize their linguistic diversity to stimulate economic growth in the future (Arcand & Grin, 2013). Since there are fewer opportunities for poor youth to participate civically and increase their civic knowledge (Atkins & Hart, 2003), it is critical for the language of instruction (LOI) to be the learners' home language. This can allow students to effectively use school as an avenue for social mobility (Bunch, 1990) and remove barriers to equal community participation (Piller, 2016).

Current research analyzes civic engagement and language in education policy in silos. Yet, there exists a research gap in understanding the intersections between youth civic engagement and language in education policy. This study seeks to investigate the role, if any, that language plays in the civic responsibility of Ga youth. Two research questions guide this work: (1) After the implementation of the 1971–1994 and 2004 medium of instruction education policies, what language did Ga youth learn in, in practice? (2) What are the intersections between Ga youths' relationship to language and civic engagement participation? Following the country context, I present an overview of Ghanaian civic engagement and the language of instruction. Building on a conceptual framework of civic engagement and linguistic injustice, I explore youth educational experiences, Ga people's perception of the vitality of their language, and their responsibility to the community. Contrary to the notion that there is a disinterest in civic engagement amongst Ghanaian

youth (Abudu & Fuseini, 2014), findings show that the Ga youth interviewed find part of their civic responsibility lies in passing on the Ga language.

Country Context

Ghanaian Language in Education Policy

Presently, there are 73 living Indigenous languages in Ghana (Eberhard et al., 2022) and the government produces educational materials for 11 main languages: Akuapem Twi, Asante Twi, Dagaare, Dagbani, Dangme, Ewe, Fante, Ga, Gonja, Kasem, and Nzema. From 1971-1974, for the first three years of primary school, the MOI was to be the students' mother tongue (abbreviated as L1). Schools had the option to choose which Ghanaian language was used based on the linguistic composition of the class starting in 1972 (Klu & Ansre, 2018). In 1974, the policy was modified, and students were given the opportunity to learn in one of nine Indigenous government-sponsored languages for the first three years of schooling (Ansah, 2014). The options were Akan (Fante and Twi), Nzema, Ga, Ga-Adangbe, Ewe, Gonja, Kasem, Dagbani, and Dagaare. Where possible, these languages would serve as the MOI until the sixth grade (Owu-Ewie, 2006). With this policy, even if the linguistic composition of the class favored one language, they could be taught in another if their L1 was not one of the nine government-sponsored languages or if they lacked materials and teacher capacity.

Between 1974 and 2002, no substantial modifications were made to the policy. However, in 2002, the government moved to an English-only policy. The change was motivated by the feeling that some rural schools had taken advantage of the previous policy, with teachers choosing not to use English as the MOI throughout primary education, resulting in English literacy levels being deemed unsatisfactory (Ansah, 2014). Once again, in 2004, the policy was changed to state, "where teachers and learning materials are available and linguistic composition of classes is fairly uniform, the children's first language must be utilized as the dominant medium of instruction in kindergarten and lower primary" (Ministry of Education, Ghana, 2004, pp. 27–28). In addition, the policy advocated for Ghanaian languages to become subjects of study from fourth grade onwards, leaving English as the MOI. While materials have been created to support this policy in 11 Ghanaian languages for the literacy and language class, teachers bear the responsibility of translating the textbooks of all other subjects into the local language of the learners for course instruction (USAID, 2020). With a lack of adequate materials, the implementation of the L1 policy is relatively low (Adika, 2012).

Accra and the Ga Ethnic Group

Since Accra functions as the country's political hub, this article centers on the Indigenes of Accra whose land serves as the seat of government. Ga people, whose name, language, and land bear the same name, are an ethnolinguistic minority group asserting Accra to be their ancestral land. As a participant noted, Ga communities are divided by socioeconomic status, social desires, beliefs, etc. and therefore, I use the terms "Ga people," "Ga youth," and "Ga community" not to generalize but to facilitate description.

As the Greater Accra Region (GAR) is socially recognized as Ga territory, it is important to note that land is "of basic importance in the identity, integrity, solidarity and culture of

any group of African life" (Quarcoopome, 1992, p. 40). Overtime, the Ga people participated in the urbanization process of the capital willingly and unwillingly (Quarcoopome, 1992). Oral tradition relays that Labadi, a Ga township, donated part of its territory when the colonial administration wished to build a university. The land called "Nilee Gɔŋ" can be broken down into two parts: Nilee meaning "knowledge" and Gɔŋ meaning "hill." The gift of this "Hill of Knowledge" would later become the University of Ghana—the country's premier university. Despite being a minority group, the Ga people have led efforts to rename streets and districts in Ga. Given their political and academic contributions to the capital, the case of the Gas provides valuable insight into the intersections of language, education, identity, and civic engagement. Understanding the nuances between these topics may shed light on more effective practices that may be undertaken in and outside the classroom to create active citizens who are empowered in their mother tongues.

Civic Learning, Language and Injustice

The Ghanaian youth population stands at 34%, its highest yet, which has created a unique opportunity for civic engagement (Ulti-Leaf Foundation, 2020) since youth are integral members of communities and tend to lead activism (CIRCLE, n.d.). However, scholars assert there is low interest in and a growing ineptitude towards civic engagement in Ghana (Abudu & Fuseini, 2014). This does not mean young people are disinterested in politics (Sam et al., 2019). Rather, this lack of motivation signals that stakeholders must implement barrier-free systems that encourage the civic interests of youth (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

Prior to the colonial era, Ghanaian families emphasized teaching children their civic responsibilities informally (Boadu, 2015), but this changed with the introduction of formal education by colonists and a shift towards formal pedagogy (Boadu, 2016). Ghana created its formal schooling system to cultivate citizens with the knowledge and critical thinking skills essential to building the nation (Mhlauli, 2012). Therefore, to achieve this goal, pupils must gain the skills needed to be active citizens. In line with traditional African thought, an active citizen is defined as one who considers how their priorities simultaneously promote the community's vitality (Avoseh, 2001).

What is Civic Engagement and Civic Education?

Civic engagement is a process by which citizens participate in creating better conditions for themselves to help the future of their respective communities (Adler & Goggin, 2005). In an African context, traditional African ways of life and civic engagement lend themselves to be collectivist rather than individualistic (Kwenin, 2020; Patel & Wilson, 2004). According to Boadu (2016), three elements make African Indigenous citizenship unique. He asserts that (1) familial relationships, political ties, and ethnicity were all interrelated, (2) prior to the colonial era, the responsibility of a "citizen" was to the family and larger community, and (3) families took part in teaching children about their civic responsibilities. However, scholars believe that the arbitrary division of nation-states at the 1884 Berlin Conference destroyed aspects of African citizenship (Busia, 1967; Thomson, 2000). This presented challenges as the rites to prepare citizens varied by ethnic

groups, which led to the adaptation of national citizenship education via formal education introduced by colonists (Boadu, 2015).

Scholars assert that civic education—defined as, "the type of education or instructions which equip the learner with relevant knowledge, right attitudes, and requisite skills to enable [them] to perform [their] role as a credible member of society" (Adams et al., 2013, p. 19)—informs a sense of identity and place in society (Kwenin, 2020). Therefore, it must be contextual and take place in and outside of the formal schooling environment for students to deeply understand their role and responsibilities to their society (Adjei & Dei, 2008; Quaynor, 2015). Literature suggests that there are positive correlations between civic education and levels of civic engagement. Galston (2004) notes that people with a greater understanding of civic issues are more likely to participate in civic life, and Adu-Gyamfi (2014) finds that if youth are not interested in current issues, their civic participation is unlikely. The ability to grasp and apply concepts is heavily impacted by current teaching practices that deny pupils the opportunity to critically engage with material outside of the classroom by utilizing community resources (Ayaaba et al., 2014). When pupils are not given the space to deeply understand civic education, civic knowledge and skills are not acquired and they cannot support social change activities (Owusu-Agyeman & Fourie-Malherbe, 2019). Still, one element civic education scholars have not considered in depth is the role of the L1 in teaching and learning.

Language of Instruction and Social Mobility

In the words of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "If you know all the languages of the world and you don't know your mother tongue or the language of your culture, that is enslavement" (Miringu Kiarie, 2020). In 1998, the MOE stated that all citizens were to be equipped with "the fundamental knowledge and skills that will enable them to become full stakeholders in and beneficiaries of development" (Tuwor, 2005, p. 21). As civic education serves to develop skills learners need to perform their roles in society, it is important to teach in a language that people understand deeply for civic education to be most effective. Many of the LOI policies from 1952-2004 utilize an early-exit transitional model that encourages Ga to be taught for only the first few years of primary schooling, followed by English instruction. This model sees language as a problem (Ruíz, 1984), devalues Ga in favor of English, and furthers the notion that Ghanaian languages are not welcomed in the classroom (Adjetey-Nii Owoo, 2022). However, to address issues of equity within a country, it is best to implement an additive policy that encourages multilingual education based on the L1's utilization as the MOI (Benson, 2019). Neglecting to do so further denies educational access to students from poor backgrounds (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015) and contributes to the mismatch between the LOI and the language(s) spoken at home, which is known to be a cause of school dropouts, repetition, and failure (Benson, 2014; Heugh, 2011; Walter & Benson, 2012).

Schooling in Ghana is characterized as a "form of internal colonialism" (Agyemang-Mensah, 1998, p. 34). This internal colonialism can be seen in the 2002 MOE report which used Western agendas and encouraged civic rights and virtues to be promoted through the education system (Ministry of Education, 2002). Since Ghanaian schooling and civic education have been implemented through a Western lens, in part because of the

country's colonial subjugation, they must be reimagined and contextualized, so that *all* citizens may benefit. While there are studies focused on Ghanaian youth civic engagement/education, they do not directly focus on the role of language. However, this lens is important because local languages give students the opportunity to learn information more deeply as opposed to learning passively and remaining confused (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015).

Given the number of languages in Ghana, the country offers a unique and informative case study to better understand the role of language in civic interests. It is recommended that learners be taught global citizenship education in their formative early childhood years (UNESCO, 2013) and if the goal is for learners to understand the material and be civically engaged, it should be done in a meaningful way that is comprehendible for learners. Therefore, to be truly inclusive of all citizens, schooling and global citizenship education must be done in the L1 of learners. Since it is critical that stakeholders implement systems that accurately measure the civic interests of all youth without barriers (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014), scholars must consider language's role in youth civic identity development and the potential barrier that a MOI may pose to civic engagement.

Civic Engagement, Civic Nationalism, and Language Policy

Given the existing research gap, a deeper understanding of how language policy impacts civic participation is needed. While there are minimal studies that explore this intersection, an ethnographic study in Tanzania found that language in education policy was a challenge to civic engagement because language policy promoted the use of English as the MOI in schooling, even though Tanzanians have more comfortability with and command of Swahili (Thomas, 2020).

In nation-building, language planning must be taken into consideration for a civic state. With regards to civic nationhood which is defined as a "political identity built around shared citizenship in a liberal-democratic state" (Stilz, 2009), Stilz proposes her least cost model to language policy which calls for promoting "citizens' fundamental interests in economic opportunity and political participation by imposing rationalization policies at the least cost to individuals invested in other languages" (p. 272) with the aim of better reflecting the interests of more citizens. Stilz further explains that this can be approached procedurally through voting to enable minority citizens to voice whether they wish to invest in the public good of their language. This system of language policy pushes for the state or regional polity to make language decisions that directly impact economic opportunity and democratic participation while allowing decisions on minority languages to be made at the local level. However, it is clarified that for this to be successful, local decisions cannot be allowed to undermine the policies mandated at the federal level and that "local minorities not be dominated by oppressive local majorities" (pp. 278–288). This is critical in several African countries where multilingualism in dominant local languages tends to crowd out non-dominant local languages and limit access to education and political power (Heugh et al., 2016). Amongst the Ga people, this phenomenon appears to be taking root. Such situations highlight broader issues of linguistic injustice that may be at play when examining the specific case of Gas.

Linguistic Injustice

The Ga people make up 7.1% of the population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021), and as a non-dominant ethnolinguistic group, they believe "their language is dying" (Anyidoho & Dakubu, 2008, p.154) because of Accra's cosmopolitan nature. In Ghana, 80% of Ghanaians speak Twi as a lingua franca. The "language death" that some Ga people believe to be occurring may be a byproduct of linguistic injustice in and out of the classroom. Asymmetric bilingualism is where members of one linguistic group (A) learn the language of another (B) without reciprocation (Van Parijs, 2002). When this occurs, the cost of learning is borne by one group (A) even though both groups (A and B) receive great benefits. In situations like these where free riding is evident, defined as two people (A and B) receiving the benefit of the work of one person (A), linguistic injustice occurs. Through the lens of this framework and with the understanding that linguistic justice serves as a "form of intercommunity cooperative justice" (Van Parijs, 2002), this study examines how language gives way to identity development, group formation, and understanding of self.

Researcher Positionality

As a U.S.-born Ga who unfortunately does not speak Ga, I view myself as an insider-outsider of the Ga community. As an outsider, I feared that my inability to speak Ga was a disservice to this work. Yet, as an insider, my hope is that this work uplifts a group that is often not centered in academia. That is not to say that there must be recognition from the academy to be valid but is to say that research has the potential to propel us forward—even in ways unexpected. Unlike participants, I did not attend school in Ghana, and I speak English with an American accent. Despite my Ghanaian-Haitian-American upbringing, there are dynamics of privilege at play for me to advocate for mother tongue education when I was raised fluently in a colonial tongue. Still, I argue to let the Ga language stay and live on. Nyɛhaani wɔha Ga ywiemɔ lɛ ahishi!

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach to gain an understanding of the intersections between language, educational experiences, identity, and civic engagement in a Ga context. Since my family is Ga and I studied abroad at the University of Ghana, I connected with my network to find participants. I conducted 22 semi-structured interviews with Ga people ages 22-58 in Ghana. Eighteen interviewees were between the ages of 18-35 since this is the official categorization of youth in Ghana.[1] All collaborators attended lower primary school in Accra between 1970-2002 and 2004-onwards. While all participants spoke Ga and English, 21 interviews were conducted in English, and one was conducted in Ga with a volunteer interpreter[2] who verbally translated the consent form and questions to the participant. Age and gender diversity were considered in the sample. Snowball sampling was used with an initial convenience sampling method as collaborators who identified as Ga were chosen by the researcher and each of those

[1] The four collaborators above 35 provided context to understand if there were differences in policy and practice between generations.

[2] As recommended by Gawlewicz (2019), the interpreter was engaged as a key informant and interviewed on aspects of their life and opinions on the research topic to make them visible and accountable in the translation process.

participants was encouraged to recommend someone to interview. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes to two hours and participants were given the option to participate in person or via Zoom.

After transcribing the audio recordings, I reached out to participants if I needed clarification on something they stated. I conducted inductive, open coding and wrote memos for each interview based on my initial impressions. I then relied on axial coding followed by selective coding, resulting in a codebook. Inductive codes like "actual Ga person" and "typical Ga" fell under the category of "Community - Others" to denote when an interviewee expressed a difference between Gas. Coding was followed up with intercoder and intracoder consistency testing by colleagues to gauge the accuracy and consistency of the codebook and promote researcher reflexivity (Joffe & Yardley, 2003). The high coder reliability, demonstrated by the agreement between coders on the same data, confirmed that the codebook was applied consistently and accurately. With this consistency, I used the codebook to classify and interpret the patterns in the data, which led to the identification and organization of the key themes and findings. Given that Ga names serve as addresses, pseudonyms are used for all participants.

Limitations

There are several limitations to the study. First, interviews were conducted primarily in English. As education levels divide the Ga community, the necessary perspectives of youth who learned in Ga as their MOI and/or youth who might have been disadvantaged by a "no vernacular" policy in their school were not captured. Second, the sampling method may have contributed to the lack of socioeconomic diversity among participants. Amongst low-, middle-, and high-income neighborhoods in Accra, most Gas populate low-income Indigenous Ga neighborhoods (Owusu & Agyei-Mensah, 2011). While questions regarding socioeconomic status were not asked explicitly, participants self-identified primarily as middle-income and were interviewed almost exclusively in English. Since social and economic mobility can be closely tied to the language that one uses to connect with their community, recruiting a more reflective range of the society's socio-economic diversity could have generated greater insights. Third, while some people knew I was Ga because of the name I was introduced to them with, others did not. This could have skewed the ways in which people felt they were and were not able to relate to me and answer the interview questions.

If You Don't Have Your Land, You Don't Have Your Heritage

Collaborators interviewed demonstrated that there is a connection between language and civic engagement. Despite policy, most participants did not learn in Ga, but rather English. Additionally, they found the Ga language, culture, and identity to be in an unstable state. They credit this to the asymmetric bilingualism they experience and the loss of heritage via land. Still, participants note that while they may be a minority group, they find great importance in community, giving back, and supporting Ga people. For a few participants, their ideas of civic activities are directly related to the promotion of the Ga people and language. Nonetheless, they speak of the roadblocks to civic engagement and their desires for change in the country.

The Status of Language
In Policy and Practice

Of the 22 participants interviewed, three started lower primary school (grade 1) between 1969–1971, 17 started between 1985–2002, and two started in 2004 or later. Whether they attended private or public institutions, 21 participants confirmed that the MOI was English, and Ga was taught as a subject, if offered at their school. Therefore, despite policy, in practice, 95% (21) of them did not use their L1, or any Ghanaian Indigenous language, as the MOI during their first three years of schooling.

Overall, 68.2% (15) of respondents noted that they could be physically punished for speaking Ga, publicly humiliated in the school compound, and/or told not to "speak vernacular" which is the term used for Indigenous languages in academic settings. For Adoley and Edith, who grew up in a predominantly Ga town called Osu and began lower primary school between 1969 and 1971, they were not permitted to speak Ga in class even though everyone in their class spoke Ga. If they did, they would have been told to speak English by the teacher. Adoley said that discipline could look like having to sweep the corridor or classroom or standing and raising one's hands. These punishments carried on three decades later as Ashitey, a dancer who began school in 2000, noted that one could receive lashes for speaking Ga in class. In Tetteh's classroom in Big Ada, 80% of his classmates were Ga, and Ga was used to explain concepts when it was clear that students were not understanding the lesson in English. He noted that this caused confusion because if one was to speak in Ga outside of Ga subject class, they would be caned. Yet, with a resistant spirit, participants noted that while punishment was possible, they did not shy away from speaking. Some were cautious but still spoke in class with other Ga speakers.

Even though Adoley expressed that initially, she did not like that she had to speak English in class because it "wasn't [her] language," she developed an appreciation for English. She noted that "it was good" because people need to learn to speak more than one language. Sowah, an undergraduate student, described learning in English as an initiation in which teachers wanted "to initiate the English language into us to be like a part of us." He described this process as "good" because it enabled him to be fluent in the language. Though some participants held differing sentiments on the effectiveness of utilizing English as the MOI, they had similar understandings of why teachers taught in English. Ashitey spoke to the impact of English in the classroom:

> So I think the teachers believed the better you're able to understand and communicate in English, the better your understanding will be for the various subjects that are being taught. So, their own idea was to push everyone to understand the language, […] it was a bit reflexive because those who really understood the language then were doing better in class than those who had a challenge understanding—not necessarily understanding English, but basically grasping everything that was being taught—were not doing so well according to the grading system. So that was a reason. So, the idea was to push everyone to speak English. Understand it. Get your tenses right. All of that.

The hierarchy of language in the classroom privileges those who are able to speak English. This promotes a power imbalance and pushes teachers to prioritize students who perform well in English over those who do not (Opoku-Amankwa, 2009). While teachers were not interviewed to gain their perspective, collaborators expressed that they would have appreciated learning in Ga. Nii, a bank employee in his early 30s, shared his disappointment in his inability to explain monetary policy in layperson's terms in Ga. I asked him if he wished he would have been able to learn core subjects in Ga to which he responded:

> Yes, why not! I think it'd be a good thing.… My language is my identity and so I should be able to understand it to the level that I can explain even the most complicated things in that language…. Imagine if we can understand things in our native languages. I'd definitely subscribe to that.

While some participants expressed that they recognized that some of their peers struggled in the classroom because of the language barrier, they also expressed that if they could do it again, they would choose to learn in Ga.

Ga Proficiency and Vitality

Since Accra is a multilingual city, I asked participants to rank their level of proficiency in all the languages they speak on a scale of one to four. One meant that they find themselves searching for words to hold a conversation, two meant that they can hold conversation and understand when others speak, three meant that they can read, write, and speak the languages, and four meant that they can talk about what they are learning or have learned in school or life.

Of the 22 participants, 21 provided a ranking for their level of proficiency in the languages they speak. Nine participants gave English the highest ranking of four and only six gave Ga the same ranking. While 21 of the interviews took place in English, eight of the participants did not include English as a language that they speak and neglected to give it a ranking. This could be attributed to the tendency for individuals to undervalue their language skills (Fisher et al., 2018). On average, participants ranked their proficiency in English a 3.75 and Ga a 3.15 out of 4, respectively. This demonstrates that even though participants see Ga to be their L1, their proficiency in the language lags behind English.

Major, a traditional leader from the Ga township Jamestown, did not provide a ranking but noted he is "very fluent" in Ga. When asked if he reads, writes, and speaks Ga well he said, "you know the Ga language when you are not used to it, when you are not doing it all the time, it becomes a problem but well, I can read […] to a certain level." Additionally, a participant who gave their Ga a rating of two also emphasized that they speak 100% fluently. This is important to note since many participants who gave themselves a ranking of three in Ga also noted that they did not know how to say words like "mango" and "tomatoes" in Ga. Akweley, an entrepreneur in her 20s, noted that when her father passed away she was unable to understand part of the funeral rites because "the Ga sounded funny in [her] ear" leading her to ask her older sibling for

translation even though Ga is their home language. Still yet, at least four participants noted that they can express themselves better in Ga than in English.

While research shows that Ga is a stable, institutional, mid-sized language (Eberhard et al., 2022), there lies a disconnect with the sentiments of Gas. In addition to expressing that Ga is "fading away" and "disappearing," a participant expressed that "we are losing our identity." One person stated that Ga is "dying" which is consistent with Anyidoho and Dakubu's (2008) overview on the relationship between language and identity, which highlighted the perception that the Ga language is dying. Four participants noted that schools are no longer teaching Ga thus barring students from learning the language in a formal setting. Since there is a perceived decline in the teaching of Ga in schools, there is a concern that there will be a new generation who does not speak the Ga language well. And considering that 81.81% (18) of participants stated that the ability to speak Ga is a central part of being a member of the Ga community, the language plays a vital community role. Due to these reasons, there are advocates for Ga to be taught in Accra schools and some participants are pushing for the vitality of the Ga language through their civic efforts.

Asymmetric Bilingualism and Land Responsibility

While 81.81% (18) of participants agreed that Ga people are united in the country, many participants found great concern with the minority status of Ga people, and the Ga language. Roughly 72.7% (16) of participants expressed concern over the loss of language and land specifically. As Addo, a participant who grew up in a historical house a few steps away from Osu Castle, said, "If you don't have your land, you don't have your heritage." His statement echoes that of anthropologist Herskovits (1962) who observed that, "some of the most widespread patterns of aboriginal culture in Sub-Saharan Africa, […] are found in the complex of beliefs and behavior involving the relationships between man and the land that nourishes him" (p.143). Major noted that the Ga language is "dicey" in Accra. He stated one main issue is that other people pretend not to speak and/or understand Ga. To him, the Ga people are the custodians of the land. As such, Major sees that they have a responsibility to promote the Ga language. In particular, he shed light on the impact of Accra's cosmopolitan nature on Ga.

From 2010-2021 the Ghanaian population of the GAR increased by 39.08% (Ghana Statistical Service 2010, 2021). While other ethnic groups saw an increase of at least 33% over the decade, Ga-Dangme people had the second lowest growth of 24.6%. Major asserted that there were more foreigners in Accra than Ga people, emphasizing the need for Gas to take a stand and endorse the Ga language. Otherwise, "their [Asantes and Northerners] language will take over ours." In the GAR, 43.7% of the population is literate in Asante Twi and 29.3% in Ga (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Given that 80% of Ghanaians country-wide speak Twi as a lingua franca, Major's fear is not uncommon. Rather, it demonstrates how Ga people experience asymmetric bilingualism, where they learn the language of another group (i.e., Asante Twi) without reciprocation from the latter group (Van Parijs, 2002). Nii explained this further when discussing interacting with street hawkers who come to Accra from other regions for economic opportunities. He noted that Ga is fading away as people refuse to speak Ga and start conversations in Twi

rather than Ga. When asked why this is the case, Nii elaborated that he believes Ga people "don't mind too much." He further explained Twi's "free riding" (Van Parijs, 2002) nature, in the sense that Ga speakers and Twi speakers can communicate because Ga speakers make an effort to speak Twi, though he feels the reverse does not happen enough.

Akweley expressed that while she does not feel a responsibility to speak Ga with others, she finds it mandatory to speak the language as a Ga and it saddens her that others initiate conversations in Twi or English. As a student at the University of Ghana, she found herself surrounded by Asante friends, none of whom spoke Ga. When she made a friend who spoke Ga and joined her friend group, she recalled that her friends would become upset and "feel threatened" by the fact that they could not understand what was being said in Ga between the two of them. This is not surprising as Akans were found to be the ethnic group least likely to tolerate diversity while Gas were found to be the ethnic group most likely to tolerate diversity at the University of Ghana (Biney et al., 2021).

Despite the asymmetric bilingualism that participants face, they expressed a sense of ownership over the land. Some expressed deep pride in the seat of government being on their land while also recognizing that parts of Accra being designated for government use and people selling their land to non-Gas, has contributed to a sentiment that Accra is not economically owned by the Ga people. This sentiment has pushed participants to care about the vitality of Ga culture, heritage, and language. Amongst participants, 68.2% (15) believe they have a responsibility to pass on the Ga language. For some, this looks like speaking the language with their kids. To participants, this is a matter of civic engagement. It is how they create a better condition to preserve themselves—their language, culture, identity—and the future of their community.

Promoting Community Engagement

Civic Engagement Acted Out

All participants deemed it important to give back to community, whether they spoke about community in an abstract way or related it directly to their family and friends—which aligns with Indigenous African citizenship (Boadu, 2016). Some participants shared that they have given back to the community by creating non-formal education programs that primarily serve vulnerable, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and/or out-of-school children—many of whom are Ga or Ga speakers. When asked about civic initiatives to improve the Ga language's vitality, participants shared numerous opportunities. Moreover, they expressed a desire to engage civically in their language on a larger scale. Adoley mentioned that she had recently heard discussions about opening a Ga library and stated she would do what she could to support the library. Edith noted that her personal contribution is in raising kids in the church. For the past 30 years, she has served as a children's service teacher. She instills "good morals" in the children in the hopes that they turn out to be "good people in their communities." Perhaps, subconsciously, she seems to adhere to a traditional African sense of social obligation and responsibility to teach youth the values and responsibilities of active participation (Busia, 1967). She teaches the children in Ga 90% of the time and teaches in English 10% of the time since all the children who attend cannot speak Ga. Nii shared his prior involvement with a non-governmental organization striving to make education more accessible to children in

coastal Ga communities. Major and Mirabelle noted that they would use television and radio to spread knowledge about the Ga community and language. It is critical to note that the civic activities put forth by participants are altruistic in nature. This builds upon the notion that if a young person is not motivated by civic initiatives, they are less likely to participate civically (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative that stakeholders implement systems that can accurately measure the civic interests of all youth without barriers (Adu-Gyamfi, 2014).

Roadblocks to Engagement

When addressing the roadblocks to civic engagement, the external efficacy of Ga youth must be considered. Participants were asked if they felt their opinions mattered to elected officials, and 63.63% (14) either expressed that they were unsure or emphatically responded, "Hell no!" At least four slightly chuckled when asked. Only 36.36% (8) stated "yes." Amongst them, one served as a traditional leader, another as a local political party chairman, one had received multiple encouragements to run for office, and one actively participates in their political party.

When asked, "if you could change one thing, what would it be?" participants listed 12 different social and political matters. Of the 22 participants, 36.36% (8) noted that they would change the mindsets and accountability of elected officials, 22.72% (5) would focus on education, and 13.63% (3) chose the mindset of citizens.

Table 1

Social and Political Change Aspirations

Desired Change	Number of Participants
Mindsets and Accountability of Officials	8
Education	5
Mindset of Citizens	3
Loss of Ga Identity	1
Awareness and Training on Ghanaian Identity	1
Economic Mobility	1
Ga Widows' Rights	1
Country of Birth	1
Political Elitism	1
Public Sanitation and Air Pollution	1
Value of Material over People	1
Taxes on Menstrual Products	1
Not sure	1

Asante (2020) notes that Ghanaians have an "attached-detachment" to the state whereby they tend to discuss national issues informally and shy away from bringing issues to state officials. These responses are critical to understanding people's confidence in the government and their willingness to participate. As demonstrated by the initiatives participants wish to be involved in and their aspiration to give back, it is evident that youth are not disinterested in civic engagement, rather they require the opportunity to fully participate as desired.

While the basics of civic participation can start in the classroom, Kotei, a secondary school teacher, noted that the current educational practices limit students. He expressed his desire to make educational institutions more practical rather than theoretical. He confirmed that the education system focuses on memorization and regurgitation and does not develop nor polish the skills students need to identify and solve societal problems. Nii shared a similar sentiment and stated that the current Ghanaian classroom does not provide students with the skills to "compete on any level in the world." He urged the government to:

> Make people feel needed, wanted, for the skills you've given them, but here's the situation where our own leaders do not even trust our own medical institutions, so they'll fall ill and travel comfortably on the taxpayers. When are we going to do something to help ourselves? And I really think it comes from the mindset. The education. We should stop teaching the kids the wrong things. It is not okay.

In response to this critique, when asked to elaborate on what he believes students should learn, he advocated for a refinement in current teaching practices so that Ghanaians can meet international standards. Similarly, when it comes to civic education specifically, scholars assert that the content delivered ought to utilize a student-centered approach to encourage meaningful engagement and critical thinking (Bajaj, 2011; Tibbitts, 2008). While students may have the ability to recall, identify, and summarize material—which aligns with the definition of "knowledge and understanding" metric given by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports' 2007 teaching syllabus for primary level citizenship education (Adams et al., 2013)—this pedagogy hinders learners from becoming active problem solvers for their communities because they are not encouraged to have conversations in and out of Ghanaian classrooms around civic engagement (Ayaaba et al., 2014). Without change and opportunities to understand citizenship education well, pupils cannot support social change activities (Owusu-Agyeman & Fourie-Malherbe, 2019). Like scholars who suggest a reintegration of "informal" civic education curricula, where teachers, principals, policymakers, and parents strengthen the civic disposition of children (Odusanya & Oni, 2019), Ashitey asserted that while the first point of contact for civic training should be at home, most of it must take place in school since learners spend much of their time there.

Discussion & Conclusion

Nkrumah wanted the world to know that the "Blackman is capable of managing his own affairs," but how is this possible when the Black person, the Ghanaian, the Ga is not using their language in school to advance in society? Previous research has explored Ghanaian language policy and civic engagement in silos. This research contributes empirical evidence on how Ga youth believe their language, culture, and heritage are dying because of migration and asymmetric bilingualism. Due to this, part of their civic responsibility lies in passing on the Ga language and engaging in civic activities that enhance the survival of the language.

As government administrations have created policies that give weight to local languages, it is a disservice for schools to not teach in a language that encourages literacy, societal participation, and breaks social barriers. Schooling serves as an avenue to raise new generations in conformity with modern forms of citizenship that are compatible with a globalizing economy (Boadu, 2015). Unfortunately, in a Ghanaian context, this is one of the reasons the hegemony of English is oftentimes supported, and there is a false discourse of "educational disutility" of Ghanaian languages (Adjetey-Nii Owoo, 2022). The labeling of Indigenous languages as "vernacular" and the punitive measures taken to ensure that students do not speak their native tongues in the classroom, begs one to consider the impacts on the development of a sense of self and on community participation. To echo Vieira (2019), English within itself is not valuable. Rather, the language's importance continues to be reinforced because of the very institutions that promote it. This is not to argue that English lacks great economic power. Rather, the belief and promotion that English is the only way to attain social and economic mobility negates the very intention behind what Ghana was meant to be.

Giving students a foundation in their L1 allows them to undergo a liberatory experience. Language is intrinsically tied to the way one sees themselves, understands their community, and moves through the world. Participants like Nii, who see their language as their identity, wish to be active citizens. His desire to explain financial policy in Ga shows he wishes to promote and serve his community. Several participants wished they had the opportunity to learn in Ga as their MOI. If, as suggested by Stilz (2009), a critical mass of people were given the opportunity to vote on such a matter and demonstrated a willingness to bear the cost of maintaining their language as a public good, it could create new opportunities for economic advancement and development. Moreover, it could remove English proficiency as a barrier to democratic participation (Anyidoho, 2018) and further promote youth's civic engagement.

While participants found their community to be their friends and families, which aligns with traditional African views of citizenship (Boadu, 2016), they expressed the challenges that exist in gaining the skills to be civically engaged. Ghanaians' "attached-detachment" style of civic engagement is seen through most of the participants' belief that their opinion does not matter to elected officials. Their wish to change the mindsets and accountability of elected officials demonstrates that the lack of trust that citizens have in the government is a barrier to civic engagement. Since Ghanaian schooling faces a reputation of being "internal colonialism," it must be revamped to give all citizens a chance at social mobility and civic participation. In turn, this will give them the skills needed to be active citizens. In understanding that, in theory, the holders of languages, and in this case, guardians of the land, have ultimate authority over what they wish to happen to an aspect of their culture, the practical implications for the lack of use of Ga and how it impacts youth engagement must be considered and examined.

In the future, it is recommended to conduct interviews in Ga to ensure that important voices are not excluded. There must be an acknowledgment that the sentiments of the Ga people have merit, especially when considered against the backdrop of the 2010 and 2021 census data. The realization of language death in the academy often comes far too late. In

the case of the Ga language, perhaps there is an opportunity to ensure that the sentiments of the people, lived realities, and educational experiences align in a manner that promotes and maintains their linguistic heritage. To enact effective change, students must have the opportunity to learn in their L1. To reach the intended goals of citizenship education, civic engagement must be barrier-free. Where possible, schools must revisit and reimagine how Indigenous ways of thinking and doing may inform movement forward. If this is neglected, then the status quo remains unchanged, and the routes that could provide education and knowledge in new ways are left untraversed.

When it comes to the field of comparative and international education, civic engagement and mother tongue education must be brought into conversation together as they inform one another. How can one deeply understand concepts of civic education when they are not permitted to the site of schooling as their full self—inclusive of their language, which participants find to be deeply intertwined with their identity? If there is truly a desire for the Black person to be capable of managing their own affairs, it must be done in a contextual manner that sees the value in utilizing the mother tongue in policy *and,* more importantly, practice.

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Decolonial Language Education and Identity Realization in Africa

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This paper explores the relationship between language education and identity realization and the consequences of choosing either an Indigenous or a colonial language education approach. The focus is on the African postcolonial context; however, the arguments are also substantiated by examples from other parts of the world. I argue for a decolonial-multilingual approach to language education, where our conceptualizations of language must be decolonized (freed from colonial rhetoric) so that language use can be explored for its utility. The paper juxtaposes two lines of arguments: the first is an insistence on a return to Indigenous language education as a form of decolonial resistance and warnings against intellectual control through colonial language education. The second line of argument explores the possibilities of compartmentalizing and interrogating language use as an alternative decolonial-multilingual reality, thereby redefining an individual's relationship with language and its influence on identity realization. As the paper highlights the extent to which language and identity are correlated, I conclude by stressing the need to decolonize language if identity realization is to be decolonized.

Introduction

This paper provides an analytical overview of how language education influences identity realization[1] by focusing on the African postcolonial context. The paper begins by setting an understanding of decolonization in relation to postcoloniality. This is followed by juxtaposing conceptions of identity with how identity is continuously shaped by language (education) as a dominant power structure. Next, the paper delves into the colonial roots of current medium of instruction (MOI) policies and how those subsequently shape identity realization. Issues raised by decolonial resistance to foreign or colonial language education are then discussed as a way of decolonizing identity. Finally, considering the complexities in establishing language education policies, a decolonial-multilingual reality is posited as a viable solution to the debate between colonial and Indigenous language education, with gaps in the discussed literature highlighted.

This paper contributes to comparative education research by arguing that language must be decolonized as a way of decolonizing language education and consequently decolonizing identity realization. For the purposes of this paper, decolonial approaches are understood as:

[1] The term is understood as constant negotiations of an identity that neither ceases to transform nor to be influenced by macrocosms such as economy and society. The term is more fully contemplated in the following section.

> The opening and the freedom from the thinking and the forms of living (economies-other, political theories-other), the cleansing of the coloniality of being and of knowledge; the de-linking from the spell of the rhetoric of modernity, from its imperial imaginary articulated in the rhetoric of democracy. (Mignolo, 2011, p. 48)

Decoloniality can then be understood as a freedom from *being* through coloniality — where colonial rhetoric and logic no longer define nor grant permission for the existence and execution of relationships. Postcoloniality, as a prior and concurrent function of decoloniality (and again for the purposes of this paper) is the awareness of the past and continued effects of colonialism. The dynamic between those two theories is replicated in the fluidity of thinking about language education, (post) colonial identity, and decolonizing language while realizing that the decolonial is the necessary progression of the postcolonial. The existence of one does not conflict with the other: the awareness of coloniality needs to be present to strive to be free from it – to achieve decolonization. Decolonization does not mean *forgetting* colonization ever happened (ceasing awareness of the past). It is the freedom from its effects.

Identity is Not Singular

The relationship between languages used and taught in educational systems and identity 'formation' is similarly complex (although not as straightforward) and is wrapped up in de/post/neo-colonization efforts. Government and educational policies have an overpowering role in how identities – and by extension – societies are formed. As Leeman (2015) states, "identities are not fixed within the individual but instead are shaped and constrained by the macro- and micro-level sociohistorical contexts, including societal ideologies, power relations, and institutional policies" (p. 102). Leeman's views on identity are congruent with Bourdieu's views on language, where language is "an instrument of power and action" and "a form of domination" (Schubert, 2014, p.179). Therefore, dominant power structures utilize and shape identity and language in varying socio-historical, educational, and political contexts to create particular realities beyond one's own capacity for self-determination. Individuals themselves shift between multiple, changing identities; therefore, the conceptualization of identity as being *formed* is in itself questionable, as 'formation' denotes a process of becoming, of solidification. It ignores what can be inherent to identity, the idea that identity can be predetermined, and that it is in continuous reformation and negotiation with itself. Identity, like language, is neither stagnant nor fixed; it is highly malleable and in a process of constant change. That is why I prefer to use the term identity *realization* (as opposed to identity *formation*, for example)— to highlight the constant transformability of identity rather than viewing identity as having a fixed and decided nature.

If we adopt Bonny Norton's (1997) theory of identity as "the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety" (p. 410), we can begin to understand how and why language choices are made in relation to shifting identities, and how individuals *desire* their identity to be perceived. This is especially the case when discussing language education in postcolonial contexts. For theorists such as Gandolfo (2009) and wa Thiong'o (1998), language denotes either Indigenous or colonial affiliation,

and the potential that a language has for security and safety is therefore assessed in light of colonial history and violence. Lanza and Svendsen (2007), Gandolfo (2009), and Mooney and Evans (2018) highlight how language became particularly significant to identity realization when the latter was threatened by political and social factors. Clots-Figueras and Masella (2013), in researching the effects of the 1983 educational reform in Spain where both Spanish and Catalan became the languages taught in schools in Catalonia (as opposed to formerly only Spanish), showcase how the introduction of bilingual education had extensive effects on political participation. Their work thus exemplifies the political consequences of linguistic self-determination through educational reform and highlights its potential beyond the individual. Language is thus far greater than a mere system of communication, it is an instrument in the broader orchestration of self and society.

Language Education and the African (Post) Colonial Identity

The choice of language used as a medium of instruction (MOI) or taught as a subject in the postcolonial educational context is controversial, particularly as it relates to identity realization. Language education, especially in this context, serves a purpose: either to affiliate the citizen with their Indigenous roots and reclaim cultural and traditional knowledges or to provide education in a colonial/ 'global' language such as English or French with the promise of better global access and opportunity in the future. Some theorists such as Mazrui (1992; 1997) and Lunga (2004) argue against such a dichotomous approach to language education and propose a decolonial-multilingual reality as the best-suited option for the future of Africa. In this latter scenario, identity is not overtly shaped by language education; rather individual agency and self-determination serve to compartmentalize the function of each language in one's repertoire. The individual can then choose how language and language education shape their identity; from a decolonial point of view, the individual then reclaims linguistic agency.

In contradiction to this argument, Jahan and Hamid (2022) provide a comparative case study in Bangladesh where the medium of instruction (English/Bangla) strongly influences how others perceive someone's identity and social status. For example, students in Bangla-medium schools saw those in English-medium schools as "weaker, having less sexual prowess and vigor" (p. 60) due to their removal from (arduous and adventurous) rural Bangladeshi life by virtue of their wealth. The English-medium students considered their opponents incapable of affording high-quality mobile phones, an extension of their perceived lower social status. Hence, while an individual can have agency in the extent to which a language determines their identity, that language is part of wider political, social, and economic ideologies. As a speaker of that language, an individual often symbolizes and can be a proponent of those macro ideologies.

In a similar vein, LaDousa and Davis (2022) elaborate on how the MOI in educational settings in South Asia not only defines the classroom space but "extends into social and institutional life" (p.1):

> People quite regularly describe themselves and others by the medium through which their education is being, or was, offered. … For example, a

> student might say, "I'm in an English-medium school, not a Tamil-medium one." Through the rubric of medium, institutions and people are viewed as different from, or even the opposite of, one another. … discussions of medium explicitly grapple with and offer critical stances toward the historically constructed, ever-changing ways in which languages, through their various connections to institutions, exhibit inequality. (pp.1-2)

This understanding of how language education can contribute to inequality and social injustice is not new, considering the history of colonial language education in (former) colonies. Jahan and Hamid (2022) explain that English education during colonial rule was "an embodiment of class, power, privilege, and mobility" (p. 46) and therefore, used as a means of social, economic, and political stratification. To ensure the effectiveness of this approach to language education, "the colonized [were socialized] to believe in the cultural and intellectual superiority of the colonizers through efforts to denigrate their own abilities and their cultures" (Bacchus, 2006, p. 261). wa Thiong'o (1998) describes how Indigenous Kenyan languages were "associated with negative qualities of backwardness, underdevelopment, humiliation, and punishment" (p.103), so that Kenyans who were educated in the colonial system experienced 'colonial alienation,' "a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community" (p.103). Colonial alienation can then be understood as a force suppressing Indigenous or inherited identity realization.

Here, Bourdieu's view of language as "an instrument of power and action" and "a form of domination" (Schubert, 2014, p.179) is exemplified: the regulation and selectivity[2] of language education during colonization was, therefore, a regulation of the identity of those who were colonized and their relationship with the local environment. To strip Indigenous people of their language and to vilify or denigrate Indigenous culture is to tarnish the *desire to affiliate* with it, as well as to tamper with that language or culture's potential for *security and safety* (according to Norton's (1997) theory of identity discussed above). Thus, the call for a return to Indigenous language learning by writers such as wa Thiong'o is resistance to colonial suppression of identity realization through language.

However, the attitude of vilifying local or Indigenous language education has persisted in many postcolonial countries, especially as political power after independence shifted into the hands of the elite who were educated in colonial languages (Bacchus, 2006; Gandolfo, 2009; Jahan and Hamid, 2022). As such, theorists such as Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019), Gandolfo (2009), and wa Thiong'o (1998) advocate for the necessary resurgence of African Indigenous language and knowledge education as a way of decolonizing African identity and reconfiguring the power that comes with language education. The aforementioned authors further stress that African Indigenous language and knowledge education extends beyond the individual by affirming connections to one's history and environment and strengthening communal ties. Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) also claims that the rampage on Indigenous languages and knowledges during colonization led not only

[2] See Bacchus (2006), Lunga (2004), Sharkey (2008) and Seri-Hersch (2017)

to the postcolonial identity crisis and inferiority complex (also discussed by Fanon (1963)), but that it is a main cause for the current 'underdevelopment' in the region. Only when the African postcolonial identity is healed through a return to Indigenous language learning – therein regaining access to inherited identity and *inherited knowledge resources* – will those communities be able to realize endogenous development[3] and contribute something "specifically African" (Gandolfo, 2009, p. 333) to the world.

Problematics of Foreign or Colonial Language Education

For Mazrui (1992; 1997), the danger for the postcolonial African in being educated only in a colonial or Western language is not only the divorce from Indigenous roots. The assimilation of aspects of Western culture as well as intellectual control by European languages further determine the African's realization of their identity:

> The process of acquiring a European language in Africa has tended to be overwhelmingly through a formal system of Western-style education. It is because of this that the concept of an African Marxist who is not also Westernized is for the time-being a socio-linguistic impossibility. (Mazrui, 1992, pp. 100-101)

For Mazrui, the method of language acquisition, through a "system of Western-style education", has as much impact on one's identity realization as the acquisition of the language. Therefore, *schooling* – similar to LaDousa's and Davis' (2022) and Jahan's and Hamid's (2022) claims mentioned earlier in this paper – not only influences one's own identity realization but influences how one interacts in society and is perceived by other members of society. Consequently, the expansion of foreign-language education and a Western style of education can create tension and inequality in a society where language education systems are not standardized.

Mazrui (1997) further shares sentiments that foreign language education policies promote agendas of intellectual control: when intellectual self-determination can only be realized in a foreign language because of Western-style schooling, a genuine educational and intellectual revolution must necessarily include widespread use of African languages as MOI. Mazrui's explanation of the compounded effects of language education – schooling, the language itself, and intellectual self-determination – showcases the extent of language education's effects on the individual and society. This is why language education can be argued to be at the center of decolonization efforts: by freeing thinking and intellect from its colonial ties, one's identity realization can ultimately be decolonized.

In line with Mazrui's (1997) stance, Gandolfo (2009) explains: "What are presented as languages of development and modernity actually act to legitimize western interests and processes of globalization at the expense of these communities" (p. 332). This sentiment echoes strongly with Ezeanya-Esiobu's and wa Thiong'o's earlier viewpoints: the use of

[3] The term 'development' on its own is problematic and raises many (neocolonial) connotations. The use of the term *endogenous development* here is purposeful. It is defined as "development coming from within communities" (Ndoye, 1997, p. 83).

African languages as the medium of instruction is a critical tool for the overall endogenous development and intellectual freedom of the region. By no means, then, is the medium of instruction limited solely to a classroom nor individual identity realization— the ideological potential of language education and its social, economic, and political consequences can serve to advance neocolonialism and decolonial forms of resistance.

A Decolonial-Multilingual Reality

The above discussion has explored some tensions surrounding colonial language education in Africa. However, there can exist a more nuanced, fluid, decolonial, multilingual reality where language education's influence on identity realization is controlled by the individual. Mazrui (1992) also expands on his earlier statements cautioning against Westernization by arguing for a more balanced stance toward language education:

> For Africa to attempt a strategy of withdrawal or total disengagement [from foreign languages/cultures] would be a counsel not only of despair but also of dangerous futility. Modernity is here to stay; the task is to decolonize it. World culture is evolving fast, the task is to save it from excessive Eurocentrism. (p. 109)

The key point that I would like to emphasize in Mazrui's statement is that modernity in all its forms is part of Africa's postcolonial reality and that disengaging from it puts Africans in more jeopardy than strategically engaging with it. Where wa Thiong'o warns against colonial alienation, the danger, in this case, is being alienated from modernity. To decolonize African identities means to decolonize language education policies and approaches, such that learning specific languages does not impose a sense of either superiority or inferiority, that it is possible to learn to speak English or French for its mere utility. The problematics of colonial languages persist; however, why and how they are learned and used should be subject to constant negotiation rather than rejecting them completely. The goal then is to decolonize language in general as much as it is to decolonize processes of identity realization through language education reform.

Spernes (2012) exemplifies this possibility and Mazrui's (1992) latter statement through a case study in Kenya, where schoolchildren are exposed to multiple languages: they speak their native Nandi at home and in the wider community, while English and Swahili are used and taught at school. Through observations, focus groups, and interviews, Spernes (2012) investigates whether the prohibition of Nandi at school influences students' identity realization. Spernes's findings are that students were acutely aware of the distinct functions of each of the three languages and were successful in compartmentalizing each. They referred to Nandi as "their mother tongue," "the heart language," "language used for storytelling," and "the language they mastered best." The students' attitude towards language learning reflected and reinforced local educational policies.

Spernes's (2012) findings suggest that students were aware of the importance of belonging to a global world (through English) and the importance of being able to connect with Kenyans from other tribes (through Swahili). Spernes (2012) therefore argues that students have "multiple linguistic identities" (p. 202). How then does wa Thiong'o's

viewpoint of colonial alienation configure in this context? According to Spernes, the students seemed confident in their distinction between the purposes of all three languages and there were no obvious negative consequences to not using or teaching Nandi at school. This is a realization of a balanced approach to language education, which does not culminate in overt Westernization of the African student's identity nor in their alienation from their mother tongue and culture. It is important to note, though, that Spernes's case study was limited to a snapshot in time of the students' (and their society's) development, and it is unclear how their socioeconomic status (the students interviewed lived in a rural area) affected their views on language, if at all. The long-term and widespread impact of such language education policies is also unclear; however, the necessity of such an approach is compounded by the fact that English and Swahili are Kenya's official languages. It would also be interesting to explore how those students' intellectualism has developed over the years – have they been able to decolonize intellectual self-determination by being multilingual?

In contrast, Osseo-Asare (2021) provides evidence that in Ghana, the prohibition of local languages at school resulted in high drop-out rates because students experienced a disassociation between their local environment, languages used in education, and their own identity realization. This supports Gandolfo's (2009) argument that access to education becomes limited for students who are forced to learn through instructional media other than the languages used at home and in their community. The issue then is not whether colonial or non-mother tongue languages such as English should be the MOI, as much as to what extent students are proficient in the MOI. Insisting on the use of foreign languages and consequently causing students to become alienated from their Indigenous languages and cultures and unable to understand school lessons is a clear impediment to educational, social, and individual progress. However, if students are able to realize a proficient, functional multilingual reality (similar to Spernes's (2012) case in Kenya), which does not impede their educational or social development, then there may indeed be substantial benefits to having non-mother tongue languages used in education as either MOI or taught as subjects.

Furthermore, Lunga (2004) raises the concept of hybridity to affirm a decolonial and multilingual reality where one language "interrupts" and "interrogates" another (p. 316). In this case, languages do not merely exist in one's repertoire side-by-side; instead, they constantly negotiate and redefine the other's existence, similar to the process of identity realization. Lunga calls for "a form of critical hybridity" (2004, p. 295) where postcolonial Africans constantly redefine their relationship with colonial and Indigenous languages, i.e., they move freely between those languages, creating multiple, fluid, non-contradictory identities. Thus, the schoolchildren mentioned in Spernes's case study would ideally grow to continually negotiate their usage of languages and form a critical awareness of how the languages impact their identity. This also aligns with Mazrui's cautions against "excessive Eurocentrism", while heeding Gandolfo, Ezeanya-Esiobu and wa Thiong'o's concerns regarding the inheritance of Indigenous language, culture, and identity. Lunga thus provides a succinct solution to language education in the postcolonial African context:

> The postcolonial challenge is therefore neither how to recover pure languages and cultures from the past nor how to erase the trace of cultural and linguistic colonialism; rather it involves the ability to live within and against contradictions created by colonialism. (p. 325)

Lunga's (2004) statement reiterates the thoughts on decolonization and postcoloniality made in the introduction of this paper: "The ability to live within and against contradictions created by colonialism" is the awareness of the continued effects of past coloniality, i.e., postcolonialism. Simultaneously being able to *live within* and *against* its contradictions is the decolonial stance towards its effects. It is the freedom from its effects.

Conclusion

The research discussed in this paper addresses the ever-changing, complex relationship between identity realization and language education, especially in the African postcolonial context where language has long been used as a tool for domination and subordination. A possible conclusion to this problem of language as a source of power- and to this paper- is not continuing to empower and subvert certain languages, but rather to strip languages completely of power in how we view them. The individual then emphasizes a language's utility instead of the ideological power it holds within a society so as to decolonize language. Multilingualism can then indicate multiple, shifting identities rather than multiplied power inherited from different languages. By decolonizing language and language education, the individual decolonizes their identity realization and relationship with language.

Future language education and identity research must therefore be conscious of the following: (a) the extent to which identity realization can be immune from language education; (b) the need for longitudinal research on how multilingualism affects shifts in identity realization over time; and (c) that theories and policies of language education extend beyond individual identity realization, with strong potential to decolonize societies and influence endogenous regional development.

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Book Review: Shadow Education in the Middle East: Private Supplementary Tutoring and its Policy Implications

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Shadow Education in the Middle East: Private Supplementary Tutoring and Its Policy Implications by Mark Bray and Anas Hajar explores the extent and nature of private supplementary tutoring in twelve Arabic-speaking countries. Six are high-income members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates; the other six are lower income: Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen. Private supplementary tutoring is often referred to as "shadow education" because it mimics the structure of formal schooling. This book is a welcome addition to the existing literature on shadow education that has predominantly focused on post-Soviet states (Silova et al., 2006), the Mediterranean (Bray et al., 2013), East Asia (Zhang and Yamato, 2018), South Asia (Joshi, 2021), and Africa (Bray, 2021). Researchers, policymakers, and educational practitioners interested in the field of private supplementary tutoring will find this book useful in further understanding the development of shadow education as a global phenomenon.

This book comprises seven chapters. It commences with a brief Chapter 1 that sets the framework and outlines the remaining sections. Chapter 2 defines the scope of the study and presents global perspectives on shadow education. These perspectives cover the major providers and modes of private supplementary tutoring, the geographical and cultural variations that emerged in the second half of the 20th century, and the benefits and detriments of private tutoring. What emerges from the literature, as the authors argue, is that private tutoring may help slow learners catch up with academic studies and further motivate high achievers to perform well in national examinations. Nevertheless, private tutoring may maintain and exacerbate social inequalities because upper- and middle-class families can afford better-quality tutoring than working-class families. Moreover, ethical issues tend to arise when active teachers are one of the major providers of private tutoring. Some schoolteachers may be tempted to neglect their regular classes to meet the demand for private tutoring.

Chapter 3 directs readers' attention to the Middle East. Despite some commonalities in the 12 countries, such as having Islam as the dominant religion and Arabic as a core subject, the authors argue that there are significant social, economic, and political diversities within the region. These diversities manifest themselves along the lines of political systems, demographic features, and social stability, which profoundly shape the overall role of the state in education as well as the scale of private tutoring. For instance, private tutoring was frowned upon in Saudi Arabia, however, its government allowed public schools to provide remunerated supplementary services for students seeking remedial support. For Dubai, owing to its high percentage (91 percent) of non-national

residents, the government has historically played a minimal role in the provision of public schooling and adopted a laissez-faire approach to private tutoring. Meanwhile, for countries like Syria and Yemen, protracted internal conflicts have weakened their governments' ability to provide public schooling. With many teachers leaving their posts, private tutoring has emerged as the major alternative to mainstream schooling. These manifestations of private tutoring in Arabic-speaking countries suggest very distinct contexts under which mainstream schooling and private tutoring are operating compared to those in other parts of the world.

Chapter 4 presents the scale and nature of shadow education in the 12 countries. Bray and Hajar argue that the scale of shadow education in the Middle East has expanded considerably in recent decades. Notwithstanding variations across the national education systems in the region, the modes of delivering private tutoring and drivers of its supply and demand have exhibited similar patterns in other parts of the world. These patterns include an overwhelming majority of primary and secondary school students receiving tutoring, greater demands in mathematics, science, and English language, and larger concentrations of private tutoring services in urban over rural areas. In Chapter 5, the authors raise concerns about the expanding scale of shadow education in the Middle East. The negative impact of shadow education is most noticeable in the backwash effect on schooling, as Bray and Hajar (2023) argue, "Private tutoring is not simply a neutral shadow; rather, it has a backwash on the system that it imitates. Private tutoring may subtract as well as supplement" (p. 57). This effect may foster students' dependency on tutoring to pass matriculation examinations and, on a societal level, damage the mandate of fee-free education and reduce the social value of meritocracy. Moreover, owing to its commercial nature, private tutoring raises ethical issues among serving teachers who are also involved in the business of shadow education. In the worst case, one-to-one private tutoring may bring risks of sexual misdemeanors.

Chapter 6 states the policy implications for regulating private tutoring. These include regulating the provision of private tutoring by active teachers and the operation of tutorial centers. On top of that, the authors emphasize the need to include all stakeholders, such as branches of government, schools, teachers' unions, parents, and media, in reducing the necessity of private tutoring. In Chapter 7, the authors conclude that shadow education in the Middle East largely resembles the trends exemplified in the global picture in terms of its scale and nature. The authors suggest that shadow education is likely to be an enduring phenomenon because it pertains to social competition; one possible way to regulate the phenomenon is through the collaboration between state and non-state actors.

This book represents one of the very few attempts to systematically investigate the development of shadow education in the Middle East. It contributes to the existing literature on private supplementary tutoring by furthering the agenda of strengthening the collaboration between state and non-state actors. This agenda pertains to the 2021/22 edition of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2021) that highlights private supplementary tutoring as a typical educational phenomenon that cannot be tackled by

governments alone and thus proposes the inclusion of other non-state actors in achieving the fourth of United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG4). In this regard, Shadow Education in the Middle East carries the same spirit by shedding light on the complexity of the phenomenon and proposing a more collaborative approach to regulating private tutoring.

The rigor of this book is limited by the fragmentary data presented. As noted by the authors in Chapter 4, there is a lack of comparable data among the 12 selected countries. For instance, the enrolment rate data of private tutoring in the 2010s were largely drawn from the 2015 and 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) whereas those before the 2010s were mostly based on individual national studies from the 1990s to early 2010s that varied in terms of sample sizes, stages of schooling, gender, and school subjects. This was because data on this topic was not collected before the 2015 TIMSS. This methodological note is telling because it testifies to the under-researched nature of shadow education in this region vis-à-vis the existing literature in other parts of the world, such as Nordic countries, Asia, and Africa. While the authors have drawn on other sources to substantiate their analyses, such as questionnaire results obtained through UNESCO's Regional Centre for Education Planning (RCEP) and relevant media commentaries, elaboration on the treatment of such fragmentary data to increase its rigor and comparability across the selected nations would strengthen the book. Moreover, some aspects associated with shadow education are not adequately addressed. These include the increasing prevalence of Internet tutoring after the outbreak of the Corona Virus Disease in 2019 (COVID-19) and the role of Islamic culture in shaping gender norms in education. Further research on shadow education in this region needs to address these aspects to generate a more nuanced picture of the provision and reception of private tutoring.

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