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Educators' Perspectives on Media Literacy in Language Education for Inclusive Knowledge Societies in Kazakhstan and the United States

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the integration of media literacy into university language education in Kazakhstan and the United States. It emphasizes its potential to foster inclusive knowledge societies. The research aims to investigate educators' views on media literacy, the degree to which it is incorporated into language curricula, and the challenges and opportunities present in these two diverse educational settings. The study examines how language teachers in two countries perceive the relevance of integrating media literacy into language education, identifies prevailing strategies and challenges associated with integrating media literacy into language teaching at the university level, and considers how insights from these contexts can contribute to the development of inclusive knowledge societies. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study combines survey data from 121 language educators, including participants from various universities in Kazakhstan and the University of California, San Diego, with follow-up interviews conducted with a select group of participants. Research indicates that US educators have access to well-established institutional

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frameworks and resources, whereas their Kazakh colleagues encounter constrained resources, inadequate training, and digital disparities. Despite these challenges, educators in both nations view media literacy as a vital means of promoting critical thinking, digital skills, and active citizenship. The results of this research have significant implications for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to foster sustainable and inclusive knowledge societies.

Keywords: Educators' Perspectives; Language Learning; Media Literacy; Inclusive Knowledge Societies; Teaching Strategies; Mixed-Methods Approach

1. Introduction

In an era of rapid digital transformation, media platforms have emerged as powerful forces shaping education, communication, and knowledge sharing^[1-6]. As the digital age redefines societal norms, the ability to critically engage with media has become a crucial competency in fostering sustainable knowledge societies (UNESCO, 2018). Accordingly, media literacy (ML), encompassing the skills to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media, is pivotal in equipping learners to navigate this complex landscape. Within language education (LE), ML fosters critical thinking, enhances communication skills, and prepares learners to participate actively in knowledge-sharing communities^[5,7,8]. A lack of ML skills can inevitably contribute to students' vulnerability to misinformation, hinder their ability to critically evaluate digital content, and limit their capacity to engage meaningfully in academic and civic discourse.

Educational institutions worldwide are increasingly incorporating ML into their curricula to address these challenges. ML integration has advanced significantly in the United States, supported by institutional frameworks and resources^[6,9,10]. In contrast, Kazakhstan faces resource constraints, insufficient training, and digital inequalities, similar to many emerging economies^[11,12]. Despite these disparities, educators in both contexts recognize the transformative potential of ML to empower learners and contribute to inclusive knowledge societies, environments where diverse knowledge systems are valued and integrated to promote equity and sustainability.

This study deliberately compares Kazakhstan and the United States to highlight findings from different levels of experience integrating media literacy into language education. While the United States has a longer tradition of integrating media literacy into various educational disciplines, in Kazakhstan, this integration is still in its infancy. By comparing these two contexts, we aim to identify not

only challenges and gaps but also applicable practices and strategies that can advance media literacy in language education in Kazakhstan and similar emerging contexts.

This study investigates how Kazakh and American language educators perceive and integrate ML into university-level LE. Specifically, it addresses three critical questions: (1) How do educators perceive the relevance of incorporating ML in LE? (2) What strategies and challenges characterize its integration in these contexts? (3) How can these insights inform the development of inclusive knowledge societies? The research is grounded in data collected from 121 language educators, including participants from various universities in Kazakhstan and the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). By comparing the practices and perspectives of educators in two distinct educational settings, this study aims to identify strategies that bridge digital divides and promote equitable access to education.

This research fills a significant gap in comparative studies on ML integration, offering practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and researchers. Examining the unique experiences of language educators in universities on two continents contributes to a deeper understanding of how ML can foster critical thinking, digital literacy, cultural awareness, and active citizenship, ultimately supporting the creation of sustainable and inclusive educational environments^[13].

Defined as the ability to access, analyze, create, reflect, and act^[4], ML plays an essential role in modern education by equipping learners with the critical thinking and communication skills necessary for active participation in knowledge-sharing societies^[1,4,14]. ML involves analyzing media representations, understanding how media influences culture and society, and developing the skills to engage with media content critically^[11]. As alluded to by past researchers, ML refers to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that allow individuals to critically analyze the daily messages aimed at announcing, entertaining, and selling

information or products to media consumers^[6]. In LE, ML offers learners opportunities to engage with authentic materials, enhance their linguistic skills, critically navigate the complexities of the digital world, and make informed decisions about media consumption and production^[15]. This dual role makes ML a vital component of inclusive education frameworks, fostering linguistic competence and critical engagement with media. Thus, in the context of our research, *ML is the ability to critically evaluate, analyze, and utilize media content relevant to their specific professional fields. It encompasses the skills to discern credible sources, understand media biases, and apply information effectively in professional contexts.*

The importance of ML in education has grown steadily, with scholars highlighting its role in fostering critical thinking, informed citizenship, and practical communication skills^[6,9,16]. Scholars consistently argue that incorporating ML into LE boosts students' engagement with authentic language use and strengthens their ability to navigate and assess contemporary complex media environments^[12,17].

Various models of ML offer diverse perspectives and practical approaches for classroom implementation to enrich learners' learning experiences. For instance, Hobbs's Process Model for Digital and Media Literacy defines five core communication competencies that can be applied across all content areas^[18]. The scholar suggests that teaching ML involves more than just analyzing media texts; it also requires actively engaging students in developing fundamental life skills needed to succeed in an information-saturated age while engaging with various forms of media^[18].

Combining media analysis with its production activities enhances language learners' critical thinking and problem-solving skills by understanding how media shapes public opinion, influences behavior, and reflects societal values^[16]. Scholars, therefore, recommend that ML instruction include both the critical analysis of media texts and an understanding of media production processes, highlighting the value of authentic, meaningful learning rather than relying solely on text-based deconstruction. They emphasize the importance of engaging students in meaningful, contextualized learning experiences rather than relying solely on analytical approaches^[11]. This capacity underscores

ML's relevance in equipping learners to navigate the media landscape with confidence and responsibility. According to Buckingham, strengthening ML education requires rethinking traditional teaching practice so that learners can engage critically and creatively with media and impact its landscape. Additionally, he emphasizes the pivotal role of educators in this process and highlights the ongoing need for continuous institutional support and professional development to teach ML effectively. At the same time, the scholar encounters challenges, including the rapidly evolving digital technologies, resistance within conventional educational institutions, and constrained resources^[1]. These obstacles directly influence how they perceive and implement ML in LE.

Integrating ML into curricula is essential for equipping students with skills to deconstruct media messages, understand media construction, and recognize the impact of digital and social media, algorithmic bias, misinformation, and big data^[15]. The scholars present a practical framework for media literacy education (MLE) that encompasses key concepts, including authorship, format, audience, content, and purpose^[15]. This framework is beneficial for educators seeking to integrate ML programs into their classrooms. Furthermore, several studies emphasize the importance of social media for ELLs, underscoring the need to integrate ML into LE curricula^[2,18]. These works introduce a comprehensive framework for MLE skills, encompassing technical, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies. Addressing these areas assists ELLs to navigate digital platforms, critically evaluate content, and understand its cultural context^[19,20]. As a result, educators are encouraged to design activities that develop technical skills, enhance cognitive evaluation abilities, and cultivate an understanding of sociocultural norms in online environments. These skills directly support learners' success in today's digital age and align with the goals of LE. This need for comprehensive approaches to ML is reflected in educational policies and classroom activities in various contexts. The literature review states that ML is well-established in educational policies in the United States, with an emphasis on its integration across curricula, including LE^[10]. Several studies highlight the successful incorporation of ML in language programs worldwide, noting improvements in students' analytical abilities and language proficiency^[15].

However, Kazakhstan is currently in the early stages of integrating ML into education. While recent national efforts have highlighted the importance of MLE, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, and varying levels of institutional support persist^[21]. The literature on the Kazakhstani education system stresses the necessity for more structured approaches and resources to support MLE^[22].

Despite these variabilities, both countries' language instructors acknowledge the importance of ML in providing students with the essential skills for the digital age. This study contributes to the existing literature by comparing the integration of ML into LE from the perspectives of educators in the USA and Kazakhstan.

2. Materials and Methods

The study employed a survey-based approach, collecting responses from 11 American and 110 Kazakh language instructors who were willing to participate in the survey. Participants from various universities in Kazakhstan were chosen to ensure a diverse representation of LE practices, while American tutors represent UCSD.

The participants involved in the study were selected due to their direct connection to the researchers. The researcher emailed potential participants a link to the questionnaire. Multiple invitations to participate were sent over a month to enhance participation. This study utilized Korona's ML survey to examine the perspectives of university-level foreign language instructors regarding the integration of MLE into the language learning curriculum^[23]. Given the importance of ML skills in their respective content areas, foreign language instructors were specifically targeted for this initiative. After the survey window closed, the researchers reviewed and cleaned the data, eliminating any incomplete surveys. This process resulted in 121 foreign language instructors participating in the survey.

The study findings were presented in two stages to gather data. In the first stage, a questionnaire survey was conducted to collect general data from participants. The six-question survey examined the integration of media literacy education into the language learning curriculum for university-level adult learners. The second stage involved interviews to gather insights from participants about their

personal experiences, beliefs, and attitudes regarding ML in ESL classrooms.

A structured questionnaire was developed to assess educators' perspectives on ML integration. The survey included closed and open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative analysis and qualitative insights. The critical sections of the questionnaire focused on:

- Participants rated the importance of integrating media literacy into language education on a Likert scale;
- Educators provide details on the extent and strategies for media literacy integration in their curricula, including specific activities and resources;
- Respondents identified the main challenges they face in integrating media literacy, such as the need for more resources, insufficient training, and institutional barriers;
- Educators shared their views on the benefits of media literacy in fostering inclusive knowledge societies, including improved language skills, cultural awareness, critical thinking, and responsible engagement with digital content.

The quantitative data analysis involved two approaches: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the percentage of responses from educators in the USA and Kazakhstan selecting each option using

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100 \quad (1)$$

Where:

P = Percentage of participants selecting a response;

F = Frequency of the responses;

N = Total number of respondents answering the question.

To determine the statistical significance of differences in survey responses between educators from the U.S. and Kazakhstan, a Chi-square test for independence was performed. This test assesses whether differences in categorical survey responses result from random variation or reveal substantial differences between the two groups^[24]. A significance level (*p*-value) of 0.05 was applied, indicating that results with *p* < 0.05 are deemed statistically significant. Conversely, if the *p*-value exceeds 0.05, the observed differences are likely attributed to random chance rather than actual differences in educators' perceptions. The analysis focused on essential survey questions, including the perceived importance of media literacy, anticipated

learning outcomes, challenges in integration, and its contribution to developing inclusive knowledge societies. We utilized this statistical method to deliver a data-driven insight into variations in ML views across these distinct educational environments.

The qualitative data of the open-ended questions were coded and thematically analyzed to identify recurring themes and insights related to the challenges and benefits of ML integration.

3. Results

This section presents a comparative analysis of survey and interview responses from language teachers in Kazakhstan and the United States, focusing on how they perceive the relevance of integrating ML into university LE, the strategies they use, the challenges they face, and how understanding these contexts can contribute to the development of inclusive knowledge societies.

The six-question survey covered three key areas corresponding to the research questions:

- teachers' perceptions of the relevance of ML in LE;
- effective integration strategies;
- challenges related to implementation.

Survey Question 1 (SQ1) asked educators about the relevance of integrating ML into the language learning curriculum. Options ranged from 'not relevant' to 'very relevant'. The results demonstrated strong recognition of ML's importance in both contexts. The survey revealed that the responses across various questions indicated that US educators consider ML highly relevant. Totally, 30.9% of Kazakhstani educators rated ML as 'very relevant', while 63.6% rated it as 'relevant'. This shows a strong consensus on the importance of ML in LE, with only a small percentage of educators viewing it as less relevant.

This finding indicates that both US and Kazakhstani educators recognize the importance of ML, although Kazakhstan's emphasis reflects a slightly more cautious yet growing appreciation of its relevance. This stance is more cautious compared to the US, where ML has a more extended history of integration (**Figure 1**).

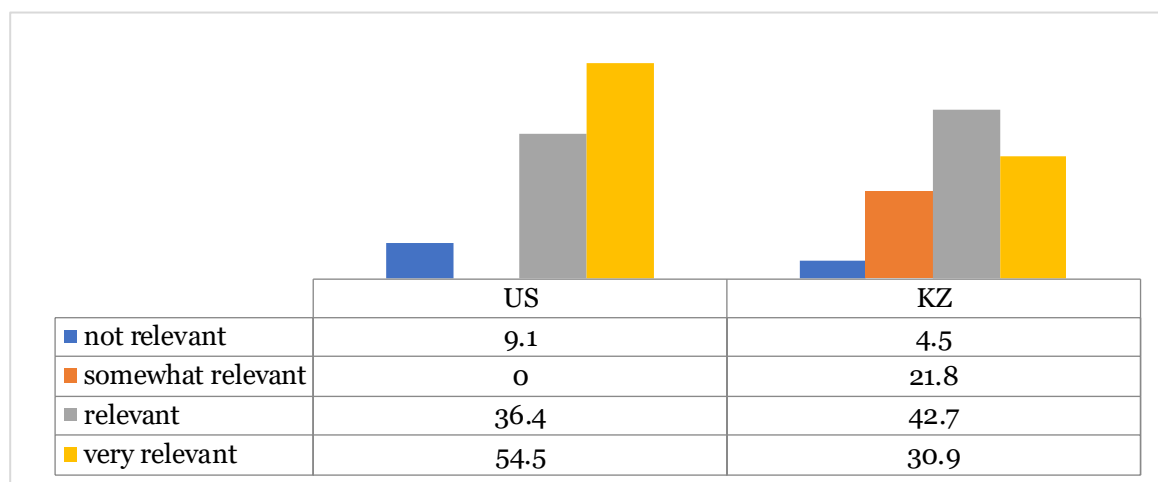


Figure 1. Educators' Perceptions on the Relevance of Integrating Media Literacy into Language Learning (%).

Survey Question 2 (SQ2) explored how participants understand ML and asked them to define ML in the context of language learning by selecting one of the following options:

- The ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media across various forms;
- Understanding how media shapes individuals' opinions and behaviors;

- The skills for critically engaging with media content;
- All of the above.

A significant number of participants from the US and Kazakhstan (82% and 44%, respectively) chose option (d) – 'All of the above', which suggested a thorough understanding of ML that encompasses various competencies, including media access, critical evaluation creation, and a sense of its societal impact. A smaller proportion of Kazakh edu-

cators chose option (a) (36 %), emphasizing a technical and analytical perspective, while none of the US educators selected this option. Option (b) was chosen by Kazakh (12%) and US (9%) respondents, focusing on the influence of the media on behaviors and opinions. Option (c) highlighted the critical engagement aspect of media literacy, with an equal proportion (9%) of respondents from both sides.

These findings suggest that while many university educators recognize the multifaceted nature of ML, emphasis varies based on individual or institutional priorities. This variation underscores the need for integrated approaches in ML training that address technical, analytical, and critical thinking skills to meet the diverse educational contexts (Figure 2).

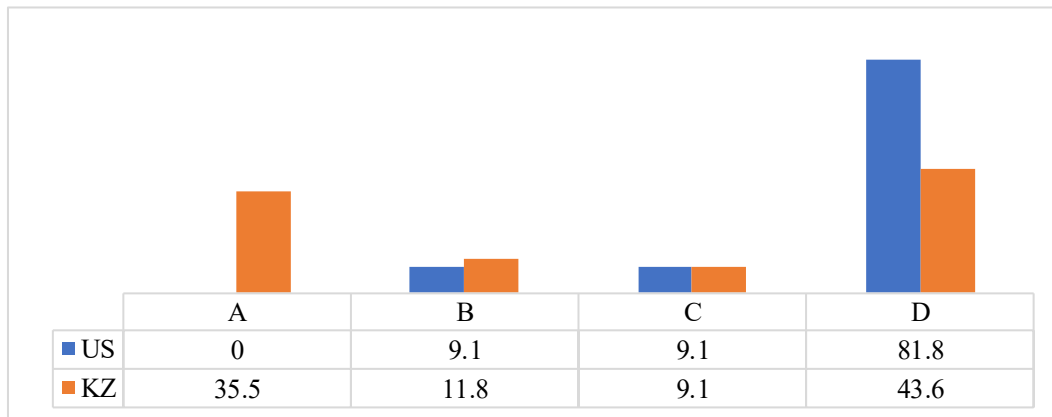


Figure 2. Educators' Perspectives on Definition of Media Literacy (%) .

Survey Question 3 (SQ3) investigated the outcomes educators expect from integrating ML into LE. In the US, 81.8% of participants anticipated improved critical thinking skills, 63.6% expected an enhanced ability to analyze and evaluate media content, another 63.6% foresaw a better understanding of media's influence on language and communication, and 36.4% anticipated increased engagement and motivation in language learning.

The survey data did not explicitly outline the expected learning outcomes reported by Kazakhstan educators.

However, the high percentage of them recognized the relevance of ML implies similar expectations for enhancing critical thinking, media analysis, and language skills.

Both groups anticipated that ML would enhance critical thinking and media analysis. However, educators in the US tend to prioritize its impact on increasing student engagement and understanding of media's influence on communication. This contrast stems from the extended history of MLE in the US, where educators have had more opportunities to observe these outcomes in action (Figure 3).

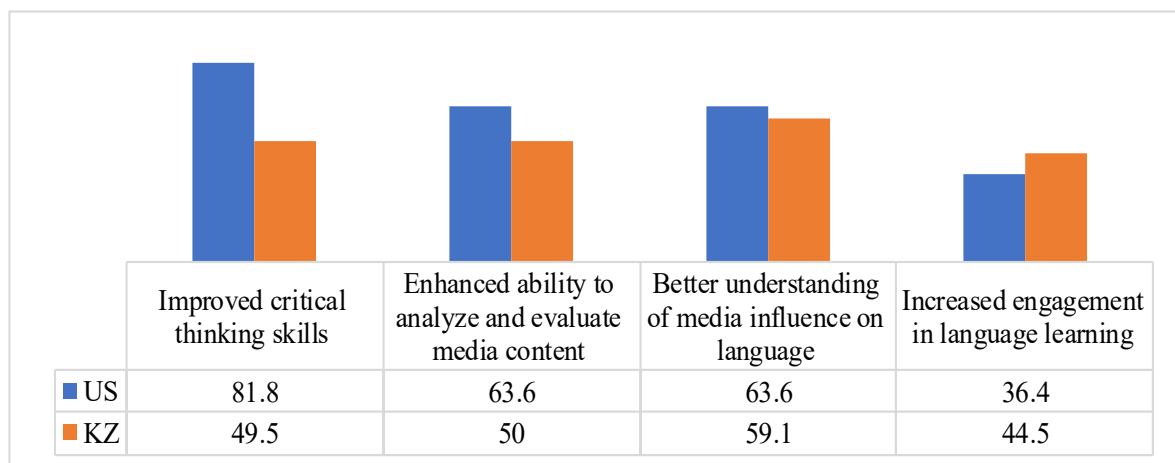


Figure 3. Educators' Perspectives on Expected Learning Outcomes from Integrating ML into LE (%).

Survey Question 4 (SQ4) focused on strategies educators found compelling for integrating ML into LE. US educators most frequently cited media analysis assignments (72.7%), using media examples in practice tasks (63.6%), and organizing ML workshops or seminars (54.5%).

Kazakhstani educators similarly emphasized media analysis assignments (81.8%) and the use of authentic

media examples (72.7%). Notably, more Kazakhstani educators (63.6%) favored workshops and seminars, reflecting a need for more formalized learning contexts. They also showed more interest in guest lectures by media professionals (27.3% vs. 18.2% in the US), highlighting the value of external expertise in the emerging ML context (**Figure 4**).

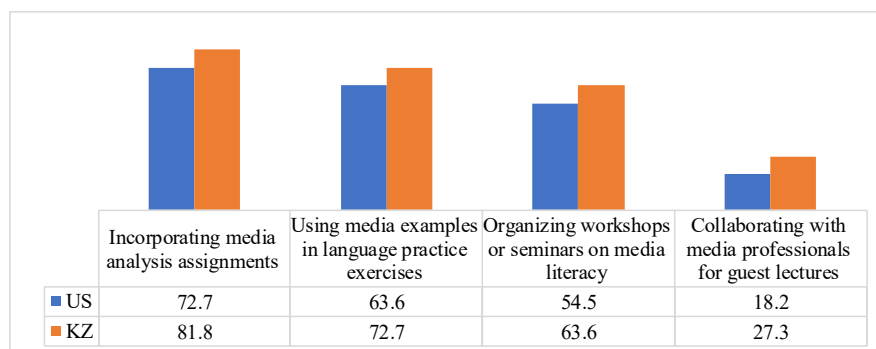


Figure 4. Educators' Perceptions on Strategies for Introducing Media Literacy in Language Education (%).

Survey Question 5 (SQ5) examined the challenges in integrating ML into LE by selecting one of the following options:

- A. lack of resources or materials;
- B. insufficient training or knowledge;
- C. limited time within the curriculum;
- D. increased engagement in language learning.

For educators in the US, the primary challenge cited was the limited time within the curriculum (90.9 %), which indicated that existing curricular demands left little room for developing additional skills, such as ML. Insufficient training or knowledge (63.6 %) was also a significant concern, suggesting that while ML was valued, educators felt

unprepared to teach it effectively. A smaller proportion of educators (18.2%) mentioned a lack of resources or materials as a challenge, reflecting a relatively well-resourced educational environment.

In contrast, educators in Kazakhstan identified a need for more resources or materials (72.7 %) as the most pressing challenge. This underscores the need for greater access to ML resources. Insufficient training or knowledge (63.6 %) is also a concern, highlighting the need for professional development in MLE in both countries. A limited time allocation within the curriculum (45.5%) was considered a challenge. These results reveal how structural differences in curriculum design and resource availability shape the integration of ML in each context (**Figure 5**).

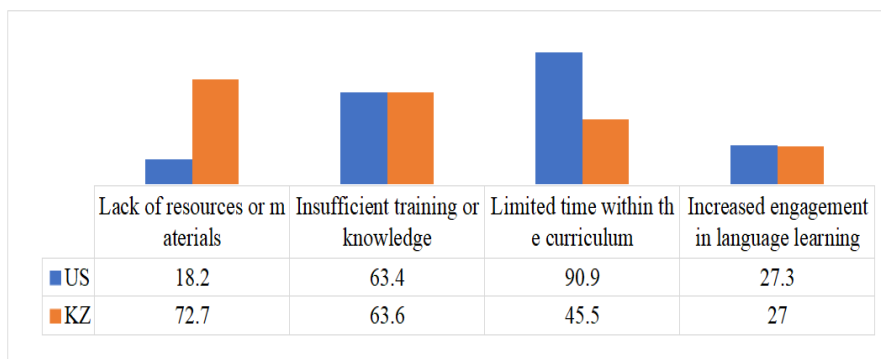


Figure 5. Educators' Perceptions on Challenges in Integrating Media Literacy (%).

Additional challenges for the ‘other(s)’ option in Question 5, such as lack of instructional support and limited access to professional development, were also noted in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Barriers to Integrating Media Literacy into University-Level Language Instruction.

Barriers	
- resistance to change	- student digital literacy levels
- cultural sensitivity issues	- institutional policy constraints
- lack of administrative support	- limited access to technology
- overcrowded curriculum	- language barriers
- difficulty in assessing media literacy skills	- time- intensive preparation.

Survey Question 6 (SQ6) asked respondents whether

insights from integrating ML could foster inclusive knowledge societies in their teaching context. The responses were recorded using a four-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

As **Figure 6** illustrates, the majority (81 %) of US educators Strongly Agreed, indicating confidence in MLE’s applicability for fostering inclusive knowledge societies. The well-established frameworks and institutional support for MLE in the US likely influence this. Another 18% chose ‘Agree’, showing general support for the statement while possibly acknowledging some contextual challenges. Only a small percentage (3 %) disagreed, and virtually no one chose Strongly Disagree, reflecting a broadly favorable perception of ML’s potential impact.

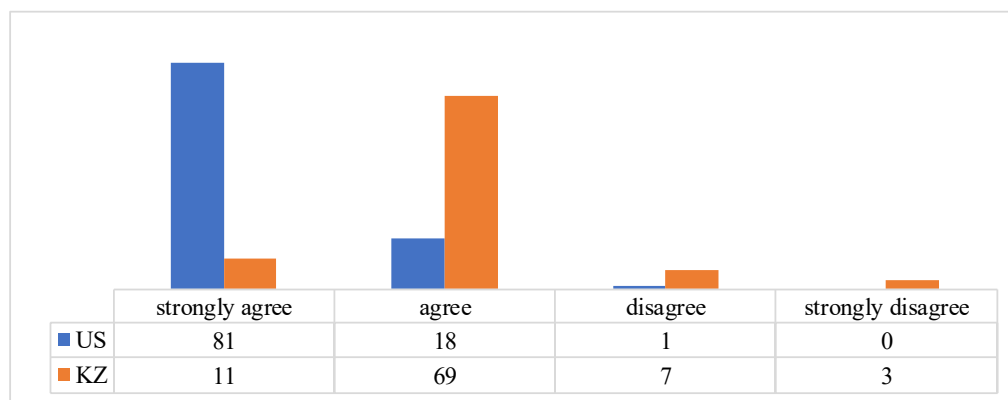


Figure 6. Educators’ Perceptions on Contribution of ML Insights to Fostering Inclusive Knowledge Societies (%)

In contrast, most Kazakhstani educators (69%) selected ‘Agree’, reflecting their optimism about the potential of ML insights to address systemic educational challenges, such as resource limitations and digital inequalities. A smaller percentage (11 %) expressed strong agreement, underscoring a strong belief in the transformative role of media literacy in fostering equitable and sustainable educational practices. However, 7% of Kazakh respondents disagreed, citing concerns about the practicality of implementing these insights due to institutional and resource constraints. Only a minimal proportion (3%) selected ‘Strongly Disagree’, suggesting limited skepticism about the relevance of ML insights for their local contexts. This indicates cautious optimism about ML’s potential to address educational inequities and digital divides.

This analysis reveals commonalities and differences in how U.S. and Kazakhstani educators integrate ML into LE.

Both groups recognize its importance and agree on effective strategies, but they face different challenges based on their specific educational contexts. U.S. educators are primarily constrained by time, while Kazakhstani educators are more concerned with resource availability and the need for structured support. These findings suggest that tailored approaches are necessary for each country’s language instructors’ needs, ensuring that ML can be effectively integrated into language curricula.

Next, to deepen understanding, we invited language instructors to participate in a follow-up interview as part of this study. Sixteen Kazakh language instructors and two U.S. instructors agreed to participate in the interview. This interview aimed to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perspectives on integrating ML into LE at the university level. Interviewers were particularly interested in understanding the long-term impacts on language learn-

ing outcomes, exploring how ML can enhance students' ability to contribute to sustainable futures, and gathering practical examples from their teaching practice. Additionally, the interview focused on identifying effective strategies and support mechanisms to overcome challenges in implementing ML in the curriculum.

Interview Question 1: "How do you perceive the long-term impact of media literacy on language learning outcomes?" showed that specific instructors initially interpreted 'media materials' to refer mainly to news. However, after explaining that media materials encompass a range of products, including articles, social media posts, podcasts, videos, and other formats, the conversation progressed more smoothly and yielded more valuable insights.

After fully understanding the notion of 'media materials,' the instructors emphasized that they viewed MLE as having a significant long-term impact on language learning outcomes. They pointed out that students skilled in ML develop more advanced language abilities and become critical thinkers, navigating the complexities of modern communication. According to Şahin et al., this dual development of linguistic and analytical skills is crucial for students to excel in academic and real-world settings ^[24]. A good example was Instructor 11's answer: "Incorporating various media formats such as videos, audios, podcasts, and social media has a notable impact on language learning.... With exposure to diverse formats, students improve their language skills and become proficient in comprehending and producing language. This is essential in the digital age and enhances their ability to critically evaluate information, which is beneficial in all aspects of life."

Similarly, Instructor 9 noted, "I recognize that media literacy can affect students' communication skills. They learn to interpret and create content across different platforms, which helps them become more versatile communicators. This will benefit their careers in the long run, particularly where clear and effective communication is essential."

Overall, the responses highlight that educators view media literacy as a decisive factor in students' long-term language development, enhancing both their linguistic competence and critical thinking skills, which, as Berkinbayeva and her contributors argue, prepares students to communicate effectively in a variety of real-world contexts ^[25].

For *Interview Question 2:* "Can integrating media literacy into language education enhance students' ability to contribute to sustainable futures? How?" the instructors agreed that integrating ML into LE significantly enhances students' ability to contribute to sustainable futures. They emphasized that MLE equips students with the tools to critically engage with various media forms, making them more aware of global challenges such as climate change, social justice, and cultural diversity. This awareness empowers students to create solutions and advocate for locally and globally sustainable practices ^[26]. For example, Instructor 5 claimed, "When students practice assessing social media campaigns or environmental documentaries critically, they improve their language skills and become more informed citizens. They use their enhanced ML to advocate for sustainable practices and share accurate information within their communities, which is crucial for driving long-term change."

Instructor 19 supported Instructor 5's position: "When students engage with various media formats, like creating podcasts on climate change or analyzing viral videos on social justice, they develop a nuanced understanding of global issues. This knowledge fosters students' meaningful contributions to discussions about sustainability, both in academic settings and the broader community."

Taken together, these findings imply that educators see media literacy as a vital tool for helping students critically engage with global issues and actively contribute to a sustainable future through meaningful language use and civic involvement, thus supporting Yelubayeva and Gabdullina's ideas about the transformative role of integrated media literacy in promoting informed citizenship and encouraging socially responsible participation in various educational settings ^[27].

For *Interview Question 3:* "Can you share specific examples or experiences where integrating media literacy into your language teaching has empowered students to participate more actively in knowledge-sharing communities?" Instructors shared that integrating ML empowers students in multiple ways. For example, Instructor 14 stated: "I introduced a project where students analyzed news articles and social media posts on climate change. They had to present their findings and discuss the different narratives in these media formats. This exercise was

incredibly impactful. It improved their language skills and motivated them to join online communities focused on environmental advocacy, where they actively participated and shared their insights.”

Instructor 9 stated, *“In one of my classes, I had students create video blogs (vlogs) on topics related to social justice. They shared these vlogs on the YouTube platform and engaged with viewers through comments. This experience empowered them to participate in broader discussions about these issues online and in class. They realized their voices could contribute to larger conversations, empowering them.”*

Overall, these responses indicate that integrating media literacy into language teaching enhances students’ language skills by involving them in authentic, real-world communication. Shakiyeva and contributors argue that real-world communication tasks motivate students to share ideas, express opinions, and actively participate in broader knowledge-sharing communities ^[28]. This helps empower students to become active members of knowledge-sharing communities, linking language development with meaningful civic engagement and digital interaction ^[29].

Interview Question 4: “What strategies or support are essential to overcoming the challenges of integrating media literacy into the curriculum?” Instructors identified several strategies and supports necessary for successful integration. They emphasized the importance of professional development opportunities covering all media materials.

Additionally, they emphasized the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between language and media studies departments to develop comprehensive curricula. Access to diverse media resources, flexibility in curriculum design, and ongoing dialogue with students to understand their interests were also highlighted as critical factors for overcoming challenges ^[24]. Instructor 17 explained this: *“Collaboration with other departments is essential to integrate this broader range of ML into LE effectively. For example, working with media studies, experts can help us design interdisciplinary courses covering language and media literacy. Additionally, having access to professional technology and media production tools, like video editing software, can greatly enhance the learning experience for students.”*

These ideas suggest that educators view ongoing professional development, interdisciplinary collaboration, access to a variety of media resources, and flexible curriculum development as essential supports for the effective integration of media literacy into language education. As a result, this approach strengthens students’ language competence through authentic, media-rich learning experiences ^[30,31].

Respondents repeatedly mentioned several strategies during the interview. **Table 2** illustrates the top 11 strategies. For Yelubayeva and Mustafina, these strategies can be tailored to specific educational contexts, promoting critical thinking, digital proficiency, and enhanced language learning outcomes ^[31].

Table 2. Strategies to Incorporate Media Literacy into Language Education.

Strategies	Purposes
<i>Integrate Authentic Media Materials</i>	<i>Develop critical analysis and comprehension skills by exposing yourself to real-world media.</i>
<i>Media Analysis Assignments</i>	<i>Enhance critical thinking and media evaluation abilities.</i>
<i>Media Creation Projects</i>	<i>Promote creative expression and practical language use.</i>
<i>Collaborative Learning Activities</i>	<i>Foster teamwork and cross-cultural communication.</i>
<i>Social Media Literacy Exercises</i>	<i>Teach digital etiquette, critical engagement, and cultural awareness.</i>
<i>Workshops and Seminars</i>	<i>Provide in-depth learning opportunities on specific media literacy topics.</i>
<i>Interdisciplinary Collaboration</i>	<i>Combine expertise from different fields for comprehensive learning.</i>
<i>Case Studies and Scenarios</i>	<i>Link language skills to critical thinking through real-life examples.</i>
<i>Cultural Context Integration</i>	<i>Build intercultural competence alongside language proficiency.</i>
<i>Reflective Practice Assignments</i>	<i>Encourage self-awareness and critical reflection on media consumption habits.</i>
<i>Digital Tool Training</i>	<i>Introduce students to video editing software, blogging platforms, or online collaboration tools to improve their digital literacy skills in conjunction with language learning.</i>

The interview results reveal insightful perspectives on integrating ML into LE from US and Kazakhstani language instructors, emphasizing a broader understanding of media materials. The interview results provided diverse viewpoints that align with the findings from the questionnaire, and together, they offer a comprehensive understanding of the research.

US and Kazakhstani instructors have emphasized the significance of integrating ML into LE. They believe this integration significantly enhances students' ability to contribute to a sustainable future. According to them, ML equips students with the critical tools to navigate and engage with issues such as pollution, climate change, and social inequality. This empowers students to become informed and active participants in knowledge-sharing communities. The instructors have also highlighted specific examples where the integration of ML led to increased student engagement and active participation in broader discussions, both online and offline. They have shared successful projects, such as analyzing environmental news across different media formats and creating social justice-themed media content, which motivated students to contribute meaningfully to discussions on sustainability

and social change.

Instructors in both countries have recognized the similar need to integrate ML into the curriculum. They have stressed the importance of professional development, interdisciplinary collaboration, and institutional support. This insight aligns with Kellner's mindset, which posits that providing educators with comprehensive training that covers various media materials, access to diverse media resources, and flexible curricula to accommodate ML components is crucial^[26].

To promote transparency in the statistical method, a detailed Chi-square analysis is provided below. **Table 3** presents the Chi-square test results, *p*-values, and significance interpretations related to the research questions, highlighting where group differences reached statistical significance. Overall statistical analysis revealed similarities and notable differences in ML perceptions among U.S. and Kazakhstan educators (**Table 3**). Specifically, the responses about the perceived relevance of ML (SQ1) did not exhibit a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.2033$), indicating that educators in both countries largely agree on its importance for LE.

Table 3. Chi-Square Test Results.

	<i>Survey Question</i>	<i>Chi-square Value (χ^2)</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Significance</i>
1	<i>Relevance of Media Literacy</i>	4.60274509803921	0.20330671971067	Not Significant
2	<i>Definition of Media Literacy</i>	7.05902255639097	0.070040127914802	Not Significant
3	<i>Expected Learning Outcomes</i>	1.47898204583782	0.68712968949875	Not Significant
4	<i>Challenges in Integration</i>	8.83412355503361	0.0315795677021770	Significant
5	<i>Contribution to Inclusive Knowledge Societies</i>	31.2047212047212	7.697222816214465e-07	Highly Significant

However, regarding the definition of media literacy (SQ2), results showed a marginally significant difference ($p = 0.0700$); U.S. educators generally adopt a broader, more holistic view, while their Kazakhstani counterparts stress its technical and analytical dimensions.

The analysis revealed no significant difference ($p = 0.6871$) in expected learning outcomes (SQ3), suggesting that both groups believe ML will similarly enhance students' critical thinking, media analysis, and language skills.

Conversely, a statistically significant difference ($p = 0.0316$) was observed concerning educators' views on the challenges of integrating ML into LE (SQ5). Findings in-

dicated that Kazakhstani educators experience more significant resource shortages, while U.S. educators mainly encounter limitations regarding curriculum time.

The most pronounced difference was found in the perceived role of ML in fostering inclusive knowledge societies (SQ6), where a highly significant variation emerged ($p < 0.0001$). The analysis suggested that U.S. educators see ML as crucial for promoting social inclusion and digital literacy. In contrast, Kazakhstani educators adopt a more measured view of their broader effects.

These findings address the study's research questions by examining how educators in both countries perceive ML's relevance, adopt practical strategies, face con-

text-specific challenges, and share their views on its potential to build more inclusive, informed societies through language education. It also offers valuable insights into how institutional support, available resources, and national educational focuses influence the incorporation of ML in university-level language teaching across various contexts.

4. Discussion

This study presents a critical analysis of the integration of media literacy into university English language teaching, comparing the views of language teachers from Kazakhstan and the United States. The study deliberately examines contexts with varying experiences in integrating media literacy into language education. In doing so, the study aims to offer practical lessons on how developing systems, such as Kazakhstan's, can adapt practices from more established contexts while considering local educational needs and traditions. While educators in both contexts agree on the relevance of ML, differences in institutional support, resources, and training reveal distinct challenges and opportunities that shape how ML is perceived and implemented.

The strong consensus among U.S. educators regarding the relevance of ML, with 81.8% rating it as 'very relevant', reflects the established role of ML in American educational frameworks. By contrast, the more cautious optimism of Kazakh educators, with 63.6% rating ML as 'relevant', suggests growing recognition but limited practical implementation. This disparity is consistent with existing literature on emerging economies^[27,28], where resource constraints and digital inequality remain significant barriers.

The broader conceptual understanding of ML among US educators, with 82% selecting 'all of the above' to define ML's competencies, underscores their exposure to a more comprehensive range of ML frameworks that encompass access, analysis, evaluation, creation, reflection, and action. In Kazakhstan, a large proportion of educators emphasized technical and analytical aspects of ML, such as accessing and analyzing media (36% choosing option *a*), which indicates a narrower focus shaped by resource limitations. This finding reinforces arguments that local conditions and available resources deeply influence educators'

perceptions of ML. This aligns with studies emphasizing the importance of contextual factors in shaping educators' approaches to ML^[27].

We analyzed the learning strategies used to overcome the challenges of integrating MLE into the curriculum, aiming to detect and understand the differences in perspectives on integrating ML into LE between US and KZ participants. These analyses were complemented by a qualitative investigation of participants' situational interpretations in stimulated recall interviews. The findings on integration strategies reveal two significant insights. First, the results show that the learning strategies used by US educators did not differ from those of KZ educators in the array of instructional methods employed^[29], but rather in their awareness of the importance of addressing a broad range of media, reflecting a more considerable extent of readiness among US educators. In North America, the concept of ML gained prominence on the agenda in the late 1980s, partly due to efforts to integrate media education into English language teaching^[1,6,18]. US educators whose primary interest is in teaching language and literature have successfully integrated ML into LE in K-12, as captured in think-aloud data^[18]. In contrast, Kazakh educators often rely on structured workshops and guest lectures by media professionals, highlighting their reliance on external expertise to fill gaps in the local community. The emphasis by Kazakhs on formalized training aligns with Buckingham's call for continuous educator training to overcome institutional barriers to the integration of ML^[1]. This is also consistent with Shakiyeva and her contributors^[28], who noted that Kazakh language educators face challenges in effectively regulating their teaching to adopt new approaches to language teaching. Furthermore, the term '*media literacy*' in Kazakhstan is often used in preference to '*media education*' in the context of journalism and the film industry^[27], which may limit broader curricular adoption. It is also essential to recognize that Kazakhstan's education system is rooted in strong traditions of teacher training and curriculum development inherited from the Soviet era, which emphasized comprehensive teacher preparation and high standards for literacy and language education^[13]. These strong foundations can serve as valuable resources for further integrating media literacy in line with national educational priorities and cultural context.

Second, when focusing on the classroom interaction instructions, we found that both U.S. and Kazakh educators identified media analysis assignments and authentic media materials as effective strategies for integrating ML. In both contexts, educators recognize that effective ML integration requires not only teaching learners to analyze media but also enabling them to produce and critically and creatively critique media content. For instance, the emphasis by U.S. educators on media creation projects and collaborative learning highlights a learner-centered approach, promoting creativity and critical engagement with media. In contrast, Kazakh educators' preference for guest lectures suggests a reliance on external resources to compensate for gaps in local expertise. This difference highlights the need for tailored strategies that address the unique challenges of each context.

This study also affirms ML's potential to empower learners to contribute meaningfully to inclusive knowledge societies. Hobbs argues that to succeed in a media-saturated world, individuals must critically question what they watch, see, listen to, read, use, and communicate (added by authors), since they serve as both consumers and creators of media messages. ML equips students with the critical skills necessary for informed participation in digital and cultural spheres^[18]. The interviews illustrate this potential, showing how integrating diverse media formats fosters critical engagement with real-world issues such as climate change, social justice, and sustainability. These findings reflect broader trends in MLE, where ML is positioned as a tool for empowering learners to navigate digital inequality and misinformation, advocate for sustainable practice, and participate actively in civic discourse^[28].

The statistical results underscore that although US and Kazakhstan educators recognize the importance of ML, their distinct challenges and perceptions differ significantly. The findings show no statistically significant difference in importance ($p = 0.2033$) and anticipated learning outcomes ($p = 0.6871$), revealing a consensus on integrating ML into LE. However, significant disparities in the challenges of integration ($p = 0.0316$) and views on the role of ML in fostering inclusive knowledge societies ($p < 0.0001$) indicate that institutional and structural factors significantly influence educators' experiences. Kazakhstani educators

highlighted a lack of resources and inadequate training, emphasizing the need for greater institutional investment and support. In contrast, American educators identified limited curriculum time as their primary barrier, suggesting that implementation strategies should focus on flexibly integrating ML into existing structures. Kazakhstani educators, on the other hand, emphasized different challenges. These findings align with earlier research, underscoring the importance of tailoring ML education to specific national and institutional contexts.

In response to these findings, this study recommends actions to strengthen ML integration in university-level LE for empowering inclusive knowledge societies in Kazakhstan:

- 1) *Develop and implement comprehensive national-level professional development programs to enhance educators' competencies in M;*
- 2) *Design flexible curricula that embed ML into language instructions aligned with national educational standards to promote critical thinking, digital literacy, and language proficiency;*
- 3) *Prioritize investments in educational technologies and resources to ensure equitable access to media literacy tools for educators and students, particularly in remote regions;*
- 4) *Establish interdisciplinary collaborative frameworks between LE and media studies experts to foster multidisciplinary approaches and enhance the effectiveness of media literacy integration;*
- 5) *Advocate for including ML as a strategic priority within national education policies, ensuring sustained administrative support and financial resources for its implementation;*
- 6) *Initiate awareness campaigns to emphasize the importance of ML among educators, policymakers, and the broader public, fostering a collective commitment to its integration.*

These interventions, supported by robust policy frameworks and sustained institutional commitment, may accelerate progress toward embedding ML in Kazakhstan's higher education and maximize its potential for preparing learners to succeed in a complex digital world.

5. Conclusions

This study highlights the crucial role of ML in LE as a catalyst for promoting inclusive knowledge societies. Media literacy equips students with essential critical thinking and communication skills, enabling them to navigate the complexities of the digital age and actively contribute to knowledge-sharing communities.

The findings reveal a significant disparity in progress between the United States and Kazakhstan. While the United States demonstrates a more advanced integration of media literacy, supported by an institutional framework and resources, Kazakhstan remains in the early stage of adoption. Persistent challenges include resource limitation, a lack of training, and uneven institutional support, which continue to constrain the full realization of ML's potential in the Kazakhstani context. Despite these challenges, educators in both countries recognize the transformative potential of ML for enhancing educational outcomes, promoting societal equity, and informed citizenship.

By comparing contexts with varying levels of experience in integrating media literacy into language education, this study offers practical insights for emerging systems seeking to adapt global practices while leveraging national educational strengths. In addition, Kazakhstan's long-standing traditions of rigorous teacher training and retraining can provide a strong foundation for localizing global practices in ML. By aligning new ML initiatives with these existing educational strengths, stakeholders can ensure that integration efforts are contextually relevant and sustainable.

Future studies will prioritize assessing the effectiveness of these strategies, exploring culturally relevant teaching methods, and analyzing the broader societal advantages of integrating ML within LE. Additionally, future research will compare the level of ML of Kazakh educators with that of educators from countries with similar educational systems and historical backgrounds to generate regionally relevant insights and recommendations. In line with recent trends in utilizing AI tools for LE, future studies will also explore how AI-assisted tools can enhance media literacy instruction in language education. These tools enable students to evaluate digital texts and media content critically^[32]. By advancing these priorities, Kazakhstan can accel-

erate its progress towards embedding ML in higher LE, equipping learners with the skills necessary to navigate a connected digital landscape while making meaningful contributions to sustainable and inclusive knowledge societies.

Author Contributions

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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