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A Critical Narrative Analysis of Kosovar Teachers' Understanding of Literacy Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study, grounded on New Literacy Studies and Critical Literacy theoretical frameworks, was to examine how Kosovar teachers understand and teach literacy. More specifically, this study examined the following research questions: (1) How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy? (2) How do these perspectives inform teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to literacy? The study draws on the insights and experiences of five Kosovar teachers at a public school in Prishtina, the capital city of Kosova. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and participant observations and analyzed through the Critical Narrative Analysis methodological framework, looking at two displays of agency: grammatical agency and framing agency.

The findings revealed that teachers understand literacy as standardized language teaching while expressing their morally contested views on literacy and language instruction in standardized Albanian in a Gheg-dominant society. Additionally, teachers perceived literacy as print-based and school-bound, constructing literacy as skills whose proximity to school grounds deemed them valuable. Moreover, teachers employed textbook-driven and blackboard-centered pedagogies in the teaching of literacy, further aligning themselves with a framework of literacy as print-based. These findings indicate a need for an expanded conceptualization of literacy, encompassing the multiple forms of literacy that go beyond the traditional 'reading and writing' understanding of literacy.

A Critical Narrative Analysis of Kosovar Teachers' Understanding of Literacy Education

By

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom, Hanushe, who is virtue personified.

Chapter One

Introduction

The effects of globalization, change in student demographics, and classrooms composed of students with varied linguistic repertoires, in combination with new technologies, have shifted what it means to be literate and how literacy is taught (Vasquez, 2017). Janks (2010) articulates how in common usage literacy has been traditionally understood as reading and writing proficiency and was established as an antithesis of illiteracy. However, in recent decades, literacy has been described as a social practice and culturally mediated, shaped by the social contexts where it occurs as opposed to being viewed as a set of decontextualized cognitive skills (Moss, 2021). Keefe and Copeland (2011) assert that definitions on literacy matter greatly as they shape literacy education curricula, national literacy agendas, pedagogical choices, and community services. Thus, a better understanding of teachers' constructions of literacy leads to a better understanding of a country's literacy education.

Education in Kosova[1] has been historically linked to the politics of language and having a right to education in Albanian language (Hetemi, 2020). As a place plagued by oppressive regimes, who by any means tried to enforce only certain literacies and fought any local literacies, the people of Kosova have had to navigate a persistent reality which prevented them from practicing their full humanity through their language and literacy. Kosovar teachers have been at the forefront of resistance, practicing their craft at times when teaching in their native language was a matter of life and death. Following the late 1980s, when Kosova lost its autonomy within

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[1] I have decided to use the term Kosova and not Kosovo, as referred to internationally, to insert awareness and reflect the local language and literacy of the people of Kosova.

Yugoslavia and, as such, all executive and legislative power on local matters such as education, Kosovar teachers sustained education in Albanian language by moving the education system to private houses, which came to be known as home-schools. This form of education came to be known as the "parallel system" of education which lasted until the end of the war in Kosova in 1999 (Shahini, 2016b).

Throughout the 1990s, Kosova's teachers were deprived of professional development opportunities as they found themselves under a segregated educational system. However, after the war ended in Kosova in 1999, education in Kosova experienced significant shifts. Kosova became subject to extensive international aid, manifested in investments to revamp the education system. Many international organizations and agencies "flooded into Kosovo in the second half of 1999 had teacher training as an important, if not the central, component of their project" (UNESCO, 2004, p. 95) and by early 2000s, Kosovar teachers voiced concerns that they "spend more time in training than in the classroom activities" (p. 96). Of equal importance is the fact that Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in cooperation with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) established the Faculty of Education within the University of Prishtina in 2002, which opened the possibilities of providing structured pre-service education (Bicaj & Berisha, 2013).

While well intentioned, extensive teacher training programs and other educational reforms were implemented in a top-down manner with substantial input from international agencies and little input from Kosovar teachers. One common critique of these reforms by local teachers is that reforms led by international agencies did not consider elements of the local context, including challenges such as lack of facilities, resources, and were inconsistent with teacher preparation and development needs (Tahirsylaj, 2013). Kosovar teachers, although pro-

reform-oriented, adopted a reactive role in the educational changes due to the lack of opportunities for active involvement in shaping the education reforms. Teachers' lack of ownership in these processes prompted them to view themselves as strangers in a process which primarily impacted them and their work. Consequently, Kosovar teachers were situated on the sidelines of education reforms (Tahirsylaj, 2013).

Scholars (Darder, Torres, & Baltodano, 2017; Kincheloe, 2004; Vasquez et al., 2013; Johnson, 2017) have suggested that a key factor in a student's learning experience at school is the teacher; more specifically, their classroom talk, enacted curriculum, and pedagogical choices (Comber & Kamler, 2004). Currently, little is known about Kosovar teachers' perspectives about the context of their work. Furthermore, there is limited information about the pedagogical choices they employ in their teaching. Yet, there is a strong consensus of beliefs among the Kosovar public about teachers' work and Kosovar students' literacy *performance*. Following Kosova's participation in the PISA test for the first time in 2015, the statistic that 80% of Kosova's 15-year-olds can be considered functionally illiterate (Shahini, 2016a) has become a widespread belief. In line with Janks' (2010) articulation of literacy as an antithesis of illiteracy, the public discourse on education in Kosova has been framed within a binary opposition between literacy and illiteracy. It is important to note that Kosovar teachers' input is most often absent from this discourse on literacy education.

My goal with this dissertation was to examine Kosovar teachers' understanding and teaching of literacy. I found it important to center teachers' voice and experience in this study because they are important to give meaning and shape the educational practice. The group of teacher participants consisted of five teachers, two primary education teachers and three lower secondary education teachers. Through semi-structured interviews and participant observations, I

captured and examined teachers' thoughts on literacy education and their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Critical Literacy were used as theoretical lenses to inform this study, and Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) was employed as the methodological framework and analysis tool to examine teachers' narratives on two levels; on a societal level, to analyze teachers' recycling of institutional discourses as they told their stories, and on a more situated level, to examine how teachers portrayed themselves regarding agency.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my work in this study:

1) How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy?
2) How do these perspectives inform teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to literacy?

Considering that the theoretical choices and the research questions I just described were influenced by the findings of my pilot study, I will briefly discuss that in this next section.

Results of the Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot study in 2018 with four primary school (K-9) teachers from two schools in Prishtina, one of them being the dissertation study site. I employed semi-structured interviews lasting roughly an hour with each teacher to explore and understand teachers' outlook on critical literacy pedagogy and its potential application with traditional Albanian literature. Two of the teachers had extensive work experience in teaching, having taught for over 15 years, whereas the other two began teaching two years prior to the study. Interview questions explored teachers' instruction on children's literature and their thoughts on students' engagement with

traditional literature. Though limitations of space here preclude me from sharing the specifics of the participants' language, I briefly discuss my findings here because they advanced my understanding of how Kosovar teachers conceptualize and teach literacy. In addition, the findings of the pilot study shaped my theoretical framework choices for the dissertation study and guided my decisions for furthering my research.

From the data I collected and the analysis through constant comparative method, I generated themes and constructed two categories to organize my findings of the teachers' thoughts and teaching experiences: enabling features and constraining features of their teaching of literacy. The enabling features include teachers' cognizance of the historical context of the country, teachers' agency over the curriculum, and teachers' efforts to build students' individual relationships with reading. The constraining, with elements of enabling, involve the limits of traditional texts in terms of content matter and language practices, teachers' lack of exposure to critical literacy pedagogy, students' little interest in reading, and teachers' challenge to implement frequent education reforms issued by the Ministry of Education in Kosova.

The initial findings of this study indicated that teachers were working hard to build meaningful opportunities for students to engage with literature, though not yet critically, and that traditional children's literature held promise as a site for children's critical literacy engagement. As teachers did not discuss critical literacy as an aspect of their pedagogy, I entered the dissertation study with the understanding that students might not have had this instruction. The pilot study experience informed the dissertation study in several ways. First, it helped me to reconsider the theoretical framework informing the study. While I initially planned to ground the dissertation study on the critical literacy framework only, the findings from the pilot study encouraged me to also include New Literacy Studies (NLS) as a general theoretical foundation

for the study. Considering the lack of research not only on critical literacy, but also Kosovar teachers' conceptualization of literacy, NLS was needed because of its practical relevance to the education reality of Kosova. Furthermore, the pilot study proved very beneficial in building relationships with teachers and the school administrators, which allowed me to establish a sense of familiarity with the teachers and research site before returning for the dissertation study. Lastly, the pilot study research helped me develop more culturally and linguistically relevant interview protocols.

Operational Definitions

The key concepts of this study carry different meanings within different theoretical paradigms. Aiming to provide some clarification over their use in this study, I define them in the following section.

Literacy: Throughout this study, literacy is defined as a set of practices rather than skills that are grounded in specific contexts, are "inextricably linked to cultural and power structures in society," (Street, 1984, p. 433) and expands beyond "traditional" written texts (Serafini & Gee, 2017). The contextual and relative nature of literacy views readers as "competent meaning makers" that compels them "to find ways to make connections between particular, contextually understood literate practices" (Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007, p. 3).

Language: For the purposes of this study, I adopted Halliday's (1975) definition of language as a social meaning-making process. Halliday conveys the social nature of language by emphasizing that language is primarily learned by being in the presence of others. Halliday (1975) also articulates language as a cultural tool, which teaches the individual about and how to be part of society. In this view, language involves participants, their contexts, and their social and relational

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practices (Avineri et al., 2018).

Standardized language: A language's standardized form is the language variety most frequently associated with specific groups, usually perceived as educated people or people who hold positions of power and authority in society, and with particular purposes in serving a community; for example, education, media, and writing (Mesthrie, 2009). I deliberately use the term standardiz**ed** language, rather than standard language, to emphasize the imposition of language uniformity. Milroy (2001) asserts that language is not inherently uniform, however, ensuring uniformity becomes "an important defining characteristic of a standardized form of language" (p. 531).

Text: The definition of text is not limited to print only and instead includes multiple genres and modes that "rely on a range of sign systems (semiotics) to make meaning, not just words" (Janks, 2019). Semiotics includes "anything from letters put together to form a word to corporate logos" (Patel Stevens & Bean, 2007, p. 1).

<center>**Significance of the Study**</center>

If educators and policy makers are to make informed decisions about efforts to improve schools, it is important to improve our knowledge of what informs teachers' pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. This study seeks to understand and expand the current knowledge base on Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy education and their role in shaping literacy education in Kosova. The study aims to center Kosovar teachers' perspectives, as they share their perceptions not only of literacy education, but also of how their teaching of literacy looks in their classroom. Due to the strong influence of international agencies in reforming the education system in Kosova (Tahirsylaj, 2013; Tahirsylaj & Wahlström, 2019), little has been published

about literacy education in Kosova by local educators. More specifically, little is known about teachers' understanding of literacy and their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. This study aims to address this gap in literature by bringing teachers' voices and experiences to the forefront of the conversation about literacy education in Kosova.

Although the results of this study are not generalizable within and to contexts beyond Kosova, the findings may be of use for educational reformers and teachers in Kosova and from countries facing similar challenges in literacy education as well as for researchers working to explore the relationship between literacy and language instruction in various languages and contexts. Possible benefits of this research include contributing to literature of global literacy education, considering the lack of representation of international research in the global project of literacy education. Additionally, this knowledge could help institutions such as the Ministry of Education in Kosova, UNICEF, the European Commission, and other relevant international agencies based in Kosova, which are involved in processes of reforming education, to make better informed decisions about teachers' experience with literacy education in Kosova and the potential opportunities for and constraints against literacy education in this context.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

I organize this dissertation into six additional chapters. In chapter 2, I lay the groundwork for this study by sharing the theoretical framework and literature review upon which the methods and analysis are constructed. This study assumed a multi-layered sociocultural theoretical framework to understand the data. I provide an overview of New Literacy Studies (NLS) and Critical Literacy, presenting foundational research and discussing recent research grounded on the core ideas of both theoretical frameworks. In this chapter, I also discuss Street's (1988)

"autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy to address the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin literacy.

Chapter 3 presents the qualitative research methodology, providing rationale to the method choices of participant observations and semi-structured interviews, language and ethical considerations to data translation, and a discussion of the methodological framework, Critical Narrative Analysis. Here, I also provide an example of my analysis approach using an interview excerpt featuring one of the teachers to exemplify my analysis of two displays of agency, grammatical agency, and framing agency, in teachers' narratives. In this chapter, I also discuss the methodological modifications I made, informed by new insights gained during data collection and analysis.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the three main findings constructed from collected data. Chapters 4 and 5 answer the first research question, whereas chapter 6 answers the second research question. More specifically, in chapter 4, I discuss teachers' conceptualization of literacy as standardized language learning, a common thread among the narratives of all teacher participants. Teachers' narratives were imbued with moral contestation as they articulated their viewpoints on standardized language and an insistence on upholding the standardized language variation as the norm. In this chapter, I argue how teachers' narratives align with normative and colonial expectations on language.

Chapter 5 focuses on teachers' discussion of literacy as print-based literacy and situated primarily in the context of school. I consider teachers' construction of literacy as phonological awareness, meaning the acquision and mastering of literaices skills, and as the reading of text(books). Chapter 5 also considers teachers construction of technology in negative terms and the negation of digital and multimodal literacy as a form of literacy. Lastly, this chapter presents

teachers' criticism towards insitutional practices, considering the expectations on teaching the national curriculum and using the nationally accredited textbooks. The discussion of the national curriculum and textbooks remained within a print-based view on literacy.

Chapter 6 considers how teachers' perspectives on literacy inform their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. Chapter 6 is organized in five sections, a section per teacher. Each section opens with a narrative describing a teaching moment constructed from data capturing my observation of each teachers' lessons, followed by an analysis of teachers' pedagogical choices. In this chapter, I present teachers' construction of literacy as primarily skills rather than practices, the tendency for assessment-oriented instruction, blackboard and textbook-driven pedagogies, and an understanding of literacy as the memorization of information.

Chapter 7 summarizes the findings that attempt to answer the two research questions. I organize the discussion of findings in correspondence with each research question, providing an analysis of the key findings and offering recommendations. I conclude the work with an overview of limitations and suggested implications for future work. At the end of this dissertation, I provide a list of appendices with more specific information on the research instruments.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to explain the need for examining Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy and their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. More specifically, I discussed the rationale behind this research, the results of the pilot study, and their impact in informing this study, the operational definitions, and, lastly, the significance of this work in the field of literacy education research. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework and literature underpinning this study.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework and review the literature that informs this study. As outlined in the previous chapter, this study investigates the following research questions: (a) How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy and (b) How do these perspectives inform teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to literacy? By their very nature, these research questions necessitate a social theory of literacy. For me to interpret how teachers make sense of literacy and how they teach it, I needed to study the purpose of literacy and the context of literacy teaching practices in this study. This study assumes a multi-layered sociocultural theoretical framework to understand the data. The chapter begins with a brief overview of sociocultural theory, with emphasis on New Literacy Studies (NLS). Then, I provide a definition of NLS, and draw a distinction between NLS and "new literacies." I do this because I want to emphasize that despite their similarity in name, these are two different movements in the field of literacy studies.

Next, I present the "autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy to address the cultural and ideological assumptions that underpin literacy, followed by a discussion on literacy practices and literacy events. Consequently, I present foundational research in New Literacy Studies from the 1970s to early 2000s, which shaped the NLS discourse around literacy and laid the groundwork for current research trends grounded on NLS. I then discuss recent research focused on the core ideas of NLS, more specifically the role of students' contexts in shaping literacy practices, the relationship between literacy and identity, the role of literacy practices in the age of technology and digital media, and the intersection of NLS with critical literacy. I conclude the chapter by discussing how my study will answer questions currently unexamined in

the literature. The literature review mostly concentrates on studies from Western, English-speaking countries, which have shaped my view on literacy during my graduate studies in the U.S.

New Literacy Studies

The Origins of New Literacy Studies

A sociocultural perspective on learning lies at the foundation of literacy as a social practice. Vygotsky (1962, 1978) argued that social learning precedes development, and that the social and cultural contexts play a central role in a child's processes of meaning-making. He articulated how children acquire cultural values, attitudes, and problem-solving practices through relationships and community. He maintained that "learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (1978, p. 90), highlighting the importance of the cultural tools and social interaction in shaping children and their learning experiences. Vygotsky's work (1962, 1978) laid the foundation for researchers to consider the sociocultural factors that influence literacy. Building on Vygotsky's work, Luria (1982) and Leontiev (1975) made significant contributions to the advancement of sociocultural theory. Luria (1982) suggested a framework for understanding how language and culture mold the way individuals perceive and make sense of their surroundings. Leontiev (1975) established the notion of "activity theory," which emphasizes the role of cultural artifacts such as signs, symbols, and practical tools as well as motivation in shaping human activity.

Paulo Freire (1996) was instrumental in advancing a social approach to literacy, as he articulated how both the learners' and teacher's language and experience should inform the mutual processes of learning and discovery. Macedo (2014) argued that the influential New

Literacy Studies and critical literacy text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is based on Freire's lived experiences in researching the relationship between literacy and the Brazilian society. Freire (1996) discussed the student-teacher relationship in schools to have a profoundly narrative character. He regarded this as the "banking model" of education, where the teacher as the narrator "deposits" knowledge to students, which is often disconnected from the students' reality and experiences, and it primarily reflects the dominant culture. As such, there is no connection between students' literacy practices embedded in their socio-cultural contexts and the new information. Students' role in the "banking model" of education is that of listening objects or "containers" where knowledge is deposited. By utilizing this approach to education, the teacher regulates how the world "enters into" the students and what understanding they make of it (Freire, 1996).

Henry Giroux, a scholar broadly acknowledged as influential in developing radical critical pedagogy, has also substantially contributed to the advancement of NLS and critical literacy (Adams, 2013). In line with Freire's work, Giroux (1983) also envisioned a model of education where students' lives in and out of school contexts could inform the learning process with the aim of utilizing literacy education as a tool for promoting social justice and fighting oppression. He emphasizes the importance of broader contexts, suggesting that "the roles that schools and teachers might have in developing radical modes of pedagogy can only be understood within the broader historical, social, and economic conditions that characterize the wider society...Schools cannot by themselves change society" (Giroux, 1983, p. 234). He was concerned with power relations between different groups in society and the potential of literacy education to embrace and perpetuate as well as challenge these power relations and structures. More specifically, he asserted that "students bring different histories to school; these histories are

embedded in class, gender, and race interests that share their needs and behavior, often in ways they don't understand or that work against their own interests" (Giroux, 1983, p. 149). According to Giroux, literacy education can be employed as a means for social and political change.

This section considered theoretical formulations of sociocultural theory focused on Vygotsky (1962, 1978), Luria (1982), and Leontiev (1975), who are attributed as some of the pioneers of advancing sociocultural theory. I also briefly discussed Freire's (1996) and Giroux (1983) contributions to the theorization of NLS, from a critical perspective on literacy education. I return to their work again as I delve into the history and practical applications of NLS and critical literacy. In the following section, I offer a definition on NLS to then clarify the difference between NLS and "new literacies."

Defining New Literacy Studies

Gee's work has been instrumental in developing NLS. In his book, *Social Linguistics and Literacy* (2007), Gee observed that scholars across disciplines were converging on an emerging common view of literacy (Gee, 2010). Gee (2009) articulates his thoughts on the process as follows:

> The NLS was composed of scholars from linguistics, history, anthropology, rhetoric and composition studies, cultural psychology, education, and other areas (e.g., Bazerman 1989; Cazden 1988; Cook-Gumperz 1986; Gee 1987; Graff 1979; Heath 1983; Scollon and Scollon 1981; Scribner and Cole 1981; Street 1984; Wertsch 1985). These people certainly saw themselves as related in some sense and, for the most part, they knew each other. But they did not then, nor later, necessarily agree on what—if anything—made them part of one emerging area. Other people, however, did begin to see them as part of something new beyond their specific disciplines. The NLS opposed a traditional

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psychological approach to literacy. Such an approach viewed literacy as a "cognitive phenomenon" and defined it in terms of mental states and mental processing. The "ability to read" and "the ability to write" were treated as things people did inside their heads. The NLS instead saw literacy as something people did inside society. It argued that literacy was not primarily a mental phenomenon, but rather a sociocultural one. Literacy was a social and cultural achievement—it was about ways of participating in social and cultural groups—not just a mental achievement. Thus, literacy needed to be understood and studied in its full range of contexts—not just cognitive but social, cultural, historical, and institutional, as well (p. 17).

Expanding upon Gee's earlier work, Street (2003) concurred that NLS signified "a new tradition in considering the nature of literacy, focusing not so much on acquisition of skills, as in dominant approaches, but rather on what it means to think of literacy as a social practice" (p. 77). Street (2003) highlighted how a view of literacy as a social practice recognizes the multitude of human experiences in constructing knowledge and making meaning. He furthered his articulation of literacy as a social practice in his distinction of the autonomous model of literacy and the ideological model of literacy, which I discuss in the following sections.

The Difference Between New Literacy Studies and "new literacies"

In this section, I clarify the distinction between the concepts "New Literacy Studies" and "new literacies," highlighting how despite their similarity in name, these are two different, yet similar, movements in the field of literacy studies. The New Literacy Studies explored a novel approach to print literacy and the surrounding oral practices. The "new literacies" approach goes beyond print literacy and involves digital media and popular culture practices. The New Literacy Studies highlighted the plurality of literacy, different literacy practices, in a socio-cultural sense,

and prepared the ground for broadening the understanding on the plurality of literacy to include new technologies (Gee, 2013). Knobel and Lankshear (2019) define "new literacies" as "creating, sharing, and negotiating meanings using forms of inscription that have emerged and evolved with the development and proliferation of digital electronic technologies and networks" (p. 4). Knobel and Lankshear's (2019) definition highlights the digital nature of "new literacies," which are also referred to as digital literacy, computer literacy, multiple literacy, multiliteracy, and online literacy (Kress, 2003; 2010; New London Group, 1996; Coiro et al., 2008; Marsh, 2010; Masny & Cole, 2012; Street, 1998; Black, 2009; Thibaut & Curwood, 2018). Importantly, nevertheless, Lankshear and Knobel (2007) asserted "that it is possible to think of some literacy being 'new' without them necessarily involving the use of new digital electronic technologies" (p. 26). Returning to NLS, this theory continues to emphasize "the nature and purpose of expression rather than on the specific tools used to compose that expression" (Mirra & Garcia, 2021, p. 467). This study is grounded on NLS, while also considering "new literacies" and their pertinence to the current educational climate. However, in my writing I will be referring to NLS and will not make a distinction between NLS and "new literacies" when discussing the impact and teachers' perception of digital technologies in the context of current literacy pedagogies. I choose not to make this distinction because "new literacies" functions as a digital strand of NLS (Mills, 2010). In the following section, I discuss the "autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy coined by Street (1984), who has played a critical role in institutionalizing the New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2013). I want to introduce these two ideas/models because they capture key conceptions of literacy and illustrate the conceptual theorizations of NLS.

The Autonomous and Ideological Model of Literacy

The perspectives on literacy as a social practice in the Western world converged in the late 1970s and early 1980s in direct opposition to the work of the "Great Divide" scholars (Goody & Watt, 1963; Goody, 1986; 2000; Ong, 1982; Olson, 1977; 1994), who attributed cultural shifts in modern societies to alphabetic literacy as the catalyst for cognitive and social restructuring. The "Great Divide" theorists constructed depictions of whole societies and their people based on the methods of communication they used, may it be oral or written discourse, and dichotomies (e.g., primitive vs. civilized) were established (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). Street (1984) was an early critic of these scholars, firmly criticizing the characterization that "literate people were more cognitively and culturally advanced than nonliterate people" (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 339), while also maintaining that literacy cannot be disconnected from the systems of power in which it is embedded. Street (1984) introduced the "autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy to distinguish between assumptions on literacy and its applicability across contexts.

In the 1970s, Street (1984) conducted ethnographic work in an Iranian village, Cheshmeh, focused on the reading and writing practices of locals across three domains: the traditional religious Maktab schools ('makhtab' literacy), the fruit distribution practices in the village ('commercial' literacy), and urban state schools (school literacy). Street (1984) found the conceptualization of literacy through a cognitive lens constrictive to capture his observations of the Cheshmehis, which led to him developing the notion of "autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy and drawing a distinction between "literacy events" and "literacy practices" (Street, 1988). Rooted in western conceptions of literacy, the "autonomous" model of literacy works from the assumption that literacy is a universal set of technical skills and competences and

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'autonomous' of social context (Street, 1998). This view of literacy is also known as the "literacy myth." In his book, *The Literacy Myth*, Graff (1979) articulated the idea of the "literate society" to be a pervasive myth in Western society, where literacy (as technical skills) was associated with achievement whereas illiterate society was associated with crime and poverty. Graff (1979) criticized such associations as efforts of the middle classes to maintain a social and cultural hegemony over various groups.

Street's (1984) "ideological" model of literacy posits that literacy is a social practice that is "always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles" (Street, 2003, p. 77). The term "ideological" aims to specify the 'cultural' and 'power structures' dimension of the acquisition, meaning and uses of various literacy. The 'ideological' is viewed as a "site of tension between authority and power on the one hand and resistance and creativity on the other" (Street, 1993, p. 8). The variety of cultural practices, including language and literacy practices, are the means through which this tension operates. Street (2003) argues that the "ideological" model of literacy is more ethnographically and culturally sensitive in its view of literacy practices as situated and contextualized. This model theorizes and tries to understand literacy in the context of the ideologies in which various literacies are embedded (Gee, 2008). Similarly, Street (2011) states that the "autonomous" model of literacy should also be viewed as an "ideological" model of literacy, because it uses "power to disguise its own ideology, its own ethnocentrism" (p. 581). This is important because it highlights that educational institutions are not exempted and neutral from power. More specifically, as Street (2011) further maintains "the power to define and name what counts as literacy and illiteracy also leads to the power to determine policy, to fund and develop literacy programmes in international contexts, to prescribe ways of teaching, development of educational materials, texts, books, assessment" (p. 581).

Literacy Practices and Literacy Events

Building from the "ideological" model of literacy, Street (1988) initiated a working distinction between *literacy practices* and *literacy events*, which have been attributed different meanings by different scholars. For instance, Scribner and Cole's work (1981) approached *literacy practices* from a cognitive dimension, specifically incorporating "notions of skill, technology, and knowledge as well as patterned activity," and not delving into the ideological facets of practices (Hull & Schultz, 2001, p. 588). Heath's work (1983) in Piedmont Carolinas, also explored the relationship between *events* and *practices* in the two communities and school settings she studied. Heath (1983) described a *literacy event* as "any occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes" (p. 93).

Street differentiates between *literacy practices* and *literacy events* by suggesting that an *event* but not a *practice* could be photographed (Hull & Schultz, 2001). Barton & Hamilton (2000) define events as "observable episodes which arise from practices and are shaped by them" (p. 8). Similarly, Street (1988) describes *literacy events* as a component of *literacy practices*. Street defines *literacy practices* as what people do with literacy, which involve feelings, attitudes, values, and social relationships (Street, 1993). Social rules which prescribe and dictate the production, use, and access of texts shape *literacy practices*. As such, literacy practices do not reside in individuals, rather they should be understood as interpersonal in nature (Barton & Hamilton, 2000).

Later, Street further elaborated on the term *literacy practices* by including Heath's events, "the participants' interactions and their interpretative processes" (Heath, 1983, p. 93), of events and the meanings they assign to them (Street, 1988 as cited in Street, 2017). Barton &

Hamilton (2000) also discussed the role of academic institutions in promoting certain literacy practices. More specifically, Barton & Hamilton (2000) suggested that "literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies are more dominant, visible and influential than others" (p. 11). Their construction of literacy practices emphasizes the need to situate literacy in the broader sociocultural context. In the following section, I discuss foundational research on NLS, which played a key role in drawing distinctions between literacy events and literacy practices.

Foundational Research on New Literacy Studies

Important historical and empirical studies which questioned literacy's inherent potential to alter people's thinking in projected directions inspired the development of New Literacy Studies (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). In what follows, I consider the work of early research on literacy as a social practice as well as seminal texts of the early 2000s and discuss their impact in reinforcing the ideas of the NLS. These studies advanced the field of literacy through discoveries about literacy learning in, primarily, out-of-school contexts (Hull & Schultz, 2001).

In their research carried out with the Vai people of Liberia in different settings, cross-cultural psychologists Scribner and Cole (1981) examined the impact of literacy and schooling in cognitive processes. More specifically, Scribner and Cole (1981) researched the performance of the Vai people in abstract reasoning and categorization tasks. They considered the language practices that the Vai people used across settings: indigenous script being used outside of school, English in formal school settings, and Arabic in the Koran schools. Scribner and Cole (1981) found that each form of literacy was associated with a particular set of skills and practices. Based on such evidence, Scribner and Cole (1981) settled for a 'practice account of literacy', suggesting literacy as a socially structured practice "is not simply knowing how to read and write

a particular script but applying this knowledge for specific purposes in specific contexts of use"

(p. 236). Thus, recognizing that there are different types of literacy applicable to various domains

of practice (Gee, 2001). Similarly, Besnier (1995) in his ethnographic study with the Nukulaelae

Atoll of Polynesia explored the social uses of literacy, looking at the role that reading and

writing play in their everyday life and the evolution of their literacy to its present state. Both of

these studies emphasized the implications of the social and cultural contexts in which literacy is

learned and practiced changed how literacy was viewed. Scholars like Barton & Hamilton (2000)

have also argued that "different literacies are associated with different domains of life" (p. 10),

which I will elaborate more on below.

Heath (1983) applied ethnographic methods to research the language practices of families

in two rural South Carolina communities, Roadville (a predominantly White working-class

community) and Trackton (a predominantly African American working-class community).

Heath's research is considered influential in illustrating the inherently social nature of literacy

across domains of practice. Heath (1983) studied the language learning habits and socialization

of children in each community and found that language expectations outside of home

communities differed. For instance, the White working-class viewed literacy as a tool for

remembering items and trading goods and reading and writing were perceived as activities

primarily for functional purposes. On the other hand, the African American working-class

community integrated reading into their everyday activities and they fostered literacy through

shared social practices, such as oral storytelling, church and religious activities, and community

and informal gatherings (Hull & Schultz, 2001). Similarly, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988)

study of inner-city African American communities offered similar findings, suggesting that these

families used reading and writing as tools for self-exploration within the social, political, and

economic realms of their lives (Compton-Lilly et al., 2019). According to Heath (1983), the "place of language in the cultural life of each social group is interdependent with the habits and values of behaving shared among members of that group" (Heath, 1983, p. 11). Heath found that the language and literacy background of the middle-class community was more closely linked to what was being used and taught at school; and the Roadville and Trackton children had to adapt and learn the school literacy, in Heath's writing called Maintown literacy practices, because their own literacy practices were disregarded. Heath's (1983) work shifted the mindset on literacy as she began to work with teachers who "learned to believe that their students could learn, and that they could learn from their students. The goal of learning from students is for us to know what they have, not tell us what they lack" (p. 314). In a similar vein, Gee (1988) discussed teachers' work while focusing on a view of literacy as discourse.

Gee's (1988) work on literacy focused on the relationship between language, identity, and culture. He argues for a "discourse systems" view of literacy, comprised of three interlocking systems relevant to any language use, which according to Gee (1988) operate concurrently. These interlocking systems include the referential system (also known as the "literal meaning"), the contextualization system (primarily related to maintaining social relations), and the ideology system (pertaining to the expression of values, beliefs, and worldview). Gee (1988) states that interpretation of text is done through discourse, which is not restricted to print-based text. As such, Gee (1988) argues that a literacy teacher's work involves discourse systems, which, ultimately, are about identity, or as Gee puts it "the ways in which people situate themselves in the world" (Gee, 1988, p. 40). He found the notion of 'literacy' limiting and popularized "discourse" as a broader category which encapsulates "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that

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are accepted as instantiations of particular roles (or 'types of people') by specific groups of people…[Discourses] are, thus, always and everywhere social and products of social histories" (Gee, 1996, p. viii, emphasis in original). Gee maintained that like literacy, discourses are inherently ideological, embedded in social hierarchies and uncover the power dynamics in society (Schultz & Hull, 2002).

Extending on previous research, Barton and Hamilton's (2000) research in Lancaster, England sought to document everyday literacy and their association with different domains of life, including culture. They maintained that literacy is essentially social, residing in the "space between thought and text" and in the "interaction between people" (p. 3). They offer a set of six propositions on literacy practices embedded and shaped by social structures:

1. Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events that are mediated by written texts.

2. There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.

3. Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others.

4. Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.

5. Literacy is historically situated.

6. Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making. (p. 8)

The key assertion here is that literacy is a social practice, and the propositions expand upon this. Barton & Hamilton (2012) emphasized the role of social institutions and power relations to maintain dominant forms of literacy over vernacular literacy which are "not regulated by the

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formal rules and procedures of dominant social institutions and which have their origins in everyday life" (p. 247). Barton and Hamilton discussed vernacular literacy in the context of situated learning. For instance, they shared the example of Cliff, a 58-year-old who together with his wife Rose cultivated an interest in betting on horse races. With no prior experience on the matter, they sought to purchase a book on the matter but were not able to find one. As a result, Cliff and Rose realized that it was possible to learn about betting through conversation with veteran bettors, which led them to slowly develop familiarity of betting literacy through situated learning.

Hull and Schultz (2001) were amongst the pioneer researchers to apply NLS theory to practice and policy. They traced the evolution of out-of-school literacy events and practices established within NLS to redirect the focus to the interplay among in and out of school literacy, with the goal of avoiding the simplistic categorization of NLS as "anti-school" or "local" literacy of resistance (Street, 2003). Hull and Schultz highlighted out-of-school research in the context of home and community (Knobel, 1999; Cushman, 1998; Moll & Greenberg, 1990), workplace (Hull, 2000), and after-school programs (Gutiérrez et al., 1999) to illustrate "the multifaceted ways in which literacy connects with learning, doing, and becoming outside of school (Hull and Schultz, 2001, p. 590). Hull and Schultz (2001) maintained that these studies across contexts offer a practical framework on how to acknowledge, expand upon, and integrate students' social, cultural, and linguistic resources at school.

In their book, *Literacy and Education: Understanding the New Literacy Studies in the Classroom*, Pahl & Roswell (2005) offered examples on the practical application of NLS in schools and classrooms across the United States, Canada, Australia, and Great Britain. In this book, Pahl & Roswell (2005) explain how for an extended period, government programs

expected teachers to approach the teaching and learning of literacy as a set of skills. Grounded on NLS, Pahl & Roswell's research affirms the work of teachers who are responsive to their students. The book discusses the central figures on fostering literacy practices: teachers, students, families, and community at large. One of the main arguments presented in the book is about the relationship between literacy and identity (Smith, 2006). According to Pahl & Roswell, how one uses and is expected to use literacy determines who they are and can become. The authors emphasize the necessity for teachers to offer students the opportunity to build a literacy identity which embraces their multiple literacy practices. Furthermore, according to Pahl & Roswell (2005), a teaching approach grounded in NLS redefines power dynamics as teachers depart from a teacher-centric approach to meaning-making to support students to construct their learning with the teacher.

Lankshear and Knobel (2006) advanced NLS further when they conceptualized digital literacy as a social practice. Lankshear and Knobel (2006; 2008) challenged mainstream conceptualizations and definitions of digital literacy, suggesting that they align with the autonomous model of literacy which, in this case, reduce digital literacy to abstracted skills and techniques which can be taught and certified through the completion of a class/course. While Lankshear and Knobel (2008) did not deny that reading and writing encompass elements of skill and technique, they argue that technical proficiency doesn't necessarily assure understanding. It is the social and cultural factors and practices involved rather than the individual's technical proficiency which facilitate the understanding and meaning-making processes (Lankshear & Knobel, 2015). In a similar vein, while accounting for the rapidly changing, globalized, and increasingly technology driven society, the New London Group introduced the concept of design "in which we are both inheritors of patterns and conventions of meaning and at the same time

active designers of meaning" (New London Group, 1996, p. 65). Here, they highlighted the symbiotic relationship between digital literacy development and socio-cultural and linguistic factors and context where students reside.

This section explored some seminal texts on NLS across decades of research. These studies have in common the fact that they questioned the premises of the "autonomous" model of literacy across a variety of disciplines, including cross-cultural psychology (Scribner & Cole, 1981), sociolinguistics (Heath, 1983; Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Gee, 1988), social anthropology (Street, 1984; Barton and Hamilton, 2000; 2012), and education (Lankshear and Knobel, 2006; 2008; Pahl & Roswell, 2005). These scholars' detailed study of particular communities initiated the conversations on terms such as literacy practices and literacy events. For them, the conceptualization of literacy necessitated going beyond the mechanical proficiency of reading and writing, suggesting that literacy practices reside and should be understood in the sociocultural and linguistic contexts in which they are embedded. Next, I will discuss recent research focused on the core ideas of NLS.

New Literacy Studies' Core Ideas

In this section, I discuss recent research focused on the core ideas of NLS, more specifically the role of students' contexts in shaping literacy practices, the relationship between literacy and identity, the role of literacy practices in the age of technology and digital media, the implications of power and inequity in NLS, and the intersection of NLS with critical literacy.

The role of students' contexts in shaping literacy practices. Barton (2017) and Gee (2012) have exhaustively articulated the significance of context in students' early literacy and language learning (Mills, 2010). In his book, *In Literacy: An Introduction to the Ecology of*

Written Language, Barton (2017) discusses the role of social, cultural, and economic contextual factors in shaping people's literacy practices, highlighting the role of home as the starting point for learning literacy practices common to the context. Yet, the literacy models that students develop at home, specifically marginalized students, are often undermined and denied in the classroom (Barton, 2017). This creates a disconnect between students' cultural identity and literacy practices and the educational experience at school. Culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), although not exactly rooted in NLS, promotes a teaching approach informed and steered by students' home and community experiences "to foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). It invites students to build upon and make meaningful connections to their cultural practices and familiar contexts (Paris, 2012).

Research (Winters, 2012; Labadie, Pole & Rogers, 2013; Comber & Nixon, 2004; Urbach & Eckoff, 2012; Kendrick, 2005; Compton-Lily, 2009) across contexts has shown the embeddedness of literacy in social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. In her study, *The Missing Tooth: Case Illustrations of a Child's Assembled, Out-of-School Authorship*, Winters (2012) presented the story of Leon, a White 6-year-old Canadian boy coming from a family below the poverty line, as he made meaning and communicated his experience of losing a tooth. Using audio and video recordings, collecting documents/artifacts that Leon created, and documenting field notes of observations alongside interview data, Winters (2012) studied Leon's preferred modes of communication and meaning making, while also considering his sociocultural surroundings. Over the course of three weeks, Winters (2012) observed Leon as he engaged in literacy practices to produce a letter to the tooth fairy, drawing a map to convey the location of the lost tooth to the tooth fairy, and drawing a comic strip to describe the process of

losing the tooth to his grandparents. Winters (2012) devised her own analytic framework called Authorship as Assemblage to analyze the "modal choices, situated contexts, and critical storylines" in Leon's authoring of his tooth losing experience. Winters (2012) articulated how in an authoring process like Leon's "authors position themselves and are positioned by the literacy that are embedded in their lives…based on the contexts that surround them" (p. 19). Leon employed linguistic, symbolic, and musical literacy practices to communicate his experiences of losing a tooth. Winters (2012) found that Leon's past experiences and his sociocultural context impacted his construction of meaning as well as his choice of modes of communication and meaning making.

Urbach and Eckoff's (2012) study of oral storytelling in a first-grade classroom showed the impact of popular culture on students' literacy and learning process. The school where the study took place is in a large Midwestern city in the U.S., where most students come from low-income backgrounds. The data was collected in a period of four months, and it includes student interviews, field notes from classroom, oral stories, and students' artifacts (e.g., drawings, written stories, story maps). Urbach and Eckoff (2012) used domain and taxonomic analysis (Spradley, 1980) to code the data and identify relations within the domains. In the oral storytelling project, students were offered the chance to write, tell, and listen to stories. Urbach and Eckoff (2012) reported an extensive use of popular culture within students' stories. In their article, *Release the Dragon: The role of popular culture in children's stories*, Urbach and Eckoff (2012) focus on Shawn, an African American first grader, who shared six stories over the course of four months. Shawn drew on a variety of popular cultural references from cartoons, videogames, and basketball to tailor his stories. Urbach and Eckoff (2012) found that although Shawn's stories were tailored in imaginative and creative terms, his teacher did not perceive

popular culture as a literacy tool. Previous research (Alvermann & Heron, 2001; Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Marsh, 2006) has yielded similar results, articulating teachers' limited view of literacy as embedded in cultural, among other, contexts. Urbach and Eckoff (2012) found that contextual facets of literacy play a significant role in shaping students' literacy practices and identities. In the subsequent section, I consider the relationship between literacy and identity.

  The relationship between literacy and identity. Research demonstrates that as children become literate, they also assume particular literacy identities, roles, and relationships. Heath's work explored how members of a particular cultural group engaged with literacy in distinct ways when compared to another cultural group (Heath, 1983). While Heath's work studied differences in culture rather than differences in identities, such work forged the path for examining identity in the context of literacy education (Moje & Luke, 2009). Gee (2000) discusses literacy identities as "cultural models" that a child acquires through their socialization across various language and literacy communities which influence how the child adopts language and literacy practices as well as how they form beliefs about literacy and its function (Johnston and Rogers, 2002). More specifically, Lee et al. (2004) defined cultural modeling as a framework whose aim "is to facilitate students' learning generative concepts in academic subjects by helping them to make connections between the target audience and forms of knowledge they have constructed from their home and community experiences" (p. 42).

  The emphasis on cultural modeling is on grounding academic tasks on students' everyday literacy practices and identities to foster new understandings. For instance, Rogers & Elias (2012) interviewed first and second grade students who attended a literacy clinic at an urban school and sought their input on their literacy lives across various domains of practice. The interviews were conducted at the end of the school year and two domains, home and school,

were built into the interview protocol. Critical discourse analysis was employed to analyze the data, as Rogers & Elias (2012) looked at students 'ways of interacting', 'ways of representing', and 'ways of being'. Rogers & Elias (2012) reported that although elementary school children were in early stages of developing their cultural models, children whose home and school cultural models of literacy differed (with emphasis on language practices) led them to develop and assume distinct identities and language practices depending on the cultural context. Rogers & Elias (2012) found that the in and out of school social practices and the kinds of engagement that they afford determined which cultural models became dominant for students. Rogers & Elias (2012) suggest that literacy teachers should foster learning opportunities which account for students' existing literacy identities forged at home, community spaces, by popular culture and media (Marsh, 2003; Pahl & Kelly, 2005) and position them as agents employing their multiple literacy identities for new learning.

Other research has shown that consideration of students' various identities in the literacy curricula increases students' engagement in the classroom (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Wagner, 2021; Wagner, 2023; Merchant, 2012; Wohlwend, 2010; Larson, 2008; Hikida, 2018). Makoe (2014) studied the nexus between language, identity, and hegemony in a racially diverse first-grade classroom in a suburban school in Johannesburg, South Africa. Drawing on NLS theory and critical discourse analysis, Makoe (2014) examined how multilingual students' identities are formed through classroom discourse and interactions. Using a qualitative ethnographic approach, data was collected through video-documented classroom discussions, classroom observations, audio-recorded interviews with teachers, and field note observations of larger school events such as birthday celebrations and assemblies. Makoe (2014) found that the school served as an ideological space, where identity categories were imposed by attributing value to certain ways of

being that correspond with the institution's view of successful learners, and alternative identity categories were seen as indicators of failure. Learners who have access to dominant linguistic capital are empowered to pursue and obtain desired identity positions, whereas learners with limited dominant language resources are confined to an identity perceived as insignificant assigned to them. Makoe (2014) demonstrates the essentialist views on language, culture, and learner identities, which not only reflect dominant orientations and exclusionary practices of the school but also highlight the urgency for pedagogical practices that foster inclusivity and value individuality. Having discussed the relationship between literacy and identity, I will now explore literacy practices in the age of technology and digital media.

Literacy practices in the age of technology and digital media. Technological advancements over the past few decades have resulted in major transformations in how we communicate and engage in daily activities including reading and writing (Marsh, 2007). Lankshear and Knobel (2006; 2007) argue for an understanding of literacy practices as an amalgamation of digital practices. Borrowing from Leander (2007), Lankshear and Knobel (2007) articulate how literacy practices "travel across spaces typically treated as binaries – online/offline, virtual world/real world, cyberspace/physical space" (p. 229) and, as such, students' employ them when making meaning across settings. Research has shown that students', specifically, out-of-school environments involve an increasing engagement with practices such as social networking (White & Hungerford-Kresser, 2014; Boyd, 2008; Haas et al., 2011), video gaming (Teichert, 2022; Wohlwend, 2015; Ranker, 2006; Wohlwend, 2009; Steinkuehler & King, 2009; Gee, 2009), and blogging (Frye, Trathen & Koppenhaver, 2010; Marsh, 2007; Waring & Bentley, 2012; Mills & Exley, 2014), which afford students with a myriad of opportunities to socially exchange their views, act as agents, and make new meanings.

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Marsh (2007) contends that online forms of literacy such as blogs promote a cross-curricular learning approach, where students draw from various sources across different subjects to imaginatively create their work. For instance, Frye, Trathen and Koppenhaver (2010) studied fourth-grade students' engagement in projects integrating language arts, social studies, and technology as they researched Cherokee people, the three branches of the U.S. government, and pirates. Students collected new information via internet workshops and then after organizing and analyzing it, they developed "I" poems, podcasts, and digital stories, published in individual blog posts by the teacher. Frye, Trathen and Koppenhaver (2010) found that blogging created opportunities for students to employ various literacy practices and develop ownership over the learning process. In another study, Larson (2009) explored the integration of technology in a fifth grade reading workshop, where students engaged with e-books and shared their thoughts on electronic response journals. Larson (2009) found that the asynchronous set-up encouraged students to engage deeply with literature and in sharing their ideas, while also exploring multiple viewpoints on the same prompts. Furthermore, students began to take an active role in shaping the course of discussion by formulating prompts. Larson (2009) concluded that the digital nature of the learning experience allowed students to tap into literacy practices generally affiliated with out-of-school contexts and digital spaces.

However, contrary to these findings, teachers remain resistant toward acknowledging the value of and adopting digital literacy practices in their classrooms (Ertmer et al., 2012; Palaiologou, 2016; Levin & Wadmany, 2006; Hultin & Westman, 2012). Palaiologou (2016) examined teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward digital devices and practices in their private lives and teaching practice in five countries (Malta, Greece, Kuwait, Luxemburg, and England). Data was collected via an online survey, followed by focus group interviews, conducted in the

language of the participants. Data was then translated into English, followed by a thematic

analysis. The initially planned literal translation led to unnatural responses and text structures, so

Palaiologou (2016) decided to adopt a free translation approach to preserve 'naturalistic' aspect

of the responses. Palaiologou (2016) found that even though teachers actively engaged with

digital devices in their personal lives, they were hesitant to incorporate them in their teaching

practice. More specifically, teachers articulated digital devices and the practices that they

facilitate "as static and controlling children's creativity, motivation and exploration"

(Palaiologou, 2016, p. 315) and were skeptical regarding their capacity to support students. In the

following section, I discuss the intersection between literacy, power, and social inequities.

The intersection of NLS with critical literacy. Street's (1984) critique towards the

"autonomous" model of literacy challenged the idea of literacy as neutral from the social and

cultural dimensions of society. Larson and Marsh (2014) contend that "autonomous definitions

associated with school can suppress students under the ideology and social control of dominant

groups, preventing a critical analysis of their social and political contexts" (p. 4). Students'

suppression may take many forms, including the expectation to conform and adopt literacy

practice aligned with dominant ideologies in school and society. Like Street (1984), Gee (2001),

Knobel & Lankshear (2007), and Barton & Hamilton (2012) have contributed to an increased

understanding of how power structures influence literacy teaching and learning, construct

students' identities, and can be means for both marginalization and equality. In her book,

Literacy and Power, Hilary Janks (2010) discusses the nexus of NLS and critical literacy as both

frameworks examine the social, cultural, and political contexts of literacy practices. More

specifically, Janks (2010) discusses how literacy is commodified as a 'social good' that is

distributed and that one's position in the social hierarchy impacts their access to resources (such

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as housing, food, water, healthcare) and, consequently, educational opportunities. Janks (2010) highlights the need for 'critical' literacy and a focus on power "to question the naturalized assumptions" (p. 13) about literacy.

Teaching grounded in NLS fosters a conducive environment for critical literacy to unfold. Like NLS, critical literacy views literacy practices as socially situated and influenced by identity, ideology, and power (Janks, 2010). According to Comber (2013), critical literacy can be described as "an evolving repertoire of practices of analysis and interrogation which move between the micro features of texts and the macro conditions of institutions, focusing on how relations of power work through these practices" (p. 589). Critical scholars (Luke, 2012; Janks, 2010; Comber, 2015; Morrell, 2017; Morrell, 2008; Darder, Torres & Baltodano, 2017; Vasquez, Janks & Comber, 2019) have asserted that what counts as 'critical' is dependent on "how the state, the media, the school, the church and other fields of institutional authority enable and disenable what can be said and done about texts and discourses" (Luke, 2018, p. 217) which inevitably determines "what can be said and done about identities, about histories, and about themselves as institutions" (p. 217). Studies exploring students' and teachers' engagement with critical literacy have taken place in diverse global contexts. Recent work has explored the use of critical literacy theory in and out-of-school contexts (Mendoza, 2017; Love, 2017; chanicka, Mahari de Silva & Merkley, 2018; de los Ríos, López & Morrell, 2015). Research in international contexts shows that there are contextually specific constraints to enacting critical engagement and critical literacy theory in schools (Llyod, 2016; Ajayi, 2015; Ioannidou, 2015; Ko, 2013).

In her book, *Negotiating critical literacy with young children*, Vasquez (2004) documents the implementation of a curriculum and pedagogy rooted in critical literacy in a K-3 classroom in

Canada. Vasquez and her students assembled an audit trail, composed of a public display of artifacts gathered by them, which became the site for building a critical curriculum. The recorded artifacts represented the discussion and analysis of issues such as fairness, the impact of human activity on the environment, the media's biased nature, and questions about power and control in society. The audit trail made the curriculum in Vasquez's classroom available for public conversation and allowed people, like parents and colleagues, to enter the classroom discourse (Vasquez, 2004). Vasquez (2004) ensured that parents were aware how the pedagogy and curriculum were negotiated, recognizing that being in continuous conversation with the students' homes was of crucial importance for impactful learning.

Some of the projects that Vasquez's students engaged with included: raising awareness about vegetarianism in their as well as other schools, discussing gender representation in books and the media, the marketing strategies of companies like McDonald's about children's toys (and the implications of gender related to the types of toys children received), and the preservation of parks by raising awareness on the consequences of deforestation. All activities were paired with social action, so that the students would have the opportunity to act on the new knowledge and literacy practices acquired. Vasquez (2004) describes the learning process in her class as a combination of social critique, social analysis, and social action. Through social critique, Vasquez and her students began to raise questions about the origin of the current state. Through social analysis, they began to study the broad relations and issues of power and control in their community and society. Through social action, students acted upon their critique and analysis to position themselves differently. Vasquez (2004) discusses the process of deepening her understanding of critical literacy work/curriculum as a recursive process of conceptualization and negotiating curricular spaces.

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Ioannidou's (2015) study in Cyprus with Greek texts discusses the role of textbooks in applying critical literacy education. Ioannidou (2015) examined teaching practices in three first grade primary schools in Greek Cypriot public schools to learn whether the policy level commitment towards critical literacy education was influencing classroom literacy practices. Even though Cyprus gained independence from Greece in 1960, the island had been following the language policies developed in Greece until very recently. The unsteady political scene, involving ethnic conflicts between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, supported the argument for the education system to become a vehicle for teaching the ideals of the 'Greek nation'. Nevertheless, from 2010 onwards, Cyprus has developed their own full-scale educational reform at all levels of education, where a critical literacy model of education was expected to be implemented. This shift towards critical literacy theory intended to move away from notions of literacy as the ability to decode viewing critical engagement with language as a "semiotic mode which influences and is influenced by social reality, and therefore becomes central to the construction and deconstruction of social meaning" (Ioannidou, 2015, p. 184).

Ioannidou (2015) explored the application of critical literacy education with particular attention paid to the materials teachers used, how textuality was perceived in their teaching, the role of metalanguage, and teachers' understanding of language legitimacy constructed in the classroom. The findings indicate that the reforms did not manage to accomplish their goals. The existing texts, mainly in the form of dialogue that had traditionally intended to teach specific language structures, constrained the enactment of critical engagement and critical literacy education. Regardless of the intentions behind the reforms, teachers already had preconceived beliefs that teaching literacy was about teaching decoding and basic comprehension. Accordingly, teachers' pedagogy followed a pattern where their talk dominated the classroom

and students were guided to provide specific answers in terms of content and form. These pedagogical approaches hindered the possibilities for students to draw on dialect and language variation as well as for them to extend the meanings of text beyond the immediate context. These studies focused on the application of critical literacy in K-9 contexts are useful in considering the ways different teachers conceptualize critical literacy, the pedagogical choices they make, and the implications of this work in students' learning.

Gaps in the Literature Review

As evidenced above, extensive NLS-grounded research has been carried out in literacy education in the K-9 context (Compton-Lily, 2009; Winters, 2012; Rogers & Elias, 2012; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; 2007; Teichert, 2022; Marsh, 2007; Frye, Trathen & Koppenhaver, 2010; Levin & Wadmany, 2006), looking at teachers' conceptualization of literacy and their teaching of literacy. Qualitative methodology predominantly characterizes this research, employing interviews and observations as key instruments for data collection. However, there is still little scientific evidence of NLS-grounded research in literacy education in the K-9 context in particular international contexts, specifically Kosova.

When looking at research focused on Kosovar teachers, previous work has explored teachers' views on student-centered teaching and learning (Zabeli et al., 2018), post-war educational change (Tahirsylaj, 2013), the impact of professional development on teachers practice (Mustafa & Paçarizi, 2021; Krasniqi, 2022; Hyseni Spahiu & Lindemann-Matthies, 2015), teachers' emotional responses in discussing war and trauma related topics in the classroom (Berisha Kida & Butler, 2021), the implications of homework assignment on student performance (Syla & Saqipi, 2022), and teachers' expectations in the early stages of the teaching profession (Alidemaj, 2021). Research on Kosovar teachers' views on literacy education is

almost inexistent. Accordingly, this study aims to address this research gap by examining Kosovar teachers' conceptualization of literacy and their teaching of literacy, drawing from interview data and qualitative observations of their teaching practice.

Another gap in existing research is the methodological combination of critical narrative analysis with NLS. Critical narrative analysis, as a methodological framework, is commonly paired with critical literacy education (Rogers & Wetzel, 2013; Williams, 2022; Taylor et al., 2018). While this study is also foregrounded on critical literacy studies, the foundational theoretical framework is NLS. Furthermore, critical narrative analysis remains an unexplored methodological framework in the context of education research in/of Kosova, hence, this study also tackles this unexplored research methodology in the context of literacy education in Kosova. Most importantly, the application of critical narrative analysis provides insight into the many layers of Kosovar teachers' narratives and experiences, which remain largely overlooked and unknown, in the discussion and discourse of literacy education.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the theoretical frameworks and literature in which this study is grounded. The chapter opened with a brief overview of sociocultural theory, focused on New Literacy Studies (NLS). I then provided a definition on NLS while distinguishing between NLS and "new literacies." Next, I discussed the "autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy to review the ideological and cultural assumptions that underpin literacy. Simultaneously, I reviewed literature focused on literacy practices and events. I then presented pioneering research in NLS, which paved the way for current research trends on NLS. I also discussed recent research on NLS focused on the role of students' contexts in shaping literacy practices, the relationship between literacy and identity, the role of literacy practices in the age of technology

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and digital media, and the intersection of NLS with critical literacy in theory and practice. The

chapter ends with a discussion of current gaps in literature and how this study aims to answer

some of the currently unexamined questions in literature.

Chapter Three

Methodology

As I sought to understand how Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy education, a qualitative methodology afforded me the necessary framework to conduct an in-depth study of a unique group of teachers. Five experienced Albanian language teachers agreed to participate in the study, which explored in depth: their perceptions and understanding of literacy education, their role as literacy education teachers, and their teaching philosophy and pedagogies. In this chapter, I describe the research design and methods I used to examine the study's research questions:

- How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy?

- How do these perspectives inform teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to literacy?

I begin this chapter with a description of the study's research design. The chapter is organized in four sections. The first section describes the context of the Kosovar education system, before delving into the research site and the description of participants. In the second section, I discuss the data collection methods; more specifically, my approach to conducting the semi-structured interviews, participant observations, document review, and how I utilized the researcher's journal to document my reflections. Then, in the third section, I describe the data analysis process. This section provides information about my approach to the transcription and coding process, the language and ethical considerations in data translation, the use of analytic memos, and offers an overview of the methodological framework for this study, Critical Narrative Analysis. The final section describes my positionality in relation to the study and its participants. The chapter concludes with a summary of the aforementioned sections.

Methods

Qualitative Research Design

To generate a deep understanding of a particular observed phenomenon or social context, robust data collection methods are required (Bowen, 2009). This study employed qualitative research methodologies to achieve its research goals. Qualitative research seeks to "discover, understand, and describe human behavior holistically, as it occurs naturally within social and cultural contexts" (Purcell-Gates, 2011, p. 135), with focus on how social experiences impact people's construction of their own realities (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The researcher is a key instrument in qualitative research as they develop the data collection instruments and collect the data themselves (Creswell, 2014). They are expected to draw from more than one source of evidence "to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods" (Bowen, 2009, p. 28).

The data collected in qualitative research typically comes from fieldwork, which includes fieldnotes on observations, interview recordings and transcripts, and written descriptions of events the researcher participated in (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). It is through such data collection methods that the qualitative research can in more depth explore and try to understand "how different people make sense of their lives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 7) from their vantage point and how they construct meaning and interpret their social worlds (Taylor et al., 2016). In what follows, I present a summary of Kosova's education context, which precedes information on the research site and participants. I believe it's important for the reader to understand the work of the teacher participants in this study and their schools in the context of the broader developments in education in Kosova over the last few decades.

Context of the Kosovar Education System

Education in Kosova has been historically linked to the politics of language and having a right to education in Albanian language (Hetemi, 2020). When Albania declared independence in 1912, a large part of the Albanian population was occupied by the Serbian Kingdom in the province known as Kosova, which led to the closing of operating schools in Kosova by the Serbian regime (Koliqi, 2004). Throughout the Serbian occupation in World War I and II, Albanians in Kosova were denied the right to receive an education in their mother tongue (Bicaj & Berisha, 2013). It was in the period of 1945-1968 that Kosova's education system was established as responsibilities from the government in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, were gradually devolved to the provincial authorities in Prishtina (Pupovci, 2012).

In 1945, Yugoslavia was established as a socialist and federal republic, granting all its citizens equal use of their language in education. That same year, Kosova adopted its first curricula for primary education with Albanian as the language of instruction. Fadil Hoxha, the communist party leader in Kosova, asked for the support of his counterpart in Albania, Enver Hoxha, which led to Kosova receiving 200 teachers from Albania. By the end of 1945, 392 schools were operating in Kosova: 279 offering classes in Albanian and 357 offering classes in Serbian (Elsie, 2011, as cited by Hetemi, 2020). At the time, Kosovar schools received copies of the primer "My First Song" from Albania (Mala-Imami, 2016) and, simultaneously, several other textbooks were translated from Serbian to Albanian (Kojçini-Ukaj, 1997).

The 1958/1959 academic year marked the beginning of higher education in Kosova with the establishment of the Pedagogical School of Prishtina. 148 students were enrolled in the two programs offered at the time: Biology-Chemistry and Mathematics-Physics. One year later, Albanian Language and Literature and the Basics of Technical Education were added as

additional programs (Shabani, Lutfiu & Agai, 2019). The beginning of the 1960s also marked the foundation of the Faculty of Philosophy, followed by the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Law, and the Faculty of Engineering getting established in 1965. These institutions functioned as an extension of the University of Belgrade, and lectures were delivered in Serbian language (Hetemi, 2021).

The late 1960s were characterized by Albanian student protests, mostly revolving around language rights. Students, intellectuals, and professionals demanded the establishment of an autonomous 'national' university in Prishtina, which would provide instruction in Albanian language. Furthermore, the protesters called for language equality across matters of public administration, which would require the use of Albanian language in government communication and legal documents, alongside Serbo-Croatian (Prifti, 1978). The protests led to the establishment of the University of Prishtina in 1969, which came to symbolize Albanian national identity (Selenica, 2018). During the following decade, Kosova received over 200 university professors and textbooks written in the Albanian literary language in the form of support from Albania (Dragnich & Todorovich, 1984).

The linguistic developments in Albania also had an impact on the education system in Kosova. Following the Second World War, Albania officially established the standardized language based on the Tosk dialect, used by the political leader installed in the country. Previously, official Albanian was based on the Gheg dialect, which continued to be used by Albanians in the former Yugoslavia, Kosova. In light of the fact that the two parts of the nation, Albania and Kosova, had already adopted different writing varieties was leveraged by the Yugoslav regime to reinforce the idea that the border marked the division between two nations. Thus, in 1968, the Linguistic Consult of Prishtina made the political decision for Albanians of

the former Yugoslavia to begin using the official language version of Albania. This decision was not driven by a cultural imperative and not by means of an agreement with the Albanian state. Although this decision rendered Kosova linguists powerless in shaping a common language variation, it did solidify their political alignment. The sociopolitical context of the time conditioned language decisions (Bërlajolli, 2022). The establishment of the University of Prishtina in the 1970s (Hetemi, 2021) solidified the adoption of standardized Albanian in educational institutions in Kosova.

The ongoing political tension in Kosova was continuously reflected in the education system. The late 1980s were characterized with increased repression, culminating in Kosova losing its autonomy within Yugoslavia in 1989 and, as such, all executive and legislative power on local matters such as education (Shahini, 2016b). This led to the installation of a system of apartheid in education in the early 1990s. In this context, curricula and textbooks experienced several changes, such as Albanian culture references being removed and replaced with Slavic and Serbian references. Here, the Serbian regime's attempt to commit a "cultural genocide" (Mako, 2012, as cited in Shahini, 2016b) aimed to diminish Albanian students' sense of national identity and belonging. A year later, Belgrade pressed for a school segregation, leading to Serbian and Albanian students being assigned separate shifts within the school premises. Shortly after this, Kosova students were object to a mass poisoning affecting 7,000 to 8,000, mainly, Albanian students (Shahini, 2016b). While, to this day, the details surrounding the mass poisoning remain a mystery, Albanians in Kosova remain confident that this was an act of the Serbian regime ("Nga helmimet e 90-ës", 2015).

These events led to the "Provisional Government of Kosova" in exile to help establish a "parallel system" of education that faced continuous repression and intimidation by Serbian

forces. More specifically, the "parallel system" of education meant that most high schools and all departments of the University of Prishtina were moved to private houses, which came to be known as home-schools. This alternative version of schooling was poorly equipped, and students found themselves sitting on the floor and taking notes with their notebooks on their laps. The home-schools served as a vehicle through which Albanians in Kosova were striving to establish the Republic they had declared a reality (Shahini, 2016b).

Amidst the declining influence of Kosova's nonviolent resistance, Serbia continued to intensify its repression, leading to the killing and massacring of people across Kosova. In November 1997, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) emerged with the political goal of "creating a Kosovo army that would start a liberation struggle against the oppressor" (Bekaj, 2010, p. 18). In the months to come, the war between the Serbian forces and KLA grew intense, especially following the battle of the Jashari family in Prekaz in March 1998. Over 1.5 million Kosovar Albanians, equating to 90% of the Kosovar Albanian population in 1998, were forced to leave their homes. During this time, over 11,000 Kosovar Albanians were killed, and an unknown number of civilians went missing (U.S. Department of State, 1999). The "parallel system" of education carried on until 1999 when the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) started their air campaign, lasting 78 days (Musliu, 2019), an intervention that eventually put an end to the Serbian regime in June 1999 and freed the people of Kosova (Saqipi, 2020).

The UN Security Council Resolution 1244, ratified in June 1999, afforded the UN unprecedented "civil and administrative functions and broad government responsibilities in administering post-war Kosovo with the establishment of the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)" (Selenica, 2018, p. 243). Notably, UNMIK embarked on an effort to rapidly reform the education system. Consequently, in 2001, Kosova established its first

national curriculum (Kadriu & Gougeon, 2014), which outlined the values, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers were expected to incorporate in their teaching. The National Curriculum Framework emphasized its aim to develop "a multi-ethnic society, cultivating environments where people would co-exist peacefully, and establishing the parameters for adhering to the wider European family political structures and society" (Saqipi, 2020, p. 6). Over the course of six years, the necessary curriculum materials for the 2001 curriculum were developed (Kadriu & Gougeon, 2014). A preliminary evaluation by the London Institute of Education in 2005 (Peffers et al., 2005) highlighted that the National Curriculum Framework failed at achieving the desired transformation in teaching and learning practices, despite extensive donor support as part of the international agencies' efforts to rebuild the post-conflict Kosovar society (Saqipi, 2020).

Following Kosova's declaration of independence in 2008, the Minister of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) announced the development of a new curriculum framework to suit the needs of the new republic (Kadriu & Gougeon, 2014). Notably, in 2011, MEST adopted a competence-based curriculum framework, adhering to the European Union's 21st century skills and competency-based agenda (Saqipi, 2020). Teachers were expected to plan their instruction with the purpose of their students' achieving specific competencies by the end of the lesson (Kadriu & Gougeon, 2014). As envisioned in the 2011 curriculum framework, the education system in Kosova is structured in the following way:

- Preschool education (children aged 0-3 and 4-5)

- Pre-primary education (children aged 5-6)

- Primary education (grades 1-5, children aged 6-10)

- Lower secondary education (grades 6-9, children aged 11–14-year-old)

- Upper secondary education (grades 10-12, children aged 15–18-year-old), and

- Higher education

Compulsory education ranges from grade 1 through grade 9 in lower secondary education, encompassing children aged 6 to 15, with the possibility of 5-year-old children to start their education earlier than the expected age range (Saqipi, 2020).

During the post-war period, extensive teacher education and curriculum reforms were implemented in a top-down manner with substantial input from international agencies but little input from Kosovar teachers. One common critique of these reforms by local teachers is that they did not consider elements of the local context, and there were no clear links between teacher training and curriculum reform due to competing international agendas for education reform (Tahirsylaj, 2013; Pupovci, 2013). The lack of coordination of international agencies between themselves and with local teachers led to a decontextualized replication of international reforms (Saqipi, 2019) that overlooked Kosovar teachers' expertise, local knowledge, and context, and resulted in a struggle to meet the needs of Kosova's education system. What was left in place was a system that lacked pedagogical knowledge that could speak to the needs of the local context. To this day, the educational system in Kosova is marked by a divergence of following modern education trends and recovering from the past (Vula & Saqipi, 2009).

I now turn the attention to the research site where this study occurred, which provides information about the school site and its main characteristics. I wanted to recount the history of education in Kosova to assist the reader in grasping this dissertation study's significance within the larger education context. Furthermore, information on the broader education context of Kosova explains the reasons behind the scarcity of research in literacy education and the research area that this study seeks to address.

Research Site

This research study was carried out at a public primary and lower secondary school in Prishtina, the capital city of Kosova. The school was purposefully selected. Prior to this study, I conducted a pilot study in the school in 2018, which led me to establish a good rapport with the deputy director and some of the teachers. During the pilot study experience, I learned that the school bore the features of a typical school in Kosova in the academic and architectural sense. The school operated in two shifts, morning, and afternoon. The lower secondary education grades operated in the morning shift, whereas the primary education grades, except for two classes, ran in the afternoon shift. The school also offered pre-primary education, which ran in the afternoon shift as well. When I initiated the dissertation study, there was a student population of approximately 1361 students. On average, a class consisted of 27 to 28 students. Most of the teachers were female and taught either in the morning or afternoon shift. The school was attended by working class families.

Architecturally speaking, the school is a two-story building with a football field on the side. It has 16 classrooms, 5 laboratories, the teachers' hall, the director's office, the secretary's office, the library, the IT room (primarily used for teacher training and school-wide education programs), the physical education hall, and several other related facilities. The first floor of the school consisted of the administration's offices, the teachers' hall, the physical education hall, the library, and several classrooms. The second floor mostly consisted of classrooms and laboratories. The classrooms were equipped with a blackboard, typically located at the front of the classroom. Next to the blackboard was the teachers' desk, which faced the rest of the classroom. Students' desks were grouped in two to three desks. When seated, students faced their peers sitting in their group. The classroom door was, generally, located on the left or right side at

the front of the classroom, parallel to the teacher's desk. Each classroom had a wall of windows on their left or right side of the classroom, opposite the door.

Participant Selection

I followed a purposive convenience sampling (Patton, 1990) to recruit participants for this study, which is "a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 2009, p. 235). I had already collaborated with the school site for the pilot study preceding the dissertation. When I reestablished contact, I met with the school deputy director to share information on the study purpose and research questions. Considering that I was interested in speaking with teachers of both primary and lower secondary education, the deputy director and I selected a teacher from each grade level. Considering that the school has one Albanian language teacher per grade level in the lower secondary education, I recruited all but one (grade 9) teacher. I decided to opt out of including a grade 9 teacher in the pool of participants as I was more interested in making room for primary education teachers. At first, the deputy director recommended two primary education teachers working in the morning shift to join the study. Due to the hectic observation schedule in the morning shift, when all lower secondary education teachers were teaching, I decided to recruit two primary education teachers in the afternoon shift. Here, I had to consider the logistical feasibility of my observation schedule and teachers' availability.

My decision to pursue a small sample of teachers (5) is characteristic of qualitative research methods, which often involves selecting a small sample of specific populations to ensure a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Bowen, 2009). I conducted this research study during the winter break and the beginning of the 2019/2020 academic year of

graduate school. As such, considering the time available and my interest in doing a more in-depth exploration of the phenomenon and study population, it was feasible for me to focus on a smaller sample of teachers. This choice allowed me to do a deeper dive of data collection in the 5 teachers classrooms via observations, and to interview them at different points during the study timeframe. At the outset, I held individual meetings with each teacher to introduce the study and distribute the consent forms (Appendix A). Upon obtaining approval from all teachers and receiving the signed consent forms, I prepared an observation schedule, which was then shared with the Deputy Director for dissemination to the teachers. Upon confirmation from the teachers, I commenced lesson observations. Subsequently, interview dates were coordinated in collaboration with each teacher.

Description of Participants

In the following section, you will meet five Kosovar teachers—Bleta, Melita, Goga, Fifi, and Enri (pseudonyms)—who were teaching at the "Qiriazi Sisters" (pseudonym) school in Prishtina, when the study began in January 2020. Bleta and Melita taught primary education grades, whereas Goga, Enri, and Fifi were teaching in lower secondary education. Below, I introduce teachers in their own words. The introductions were constructed from individual interview transcripts, using teachers' original language. I present information on their beginnings as a teacher, the motivations to become a teacher, and their teaching philosophy. I do this because I want the reader to get to know the teachers through their own words and based on what they felt comfortable sharing when asked to introduce themselves.

Melita, 4th grade teacher. I have been working in education for 22 years. The day I finished high school, my father picked me up at school and, at first, I didn't know where we were going. He then told me that he was taking me to apply to the Faculty of Education. At the time, I wasn't

paying attention to deadlines because I was going to school in circumstances of war; classes were held in private homes. I remember it to this day; we were having class at Bajram Kelmendi's house. When I got accepted, we didn't have the money to pay the university fee of 70 deutsche marks. My father used the last money he had to pay for it. During my first year at the university, the director of my high school employed me as a teaching assistant. That had a direct impact on my training as a pre-service teacher. I also taught in Canada when my family took refuge there during the war in Kosova, helping with Albanian language classes. I'm very passionate about teaching. I try to be close and supportive to my students. To be inclusive, successful, and produce good results.

Bleta, 5th grade teacher. I have been teaching for 11 years. I have had a passion for teaching since I was little. I find children to be ingenious. They are always appreciative of you, and you can have a great impact on their life. I have developed a close relationship with my students. I cannot see myself working anywhere else! My fifth graders will soon be done, and I'm often reminded of the fact that my time with them is close to an end. I believe that the teacher must try and unearth each students' learning style. I have learned which students to support towards learning independence and which ones to further support in that process. As a teacher, you realize that your students' future is dependent on you. If there are gaps in their learning, it is because you didn't contribute enough to their development. Thus, I try to do my best to give them a strong foundation upon which they can build themselves and their future.

Fifi, 6th grade teacher. I have been working as a teacher for the past 14 years. I come from a family of teachers. My father is a teacher. My aunt and sister are also teachers. Thus, I come from a family who has given all their contribution to the cause of education. My father has had an invaluable positive impact on me, as I saw how much he loved teaching. How respected he

was at the time. I would describe teaching as a sacred profession. It is known that children come to school as a blank slate. As a teacher, you get to fill students with as much knowledge as possible. You should be both their friend and an authority figure. When students see a teacher with a good attitude, they are more prone to liking your subject. You need to be both tolerant and decided in setting boundaries in your teaching. I believe I have achieved both objectives.

Goga, 7th grade teacher. I finished my studies in 1986. In the late 80s, I taught Albanian to the Serbian community until the protests of '89 erupted. Throughout my career, I have taught in small villages, inner city, and suburban schools in Prishtina. My brother encouraged me to become a teacher. As a teacher himself, he used to seek my advice in grading students' homework. That was the beginning of my exposure to the profession. I have now been working at this school for over eight years. I think that teaching serves to form a healthy individual for society, someone who shares values, thinks, and works fairly, and will give back to this country that has endured much suffering. I like to lead my lessons with proverbs and advice. I think that students appreciate that. In some ways, teachers are like a second parent to their students, and occasionally even serve as parents.

Enri, 8th grade teacher. I do not know if there is a more sacred profession than teaching. To lecture students is an immense pleasure. It is a privilege. I started my teaching career in 2015, at a high school in my hometown and eventually moved to lower secondary education here. Working with students of different grade levels has been a good experience. I now teach 8th graders. At first, in terms of pedagogy, I had little knowledge, because I was at the Faculty of Philology, and science is taught there. We are more prepared for science than pedagogy and methods. But we do autodidact learning. Although I have been in the faculty of science, I have no problem using techniques. I always try to illustrate lessons in every detail, every learning unit,

so as not to leave room for misunderstanding. I try to be very open with the students, in the sense that they feel free to ask about anything.

In the following section, I shift the focus to data collection methods, describing the use of instruments like interviews and fieldnotes to document teachers' thoughts and their pedagogical choices and approaches.

Data Collection

Data was collected from interviews, lesson observations, and supplementary documents. I conducted the first and second interview as well as the lesson observations between January and February 2020. In May 2021, I conducted follow up interviews with all teachers. Other than one group interview, all interviews were conducted individually with each teacher.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to capture participants' thoughts on the topic and explore it in greater detail (Duke & Mallette, 2011). The interview process combined a conversational strategy with the semi-structured format (Patton, 2015) to explore the participants in more depth and "to pose questions about new areas of inquiry that were not originally anticipated in the interview instrument's development" (p. 347). I conducted the interviews in a funnel sequence (Maxwell, 2018), meaning that I started with broad questions that got more specific as the interview progressed. All interviews but one were conducted individually. The interview protocols addressed questions such as: 1) Tell me about your work as a teacher, 2) Describe your pedagogy and instructional methods, 3) Describe the term "literacy", 4) Tell me about your teaching philosophy, 5) Tell me about the resources you use for teaching literacy? When the participants indicated that they have more to share about a particular question, I

followed up with statements such as "What do you mean by that?" or "Can you tell me more about that?". As I asked these kinds of questions, I hoped to get to issues that might be important to the participants themselves regarding their perspectives toward literacy.

Prior to the interview, I provided the participants with an informed consent document in Albanian and they were given an opportunity to ask questions. I conducted three interviews with each teacher. I chose to separate the interviews because of the substantial amount of information I planned to collect. In addition, I considered that the observations between the first and second interview would give me a more informed sense of the teachers' pedagogical practices and, hence, provide me with specific content that I can further explore in the second and, eventually, third interview. The interview protocols (Appendix B & C) were used to guide the participants in sharing their understanding of literacy and their experiences teaching literacy. The interviews lasted between 25 – 75 minutes and each of the participants was interviewed three times.

The first and second interview took place during January and February 2020. The first interview focused on the participants' beginnings in teaching, their teaching philosophy, and their understanding of literacy. Upon the first interview, I observed several things, including some teachers' tendency to answer to my questions very concisely, requests seeking further clarification on the questions, the absence of concrete classroom examples in the conversation, and in occasions when teachers provided examples, they often referred to previous student cohorts. I took note of these observations and revised my approach so that in the upcoming interviews, I could collect information which spoke more thoroughly and specifically to teachers' experiences with their current students, dynamics that I could also capture through the observation notes.

In the second interview, I focused on the teachers' understanding and application of critical literacy. The second interview was accompanied by a one-page document (Appendix D) explaining critical literacy and providing an example of an instructional method that describes the application of critical literacy pedagogy. Depending on teachers' familiarity with critical literacy pedagogy, the one-page document aimed to support teachers in providing answers pertaining to this topic. Here, I began noticing teachers referencing specific classroom examples and referring to particular students by name, explaining the rationale behind their teaching choices. I also noticed how the interaction between the teachers became more familiar, and teachers began providing more lengthy answers. The first and second interviews took place within school premises, in locations such as the teachers' hall, the school library, and empty classrooms.

The third interview took place in May 2021 and focused on me asking teachers to delve deeper into notions discussed in the first and second interview. The third interview took place in locations of choice by the teachers, which involved cafes near the school where they teach and in downtown Prishtina. In the third interview, I noticed that teachers were now much more specific in discussing their teaching choices and bringing lesson references to the conversation. Furthermore, they began to draw some connections between what happens in their classroom and the systemic and public expectations in their work, especially in relation to language learning and use and the national curriculum application.

I audiotaped all interviews, so that I could accurately capture participants' responses. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed by me. I transcribed the interviews as soon as possible following their completion. The transcription process entailed analytic notes as well, in that transcribing made me think of follow up questions to ask teachers on ideas that needed

further exploration and note down the commonalities and differences I was already noticing. For example, after the interview with Fifi, I noticed that she occasionally and briefly discussed authority as a desired trait in a teacher. Reflecting upon this highlighted the need for me to review my interview approach and consider including more follow-up questions to encourage an exploration of this topic in more detail. I recorded these analytic bits in the form of comments in my transcription copy as well as in the memos I prepared. Following the transcription of interviews, I provided the participants with the transcriptions for review and member checking, which is an important procedure for validating information observed and/or transcribed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998). The following section describes my approach to participant observation.

Participant Observation

To research teachers' pedagogical practices in teaching literacy and to better understand the context in which they work, capturing teachers' lessons was important. Participant observation is "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting" (Schensul et al., 1999, p. 91). As such, observations allow the researcher to gain insights into the participants' context and practices so that they can better understand their perspectives. Furthermore, participant observations allowed me to triangulate the data, while gaining a deeper understanding (Taylor et al., 2016) of teachers' pedagogical practices in teaching literacy when paired with their narratives captured in the interviews. For my study, I conducted repeated lesson observations (Purcell-Gates, 2011) in all teachers' classrooms. Observing the participant teachers was important to understand and learn more about the teaching of literacy as it happens naturally and to obtain detailed evidence about

it (Duke & Mallette, 2011). The teachers and I agreed on the observation schedule as I began to meet with them, discuss the research project, and equip them with the consent forms.

I conducted observations prior to and after conducting the interviews for various reasons. First, the observations allowed me to, when necessary, bring teaching experiences observed in the classroom setting in the interviews and further discuss their thoughts on pedagogical choices and classroom dynamics and, when applicable, teachers' rationale and decision-making processes behind their instructional decisions. For instance, while teaching, Goga repeatedly asserted that the textbook information was articulated in a complex manner for students to understand. In the third interview, I brought this observation to our conversation and asked her to further elaborate on it. She explained how the textbook for the Albanian language subject resembles a leaflet when, in fact, it should be more voluminous. Furthermore, Goga explained that the current phrasing of information and definitions are not graspable for students and sometimes even her to understand. She articulated her concerns on the textbook in the context of learning, emphasizing that she's unsure how much deep learning occurs. Incorporating this example from the observation notes in my conversation with Goga allowed me to better understand her commentary on textbooks and the concerns she was raising in terms of deep learning.

Second, the information collected during the observations provided practical examples which spoke to teachers' understanding and application of literacy and, occasionally, contradicted the information provided in the interviews. For example, in the interviews, Fifi expressed a philosophical orientation to behaviorism, emphasizing the importance of the teacher's "demeanor" in molding and reinforcing their students behavioral and learning outcomes. The observation notes supplemented Fifi's described teaching approaches such as

classroom management by directing reading activities while nurturing a climate of discipline and the display of reassuring behavior toward students input through positive feedback ("good job"). However, in Goga's case, her pedagogical choices documented in the observation notes contradicted her articulation of her teaching philosophy. While Goga framed her teaching choices as intentional in encouraging students to practice their full humanity through their literacy, the observation notes painted a picture of teaching focused on replicating the textbook content and allowing for little student exploration.

I conducted a set of ten observations in each teacher's classroom, resulting in fifty observations in total. Initially, I had planned to conduct an average of five observations per teacher. I decided to increase the number of observations to grant myself more opportunities to understand teachers' pedagogies and see if any patterns could be identified within the timeframe of observations. I was aware that my time at the school was limited overall, and this shift in the observation schedule was a way to make the most of my time there. The classes I observed lasted 45-minutes each, and considering that, on average, I conducted three observations per day, I made sure to schedule them in a way that I left an hour of a break between each observation. During these breaks, I would use my time at the school library to supplement my notes. Subsequently, after concluding all observations for the day, I used the remaining hours of the day to finalize my notes.

A typical observation involved sitting at the back of the classroom, next to a group of students, and taking notes on my laptop. I would usually meet the teachers in the classroom, a few minutes before class started. As teachers would mostly be busy setting up and getting ready for class, I would simply greet them and head to my seat. It was common for teachers to sometimes communicate with me directly as they were teaching, commenting on students' input

or other classroom dynamics. Similarly, students were aware of my presence and often looked in my direction. A teacher participant even commented on how students wondered what I was continuously writing on my laptop. Hence, my presence in the classroom was obvious and, at times, led to the participants exhibiting "reactive effects" (Taylor et al., 2016) in the research setting, meaning that they acted in particular ways due to my presence and interactions with them. I tried to mitigate the effect of my presence by arriving at the classroom and setting up before the lesson began and by keeping my interactions with the teachers during lesson time at a minimum. Direct observation gave me the opportunity to compare teachers' descriptions of their teaching with data capturing specific teaching moments over the course of two months. In the following section, I discuss the documents as an additional data source I considered in this study.

Documents

Additional data sources, such as teachers' lessons plans, were important to fill any gaps that I might have been unable to observe and capture during the interviews and observations (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, collecting and reviewing teachers' lesson plans allowed me to triangulate the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and reinforce the credibility of the data (Anney, 2014). As such, I was able to review the alignment of the teaching approach with the lesson plan and better understand the sequence of instruction. At the end of the lesson sessions I observed, I took pictures of teachers' lesson plan on my phone. I returned to and reviewed the lesson plans as I supplemented the observation notes. In addition to the lesson plans, I also factored in several documents, such as the school's newspaper and notices for school events, provided by the deputy director. These documents increased my familiarity with the school's culture and history and the various activities in which both students and teachers were involved. For instance, the school published a newspaper featuring student work, such as essays and

poetry. Furthermore, on national holidays, students, with the help of teachers, would put together a program for celebration. During February, I observed teachers' involvement, specifically Enri's, in supporting students to organize the program for celebrating Kosova's independence anniversary. Next, I discuss using the researcher's journal to document my thinking during this study.

Researcher's Journal

I kept regular accounts of reflection on what happened during the study and my thoughts and feelings about the study (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). A researcher's journal could be characterized as a place to "talk to yourself" (Hatch, 2002, p. 88) regarding the continuous data collection activities. Following each day of interview and observation(s) sessions, I took some time to reflect and capture my initial reactions by audio recording them. The reason behind my choice of the audio-recording method was its immediate suitability for capturing my thoughts and observations. Every time after I left the school premises, I had an hour of a walk back home and used this time to record my thoughts and reflections on the data collection processes and my interactions with both teachers and students. These recorded reflections guided my interaction with the data whenever I returned to it, as they captured context clues related to specific data sets, which, otherwise, in time I would forget. For example, my first interview with Melita began in the teachers' hall but we then had to move to a classroom. The change of location interrupted her thinking flow, and the rest of the interview wasn't as lengthy and informative as the first part. I made a note to consider the school's library as a location where I could conduct the second interview, so that we wouldn't be interrupted there. Thus, these reflections informed my methodological decisions and the logistics of the study (Ortlipp, 2008). Altogether, this space helped me generate ideas for future interactions with teachers and additional sources of data. For

instance, during the first interview with Bleta she discussed a specific lesson plan in the context of some of the questions I asked. I made a note of this information in the audio reflection following the interview to review the specific lesson plan when transcribing and analyzing the interview data. Furthermore, I reminded myself to consider drafting follow up questions for the upcoming interview to fill any potential gaps I still had in terms of information. In the following section, I discuss data analysis, beginning with my approach to the transcription and coding of data.

Data Analysis

Transcription & Coding

During and after completing data collection, I transcribed the interviews sessions, typing them in a Word document. Transcribing the data allowed me to become intimately familiar with it, ensure the correctness of the transcription, and develop and maintain context awareness on teachers' statements. Concurrently, the transcription and data cleaning process served as an initial analysis as I documented my thoughts on the content by highlighting key points and ideas generated in the moment as well as potential questions to ask in the follow up interview. These reflections, also described as analytic memos (Charmaz, 2014) were documented in my journal as I noticed initial ideas and themes to build on.

I then transferred the Word transcripts to the Atlas.ti software (Hwang, 2007) and began conducting a thematic analysis, using an open coding scheme (Glaser, & Strauss, 1967). More specifically, the open coding scheme approach involved several steps. The first step involved reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, observation notes, and journal memos. This was followed by line-by-line coding on Atlas.ti. Charmaz (2014) suggests line-by-line coding for

researchers who "do not want to impose a pre-existing framework onto the data, but rather to let new themes emerge from it" (p. 80). I determined the codes through constant comparison of data, which led to code modifications as I constructed themes. The idea behind developing thematic codes was "to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 21), which permits data to be "segregated, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation" (p. 21).

The open coding scheme led to the development of 285 codes; hence, there was a high level of specificity in coding. For instance, teachers' description of students' feelings and emotions led to the development of codes such as "Feeling Accomplished," "Feeling Disappointed," "Feeling Happy," "Feeling Proud," "Feeling Shy," and "Feeling Nostalgic." This level of specificity led me to the second level of coding, axial coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). In applying axial coding, I developed 10 core codes. More specifically, I clustered several what came to be sub-codes, such as the examples of emotions mentioned above, under one core code. Some of the core codes I developed included "Teachers' Perception of Literacy" and "Teachers' Pedagogies on Literacy." For example, thirty-four sub-codes were associated with "Teachers' Perception of Literacy:" among them "Phonetics," "Reading Acquisition," "Reading Aloud," "Reading Competences," and "Grammar." The third level of coding involved selective coding. More specifically, selective coding "continues the axial coding at a higher level of abstraction [through] actions that lead to an elaboration or formulation of the story of the case" (Flick, 2009, p. 310). At this stage, I progressed the data analysis process to constructing meaning(s) associated with the research questions.

I constructed themes and decided to write about literacy as standardized Albanian and print based because conversations with all teachers touched upon them, there were

commonalities to their thinking, and previous research hadn't considered them. Although I didn't extensively focus on themes of grammar and reading competencies, I recognize their significant potential to build upon and further solidify them in the context of the foundations laid in this study. Aiming to maintain clarity and depth within the study, I understood the need to prioritize themes which aligned more closely with the research objectives and had potential to open a conversation about sensitive topics such as standardized Albanian and Kosovar identity in the context of literacy education.

Although the process of coding data can be viewed as technical, it in fact entails a lot of reflection and interpretation of the data (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014; Saldana, 2012). Bassit (2003) asserts that "even if the researcher is not involved in a formal analysis of the data at the initial stages of research, s/he might be thinking how to make sense of them and what codes, categories or themes could be used to explain the phenomena" (p. 145). I conducted data coding and analysis with data in its original form, Albanian language. This choice increased my awareness and attention to teachers' language choices and the meanings that I was attaching to them in the coding process as I was grouping the data under specific codes. In the section below, I discuss the language and ethical considerations on data translation and the measures I took to maintain data accuracy to the extent possible in the translated version in English.

Language and Ethical Considerations

I conducted research using Albanian language, thus, the interviews were conducted and transcribed in Albanian, and the same goes for fieldnotes. After I completed data analysis, I translated the selected data paragraph into English for the purpose of writing the findings of this research. I am aware that translation is "not merely a direct transfer from one language to another" (Gawlewicz, 2020, p. 3) but rather "an interpretative act and involves assigning

meanings to words in source and target language" (p. 3). While recognizing that the role of the translator is far from "objective" and "neutral," I found it important to translate the data myself and was intentional in taking several measures to maintain the intended meaning of the data in Albanian as much as possible during its translation to English. First, as a Kosovar educator myself, I am familiar with the "unique cultural, social, and political assumptions and meanings" (Gawlewicz, 2020, p. 3) that teachers' narratives carry and the context where they live and work. Second, during follow-up interviews with teachers, I was forward in asking questions and double-checking with them to ensure that the intended meaning of specific words or phrases was correctly captured and translated. Third, I sought assistance and advice from my critical friend (more on this below), an Albanian speaker from Kosova himself, to review the translated data and provide suggestions for any necessary alterations to capture the meaning of the data more accurately from Albanian to English. I am hopeful that these measures made a positive difference in maintaining the authentic meaning behind teachers' narratives.

In the findings section, I present the data in both the Albanian and English version. I chose to also keep the original version for two reasons. First, I want to honor the language in which the teachers articulated themselves. Second, this dissertation study aims to primarily serve the education context in Kosova, thus, I want to provide the Albanian speaking reader with the opportunity to read teachers' narratives in their original language and, also, give them the opportunity to come to their own conclusions as they engage with these narratives. Furthermore, considering the findings and questions that this study puts forth in relation to the Albanian language reality in Kosova, I think it is valuable for the reader to consider the language choices that the teachers and me, the researcher, made and the potential meanings and additional critical questions which could be asked about these choices beyond the context and focus of this study.

In what follows, I discuss how I utilized analytic memos during data analysis, while also providing an example which illustrates my approach.

Analytic Memos

I used analytic memos to closely document and reflect about my data analysis process, focusing on code choices, emergent patterns and categories, and themes and concepts. Clarke (2005) suggests that "memos are sites of conversation with ourselves about our data" (p. 202) that encourage the researcher to raise questions, draw connections between data points, think of strategies, and generate answers to inquiries (Saldana, 2009). The process of data coding and writing analytic memos are simultaneous analytic activities in qualitative research, considering that there is "a reciprocal relationship between the development of a coding system and the evolution of understanding a phenomenon" (Weston et al, 2001, p. 397). Throughout data analysis, I documented my thinking and its progression over the course of both data collection and analysis activities, noting down how I was reading and understanding teachers' narratives. As an illustration, in a memo I wrote following the second interview with Melita, I jotted down the following thoughts:

> Melita provided several examples of her teaching of literacy, most of which refer to her work with previous student cohorts. She discussed these learning activities in the context of the extensive training she has received in the past, emphasizing the importance of continuous learning to revise her pedagogical approach. There have been several instances of Melita bringing up training experiences, especially when asked questions about her pedagogical choices. It strikes me that she takes great pride in her investment in teacher training. Consider asking follow-up questions on how these trainings are informing her current pedagogical choices. Furthermore, bring some examples from what you have observed in her teaching and try to better understand the link between her professional development, its impact on her understanding of literacy, and the pedagogical choices that ensue. This could also help me better understand her teaching philosophy.
>
> Memo, January 29th, 2020

Revisiting this memo, and others, was helpful in guiding my approach to upcoming data collection and analysis processes. More specifically, I was able to document and trace the progression of my meaning-making processes on teachers' talk and teaching from the beginning of data collection activities to the point when I began writing up the findings. The time spent writing the memos allowed me to consider the additional questions I had to ask to deepen my comprehension of teachers' work, which would eventually foster a more layered articulation of teachers' understanding and teaching of literacy. The memo above, in particular, was helpful to guide the writing of Melita's section on her teaching philosophy and pedagogical choices in chapter six. I will now elaborate the methodological modifications I have made, providing the rationale behind each one.

Methodological Modifications

During this research, as I gained new insights while conducting data collection and analysis, I made several methodological changes. Originally, I planned to apply a hybrid analytical approach for data analysis, including a combination of critical narrative analysis (Souto-Manning, 2014; Vlach, Taylor & Wetzel, 2019; Cortazi, 2001) and critical discourse analysis, more specifically, Fairclough's three semiotic resources model (Fairclough, 1995; Rogers, 2011; Machin & Mayr, 2012). My initial plan was to use critical narrative analysis to identify the major themes and trends on the dataset, which I would then analyze further by utilizing critical discourse analysis. After conducting a follow-up round of interviews with the teachers, I came to realize that critical discourse analysis may not be the ideal choice for my study for several reasons.

The structure of Albanian language is quite different from English. Albanian language is a "synthetic-analytic" language, whereas English falls into the category of "analytic-synthetic"

language. The key difference between Albanian and English is how they convey grammatical information. While Albanian is characterized by flexible word order and the use of inflections, English follows a more rigid word order and auxiliary words to specify the grammatical links between words (Alimemaj, 2013). Considering that I coded and analyzed the data in its original form, Albanian language, and translated to English only the excerpts that I present in the finding's chapters, I was concerned that the application of critical discourse analysis would become more about linguistic clarification and technicalities rather than the content of teachers' talk. Hence, I decided to only apply critical narrative analysis. The decision to do so allowed me to center data analysis to the Albanian language standards and the Kosovar context without necessarily having the English language as a frame of reference.

I believe it's important to also note that, initially, this study had an additional research question focused on Kosovar teachers' reflections on critical literacy as it relates to their teaching. Hence, the second interview involved several questions specifically focused on critical literacy. However, I decided to exclude this research question to ensure a more targeted focus on literacy education. Currently, there is very little, if any, research focused on Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy education and their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. Considering that I had a breadth of data which spoke to these two research questions, I have decided to explore the research question focused on critical literacy education in a separate publication. Next, I discuss in more detail the methodological framework of this study, critical narrative analysis, and illustrate my use of it through the example of an interview excerpt.

Methodological Framework: Critical Narrative Analysis

This qualitative study used critical narrative analysis (Suoto-Manning, 2014a) to explore Kosovar teachers' understanding and pedagogy on literacy education. Critical narrative analysis

aims to examine "how people make sense of their experiences in society through language" (Souto-Manning, 2014a, p. 161) by focusing on exploring the link between macro-level institutional discourses and micro-level narratives (Suoto-Manning, 2014b). By analyzing the relationship between everyday narratives and the social construction of institutional discourses and cultural norms, critical narrative analysis has the potential to show "how institutional discourses influence and are influenced by personal everyday narratives" (Suoto-Manning, 2014a, p. 163).

In my research, critical narrative analysis allowed me to critically look at the stories told by the teachers through thematic analysis, by asking questions such as: What is the teacher's story about? How are they describing each topic? Do they draw on ways of talking about the topic that are familiar to the researcher? What does the teachers' narrative signify in terms of literacy, pedagogy, curriculum, systemic expectations, and so forth? In addition, I asked questions about how teachers position themselves, their students, and other key actors in their stories, and how they construct meaning about literacy in their teaching practice. I looked for repetition of possible themes throughout the narrative. Depending on their content, repetitions were organized and grouped into themes.

The analysis of teachers' narratives is twofold; on a societal level, I examined teachers' recycling of institutional discourses as they told their stories, and on a more situated level, I analyzed how they portrayed themselves regarding agency. I did this to understand the impact of institutional discourses on their perception of literacy as well as the level of agency in their teaching choices. I considered two displays of agency: grammatical agency and framing agency. Grammatical agency describes how teachers perceive themselves in their experiences; for instance, teachers may display grammatical agency by depicting themselves as actors in their

experiences (subject) rather than viewing themselves as passive recipients of action (object). This is important to highlight because the teachers' framing of their own position and role impacts the teaching and learning dynamics as well as students' positioning in the learning process. Framing agency reflects teachers' moral and discursive alignment with larger discourses, normative morals, and structures of power. I considered how teachers framed their students, language, textbooks, teacher training and other aspects of their work as they discuss literacy education. Framing agency highlights the ways in which teachers embrace, negotiate, and resist institutional and normative discourses (Souto-Manning, 2014a).

Below, I provide an example of my analysis approach using an interview excerpt featuring Goga's articulation of the role of language in literacy instruction. Instances of grammatical agency are underlined, while framing agency is bolded.

> I do not always ask for it. Now, **some mistakes are not tolerated.** Mistakes that are, mistakes that ... **Or a register of the language spoken at home. They are not even allowed in school.** But as far as the standard is concerned, **for him [the student] to get weary of the standard,** I do not burden him. I do not burden. **But he must speak the language that is needed, that is used in school, he is expected to use it. Because he cannot speak in the street or in his home language.** We also teach them those registers.

These instances of grammatical agency and framing agency reveal Goga's viewpoint on standardized Albanian in relation to students' home language variation. Goga displays grammatical agency by depicting herself as a decision-maker in her classroom and teaching in relation to the language registers she allows of disallows in the classroom. Simultaneously, Goga uses framing agency to frame herself as someone who understands and recognizes the effects of two language variations that students need to navigate as they engage in literacy practices. This is exemplified in her statement "I do not burden him [the student] …to get weary of the standard."

Critical narrative analysis of individual narratives was followed by a comparative thematic analysis of the 5 teachers' narratives. I returned to the individual narratives throughout the general analysis process to explore if there might be new elements of the individual narratives that might be important to highlight in the process of interpretation of individual narratives and/or the group's narratives (Rogers & Wetzel, 2013). Identifying new elements added more nuance to the data and allowed me to present a richer picture of teachers' narratives and their teaching pedagogies. For example, in writing about teachers' construction of literacy as print based, I looked for similarities and differences in teachers' narratives and their articulations on this topic. I then integrated various examples from the interview and observation notes to provide a thorough account of their thinking. I dedicate the following section to my critical friend, and the role of their support in guiding my work in this study.

Critical Friend

Working with a critical friend was integral to conducting this study. A critical friend is someone who facilitates personal reflection and encourages a thoughtful dialogue with data (Whitehead, 1989). My critical friend supported me throughout this study and, especially, during data analysis by reading my initial findings' drafts and encouraging me to dig deeper into the data and further consider the contextual clues within data. My critical friend is a Kosovar doctoral student in literacy education, also studying at a university in the U.S. Through conversations in person, at academic conferences, and Zoom calls, my critical friend helped me reconsider and more critically examine the teachers' narratives within the larger socio-cultural context of Kosova. For instance, as I analyzed teachers' narratives in the context of their lessons, my critical friend's questions about the relationship of my findings with the current public discourse and debates on teachers helped me to approach the narratives as also a way for teachers

to rationalize their choices amid continuous criticism by the Kosovar public. For example, I began to see the depth of Melita's statement more clearly, "what happened to the teachers," when discussing the use of the Gheg dialect at school. In my exchanges with the critical friend, I was mindful about preserving the research participants' anonymity and never shared any identifying information which could compromise their or the school's anonymity.

Positionality Statement

It is critical to discuss my motivations for conducting the research and the intentions about the outcome of the research. Stevens (2011) asserts that research "holds both the potential to re-enact opportunistic trends" that the researchers might have in moving forward their research agenda for academic pursuits and "the possibility to recraft the presence and use of critical language awareness in educational research" (p. 184). As a researcher, it is important for me to reflect on how my positionality shaped this research, from the moment I established contact with the teacher participants to the data analysis process and interpretation of the findings. It is impossible for researchers to enter a research site removed from their already preconceived beliefs and ideas. Simultaneously, this fact warrants a careful consideration of one's own positionality and its impact on the research study (Watt & Scott-Jones, 2010).

My interest in studying teachers' understanding of literacy education was sparked by my own experiences as a student in both Kosova and the U.S. While at the research site in Prishtina, I found myself to be both an insider and outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) of the study context. Most of my life has been spent in Kosova, and I received my education here until I finished my undergraduate degree. As a student of public education, myself, I had a degree of familiarity with the education system and the curriculum. I am a native speaker of Albanian myself and was raised in Prishtina, where most teachers were also from. Hence, the teachers and I shared a

similar linguistic and cultural background. However, simultaneously, I was an outsider to the study context in several ways. I have no teaching experience in the formal education system in Kosova. My view on literacy and education has been significantly shaped by research conducted in Western contexts, such as the U.S., with which I came in contact during my graduate studies. Furthermore, my exposure to graduate course work and K-12 classrooms in the U.S. had impacted my views and preferences about teaching and learning.

The teaching workforce in Kosova is predominantly composed of women, which was also reflected in this study as only one of the five teachers was a male teacher, with whom I had already collaborated with in the pilot study. Considering this, my observation is that my gender didn't play a significant role in my access to participants' narratives and their perception of me. However, I am aware that my gender identity, class, position, such as "doctoral candidate," and age might have led to various perceptions among the participants and could have affected their level of comfort and information they shared with me. Considering all these factors, it's necessary to acknowledge that the data collection while on the research site, the analysis, and writing up of findings were shaped by my own perceptions colored by various experiences throughout my life.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the qualitative research methodology and methods I applied to study Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy and their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. The chapter opened with an overview of the context of the Kosovar education system, describing the impact of historical and political events on the education system. Then, I described the site where this research took place to introduce the teacher participants in their own words, using their original language as captured in the interview transcripts. The second section

of this chapter focused on the data collection methods used in this research. I presented my data collection approach, which utilized interviews, participant observations, and document review. The subsequent section delved into the data analysis approach, explaining how Critical Narrative Analysis allowed me to examine teachers' narratives in articulating literacy education and their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. The final section centered on my positionality statement. In the next three chapters, I will report the results of this study, beginning with Kosovar teachers' articulation of literacy as standardized language teaching.

Chapter Four

Literacy as Standardized Language Learning

This chapter focuses on teachers' conceptualization of literacy as standardized language learning, a common thread among the narratives of all teacher participants. Through an analysis of teachers' narratives and observation notes capturing their teaching of literacy, I describe how teachers consider the acquisition of standardized Albanian language as evidence of students' literacy *skills* development and lack of. As noted in the methods section, I employ Critical Narrative Analysis (Souto-Manning, 2014; Rogers & Wetzel, 2014) to explore how the five Kosovar teachers - Bleta, Melita, Enri, Goga, and Fifi (all pseudonyms) - shaped their narratives on literacy education. The chapter is divided into several sections, each of them capturing the nuance of teachers' talk in relation to literacy.

The analysis is twofold; on a societal level, I examine teachers' recycling of institutional discourses as they told their stories, and on a more situated level, I analyze how they portrayed themselves regarding agency. I do this to understand the impact of institutional discourses on their perception of literacy as well as the level of agency in their teaching choices. I consider two displays of agency: grammatical agency and framing agency. Grammatical agency describes how teachers perceive themselves in their experiences; for instance, teachers may display grammatical agency by depicting themselves as actors in their experiences (subject) rather than viewing themselves as passive recipients of action (object). This is important to highlight because the teachers' framing of their own position and role impacts the teaching and learning dynamics as well as students' positioning in the learning process. Framing agency reflects teachers' moral and discursive alignment with larger discourses, normative morals, and structures

of power. I consider how teachers frame their students, language, textbooks, teacher training and other aspects of their work as they discuss literacy education. Framing agency highlights the ways in which teachers embrace, negotiate, and resist institutional and normative discourses (Souto-Manning, 2014).

The Relationship Between Language and Literacy

As I sought to learn about how the Kosovar teachers made sense of literacy, our conversations began to focus more on language instruction. In my first interview with Goga, she discussed the challenge that Kosovar Albanians face in relation to standardized Albanian language use:

> **Goga:** Tash pak na e kemi vështirë për, se na si Kosovarë flasim ndryshe n'shtëpi dhe duhet n'shkollë ta flasim gjuhën standarde. Pak e kemi vështirë, e vërej atë edhe te nxënsit. Mirëpo duhet t'i përmbahemi standardit. Edhe duhet edhe ta shkruajmë bukur gjuhën shqipe.
>
> **Goga:** Now it is a little difficult for us because we as Kosovars speak differently at home and we must speak the standard language at school. We find it a little difficult, I notice it in the students as well. But we must adhere to the standard. We must also write the Albanian language beautifully.

In this narrative, Goga discusses the reality of language education in Kosova. Although the Gheg dialect remains the spoken language in Kosova, Kosovar students continue to receive an education in standardized Albanian. These two intertwined language realities shape teachers' views on literacy and their role in teaching literacy. Goga's comment encouraged me to begin considering the implications of language instruction on literacy education. As a result, I began asking questions about the relationship between language and literacy, aiming to explore the reasoning behind the "commonsensical" nature of language education in Kosova as well as its interdependence with literacy education. The rationale behind my questions focused on language education as it relates to literacy was informed by April Baker-Bell's work in linguistic justice.

Baker-Bell (2020) speaks about dominant language efforts that deny and erase students' identity and literacy practices development. In her book, *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity and Pedagogy*, Baker-Bell (2020) argues that traditional language education in the U.S. does not account for Black students' linguistic repertoire and, by doing so, inflicts emotional harm on students' sense of self and identity. Although Dr. Bell's work discusses the language power dynamics in the American education system, her work is pertinent to Kosova's context for several reasons. Kosovar students continue to receive an education in standardized Albanian, a language variation close to the Tosk dialect of Albania, although the spoken dialect in Kosova is Gheg. Kosovar students communicate in Gheg, a language that is valid outside of school, at home, and in their community but are pressured by teachers to use the "language of school" (Baker-Bell, p. 4), meaning standardized Albanian. Furthermore, social categories and hierarchies (e.g., *townsman* and *villager*, *educated* and *uneducated*, *ignorant* and *knowledgeable*) are produced by standardized Albanian language ideologies which power social oppression.

In the current language hierarchy in Kosova, with standardized Albanian being the medium of instruction in school, Kosovar students and teachers are denied the right to their everyday spoken language, the Gheg dialect, and this reality perpetuates linguistic colonialization. Language nurtures and socializes students on how to engage with the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 2005), a process that is intertwined with the emergence and development of literacy practices. It is for all these reasons that developing a better understanding of and problematizing language instruction in the context of literacy education in Kosova is necessary to understand how teachers make sense of literacy and how they position their students and themselves to literacy learning and teaching.

The first section of this chapter discusses students' experience in school, a learning environment that considers standardized Albanian to be the norm. Teachers' narratives are painted with tension; some reinforcing the normative nature of language expectations in school, and others recognizing students' struggles with standardized Albanian and alluding to a more inclusive language model as a possibility. The section begins with a narrative describing the nature of the meeting with Bleta and Melita, as constructed from data capturing my observation of their language, behavior, and feelings during our meeting and documented in my fieldnotes and one of my memos. Through this narrative, and more to follow, I establish a sense of context for the study as well as describe the conversation and teaching dynamics captured in my observation notes. This narrative and the findings that follow assist in answering the first research question: How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy?

Bleta and Melita met me on a sunny day at a café close to the school where they teach. At this point, I had separately interviewed both twice, and had conducted a set of 10 observations in each of their classrooms. For the third interview, they preferred to meet as a group rather than be interviewed separately. When I entered the café, they were already there, sitting at a table near the entrance. We exchanged hugs and followed Melita to a table in the left corner of the café. There was a grocery store next door. We were sitting next to the entrance that separated the café from the grocery store. Although there was plenty of commotion, that didn't seem to interrupt our conversation. It had been a while since we had last seen each other. Melita informed me about her daughter starting college. At some point, we discovered that my sister and her daughter were in the same class in high school, which increased our sense of familiarity with each other. We ordered coffee and I began setting up my iPad to record our conversation. I asked them both if I could begin recording and they agreed. I explained my rationale behind the third interview, in this case a group interview. Although I had already had extensive conversations with them on literacy, there were some additional questions that emerged from the preliminary data analysis. I began by asking both Bleta and Melita to expand on some of their narratives discussed in the previous interviews. Considering that in our previous interviews I had asked general questions about literacy, this time I was interested on their thoughts on literacy in more focused ways, in relation to Albanian language instruction, their students' linguistic repertoires, texts, technology, the national curriculum, and teacher training programs. More specifically, I was interested to hear Bleta and Melita's thoughts on the implications of language instruction in literacy education. I had noticed references made to Gheg and standardized Albanian in both of their previous interviews and lesson observations and was wondering what they could add to that.

"Finding the Right Words to Speak at School."

In this section, I review findings related to teachers' initial thoughts on standardized language instruction. I begin with an excerpt from the group interview with Bleta and Melita to then continue with an excerpt from an interview with Goga. I started with these teachers because they activated the conversation on the implications of language in literacy education. In the excerpt below, I begin to describe my impressions on language instruction based on my observations on the teachers' teaching, which generates a reaction by Bleta and then Melita.

> **Anemonë:** Diçka që e kom vërejtë gjatë observimeve te ju po edhe te mësimdhënësit e tjerë është rreth dinamikave të gjuhës. Gjuha që na e flasim në familje edhe gjuha…
> **Bleta:** Po ndikon.
> **Anemonë:** Gjuha standarde është standardi po na flasim më shumë ka gegënishtja.
> **Bleta:** Po.
> **Anemonë:** Çfarë ndikimi ka kjo te nxanësit?
> **Bleta:** Ndikon.
> **Melita:** Sa ma shumë me lexu.
> **Bleta:** Jo, jo, vështirësi ju krijon shumë se ata deri te gjejnë fjalën që nuk duhet me përdorë n'shkollë, pak i huton. A me pas kështu direkt me fol, mos me pas atë mendjen që disa fjalë nuk përdoren n'shkollë, se ka disa që harrojnë, edhe aq nihen keq sa që tjetrën herë nuk ta ngrisin dorën mo me fol. Se jon' mbyll prej atyne fjalëve se e kanë ngatërru a jon' n'shkollë, a jon' n'shpi. E ajo ndikon shumë. Po n'shprehje.
> **Melita:** Ama ti si mësuse duhesh me i përgatit nxansat edhe fëmitë mos m'i lan…edhe nëse keshin nxansat a diçka rreth asaj fjale…
> **Bleta:** Po, ashtu patjetër.
> **Melita:** Që m'i thanë "Secili njeri gabojmë…"
> **Bleta:** Po edhe na nuk jemi me gjuhë krejt perfekt, shumë fjalë i përdorim qysh s'duhet.
>
> **Anemonë:** Something I have noticed during the observations, not only in your class but in the other teachers' classes as well, is the language dynamics. The language that we speak at home and the language…
> **Bleta:** Yes, that's impactful.
> **Anemonë:** That standard language is the norm, but we speak more of the Gheg dialect.
> **Bleta:** Yes.
> **Anemonë:** How does this affect students?
> **Bleta:** It affects them.
> **Melita:** They need to read more.
> **Bleta:** No, no, it makes it very difficult for them because until they try to find the word that should not be used in school, it confuses them a bit. But if they would have the

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opportunity to speak directly, to not have to think about [the fact that] some words are not used in school, because there are some [students] that forget, and they feel so bad that next time they do not raise their hand to speak. They get closed off because of [using] those words. Because they are confused whether they are at school or home. And that has a lot of effects. Yes, in [students'] expression.

Melita: But you, as a teacher, must prepare the students and you should not let the children…even if the [other] students laugh about [the usage] of that word…

Bleta: Yes, that is for sure.

Melita: To tell them that, "Everybody makes mistakes…"

Bleta: Yes, but even us, we are not perfect in our [standard] language use. We use a lot of words in ways that we shouldn't…

In this excerpt, Bleta and Melita begin to have a conversation amongst themselves on language instruction. At the beginning, through the articulation of "It affects them," Bleta recognizes the impact of instruction in standardized Albanian to students' literacy learning. Students' agency is grammatically mitigated as "it," meaning language norms and expectations "affect" students, the object in this construction. When I began to delve into the specifics of Kosova Albanians', spoken language being closer to the Gheg dialect, Blerta quickly responds with a "Yes." Her acknowledgment paves the way for a critical conversation on the complexity of language expectations in school.

Melita's response to Bleta's narrative is that "they," referring to students, "need to read more." Grammatical agency and situated framing are employed here. Melita's response linguistically portrays students as actors in their learning of standardized language skills and mitigates her and the school's responsibility by situating students as responsible for accommodating to the standardized language variation. Furthermore, a social infrastructure and larger discourse of competence in standardized Albanian is articulated here: reading is defined as the reading of texts written in standardized Albanian language and, as such, that it is through them that standardized Albanian language skills can be acquired and reinforced.

Bleta's response of "No, no, it makes it very difficult for them," refocuses the conversation on the students' struggle with the standardized language reality. Her articulation of "No, no," highlights her disagreement with Melita and, like above, students' agency is grammatically mitigated as "it," the standardized language variation, presents difficulties for "them," students, the object in this construction. Furthermore, Bleta mitigates students' grammatical agency by constructing them as subjugated by school expectations on language norms, orienting to morals "some words are not used in school…there are some [students] that forget, and they feel so bad that next time they do not raise their hand to speak." Bleta articulates her students' moral stance as their emotional reaction regarding the use of 'wrong' words in their engagement with language content and literacy learning.

Bleta also makes a moral stance about herself, as she empathizes with her students on the difficulties they face in navigating standardized language expectations. In fact, her sense of compassion in describing students' navigation of language parallels is summarized in her own words, "they have confused whether they are at school or home." Here, Bleta uses framing agency to discuss the ambivalent language boundaries that students navigate as Gheg speakers in a standardized language learning environment. Bleta speaks to students' efforts in inhibiting the use of home (Gheg) language and literacy in the meaning-making processes at school, because they are not counted as literacy. In the described learning context, meanings become unstable by using 'wrong' words, where both the students' and teachers' references may become ambiguous to each other. Due to their lack of access to education in their spoken language variation, students must engage in the practice of codeswitching from one language variation to the other to 'prove' that they are 'literate'. In this section, Bleta's situated morality leads to her expressing some resistance towards the construction of students as lacking literacy practices.

Later in the excerpt, teacher Melita employs grammatical agency when describing the teacher's role in relation to language dynamics. In the articulation, "You, as a teacher, must prepare the students…," implying the third person "we," Melita speaks to the teacher's responsibility to ameliorate occurrences of language mis/use by telling students that "Everyone makes mistakes." Melita's framing of the Gheg language variation as "mistakes" denies its legitimacy. Here, by employing institutional discourses, Melita portrays herself and Bleta (as she responds to Bleta) in agentive terms; they are situated in a teaching context, where standardized Albanian language is the norm, and they are the channel to perpetuate it through teaching. She also draws a generalization about language use. Although Bleta was specifically discussing her students' struggles with the two language variations, Melita's response frames the conversation in terms of "everyone."

Bleta's response of "yes, but" expresses a moral contestation. Her grammatical agency and situated framing here reflect the sensitivity of the language expectations, students' linguistic choices, and teachers' role in these processes. This is reflected in her statement, "Even us, we are not perfect in our [standard] language use. We use a lot of words in ways that we shouldn't…" Here, Bleta demonstrates self-reflection while speaking about collective reality and responsibility. Instead of taking on a disposition that would lead to her blaming the students, Bleta effects grammatical agency by choosing to instead use teachers, by using the collective framing 'we', as another example of what students' linguistic struggles reflect: an education system that expects standardized Albanian to be the norm in a Gheg dominant society. Gheg is delegitimized again by being framed as a language variation that "shouldn't" be used.

The effects of standardized language expectations on students' literacy practices use

emerged in the conversation with Goga as well, as we spoke about the role of language in

literacy instruction. This excerpt is extracted from the third interview with Goga.

> **Anemonë:** Ju e përmendet që nuk e përdorni strikt vetëm standarden në orë mësimore. A mendoni se kjo ndikon në mësimnxënien e nxënësve?
> **Goga:** Shumë. Shumë. Se nuk ja u kërkoj gjithmonë. Tash disa gabime nuk tolerohen. Gabime që janë gabime që...Ose një regjistër i gjuhës që flitet n'shtëpi. Ato nuk lejohen as n'shkollë. Mirëpo sa i përket standardit, mu lodh ai me standardin, se ngarkoj asnjiherë. Nuk e ngarkoj. Ama me fol n'gjuhën që duhet, që përdoret n'shkollë, pritet me përdor. Se nuk mund ta flas ai n'i gjuhë t'rrugës ose t'shtëpisë. Na i mësojmë edhe ata regjistra. N'shtëpi përdoret një regjistër ma i ulët, ma i lirshëm. Aty duhet pak, jo me ja imponu na po ai vetë me ndi ata që duhet n'shkollë një gjuhë pak tjetër. Vetë me e ndi. Edhe fjalët, leksikin, me i përdorë jo ato që nuk duhet me i përdor. Po, jo me pas atë ngarkesën qysh po e them foljen. Unë mendoj ashtu.

> **Anemonë:** You mention that you do not strictly use only the standard in your lessons. Do you think this influences students' learning?
> **Goga:** A lot. Lots. Because I do not always ask for it. Now, some mistakes are not tolerated. Mistakes that are, mistakes that ... Or a register of the language spoken at home. They are not even allowed in school. But as far as the standard is concerned, for him [the student] to get weary of the standard, I do not burden him. I do not burden. But he must speak the language that is needed, that is used in school, he is expected to use it. Because he cannot speak in the street or in his home language. We also teach them those registers. A lower, looser register is used at home. It is necessary, not for us to impose it, but for him himself to feel that at school he needs to use a different language. To feel that himself. Even the words, the lexicon, to not use the ones he should not use. Yes, but to not have the burden of [thinking about] how I am [the student] saying the verb. I think so.

In this excerpt, Goga's articulation is painted with moral contestation. At the beginning of the

narrative, Goga uses both grammatical and framing agency, "I do not always ask" for the

standardized language variation. Here, she demonstrates grammatical agency using the pronoun

"I" followed by the verb "do not," and frames herself as someone who understands and

recognizes the effects of two language variations that students need to navigate as they engage in

literacy practices. Then, Goga shifts to "language spoken at home…or mistakes are not

tolerated." Here, Goga's narrative aligns with normative frames of language instruction. The act

of speaking Gheg, also known as students' home language and literacy, is framed as prohibited "mistakes" to make at school. Goga's hierarchical language framings in this section speak to the inherent ideologies of language instruction in education institutions; the Gheg language variation is not recognized within institutions.

Later in her narrative, Goga employs moral contestation over the fact that students should not "get weary of the standard." Throughout this excerpt, Goga both challenges and employs institutional discourses. At first, she challenges institutional discourses by letting the students' literacy shape her expectations on language learning and teaching. This is demonstrated in her articulation of "I do not always ask for it," by "it" referring to standardized language, and by not burdening students to "get weary of the standard," describing the impracticality of memorizing certain grammatical rules and language modalities. Simultaneously, Goga employs institutional discourses to justify her expectations of students' language practice. For instance, Goga refers to the language students speak in the street and at home as a register, or language variation, that is "not even allowed in school." Here, Goga uses a normative and colonial lens grounded in the education system's framing of 'accepted' language practices to rationalize its commitment to dismiss and regulate students' home language and literacy.

Goga frames students as expected to assume responsibility in navigating language dynamics in and outside of school. This is evidenced by her statement, "It is necessary, not for us to impose it, but for him himself to feel that at school he needs to use a different language. To feel that himself," referring to standardized Albanian by "it." In this articulation, while students are framed as the responsibility bearers, Goga uses the collective framing "us" to take the onus off teachers. Furthermore, Goga conceptualizes literacy and language learning as technical and decontextualized *skills* that students are expected to acquire within school grounds, while

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consciously refraining from incorporating their literacy practices that do not adhere to standardized Albanian language. Goga's use of the colonial lens exposes a mentality of subordination towards Gheg in relation to standardized Albanian; rationalizing the imposition of standardized Albanian and, subsequently, the need to sustain it. In the following section, I discuss Bleta and Melita's hesitation and struggle in articulating the intricacies of language education and how they shape the public's perception of their role as teachers,

"What Happened to the Teachers:" Who is Standardized Albanian Serving?

In this section, I present narratives that speak to teachers' hesitation to imagine a teaching and learning environment grounded in Gheg. Just the thought of this potential reality has teachers like Melita be gripped by fear of judgment by the public. I now present an excerpt from the group interview with Bleta and Melita, in which we discuss students' home language practices and further explore teachers' thinking and, potentially, criticism on the topic of standardized Albanian.

> **Anemonë:** Më tregoni më shumë për gjuhën e nxansave n'raport me shkrim-leximin.
> **Bleta:** Po. Jo ndikon ajo. Te unë e vërej shumë me t'madhe, për shembull, që deri sa te gjen fjalën që duhet me fol. Po masnej edhe n'lexim, ka do fjalë pak që si kuptojnë. Shqip jon'. Shumë t'kuptushme jon' po thjesht nuk i përdorë kurrë. N'shpi se përdor se e përdorë një fjalë zavendësuse tjetër. E tash ajo deri t'i kujtohet çka është ndikon.
> **Anemonë:** Qysh mundet me u adresu kjo sfidë?
> **Melita:** Me bashkëpunu me prindërit, me ja u sqaru që me përdorë ma shumë gjuhën standarde në shtëpi. Ju kom thanë valla edhe n'mbledhje, "Ju lutem sa ma shumë gjuhën standarde t'prindërve n'shpi. Pe di që edhe na s'jemi fort perfekt po edhe ju sado me ndryshu është mirë."
> **Anemonë:** A mendoni se është e nevojshme na me fol gjuhën standarde si Kosovarë?
> **Melita:** Mos po dalim krejt…çka u bo me mësusat!
>
> **Anemonë:** Tell me more about students' language use in terms of literacy.
> **Bleta:** Yes. No, that affects them. I notice it a lot. For example, until they find the word they need to speak. But then also in reading, there are a few words that they don't understand. They are in Albanian. They [the words] are understandable but they [the students] never use them. He doesn't use it at home because he uses another substitute word. And then until he remembers what that [the word] is, it affects him.

Anemonë: How can this challenge be addressed?
Melita: In cooperation with parents, to explain it to them to use the standard language at home. I've told them, "Please use as much as you can the standard language at home. I know that even us [teachers], we're not totally perfect at it but some change in your side, too, would be good."
Anemonë: Do you think that it is necessary for us Kosovars to speak the standard language?
Melita: Aren't we going too [far]…what happened to the teachers!

In the excerpt above, Bleta demonstrates grammatical agency in her articulation of "I notice it a lot," as she speaks to her students' struggle in navigating both language variations. Here, Bleta frames the language expectations as having agency over her students. Students must "find" and "remember" the words that they "never use" outside of school to participate in learning processes in school. Bleta employs a framing agency to also express a moral contestation. She positions herself as an observer watching something unfold and negatively 'affect' her students. In sympathetically describing her students' struggles in navigating expectations on standardized language, Bleta constructs herself as lacking agency to disrupt this reality. Bleta's lack of agency is exemplified in her articulation of the current language dynamics as a relationship between the students and the academic institution, while removing herself from this equation in terms of decision-making power. As such, she frames herself as an object of an uncontested language system and not as a subject capable of enacting a pedagogy that recognizes and celebrates students' home language and literacy in their meaning-making processes. From this point of view, systemic expectations determine a teaching approach that dismisses students' ways of being, their literacy legitimacy, and strips teachers of their agency to enact a pedagogy contextualized to their students.

The conversation then shifts to how the challenge of language differences could be addressed. Here, I was interested to see if and, if so, how teachers think they could respond to these language disparities and the harm that they may inflict. Using framing agency and

highlighting normative institutional beliefs on language instruction, Melita's narrative suggested cooperation with parents to encourage the application of standardized Albanian at home. This is illustrated when she says, "I know that even us [teachers], we're not totally perfect at it but some change in your side, too, would be good." Melita's narrative suggests that parents need to follow the direction of the language authority, the school, and teachers, in 'correcting' their children's language use. In this construction, both teachers' narratives begin to unveil a broader picture of the language tension that students, teachers, and parents experience. If neither group frequently engages with standardized language and literacy practices outside of school, why is there an institutional expectation to teach standardized Albanian in school? Both Bleta and Melita discuss how they are "not totally perfect at it," and establish an interrelatedness between their own narratives and their students' narratives. Furthermore, Melita describes the perpetual 'mastering' role that teachers, and preferably parents as well, must have to maintain standardized Albanian.

Melita's narrative illustrates a shift from 'challenge' to 'solution' possibilities to maintain standardized Albanian. If students' language skills are a 'challenge', parents should use standardized Albanian language at home, which becomes the 'solution'. While functioning within the framework of upholding standardized Albanian, and this reality being the only solution, Melita discloses the dominant framework on language and literacy that paints teachers' views on literacy. Consequently, Melita's narrative conveys how the expectations of the academic institution where she works limit the human potential for her and her colleagues ("I know that even us [teachers], we're not totally perfect at it"), her students' parents ("change in your side, too, would be good") and, consequently, her students to embrace and express their complete humanity through language and literacy practices within academic grounds.

As the narrative concludes, in response to my question on the necessity of learning standardized Albanian language at school, Melita grammatically positions herself as the object of the public's perception. Since the PISA tests results were published in 2016 with Kosova being placed in the bottom five in the rankings, teachers have been under high public scrutiny. "What happened to…" is a local colloquialism that Melita uses, meaning what will people think of her, in this case, if she contested the standardized Albanian language use in school. That would be "going too far," she asserts. Here, Melita frames herself as lacking the agency to be critical of formative beliefs on language education in Kosova and, as such, is obliged to embrace institutional and normative discourses on language and literacy education. In this construction, the public's perception carries more weight than Melita's experience as well as knowledge of the teaching context and its needs. Repeatedly, these language issues manifested themselves, as we will see in the next section.

Traveling Between Language Identities

Enri and Fifi's narratives articulated a shared concern on the challenges of standardized language instruction in a classroom context where Gheg is the dominant spoken language variation. Enri discussed these challenges by focusing on the parallel nature of students' and teachers' talk in the learning context. In the excerpt below, extracted from the third interview, Enri began elaborating the challenges that teachers like him face while also referencing some of his colleagues' work.

> **Enri:** Është sfidë se jo, kjo në fakt nuk përbën sfidë vetëm për nxënësit por edhe për mësimdhënësit. Për shembull, nxënësit kur janë me shokë, po e marrim rrugëve, ata kanë një ligjërim t'shkujdesur. Nuk e shikojnë ata, nuk i kushtojnë ata rëndësi përzgjedhjes së fjalëve. Janë para profesorit edhe duhet t'them "I nderuar," por kanë, domethënë, fjalë të tjera të cilat i përdorin të rinjt. Ose në shtëpi nuk mund të flasin, nuk mund t'i thonë, për shembull, së ëmës "Nënë, a mund të vish me mua" se i duket

vetja që po del qesharak edhe pastaj do t'qeshin edhe familjarët e tjerë. Ose, nëse i thonë "Eja, eja me mua," pastaj do t'qesh dikush nga familjarët ose edhe nga shokët.

Enri: It is a challenge, because no, this in fact is not only a challenge for students but also for teachers. For example, when students are with friends, let's say when on the streets, they employ careless discourse. They do not look at it, they do not pay attention to the selection of words. They are in front of the professor, and I have to say, "Honored X [professor]", but they have, that is, other words that young people use. Or at home they cannot talk, they cannot say, for example, to the mother "Mother, can you come with me [in the standardized Albanian]," because he finds himself laughing and then other family members would laugh. Or, if they say, "Come, come with me [standardized version]," then someone in your family or friends will be laughing.

Enri begins his narrative by grammatically framing both students and teachers as lacking agency in relation to language expectations; they teach and learn in an education context where their home language, Gheg, is not the norm. This is highlighted by his remark "this," meaning standardized Albanian, "is not only a challenge for students but also for teachers." Enri launches into a discourse on the challenges students face in navigating between the standardized Albanian and the Gheg language variations. According to Enri, students' casual interactions with friends involve employing a "careless discourse," and they "do not pay attention to the selection of words." Here, Enri frames the "careless discourse" as spontaneous and open, and students' engagement with it as uninhibited by thoughts ("pay attention to the selection of words") on the 'correct' use of language forms. In this context, Enri describes students' use of literacy *practices* in socio-cultural contexts, which varies from the academic context.

Enri's narrative changes direction when he suggests that students' potential engagement with standardized Albanian in conversation with family and friends is tied to a feeling of embarrassment, where the reaction will be laughter. At this point, Enri uses intertextual narrative, narrating the story of his students, to illustrate the position in which they are in relation to standardized Albanian. Enri's articulation highlights how students may be experiencing a double consciousness (Du Bois, 1968), a mental conflict associated with having a dual language identity.

In the context of school, students view themselves through the eyes of their teachers as they try to remember the 'right' words to use to prove their 'literate status'. Outside of school, as Enri articulates, students refrain from using standardized Albanian language because they may be laughed at. As such, students' language identity outside of school is defined by established parameters that view the use of standardized Albanian as an intent to showcase a sense of superiority/education status over the others.

In this articulation, Enri constructs himself as orienting to morality and understanding his students' struggles. Enri's narrative also outlines how the teaching of standardized Albanian comes with the understanding that students must travel between different language identities to participate in context-bound talk and, consequently, literacy *practices*. Here, Enri employs a framing agency to position his students as agents in processes of language use across contexts; students understand and recognize the potential outcomes of language use and navigate them to their best perceived interest. As Enri begins discussing the challenges that the teaching of standardized Albanian presents for teachers, he also begins to recognize the systemic nature of the language teaching expectations. He does so by describing both teachers and students as lacking agency to change the reality of language use in academic contexts. Simultaneously, his framing of the systemic nature of language expectations remains in abstract terms as he doesn't name a particular entity of authority.

Below, I present Fifi's narrative to describe her understanding of the teacher's role in literacy education. Concurrently, Fifi discusses her response to students who employ their home language variation, Gheg, during learning instances. This excerpt is extracted from the third interview with Fifi.

Fifi: Po, shpeshherë vjen…domethënë…tash gjuha standarde edhe dialektet që përdorim ne kryesisht toskërishten, shpehherë, domethanë, nxansat i përdorin shprehjet të cilat i përdorin në shpi e përdorin edhe n'klasë. Mandej si mësimdhënës i gjuhës patjetër që duhesh me ndërhy, a din, me përmirësu. Por, prapëseprapë nuk është gabim. Do t'thotë që nxansat i mësojnë edhe gjuhën standarde edhe t'folmen e dialekteve tona sepse t'gjithë, domethanë, nuk janë t'arsimum. Edhe është mirë me kuptu edhe n'gjuhën standarde si duhet mu shpreh por edhe n'gjuhën e përditshme që ata e përdorin. Domethënë, thjesht që m'i kuptu ata se çfarë do t'thotë ajo fjalë edhe qysh mundet me u thanë ndryshe.

Fifi: It [the student] often comes…meaning…standard language and the dialects that we use, mainly Tosk Albanian, often, the students use the expressions that they use at home in the classroom. Then as a language teacher you definitely have to intervene, you know, correct them. But still, it is not wrong. It means that the students learn both the standard language and speaking in the dialect because all [students], namely, are not educated. And it is good to understand both in the standard language how to express themselves properly but also in the daily language that they use. That is to say, they simply need to understand what the word meant [during a lesson] and how they could say it differently [in standard Albanian].

In describing language use in the classroom, Fifi employs a grammatical agency to position teachers in an intervening and correcting role towards their students. More specifically, Fifi explains how students often use their home language and literacy in the form of the Gheg dialect to participate in learning. By employing agentive grammatical framing, Fifi articulates that "As a language teacher, you, definitely have to intervene…correct them." Here, the pronoun "you," implies the third person "we," denoting the teacher's responsibility to "correct" students' language mis/use. By employing institutional discourses, Fifi frames herself as an agent that upholds and fosters the "correct" use of language, meaning standardized Albanian. The use of the adjective "definitely" further emphasizes her agentive grammatical framing in "correcting" students' language mis/use.

When further discussing language dynamics in her classroom, Fifi exerts moral contestation as she begins to discuss the notion of being "educated." She articulates that "students learn both the standard and speaking in the dialect because all, namely, are not

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educated." Here, Fifi frames students' linguistic skills in a deficit way by describing students who do not use standardized as 'uneducated'. This points to the ideological and discursive associations that standardized Albanian carries in terms of intellectual ability ("educated"), and Gheg, as a non-standardized form, being evaluated in negative ("uneducated") terms.

A similar dichotomy is present in Fifi's articulation of students' acquisition of standardized Albanian to "express themselves properly," using an evaluative adjective to describe the 'right way of speaking' at the expense of the home language, the Gheg dialect, inferred as an 'improper' way of language use. Here, Fifi also mitigates her responsibility, and the school's responsibility, as the onus is on students to accommodate to the standardized Albanian language variation. Fifi doesn't offer consideration to the idea of teachers and the school accommodating to the Gheg dialect and, consequently, the students' linguistic and literacy repertoires. As the narrative continues, Fifi articulates how students' use of the Gheg dialect is manifested in daily ways of being and doing. This is highlighted by her remark, "And it is good to understand both in the standard language how to express themselves properly but also in the daily language that they use." Here, Fifi marks the borders of language use and worth; students' home linguistic and literacy skills are positioned as insignificant to guide and inform the learning process taking place at school but are seen as worthwhile for outside of school learning.

Fifi was not the only teacher who spoke about the teacher's role in literacy education with emphasis on language use. In the excerpt below, extracted from the first interview, Enri discusses his role as a language teacher by drawing a connection between a teacher's proximity to standardized Albanian and its translation to students' application of standardized Albanian.

> **Anemonë:** Si e kishit pershkru rolin e mësimdhanesit në mësimdhenien e shkrim-leximit?
> **Enri**: Mësimdhënësve të gjuhës a në përgjithësi?

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Anemonë: Po, t'nisemi prej pervojes tane si mesimdhenes i gjuhes shqipe. Si e sheh rolin tend si mesimdhenes per me i mesu nxansat shkrim-lexim?

Enri: Së pari duhet t'lexojnë vet edhe t'shkruajnë vet. Se pa lexuar dhe pa shkruar vetë ne nuk mund t'kërkojmë prej, prej dikujt diçka tjetër…Domethënë, me këtë kuptoj që ne duhet të jemi gjithmonë mësimdhënës bashkëkohorë, mësimdhënës modern. Gjithmonë të përcjellim risitë që ndodhin në gjuhë. Se gjuha evoluon, domethënë, zhvillohet me kohë dhe nëse ne nuk jemi në hap me këto, me këto risi ose me këto ndryshime ose modifikime, atëherë ne nuk do të jemi të rregullt në raport me gjuhën edhe nuk do t'jemi korrekt ose transparent me nxënësit tanë. Mendoj është obligative, pavarësisht je mësimdhënës i gjuhës shqipe ose je mësimdhënës i matematikës ose je mësimdhënës po edhe i bujqësisë, pavarësisht, mjafton ta kesh statusin, domethënë, mësimdhënës ose profesor; Ti duhet të jesh në gjendje paraprakisht të lexosh edhe të shkruash vetë, po edhe ta respektosh shqipen standarde para nxënësve. Sepse shumë mësimdhënës nuk e respektojnë shqipen standarde. Shumë mësimdhënës flasin sikurse flasin me shokët ose me familjen në shtëpi. Mendoj se mësimdhënësi ka një rol shumë të madh edhe është një pasqyrë e nxënësve. Duhet të jenë, duhet t'jenë korrekt me nxënësit, duhet ta respektojnë gjuhën e vet, duhet të lexojnë vazhdimisht edhe duhet të shkruajnë po ashtu. Se vetëm kështu edhe përvetësojnë, siç thamë edhe më parë, edhe e përvetësojnë profesionin edhe fitojnë njohuri t'tjera shtesë.

Anemonë: How would you describe the teacher's role in teaching literacy?

Enri: Of the language teachers or in general?

Anemonë: Well, let's start from our experience as an Albanian language teacher. How do you see your role as a teacher in teaching literacy?

Enri: First they must read and write for themselves. Because without reading and writing ourselves we cannot ask for anything from anyone else…That is, by this I understand that we should always be contemporary teachers, modern teachers. Always follow the innovations that occur in language. Because language evolves, that is, it develops over time, and if we are not up to date with these, these innovations or these changes or modifications, then we will not be up to par in relation to language nor will we be correct or transparent with our students. I think it is mandatory, regardless of whether you are a teacher of Albanian language or are a teacher of mathematics or are also a teacher of agriculture, regardless, it is enough to have the status, that is, teacher or professor; You must be able to first read and write yourself, as well as respect standard Albanian in front of students. Because many teachers do not respect standard Albanian. Many teachers talk as if they were talking to friends or family at home. I think the teacher has a very big role and it is a mirror of the students. They must be, they must be correct with the students, they must respect their language, they have to read constantly, and they have to write as well. Only in this way they adopt, as we said before, and they adopt the profession and gain additional knowledge.

When asked about his role in teaching literacy, Enri begins describing teachers' relationship with language. Here, Enri employs a collectivist framing agency by using the first-person plural pronoun "we," to construct the teachers' shared sense of responsibility to follow "contemporary"

and "modern" language teaching trends. For the most part, Enri uses framing agency to highlight a normative sense of "responsibility" that teachers carry. This is showcased when he expresses, "We should always be contemporary teachers, modern teachers. Always follow the innovations that occur in language." The knowledge of language innovations is framed as an asset which determines a teacher's status and relationship to their students. As the narrative progresses, Enri speaks about the progression of a language. He asserts "Because language evolves…over time, and if we are not up to date with these…changes or modifications, then we will not be up to par in relation to language nor will we be correct or transparent with our students." In this part, Enri constructs himself as adhering to his moral and ethical obligation towards his students.

As the narrative continues, Enri discusses the teacher's proximity to normative discourses on literacy. His statement, "You must be able to first read and write yourself, as well as respect standardized Albanian in front of students" speaks to the institutional norms on language use across subjects and the expectation for teachers' skills to align with such expectations. I use the descriptor 'skills' rather than 'practices' because Enri's framing of reading and writing is grounded in an understanding of literacy as skills-and-print-based. This is exemplified by his words in terms of a teacher's abilities to "read and write" themselves, which focuses on the technical aspects of reading and writing and overlooks the socio-cultural dimensions of literacy. In what follows, Enri's narrative takes a turn; using the conjunction "because," Enri begins to explain his rationalization behind highlighting the necessity for "proper" standardized Albanian language use among teachers. He describes how "many teachers do not respect standard Albanian" and "talk as if they were talking to friends and family at home." Here, Enri employs framing agency to draw a distinction between himself and "many teachers." By referencing other teachers' talk and teaching approach, Enri strengthens his

position to normative morals and institutional discourse on language. The responsibility to teach standardized Albanian is framed as 'correctness' towards students and "respect" towards the standardized Albanian language. In this articulation, Enri strengthens his view of literacy as skills-and-print-based literacy, suggesting that further reading [of text] increases teachers' knowledge of standardized Albanian and, subsequently, would manifest itself in their teaching practice.

Enri's narrative makes no reference to any potential value of using the home language and literacy of both the teachers and students in furthering their literacy practices. As such, Enri's narrative concludes with an expectation of having his colleagues increase their knowledge of standardized Albanian through reading and writing as "the only way…[to] immense themselves in the profession and gain additional knowledge." Although the narrative began with a collectivist framing agency of "we," by the end of it we notice a shift of 'me' versus 'them', describing different teachers' proximity to standardized Albanian as a determinant of 'an ethically and morally right' teacher/teaching of language and literacy.

Why Should Standardized Albanian Language Be the Norm?

The previous excerpts of the group interview with Bleta and Melita revealed some of their struggles of teaching and learning in standardized Albanian in a Gheg dominant society. In this section, I add some specificity to my question on the rationale behind teaching and learning standardized Albanian, aiming to better understand Bleta and Melita's thoughts on the teaching requirements on standardized Albanian.

> **Anemonë:** Sinqerisht po pyes. Këtu ekziston një pritshmëri me mësu një gjuhë të cilën nuk e flasim në shpi.
> **Bleta:** Na se flasim hiq. Na se flasim hiq.

Melita: Vetë fjala shpi, si shpi po na vjen. Unë e përdora, ti e përdore. Ama kur t'lexojmë është diçka tjetër. "Fjalët e librit," ju kom thanë. "Ju lutem, sa ma shumë m'i përdorë fjalët e librit."
Bleta: Po fjalët e librit e tani ajo…
Melita: Nuk i lexojnë n'shtëpi
Bleta: Po s'jon' mes veti fjalët e librit me fjalët e tona. E me qenë një gjuhë që nuk kish pasë nevojë me ndryshu kurgjo. Thjeshtë fole, ndije qato që, qite qata që e ndin, ajo ish kanë shumë ma e lehtë. Tashti te na është problem. Ka ndryshu…
Melita: I vetmi problem është që duhet me lexu ma shumë për me ndryshu t'folurit…
Bleta: Ka ndryshu se ma herët u fol ndryshe. Tash nuk folet bash n'atë mënyrën…
Melita: Krejt dialiekt.
Bleta: Qysh kanë fol gjyshet tona.
Melita: Jo. Jo.
Bleta: Po kadal kadal me ardh deri tek…disa po ndreqen, disa po prishen prapë.
Melita: Çka po prishet është që po ndrron edhe gjuha angleze. Po shkon po hyn gjuha angleze te fjalori i nxansave, pe përdorin.

Anemonë: I'm honestly asking. There is an expectation for us to learn a language that we do not speak at home.
Bleta: We don't speak it at all. We don't speak it at all.
Melita: The word home itself, we're saying it as home. I used it. You used it. [Melita notes that the two of us have been using the Gheg variation of the word 'home' which is 'shpi' rather than the Tosk variation, which is 'shtëpi'.] But when we read it's something else. "The words of the book," I've told them. "Please, use the words of the book as much as possible."
Bleta: Yes, the words of the book but then…
Melita: They do not read them at home.
Bleta: Yes, but the words of the book are not the same as our [Gheg] words. If there were a language that there was no need to change anything. Just say it, feel that, say what you feel, that would have been much easier. But we have a problem. It has changed…
Melita: The only problem is that more reading is necessary to change the speaking…
Bleta: It has changed because it [language] was spoken differently before. Now we do not talk exactly that way…
Melita: All in dialect.
Bleta: How our grandmothers used to talk.
Melita: No. No.
Bleta: But slowly to come to…some [students] are improving, some are deteriorating again.
Melita: What is deteriorating is that the English language is also changing. The English language is entering the vocabulary of the students, they use it.

The narrative began with Bleta asserting, "We don't speak it at all." Here, Bleta employs a

collectivist framing agency by using the variation of the first personal pronoun "we," to construct

a shared language identity not only with the teachers, but students and their parents as well. This

is followed by Melita's explanation on how the three of us have used the Gheg variation of "home" ("shpi" instead of "shtëpi") in our conversation. At first, it seems as if Melita shares a similar sentiment with Bleta; nonetheless, Melita continues to suggest that students need to acquire the "words of the book," meaning standardized Albanian language. Here, Melita uses a framing agency to refute home language and literacy and reinforce a normative discourse on 'correct' language use at school. Teacher Bleta's response with "yes, but…" seems to push back against Melita's narrative and, simultaneously, institutional discourses until she is interrupted by Melita. "They do not read them at home," interjects Melita, by "them" meaning books. Here, she embraces deficit-ridden institutional discourses in constructing and defining students' language and literacy identity.

According to this judgement, reading is defined traditionally, as a practice that does not take place in the context of home. Melita articulates a larger discourse of literacy, defining literacy as *skills* to be acquired through the reading of print-based texts. Research suggests that oral language practices lay the foundation for the literacy skills and practices that students further develop in school (McCarty, 2014). Melita's insistence on the "words of the book," aligns with Freire's (1996) banking process of education, which views students as canisters to be filled while disregarding their full humanity, more specifically, the language and literacy practices they bring to the learning process. Bleta responds by pushing back towards Melita's assertion, stating "yes, but the words of the book are not the same as our [Gheg] words." Bleta's following statement, "If there were a language that there was no need to change anything…just say it…say what you feel, that would have been much easier," further solidifies her critique, highlighting how the expectations on the students don't account for the language reality they are faced with. Furthermore, by recognizing oral language as a modality of literacy practices, Bleta challenges

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the view of literacy as technical *skills* disconnected from the students' socio-cultural context. Melita's response to Bleta's articulation underscores the necessity for "more reading to change the speaking," framing reading in the context of print-based texts.

At the beginning of this excerpt, Bleta and Melita began to engage in a critical dialogue about the differences between the two languages variations that students must navigate and their effects on students' literacy learning. By the end of the excerpt, both teachers try to halt this critical dialogue as they voice their agreement with each other on how language practices are changing, and by change, meaning that they are assimilating to standardized Albanian. This is evidenced by Bleta's statement "It," meaning 'the situation', has changed because it [language] was spoken differently before. Now we do not talk exactly that way…" to which Melita responds with "All in dialect." This change is framed in a positive light. Bleta articulates how due to the Gheg's assimilation into standardized Albanian, students' language is "improving." Concurrently, she asserts that some students' language is "deteriorating."

Melita interjects to highlight how English is "entering in the students' vocabulary," hence, contributing to students' language deterioration. Here, one-language proficiency, and that of standardized Albanian language, is enforced by both Bleta and Melita's responses. Their attachment to the idea of a one-language proficiency is detached from the global landscape where one-language proficiency is becoming a minority human experience as language borders are becoming inexistent and multilingual communities (online and in person) are thriving. Currently, people navigate online spaces across contexts using a variety of language varieties and literacy, including home, community, and school languages and literacy, as well as media, multimodal, and languages and literacy at varying levels of proficiency (Anani et al., 2021). In the following section, I further analyze similar discourse on language as I engage with Fifi's

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narrative on the effects of English language and technology on students' language and literacy practices.

English Language and Albanian Language Learning

In this section, I analyze Fifi's narrative focused on the relationship between English and standardized Albanian language. The excerpt, extracted from the third interview, begins with the question on whether standardized Albanian should be considered the ideal language variation to be taught at school. Fifi response diverts the conversation to the impact of students' exposure to English language in their language *skills* development.

> **Anemonë:** Për juve personalisht a është gjuha standarde verzioni ideal me e mësu në shkollë dhe…
>
> **Fifi:** Po valla. N'shkollë patjetër kish me qenë shumë mirë sikur t'ish përdorë gjuha standarde sepse na po e shohim tash edhe nëpër media, nëpër debate t'ndryshme, do t'thotë, në asnji emision pothuajse nuk është që përdoret gjuha standarde. Gjithkun' ka barbarizma t'gjuhës, mandej huazime t'fjalëve t'huaja të cilat janë fut shumë n'gjuhën shqipe edhe nxanësat shpeshherë janë konfuz, tash a është shqip a është e huazume prej gjuhëve t'tjera. [Nxënësit] Ndoshta shpeshherë edhe kanë ma shumë shprehje t'gjuhës angleze që ju përshtaten për me shpreh ata një mendim. Po edhe n'gjuhë angleze e gjejnë veten ma lirshëm, a din, me shpreh ndoshta një mendim se përmes gjuhës shqipe. Se shpeshherë [nxënësit pyesin] "A anglisht qishtu, po qysh po i bjen n'shqip tash?" Gjeneratat e reja krejt fokusin e kanë te gjuha angleze edhe te teknologjia, kështu që qaty ka ndonjëherë njëfarë ngecje të vogël. E ndijnë veten, domethanë, ma lirshëm ata që e dinë gjuhën angleze me u shpreh n'gjuhën angleze sepse sipas tyne gjuha angleze ka ma tepër shprehje që atyne ja u mundson t'shprehen ma lirshëm edhe ta kenë një fjalor më t'pasur, n'i leksis.
>
> **Anemonë:** Po.
>
> **Fifi:** Sidomos gjuha angleze. Jo gjuhët e tjera, po gjuha angleze po.
>
> **Anemonë:** Duke e marrë parasysh faktin që të rinjt sot po rriten me filma, me muzikë në gjuhën angleze dhe po kanë qasje n'shumëçka n'këtë gjuhë dhe sikur u bo ma e natyrshme për ta.
>
> **Fifi:** Qajo, qaty është ajo esenca që ata vazhdimisht…unë e shoh vajzën time, kaq e vogël është edhe krejt ato programet çka i përcjellë, i percjell n'gjuhën angleze. Kjo tash ti nuk mundesh me ja ndalu se është diçka që duhet me ec me kohën fundi i fundit. Tash jo edhe me anashkalu gjuhën shqipe, por nëse arrin edhe me msu një gjuhë t'huj është shumë sukses. Edhe i duhet. Ti ma veç e din edhe vetë. Gjuha t'i hap dyrtë gjithkund. Kështu që, duhet m'i lanë pak t'lirë këta me vendos se çka po dojnë.

Anemonë: For you personally is the standard the ideal language version to be taught in school and…

Fifi: Yes. In school, it would have been very good if the standard language would be used because we are now seeing it in the media, in various [public] debates, that is, in almost no [tv] show is the standard language used. There are barbarisms of the language everywhere, then borrowings of foreign words which are very much introduced in the Albanian language and the students are often confused, now is it Albanian or is it borrowed from other languages. They [students] probably even have more English expressions that suit them to express their opinion. They also find themselves more fluent in English, you know, to probably express an opinion rather than through the Albanian language. Because often [students ask] "In English it's this, but how is that said in Albanian now?" The younger generation focuses entirely on English and technology, so that sometimes there is a slight lag. That is to say, those who know English feel more at ease with expressing themselves in English because, according to them, English has more expressions that enable them to express themselves more freely and to have a richer vocabulary, a lexicon.

Anemonë: I see.

Fifi: Especially with English. Not with other languages, but with English yes.

Anemonë: Consdering that young people are growing up with movies, music in English and are gaining access to many things in this language and as if it became more natural for them.

Fifi: Exactly, that's the essence that they constantly… I see my daughter, she is so little and all those programs that she follows, she follows them in English. This is something that you can't stop now because it's something that you must keep up with in the end. Now, not to ignore the Albanian language, but if you can learn a foreign language, it is a great success. They need it, too. You already know it yourself. Language opens the doors everywhere. So, we must let them decide what they want.

Fifi's narrative begins with the attestation that the use of standardized Albanian language in school should be the norm, stating that "it would be very good if the standard language would be used." Fifi also describes her aspiration for the application of standardized Albanian in the context of mass media and public debates, as currently "there are barbarisms of the language everywhere." In this section, Fifi's narrative illustrates how standardized Albanian's reach perhaps remains within school grounds and is a language variation that is applied in isolation from other contexts. Fifi uses mass media and public discussions as evidence to denote the "barbarization" of Albanian language. Here, Fifi frames such 'barbaric' language dynamics and

the contexts where they are used as having agency over her students' choices in language use, because this "barbarization" instills confusion and uncertainty in students.

Fifi also describes the impact of English language on students' expression. Here, Fifi uses intertextual narrative, describing her students' experience with English language to illustrate today's language environment in Kosova. She frames English language as a rich resource that allows students to express themselves more freely than standardized Albanian language. This is reflected in her statement "they," meaning students, "also find themselves more fluent in English, you know, to probably express an opinion rather than through the Albanian language." Within this framework, Fifi presents a dichotomy between English language (also conflated with the use of technology/internet) and standardized Albanian, whilst the Gheg dialect is not considered to be a determining factor in the development of students' language and literacy practices. Embracing discourses of neoliberalism, Fifi places languages in rivalry with each other as she established a language hierarchy, with English being positioned as a rich and resourceful language, followed by standardized Albanian; whilst the Gheg dialect is altogether dismissed.

In some ways, Fifi almost embraces discourses of multilingualism, recognizing that her students 'live' in multilingual communities, with emphasis on the online world that access to technology ensures. Here, Fifi embraces discourses of neoliberalism to discuss the market value of language, and particularly English language, as a commodity that "opens doors everywhere." English language is framed as a resource which "has more expressions that enable them," meaning students, "to express themselves more freely and to have a richer vocabulary." In this part, Fifi speaks to the effects of English domination on Albanian language. Furthermore, because English is framed as a commodity, unlike the Gheg dialect, students are praised for acquiring and "freely" using it.

Fifi's beliefs on English language simultaneously reveal her beliefs on the Gheg dialect as she continues to embrace institutional discourses and depictions of inferiority in relation to the Gheg dialect. Unlike English, the Gheg dialect, although central to students linguistic and literacy practices, is not acknowledged and valued as the foundation that lays the ground for students' identity development and, eventually, the acquisition/learning of additional language/literacy variations. Thus, again, the Gheg dialect is framed as inferior and inadequate in shaping students' literacy. In the following section, I present Enri's views on Albanian language textbooks, where he also discusses the impact of English language in the quality and students' acquisition of standardized Albanian language.

Criticism on Albanian Language Textbook(s)

In this section, I explore Enri's narrative on Albanian language textbooks. Here, Enri discusses the implications of language, specifically English language, in textbooks as well students' literacy learning. As an admirer of standardized Albanian, Enri disapproves of current Albanian language textbooks because they "uglify" Albanian language as well as hinder the learning process of students who are unfamiliar with English language. This narrative is excerpted from the third interview with Enri.

> **Enri:** Kur hartohen tekstet, domethënë, është mirë edhe kërkohet që gjithmonë të hartohen tekstet duke pasur për bazë nivelin e nxënësve. Besoj edhe ju e keni t'qartë se ka tekste të hartuara t'nivelit, domethanë, që nuk plotësojnë kriteret bazë për t'qenë një tekst për t'mësuar nxënësit e që janë t'shumta. Ka tekste t'shumta që me t'vërtetë nuk i, nuk i plotësojnë kushtet për t'qenë tekste n'shkollë që t'mësojnë nxënësit. Nëse ne marrim një tekst dhe e krahasojmë tekstin e vjetër, një tekst t'vjetër të leximit letrar ose e marrim tani një tekst të ri t'leximit letrar, ne shohim që gjuha që përdoret në tekstin e vjetër është shumë më e kapshme për nxënësit, më e kuptueshme për nxënësit, sesa tekstet që janë të reja. Pse? Se tash kur janë hartuar tekstet e vjetra, edhe hartuesit kanë qenë konsiderojmë më të përgatitur, më serioz gjatë punës së tyre. Ndërsa këta sot, kur marrim tekstet e reja ne shohim që përdoren shumë fjalë të huaja, të cilat veç e, e shëmtojnë gjuhën shqipe dhe çka, çka bën kjo, çka bën kjo pastaj? Kjo bën që nxënësit, jo t'gjithë nxënësit tash e njohin mirë gjuhën angleze, për shembull; por kjo bën që

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nxënësit e tjerë që kanë ngecje, kanë ngecje n'gjuhën amtare e lëre më në gjuhën angleze, do ta kenë shumë problem t'i kuptojnë tekstet. Dhe këtu ne e dimë nga përvoja, domethënë, me, me nxënësit. Të paktën duhet të dish pak n'gjuhën e huaj, në gjuhën angleze n'këtë rast, për t'kuptuar tekstet. Tekstet që janë hartuar tash, tekstet e reja po flasim, për shembull, më shumë nuk janë hulumtime të mirëfillta që duhen të vendosen në një libër shkencor ose në një libër shkollor, por janë pjesë të shkëputura prej internetit, diku prej prej ose në Google ose diku tjetër, në ndonjë faqe të caktuar, edhe janë futur si pjesë e tekstit në tekstin shkollor. Dhe kjo ka bërë që tekstet t'jenë t'varfëra dhe gjuha që përdoret t'mos jetë e duhura për nivelin e nxënësve. Ligjërimi, pra, që përdoret n'tekstet e reja nuk mund ta krahasojmë edhe nuk mund t'themi ne që është i mirëfilltë sa tekstet që janë dikur të botuara më herët.

Enri: When drafting textbooks, that is, it is good and it is required to always draft textbooks based on the students' level. I believe you are also aware that there are textbooks designed at the level, that is, that do not meet the basic criteria to be a textbook for students to learn, and they are numerous. There are many textbooks that really do not meet the requirements to be a textbook for students to learn. If we take a text and compare the old text, an old literary reading text or now take a new literary reading text, we see that the language used in the old text is much more accessible to students , more understandable to students than texts that are new. Why? Because when the old texts have been drafted, even the drafters have been considered more prepared, more serious in their work. Whereas today, when we receive new texts we see that many foreign words are used, which in turn, uglify the Albanian language and what, what does this, what does this do then? This means that students, not all students now know English well, for example; but this means that other students who struggle, struggle in their mother tongue let alone in English, will have a lot of difficulty to understand the texts. And here we know from experience, that is, with, with students. At least you need to know a little a foreign language, in English in this case, to understand the texts. The texts that have been drafted now, the new texts we are talking about, for example, are no longer genuine research that should be placed in a science textbook or textbook, but are detached from the Internet, somewhere from or on Google or elsewhere, on a certain page, they are even inserted as part of the text in the textbook. And this has flawed the textbooks and the language used is not appropriate for the students' level. The discourse used in the new texts, then, cannot be compared, nor can we say that it is as authentic as the texts that were once published earlier.

In this excerpt, Enri discusses Albanian language textbooks by drawing comparisons between older textbooks and the current ones. He frames current Albanian language textbooks as inaccessible due to the borrowing of English words that "uglify" Albanian language. Throughout his narrative, Enri employs a collectivist framing agency by using the variation of the first pronoun "we," to construct a shared experience with teacher colleagues. For instance, he

articulates "when we receive new texts, we see that many foreign words are used…" Here, Enri positions himself and his colleagues as lacking agency in textbook development processes and, more specifically, over the content they teach. Furthermore, Enri's emphasis on the 'purity' of Albanian, detached from the influence of other language(s), describes his ideological orientation to the teaching of standardized Albanian capsulated from the language reality in Kosova and beyond.

Throughout this excerpt, Enri uses a framing agency to align himself with discourses of competence. He speaks from a critical position about textbooks, curriculum development, research, and the level of expertise of current textbook and curriculum drafters/experts in Kosova. This is illustrated when he states, "There are many textbooks that really do not meet the requirements to be a textbook for students to learn." In disagreeing with and criticizing the current state of teaching resources such as textbooks, Enri positions himself as a competent expert and user of Albanian language. Later in the narrative, he draws a comparison between textbook drafters across time periods, positioning current drafters as incompetent due to the borrowing of language from English as well as for developing content that is obtained from trivial sources, such as Google. This is reflected in his statement, "when the old texts have been drafted, even the drafters have been considered more prepared, more serious in their work. Whereas today, when we receive new texts we see that many foreign words are used, which…uglify the Albanian language." Here, Enri's narrative is painted with criticism toward authority as he draws on discourses of monolingualism. In referencing older Albanian textbooks, Enri emphasizes the changing nature of language in Kosova and his disagreement with and resistance toward this change.

In this narrative, Enri also speaks about the student experience in engaging with Albanian language textbooks. He frames students who do not know English well, as struggling to understand the textbooks content and as pre-determined to fail. Enri suggests that the drafting of textbooks should consider students' language level. It is not clear whether Enri is referring to the Gheg dialect when he speaks about the "students' language level." In discussing his students' experience with textbooks, Enri constructs himself as orienting towards morality by empathizing with his students' struggles, especially the ones who haven't acquired English language.

Considering that Enri's narrative above speaks of Albanian language in general terms without delving into the specifics of standardized Albanian and the Gheg dialect, below I provide an excerpt from my observation notes from one of my encounters with Enri. This information aims to provide context on Enri's viewpoints on Albanian language and his affinity for standardized Albanian.

Teacher Enri and I met in the summer of 2018, when I first began collaborating with his school on a study focused on students' engagement with culturally traditional texts. At the time, I was interviewing him and conducting think-aloud interviews with some of his students. I shared the assent form and consent form for parents via email with Enri, so that he could share them with students before I got to meet them. Later in the week when Enri and I met, he informed me that he had corrected some of the language on the consent form, meaning altering some words and phrases to align with the standardized Albanian language variation. This study was the first experience I had with IRB, and I was just beginning to get culturally familiarized with the expectations of doing research under the umbrella of IRB. At first, I was surprised by Enri's comments. After completing a pile of documents to conduct research internationally with minors, I was overwhelmed by and slightly frightened of IRB. At the same time, Enri's commentary reminded me how out-of-context the research through an IRB lens was in Kosova, having to facilitate the interview process through documents that would record the participants' consent and assent to participate in the study. Furthermore, this episode was an introduction to Enri's passion for standardized Albanian. I share this vignette primarily to paint a picture of Enri and his passion for the 'correct' use of standardized Albanian. In our interviews, Enri engaged in conversation with me in standardized Albanian, while I was switching between the standardized Albanian and the Gheg dialect variation. Throughout our conversations, he would often contextualize his thoughts and ideas through examples of 'proper' Albanian language use; what is the proper way to conjugate 'X' verb, when should "ë" get used at the end of the verb and when it shouldn't, what's the correct pronunciation of 'X' word in standardized Albanian, what's

the Albanian version of a word borrowed from English, and so on. This vignette also aims to situate the following excerpt within Enri's passion and belief system around standardized Albanian language as well as the approach to language instruction in Kosova.

Fifi was another teacher who criticized the Albanian language textbooks. Below I present an excerpt from the second interview with Fifi, where she also discusses the use of alternative texts to bridge the gap caused by current textbooks.

> **Fifi:** Problemi është që noshta shumë ma mirë ka qenë ma përpara se tash. Tash kemi na mungesë t'informacioneve n'librat e ri. E kemi një libër t'ri, asnjë rregull t'saktë të gramatikës nuk e gjen. Asnjë definicion qysh e kemi mësu na ma herët: Ç'është emri, ç'është mbiemri, çka është folja, këto. Tash n'librat e ri nuk e has ata. Mandej ka aq pak material që ti nëse si mësimdhanës nuk i merr edhe librat paraprak ose njohuritë paraprake mi bo njëfarë kombinimi, ti ki me mbet shumë keq. Se librat jon' tepër t'paktë që t'i nuk din çka me ju thonë atyne nxanësve e, për shembull, e ki orën 45 minuta.

> **Fifi:** The problem is that it was much better before than now. Now we have a lack of information in new books. We have a new book; no correct rules of grammar can be found. No definition as we were taught earlier: What is a noun, what is an adjective, what is a verb, these. Now I don't find them in the new books. Then there is so little material that if you, as a teacher, don't also take the preliminary books or the preliminary knowledge, to do some kind of combination, you're left in a difficult position. Because the books are too scarce [in information] that you do not know what to say to the students and, for example, the class session is 45 minutes.

Fifi's narrative opens with her criticism toward current Albanian language textbooks. She frames them as inadequate compared to the previous textbooks that were richer in information. This is reflected in her statement, "The problem is that it was much better before than now. Now we have a lack of information in new books." Following this, Fifi discusses the lack of definitions in the current textbooks and how the lack of guidance leaves teachers in a "difficult position." While Fifi describes current textbooks as free from "definitions" and as "lacking information," she frames them as 'descriptive' and 'inquiry-based' in nature, which encourage active student participation in the learning process.

Fifi's last statement in her narrative discloses a sense of frustration and uncertainty. This is illustrated when she says, "Because the books are too scarce [in information] that you do not know what to say to the students and, for example, the class session is 45 minutes." Her emphasis on the length of the class session also reveals a sense of helplessness, suggesting that the lack of ready-made material in textbooks makes it challenging for Fifi to navigate her 45-minute class session effectively. Simultaneously, she frames herself as a competent teacher when she states that "if you, as a teacher, don't also take the preliminary books or preliminary knowledge, to do some kind of combination." Here, the pronoun "you," implies the third person "we," indicating the teacher's commitment to doing the necessary additional work to plan the lesson. Fifi constructs herself as orienting to morality and doing what is best for students.

When Fifi discusses the obstacles that accompany a 'descriptive' and 'inquiry-based' textbook, she frames herself in agentive terms. Although, according to her, the textbook provides a narrow scope of information, she does have the freedom to and relies on additional resources, specifically "books," to complement the lesson plan. Simultaneously, Fifi frames her students as devoid of agency, as her reliance on a standardized teaching approach and content delivery rich in technical information positions students as passive learners. In the following section, I present Enri's and Goga's outlook on the language reality in Kosova in the future.

Moving Forward: The Language Reality of Kosova

In this section, Enri and Goga begin to problematize the current language reality in Kosova by acknowledging the obstacles that both teachers and students face as well as exploring potential solutions to these obstacles. I first introduce an excerpt from the third interview, which captures Enri's thoughts on the future of Albanian language in Kosova. He begins by expressing

his affinity with standardized Albanian language to then discuss opportunities that could

facilitate a more inclusive approach between Albanian language and people's practice of it.

> **Anemonë:** Cili verzion i gjuhës mendon se duhet me qenë ideali për neve Kosovarët?
> **Enri:** Unë për vete e pëlqej që t'flasim shqipen standarde, por e di që është shumë e pamundur se duhet t'kaloj një kohë shumë e gjatë, ose duhet të futen në fjalor edhe fjalët që i përdorë kombi se pikërisht fjalori hartohet nga fjalët që i përdorë populli. Vetëm që korrigjohen edhe pastaj përdoren. Unë jam për shqipen standarde, por thashë që është tepër e pamundur që ne ta shmangim cilindo dialekt, pavarësisht prej cilës krahinë është një individ i nivelit t'caktuar. Si, unë jam për shqipen standarde në institucione por jo edhe në shtëpi.

> **Anemonë:** Which language version do you think would be ideal for us Kosovars?
> **Enri:** I personally like to speak standard Albanian, but I know that it is very impossible because a long period of time must pass, or the words used by the nation should be included in the dictionary because the dictionary is made up of words that the people use. It's only that they [the words] get corrected and then used. I am for standard Albanian, but as I said, it is very impossible for us to avoid any dialect, regardless of which province is from an individual of a certain level. Like, I am for standard Albanian in institutions but not at home.

At the beginning of the narrative, Enri used a normative lens grounded in his academic

upbringing to account for the aspiration he holds for Albanian language use; only to then express

moral contestation over the fact that his aspiration may be "impossible." This is exemplified by

his words, "I personally like to speak standard Albanian, but I know that it is very impossible."

As the narrative continues, Enri uses framing agency to position people as the object of time-

consuming language processes that shape the national dictionary and define the boundaries

between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' language. He articulates "I am for standard Albanian,

but as I said, it is very impossible for us to avoid any dialect..." Here, Enri both embraces and

challenges normative and institutional discourses on language. The first part of the sentence, "I

am for the standard," illustrates Enri's theoretical alignment with normative and exclusive

discourses on language. On a practical sense, later in the sentence Enri challenges normative

discourses on language as he discussed the "impossibility" of "avoiding" dialects. Enri's framing

of language within the dichotomy of possible/impossible reflects the reality of language dynamics in Kosova whilst continuing to uphold beliefs that the standardized language variation is superior.

In the progression of the narrative, Enri proposes to amend the national dictionary to reflect people's language practices. This is underscored by his comment, "The words used by the nation should be included in the dictionary because the dictionary is made up of words that the people use. It's only that they [the words] get corrected and then used." Here, Enri is acknowledging and embracing the fact that standardized language forms should be build upon ways of speaking, more specifically "words that the people use." Enri challenging the current standardized language reality remains within the framework of having a standardized language, however, one that is more inclusive of the "people's" language.

In the last sentence of his narrative, Enri says, "I am for standard Albanian in institutions but not at home," Here, Enri relocates himself in alignment with normative and institutional discourses again. He grammatically positions himself agentively in favor of standardized language use, which is also demonstrated in his teaching and personal language use. Throughout this narrative, Enri expressed theoretical certainty over language as well as contestation over the practical use of language and its variations. In the end, Enri affirms institutional discourses on language by defining the borders of language use between institutions (i.e., the school) and home. Inadvertently, home language and literacy practices are situated as unnecessary and unimportant in students' further language, identity, and literacy development in learning processes at school.

Goga also spoke about her vision on the possibilities of Albanian language instruction.

The excerpt, captured in the third interview, begins with a question I ask regarding the language

reality in Kosova and if this reality presents a challenge for students' application and

development of their language and literacy.

> **Anemonë:** Me u ndërlidh me këtë aspektin e gramatikës, se me sa shumë përmbajtje ballafaqohet nxanësi, por edhe fakti që na e mësojmë gjuhën standarde mirëpo e flasim kryesisht gegënishten. Cfarë mendoni, a është sfiduese për nxanësin që në shpi dhe shoqni e flet një gjuhë, mirëpo në shkollë pritet të mësohet një gjuhë krejt tjetër? Dhe sa ua vështirëson vendosjen e kësaj dije në praktikë kur kjo dije nuk e përfaqëson praktikën për ta?
> **Goga:** Edhe tash, jo vetëm me nxënës, po e kam pa edhe në emisione televizive… Fëmija shumë i vogël mundohet me fol gjuhën letrare, çka është shumë e vështirë për të. Se secili popull e ka një gjuhë standarde. Mirëpo tek ne thuhet që është ba padrejtësi, për neve po flas (Kosovarët). Tash unë edhe vet si arsimtare shumë, shumë nuk e praktikoj gjuhën standarde. N't'folun po mendoj. N't'shkruar po. Se pak është vështirë, e le ma për nxanësin. Tash, është sfiduse. Se ai mundohet, tu mundu me i fol ato trajtat që duhet, e harron t'shprehurit. S'fokusohet hiq n'përmbajtje veç tu mendu qysh m'i thanë foljet. Se është, janë disa t'vështira aty. E dimë paskajoren aty, na nuk e kemi. Nuk e kemi pasur n'jetën e përditshme. Aty duhet me përdorë, ka pak mandej përmbajtje tu mundu me i fol ato. Kështu, lirshëm…po këtu tash sa i përket gjuhës, nuk di, me u rishiku edhe një herë ai Kongresi.
> **Anemonë:** Ëhë.
> **Goga:** Sa kemi na za, sa na ndëgjohet zëri. Po, kisha thanë që me ndryshu.
> **Anemonë:** Me u përshtat me dialektin?
> **Goga:** Me u përshtat. Se dialekti, se dialektet janë veç pasuri. Veç pasuri janë. Edhe mu, tash si arsimtare, m'pëlqen shumë t'folmit e Shkodranëve, shumë, edhe që s'lodhen me standarden. Shumë m'pëlqejnë. Po tash nxanësit, kisha bo disa ndryshime për me qenë nxanësit ma t'lirë.
> **Anemonë:** Si për shembull?
> **Goga:** Po, për shembull, paskajoren e këto mos m'i përdorë. Me u lodh ai qysh me thanë.
>
> **Anemonë:** Concerning the grammar aspect, the amount of content that the student faces, but also considering that we learn the standard language but mainly speak Gheg; what do you think, is it challenging for a student to speak one language at home and with friends, but then be expected to learn a very different language in school? And if so, how difficult is it for them to put this knowledge into practice when this body of knowledge (at school) doesn't represent practice to/for them?
> **Goga:** Even now, not only with students, but I have also seen it on TV shows...A very young child tries to speak the literary language, which is very difficult for him. Every population has a standard language. But we are told that injustice has been

done, I'm talking about us [Kosovars]. Now, I, myself, as a teacher, do not practice the standard language much, much. I mean in speaking. In writing, yes. Because it is a little difficult, let alone for the student. Now, it's challenging. That he tries, trying to be able to speak the [verb] forms he needs, he forgets how to express [himself]. He does not focus on the content at all because all they are thinking about it on how to say the verb [form]. That is, there are some difficulties there. We know about the infinite [form], we [Kosovars] do not have it. We did not have it [/practiced] in our daily lives. I have to use it there [in teaching] and there is some content that covers that. So, freely…here now, as far as language is concerned, I do not know, the [Albanian Literary] Congress should be revisited once again.

Anemonë: I see.

Goga: How much voice we have, how much our voice is heard. But I would say it needs to change.

Anemonë: To adapt to the dialect?

Goga: To adapt. Because the dialect, dialects are only wealth. They are only wealth. Even now, as a teacher, I really like the speech of the people of Shkodra, a lot, and the fact that they don't bother with the standard. I like it a lot. By now for students, I would make some changes so that students are freer.

Anemonë: Such as?

Goga: Well, for example, to stop using the infinitive. So that he [the student] doesn't bother with how to say it.

Throughout this excerpt, there is a noticeable tension in Goga's narrative around standardized Albanian language in comparison to other language variations. She alternates between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' as well as 'idealistic' and 'pragmatic' language practices during her narrative. Goga discusses literary language and standardized language simultaneously, conflating the two into one language variation. Goga's conflation reveals dominant views on literary work, which is predominantly written in standardized Albanian. At the beginning of her narrative, Goga employs grammatical agency using the pronoun "I" followed by "have seen it" to articulate her understanding of students' application of literary Albanian language. She frames literary language as a difficult language variation to be mastered, later indicating, even by herself. Employing framing agency, Goga uses her experience with spoken standardized Albanian language as the lens through which she understands her students' struggle with its application.

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Here, Goga questions institutional and normative discourses on "proper" language use by articulating the 'foreignness' of the standardized and literary language variation to the students' language practices. This is made apparent when she declares "Now, I, myself, as a teacher, do not practice the standard language much, much. I mean in speaking. In writing, yes. Because it is a little difficult, let alone for the student." Here, Goga's discourse takes a turn as she draws a distinction between the 'written' and 'spoken' language and defines the borders of 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' language practices. Grounded in normative and institutional discourses, Goga frames written language in any variation other than standardized Albanian as unacceptable. Here, she establishes margins of exclusion by framing written language as necessarily aligned with standardized language. On the other hand, spoken language is viewed as heterogenous across spaces/borders. Students are 'allowed' to alternate between various language practices and, thus, use their linguistic repertoires in multiple ways.

Goga also discusses broader language dynamics in Kosova in relation to Albania. She mentions the Literary Congress and suggests that the outcomes of the Congress may be considered as an "injustice done" to Kosova. Here, Goga begins to discuss structural underlying forces that impact the students' and teachers' day-to-day contact with standardized Albanian language. Employing framing agency, Goga's reference to the Literary Congress begins to question the root cause as well as the institutional rationale and expectations around language and literacy education in school. By the end of this section of the narrative, Goga suggests the revisitation of language norms through another Literary Albanian Congress, although a note of hesitation is noted through her framing of "I do not know," followed by the suggestion.

As Goga continues to discuss the future of Albanian language, she uses framing agency to express concern over the decision-making power concerning language norms. It is unclear if

by the "we" in the articulation, "How much voice we have, how much our voice is heard," Goga is referring to Kosovar teachers or Kosovar people in general. In either case, her narrative reveals the sentiment that is shared regarding agency over language teaching as well as norm-setting in relation to Albanian language classes. At the same time, Goga frames language rich in dialects as a "wealth," suggesting the recognition of the Gheg dialect as an enriching addition to standardized Albanian.

As the narrative continues, Goga comments on the people of Shkodra's approach towards language. Although located in a context, Albania, where standardized Albanian is the norm, Goga frames the people of Shkodra as 'unconcerned' with following the standardized variation and determined to apply their own dialect. Goga uses the people of Shkodra as an example to suggest that she would like to offer a similar freedom of expression in their own language to her students. Here, Goga frames herself as orienting to morality and doing what is best for her students. The narrative concludes with Goga's suggestion of potential changes in the current form of Albanian language and, as such, expressing some resistance to the current institutional expectations on language form and use.

Conclusion

This section discussed the findings on the theme "Literacy as standardized language learning" pertaining to the first research question: How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy. Teachers' narratives spoke to the complexity of language instruction in standardized Albanian in a Gheg dominant society. The section opened with Bleta and Melita's narratives describing the tension that students face in navigating standardized language expectations whilst being unable to use their home (Gheg) literacy. Throughout this section, Bleta's narrative was imbued with moral contestation as she articulated the lack of possibility for students to apply

their home language and literacy in the classroom. This finding is important because it uncovers the tension and obstacles that teachers face in relation to their language and literacy teaching choices.

Melita's narrative revealed an insistence on "the words of the book," and was generally aligned with normative and colonial expectations on language. Melita considered it necessary for parents to incorporate standardized forms of speaking at home to proliferate students' absorption of standardized Albanian. Teacher Goga shared similar sentiments as Melita. Although Goga expressed some understanding of students' struggle in navigating the standardized language expectations, she was also insistent about upholding standardized Albanian as the norm. Her narratives were charged with moral contestation. By the end of the section, Goga begins to articulate pragmatic changes that could be made to the current language norms so that language learning meets students' dialect halfway through the learning experience. This shift it important because it illustrates how teachers like Goga are aware that the status quo on language and literacy instruction needs to be rethought.

Fifi also articulated her support of standardized Albanian language as she spoke about a pedagogy of correction that the work of upholding this language variation necessitates. At some point, Fifi also utilized discourses of neoliberalism in discussing students' English language repertoire and its value in "opening doors" and advancement opportunities in life while further discussing home literacy, the Gheg dialect, in a negative and deficit manner. Enri spoke about correctness towards language use. He articulated his philosophy on standardized language teaching as "respect" towards the language. Although at the end of this section Enri expressed some openness about reforming language education, he continued to consider standardized Albanian as a superior language variation compared to the Gheg dialect. Besides Bleta, the other

teachers took a more indirect approach to discussing the value of using the home language and literacy of both the teachers and students in meaning making and literacy growth in school and beyond. I note this because Bleta's narrative highlight how dominant ideologies on standardized Albanian are not fully embraced by all teachers. I will return to these findings in the Discussion section in chapter 7 to consider the underlying meaning and possible implications of teachers' talk on standardized language learning as literacy. I now move to chapter 5, which discusses teachers' construction of literacy as 'school-bound literacy'.

Chapter Five

Literacy as Print-Based and School-Bound

In this chapter, I address the first research question: How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy? The first part of this chapter focuses on participants' discussion of literacy as print-based literacy situated in the context of school. More specifically, the first section considers the following themes: the ways in which teachers discuss the reading of text (specifically books), teachers' framing of students' reading approach, and their framing of literacy as phonological awareness. Across the narratives, teachers discuss school-based and print-based literacy as the most fundamental form of literacy.

The second section of this chapter centers on teachers' viewpoints on technology and its relation to literacy education. Several teachers discuss the increased use of technology and its impact on students' literacy. I constructed two key themes here. First, teachers continued to frame literacy in print-based terms. As such, technology is discussed in negative terms and digital as well as multimodal literacy are not viewed and recognized as literacy. Second, technology is framed as a force hindering students' school-based literacy, thus limiting literacy within print-based understandings.

The third section focuses on teachers' articulation of institutional processes and initiatives and their translation in the teaching and learning of literacy. Teachers discuss the expectations of the Ministry of Education in relation to the teaching of literacy. Teachers also consider the national curriculum and textbooks, the opportunities and challenges that they present in lesson planning and the pedagogical approaches to the teaching of literacy. The narratives in this section

are painted with teachers' criticism towards institutional practices. The chapter opens with the section focused on print-based as school-bound literacy.

Print-Based Literacy as School-Bound Literacy

This section begins with Enri's thoughts on literacy education. In the third interview, as Enri and I began discussing the difficulties that Kosovar people face in switching between the Gheg Albanian and standardized Albanian, I stated that the speaking of standardized Albanian doesn't come 'naturally' to Kosovar people. This prompted a reaction from Enri, which is captured in the narrative below. This excerpt reveals some of Enri's beliefs on literacy education.

> **Enri:** Po, pikërisht s'është e natyrshme po edhe këtu ndikon pastaj që ata nuk kanë lexuar mjaftueshëm libra. Se kur ti lexon, ti ke njohuri më t'mëdha për çështje t'caktuara edhe ti je i gatshëm që t'flasësh. Ti do t'jesh më i kufizuar nëse nuk lexon. Prandaj është mirë edhe gjithmonë ne u themi nxënësve që lexoni, lexoni, se ju ndihmon shumë kjo vepër ose ky tekst që t'fitoni, domethënë, shprehje të reja kurdo që ju komunikoni, është e vërtetë. Po.

> **Enri:** Yes, it is not natural but here it also has to do with the fact that they [students] have not read enough books. Because when you read, you have greater knowledge of certain issues and you are ready to speak [about them]. You will be more limited if you do not read. That's why it's good and we always tell students that you should read, read, because it helps you…this work or this text helps you a lot to acquire, that is, new expressions whenever you communicate, it's true. Yes.

When discussing the use of standardized Albanian, Enri frames literacy as the reading of books. As the excerpt begins with Kosovar people's' 'unnatural' relationship to standardized Albanian language, Enri presents his rationale on why that's the case in the context of his students: the lack of "reading of books." His narrative, grounded in a discourse of language acquisition, suggests that a higher exposure to books leads to students' development of their language skills. He then suggests that teachers should encourage students to "read" so that they "acquire" new ways of

speaking. Here, Enri frames 'text' as print-based text, which have the potential to enrich students' literacy repertoire.

The following statement in Enri's narrative, "You will be more limited if you do not read," further reflects his thinking on literacy. In this part, Enri grounds his views on a print-based paradigm to literacy, defining the act of reading as the reading of print-based texts. This is made apparent when he declares, "We always tell students that you should read, read, because it helps you…this work or this text helps you a lot to acquire, that is, new expressions whenever you communicate, it's true." Here, he underscores the term "text," which in Kosova it refers to books, to specify the resource he is referring to which "helps [students] acquire new expressions."

Enri's print-based paradigm on 'literacy' and 'text' confines students' knowledge and experience base within the context of print-based text and literacy; and students' worth as literate beings is defined within this frame of mind. As such, Enri's viewpoint on 'literacy' and 'text' restricts what constitutes literacy practices in engaging with multimodal and digital texts. In this narrative, Enri embraces widely held beliefs and deficit-ridden institutional discourses in constructing and defining students' literacy identity. Consequently, students are framed as subjects in need of explicit guidance on how and what to read for them to attain the characterization of 'literate' beings.

Below I present field notes from an observation I conducted in Bleta's class. The fieldnotes capture a lesson plan focused on storytelling and aimed at furthering students' understanding of the different parts that make up a fairytale and it precedes Bleta's narrative on literacy. I cite this fieldnote because I want to illustrate a teaching activity conducted from a

print-based paradigm on literacy. Furthermore, following this observation, I analyze Bleta's

narrative on literacy, where she expresses similar views to those of Enri's.

Bleta makes her way to the front of the classroom. "How was your weekend?" she asks the students. "Good," replied several students. "What have you read during the weekend?" is her next question, as she walks towards the center of the classroom. A female student sitting in the back replies, mentioning some of the texts they've been going through as a class. Bleta nods as the student speaks, maintaining eye contact with her. "How many of you read to somebody else?" asks Bleta, as she walks towards the left side of the classroom, through the windows. A female student sitting with the group by the door raises her hand and says that she reads to her mom because her mom likes to listen to her reading. A male student sitting on the same group named Arben goes next. He says that he reads fairytales to his sister. "Which fairytales?" asks Bleta. "I read them from a book that my sister received as a gift," replies Arben. "Tell us about the name of any of these tales?" insists Bleta. Arben doesn't provide an answer. Bleta repeats the question as she looks across the classroom. "Can somebody tell us the name of some tales?" she asks. Nita, a female student, responds "Cinderella." Another one responds, "Little Red Riding Hood." "Lushi si Askushi" responds a male student sitting at the front of the classroom. "Who can tell us how fairy tales usually begin?" asks Bleta as she looks at the students. "Once upon a time" responds a student. Bleta nods and goes on to say, "What other expression?" "It was what it was," responds another student. "Yes. Good," says Bleta. "Once upon a time there was…" responds Rina. Bleta nods and smiles as students provide the answers. "Other suggestions" she asks. "A long time ago," responds a student. Bleta recaps the answers some of the students provided, saying how most tales begin with "Once upon a time" and "There was a time when…" Tales have a beginning, a middle, and an end. Some students join in saying this, too. Bleta then asks if there's any student who is absent from class. "Orest," responded by a couple of students. "Without Orest, there are 27 of you. Divided in two that makes…" Bleta says as she then stops speaking, perhaps doing them math in her head. "I have some tales. We are going to do an activity like last week's" says Bleta, further explaining how the text will be ripped into several pieces of paper and they will assemble it together as a group. Several students are smiling, with wide smiles on their faces, while looking at each other. "I'm going to cut them to 8 pieces," says Bleta. She is holding a pile of papers in her hand, each in a different color. She places them on her desk, while holding onto one of them and she then begins to rip it first in the middle, then each piece ripped piece is cut in the middle again, and again, until there are 8 small pieces of paper. As she cuts them, she counts them out loud. She does the same with all the big pieces of paper. The group sitting next to her is looking at her while she works. The rest of the students seem engaged in chatter within their small groups. The group next to me is discussing the roles that they will take up in this assignment. A female student, who usually sits at the front of the class is helping Bleta place all the smaller pieces of paper in a shoebox. When they're done, the student returns to her desk and Bleta begins distributing the assignment to the student groups. (Observation 4)

I now present Bleta's narrative which encapsulates her understanding on literacy as

book reading. Here, Bleta discusses her 5th grade students' experience with the reading of books.

The excerpt below is extracted from the third interview with Bleta.

Bleta: Unë po t'thom që shumë shpesh lexojnë veç sa për me lexu. N'momentin që s'ju kërkohet diçka pak ma shumë, ata lexojnë…"Ta hekim, ta kryjmë qat obligim." E pak kanë vëmendje t'asajna me lexu pak ma gjatë. Unë, për shembull, tash i kom klasën e parë veç, për shembull, lektyrat, shumë m'vjen çudi, për shembull, nxanësi ta ka lexu krejt lektyrën edhe e di që e ka lexu, po s't'ka kuptu kurgjo. Nji lektyrë me ta lexu edhe mos me qenë n'gjendje me komentu nuk është, nuk është…jo që s'ta komenton se ai flet ton' ditën tjetër, po qat lektyrë, për shembull, se se ka pas vëmendjen. Thjesht i ka lexu si shkronja. E ajo është një shqetësim shumë i madh. Unë i thom lexoma një faqe, jo nji lektyrë. Qat faqe lexoje çka ka.
Anemonë: E pse mendon se ekziston kjo sfidë për ta.
Bleta: Mosinterestimi. Veç ta kalojmë, ta hekim, ta kryjmë obligimin. Veç ta kryjmë obligimin. Nuk lodhen pak ma shumë. A nëse është diçka n'interes t'tyne, që ju duhet atyne personalisht, ata ta lexojnë me shumë vëmendje. Edhe as s'ti kalon aspak. Po nuk e di pse.

Bleta: I'm telling you that very often they read just for the sake of reading. In the moment when they are not asked for something more, they read…"Let's do it, let's fulfill the obligation." Few pay attention to what they read for a little longer. I, for example, now have [teach] the first grade and, for example, readers, I am very surprised, for example, the student has read the whole reader and I know that he has read it, but he has not understood anything. To read a reader and not be able to summarize is not, is not… not that he does not summarize it because he speaks about it the whole day, but for that reader, for example, he wasn't paying attention. He simply read it like letters. And that is a very big concern. I tell him to read a page, not a reader. Read what's in that page.
Anemonë: And why do you think they face this challenge?
Bleta: Disinterest. [Aiming] To just be done with it, to perform it, to fulfill the obligation. They don't bother beyond that. But if there's something in their interest, that they personally need, they read it carefully. They don't miss anything. But I do not know why.

Bleta begins her narrative by effecting grammatical agency in the articulation "I'm telling you."

This formulation aims at securing tellership by getting the listener's attention. In what follows,

Bleta frames students as 'disinterested' readers. This is reflected in her statement "they read just

for the sake of reading…few pay attention to what they read for a little longer." Within this framework, Bleta descibes her understanding of literacy as the 'reading of books' by sharing an example of her students' reading experience as evidence. Furthermore, Bleta asserts that she knows that the "student has read the whole reader" but that they have "not understood anything." Here, Bleta frames students' reading practices as 'superficial' and 'intattentive'.

Similar to Enri, Bleta articulates literacy in the context of print-based text (readers) and print-based literacy. She establishes a connection between students' interest in reading, translated in the reading of readers, and the learning that may or may not occur. A definition of learning emerges in Bleta's thought process when she states "I know that he has read it, but he has not understood anything." Here, learning is defined as a deeper understanding of text content. However, her following statement "to read a reader and not be able to summarize it," allows for ambiguity in Bleta's definition of reading as deep understanding of text given that Bleta now places emphasis on summarizing the text. Nonetheless, by the end of this section, Bleta underscores the importance of quality reading, meaning deeper understanding, over the quantity of reading, when she states that she tells students to "read a page, not a reader." This is further emphasized in her remark "Read what's in that page."

The remainder of Bleta's narrative is painted with both concern and moral contestation. She reiterates students' "disinterest" in text reading and how they simply aim to "fulfill the obligation" with this reading approach. She further emphasizes this when she says "They don't bother beyond that." Here, students are framed as dutiful to meet the reading requirement but unenthusiastic for deeper learning. Bleta then indicates that when interested, students' reading may be more careful and attentive. This is followed by Bleta's moral ambivalence through the injection of "I don't know why." At this point, Bleta's narrtive is filled with some contention

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over the fact that students' interest varies in relation to the reading assignment, alluding to the

idea that the text being read may be uninteresting. Throughout her narrative, Bleta discusses

literacy in the context of reading and that, the reading of print-based text. The several references

she makes to her students reading experiences further solidify her alignment with print-based

discourses on literacy.

Goga was another teacher who discussed literacy from a print-based viewpoint. In the

following excerpt, she provides her rationale behind asking students to read out loud in class.

Previous to this narrative, Goga discussed the difference between teaching students theory and

providing opportunities for them to put theory into practice. The excerpt below, extracted from

the second interview, details what Goga means by practice.

> **Goga:** E tash po lidhna me, me orën paraprake. Ju e vërejtët që unë, njëhere e shpjeguam [mësimin] krejt n'mënyrë praktike. M'keni, m'patë edhe aty. Pse i shtina me lexu? Une mujsha me përfundu orën me ato çka ua shpjegova. Është tepër i rëndësishëm. Une e konsideroj tepër t'rëndësishëm. Se po shihet pak nxanësit na i ka marrë…jo veç nxënësit po t'gjithëve na ka përfshi teknologjia. Leximi ka mbet pak…ka njerëz që lexojnë, mirëpo këto gjenerata nuk guxojmë na me i lëshu [me përfundu shkollën] pa ditë me lexu. Jo veç me ditë [si me lexu], po me ba ai edhe praktikë me lexu. Po për ata i shti me lexu njësinë mësimore. Ja u shpjegoj e krejt, a e ke pa, thojnë "Arsimtare, a t'lexoj?" Po jo njëherë, unë po ta shpjegoj. Mirëpo pa e lexu, se ky nuk lexon. Është, për mu është shumë i randësishëm. Është shumë, shumë i rëndësishëm. Ta krijon t'shprehurit edhe t'gjitha t'i krijon. Shkrim-leximi është besoj ma i, për mua si gjuhëtare shumë i rëndësishëm."

> **Goga:** I'm now referring to, to the previous class. You noticed that I first explained it [the lesson] in a very practical way. You have, you have noticed that there. Why did I ask them to read? I could finish the class with what I explained. It's incredibly important. I consider it very important. Because we can see that the students have been taken by…not only the students but technology has involved us all. There is little reading practiced… there are people who read, but we do not dare to leave these generations [finish school] without knowing how to read. To not only know [how to read], but for him to also adopt a reading practice. That is why I have them read the lesson unit. I explain to you all, have you noticed, they say "Teacher, shall I read it to you?" Yes, not now I'm going to explain it [the

lesson]. But without reading it…because he does not read. It's very important to me. It is very, very important. It develops your expression and develops everything. Literacy is, I believe, very important to me as a linguist."

Throughout this excerpt, Goga's narrative demonstrates grammatical agency in the articulation of her teaching philosophy and understanding of literacy as she employs the first-person pronoun "I" to convey agency. At the beginning of the narrative, Goga employs a framing agency to presume my comprehension of her intended meaning. This is made apparent when she declares "You noticed that I…" and "You have noticed that" to then reference a teaching moment as she puts forth the rhetorical question, "Why did I ask them to read?" Following this, Goga employs a collectivist framing agency "we," to construct a shared sense of understanding with me, and perhaps a larger audience, on the effects of technology on students' print-based literacy. "There is little reading practiced," says Goga, following her commentary on the wide use of technology. "There are people who read, but we do not dare to leave these generations [finish school] without knowing how to read," she continues.

A larger discourse of 'reading' and 'literacy' is articulated here and in what follows. Goga framing of students' engagement with technology and digital spaces is voiced as a factor hindering students' acquisition and development of literacy practices. Simultaneously, the articulation of the "little reading practiced," frames students as unengaged with literacy practices outside of print-based literacy and the school borders. Here, Goga establishes a framework of literacy 'spaces' and 'borders', and their use as justification for defining and reinforcing the notion of 'print-based literacy' as the especially valuable form of literacy. Furthermore, she frames the 'lack' of reading as a generational challenge when she asserts "we do not dare to leave these generations [finish school] without knowing how to read." Here, Goga effects grammatical agency by using the collective framing "we" to reflect a shared sense of responsibility that

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teachers bear to 'achieve' the "knowing how to read" aspiration. Concurrently, in her articulation of "we do not dare" she makes a moral stance about herself and her colleagues and their ethical obligation to do right by their students.

As the narrative unfolds, Goga explains her rationale behind her pedagogical choice to have students read out loud in class, while framing students as familiarized with and expectant of this learning approach. This is exemplified by her words "To not only know [how to read], but for him to also adopt a reading practice," by "him" meaning the student. Here, Goga's articulation on 'reading' within a print-based framework resists broader perspectives on 'text' and 'literacy' which encompass multiple modes and formats through which information as well as ways of being and doing are conveyed and, accordingly, meanings created. It is within this basis that Goga frames 'technology' as a negative devise.

Towards the end of the narrative, Goga frames herself as a "linguist." More specifically, she asserts "Literacy is, I believe, very important to me as a linguist." Here, Goga articulates literacy and language as intertwined. In making a statement about herself as a linguist, Goga shows her leaning towards a scientific view on language and emphasizes a focus on the grammatically accurate form of language and literacy rather than its social and practical nature (Street, 2003). Furthermore, her framing of herself as a linguist also embodies institutional discursive practices around language and literacy education, which emphasize the print-based lens on literacy whilst overlooking the linguistic repertoires and the literacy practices that students acquire outside school. In the following section, I analyze Melita's and Fifi's narratives on literacy, where they begin to specifically discuss and frame literacy as phonological awareness.

Literacy as Phonological Awareness

In this section, I present teacher narratives that describe literacy as phonological awareness. The section begins with Melita's narrative, where she articulates her understanding of literacy education in response to my question which asked for her definition on literacy. This excerpt is extracted from the second interview.

> **Melita:** Atëhere, unë gjithëherë boj lidhmëri n'mes tyne dhe asnihere s'thom ky është kështu ky është kështu, për shembull. Thashë që disgrafi është në të shkruar, disleksi në të lexuar. Termi lexim është, une pe marrë si prej vetes edhe po thom që është një zhvillim, nji proces. Nji proces n'rritje e sipër. Se, secili na e dimë që n'klasë t'parë nxënsit vijnë me shkronja. Ndodh ende pa i njoft shkronjat. Mandej njohja e shkronjave, formimi i rrokjeve, fjalëve, fjalive. Domethanë, këto ndikojnë që fëmija të përvetsojë të lexuarit. Të shkruarit zakonisht duke praktikuar shkronjat, grafikun e tyre, formën, subjektin, e kështu me radhë. Domethanë, si definicion muj me përshkru që kanë lidhmëri shumë mes veti njëra me tjetrën.

> **Melita:** Then, I always make connections between them, and I never say this is so, this is so, for example. I said that dysgraphia is in writing, dyslexia in reading. The term reading is, I take it as myself and I say it is a development, a process. A growing process. We all know that first graders come in with (knowledge on) letters. It can be even without knowing the letters yet. Then the recognition of letters, the formation of syllables, words, sentences. That is, they influence the child to master reading. Writing usually (develops) by practicing letters, their graph, form, subject, and so on. I mean, as a definition I can describe that they (reading and writing) are very related to each other.

Throughout her narrative, Melita demonstrates grammatical agency in the articulation of her thoughts on the definition of literacy as she employs the first-person pronoun "I" to convey agency. The narrative opens with Melita breaking down literacy into 'reading' and 'writing'. She considers these concepts in relation to each other, discussing writing as "dysgraphia" and reading as "dyslexia." Melita's articulation of literacy as a "development…growing process" is grounded in the developmental theory, which views changes in children's thinking and understanding of the world integral to their course of development (Morrow, 2004). Melita's usage of the concepts

"dysgraphia" and "dyslexia", even if potentially misguidedly, reflects a discourse focused on the 'challenges' posed when engaging in literacy practices.

Next, Melita describes the course of development students should follow to 'become' literate. She acknowledges that students typically arrive at school with knowledge on the alphabet: "We all know that first graders come in with (knowledge on) letters." Here, Melita employs a collectivist framing agency, "we all know," to imply a known reality about students' pre-school preparation. She then describes the process of building phonological awareness through "the recognition of letters, the formation of syllables, words, sentences." Here, Melita articulates literacy as the learning and teaching of isolated skills over meaning-based instruction. This process aims to "influence the child to master reading." As such, literacy is framed as a process where mastery is acquired through the acquisition of phonemic awareness. Simultaneously, within this framing, Melita constructs literacy practices as confined to the school confines.

By the end of the narrative, Melita discusses the particularities of writing acquisition. She asserts that "Writing usually (develops) by practicing letters, their graph, form, subject, and so on." Here, Melita frames writing as a set of technical skills acquired through practice, and by practice meaning a habitual exercise to attain mastery of particular skills. As such, writing is viewed as context and culture independent. Melita's narrative concludes with "I mean, as a definition I can describe that they (reading and writing) are very related to each other." Melita then returns to the definition of literacy, suggesting that reading and writing are analogous. Concurrently, she frames both reading and writing and, consequently, literacy, as skills that can be acquired through phonological awareness and repetitive practice.

Fifi is another teacher who also spoke about literacy in the context of phonological

awareness. Below, I present her narrative where she articulates literacy as phonemic awareness

while establishing a dichotomous thinking of a 'literate' vs. 'illiterate' student depending on their

acquisition of phonemic awareness. This excerpt is extracted from the first interview.

> **Fifi:** Po shkrim-leximin…shkrim-lexximi besoj se duhet t'fillojë qysh prej klasës
> t'parë. N'rast se një nxënës nuk arrin për pesë vite me mësu shkrim dhe lexim, të
> paktën fjalët në rrokje t'i ndajë, atëherë patjetër që ai fëmijë duhet me qenë me
> plan individual. Plani individual i ndihmon, do të thotë, që ai të paktën të arrijë t'a
> ndaj një fjalë në rrokje edhe mandej t'a lidhë atë fjalë, t'a lexoj. Po ashtu, shkrimi,
> unë vete punoj me nxansa me plan individual, vështirësia e tyne, do të thotë, që e
> shoh është të shkruarit me shkronja të shkrimit. Ata ndoshta edhe e përfundojnë
> shkollën fillore, e nuk arrijnë me mësu t'shkruarit me shkronja t'shkrimit. Me
> t'shtypit ju vjen ma lehtë. Ndërsa me t'shkrimit është pak ma problem. Këta
> nxënës besoj që intelegjenca e tyre, do të thotë, është në atë shkallë që ata e kanë
> shumë ma t'vshtirë me, me arrit me mësu m'i lidh fjalët n'rrokje edhe mandej me
> lexu nji fjalë t'plotë.
> Krejt çka i përket shkrim-leximit muj me thanë se fatmirërisht kemi një numër
> shumë, shumë t'vogël, por megjithatë te këta nxansa është problem. Sepse
> harrojnë shpejtë. Ata ndoshta për nji muj e mbajnë mend. Pas nji muji, n'rast se ti
> nuk mirresh intenzivisht me ta, ata fillojnë edhe harrojnë. Këtu faktor është edhe
> prindi. Sepse ndodh që fëmiu vetëm aq sa arrin n'shkollë me mësu, mëson.
> Përndryshe, do të thotë, në shtëpi si duket nuk mirren prind't me ta. E ky është një
> problem që na e hasim edhe e shohim, do të thotë, në përditshmëri që punojmë me
> nxansat. N'rast se është edhe prindi bashkëpunus bashkë me mësimdhanësin,
> atëherë pa dyshim që edhe këta kanë me ia dal. Po po thom, fatmirësisht, kemi
> numër t'vogël se përndryshe kish me qenë shumë problem. Pasi që dihet se ata
> nuk kanë msuse personale apo asistente, që ndoshta kish me ndiku shumë ma
> mirë, shumë pozitivisht, sepse unë nuk muj mi lanë tash tridhjetë e katër nxënës
> t'tjerë me u marrë me një nxënës vazhdimisht. Po aq sa kemi hapësirë edhe
> mundësi mundohemi me ju përqëndru edhe atyne, që t'paktën mos t'kalon shkolla
> fillore pa dit' shkrim lexim. Se është, po jetojmë n'shekullin njëzet e një, tash kur
> teknologjia ka evolu me t'madhe edhe shkrim-leximin mos me dit është shumë e
> randë, por megjithatë kemi raste t'tilla.

> **Fifi:** Yes literacy… literacy, I believe, should begin from the first grade. In case a
> student does not manage to learn to read and write in five years, at least to
> separate the words in syllables, then that child must have an individual plan. The
> individual plan helps him, that is, to at least manage to split a word into syllables
> and then connect that word and read it. Also, writing, I myself work with students
> with an individual plan, their difficulty, that is, what I see is writing in cursive

letters. They may even finish primary school and not be able to learn to write in cursive. It's easier for them [to write] in print. Whereas cursive writing is a bit more of a problem. These students, I believe that their intelligence, that is, is to the extent that they find it much more difficult to learn to connect words in syllables and then read a complete word.

As far as literacy is concerned, I can say that fortunately we have a very, very small number, but nevertheless it is a problem for these students. Because they forget fast. They perhaps remember it for a month. After a month, if you do not work with them intensively, they start to forget. Here, the parent is also a factor. Because so it happens that the child only learns what they learn in school. Otherwise, it means that, the parents do not seem to attend to them at home. And this is a problem that we encounter and notice, namely, in our daily work with children. If the parent is also cooperating with the teacher, then they [the students] will undoubtedly succeed. But I mean, thankfully, we have a small number [of students] because otherwise it would have been quite a problem. Since it is known that they do not have personal teachers or assistants, which probably would have been more effective, very positively, because I can not now leave thirty-four other students to work with one student continuously. As much as we have room and opportunity, we try to focus on them as well, so that at least primary school does not go without [the acquisition of] literacy. That is, we are living in the 21st century, now that technology has evolved so much, not knowing how to read and write is very problematic, however, we still have such cases.

Fifi begins her narrative by framing literacy as a process of acquiring basic cognitive skills, reading and writing, viewed as 'school' literacy. This is highlighted by her remark, "Literacy, I believe, should begin from the first grade." Here, Fifi grounds the acquisition of literacy skills within the context of school. Fifi then touches upon students' phonemic awareness, more specifically speaking to students syllable blending awareness. A dichotomous thinking of a 'literate' vs. 'illiterate' student is established early on in the narrative. Fifi suggests that "In case a student does not manage to learn to read and write in five years, at least to separate the words in syllables, then that child must have an individual plan." More specifically, she articulates how if a 5 year-old student should be able to demonstrate syllable blending awareness by the time they enter the first grade. If not, Fifi asserts that an individual plan is imperative, thus, framing a lack of syllable blending awareness as a learning disability.

Fifi's narrative then shifts to the challenges students face with cursive writing, which doesn't seem to be the case with print writing. In this part, Fifi employs framing agency to associate student's preference over writing style with their intelligence level. A discourse of ability is articulated here to group students' difficulty with cursive writing as well as phonemic awareness as impeding factors to acquire literacy skills and become 'literate'. This is illustrated when she states, "These students, I believe that their intelligence, that is, is to the extent that they find it much more difficult to learn to connect words in syllables and then read a complete word." Fifi's focus on phonological awareness emphasizes the teaching of isolated skills over meaning-based instruction. Furthermore, within this framing, literacy is constructed as practices fundamentally acquired within the confines of the school language curriculum.

Mid-way through the narrative, Fifi frames students' "forgetfulness" as inhibiting students from acquiring literacy. In her statement, "As far as literacy is concerned, I can say that fortunately we have a very, very small number, but nevertheless it is a problem for these students," Fifi speaks to the "small number" of illiterate students. Although she doesn't directly use the term 'illiteracy', the use of expressions such as "fortunately" and "problem for these students" contributes to the framing of 'illiteracy'. In what follows, Fifi discusses parents involvement in students' learning: "the child only learns what they learn in school…the parents do not seem to attend to them at home." Here, Fifi frames parents as uninvolved in their children's learning and speaks to this uninvolvement as a obstruction in students' overall learning experience. Simultaneously, Fifi marks the borders of learning space(s), suggesting that literacy learning largely occurs within schools borders. Students are framed as interdependent on adults for literacy acquisition and learning to ensue. Here, Fifi also speaks to the relational nature of learning, reducing it down to one group of people, adults/parents. However, she also challenges

the idea of 'relational learning' when she confined literacy learning to the school setting(s). Fifi further aligns her discourse to 'illiteracy' when she again states that "Thankfully, we have a small number [of students] because otherwise it would have been quite a problem."

Fifi's articulation of students' acquisition of 'literacy' and the process of becoming 'literate' is further discussed later on in the narrative. Fifi notes that she tries to provide as many learning opportunities as possible for literacy learning so that "at least primary school does no go without [the acquisition] of literacy." Here, literacy is framed as school-bound literacy, innate to formal schooling. Concurrently, she acknowledges the impossibility of her supporting students in need of additional support as she has to teach to thirty-four students at once. This is exemplified by her words "I can not now leave thirty-four other students to work with one student continuously." Here, Fifi makes a moral stance about herself, suggesting that her teaching choices aim to do what's best for the majority of students in class. Lastly, Fifi briefly mentions technology and its impact on literacy when she states "We are living in the 21st century, now that technology has evolved so much, not knowing how to read and write is very problematic." Here, Fifi frames 'school literacy' as imperative, a stepping stone, for students literate use of technology. In the following section, I delve into the specifics of some of the teachers' narratives on technology and its implications on teachers' understanding of literacy.

Technology's Role in Students' Literacy Practices

In this section, I present Goga's narrative on literacy education, where she speaks about technological developments as a negative influence on students' expansion of literacy practices. During the interview process, I first asked Goga about her views on literacy and afterwards I presented my definion of literacy and sought her impressions on it, which is what the following

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narrative considers. In this narrative, Goga also references some of her teaching moments, followed by an explaination of the rationale behind her pedagogical choices on literacy. This excerpt is extracted from the first interview.

> **Goga:** Se gjithmonë une nisem prej asaj, klasën e gjashtë, ju them edhe nxënësve, klasën e gjashtë praktika, praktika ndihmon shumë. Sepse këta, po e dimë zhvillimin e teknologjisë, na i ka marrë pak fëmija, fëmitë, edhe nëse nuk e praktikojmë leximin edhe shkrimin, po sidomos leximin, n'klasën e nantë besom disa nxënës po harrojnë me lexu. Se këtu bash ma zgjoj këta "më shumë si një grup praktikash sesa aftësish." Është shumë e saktë kjo. Edhe shumë pajtohna me këtë. Se aftësi kanë t'gjithë, po sa e praktikojnë? Unë kështu po e shoh. Edhe e shoh unë, çdo ditë e shoh. Nëse një nxanës, edhe tash çka kam shku une n'klasët e nanta me i thanë dikujt e kam lexu mësimin se e kam dit që ata, nëse t'i veç ua shpjegon, ua thua, ata nuk kanë me lexu. Nuk kanë me ditë me lexu. Mirëpo, e kanë lexu secili mësimin. E ka lexu, e ka lexu, e ka lexu, se une tash, lexojmë na, lexojmë na, po jo sa duhet. Po e dimë tash secili jemi dëshmitarë t'asaj; mirëpo i kam shti me lexu edhe n'klasën e nantë. Ndoshta dikujt i duket absurde me lexu nxansi n'klasën e nantë. Mirëpo unë e kam pa t'arsyshme me lexu edhe mësimin n'klasën e nantë. Beso që ma mirë kanë lexu disa n'klasën e gjashtë se n'klasën e nantë. Domethanë që është veç praktikë ajo, jo aftësi, po praktikë. Ashtu e kom pa unë.

> **Goga:** I always start from that, sixth grade, I also tell students, in sixth grade practice, practice helps a lot. Because they [students], we know [of] the development of technology, a child has been lured, children, and if we do not practice reading and writing, but especially reading, by the ninth grade, trust me, some students are forgetting to read. Because it specifically provoked this "more as a set of practices rather than skills." This is very accurate. And I very much agree with that. Because everyone has skills, but how much do they practice them? This is how I see it. And I see it, I see it every day. If a student, even now that I went to the 9th graders and told someone to read the lesson, I knew that if I only explained it to them, you tell it to them, they will not read it. They will not know to read it. However, everyone has read the lesson. He has read it, he has read it, he has read it, because I now, we read, we read, but not enough. We all now know, we are witnesses of it now; but I had them read [aloud] in the ninth grade. It may seem absurd to someone for a student to read [aloud] in the ninth grade. But I found it reasonable to read the lesson in the ninth grade, too. Trust me, some read better in the sixth grade than in the ninth grade. I mean, it's just practice, not skills but practice. That's how I saw it.

Goga's narrative was shaped by the setting provided by the definition I introduced on literacy, which demonstrates the co-construction of narrative (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Goga begins to discuss literacy as a practice, drawing a comparison between the 6th and 9th graders to illustrate that by the 9th grade, some students are "forgetting to read." However, Goga uses the term "practice" in a particular way. When she suggests that all students possess literacy skills, however, "how much do they practice them?" she emphasizes a distinction between 'skills' and 'practices' in literacy, suggesting that "everyone" possesses literacy skills but not all "practice" them. Here, Goga frames literacy practices as a habitual procedure to effect literacy skills. More specifically, Goga is saying that the more a student practices literacy, e.g. through read aloud activities, the more they harness their literacy skills. This is highlighted by her comment on this portion of the literacy definition I provide, "more as a set of practices rather than skills," where Goga's reaction is, "This is very accurate. And I very much agree with that."

Goga draws on a school-santioned literacy discourse to frame technology as a force that is hindering students literacy growth. In using "we know," Goga employs a collectivist framing agency to indicate a known reality (context) on the impact of technology (negative) on students' literacy education. The prominent underlying discourse on Goga's narrative is about the technology/pedaogogy nexus. Goga's narrative suggests that students' wide use of technology is leading to a reduced application of literacy skills, such as the reading of print-based text. Students are not engaging in school-sanctioned literacy sufficiently so that they may allow for the application of school-sanctioned literacy skills. The subtext here is that digital and multimodal literacy practices do not count as literacy. Although students are enacting their literacy when engaging with technological devices, while simultaneously using school-sanctioned literacy, these practices are not valuable because they don't fit within the parameters

of what is accepted as a 'literacy practice' in the context of institutional discourses; in this case Goga's narrative.

Drawing on dominant discourses on technology in relation to children/students, Goga frames technology as a negative tool that deteriorates students' literacy. This was also reflected in the third interview with Goga in her statement, "[I ask them to] Read the text to me. Read me the story. Read me the poem. Why? Because our children are on the phone all day. Believe me, he [the student] completes the 9th grade, comes out [of school] illiterate. They didn't come to 6th grade illiterate." Goga explains how pedagogical practices such as 'read alouds' are necessary to provide opportunities for students to 'pratice' school-sanctioned literacy in the context of school. The emphasis on 'practice' as a habitual exercise to effect literacy suggests that that's the element of 'success' for students to develop and 'preserve' literacy. As such, literacy is materialized through literacy activities such as read alouds. Furthermore, Goga frames the use of technology devises, such as phones, as an instrument for fostering illiteracy. She strenghtens her position to this statement when she asserts that a student "didn't come to 6th grade illiterate," but may complete the middle school "illiterate." Here, the implied meaning is that the lack of explicit read-aloud reading opportunities in middle school as well as students' increased use of technology devices hinders their literacy and leads to illiteracy.

Goga's narratives above illustrate her framework on literacy and, subsequently, its impact on her teaching choices. Within this framework, Goga presents a dichotomy between 'literacy' and 'illiteracy'. Embracing dominant and institutional discourses of literacy education, she frames literacy as traditional reading primarily acquired within school grounds and through activities grounded in print-based texts. As such, Goga frames both the school and teachers as the exclusive resource for fostering literacy. This is evidenced by her statements on her intentionality

to create opportunities for read-aloud activities. The contrasting point of Goga's dichotomy is 'illiteracy', which is primarily promoted through the use of technological devices. Here, Goga reveals that her views on literacy do not align with the evolving nature of literacy and, as such, further strengthen the separation of in-and-out-of-school literacy.

As the conversation on literacy education continued, the teachers further discussed the literacy and technology nexus as well as the digital world in more focused ways. Below I present fieldnotes from an observation I conducted in Goga's class. The field notes capture a lesson plan focused on students reading aloud their homework assignment. In this context, students were assigned to write a short essay to practice the use of citations. Most students had written about technology and the excerpt below captures the conversation that ensued following the reading of essays.

Goga and I make our way to the classroom. While she sets up in her desk, I make my way to the back of the class. Edon, who is sitting with the group of students on my right raises his hand to ask a question. He has dark short hair. As he holds the book in his hands and gazes towards the bottom of the page, he says that he partially misunderstood the assignment and forgot to include citations. Goga responds by saying that they were indeed expected to do so, and then asks a student to explain the definition of a citation. A student sitting with the group next to Goga's desk volunteers to do so. Seated, the student articulates the definition, while maintaining eye contact with Goga. Afterwards, Goga asks for volunteers to read aloud their assignment. Several students raise their hands. Goga calls on Anila, who is sitting on my right side. Anila, a brown curly haired girl, with hair long enough to reach her arms, explains that her essay is about the dangers of phone use. Goga asks if that's the title of the essay. Anila states that she hasn't decided on a title yet and then after Goga's suggestion agrees to name the essay "The dangers of phone use." Anila begins reading, in a moderately-paced firm voice. She has trouble pronouncing the word 'frequences' and Goga helps her with the pronounciation. Most of the classmates are looking in Anila's direction as she reads in a medium-paced voice. When Anila is done reading, Goga asks other students reaction to her essay. "Will you continue using them [the phones]?" asks Goga. The students are silent. "Does this essay have any impact on you?" she continues. A few students laugh. A couple of them respond out loud saying that they were aware of some of the dangers of phone use. Goga walks to her desk and makes a note on her notebook. She then heads towards the windows, turns to the students and asks for other volunteers to read aloud. Several students raise their hands. Goga asks Butrint to go next. His piece is about technology, too. He begins reading, keeping his gaze fixed on his notebook and uses his right-hand index finger to follow the text. His essay is about technology use in the 21st century and the

negative impact of technology use. In the meantime, a couple of students sitting in the far-right group of students at the back of the classroom are chatting. After a few seconds the conversation dies down and they fix their gaze at Butrint. Goga is standing by the windows, looking outside. She eventually turns around and directs her gaze towards Butrint, as he finishes reading. Goga asks him to repeat the last sentence, and so he does. He has a hard time pronouncing a few words as he rereads the last couple of sentences of the essay. Goga squints her eyes and then says that she cannot comprehend what he is saying. Another student, Edon, jumps in and repeats what Butrint just read: "We should be careful about our technology use." He then turns to his friend and with a smile in his face repeats the text in Butrint's voice. Goga doesn't seem to notice. She walks to her desk, makes a note on her notebook, and then asks for other volunteers to read their essay. A couple more students volunteer to read essays on the negative aspects of technology. Goga suggests that they should allow for other topics to be discussed and seeks volunteers who have written about something other than technology.

I included this field note excerpt to describe the interaction dynamics between Goga and her students as students read aloud their essays on technology. The essays read here consider the negative impacts of technology. The course of the reading aloud is structured in a manner that students read one after the other, invited to do so on a volunteer basis, and the reading is not followed by a discussion, although several opportunities appeared. Following each student's read aloud, Goga openly and visibly recorded a grade next to the student's name in her notebook. Considering that students were asked to volunteerily read, the grade illustrates an incentive to encourage students' participation. This excerpt, in addition to Goga's narrative, further cements negative views on the impact of technology. Although several opportunities present themselves to have an in-depth discussion about the statements students present on the negative impact of technology, Goga's inaction to do so further reveals her alignment with this views.

Fifi was another teacher who discussed the literacy and technology nexus. More specificaclly, she discussed student success in the context of technology use. In the narrative below, Fifi shares the parents' concern with their children's increased use of technology, which she describes to be concerning. This excerpt is from the third interview with Fifi.

Fifi: Teknologjia, teknologjia bash kohëve t'fundit është faktori kryesor që ka ndiku në ramjen e suksesit t'nxënësve. Se gjatë tërë kohës secili prej prindërve që vjen thotë "Kujdestare, problemin ma t'madh e kom me ja hek telefonin prej dorë. Vazhdimisht është me telefon." Edhe qaty e shoh, domethënë, problemin ma t'madh. Që ramja e suksesit është e theksume. Nuk mirren, domethënë, me libra. Nuk mirren me naj aktivitet tjetër, po pothujse pjesën dërrmuse t'kohës ata e kalojnë n'telefon. N'grupe t'ndryshme, n'lojëra t'ndryshme, n'biseda t'ndryshme. Domethënë, ankesa e secilit prind që vjen është përdorimi i teknologjisë.

Fifi: Technology, recently, technology has been a major influential factor in decreasing student success. Because all the time each of the parents who come says "Head teacher, the biggest problem I have is to take the phone out of their hand. He is constantly on the phone. " That's how I see it, that's the biggest problem. That success rate decrease is pronounced. They're not concerned, that is, with books. They do not engage in any other activity, but they spend most of their time on the phone. In different groups, in different games, in different conversations. Namely, the complaint of every incoming parent is the use of technology.

Fifi uses intertextual narrative, sharing parents' narrative on technology, to illustrate students' engagement with technology, specifically phones, and their negative effect on their 'success'. This is reflected in her reference to the parents' remark, "The biggest problem I have is to take the phone out of their hand. He [the child/student] is constantly on the phone." Fifi's framing, 'technology's impact on students', implies that rather any shifts in conjunction with technology result from technology somehow doing things to the student; when, it may be more likely that it is the students, in ways constrained by their existing social and ideological knowledge, and possibly without overt awareness that anything might be happening, are doing things with technology (Stuart-Smith, 2011).

Fifi's narrative is grounded in a discourse of resistance towards technology. She draws a comparison between books and technology to illustrate students' lack of interest in print-based literacy. This is underscored by her words, "They're," meaning students, "not concerned, that is, with books. They do not engage in any other activity, but they spend most of their time on the

phone." Here, Fifi engages in a 'versus' mode of thinking, placing "books" and the "phone," or

technological devices, in opposite ends. She regards the "phone" with a negative connotation,

associating it with "decreasing student success," stated at the beginning of her narrative. As such,

"books" carry a positive connotation, associating them with learning. Grounded in dominant and

institutional discourses, Fifi acknowledges the contribution of books in students' literacy while,

simultaneouly, negating the various literacy practices students enact when interacting with

technology. Her narrative demonstrates an insistence for students to prove their literate selves

through a print-based lens on literacy while, simultaneously, negating their digital literacy and

failing to recognize what literacy looks like in the 21st century.

I eventually ask Fifi if she has made any attempt to incorporate technology in her

teaching. Below, I present her narrative, where she articulates the positive and negative qualities

of technology. This excerpt is extracted from the third interview.

> **Anemonë:** Sa keni mundësi me inkorporu teknologjinë n'klasë që me bo një ndërlidhje me këtë interesim të nxanësave?
> **Fifi:** A sikur t'ju kish interesu nxanësave për mësim me hulumtu ose me gjet diçka naj risi, naj informatë t're kish me qenë shumë mirë. Por ata mirren me ato çka atyne ju intereson. Nuk…tash teknologjia i ka anët pozitive edhe negative. Tash na ata t'gjithë e dimë, po këta zakonisht e përdorin veç për qefe t'tyne, për foto, për postime, për qito. Për biseda. Zakonisht tani edhe problemet po na lindin qishtu se fillon nji kacafytje përmes teknologjisë edhe masnej kur t'vinë n'shkollë e bartin qata edhe te, edhe n'shkollë. Tani deri te rrahjet, te fyrjet, e qito. Se nuk është që e përdorin për mësim. Se sikur ta kishin përdorë për mësim kish me qenë shumë n'rregull. Por kur kërkon ti si mësimdhënës, për shembull, hulumtoni lidhur me një temë, shkojnë pothujse pjesa dërrmuse e klasës ta sjellin t'njëjtin informacion. Sepse ose e marrin përmes njani tjetrit ose hyjnë te qajo webfaqe edhe e marrin copy paste edhe u kry. Jo diçka ma thellësisht. T'rrallë nxansa jon' që fokusohen kështu tamon te ajo çka kërkohet edhe që dojnë me zbulu diçka ma shumë, me mësu diçka ma shumë. Sidomos kjo koha e pandemisë ka ndiku jashtëzakonisht shumë. Interesimi ma i ulët s'ka qenë asnjëherë.

Anemonë: Are you able to incorporate technology into the classroom to draw a connection between technology and your students' interest?

Fifi: If students were interested in learning, researching or finding something new, some information, [that] would be very good. But they care only about what interests them. Not…now technology has both positive and negative sides. Now we all know that, but they usually use it just for fun, for photos, for posts, for these things. For conversations. Now, usually issues are arising like that, because a fight starts through technology and then when they come to school they carry that to us, also here at school. Then up to the beatings, the insults, and things like that. Because it is not like they are using it for learning. Because if they had used it for learning, it would have been very okay. But when you as a teacher ask, for example, [for students to] research on a topic, almost the vast majority of the class go and bring the same information. Because they either get it through each other or go to the website and get it 'copy-paste' and it's done. Not something in depth. Rarely do our students focus so much on what is required and want to discover something more, learn something more. Especially [during] this time of the pandemic [technology] has had a great impact. The lowest interest [among students] there has even been.

Fifi's narrative begins with hypothetical reasoning as she states "If students were interested in learning…," then the use of technology "would be very good." The implied meaning here is that the contrary is occurring, which justifies Fifi's views on technology. Her following statement further strengthens her declaration of students' inadequate use of technology: "Technology has both positive and negative sides. Now we all know that, but they [students] use it just for fun, for photos, for posts, for these things. For conversations." Here, Fifi effects grammatical framing by using the collective framing "we" to indicate a shared understanding with her colleagues and, potentially, a larger audience. Furthermore, by using the pronoun "we" Fifi situates her morals in alignment with dominant discourses on technology. This is illustrated by the latter portion of the statement, "we all know that." Next, Fifi articulates how students "Usually use it," meaning technology, "just for fun, for photos, for posts, for these things. For conversations." In this particular context, she frames 'learning' and 'fun' in opposing directions from each other.

In the progression of the narrative, Fifi voices a sense of consideration over her students' use of technology through a conditional framing: "Because if they had used it [technology] for learning, it would have been very okay." In the context of literacy, several ideas are constructed here. First, learning is defined in rigid terms. Fifi's articulation suggests that students' practices with and through technological devices don't encompass learning and students enacting their literacies. More specifically, this articulation suggests that technology use beyond a 'fixed' assignment is 'meaningless' in academic terms. Second, Fifi's articulation of the negative aspects of technology, such as "the beatings" and "the insults" that the use of technology incites, reduces students' interaction via technology to a devise instigating student fights. Lastly, Fifi's fraiming negates the application of literacy, specifically digital literacy, in a context beyond school grounds. As such, she presents a narrow understanding of literacy and a resistance towards current reality, where technologies signify "new ways of doing things and new ways of being" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006, p. 54).

By the end of the narrative, Fifi articulates her concerns about the use of technology in more specific terms. For example, she asserts that "When you as a teacher ask, for example, [for students to] research a topic, almost the vast majority of the class go and bring the same information. Because they either get it through each other or go to the website and get it 'copy-paste' and it's done. Not something in depth." Here, Fifi frames students' approach to completing their homework as superficial and merely about meeting the obligation. In doing so, she aligns herself with ethical discourse as she expresses her dissent for their "copy-paste" homework practice. The following statement "Especially [during] this time of the pandemic [technology] has had a great impact," solidifies her views of technology from a deficit-perspective, which paints students increased use of technology during the pandemic as a learning loss. In the

following section, I present teachers narratives on literacy as they also consider the systemic expectations in teaching literacy.

Systemic Expectations on the Teaching of Literacy

Teachers also discussed the systemic expectations and the Ministry's of Education decision making processes in relation to literacy and their effects on their teaching practice. More specifically, teachers articulated the impact of the national curriculum and textbook policies on the teaching of literacy. Below, I present the narratives of Enri, Bleta, Goga, and Melita on the matter. The section begins with Enri's narrative, exctracted from the third interview, where I consider the structure of his narrative, his framing of literacy and his students, the lingustic devices employed to convey agency, and the wider context where his narrative is situated.

> **Anemonë:** Si mendon që e koncepton kurrikula shkrim-leximin dhe shkrim-leximin kritik? Sipas kurrikulës si dokument bazë, si pritet që ti me e mësu shkrim-leximin?
> **Enri:** Aty qysh parashihet, duhet t'kesh një nivel shumë t'lartë t'nxënësve, një nivel shumë t'lartë t'nxënësve e ne shpesh nuk mund t'i arrijmë ato rezultate. Se është shumë problem. Se prapë po them niveli i nxënësve nuk është, besoj edhe ju kur keni dalë n'terren keni parë vetë çfarë niveli t'nxënësve ka në shkollat n'Kosovë, edhe është shumë e pamundur t'praktikohet e gjithë ajo çka kërkohet në dokument. Por ne mundohemi t'paktën diçka prej, prej atyre çka kërkohen t'i realizojmë. Është e pamundur, kushdo mund t'thotë që ne i realizojmë të gjitha rezultatet, i arrijmë të gjitha rezultatet sipas kurrikulës; është e pamundur. Se kemi tekste jo cilësore, kemi nivelin e nxënësve jo shumë t'lartë. Nxënësit, domethënë, nuk lexojnë shumë edhe pastaj ti duhet që t'bësh diçka tjetër që është më e thjeshtë për të e që ta kuptoj. Se përndryshe rezultatet edhe n'vlerësim do t'jenë shumë, shumë dëshpruese.
> **Anemonë:** Domethënë, nuk lexojnë shumë libra? Për libra e keni fjalën?
> **Enri:** E kam fjalën për libra n'përgjithësi, për mësimet që kanë. Interesimi, domethënë, nuk është siç ka qenë, për shembull, dikur. Siç mësonin brezat e mëhershëm.
>
> **Anemonë:** How is literacy conceptualized in the national curriculum? According to the curriculum as a guiding document, how are you expected to teach literacy?

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Enri: As it is expected, you have to have a very high level of students, a very high level of students, and we often cannot achieve those results. Because it is a big issue. Again, I am saying that the level of students is not [high], I believe that when you went out on the field, you saw for yourself what level of students there is in schools in Kosovë, and it is very impossible to apply everything that is required in the document [curriculum]. But we try to do at least some, some of the things that are required of us. It is impossible, anyone can say that we achieve all the results, we achieve all the results according to the curriculum; it is impossible. Because we have low quality textbooks, we don't have a very high level of students. The students, that is, do not read much and then you have to do something else that is easier for him [the student] to understand. Otherwise, the results in assessment will be very, very despairing.

Anemonë: You mean, they don't read a lot of books? Are you talking about books?

Enri: I'm talking about books in general, about the lessons they have. The interest, meaning, is not as it once was, for example. As previous generations learned.

Throughout his narrative, Enri demonstrates grammatical agency in the articulation of his thoughts on the national curriculum in relation to the teaching of literacy. The narrative opens with Enri framing students as underachievers in relation to meeting the expectations of the national curriculum. This is reflected in his statement, "You have to have a very high level of students, a very high level of students, and we often cannot achieve those results." Enri's repetition of the "level of students" twice aims to emphasize this reality. Simultaneously, Enri may have employed repetition in order to take his time to articulate his thoughts. Next, in asserting "Again, I'm saying…" Enri employs grammatical agency, followed by "…you saw for yourself what level of students there is in schools in Kosovë," where Enri employs framing agency to presume an alignment of his views with mine, suggesting a known reality on Kosovar students' standing (negative) in academic processes. Furthermore, Enri tries to validate his rationale as to why the curriculum is somewhat inapplicable in his teaching when he states "and it is very impossible to apply everything that is required in the document [curriculum]" due to his students' "level."

Enri proceeds to provide additional reasons to explain his fraiming of the curriculum as inapplicable. This is demonstrated when he says "Because we," meaning teachers, "have low quality textbooks, we don't have a very high level of students." Here, Enri frames the "low quality" of textbooks as a hindering factor for his teaching of literacy. Then, he frames students as disinterested readers, while employing a collectivist framing agency by using the first-person plural pronoun "we," to construct a shared sense of conviction with teacher colleagues. Furthermore, when he states, "The students, that is, do not read much and then you have to do something else that is easier for him [the student] to understand," Enri grounds his narrow framing of reading in dominant and instutional discourses on reading and literacy. He situates teachers in a difficult circumstance as they try to make pedagogical choices that can make it "easier for him [the student] to understand" the content matter. The following articulation of Enri is situated in a discourse of assessment as he suggests that an assessment of his students would yield "very, very despairing" results. Here, Enri's narrative explains his navigation of substandard textbooks to prepare students for the test.

My prompt to seek clarification on Enri's statement of students "not reading much," aimed to understand what form of text he was referring to. Enri's response reiterates a pattern across teacher interviews, discussing 'reading' and 'literacy' in the context of print-based literacy. This is exemplified by his words, "I'm talking about books in general, about the lessons they have." Employing framing agency, Enri articulates his disappointment with the current generation of students' learning "interest" when he states "The interest, meaning, is not as it once was, for example. As previous generations learned." Here, Enri draws a comparison between different student generations, although he was still a relatively young teacher at his current school.

Bleta was another teacher who discussed institutional policies and their impact on her teaching experience. Bleta spoke about textbook design, criticizing teachers' lack of involvement in the process. Below I present Bleta's narrative, extracted from the second interview, followed by my analysis.

Bleta: Mu shumë m'vjen keq edhe është shumë e dhimbshme, botohen librat edhe nuk ka mësimdhanës gjatë punës. Pse nuk na qohet neve kërkesë? Pse gjatë një botimi të një libri, të një teksti mësimor, nuk janë mësimdhanësit? Ata janë ata që përballen me ato. O sa herë gjen gabime në libra edhe ribotohen çdo vjet! Prapë vazhdojnë me gabime t'njëjta. Edhe jon' disa detyra, disa sene, që thjeshtë nuk jon për moshën e fëmive. Thjeshtë i ke ronu ma shumë se që duhet. Fëmija deri n'klasë t'5 ka nevojë me i dit gjanat elementare, jo me kalu une, detyrat e fakultetit i kanë edhe këta klasa e 5-të. Nuk është n'rregull mu ronu qakaq shumë. Deri t'i mësojnë mirë e me hapa. Unë ndojherë edhe jo thom, kalojna këtë njësi se nuk është për juve. Te mësojna njëherë bazën mire mandej kalojna n'hapa tjerë. E jo veç mi kalu te kryj planin. Se plani ka…na planin na e dimë përafërsisht sa mrrijna, po nuk është mirë me ec nëpër to, por mos mi kuptu.

Bleta: I'm very sorry and it's very painful, books are published and there are no teachers [involved] in the work [process]. Why aren't we invited? Why during the publication of a book, of a textbook, teachers are not [there]? They are the ones who face them [the outcome]. Oh, the number of times I find errors in books they are republished every year! They still make the same mistakes. And there are some assignments, some things, that are not age-appropriate for the children. You have simply burdened them more than you should. The child up to the 5th grade needs to know the basics, not for me to…5th graders have university-level assignments. It's not okay for me to burden them as much. Until they learn them well and in steps. I sometimes even say, let's pass this unit because it is not for you. Let's first learn the basics well, and then move on to other steps. And not for me to just carry out the [lesson] plan. Because the [lesson] plan has…with a plan, we know how much we can approximately achieve, but it is not good to apply it, but not understand it.

In this narrative, Bleta raises several concerns about education policies and their effects in the classroom. She articulates her moral stance as her emotional reaction to the textbook design processes: "I'm very sorry and it's very painful, books are published and there are no teachers [involved] in the work [process]." Bleta's use of "very" emphasizes the intensity of her moral

stance. Here, Bleta expresses her disagreement as well as disappointment with the current instutional approach to textbook design policy. Following this, she raises some rhetorical questions to accentuate her critique and remind me, and the audience, about the impact of such decision-making on the teachers' teaching experience: "Why aren't we invited? Why during the publication of a book, of a textbook, teachers are not [there]?"

Bleta's then continues to frame textbooks as inadequate when she asserts "Oh, the number of times I find errors in books they are republished every year! They still make the same mistakes." Her emphasis on the detail about the yearly "republishing" intends to strengthen her framing of the textbook's inadequacy. Besides discussing errors found in the books, Bleta also frames the nature of current textbooks as age-inappropriate. More specifically, she uses a discourse of "burdening" to explain her thinking. This is illustrated when she states, "And there are some assignments, some things, that are not age-appropriate for the children. You have simply burdened them more than you should." Here, Bleta's use of the second person "you," grammatically positions textbook content creators as the direct audience of her criticism. Simultaneously, here she makes a moral stance about herself, as she frames herself as empathetic and positioned in the opposite side of this circumstance. This is particularly visible in her statement, "I sometimes even say, let's pass this unit because it is not for you. Let's first learn the basics well, and then move on to other steps." Here, "you," refers to her students.

Similar to Bleta and Enri, Goga spoke about textbooks in the process of commenting on the national curriculum. Her framing of curriculum development processes as well as textbooks occurred in the context of print-based literacy. This narrative is extracted from the first interview with Goga.

Goga: Kur e përpilojmë planprogramin nuk bazohemi vetëm në tekst, vetëm n'tekstin që e kem, mirëpo marrim edhe prej gazetave, prej mjeteve t'informimit, edhe kështu vizive. Jo vetëm t'këtyre, gazetave, revistave. Edhe libra tjerë përdorim nëse është e nevojshme, edhe libra tjerë. Për shembull, unë për gjuhë shqipe e marrë edhe fjalorin. Se ti ja u shpjegon kot si përdoren fjalët, por ai i sheh. Gjithçka, çka është praktike është ma lehtë e kuptushme. Se pak une ndoshta gabim e kam, po e kam pak një vërejtje që pak po i ngarkojmë nxënësit me teori. Se kushtet, ne sistemin e kemi ashtu. Pak gjithmonë e ndjej njëfarë dhimbje për ta se pak me teori po i ngarkojmë shumë. E kur ti teorinë, pak teorinë ja lidh me praktikën është krejt ma ndryshe. Kështu i përpilojmë planprogramet.

Goga: When we develop the syllabus, we do not rely only on the text, only on the text that I have, but we also get it [information] from newspapers, from the media, and so on, visually. Not just these, newspapers, magazines. We use other books, if necessary, also other books. For example, I also take the dictionary for Albanian language. Because you explain to no purpose how the words are used, but he [the student] sees them. Everything that is practical is easier understood. I'm probably wrong, but I have a small critique that we're burdening students with theory. Because the conditions, the system is like that. I always feel some pain for them because we are burdening them with theory too much. And when you connect theory, a little bit of theory with practice, it is completely different. This is how we compile syllabi.

Goga's narrative illustrates an ambivalent agency, alternating between a first-person singular and the first-person plural pronouns. The narrative begins with Goga employing a collectivist framing agency by using the first-person plural pronoun "we," to construct a shared teacher approach in designing the Albanian language syllabus. She discusses the use of additional text resources as a necessity in the planning process. At first, Goga mentions mainly print-based resources such as newspapers and magazines, including visual media in passing, only to then circle back to another print-based resource, the dictionary. Here, Goga switches to the first-person singular "I" to present a personal, and perhaps not widely shared, teaching practice.

This is exemplified by her words, "I also take the dictionary for Albanian language. Because you explain to no purpose how the words are used, but he [the student] sees them. Everything that is

practical is easier understood." Here, Goga's teaching choice aims to add a "practical" element to learning.

In what follows, Goga's narrative is painted with moral contestation. "I'm probably wrong, but I have a small critique…" prefaces her criticism on the curriculum, discussing how it's burdening students with theory. Here, Goga also makes a moral stance about herself, as she empathizes with her students. Similar to Bleta, a discourse of 'burdening' emerges in Goga's narrative as she discusses how the curriculum is heavily dependent on theory. Her sense of compassion is summarized in her own words, "I always feel some pain for them because we are burdening them with theory too much." Here, Goga uses framing agency to describe the 'impractical' nature of the curriculum that both teachers and students must navigate in the process of teaching, learning, and practising literacy. Simultaneously, her grammatical framing of "we are burdening" also reveals Goga's self-criticism, where she for a moment situates herself as part of the 'problem'.

Overall, Goga's criticism remains minimal. Goga's framing of her critique, especially the use of descriptors such as "wrong" and "small" hints at her reluctance to expose systemic issues. "The conditions, the system is like that," remark summarizes Goga's tendency to minimize and perhaps neutralize any seriousness in her critique towards the education system. In this section, Goga's situated morals lead to her expressing some resistance towards the current standing of the national curriculum. By the end of her narrative, she redirects her talk to what she can do and does to address said critiques. This is evidenced by her statement, "And when you connect theory, a little bit of theory with practice, it is completely different. This is how we compile syllabi." Regrounding herself in a collectivist framing agency by using pronoun "we," she

articulates a shared teaching commitment to create opportunities for a practical application of knowledge.

Merita spoke to the 'expectations' of the Ministry of Education and the national curriculum on literacy as well. Below I present her narrative, where she shares some of her beliefs on the definition and nature of literacy, followed by my analysis. This narrative is extracted from the first interview with Melita.

> **Melita:** Ministria pret që fëmitë me lexu rrjedhshëm, me ditë. Me lexu rrjedhshëm edhe me kanë kuptueshëm. Shpeshherë unë i shoh, vërej dikon' tjetër që thotë "Pse krejt s'po dinë me lexu mirë?" Po krejt është edhe psiqikë pak. Se di a ke mujt…jo secili fëmi lexon bukur rrjedhshëm po atë që e lexon…një rresht, një rresht, i thom, boj pytje veti, "Çka kom lexu n'qit rresht?" Zakonisht për me pas nji msimdhënie t'mirë…E kështu që, Ministria normal që po besoj edhe po shpresoj që presin rezultate t'larta. Edhe secili mësimdhanës ka qef me kanë fëmija i saj ma i miri, si krejt mësimnxënst tjerë. Mirëpo fëmitë jon' t'barabartë, secila klasë. Na kemi bashkëpunim t'madh me aktivitet. A beson që e kena planin e njëjtë? Ditorin, mujorin, javorin. me secilën klasë. Edhe n'ditar, n'ditor i shkrujmë njona tjetrës çka mujna me shti diçka tjetër.

> **Melita:** The Ministry [of Education] expects children to read fluently, to know. To read fluently and to understand. I often see them, I notice someone else saying "Why doesn't everyone know how to read well?" Yes it's quite a bit cognitive as well. I don't know if you could…not every child reads beautifully fluently what he reads…one line, one line, I say, ask yourself, "What did I read in that line?" [An approach used] To generally practice good teaching…And so, it's normal that the Ministry [of Education] I believe and hope is expecting high results. And each teacher wants for their child to be the best, like all other teachers. But children are equal, in each classroom. We have great cooperation with [other teachers when it comes to] activities. Can you believe that we have the same [lesson] plan? Daily, monthly, weekly, for each classroom. Even in the teacher's book, for the daily [lesson plan] we write to each other about what else we can add.

Melita's narrative begins with her articulation of the Ministry of Education's expectations in a descriptive manner. This is reflected in her statement, "The Ministry [of Education] expects children to read fluently, to know. To read fluently and to understand." Here, Melita articulates

"fluency" and the "understanding" of what is being read as critical components of reading. In her formulation of "I often see them, I notice…," Melita employs grammatical agency, which is present throughout the narrative. Her following remarks unpack her views on literacy a little further: "Why doesn't everyone know how to read well?" Yes it's quite a bit cognitive as well. I don't know if you could…not every child reads beautifully fluently what he reads…" Here, Melita's rhetorical question on everyone's inability to read well is grounded on a print-based discourse on literacy. Her alignment with this discourse is further strengthened in her commentary about "reading beautifully fluently."

In the progression of the narrative, Melita describes a pedagogical choice she makes to foster students' understanding of text. This is illustrated when she states "I say, ask yourself, "What did I read in that line?" [An approach used] To generally practice good teaching." Here, Melita highlights her intentions to encourage a level of consciousness in her students' reading practices. While constructing herself as orienting to morality by "practising good teaching," she also frames herself as interested in deepening students' literacy. Then, she engages in a discourse of performance as she considers the Ministry of Education's expectations on high results. Melita's statement, "I believe and I hope is expecting high results," presents her assumptions on the Ministry's expectations as well as her alignment with these assumptions.

The last part of Melita's narrative is grounded in discourses of teacher collaboration. In recognizing that "each teacher wants for their child to be the best" and emphasizing how "children are equal, in each classroom," Melita appraises teacher collaboration as a contributing factor to maintain these purposes. Her articulation of "Can you believe that…" operates as discourse marker to signal a noteable aspect of teaching. Melita's remarks about the "same daily, monthly, weekly [lesson] plan" that she and her colleagues apply reveals aligned teaching goals

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and approaches to the teaching of literacy. In the next section, I provide a summary of the main ideas and themes explored in this chapter.

Conclusion

This section discussed the findings on the theme "Literacy as 'school-bound literacy'" pertaining to the first research question: How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy. Teachers' narratives discussed literacy teaching and learning in the context of print-based literacy, while expressing their criticism on technology, the digital world, and institutional policies on curriculum and textbooks. The chapter opened with Enri's narrative, where he discussed both text and literacy in the context of print-based literacy. He also expressed disappointment in students' literacy 'level' and stated that they do not meet the requirements of the national curriculum. This finding is important because it provides information about the framework which informs teachers like Enri's understanding and pedagogical choices on literacy.

Bleta's narratives revealed moral contestation about her students' engagement with text and literacy practices. At first, she criticized students 'superficial' reading of print-based text to then only suggest that perhaps the content matter covered in school is uninteresting to the students. As Bleta discussed literacy as print-based literacy, she expressed criticism over the current standing of textbooks as well as the lack of teacher involvement in decision-making processes on content matter and pedagogy related to language and literacy instruction. Goga expressed criticism of textbooks, too. She voiced her concerns about burdening students with "too much theory" and she discussed the use of additional print-based resources as imperative to compensate for what the textbooks lacked. These examples illustrate how teachers' articulation of literacy and criticism of text remained within print-based discourses on literacy.

Teachers also discussed technology and digital literacy in disapproving terms. Fifi and Goga's narratives commented on the harm that technology inflicts on students' literacy. Their discourses on literacy further revealed that their understanding of literacy reflected exclusivity to 'print-based' literacy and didn't recognize alternative forms of literacy, such as digital literacy and multimodal literacy, as literacy. As such, all teachers did not discuss and recognize literacy practices applied and acquired through technology use and an engagement with the online world as literate ways of being and doing. Again, this is important because it reflects the dominant and institutional discourses on literacy and, ultimately, the students' experience in navigating in-and-out-of-school literacy.

Lastly, some of the teachers discussed literacy as phonological awareness. Melita viewed phonological awareness as the acquisition and mastering of literacy skills. As for Fifi, a dichotomous thinking of a 'literate' vs. 'illiterate' student was established early on in her narrative, depending on students' demonstration of syllable blending awareness. These findings are important because they illustrate a dichotomous thinking which limits students' to express their diverse literate selves and get recognized as 'literate' selves beyond the scope of print-based and school-bound discourses on literacy. I will return to these findings in the Discussion section in chapter 7 to consider the underlying meanings and possible implications of teachers' talk on literacy as school-bound and print-based literacy.

Chapter Six

Teachers' Pedagogical Philosophies and Practices in Teaching Literacy

The previous two chapters focused on how Kosovar teachers' make sense of literacy. In this chapter, I address the research question: How do these perspectives inform teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to literacy? The educational philosophies teachers adopt affect the course of the teaching and learning processes (Alanoglu et al., 2022). Furthermore, the educational philosophies teachers embrace describe their values and beliefs about education and teaching, determine the methods and techniques that teachers employ, and their approach in the organization of the classroom (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2012). In this chapter, composed of five sections, a section per teacher, the teachers' narratives describe their teaching philosophies. Each section opens with a narrative describing a teaching moment constructed from data capturing my observation of each teachers' lessons. Through these observations, I establish a sense of context for the teachers' narratives on their teaching philosophy, which are then followed with more information on their teaching methodologies and techniques, regarding literacy.

The first section of this chapter focuses on Melita's teaching. This section considers the following themes: student-centered teaching, teacher training, and assessment trends. In the second section, I present Goga's teaching practice, which centers on blackboard pedagogy and civic education values. The third section considers Enri's teaching philosophy, focused on a textbook-driven and teacher-centered pedagogy. This is followed by the section on Bleta, where I constructed the following themes: students' as knowledgeable meaning makers and assessment informed by students' learning styles. The last section focuses on Fifi's teaching philosophy and methodology. Fifi's narratives discuss themes such as authority, transition to middle school, and student independence. In each of these sections, I emphasize how their perspectives inform and

impact their teaching of literacy. I conclude the chapter by providing a summary of main ideas

discussed and discourses teachers engage in throughout the chapter.

Melita

I begin this section with one of Melita's teaching moments captured in my observation

notes. Melita took pride in the teacher training she had received since 2001 to diversify her

teaching methodology.

> **Melita:** I kom dikun' mbi një mijë orë trajnim. Shumë, që jon' t'panumrushme... Edhe, nuk kom lan trajnim pa shku, sado pak. Fati jem është që kur kemi studiu na nuk kemi pas liri t'shprehurit sa duhet. Gjithëherë t'mungon ajo! Thom "O këta bre le t'shprehen. Le t'folin. E pat mirë, se pat mirë.

> **Melita:** I have over a thousand hours of training. Many, that are countless…There was no training that I did not attend, somewhat. It so happened that when I was a student, we didn't have enough freedom to express ourselves. You'll always miss that! So, now I say "Oh, let them [students] express themselves. Let them talk. Regardless of whether they got it right or wrong.

Melita's lessons involved teaching and learning approaches that encouraged students'

participation. As Melita explained, her exposure to various trainings encouraged her to

incorporate creativity and allow exploration in her teaching. For instance, she would start class

by projecting a picture of the sky and asking students to note down everything they saw. After

that, a conversation about the planet and stars would ensue (Observation 5). Referencing her

training practice, Melita highlights the importance of students' active engagement in the learning

process. She frames effective learning and teaching as processes that grant students opportunities

to enact their agency as learners. Melita highlights the importance of students' active

involvement in the learning process, reflecting on her own experience as a learner in an

environment that lacked freedom of speech. Through her statement, "You'll always miss that,"

Melita articulates how her own missed opportunities as a learner have inspired her to prioritize

her students' meaningful participation in their learning. Concurrently, she frames her teaching

philosophy as rooted in personal experiences and nurturing students' holistic growth. Below, I share a vignette from Melita's classroom, captured in my observation notes. This observation of her work with the 4th grade students, and more to follow, aims to provide some context for the teachers' narratives on their teaching philosophies and methodologies.

It was early afternoon, and the 4th graders were settling into their seats. They arrived in class a few minutes ago. Although it was February, the sun was shining, and the classroom was warm and bright. Melita was by her desk, going through the teacher's book. The students I was sitting next to were chatting with each other. After a few minutes, Melita started checking the students' homework, one by one. As she made her way to the group I was sitting with, I could hear her making comments such as "Bravo!" "Well done!" as well as asking questions about why some students hadn't completed their homework. She eventually reached my group, briefly looked at their homework, and placed a grade 5 on each student's notebook. Melita then started taping some pictures on the blackboard. After she taped the last picture on the board, she turned to a female student sitting at the center group and asked, "What do you see in these pictures?" The student responded by saying that she could not see the pictures. "Come closer to the blackboard," reacts Melita as she waves in her direction. "So, what do you see?" she asks, while resting her hand on the student's back. "There are animals in all pictures, domestic and wild animals," answers the student. "Yes. Good job" replies Melita as she smiles and guides the student toward her seat.

"How would you call this collection of pictures?" asks Melita. "The tree of pictures," replies a male student. "Ahh," responds Melita, beaming while raising her arms. "What else?" she asks. "Animal pictures," responds Ariola, a student sitting next to me. Another female student, sitting in one of the groups by the windows answers "I'm seeing different animals." Melita invites her to get closer to the blackboard. "Some of them are domestic pets," states the student as she looks at the pictures. "Why do we call them domestic pets?" asks Melita. "They are animals that can be kept at home," responds the student. Melita, her hand placed on the student's back, starts walking with her toward their seat. Viola, a petite blonde-haired student with black-framed glasses, is called to the blackboard. Melita asks her about the benefits of domestic pets. Viola responds, "Animals like cows provide many products that people can use, such as milk, cream, and cheese." "Great job!" replies Melita.

At some point, Melita asks, "Why have I drawn the trees?" "Because a lot of animals live in the forest," responds a male student. "Why do they live in the forest?" is Melita's follow-up question. "Because some are wild animals, and they need to live in that environment." While nodding, Melita asks, "What is the purpose of these animals and the environment in which they live?" Most of the students are facing the blackboard and looking at Melita. No hands are going up. "Are there any benefits from these animals?" asks Melita. "They help to keep the air fresh," responds a male student. "Great answer," reacts Melita. "How do we breathe?" she asks. A student sitting at the front of the class raises his hand. He explains how breathing requires air inhalation. "What is air made up of?" asks teacher Melita as she walks towards her desk.

"Oxygen and carbon dioxide" is a student's reply. Melita goes on to explain how carbon dioxide is something that cannot be seen or touched. "How long does it take for trees to grow?" asks Melita. Aida volunteers to answer, "Up to 30 years." "30 years!" reiterates Melita, slightly raising her voice as if to emphasize the statement. "How long does it take for them to burn?" she asks. "One minute," answers a student. As Melita smiles and makes eye contact with me, she responds that it might take them, perhaps, a day to burn.

"Do the trees release oxygen when burned?" asks Melita, leaning by the windows. "No," answered several students. Melita nods. "Teacher, I thought we were discussing Nature and Man," says a male student sitting at the group by the door. "Yes, well, we combine the information from several subjects. We should do so when we can," replies Melita, to then ask, "What helps plants to generate oxygen?" "Air…water…," respond several students across the room. "Oh, I'm getting warmed up by the sun's rays," says Melita in a playful voice, patting her arms. "The sun…light," respond some students. "Well done," replies Melita as she walks towards the blackboard. Pointing to the pictures on the blackboard, Melita explains how "All of these pictures talk about the forest." She picks up the chalk and writes 'The forest' at the top of the blackboard. She shares some facts about the forest and then directs the students to the textbook to read a text discussing the forest (Observation 4).

This vignette captures Melita's typical teaching approach. She would usually begin class by grading students' homework, followed by an activity that involved asking questions about the lesson topic for the day. Here, she applies guided discovery, rooted in constructivism (Iswati & Purwati, 2022), where students actively participate in discovering knowledge. Melita's teaching entails giving students hints and feedback to guide them toward the learning objective (Mayer, 2004). She would usually use aids, such as pictures, in this case, to visualize the concepts and ideas to capture the lesson objective. When students would ask questions, Melita would mostly revert the question to them, positioning students as knowledge-holders and encouraging them to self-reflect and formulate an answer themselves.

The observation notes illustrate the teaching and learning atmosphere in Melita's classroom. To complement this, below I now provide an excerpt from the first interview with Melita, where she describes her teaching philosophy.

Melita: Ahh, filozofia jem. Mundohem me qenë sa ma e afërt, me qenë sa ma përkrahëse. Mu mundu me secilin nxëns me ba gjithëpërfshirje edhe gjithmonë kom

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qef me pas sukses edhe rezultat. Por, por, n'secilën…se na i vlersojmë nxansat. Unë…I vlersojmë n'lexim, i vlersojmë n'shkrim, i vlersojmë n'analizë, i vlersojmë n'pytje përgjigje, i vlersojmë o n'mnyra t'shprehurit, i vlersojmë…i kena listën e kontrollit. Ndoshta n'fund t'orëve mësimore ulna edhe thom qiky e ka bo këta këta edhe i vlerësoj n'mnyrën tem. Ja dha vetit 5 minuta për qat punë. Por, çka është e rëndsishme që po t'shqetson ma s'shumti si mënyrë vlerësimi? Testet, që krejt bota po i don e po vlersohet n'mnyrën maksimum t'mundshme. Fëmitë tanë n'Kosovë, i kom 15 nxansa që m'dalin me sukses t'mirë. Domethënë, 50% e klasës. 30 nxënsa jon' gjithsej. T'shqetëson ky sen se çdo herë mundohesh me mbrri. Për shembull, gjithë ata që e jep edhe i shoh pse t'njëjtën detyrë n'tabelë ma bon, afrona ngat tij ma bon. Kur e afroj testin i hup. I hup! Edhe tash une munona me vlerësu, mi marrë edhe elementet tjera edhe për me mrri n'i notë përfundimtare.

Melita: Ahh, my philosophy. I try to be as close as possible, to be as supportive as possible. To try to be inclusive with each student and I always want to have achieve success and results. But, but, in each…because we value students. I…We assess them in reading, we assess them in writing, we assess them in analysis, we assess them in questions and answers, we assess them in the ways of expression, we assess them…we have a checklist. Maybe at the end of the lessons I will sit down and say how did he do this, and I assess them in my own way. I give myself 5 minutes for that task. But what is important, that concerns you the most as a way of assessing? The tests, that the whole world wants them and [they] assess in the maximum possible way. Our children in Kosovo, I have 15 students who are doing well. That is, 50% of the class. 30 students in total. This thing worries you because you try every time to achieve [something]. For example, all that he [the student] provides, and I see that [they complete] the same task on the board for me, I approach him and [he gets it] it's done. When I provide the test, they forget it. They forget it! And now I am trying to assess, take the other elements to get them to a final grade.

Melita's articulation of her teaching philosophy begins with a description of her teaching qualities. She demonstrates grammatical agency using the pronoun "I" followed by "try to be" as she frames herself as someone who seeks to be "inclusive" and "supportive," aiming to achieve "success and results." Then, Melita's grammatical framing takes a turn as she employs a collectivist framing agency by using the first-person plural pronoun "we" to construct a shared teaching approach grounded in a discourse of assessment. Here, Melita frames "results" as test-based outcomes that drive and determine her teaching practice. Melita's shift from "I" to "we" as she begins to discuss normative institutional beliefs on conventional assessment approaches

describes a collective reality of teachers who are faced with a particular education philosophy; one which reduces learning to a test performance. She emphasizes this when she says, "What is important, that concerns you the most as a way of assessing? The tests, that the whole world wants them [tests] and [they] assess in the maximum possible way." Melita shifts from "I" to "we," because assessment is at the forefront of her mind, and she rationalizes assessment by articulating it as a practice relevant to all teachers' work. Melita's framing here positions teachers as situated within institutional frameworks that shape their pedagogical practices within established assessment approaches and limit their agency.

Melita's concerns about assessment are aligned with her teaching documented in the observation notes. She did begin most classes by employing an assessment-based pedagogical choice. More specifically, Melita openly and visibly recorded students' grades in their notebooks as she moved around the classroom. This is also exemplified in the observation notes above, where Melita focuses her attention on and gains insight into students' progress through individual grading. In our first interview, after I had observed a couple of lessons in her class, Melita told me how "There are occasions when I don't assign homework and students respond with "Teacher, we will come up with 10 questions about the lesson ourselves."" She described students' reaction as an outcome of the habit-forming around homework. Melita's pedagogical choice on homework shaped the classroom culture around learning and assessment and, subtly, taught students about the expectations and norms for how learning is measured and evaluated. Consequently, students internalized the expectation of assigned homework, leading them to assign it to themselves.

Referring to Melita's narrative on her teaching philosophy, she provides a mixture of agency in the narrative. At first, as she discusses several assessment approaches summarized in a

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checklist, she employs framing agency: "Maybe at the end of the lessons I sit down and say how did he do this, and I assess them in my own way." By using "I" repeatedly and emphasizing on "my own way," Melita frames herself as an agent in charge of her teaching approach. Then, as Melita begins to express her concern with the "world's" fixation on tests, the narrative diverges. Melita portrays herself as lacking agency, and her narrative evokes a feeling of apprehension. Here, Melita expresses some resistance towards an assessment-based education reality where teachers are stripped of their agency in order to fulfill education trends, which reduce teaching to a performance-based and managerial task.

Melita expresses concern over her students' performance on tests, stating that 50% of her students don't perform well. She explains that she uses alternative ways to "test" students' knowledge base that prove to be more successful than conventional testing approaches. In this articulation, Melita constructs herself as orienting to morality and doing what is best for students. As such, Melita resists normative institutional beliefs grounded in conventional assessment approaches by suggesting alternative means of assessment to prove her students' knowledge acquisition. Here, Melita constructs literacy as expansive and difficult to capture within the confines of a test. Nevertheless, her understanding of literacy remains within the confines of assessment, which measures students' *skills* on particular topics. Melita's assessment approach aims to expand the range of literacy skills that a test measures while simultaneously embracing the philosophy of assessment which considers literacy as *skills* possible to be captured within the confines of a test. Melita describes a 'teaching to the test' pedagogical approach, as she tries to ensure that her students achieve higher scores in a test.

I will now share some examples of Melita's alternative pedagogical choices, or as she says "her own way" of assessing students, captured in the observation notes, although these

alternative choices remain within the boundaries of viewing literacy as *skills*. Melita often used

authentic assessment techniques (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000) to evaluate students'

understanding and application of concepts in everyday experiences. For instance, she would ask

students to share a short amusing story from their own lives that taught them a valuable lesson.

She would then incorporate these details into a lesson about anecdotes (Observation 6). When

students were asked to define anecdotes, they had a personal reference point to draw from. On

another occasion, Melita prompted students to write about their favorite book and used their

responses to guide a discussion on a poem about books. During the discussion, she called on

certain students to explain specific stanzas of the poem that related to what they said about their

favorite book (Observation 10). These examples show Melita's intentions to apply "inclusive"

and "supportive" pedagogical choices that intend to "take the other elements" into account when

evaluating students' work. Furthermore, they show how Melita makes use of alternative

pedagogical choices to respond to her moral dilemmas. That is, she uses language to explain her

way out of being in the confines of conventional testing approaches. As a result, her choices

strengthen her position on morality.

Overall, Melita begins to contest assessment and its ability to "measure" students'

knowledge and skills but only articulates these challenges at a surface level. The PISA test,

which has become synonymous with education in Kosova, may have played a significant role in

shaping Melita's conceptualization of her students, literacy, assessment, and her pedagogical

choices. Considering that in recent education debates about education in Kosova, the PISA test is

viewed as the ultimate measure of success, for Melita, ensuring that her students are well-

equipped to success on a skills-based test like PISA may be a critical aspect of her work as a

teacher. Although her thoughts on her teaching philosophy are painted with a discourse of

assessment highlighting the neoliberal views on education, she tries to challenge such normative institutional views on assessment through some of her pedagogical choices. For example, the construction of knowledge in the tree activity, captured in the observation notes (4) above, considers students' out-of-school literacy and how they connect with what is being taught at school. Here, Melita mediates the meeting of the two. Her pedagogy positions students as knowledge-holders and considers literacy as being developed beyond the academic setting. As such, teaching is framed as a method of facilitating meaning-making through various bodies of knowledge and experiences. It is participatory in nature as the teacher and students co-construct knowledge, as exemplified in the tree activity. Furthermore, interactive activities add liveliness to the learning process. The following section focuses on Goga's teaching practice on literacy education, with a focus on promoting civic education values.

Goga

Goga has been teaching the longest in the teacher participants group. In our conversations, she would occasionally share vignettes about her teaching practice throughout the years. Once, as she was discussing the difficult teaching conditions in the 90s, she stated her concern about students' literacy *skills* nowadays. "They have many more learning opportunities, yet their reading and writing keeps deteriorating. I must ask students to read out loud, so that they at least rehearse reading in class." Here, Goga frames literacy as *skills* that require *practice* and training. When she employs the word "practice," she is referring to the recurring and consistent action of developing a *skill*. The rehearsal process intends to cultivate students' competence in reading printed texts. Goga hints at a transformed learning environment, speaking about increased access to information in current times, yet her views on literacy reflect similarities to a significantly different social context. Goga's lessons with the 7th graders often focused on grammar content.

Below I present a teaching moment from Goga's class, captured in my observation notes, which precedes Goga's thoughts on her teaching philosophy.

It's Wednesday, the weekday when Goga starts teaching later in the day. She starts the lesson by asking students to open their workbooks. "Have we talked about the verb with you yesterday?" she asks. "Yes," answer several students. "What class did you have before this one," asks Goga. "Physical education," respond a few students. "I can see that you're a bit disoriented," replies Goga. "Before we delve into today's lesson, who will tell us about the verb and its function?" she asks Nora sitting at the front of the room, raises her hand. Goga calls on her. Seated, with her school uniform on, Nora explains that the verb is generally placed at the beginning of the sentence. Goga widens her eyes and states that that's incorrect. Nora continues by clarifying that the verb describes the subject's action. As Goga nods, she calls on Mal, a petit male student wearing a red hoodie sitting at the back of the classroom, to give an example of a verb. He starts to get up, but Goga asks him to remain seated. "Play, learn, do," answers Mal. "Does the verb have categories?" asks Goga. "No," answered several students. "Right," she replies.

Leaning on the window, Goga asks students to quiet down, noting that they seem lively and chatty today. "Okay, what else about the verb" she asks. Nora starts speaking about verb conjugation. Goga asks students to think about what type of answer was that of Nora. There is no response. Some students look at her, and others' gaze is fixed on their desk. "It looks like you haven't studied this at all" says Goga. "We're going to practice it together," she continues. She asks students to go to page 88 on the workbook, explaining how they will work on some activities to practice using the verb. Goga instructs students to go through the text, identify the verbs, and take turns writing them on the blackboard. She calls on Arbër, a male student, to stay by the blackboard. Another student is called to start reading out loud. Arbër starts writing the sentence on the blackboard. "Don't write the whole sentence, just the verbs," reacts Goga. "Let's continue to identify the verbs," she adds. Several students start shouting the verbs, "talking," being the first. "What other verbs do you see?" asks Goga. "Have," respond a few students. Arbër writes both verbs down, then heads to his desk. Lea is the next student called to the blackboard. A male student reads the following sentence. "Comes, understands," respond a few students, and Lea starts writing on the blackboard, with her back facing the classroom.

Elena, sitting in the same group as I am, looks at a list of names and keeps track of who participates in the exercise. Simultaneously, she underlines the verbs discussed while keeping an eye on the list. She turns to Goga and mentions the name of the student who should write next on the blackboard, as she writes a plus (+) next to what seems to be Lea's name. A male student is called to the blackboard. With a smiley face, he picks up the chalk and directs his gaze to Goga. "Who will be reading next?" asks Goga. Edon volunteers to read. As he begins reading, he encounters the word "chameleon," which makes him laugh. Other students smile, and so does Goga, as she looks in my direction. The student at the blackboard writes down the verbs "had put, had won, had achieved." Goga looking at the blackboard, responds "Good, you can go back to your seat."

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Ana was the next student called to the blackboard. Edi, sitting next to Goga, is asked to read. He begins reading in a low voice, pausing in between sentences. Ana looks at the person on her rights and smiles. Goga asks Edi if he is underlining the verbs as he reads. "Share them with the rest of the class," adds Goga. Edi begins reading them aloud "complain, change…(pauses) had changed." Ana writes them down on the blackboard. "Are there other verbs in the sentence," asks Goga. "No," replied several students. Goga walks towards her desk and takes a seat. She instructs students to take turns reading the text out loud for the remaining time. Here and there, she interjects to ask questions and comment on students' input. Elena keeps track of who is reading by marking a + next to the student's name. When the bell rings, Goga collects her things, and we both make our way to the teachers' hall. (Observation 3)

The excerpt above describes a typical lesson in Goga's classroom, capturing her teaching approach and classroom dynamics. Goga would usually start class by asking students to summarize the previous lesson unit and would then use that information to introduce the new lesson topic. She would apply a chalk and blackboard pedagogy, where the blackboard serves as a teaching aid to provide content in a central location, and deductive grammar instruction (Brown, 1994), where the emphasis on grammar teaching is to help students understand and apply the rules. By employing a lecture-based pedagogical choice, Goga would moderate the pace of discussion to allow students to copy-paste on their notebooks the content displayed on the blackboard (Ball, 2017). This approach would regulate the communication dynamics with students, where the teacher would predominantly direct the discussion. Concurrently, the discussion would remain within the lesson topic confines, reproducing and seldom going beyond the content presented in the textbook. The repetition of information was viewed as an acquisition of new knowledge, as students were passively absorbing new information.

Like Melita, Goga conducted classroom participation evaluation in an open manner. In fact, she had students assist her in assessing classroom participation by adding the symbol "+" next to a student's name to document their participation rate. For instance, in the observation notes above, Elena was assisting Goga in grading students' observation as they practiced the

usage of the verb. Similarly, when Goga taught a lesson on adverbs, students were orderly called to copy-paste sentences of the book to the blackboard to then identify the adverb in the sentence. In this occasion, Edon was assigned the responsibility to keep track of students' participation and, occasionally, call on students with a documented lower participation in their list (Observation 10). By employing an active monitoring and engagement pedagogical choice, Goga was able to assess and address students' participation levels while, additionally, reinforcing a sense of shared responsibility to do so by involving certain students in the monitoring process.

I now provide an excerpt from the first interview with Goga, where she discusses her teaching philosophy with focus on civic engagement.

> **Goga:** Po, filozofia ime është ta formojmë një njeri t'shëndoshë për këtë shoqëri, për këtë komb, edhe për këtë vend. Një njeri i cili deri nesër ka me dhanë edhe ai kontributin e tij për këtë vend. Edhe gjithmonë i kujtoj ato thëniet e njerëzve t'mençur, thotë, "Gabimi i mjekut është nëntokë, kurse gabimi i një mësimdhënësi ec mbi tokë." Edhe filozofia ime e mësimdhënies është gjithmonë ta, ta krijojmë, si t'themi, ta krijojmë ose ta formojmë, jo ta krijojmë, po ta formojmë një njeri me vlera që deri nesër edhe ai t'jap kontribut për këtë vend.
> **Anemonë:** Kur po flisni për një njeri t'shëndoshë, çka po nënkuptoni me "me qenë i shëndoshë"?
> **Goga:** Njeri t'shëndoshë po nënkuptoj me mendje t'shëndoshë. Se thonë, "Mendja e shëndoshë në trup të shëndoshë." Me këtë po nënkuptoj një njeri i cili s'pari duhet t'ketë edukatë. Se shkolla nuk t'bën njeri, është veç një zanat. Mirëpo një njeri që s'pari duhet t'mendojë t'punojë drejtë, t'punojë për vendin e tij, edhe ta qoj këtë popull përpara se mjaft ka vuajtur.

> **Goga:** Yes, my philosophy is to form a healthy person for this society, for this nation, and for this country. A man who tomorrow will also give his contribution to this country. I always remember the sayings of wise men, they say, "The doctor's mistake is underground, and a teacher's mistake is on the ground." And my philosophy of teaching is always to create it, how to say it, to create it or to form it, not to create it, but to form a person with values that tomorrow he will also contribute to this country.
> **Anemonë:** When you talk about a healthy person, what do you mean by "being healthy"?
> **Goga:** A healthy person is a healthy mind. They say, "A sound mind in a sound body." By that I mean a man who must first have an education. Because school does

not make you human, it's just a craft. But a man who must first think of working righteously, working for his country, and to take these people forward before they have suffered enough.

Goga constructs herself as orienting to morality in discussing her teaching philosophy. She speaks of forming "healthy" students "with values" who will contribute to their society. Grounded in a discourse of civic education, Goga explains that teachers hold a great responsibility in the process of "molding" citizens to contribute to the betterment of their "country." She speaks in future terms, underlying the hopeful nature of the world that her students can work toward. Referencing a quote, she states that a "teacher's mistake is on the ground," emphasizing the long-term consequences of their potential errors. Here, Goga also speaks about a sense of duty that teachers have to society, as they can see the impact of their teaching in real-time. Simultaneously, Goga describes how through her pedagogy she tries to impart these moral and civic values to her students. For her, the embodiment of civic and moral values is demonstrated by serving one's country. This idea was often emphasized in Goga's teaching. For instance, when she was discussing a homework assignment on the poem "Çamëria" written by Bilal Xhaferri, she began telling students that there is no greater pain than fleeing the country during the war, "something that you probably don't remember." Goga made this passing reference without offering an explanation in the moment, and proceeded to discuss other aspects of the poem, assuming that the students comprehended the intended message of her statement (Observation 4).

In the narrative, Goga does not view schooling as an all-fulfilling process, stating that "school does not make you human." Here, she recognizes that learning, and ways of being and doing, are not isolated and reduced to the context of an academic institution. She recognizes the various contexts that teach and cultivate students' sense of self. She goes on by saying, "And to

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take these people forward before they have suffered enough." Goga now speaks to the collective

suffering of Kosova Albanians and an urgency of hope for positive change. More specifically, the

"suffering" refers to the recent war that Kosova people experienced and the trauma from which

they are recovering. Here, Goga speaks of a fundamental tenet of her teaching philosophy to

motivate her students to do "righteous" work and see themselves as an extension of society.

Concurrently, when Goga says, "a man…must first have an education," she frames education as

a resource to guide and support students in the process of doing "righteous" work. This is

exemplified in Goga's articulation "a teacher's mistake is on the ground," where she speaks to a

teacher's duty to instill a social righteousness in their students. Consequently, she frames herself

as the conduit for education.

At the time of this interview, Goga was a couple of years close to retiring from teaching.

This circumstance is reflected in her narrative as she frames her teaching practice as a

contribution to society, emphasizing how her teaching intends to prepare students to serve their

country as it copes with collective trauma and loss. Here, Goga articulates the historic context of

Kosova where oppressive regimes tried by any means to enforce only certain literacy and fought

any local literacy, let alone civic literacy that would enable people to practice their full humanity.

Goga's narrative discusses her teaching philosophy and, consequently, pedagogical choices as a

platform to encourage students to practice their full humanity in and out of school. Furthermore,

Goga frames her students' enactment of their literacy as a manifestation of freedom, which

allows them to embrace their humanity. Goga's narrative is painted with nostalgic and reflective

notes, narrated almost like a farewell letter filled with lessons learned across decades of teaching.

Across her narrative, by discussing her commitment to form socially responsible students, Goga

constructs herself as orienting to morality while framing herself and her students as agents of change in a society in need of change.

However, Goga's pedagogical choices documented in my observations contradict her teaching philosophy. When closely analyzing her pedagogical choices captured in the observation notes, Goga approach to teaching literacy focuses on replicating the textbook content. The observations of Goga's teaching, apart from the observations mentioned earlier, reveal that her pedagogical choices, as exemplified in the teaching of verb tenses and conjugations (as captured in Observations 1, 5, and 6), encourage students to reproduce the exact wording and structure of the textbook. Goga's teaching approach allowed for brief moments of exploration. During a lesson on reading and summarizing a poem about solitude, Goga prompted Edi, a male student, to expand on his interpretation of the phrase "love is delicate" in the poem. Edi responded by explaining how love can be intricate and vulnerable. Although this interaction provided a chance for deeper analysis, it remained surface-level (Observation 7). On another occasion, Goga tasked the students with a homework assignment that required writing an essay incorporating citations. During the lesson, Zana, one of the students, was called to read her essay aloud, focusing on the potential dangers of using smart phones. As Zana read, Goga occasionally stopped her to address pronunciation issues. Once Zana finished, Goga asked for her thoughts on the issue, to which Zana responded with "I think so." Goga then turned to the rest of the students, asking for their viewpoints. Arbnor, a male student, asserted that despite being aware of the dangers, he would continue using it. The conversation concluded here, and Goga returned to other students, asking for a volunteer to read their assignment aloud (Observation 2). The prospect of a more profound discussion was missed. Her additional pedagogical choices encompassed structuring the classroom to facilitate focused one-on-one discussions, maintaining

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an ongoing evaluation of students' participation in class, and implementing a regulated allocation of time per student/action.

Goga's view of literacy as *skills* to be captured through the copy-pasting and reproduction of textbook and blackboard information informs a pedagogy which positions students as passive participants in the meaning-making processes. Their participation is reduced to actions such as writing down information on/from the blackboard, and the question-answer method facilitated by Goga remains at the technical level of grammar understanding. While there are several opportunities to invite students to share practical examples of their application verbs from their daily in and out of school practices, as well as how verb and subject choices can shape their agency within societal structures, the teaching and learning of grammar remains technical and is framed as information to be memorized and its use to be neutral and independent of the socio-cultural context. Furthermore, although the grammar lesson presents several opportunities for Goga to explore the civic literacy which she highlights in her teaching philosophy, these instances are not seized. Goga's teaching philosophy on literacy is not translated into her actual teaching strategies. In the following section, I present Enri's views on education, who different from Goga, is the youngest teacher in the teacher participants' group of the study.

Enri

Enri conveyed a strong sense of pride in his profession as a teacher. "I don't know if there is a more sacred profession than teaching. I don't know if there is anything more sacred than going out in front of students and lecturing them. You teach them. You teach them. When you lecture in front of someone, it is an immense pleasure. It is also a privilege because they learn from you." Enri discusses teaching as a profound profession, allowing one to shape students' minds by imparting knowledge. He briefly discusses didactic teaching as his preferred teaching

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approach. In this articulation, Enri positions students as passive recipient of knowledge in the learning process. When asked about his teaching philosophy, Enri emphasizes the impact of the lesson topic on the planning process. Before sharing Enri's response to this question, I present a vignette describing one of his teaching moments with the 8th grade students, captured in my observation notes, to provide some context for his narrative on the teaching philosophy and methodology.

It's 8:20 AM on a Monday when I make my way to Enri's classroom. He is settling into his seat as I make my way to the back of the class. We nod and smile at each other. Enri continues writing something in the teacher's book and then gets up and walks towards the blackboard. "Today, we will begin with a recap of the ballad "Of one's heart" to continue with other assignments. Who will summarize the ballad for us?" asks Enri. "Or what is a ballad? Let's begin there," he adds. Era, a female student sitting at the front of the class, raises her hand, and Enri calls on her. She responds by saying that a ballad is a lyrical poem. Nodding, Enri reiterates the definition, noting that ballads can also be historical. Era, who is still standing up, starts to summarize it. At some point, a couple of students react, saying that Era is mixing the details of the ballad with another one they discussed last week. Enri asks Era to sit down and calls on Zana to continue. She begins by explaining that it was written by Ismail Kadare and then starts summarizing the ballad, her gaze fixed on the blackboard.

"Now, go to page 48, where you have the questions," says Enri after asking Zana to sit down. There is a low murmur coming from across the classroom. "Girls, continue to answer the questions," asserts Enri, clapping his hands while standing between the groups by the windows. There is some small group chatter here and there, and most students are writing in their notebooks. Enri goes back to his seat and asks the students to be quiet. "Read the ballad again so that you can understand what the answers are. Edon, are you working on the assignment?" asks Enri, looking at a group of male students sitting at the back of the class. "What do you expect, professor, that I keep up with the 5's [highest graded students]" responds Edon. Enri looks at him. The classroom is now quiet. Enri walks towards my seat and is now standing next to me. When he hears some chatter, he claps his hands and says, "Continue with the assignment."

"Good, Art, let's read the ballad again, and then we'll continue with the answers," says Enri. "Let's now listen," he adds, increasing his voice. "I said let's now listen," he adds, raising his voice. Art starts to read while seated and resting his jaw on his hand. He reads in a monotone voice. When he is done reading, several students raise their hands. "Who will answer the first question? Let's go Ela," says Enri. "Who is the lyrical hero of the poem," Ela reads from the book. "The soldier," she responds, looking at Enri. "Yes," responds Enri, who then calls on Ariana to answer the following question. "What are the central motifs of this poem?" reads

Ariana to then answer, "The main motifs of this poem are love, patriotism, and mourning a mother." "Somebody else…Have you answered the question differently?" asks Enri. He calls on Vlora. "Motifs such as love, pain, losing a mother, etc.," Vlora replies.

"The next question speaks about the soldier's request," asserts Enri. "What are some specific examples of the requests he made." Eron volunteers to answer. "Don't bury my black eyes," he responds. Art goes next, "To meet his daughter.". "Who is he homesick for? He is speaking about a truth. What is it?" asks Enri. "It's about seeing the girl with another man," responds Arta. Enri nods and continues to read question 5. "Do they have a different opinion?" he asks. Endrit says that the soldier speaks about the girl that he saw with another man." "Good," replies Enri, who then calls on Vera to answer the following question. "He speaks to the crows because of his sorrows," she answers. "Because his mother had died, and the girl was unfaithful with another man," adds Edona. "Good, let's continue with question 7," says Enri. "What stanzas have similarities in the ballad?" he asks. Era raises her hand. She repeats the question and responds with "All stanzas have similarities." Vera adds, "I think that the first and the second stanzas have more similarities than the rest of them." "So, there are some similarities between them," adds Enri. They go through two more questions and are interrupted by the ringing bell.

The observation notes above capture a typical lesson of Enri's. His teaching approach mostly involved a question-answer method, and there was not much space for students to bring in their agency and disrupt established interpretations brought forth by the textbooks. He would begin class by asking a general question to then direct students to specific questions at the end of the textbook unit. Students' work involved individual work, answering questions in their notebooks, followed by a big group sharing session. Applying didactic teaching (Sandoval et al., 2022), Enri structured the discussion order and the parameters within which the content matter was to be discussed. The discussion was mostly confined to the textbook content, and there was little room for students to express creative answers and incorporate local knowledge. Enri's pedagogical approaches paint his understanding of learning as disconnected from emotions and creativity. Furthermore, a pedagogy which largely accommodates discussion within the confines of the textbook precludes students from bringing their various literacy to the learning process. Here, the textbook served as the central aid for teaching and learning. Enri's pedagogy positions students as "empty vessels" who passively absorb information (Freire, 1996) as he remained the

central figure to facilitate the pace and course of discussion, which in this case was reproducing

the information of the textbook within its confines.

Below, I provide an excerpt from the first interview with Enri, where he is asked to

describe his teaching philosophy.

> **Anemonë:** Cila është filozofia juaj personale e mësimdhënies?
> **Enri:** Se tash nëse t'flasim për filozofinë është t'them pak më më i gjerë për filozofinë e punës. Mundohem, mundohem gjithnjë. Bëj përpjekje gjithmonë që të sqarojë në çdo detaj, çdo njësi mësimore, në mënyrë që t'mos le hapësirë që nxënësit të mendojnë pastaj se a po mund…tash çka tha me këtë fjalë, e tash unë nuk po e di, ose t'i vijë keq t'pyes për diçka që nuk di. Thjesht mundohem të jesh shumë i hapur me nxënësit. I hapur në kuptimin që ata të jenë të lirë të pyesin për çkado.
> **Anemonë:** Ta shpjegoj pak më shumë pytjen time. Cilat janë idetë që e ushqejnë, në një farë forme, e drejtojnë dhe e formësojnë qasjen tënde n'mësimdhënie?
> **Enri:** Po, natyrisht, ti duhet të përgatitesh, të lexosh paraprakisht se nëse vjen ti në klasë edhe nuk përgatitesh, nuk mund t'kesh edhe rezultate. Ne së pari, së pari, para se të vijmë te filozofia edhe ajo, së pari ne e shohim se cila është tema ose njësia mësimore. Edhe në bazë të saj, ne vendosim pastaj si të veprojmë. Se varet komplet nga njësia mësimore.

> **Anemonë:** What is your personal teaching philosophy?
> **Enri:** Now, if we talk about philosophy, it is a little broader, I'd say, than talking about work philosophy. I try, I always try. I make an effort to explain in every detail, every learning unit, so as not to leave room for students to think then whether they can…now what [did] he mean with this word, and now I do not know what…or to feel bad to ask about something I do not know. I just try to be very open with students. Open in the sense that they are free to ask about anything.
> **Anemonë:** Let me elaborate my question a little more. What are the ideas that foster, in some form, guide and shape your approach to teaching?
> **Enri:** Yes, of course, you have to prepare and read in advance because if you come to class and you do not prepare, you cannot have results. We first, first, before we get to the [teaching] philosophy and such, first we see what the topic is or learning unit about. And based on that, we then decide how to act. That depends entirely on the learning unit.

Throughout his narrative, Enri displays grammatical agency, despite not explicitly describing his

teaching philosophy. The narrative opens with Enri explaining how he and his students interact.

In asserting "I always try" twice, Enri emphasizes his attempt to conduct his lessons in detail to not leave room for uncertainty. He frames his students as hesitant to ask questions, and as such, his teaching intends to leave little room for confusion to avoid a feeling of discomfort. In this line of thought, Enri frames himself as an "open" teacher that students are "free to ask anything." There's some contradiction in his narrative as he explains his rationale for the detail-oriented nature of this teaching which leaves little room for questions to then suggest that students are open to asking about anything. Here, Enri's perception of himself and his pedagogical approach as "open" is not reflected in the remainder of his narrative and teaching.

Enri describes his pedagogy as adaptable and flexible. He articulates how his teaching choices depend "entirely on the learning unit," meaning that his pedagogical choices vary depending on the topic and context of the lesson. As depicted in the observation notes, sometimes Enri would begin class by asking open-ended questions about a text to then continue with structured content delivery. During one class session, he started the lesson by playing a song about love to then ask students how they made sense of specific stanzas. He incorporated students' responses to supplement his explanation of the song, while still placing an emphasis on correct answers and exerting influence over the learning process (Observation 2). In another instance, Enri started the lesson by writing a couple of sentences on the blackboard to then instruct students to individually convert these sentences into standardized Albanian. These sentences involved spelling variations and regional pronunciations to specific words. For example, the word "boy" was written in an alternative version sometimes used in some parts of Kosova ("djelmt" instead of "djemtë"). When a student corrected the sentence, Enri proceeded to elaborate how "somebody might say 'djelmt' rather than 'djemtë' due to a lack of language education (Observation 3). Here, Enri's used a language awareness pedagogical approach, rooted

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in linguicism, where students were asked to identify errors and make necessary corrections to gain a deeper understanding of standardized language rules and patterns; Enri, simultaneously, stigmatized non-standardized language use.

Drawing upon these examples in the context of Enri's description of his pedagogy as "open," teaching and learning are framed as unilateral processes where the teacher functions as the primary source of knowledge in the classroom, and students play a passive learning role as their answers are expected to involve minimal elaboration and are often based on memorization. By characterizing himself as an "open" teacher, Enri makes a moral stance about himself, suggesting that his teaching approach aims to make students feel comfortable in the learning process and avoid exposure to feelings of uncertainty. For instance, Enri exemplifies his students' thinking by saying "now what [did] he mean with this word, and now I do not know what…or to feel bad to ask about something I do not know." Here, Enri considers students' insecurity and uneasiness to ask questions or seek clarification about the lesson.

At first, when asked about his teaching philosophy, Enri refrains from detailing his teaching philosophy, prompting me to further clarify my question aiming to gain deeper insight into the values and beliefs that inform his teaching. He continues to describe the technical aspects of his teaching practice. Enri speaks from a standpoint of responsibility; a teacher's need to strive diligently to achieve results. He states that "before we get to [teaching] philosophy as such," the teacher should focus on the lesson topic. Here, Enri's teaching philosophy is conflated with teaching techniques used based on the particularities of a lesson and not as beliefs and values that inform his teaching practice. While this articulation hints at Enri's adaptable teaching approach, it can also mean that Enri has not reflected deeply about his pedagogy, which results in an incoherent teaching philosophy. In this articulation, Enri effects grammatical agency by using

the collective framing "we" to reflect a shared teaching approach with his colleagues. By using the pronoun "we" rather than "I," Enri makes a moral stance aligned with institutional discourses and expectations, rationalizing his choices as suitable by suggesting that they are like those of his colleagues. Enri's insistence on achieving results specific to the lesson topic also speaks to his sense of responsibility to align his teaching to systemic expectations set by the national curriculum. He explicitly articulated this in the second interview, maintaining that "we have to prepare a lesson plan based on the curriculum…we try to comply with the guidelines set in the curriculum." Here too, Enri adopts the collective framing "we" to emphasize a shared teaching approach.

The observation notes combined with Enri's narrative on his teaching philosophy illustrate a teacher-centered and textbook-driven teaching approach; the teacher serving as the central figure of knowledge and the textbook serving as the primary instructional material. Enri recognizes the significance of accommodating students' learning needs by fostering a culture of questioning, however, as recorded in the observation notes, he does not encourage opportunities for extended discussions and meaningful exchanges between students. Although Enri's pedagogical choice to ask open-ended questions leads to students' offering their input, without sufficient time for discussion, it hinders the exploration of alternative viewpoints. Moreover, Enri's teaching heavily relies on resources like the textbook to get to the "right" and "true" answer, which poses a challenge within the teaching context because it situates the notion of the "right" and "true" answer as existing outside of students' knowledge and understanding. Such pedagogical choices disclose an understanding of literacy as *skills* to be acquired through resources such as textbooks within academic education confines. In what follows, I present

Bleta's narrative on her teaching philosophy, characterized by student-centered approaches in grasping new concepts and engaging in meaning-making processes.

Bleta

Bleta's classroom dynamics were characterized by continuous interaction between her and the students as she traversed the classroom, moving from one side to the other. She rarely sat on her chair and was mostly standing next to students' desks, looking over their shoulders as they were engaging in an activity or interacting with each other. Her teaching focused on hands-on activities and positioned students as knowledge-holders. It was common for Bleta to respond to her students' questions with "Well, what do you think about it?" consistently seeking their insights before providing a response. Below, I present an excerpt from the observation notes on Bleta's lesson with the 5th grade students to precede her narrative on her teaching philosophy.

Bleta makes her way to the group sitting by the window, holding a blue shoebox in her hand. She asks the students to close their eyes and starts calling their names one by one as she places the box in front of each student. After all the students collect a piece of paper, Bleta makes her way to the other small groups. "Make sure you only collect one piece of paper," she states as she extends the box to a student sitting at the small group next to my right. A male student picks a pink piece of paper, and when he opens his eyes, he smiles. He looks over at another male student, also holding a pink paper, and waves the piece of paper, smiling. The other student smiles back. Bleta finishes distributing the remaining pieces of paper and then invites students to join her by the blackboard. Bleta picks a color, yellow, and asks the students holding a yellow piece of paper to go and sit on the group at the back, while pointing in that direction. As she continues to call on other colors, groups of students settle in different parts of class.

When students are seated, Bleta explains that they will assemble the sentences to form a short story. Still holding the shoebox, she looks over each group, and after seeing the color of their paper, she pulls out the remaining pieces of paper in that color and places them on their desk. At this point, some students are up, some lean on their desks, and most of them form a small circle and work together. Bleta moves from one group to the other. Shortly, the group of students sitting by the door says that they are done. The group I'm sitting next to, working with the yellow color, says that they are done, too. "We are the second ones," says a male student to the rest of the group as he looks in the direction of Bleta. The group on our right announces that they completed the assignment. "Can the ones who are done remain on their seats and keep quiet?" asks Bleta, who is now looking over the groups sitting at the front of the classroom, still working on the assignment. After a while, she walks to the group on my right and asks students to

practice reading the story until it's their turn to present their work. Three female students, sitting close to each other, look at the text in silence. The two male students of the group keep on looking in my direction and, occasionally, laughing as they exchange looks.

"Take your chair and start reading," says Bleta. "I won't continue with the lesson until everybody is quiet," she adds. The students stopped chatting. Bleta invites the group that finished first to start reading. A female student, with her hair in a ponytail, reads the story in a slightly high-pitched voice. At times, she stops and makes several attempts to pronounce specific words. From time to time, Bleta interferes by pronouncing the word, and the student repeats it after her. The student reaches a dialogue in the story and starts raising the intonation when reading some phrases. When done reading, Bleta asks, "What was the story about?" The student who was reading started discussing the characters of the story. "What were the characters talking about?" asks Bleta. "They were talking about a donkey," answers Lea. "Why did they think that the donkey was not wise?" asks Bleta while suggesting that the rest of the group can answer the questions. A female student raises her hand and says that the donkey wasn't considered wise because he carries things on his back. "Good," replies Bleta and then asks them to summarize the ending. Another student does so. "Do you think that's fair?" asks Bleta. "Well, teacher…" respond a couple of students from the group and then stop there. "The word 'idiot,' is that a good word?" asks Bleta. "No," answer some students. "So, this word shouldn't be used only for specific animals in the story because they're all individual animals," says Bleta.

Bleta now calls on another group to read their story. "The goat with 7 kids" starts reading a male student. When he is done, Bleta asks, "So, this is a classic tale you've heard growing up. Can you tell us about the story in your own words?" A female student starts to summarize the story, looking in the distance as she speaks, drawing circle movements with her hands placed on the desk as she speaks. "Does the story have a happy ending?" asks Bleta. "Yes," answer the students. "The content of this tale is very educative, showing how the little ones listen to their mother," says Bleta. The rest of the groups are called to read their stories next. The story of the group I'm sitting with ends with a note on virtues that everyone possesses. "How well! Great ending!" states Bleta. The student who just read says that the story shows that everyone should feel good about their virtues. Nodding, Bleta reiterates what he just said to the rest of the class. The last story is read by a male student in a sharp voice as he uses his index finger to keep track of the text. The rest of his group mates look in his direction as he reads. When he is done, Bleta asks "What type of beauty are they talking about?" "It is saying that if we do not lie…" respond a couple of students. "Our soul becomes beautiful," continues Bleta. "So, the story encourages us to tell the truth, even when it might hurt, rather than telling a lie," adds Bleta. The students nod. "What do we learn from tales?" asks Bleta. "Do we just read them without a purpose?" she adds. Most students are looking at her. She says that the messages encountered in these stories speak to the purpose of reading. "Do we learn about tales that lack a message, or are they about bad actions?" asks Bleta. "No," responded several students. Bleta states that learning from fairy tales encourages them to try their best and aim for a good ending. "This is it for today," adds Bleta, asking students to take a short break before continuing with the next class.

Bleta's teaching mostly revolved around group work activities. Throughout my

observations in her classroom, the composition of the student groups remained the same, as they

continued to sit at the same spot and with the same group of peers. The lesson plan captured

above describes Bleta's typical teaching approach. She would begin class with instructions on the

lesson topic, have students complete an activity through group work, followed by each group of

students presenting their work. Bleta usually concluded the lesson by offering a summary of

what was done and, occasionally, assigning homework. Students' pairing in small groups

(Bogard et al., 2018) promoted collaboration, offered students the opportunity to tackle more

complex tasks that they possibly could on their own, encouraged peer-to-peer communication,

and exposed students to various perspectives. I now present an excerpt from the first interview

with Bleta, where she describes her teaching philosophy.

> **Bleta:** Ëë une mendoj që njeri duhet mu mundu me ja arr' gjet secilit mas' mënyrën e vet t'mësumtit. Une shumë shpesh ju thom edhe prindërve, sa jon me mu se unë e kom mësu edhe psikologjine e secilit fëmijë gati veç e veç, se mësimdhanësi është edhe një psikolog n'vete. Se e mëson secilin problem veç e veç edhe tash jom në gjendje me dit secili mënyrën qysh e don të mësimit, sa kom nevojë me ju ofru; ndonjëherë shumë e largoj me qëllim që du me pavarësu. E kështu që n'çdo mënyrë duhet me u mundu me gjet atë; n'bazë t'qasaj edhe t'njohjes shkon edhe deri te shkallët e ndryshme të punës me ta, t'vlerësimit, varësisht prej asajna sa, sa arrijnë.

> **Bleta:** Hmm I think one should be able to ascertain each [student's] own way of learning. I often tell my [students'] parents that I have learned the psychology of each child almost separately, that the teacher is also a psychologist in his own right. Because you learn each problem separately and even now, I can know each [student's] learning preference, how much I need to offer them; sometimes I dismiss him [the student] a lot because I want them to become independent. And so, however I can I have to try and find that [learning preference]; on the basis of that and of knowing [students] we get to the different stages of working with them, of assessment, depending on how much, how much they achieve.

Bleta displayed grammatical agency throughout the articulation of her teaching philosophy. She

spoke of the teacher's role as like that of a psychologist, aiming to understand individual learning

styles that inform her teaching process. Her purpose is to familiarize herself with each student's

"learning preference." As such, Bleta articulated her awareness on the necessity and importance

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of understanding her students' learning strengths and opportunities for growth so that she can best support them individually. Her emphasis on "each student" reveals her philosophical leaning towards a teaching approach that recognizes and supports students' differences in understanding and making meaning of new knowledge. From this viewpoint, Bleta frames her literacy pedagogy as student-centered, focused on students' needs, interests, and learning preferences, and she expects students to be actively involved in the learning process. For example, when she says, "sometimes I dismiss him [the student] a lot because I want them to become independent," Bleta explains how the intention behind her pedagogical choices is to encourage autonomy and more self-directed learning. By not embracing a one-size-fits-all model of teaching and learning, Bleta displays a view of students' literacy repertoire as abundant and diverse which prompt the teacher to step back and allow the student to navigate their learning experiences through their own literacy' choices.

Bleta's description of a teacher's role as that of a psychologist reveals the theoretical underpinnings that inform her work. Grounded in educational psychology theory, more specifically behaviorism and cognitive theory, Bleta's teaching also focuses on students' thought processes and behaviors in the learning context. When Bleta describes how "sometimes I dismiss him [the student] a lot because I want them to become independent" she also articulates how she encourages students to not solely rely on the teaching aids provided by the teacher. Indirectly, teaching aids such as textbooks are not framed as the main source of knowledge. This is also exemplified in the observation notes. For instance, in a lesson centered on synonyms, Bleta used a visual aid featuring two individuals expressing their thoughts by making distinct language choices. She guided students to analyze the entire picture, including the language bubbles, and

encouraged them to understand the concept of synonyms within that visual context. This was followed by prompting students to offer their own examples of synonyms (Observation 2).

Bleta also frames her teaching practice on literacy as fluid, getting informed and molded by her observation of students' behavior and input: "You need to guide [the students] by attaining the necessary information." The observation notes point out the pedagogical choice of reflective questioning in several instances. For example, in one of her lessons, Bleta initiated class by inquiring about the students' recent reading materials and whether they have read to someone else. A male student responded by mentioning that he had been reading fairytales to his sister. Bleta then engaged the whole class by asking them to recall and name fairy tales they could remember, which resulted in responses like "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "Lushi si Askushi." Bleta proceeded to ask how fairy tales typically begin, to which most students responded with "Once upon a time." This was followed by an activity where students were tasked with arranging different components of a story in a chronological order (Observation 4). Here, Bleta employed a sequencing activity as a pedagogical choice to actively involve students in organizing and reconstructing narrative elements. In the second interview, Bleta summarized the rationale behind such pedagogical choices, explaining that her intention is to "guide students from time to time, by not providing them with ready to go information, but with the opportunity to think of solutions themselves."

Bleta's narrative is also painted with a discourse of assessment. She asserts that her teaching methodology is shaped by "assessment, depending on how much, how much they [students] achieve." Here, Bleta's narrative implies that it is universally understood what is meant by "assessment" and its influence over a teacher's pedagogy. In this articulation, Bleta constructs herself as orienting to morality by discussing her study of students' learning

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preferences as a necessary step to tailor and align the assessment to them. The observation notes did not highlight any explicit evaluation of students' work in Bleta's teaching. However, in the second interview, she went into greater detail, expressing her concerns about assessment, particularly emphasizing the PISA test:

> **Bleta:** Shumë keq m'vjen për shembull që n'testet [nxënësit] kanë dështu. N'qito testet ndërkombëtare, për shembull, n'PISA. Une nuk mendoj që nuk dinë shkrim-lexim te na n'Kosovë nxansat. Po, vetë qasja e pytjeve ndryshon prej vendit n'vend. Ndryshe mësohet, ndryshe e mëson një msuse prej një msuses tjetër e le mo një shteti prej një shteti tjetër. Une qitu sa e shoh, për shembull, edhe sa e kom pa…sa jom msuse qe 10 vjet, une e shoh që nxëns't dinë me lexu edhe me kuptu ata çka kanë shkru. Nuk është që nuk mrrijnë. Mirëpo vetëm fakti se qysh e elaboron pytjen ka shume rënsi te nxansat.

> **Bleta:** "I'm very sorry, for example, that they [students] failed in the tests. Take international tests, for example, PISA. I don't think that the students in Kosovo are illiterate. But the question formulation varies from country to country. Learning looks different, one teacher may teach it differently from another one, let alone one state from another. As far as I can see, for example, from what I've seen…as a teacher for 10 years, I see that the students know how to read and understand what they've written. It's not that they don't manage to do so. But just the fact of how you elaborate the question has a lot of influence on the students.

Bleta touches upon several issues here. She challenges the notion of illiteracy, asserting that literacy cannot be divorced from the context within which it is embedded. While articulating her thoughts on how "learning looks different" in different contexts, Bleta frames the PISA test as potentially favoring specific educational approaches and exhibiting cultural bias. She highlights the dissimilarity in teaching approaches across contexts, as different teachers use different pedagogies. Bleta's reference to her teaching experience, "as a teacher for 10 years," aims to establish credibility to her insights on students' literacy, which according to her are currently not getting captured within the PISA test. Although she criticizes the PISA test, she also embraces its underlying principles by regarding literacy as a set of measurable skills by a test. According to

her, through an emphasis on "difference" in relation to teaching approach and context, a test better attuned to the country's socio-cultural context could yield better results.

Considering Bleta's narrative on her teaching philosophy in its entirety, her emphasis on students' learning preferences challenges dominant narratives on standardized testing by suggesting the ineptness of a one-size-fits-all approach. Bleta's views on literacy as multiple and varied inform a pedagogy which is student-centered, and context bound. Her teaching approach is methodical and in its initial stage aims to get to know the student and their learning preferences. Bleta's knowledge of her students' literacy repertoires then informs and molds her pedagogical choices on literacy. In the next section, I focus on Fifi's teaching philosophy and provide some context on her teaching practice with 6th graders, as captured in the observation notes.

Fifi

Fifi took pride in the fact that she comes from a family of teachers. "The reason why I chose teaching was my parents. My father is a teacher. My aunt is a teacher. My sister is a teacher. I come from a family that has given all their contribution to education, which is why I have also chosen this [career] path. My father was the main influencer because I saw how respected he was." Fifi was inspired particularly by her father's career trajectory as a teacher to pursue teaching herself. Her views on teaching were formed before she began teacher training. She regards the teacher as a respectable figure among students and the community, and the emphasis on respect is discussed in her narrative, too. The excerpt from the observation notes together with Fifi's narrative on her teaching philosophy paints a picture of her pedagogy on literacy. Below I present one of Fifi's teaching moments with the 6th grade students captured in my observation notes. This lesson is focused on a story about a male student, characterized as a

troublemaker at school, and it presents the consequences that follow his actions. Here, we learn about Fifi's teaching approach as the story is read and discussed.

After jotting down something in the teacher's book, Fifi gets up and faces the class saying that today's lesson will focus on the story of Mironi. Fifi explains how the text describes the misdemeanor of a boy at school, adored by his peers because he made everyone laugh. "That's what students like," adds Fifi. "Yes," responded a couple of students. "We will find out if Miron reflects on his behavior," says Fifi as she walks toward her desk and picks up the textbook. She starts reading at a medium pace, standing up. Some students look at her, and others have their gaze fixed on the textbook. She is now reading a dialogue capturing a conversation on the characters' favorite colors. Two students sitting by the door are whispering to each other. "The story ends with three dots, which means that it doesn't have a particular ending, so we will come up with it together," states Fifi.

"Did Miron change his behavior after he got back to school, and would the teacher still reprimand him, or would she change her demeanor toward him," asks Fifi. Elza sitting in the middle group at the front of the class, hair in a ponytail, raises her hand. "I think he has changed [his behavior]. He said he likes purple to make the other students laugh," answers Elza. Fifi repeats the question. Another female student responds, saying she doesn't see anything problematic with Miron's choice of color as different people can have different preferences. Walking toward her desk, Fifi suggests they take an example. "Each classroom has a head teacher. If there's a problem - you may have small problems, and not big ones – when you address a problem with your head teacher, do they reprimand you?" asks Fifi. "I think they were right to reprimand him," answers Lira. "So, the teacher was right to reprimand him [Miron]. He reflected on his behavior and improved it. Does a teacher reprimand a student with good behavior?" asks Fifi. "No," replied several students. "So, the teacher reprimands students who disturb the classroom, hurl insults, etc.," adds Fifi. Some chatter ensues across the classroom.

Fifi asks for volunteers to summarize the story. Erblin volunteers. He stands up and starts speaking in a fast-paced voice, pausing between phrases. "Shall I do the summary, and then you can go next?" asks Fifi. Erblin nods. In her summary, Fifi characterizes Miron as a "troublemaker." "What's a troublemaker?" asks one student. "A problematic student," responds Fifi. As she continues speaking, students are chatting with their desk mates across the room. Fifi adds, "Maybe I don't need to do the summary at all." As the room quiets down, she continues. Fifi explains how Miron was expelled for a few days as he brought a snake to school, which was not poisonous but big enough to scare his classmates. When Miron returned to school, he was retrieved from his classmates, transforming into a quiet [used instead of sensitive language] person. A student asks what quiet means. "It's somebody who doesn't know how to speak and is hard of hearing. Okay, who wants to do the summary next?" asks Fifi. Erbin stands up and starts speaking. Fifi is standing next to his group, her arms crossed, looking at Erblin. "What colors did the students pick," she asks. "All of them." Responds Erblin, mentioning them one by one. "Why did Miron like the color purple?" asks Fifi. "Because the color of my shirt is of that color," responds Erblin, smiling. Everyone starts laughing, including Fifi.

"Okay, Eranda, let's hear the summary of the story from you. You are constantly looking out the window," says Fifi. "I'm interested to hear from students who are not volunteering," she

adds. "We just read the story, so you should know what it's about," says Fifi. Eranda looks at the desk and doesn't say anything. "Drit, let's hear from you," says Fifi. Drit, blonde-haired with black framed glasses, stands up and starts summarizing the story. He moves his hands back and forth as he speaks. As he starts talking about the colors, some of the other students interfere to correct him. When done, Fifi suggests continuing with a series of questions on the story. "The first question goes for Sara. How would Miron behave in class?" asks Fifi. Sara does not provide an answer. "In an awry manner," responds Fifi. "What did he bring to the classroom," asks Fifi. Several students respond with "a snake." Fifi asks a couple of follow-up questions. As Fjolla is answering, the bell rings. "Okay, this is all for today," states Fifi as she walks towards her desk, starts to gather her things, and we eventually head to the teachers' hall. (Observation 4)

The observation notes capture a typical lesson in Fifi's classroom. She would apply a direct teaching approach (McMullen & Madelaine, 2014), where communication was predominantly one-way, from teacher to student. Here, Fifi began class by giving instructions in the lesson, followed by her reading the story. Several students would be asked to read sections of the text aloud. Sometimes, Fifi would do so herself. She would then typically apply a question-answer method in the middle of the unit before asking for student volunteers to summarize the lesson. The question-answer method involved Fifi asking students the end of the unit textbook questions and questions of her own, which were always specific to the lesson topic. Fifi usually sought out students' input on a volunteer basis; students who expressed interest (by raising their hand) were called on to participate. She would read students' behavior for cues on acquired learning and this was exemplified by calling on 'prepared' students to respond. In this lesson, Fifi uses the story of Miron to illustrate her views on accepted behaviors in the classroom. The observation notes illustrate a pedagogy of literacy which reproduces textbook information and words/sentences provided by the teacher, where the students role is to memorize the information and use it for answering specific questions. Literacy learning is translated into the development of a set of isolated *skills*, as the discussion is confined to the textbook content.

Below, I present an excerpt from the first interview with Fifi where she discusses her teaching philosophy to provide a more extensive understanding of her teaching philosophy and methodology.

> **Anemonë**: Cila është filozofia jote personale e mësimdhanies.
> **Fifi:** Për me qenë një mësimdhanëse njëkohësisht edhe shok edhe autoritar për një nxënës, fillimisht duhet të jetë qëndrimi. Në rast se nxënësit e shohin një qëndrim t'mirë te një mësimdhënës, do të thotë, sado pak reflekton edhe tek ata edhe i bon edhe ata që me dashtë landën tane. Sepse na jemi cikli lëndor, kështu që me mësuse ma ndryshe, sepse me mësusen lidhen jashtëzakonisht shumë. Ata i konsiderojnë edhe si prind. Ndërsa te cikli i lartë është pak më ndryshe, sepse kalojnë prej një mësuse kalojnë në dy-tre mësimdhënës, po megjithate ajo që fëmija, do të thotë, e sheh te një mësimdhënës, në rradhë të parë është qëndrimi i tij. N'rast se e ke një qëndrim të mirë, në raste të tilla duhesh të jesh tolerant. Ka raste, do të thotë, kur ti duhet, vendos, me caktu një kufi se deri ku, po megjithatë besoj se ja kom arrit deri dikund.

> **Anemonë**: What is your personal teaching philosophy?
> **Fifi:** To be a teacher, at the same time a friend and an authority figure for a student, you must first have a certain stance. If the students see a good stance of a teacher, it means that to some extent it reflects on them and it makes them love your subject. Because we [middle school teachers] are the subject cycle, because with [primary education] teachers are different, because they [students] are extremely close to the teacher. They also consider them as parents. Whereas in the upper cycle [middle school] it is a little different because they go from one teacher to two or three teachers, but still, what the child, that is, sees in a teacher, in the first place is his demeanor. In case you have a good stance, in such cases you have to be tolerant. There are times, that is, when you have to, you decide, set a limit to how far, but I still believe that I have made it to some extent.

Fifi's narrative reveals a philosophical leaning to behaviorism, viewing the teacher as an authority figure in the classroom. Fifi articulates that a teacher "must first have a certain stance," to then suggest that the stance entails characteristics of both "a friend and an authority figure." Here, Fifi presents a philosophical orientation to behaviorism, implying that her authoritative behavioral traits "reflect" on her students and encourage them to "love" the subject. Fifi describes the teacher as a class 'manager' whose authority influences student behavior. At first,

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she speaks about the "teacher" in a general sense as she doesn't employ a personal pronoun to refer to her teaching approach. However, eventually, she employs a collectivist framing agency by using the first-person plural pronoun "we," to construct the middle-school teachers' shared approach and sense of responsibility to be both a "friend" and an "authority" figure in their teaching practice.

The discussed teaching approaches were further illustrated in the observation notes. In a lesson focused on pronouns, Fifi starts the class by reviewing the previous lesson, asking students about the content discussed. Positioned at the front of the classroom next to the blackboard, Fifi engages with students. A few students raise their hands, and Fifi calls on Etrit to share his response, which involves identifying names in a chapter in Greg's Diary and substituting them with pronouns. As Etrit begins reading, Fifi attentively approaches his desk and observes him while he reads, despite Etrit's slightly shaky voice. Once Etrit finishes, Fifi acknowledges his efforts with a positive comment, "good job," before moving to the blackboard to write 'pronouns and their types' (Observation 5). This teaching moment demonstrates several pedagogical choices and behaviors, such as Fifi employing a scaffolded approach by reviewing the previous lesson and expanding upon it, her management of the classroom by directing the reading activity while fostering a climate of order and discipline, and her display of supportive behavior by providing positive feedback ("good job") to Etrit.

On another occasion, Fifi employed the pedagogical approach of predictive summarization, asking students to summarize the main elements of a story and make predictions about its ending. First, she read a portion of the story "The book about the happy prince," occasionally pausing when she heard chatter in the classroom and maintaining eye contact with students until the chatter ceased. She then asked for student volunteers to summarize that portion of the story to

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then seek students' thoughts on what would happen next in the story. In doing so, Fifi asked direct questions such as "what will he do next?" to guide students to reflect on key elements of the story. She facilitated the discussion around the story's prospective outcomes by calling on different students to offer their ideas and noting them down on the blackboard (Observation 9). Fifi employed this pedagogical choice on another occasion (Observation 3) as the class engaged with another story. On both occasions, Fifi's focus was on supporting students to develop reading comprehension skills by using key information of the text to make reasoned predictions.

In the second part of the narrative, Fifi draws a distinction between the single-teacher model in primary education and the subject-teacher model in lower secondary education. As a 6th grade teacher, she was working with students who had just transferred to middle school. She emphasizes the significant shift students experience as they navigate the new learning environment, different teacher-student interpersonal dynamics, and the challenges that come with this transition. According to Fifi, the middle school teacher's stance, meaning less individualized attention to devote to each student, illustrates the nature of this transition. Fifi frames "stance" in positive terms, as a key component for effective teaching. Here, she articulates her teaching norms and expectations on students' behavior. To this end, students' behavior is regulated to meet these norms, and this is the philosophy that guides Fifi's teaching of literacy. Rooted in behaviorism, Fifi's pedagogy aims to influence how students react and behave in the classroom. Literacy learning is reduced to the development of isolated skills which students primarily undertake through their behavior, such as summarizing and predicting texts, active listening, and reading with fluency. Ultimately, Fifi's articulation of a "stance" also embraces neoliberal discourses of education, the idea to prepare students for an order of life where behavior is expected to be standardized and figures of authority to be respected.

Fifi's narrative and the observation notes on her teaching paint a picture of Fifi's understanding of literacy and her pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. She believes in a behaviorist philosophy of teaching and, as such, Fifi emphasizes the importance of her "demeanor" to shape and reinforce students' behavior and learning outcomes. Fifi also uses direct instruction techniques to impart knowledge and skills to her students. She describes students as in need of guidance to acquire certain attitudes/behaviors that mark the transition to a learning context where independence from the teacher is necessary. Fifi frames demeanor as an inspirational trait that students look up to. Fifi also makes a moral stance about herself, describing her intentions to inspire her students through her teaching approach as aligned with normative morals on teaching and, consequently, what a teacher's role should be about in the classroom.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the various teaching philosophies that shape Kosovar teachers' instructional practices as it aimed the answer the following research question: How do teachers' perspectives on literacy inform their pedagogical choices? The chapter was organized into five sections, each section focused on a specific teacher. I analyzed teachers' narratives in the context of their teaching moments captured in the observation notes. I constructed several themes, the main ones revolving around a textbook-driven pedagogy, literacy as memorization of information, assessment-oriented literacy instruction, the construction of literacy as "skills" vs. "practices," and teacher-centered pedagogies.

The chapter opened with Melita's teaching example and her narrative on the teaching philosophy. She emphasized the necessity to create opportunities for students to actively participate in the learning process. The teaching activities were characterized by using teaching

props and the blackboard served as a central means to facilitate the teaching and learning processes. Melita's narrative was also painted with concern over assessment trends and their impact on shaping her teaching approach. Here, her philosophy was to design alternative assessments to accentuate students' strengths. Ultimately, Melita articulated literacy as skills to be captured within the confines of an alternative test. Like Melita, Goga utilized the blackboard as a teaching aid where teaching content was centralized. Her teaching philosophy fostered civic education values and oriented to morality in describing a teacher's responsibility to contribute to society through their teaching. Literacy was constructed as skills to be memorized and reproduced through reliance on textbooks. Literacy learning was limited to the confines of the textbook.

Bleta described her teaching approach as informed by students' learning preferences. Her teaching approach involved the application of creative group activities, where teaching and learning took place in a small group session, to then transition to a big group session, where Bleta took on a more prominent facilitation role. Her emphasis on different learning preferences acknowledged students' various literacy repertoires and positioned students as knowledge-holders in need of guidance to materialize their literacy. On the other hand, Enri structured learning activities in a sequential manner mirroring the textbook. He was the central figure in the teaching process, regulating the order and degree of student participation and content delivery. Similarly, Fifi applied a direct teaching approach, and the textbook was the primary resource to facilitate learning. Both Fifi and Enri typically applied a question-answer method to summarize the lesson and answer the questions at the end of the textbook unit. Furthermore, they both described literacy as skills to be acquired within the confines of a textbook.

This chapter sought to describe Kosovar teachers' pedagogical practices in teaching literacy. In the following chapter, I present a summary of findings, how they relate to relevant current research, this study's limitations, and the implications for policy and practice in literacy education in Kosova and beyond.

Chapter Seven

Discussion

An interest in studying literacy education emerged when I came across Paulo Freire's book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996) during my first year in graduate school. I felt seen on Freire's example of the banking model of education. I had struggled to articulate my education experience in Kosova up to that point; I was aware that most of my education journey had involved me taking on a passive role throughout it. Freire's articulation of "banking education" resonated with me. His work was an introduction to critical work in education studies. From there, I began to dig deeper into his work and that of his collaborators. I came to understand that literacy doesn't only encapsulate print-based literacy; that a more diverse and sensible representation of literacy takes the form of litera**cies**, highlighting the many literacies practices that people engage with/in and use in their processes of being and becoming. These realizations made me intensely curious about Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy education and their pedagogy in literacy education. With that in mind, I began this study seeking answers to the following questions:

1. How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy?
2. How do these perspectives inform teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to literacy?

Drawing on a New Literacy Studies and Critical Literacy theoretical framework and Critical Narrative Analysis, I examined how these teachers understand literacy and how this understanding informs their teaching. In this final chapter, I summarize the findings that attempt to answer the research questions. I organize these findings in correspondence with each research question. In what follows, I provide an analysis of the key findings, where I also offer my

recommendations. Then, I discuss the implications for future research in literacy education. I conclude the chapter by addressing this study's limitations and sharing my final thoughts on this work.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

Literacy as Standardized Language Learning

Chapter four focused on the first research question: How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy? At the heart of this chapter lay teachers' framing of literacy as standardized language learning, referring to the complexity of literacy and language instruction in standardized Albanian in a Gheg dominant society. Teachers' narratives were imbued with moral contestation as they articulated their standing in literacy and language teaching. A few teachers expressed an insistence to teach "the words of the book," while aligning their views with normative and dominant ideologies on language. For instance, Melita and Enri maintained that students should use 'correct', meaning standardized Albanian, language at school. Teachers' narratives also uncovered the tension and obstacles that they face in relation to their language and literacy teaching choices as they considered their students' struggles with "speaking the right language" within academic settings.

Teachers' insistence in centering language teaching and learning on textbooks and, as such, confine literacy to standardized Albanian language revealed a social infrastructure and larger discourse of competence on literacy. Under such framings, literacy was articulated as skills that can be acquired and reinforced through an exposure to specific language practices found in textbooks and within school grounds. This understanding of literacy rendered the teaching and learning approaches aligned with a banking system of education (Freire, 1996). Teachers were

positioned as the knowledge-holders who deposit knowledge and "current" language practices into students' mind. More specifically, the findings indicate that students' passivity is pre-determined by socio-cultural and linguistic factors, as students live in a context where their home and community language variations differ from that taught in school. For instance, Fifi articulated the need for a pedagogy of correction toward students' language mis/use, positioning teachers as agents that uphold and foster a "correct" use of language. As such, students were predisposed to being viewed as *canisters* to be filled with the standardized language variation. Furthermore, the findings indicate that students' agency is subjugated by institutional expectations as they are limited in incorporating their existing literacy, ways of speaking, being, and doing, while navigating the school language restrictions.

Teachers' stance on literacy as standardized Albanian should be understood in the context of the assessment and curriculum demands, as they influence the way literacy teaching is framed, discussed, and applied. Since Kosova's participation in the PISA test in 2015, the public has been very critical of teachers' work. Following the 2015 PISA results, the statistic that over 80% of Kosova's 15-year-olds are functionally illiterate (Shahini, 2016a) has become widespread. Its *normalization* has reinforced dominant discourses on literacy and has framed the national discourse on education in a dichotomy of a "literate" vs "illiterate" student population. The public scrutiny and questioning of teachers' expertise have affected teachers' perceived agency within the classroom. The findings reveal that teachers were hesitant to contest standardized language use in school, and they were prone to adopting dominant discourses on standardized Albanian.

This study also found a consistent pattern of teachers' insistence to keep their teaching within the parameters of existing textbooks, even if, at times, teachers were critical of them.

However, teaching within the parameters of textbooks allowed for teaching grounded in standardized Albanian language and, as such, to conform to and maintain systemic expectations on teaching language and literacy. Melita's statement "I've told them [students] "Please, use the words of the book as much as possible" epitomizes the inclination to restrict education to the confines of textbooks. This finding is in line with Street's (1984) "autonomous" model of literacy, which works from the assumption that literacy is a set of skills and competences autonomous of social context.

Furthermore, teachers' language suggested adoption of dominant and institutional discourses on standardized Albanian as their own set of beliefs can also be understood as a passive acceptance of their role within the education system and society. This discourse adoption is most observed in the tension that is caused in teachers' articulations on language and literacy. For instance, teachers like Bleta and Goga vocalized their empathy towards students' struggle with navigating two language variations, while simultaneously highlighting that learning and speaking in the standardized language variation is imperative. The findings reveal the morally contested struggle teachers face over students' engagement with standardized Albanian language, and, simultaneously, teachers' feeling of obligation to preserve a language variation which doesn't fully represent their students' ways of speaking and being. The findings also indicate how teachers' narratives were oriented to morality, as they navigated their narratives to widely accepted morals in society, a dominant perception of standardized Albanian language as the superior language variation.

Simultaneously, it is important to note that teachers' insistence on having their students learn standardized Albanian could be interpreted as a desired goal to provide students access to the language power and its social futures in a Frerian sense. Teachers' narratives articulated the

fact that social categories, which are formed by ideologies related to standardized language, impact one's personal and professional trajectory. As such, teachers' determination to expose their students to the language of power, standardized Albanian, could be their way of preparing their students for a reality which values them based on their possession of and proximity to standardized language. In line with Baker-Bell's (2020) work, the findings highlight the importance of literacy and language education initiatives to consider critical questions concerning the purpose of literacy and language education in the current social and political context, the possibilities of moving toward more holistic approaches to language and literacy education that view students' various literacies and linguistic practices as interrelated, and the pedagogies that these considerations necessitate. In the following paragraphs, I will outline a series of practical recommendations aimed at addressing the identified issues in relation to language and literacy.

Teachers' articulations on literacy teaching within a standardized language framework invite a conversation about the teacher preparation programs and their approaches to the construction of language and literacy. Currently, the Faculty of Education provides courses about Albanian language and spelling, which aim to assist pre-service teachers to enhance their understanding of the principles and rules of standardized Albanian spelling, along with their practical application. Furthermore, courses on Albanian language spelling focus on the difficulties of the correct implementation of standardized Albanian language not only in school, but also in society at large (Fakulteti i Edukimit, n.d.). This framing of standardized Albanian presents a need to approach articulations on literacy and language education more holistically. Hence, the Faculty of Education could expand the theoretical grounding of current courses on literacy and language to include sociocultural, more specifically sociolinguistic viewpoints, to

question how language has been used to establish and uphold hierarchies within in the educational system and beyond. This course could unpack language ideologies, discuss holistic approaches to language instruction, and explore the use of language as a social signifier within educational contexts. Furthermore, pre-service teachers should be guided to reflect on curriculum enrichment possibilities and ways to incorporate various forms of literacy and language within the curriculum.

Lastly, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology in Kosova needs to consider the development of inclusive language policies that acknowledge and value linguistic diversity while still aligning with academic criteria. In early 1970s, the establishment of the University of Prishtina meant access to higher education in Albanian, which also symbolized Kosova's autonomy within Yugoslavia (Kostovicova, 2005). Coupled with the adoption of the standardized language variation mainly reflecting the Tosk dialect of Albania, Kosova aimed to develop a national identity, within and different from Yugoslavia, through the means of language. Yet, over fifty years later, the adoption of standardized Albanian in Kosova has failed to bring linguistic unity and the Gheg dialect remains the dominant spoken language. Kosova's example illustrates how language cannot be imposed on people. On the contrary, it is through existing home and community language and literacy practices that students can further develop and enrich their already literate selves (Barton, 2017). Hence, the findings of this study suggest a need to reevaluate the national objectives on language and literacy education and reconsider decisions like the recent one by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology to align Kosovo's ABC book with that of Albania (Ahmeti, 2022). In the following section, I shift the focus to another critical finding, teachers' articulation of literacy as print-based and school-bound, which was thoroughly explored in chapter 5.

Literacy as Print-Based and School-Bound Literacy

Chapter five also aimed to answer the first research question: How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy? This chapter was primarily concerned with teachers' framing of literacy as print-based and school-bound. Teachers' narratives constructed literacy as skills whose proximity to school-grounds deemed them valuable. Furthermore, teachers' narratives suggested that textbooks are instrumental in cultivating literacy skills and facilitate their functionality. Within this context, literacy was characterized by a dualistic viewpoint, one of 'literacy' vs. 'illiteracy', which painted teachers' insights on literacy, language, text, and pedagogy. For instance, Goga spoke about the lack of reading among her students due to their increased engagement with technology, among other factors, to then suggest that she applies a read aloud pedagogical approach so that her students can practice reading print-based text.

The findings indicate that teachers articulated literacy within a framework of space and time. In the context of teachers' narratives, the concepts of 'literacy' and 'school' were inextricable, meaning that literacy primarily materialized and sprang into existence in the school setting. Teachers expressed concern over students' level of reading and comprehension, which was always discussed in relation to print-based books. They used words/phrasing such as "read a page," "read aloud," "master reading," "read a text" to articulate their dissatisfaction with students' reading interest. The study results point toward the conclusion that teachers consider textbooks as the exclusive avenue for knowledge transfer. In the context of this assumption, teachers constructed textbooks as a principal and substantive resource for students' acquisition of knowledge. While teachers like Bleta and Goga criticized textbooks for being theory-centric and filled with errors while also grounding their teaching on them, especially Goga, teachers like Enri framed literacy education as directly impacted by both teachers and students' contact and

interaction with printed texts. The findings suggest that teachers view the enhancement of students' literate and linguistic skills as a direct result of the exposure to printed texts.

The evidence in the study supports the idea that teachers' strong reliance on textbooks as a principal resource for knowledge frames textbooks as modalities for linguistic and socio-cultural control. This finding suggests that teachers adopt a textbook-centric approach to maintain greater autonomy over literacy and linguistic content. In accordance with this finding, Luke et al.'s (2013) work revealed that textbooks can become the vehicle dictating the scope and nature of students' reading and a tool for monitoring and controlling classroom literacy events. The findings indicate that teachers used textbooks to foster specific approaches to literacy teaching, such as isolated grammar instruction, dictation, text-centric instruction, confining the discussion of concepts and ideas within print-based text. This finding aligns with Street's (1998) articulation of the autonomous model of literacy, which views literacy as autonomous from the social context.

Previous research (White & Hungerford-Kresser, 2014; Teichert, 2022; Wohlwend, 2009; Gee, 2009; Marsh, 2007; Waring, & Bentley, 2012) suggests that students are increasingly engaging with literacy practices such as social networking, video gaming, and blogging, which afford them opportunities to engage in social discourse, enact their agency, and foster new insights. In this study, teachers' narratives do not view such platforms and the practices that they facilitate as valuable and influential in fostering students' literacy. This finding is notable because it illustrates a narrow understanding of literacy, while also providing an avenue for further exploration. In light of these findings, it is crucial to consider practical recommendations that can drive positive change.

While teachers maintained a view of literacy closely associated to print-based text and literacy, they were open to conversations on a broader view of literacy. In casual conversations outside lessons and interview instants, teachers were curious about my learning experience in the U.S. I didn't elaborate extensively on my thoughts on literacy as I was concerned about influencing their response to the interview questions. In retrospect, I understand that my lack of response or depth might have produced a similar effect to what I was trying to mitigate. However, during these casual conversations, I did observe teachers' openness to considering new and alternative ways of thinking about literacy. In the context of structural interventions, offering informal teacher-training programs within school premises, even in the form of discussions, could be beneficial in discussing and considering literacy framings and pedagogical approaches beyond a print-based perspective. These discussions could also serve as an opportunity to encourage teachers to begin to theorize PISA results and students' in and out-of-school literacies as the basis for reading, viewing, and studying alternative forms of practice. Furthermore, teachers could be encouraged to use supplementary materials to bridge the various student literacies in the learning process.

The professional development support offered to teachers should be married with critical conversations on notions such as 'literacy' and 'illiteracy'. The findings indicate a dominant dichotomous thinking over these two concepts in teachers' narratives, which frequently recycle dominant and institutional discourses on literacy. Building upon this, on-the-job coaching could ensure to support teachers' integration and application of pedagogies which account for students' various literacy. Vasquez's (2004) pedagogical approach of social critique, social analysis, and social action could be a useful starting point for teachers to reflect upon notions of literacy and teaching and guide their students towards raising questions, studying, and considering action in

relation to new ideas and literacy practices considered at school. Now, I shift the focus to the findings discussed in chapter 6, which looked at teachers' pedagogical choices in teaching literacy.

Teachers' Pedagogical Philosophies and Practices in Teaching Literacy

Chapter six focused on answering the second research question: How do teachers' perspectives on literacy inform their pedagogical choices? Each teacher's section considered their teaching philosophy and pedagogies in the context of their teaching moments captured in the observation notes. The central themes of this chapter were teachers' preference for textbook-driven and blackboard pedagogy, which mainly remained in a view of literacy as print-based. Furthermore, teachers' narratives discussed literacy instruction from an assessment perspective, while also constructing literacy as "skills" rather than "practices." Lastly, some of the teachers' narratives articulated a preference for teacher-centered pedagogies.

Teachers articulated their teaching philosophy and pedagogies in agentive terms. Their narratives were imbued with a sense of influence over decisions on curriculum and teaching. The findings reveal that when teachers discussed matters of assessment, they situated themselves as conditioned by institutional expectations to make teaching choices beyond their preferences. Teachers like Melita and Bleta articulated a sense of obligation to tailor their teaching in ways that supported students' performance in tests. The findings suggest that although teachers like Melita and Bleta articulated more comprehensive views on literacy, they primarily viewed literacy as a mental rather than social phenomenon. Bleta even described herself as a psychologist. This finding is notable because it shows that even teachers who were attempting to approach literacy more broadly, their articulations remained within skills-based approaches to literacy education. Concurrently, Melita articulated her intentional inclusive assessment approach

to encompass her students' diverse literacy practices. In doing so, Melita highlighted that a more holistic and inclusive assessment approach can account for students' knowledge that a standard assessment approach might overlook.

The findings also reveal a teachers' focus on blackboard pedagogies and a high reliance on textbook content. For most teachers, the blackboard served as a tool to centralize knowledge sharing and a platform to model the copy-pasting of information from the textbook to students' notebooks. For instance, Fifi and Goga facilitated most of their lessons by using the blackboard as a teaching tool. In Goga's case, a blackboard pedagogy allowed her to regulate the communication dynamics with students as she directed the discussion. Furthermore, the study found a strong association between teachers' reliance on textbooks and little opportunity for students' potential questioning and disrupting of textbook formulations; as such, positioning students as passive recipients of information while constricting opportunities for contextualizing new knowledge and information to existing literacy practices. The findings suggest that teachers leaned more towards conventional teacher-student roles within the classroom, with the teacher taking on the knowledge holder role and students being positioned as the knowledge receivers. This finding aligns with Freire's (1996) "banking education" model, where learning occurs primarily through didactic methods such as lecturing and textbook-based instruction.

The findings also demonstrate that teaching philosophies were predominantly grounded on behaviorist theory. Teachers showed a focus on certain observable behaviors as instances of learning. For instance, Fifi articulated this in the context of teacher's stance and authority as measures for ensuring student learning. This theoretical grounding also explains teachers' views on literacy from a print-based perspective. The pedagogical choices that most teachers applied were structured and the goal was students' mastery of specific skills by the end of the lesson.

Furthermore, teachers articulated how regular assessment was necessary to measure the mastery of such skills to determine student progress. In the case of Melita and Goga, an open evaluation of students' performance only strengthened the belief and expectation to reward certain behaviors as well as construct such behaviors as instances of effective learning. In what follows, I present a range of recommendations that can inform efforts towards improvement.

The literature (Barton, 2017; Labadie et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2004; Rogers & Elias, 2012) offers valuable perspectives on student-centered and active-learning pedagogies that teachers can employ to foster opportunities for students to bring their various literacies to the learning process and environment. For instance, Winters (2012) study shows that students' past experiences and sociocultural contexts impact their construction of meaning and their choices of modes of communication and meaning making. Kosovar teachers would benefit from engaging with case studies of student-centered and active-learning pedagogies which illustrate the application of such pedagogies in real-world contexts. In tandem with this, teachers could also engage in comparative analysis of multiple case studies to identify commonalities and differences and discuss the possibilities of replicating certain pedagogies while contextualizing them to their teaching context and student population.

In efforts to apply alternative student-centered pedagogies, teachers could position their students as decision-makers in the learning process by giving them the opportunity to have a say in their learning in terms of curriculum and pedagogical choices. Although teachers are obliged to meet specific curriculum requirements, they have a 30% flexibility in terms of content choices, which could be planned and decided in collaboration with their students. This will ensure the reflection of student preferences in the curriculum and help in deliberately bridging students' various literacy practices and experiences with the school ones. Teachers could also

afford their students the opportunity to give feedback on teaching methods as teachers review and rethink their pedagogical choices. Building on this work, I now discuss areas that warrant further exploration.

Future Research

This dissertation expands our understanding of Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy and their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy. Although the existing literature on literacy education has been valuable in shaping this work, this study recognized the need to delve deeper into studying literacy education in the context of public education in Kosova. This dissertation addresses some of these gaps while simultaneously paving the way for future research. Research on Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy is almost inexistent. While the findings from this study highlight Kosovar teachers' conceptualizations of literacy as well as the pedagogies employed, future research is necessary to further understand the factors which influence teachers' conceptualization and teaching of literacy. More specifically, I would recommend that researchers expand the scope of what was possible for this research and explore teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to various factors, such as the national curriculum, textbooks, and other teaching materials. Examining such factors could potentially offer a more detailed overview of what informs teachers pedagogical choices.

Research that sits at the nexus of literacy and language education in Kosova is limited. Exploring the role of Albanian language education, with focus on the standardized Albanian and Gheg dialect dynamics, could provide valuable insights into literacy education. This study has confirmed that perceptions on standardized language variation are influential in forming beliefs and attitudes towards alternative language variations, pedagogy, student population, and the role of schools. I would also recommend that future research considers students' perspectives and

experience on language and literacy education to foster a deeper understanding of the teaching and learning dynamics within the classroom. Combining the perspectives of teachers and students could convey insights into potential disparities and opportunities for improvement.

This dissertation study was grounded in the New Literacy Studies and Critical Literacy theoretical frameworks as they provided important insights into understanding the nature of literacy in Kosova. Future research can expand on this work by using other theories on language and literacy to further broaden our understanding of language and literacy practices in the context of Kosova. More specifically, future research could consider culturally sustaining pedagogy theory (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017) and raciolinguistics theoretical perspectives (Baker-Bell, 2020) to look at the intersection of language, literacy, and ethnicity in Kosova and provide deeper insights into language and literacy policies that promote diverse linguistic repertoires.

There is still a lack of long-term research examining the progress of teachers' pedagogical choices over an extended period. Long-term research could offer valuable insights into several factors which affect teachers' choices and shed light on potential approaches to support teachers' work. Concurrently, further research is needed to examine the role and effect of professional development opportunities in shaping teachers' insights and pedagogies. Considering the high exposure of Kosovar teachers to professional development opportunities, research which explores their influence on teachers' work would be beneficial. More specifically, such research could shed light on what worked and what could use adaptation so that teachers are suitably supported. Furthermore, research on the role of professional development efforts in literacy and language education could lead to developing more authentic and culturally relevant curriculum

design and pedagogies. Having considered areas for potential future research, I now discuss the limitations of this study.

Limitations

Although this study contributes to knowledge on Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy and their teaching of literacy, it has its limitations. In this section, I will discuss some of the limitations of this work. Considering the qualitative nature of this research study, the findings from this study are not intended to be generalizable to all Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy and their pedagogical practices in teaching literacy. This study should be understood within the context of the research design, the research setting, and its participants. This study is limited to five (K-9) teachers in a primary and lower secondary school in the outskirts of Prishtina, the capital city of Kosova. This school was chosen partly because I had already collaborated with some of the teachers and administrators of the school for the pilot study. Therefore, the findings of the study should be considered in the context of this school setting that may be different from other schools in Prishtina and elsewhere in Kosova. I also limit this study to the type of data that I collected from teachers. Although I approached data collection through comprehensive interviews and lesson observations, it is impossible to capture information on all the factors that might contribute to teachers' understanding of literacy and their pedagogical choices in teaching literacy.

Another limitation of this study is the amount of time spent in the research setting. I spent a little over two months conducting the first two interviews and the lesson observations in the teachers' classroom. Preferably, it would have been advantageous to be in teachers' classrooms for at least a school term to observe their teaching throughout a longer timeframe so

that I could also better capture their teaching approaches from the beginning of a process to its end. This also leads me to another limitation, which is the lack of integration of teachers' lesson plans on the data set. Although the focus of the study was to explore teachers' thoughts on literacy and draw connections between the interview data and observed lessons, the data collection and analysis would have been richer if the existing data was considered in the context of lesson plans. This is something that I will be more mindful of in future research, so that I can engage in a richer picture of teachers' work and the several factors which impact it.

Another limitation of this study is the potential loss of some of the meanings of the data for the non-Albanian speaking reader due to the translation of data from Albanian to English. Recognizing the varied "linguistic, vocal, locational, and political situatedness" (Lincoln, González y González, & Aroztegui Massera, 2016, p. 533) between each participant teacher and myself, it is important to keep in mind that the "different political and social formations" (Lincoln, González y González, & Aroztegui Massera 2016, p. 533) influence my understanding and, hence, translation of teachers' talk from Albanian to English. It should be emphasized that it is close to impossible to fully capture the meaning of the collected data in Albanian to English. I also recognize that the interview protocols were occasionally reframed from the originally proposed questions to address the gap between theoretical understandings developed and published in Western countries, especially in the North American context, which have greatly informed my thinking and the design of this study, and the current developments in literacy education in Kosova.

Final Thoughts

It is my hope that this study may help move education researchers to a deeper understanding of Kosovar teachers' understanding of literacy and their pedagogical practices in teaching literacy. Education in Kosova remains an extensively discussed tenet of society. The dominant discourses on education mostly revolve around functional illiteracy and teacher criticism, which have been largely shaped by the PISA results. The lack of research which unfolds teaching approaches and pedagogies within Kosovar classroom may play a role in misrepresenting or simplifying Kosovar teachers' work. In this context, I hope that this dissertation manages to a certain degree to provide a window to teachers' teaching, how they articulate it as well as how it has been captured in the observation notes.

A significant insight gained from this study is the teachers' courage to open their classrooms and themselves to me and my inquiries. At a time when Kosovar teachers are under public scrutiny, they displayed nothing but genuine willingness to explore topics on literacy, teaching, and curriculum with me. I hope that the findings from this study encourage further research grounded on teachers' talk and experience. I found it beneficial to spend time in their school on a regular basis throughout the two months of my study. In retrospect, I can see how time is a positive factor in developing a closer working relationship with the teachers and positioning them in a more comfortable position to provide their thoughts to my questions.

Although these teachers share a common profession, their personal, educational, and professional journeys differed. This group of teachers were characterized by teachers who taught before, during, and after the war in Kosova as well as teachers who completed their studies and began teaching in the past decade. Their personal and professional identities, and the literacy

practices fostered, largely shape their teaching. Throughout the study, I was reminded that these teachers' teaching choices aim to achieve what in their vision is the best outcome for their students. It is my hope that I managed to capture this in my writing, while also offering my insights and recommendations as avenues for further exploration and a potential realignment of teachers' efforts to reach a fuller potential of literacy education in Kosova.

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP
150 Huntington Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244
Kosovan Teachers' Engagement with Critical Literacies Pedagogy

My name is Anemonë Zeneli and I am a graduate student studying Teaching and Curriculum at Syracuse University in USA. I am inviting you to participate in a research study for my dissertation. Involvement in the study is voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. This letter will explain the study to you, but please feel free to ask additional questions about the research if you have any. I am happy to explain anything in detail if you wish.

I work with Dr. Jeffery Mangram and we are interested in learning more about your pedagogy in teaching literacy. In addition to participating in an interview, I will be conducting focus groups with a group of teachers in your school and would be interested in your participation. The interview should take about an hour, which will take place at a convenient location for you. The focus groups should take about two hours and will take place at a convenient location for all the participants. All information will be kept confidential and no identifying information about you will be shared with anyone at any time during the study. Should you agree to participate in this study, it is important to note that a transcription of your responses will be stored in a locked file and only myself, my faculty advisor, Dr. Jeffery Mangram will have access to the file. Jeffery Mangram will assist me by helping to draft protocols, assist in translation, and assist with data analysis and future writing from this data set. I will also consult with you upon transcription of the interview to ensure I correctly captured your responses. For the dissertation and any articles we write or any presentations that we make, we will use a pseudonym name for you, and we will not reveal details about the school where the study was conducted. Your study data will be kept as confidential as possible. We will not communicate any of your responses with administrators, students, parents, or other teachers. The teachers that will also be participating in the focus groups will be aware of your participation in this study and might be able to identify the particular data that pertain to your pseudonym name.

To ensure I have accurately captured your responses during the individual interview and focus groups, I plan to audio record the interview. The recordings will help support the notes I will write during the interviews and focus groups and will be referred to as I write up my notes. The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on my computer until all interviews have been conducted and transcribed. After all interviews have been transcribed, the recordings will be deleted. Only I will have access to the original information as well as your contact information. Jeffery will have access to the transcriptions of interviews and to my observational notes. No identifying information will be shared outside of the research team.

Consent Form 4 – Teachers   1

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping us to understand literacy instruction in the context of your school in Kosovo. This information should help us to promote quality instruction for all students.

The risks to your participation in this study are minimal. However, upon publication of this study's findings, one who is familiar with the area could potentially identify you or the school. However, to minimize this risk, we will use pseudonyms for all identifiable information.

If you do not want to take part, you have the right to refuse without penalty. If you decide to take part and later no longer wish to continue, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. Should you give consent for to participate in this study, have the consent form returned to me, Anemonë.

Contact Information:
If you have any questions, concerns, complaints about the research contact Dr. Jeffery Mangram or Anemonë Zeneli at jamangra@syr.edu or azeneli@syr.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you have questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator, if you cannot reach the investigator, contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board at orip@syr.edu.

All of my questions have been answered and I wish to participate in this research study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

____ I agree to be audio recorded during the individual interview.

____ I do not agree to be audio recorded during the individual interview.

____ I agree to inform my students about the possibility to participate in the Think-aloud study.

____ I do not agree to inform my students about the possibility to participate in the Think-aloud study.

The subject is 18 years of age or older.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

_____
Printed name of participant

_____   _____
Signature of researcher   Date

Anemonë Zeneli
Printed name of researcher

DEPARTMENTI I MËSIMDHËNIES DHE LIDERSHIPIT
150 Huntington Hall, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244
Dokument për lejen e mësimdhënësve

Angazhimi i mësuesve Kosovarë me pedagogji kritike të shkrim-leximit

Emri im është Anemonë Zeneli dhe unë jam studente e doktoraturës në Mësimdhënie dhe Kurrikulë në Syracuse University në SHBA. Po ju ftoj të merrni pjesë në një hulumtim që jam duke e zhvilluar për temën time të diplomës. Pjesëmarrja në këtë hulumtim është në bazë vullnetare, kështu që ju mund të vendosni nëse dëshironi të merrni pjesë apo jo. Kjo letër do t'ua shpjegojë natyrën e këtij hulumtimi, por ndjehuni të lirë të parashtroni pyetje shtesë nëse keni. Unë jam e gatshme të jap informata dhe shpjegime shtesë po qe e nevojshme.

Unë punojë me Dr. Jeffery A. Mangram dhe ne jeni të interesuar të mësojmë më shumë rreth eksperiencës tuaj të mësimdhënies për shkrim-lexim. Përveç intervistës që do të zhvilloj me ju, unë do të zhvilloj edhe fokus grupe me mësimdhënës në shkollën tuaj dhe jam e interesuar që edhe ju të merrni pjesë në këto fokus grupe. Intervista parashihet të zgjasë rreth një orë, e cila do të zhvillohet në një lokacion të përshtatshëm për ju. Fokus grupet do të zgjasin rreth dy orë dhe do të zhvillohen në një lokacion të përshtatshëm për të gjithë pjesëmarrësit. Të gjitha informatat do të jenë konfidenciale dhe asnjë informatë identifikuese e juaja nuk do të ndahet me dikë tjetër gjatë studimit. Nëse pajtoheni të merrni pjesë në këtë studim, është e rëndësishme ta keni parasysh se një transkriptë e përgjigjeve tuaja do të ruhet në një dokument në laptopin tim personal të mbrojtur me password dhe vetëm unë dhe mentori im Dr. Jeffery Mangram do të kemi qasje në këtë document. Jeffery Mangram do të më ndihmojnë mua, Anemonën, në përpilimin e protokolleve për intervistë, përkthimin e të dhënave, analizimin e të dhënave, dhe shkrimin e raporteve nga këto të dhëna. Gjithashtu, unë do të konsultohem me ju për tu siguruar se i kam dokumentuar në mënyrë korrekte përgjigjet tuaja. Në shkrimin e temës së diplomës dhe në çdo artikuj që do të shkruajmë apo prezentim që do të zhvillojmë, ne do të përdorim një pseudonim për ju, dhe nuk do të ndajmë informata për shkollën se ku është zhvilluar ky studim. Të dhënat tuaja nga ky studim do të ruhen në formën më konfidenciale të mundshme. Ne nuk do t'i ndajmë këto informata me administratën në shkollë, studentët, prindërit, apo mësimdhënësit e tjerë. Normalisht, mësimdhënësit që do të jenë pjesë e fokus grupit me ju do të jenë të informuar për pjesëmarrjen tuaj në këtë studim dhe mund të jenë në gjendje të identifikojnë se cilat informata i përkasin pseudonimit tuaj.

Në mënyrë që t'i dokumentoj përgjigjet e juaja në mënyrë të saktë gjatë intervistës individuale, unë planifikoj që të inçizoj në audio intervistën dhe fokus grupet. Ky inçizim do të më ndihmojë t'i plotësoj shënimet që do t'i marrë gjatë intervistës. Inçizimet do të ruhen në një dokument në laptopin tim personal, i cili është i mbrojtur me password, derisa të zhvillohen dhe transkriptohen të gjitha intervistat. Pasi që intervistat të jenë transkriptuar, inçizimet do të fshihen. Vetëm unë do të kem qasje në informatat origjinale dhe të dhënat tuaja personale. Jeffery do të kenë qasje në transkriptën e intervistës tuaj dhe në shënimet e mia. Asnjë informatë identifikuese e juaja nuk do të ndahet përtej ekipës hulumtuese.

Dobia e këtij hulumtimi është se ju do të na ndihmoni të kuptojmë se si zhvillohet mësimdhënia për shkrim-lexim në kontekstin e shkollës suaj në Kosovë. Këto informata do të na ndihmojnë që të promovojmë mësimdhënie kualitative për të gjithë nxënësit.

Rreziku i pjesëmarrjes tuaj në këtë hulumtim është minimal. Sidoqoftë, pas publikimit të të dhënave të studimit, dikush që është i njoftuar me rrethinën tuaj ka mundësi që potencialisht të ju identifikojë juve apo shkollën si pjesëmarrës në këtë studim. Sidoqoftë, për të minimizuar këtë rrezik, ne do të përdorim pseudonime për të gjitha informatat personale.

Nëse ju nuk dëshironi të merrni pjesë në këtë studim, është plotësisht e drejtë e juaja. Nëse dëshironi të merrni pjesë në këtë studim mirëpo në ndërkohë vendosni që të mos e vazhdoni angazhimin tuaj në këtë studim, atëherë keni të drejtë të tërhiqeni nga studimi në çdo kohë, pa ndonjë ndëshkim.

Informata kontaktuese:
Nëse keni ndonjë pyetje, shqetësim, apo ankesë rreth hulumtimit, kontaktoni Dr. Jeffery A. Mangram ose Anemonë Zenelin në jamangra@syr.edu apo azeneli@syr.edu. Nëse keni ndonjë pyetje rreth të drejtave tuaja si pjesëmarrës në këtë hulumtim, apo keni pyetje, shqetësime, apo ankesa të tjera të cilat do të dëshironit t'i adresoni me dikë përtej ekipës së hulumitimit, apo nëse skeni mundësi ta kontaktoni ekipën hulumtuese, kontaktoni Bordin për Kontrollim Institucional në Syracuse University në orip@syr.edu.

Kam marrë përgjigje për të gjitha pyetjet që kam parashtruar dhe dëshiroj të marrë pjesë në këtë hulumtim. Unë e kam pranuar një kopje të këtij dokumenti.

_____ Pajtohem që të inçizohem gjatë intervistës.

_____ Nuk pajtohem që të inçizohem gjatë intervistës.

_____ Pajtohem që të njoftoj nxënësit e mi rreth mundësisë për të marrë pjesë në studimin "Të menduarit me zë të lartë"

_____ Nuk pajtohem që të njoftojë nxënësit e mi rreth mundësise për të marrë pjesë në studimin "Të menduarit me zë të lartë"

Subjekti është 18 vjeçar apo më i/e vjetër.

_____   _____
Nënshkrimi i pjesëmarrësit/es   Data

_____
Emri dhe mbiemri i pjesëmarrësit/es

_____   _____
Nënshkrimi i hulumtueses   Data

Anemonë Zeneli
Emri dhe mbiemri i hulumtueses

Consent Form 4 – Teachers   3

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Research question	Teacher Interview Protocol
1) How do Kosovar teachers make sense of literacy? a. How do these perspectives inform teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to literacy?	1. Tell me about your work as a teacher. 2. Why did you want to become a teacher? 3. What is your personal teaching philosophy? 4. Walk me through a typical lesson in your classroom? 5. How do you define literacy? 6. Describe your pedagogy and instructional methods in teaching literacy. 6a. Why do you use these particular teaching strategies as opposed to others that might be available to you? 7. How would you describe what a teacher's role should be in teaching literacy? 8. Tell me about the resources you use for teaching literacy. 9. How do you go about creating curriculum? What does this process entail? 10. How does your understanding of literacy connect with the national curriculum you teach?

11. What has been left out of this interview that you want to share about your teaching?

First Interview Protocol - Albanian

Pyetja kërkimore	Protokolli i intervistës së mësuesit/es
1) Si e kuptojnë mësimdhënësit Kosovarë shkrim-leximin? a. Si i informojnë këto këndvështrime zgjedhjet pedagogjike të mësuesve në lidhje me shkrim-leximin?	1. Më tregoni për punën tuaj si mësues/e. 2. Pse keni dashur të bëheni mësues/e? 3. Cila është filozofia juaj personale e mësimdhënies? 4. Më tregoni se si shkon një orë e juaja mësimore. 5. Si e definoni shkrim-leximin? 6. Përshkruani pedagogjinë dhe metodat e juaja të mësimdhënies për shkrim-lexim. 6a. Përse i përdorni këto metoda të mësimdhënies në veçanti në vend të metodave të tjera që mund të jenë në dispozicionin tuaj? 7. Si do ta përshkruanit rolin e mësimdhënësit/es në mësimdhenien e shkrim-leximit? 8. Më tregoni për mjetet/resurset që përdorni në mësimdhënien e shkrim-leximit. 9. Cili është procesi i përpilimit të planit mësimor? Çka përmban ky proces? 10. Si ndërlidhet mënyra se si ju e kuptoni shkrim-leximin me kurrikulën e Ministrisë të cilën e zbatoni?

11. Çfarë ka mbetur jashtë kësaj interviste që dëshironi të ndani për mësimdhënien tuaj?

Appendix C: Second Interview protocol - English

Research question	Teacher Interview Protocol
2) What are Kosovar teachers' reflections on critical literacy as it relates to their teaching?	1. Describe the term critical literacy? 2. Do you see anything distinctive between the terms 'literacy' and 'critical literacy'? If so, what is the distinction? 3. Describe the characteristics of a "critical" teacher. 4. How does critical literacy look like in your teaching/classroom? 5. Do you make curricular decisions and pedagogical choices with particular critical purposes in mind? 5a. If so, what are you trying to accomplish? 5b. What do students benefit from this approach? 6. Do you think that critical literacy is important to teach? If so, why? If not, why not? 7. How does your understanding of critical literacy connect with the national curriculum you teach?

8. What has been left out of this interview that you want to share about your teaching?

Second Interview protocol - Albanian

Pyetja kërkimore	Protokolli i intervistës së mësuesit/es
2) Cilat janë reflektimet e mësimdhënësve Kosovarë për shkrim-leximet kritike në lidhje me mësimdhënien e tyre?	1. Përshkruani termin/konceptin shkrim-lexim kritik? 2. A shihni ndonjë dallim midis termave "shkrim-lexim" dhe "shkrim-lexim kritik"? Nëse po, cili është ndryshimi? 3. Përshkruani karakteristikat e një mësimdhënësi "kritik". 4. Si duket shkrim-leximi kritik në mësimdhënien / klasën tuaj? 5. A merrni vendime kurrikulare dhe a bëni zgjedhje pedagogjike me synime të veçanta kritike në mendje? 5a. Nëse po, çfarë po përpiqeni të arrini? 5b. Çfarë përfitojnë nxënësit nga kjo qasje? 6. A mendoni se shkrim-leximi kritik është i rëndësishëm për t'u mësuar? Nëse po, pse? Nëse jo, pse jo? 7. Si lidhet mënyra se si ju e kuptoni shkrim-leximin kritik me kurrikulën e Ministrisë të cilën ju e mësoni?

8. Çfarë ka mbetur jashtë kësaj interviste që dëshironi të ndani për mësimdhënien tuaj?

Appendix D: Guide to Critical Literacy - English

What is critical literacy?

The basic premise of critical literacy is that language is a social construct and never neutral (Freire & Macedo, 1983). With this assumption, critical literacy encourages readers to deconstruct a wide range of written, visual and spoken texts. Through such processes of deconstruction of text(s), readers come to "recognize texts as selective versions of the world; they are not subjected to them and they can imagine how texts can be transformed to represent a different set of interests." (Janks, 2010, p. 22). Critical literacy pedagogy encourages readers to ask critical questions when engaging with texts, such as: What is the purpose of this text? How is this text trying to position me, the reader? How is reality constructed in the text? What/Whose ideas are represented? What/Whose ideas are being silenced? (Phelps, 2010).

How can critical literacy look like in the classroom?

Patel Stevens & Bean (2007) model supports students to:

(a) read the text through a specific lens or stance to help them note whose voices are heard and whose voices are silenced

(b) consider the social, historical, and political context of the text

(c) deconstruct the text by questioning the text's structure, content, and language

(d) reconstruct the text highlighting different perspectives and voices

Guide to Critical Literacy - Albanian

Çfarë është shkrim-leximi kritik

Premisa themelore e shkrim-leximit kritik është se gjuha është një konstrukst shoqëror dhe asnjëherë asnjanës (Freire & Macedo, 1983). Me këtë supozim, shkrim-leximi kritik i nxit lexuesit të dekonstruktojnë një gamë të gjerë tekstesh të shkruara, pamore dhe të folura. Përmes proceseve të tilla të dekonstrukstimit të tekstit/eve, lexuesit arrijnë të "njohin tekstet si versione selektive të botës; ata nuk u nënshtrohen atyre dhe mund të imagjinojnë sesi tekstet mund të transformohen për të përfaqësuar një grup interesash të ndryshme. "(Janks, 2010, f. 22). Pedagogjia e shkrim-leximit kritik i nxit lexuesit të bëjnë pyetje kritike kur merren me tekste, siç janë: Cili është qëllimi i këtij teksti? Si po përpiqet ky tekst të më pozicionojë mua, lexuesin? Si ndërtohet realiteti në këtë tekst? Çfarë ide dhe idetë e kujt janë të përfaqësuara në këtë tekst? Çfarë ide dhe idetë e kujt nuk po shpërfaqen? (Phelps, 2010).

Si mund të duket shkrim-leximi kritik në klasë?

Modeli Patel Stevens & Bean (2007) mbështet nxënësit/et që:

(a) të lexojnë tekstin përmes një këndvështrimi ose qëndrimi specifik për t'i ndihmuar ata/ato të kuptojnë se zërat e të cilëve/ave dëgjohen dhe të kujt jo

(b) të marrë parasysh kontekstin shoqëror, historik dhe politik të tekstit

(c) të dekonstruktojnë tekstin duke vënë në dyshim strukturën, përmbajtjen dhe gjuhën e tekstit

(d) të rindërtojnë tekstin duke theksuar këndvështrime dhe zëra të ndryshëm

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| | *Buzuku Publishing House*, Kosova |

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

Zeneli, A. (2021). A critical discourse analysis of Kosovar teachers' engagement with critical literacies pedagogy. Paper presented at the 71st Annual Literacy Research Association Conference. Atlanta, GA.

Zeneli, A. (2021). Is it about language or literacy: The effects of language education on literacy acquisition in Kosova? Paper presented at the New York State Reading Association Conference. Online.

Zeneli, A. (2020). Kosovar teachers' engagement with critical literacies pedagogy. Paper presented at the 70th Annual Literacy Research Association Conference. Online.

Morgan, C & **Zeneli, A.** (2020) Teachers as political actors: Engaging pre-service social studies teachers with a critical literacies' pedagogy. Paper presented at the 11th Annual International Society for the Social Studies Annual Conference. Orlando, FL.

Zeneli, A., Waymouth, H. (2019). Kosovar youth's critical engagement: A think aloud study. Paper presented at the 69th Annual Literacy Research Association Conference. Tampa, FL.

Zeneli, A. (2019). Literacy across the globe: Reading the world together. Poster presented at the Central New York Reading Council Conference. Syracuse, NY.

Zeneli, A., Waymouth, H. (2018). Kosovar youths' critical engagement with culturally traditional texts. Poster presented at the 68th Annual Literacy Research Association Conference. Palm Springs, CA.

GRANTS & AWARDS

2021	**Senator Donovan Memorial Scholarship**. New York State Reading Association.
2021	**Summer Dissertation Fellowship**. Graduate School at Syracuse University.
2021	**Research and Creative Grants**. School of Education, Syracuse University.
2021	**Travel Grant**. School of Education, Syracuse University.
2021	**Travel Grant**. Graduate Student Organization. Syracuse University.
2020	**Research and Creative Grants**. School of Education, Syracuse University.
2020	**Travel Grant**. Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University.
2020	**Travel Grant**. School of Education, Syracuse University.
2019	**Research and Creative Grants**. School of Education, Syracuse University.
2019	**Richard Allington Grant**. New York State Reading Association.
2018	**Research and Creative Grants**. School of Education, Syracuse University.
2018	**Himan Brown Award**. School of Education, Syracuse University.
2018	**Travel Grant**. Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University.
2018	**Travel Grant**. School of Education Graduate Student Organization, Syracuse University.
2018	**Travel Grant**. School of Education, Syracuse University.
2015	**Transformational Leadership Scholarship** for Master studies at Syracuse University (Full scholarship).

SERVICE

2020 – present	**Co-Chair of Research Committee.** The Ideas Partnership, Kosova
2020 – 2022	**Conference Proposal Reviewer**. American Education Research Association
2018 – 2022	**Conference Proposal Reviewer**. Literacy Research Association
2018 – 2020	**Secretary**. Central New York Reading Council, Syracuse, NY
2018 – 2020	**International Student Peer Mentor**. Syracuse University
2017	**Consultant**, NGO Changemakers. Kosova
2016 - 2017	**Facilitator**. Slutzker Center for International Services (SCIS), Syracuse University
2016	**Peer Assistant**. Slutzker Center for International Services (SCIS). Syracuse University
2013 – 2017	**Active member**. U.S. Embassy Youth Council, Kosova
2013	**English Language Teacher**. NGO Pjeter Bogdani. Kosova
2013 - 2014	**Literacy and Numeracy Teacher**. NGO The Ideas Partnership. Kosova