

Critical Internationalization in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

English Version

The internationalization of Chinese universities has evolved through many stages since Chinese modernization: through “‘being late’ and ‘catching up’, and paradoxes between ‘fast and slow’ paces” (Xu, 2023, p.375). At the same time, the internationalization of Chinese universities has been heavily influenced by the internationalization of US higher education (Qiu & Sun, 2025). In this paper, I intend to challenge the normative narrative of US internationalization and aim to shed light on the critical and post-structural lens of internationalization that has been practiced and planned in the current internationalization of Chinese universities. I first explored the evolution of rationales of US internationalization of higher education. I then use both critical and post-structural epistemological lenses to challenge and look for alternatives to internationalization. Moreover, I will examine how critical and post-structural epistemological thinking is reflected in the internationalization of Chinese higher education. Furthermore, I will show how potential methodological approaches are situated in both epistemologies. Lastly, I will explore how my positionality reflects my knowledge production process in this study.

Chinese Version

自中国开启现代化进程以来，中国高校的国际化历经了多个演进阶段：从“起步较晚”到“奋起直追”，再到“快”与“慢”的节奏之间所呈现出的冲突 (Xu, 2023, p.375)。与此同

时,中国高校的国际化进程也深受美国高等教育国际化模式的影响(Qiu & Sun, 2025)。本文旨在对美国高等教育国际化所构建的规范性叙事发起挑战,并致力于揭示当前中国高校国际化实践与规划中所蕴含的批判性与后结构主义视角。首先,我探讨了美国高等教育国际化背后理据的演变历程。随后,我将运用批判性与后结构主义这两种认识论视角,对既有的国际化模式进行审视与挑战,并探寻其替代性方案。此外,我将探索批判性与后结构主义的认识论思维是如何体现在中国高等教育的国际化实践之中的。另外,我将阐述潜在的方法论进路是如何置身于这两种认识论之中的。最后,我将探讨我的主体位置性如何反映了我在本研究中的知识生产过程。

Key words

Internationalization, Critical Internationalization, Decolonial, Post-development, Chinese universities

Introduction

The internationalization of Chinese universities has evolved through many stages since Chinese modernization: through “‘being late’ and ‘catching up’, and paradoxes between ‘fast and slow’ paces”.(Xu, 2023, p.375). At the same time, the internationalization of Chinese universities has heavily been influenced by the internationalization of US higher education (Qiu & Sun, 2025). In this paper, I intend to challenge the normative narrative of US internationalization and aim to shed light on the critical and post-structural lens of internationalization that has been practiced and planned in the current internationalization of Chinese universities. I first explored the evolution of rationales of US internationalization of higher education. I then use both critical and post-structural epistemological lenses to challenge and look for alternatives to internationalization. Moreover, I will examine how critical and post-structural epistemological thinking is reflected in the internationalization of Chinese higher education. Furthermore, I will show how my potential methodological approaches are situated in both epistemologies. Lastly, I will explore how my positionality reflects my knowledge production process in this study.

The evolution of rationales for the internationalization of US higher education

The rationale behind the internationalization of US higher education can be traced back to World War II. During the Truman administration, the internationalization of US higher education was used to not only build peace around the world but also foster America’s knowledge about other regions and nations (Veerasamy & Durst, 2023). During this time, the national intention to internationalize was justified by the desperate need to become the ideological and knowledge leader of the world. The academic need to understand other nations was intensified by the threat of national security during the Cold War (Veerasamy & Durst,

2023). However, due to a lack of financial support for internationalization policy after the 1970s, the internationalization of US higher education has rapidly transitioned to a more economic-development rationale (Veerasamy & Durst, 2023). This economic development rationale eventually evolved into a competitive rationale in the global economy (De Wit, 2019).

De Wit (2019) analyzed that the impacts of the internationalization of higher education from the competitive rationale are massification, the global knowledge economy, and the reputation and rankings. Massification indicates a shift in access to international education, which was previously exclusive to the elite and wealthy families. To compete in the global economy, emerging economies like China, India, Latin America, and the Caribbean have demanded an increase in the import of higher education from the United States, the United Kingdom, continental Europe, Canada, Australia, South Korea, and Japan (De Wit, 2019). This results in a massification of international higher education with an increasing enrollment of international students from middle-class families from emerging economy countries to developed countries.

At the same time, the global knowledge economy also reinforces the competitive rationale to internationalize US higher education. Technology and knowledge are the essential elements to compete in the global economy. Universities play an increasingly important role as knowledge producers. International research partnerships, scholarly contributions by international students and researchers, and the attraction of top talent are all strategies important for universities to maintain competitive statuses as knowledge production sites. Therefore, De Wit (2019) believed that the global knowledge economy has not only motivated universities to internationalize but also standardize English as the global language of research.

Moreover, De Wit (2019) pointed out that there is a clear relationship among excellence initiatives, rankings, and internationalization. As intercultural competency has become an important skill to maintain competitiveness in the global workforce, internationalization of the program and curriculum has become an important measure of the excellence of higher education. The ranking is part of a mechanism in the game of global economy where it structures a competitive relationship among universities and countries, creates a hierarchical value system with quantitative evaluation methods, and confines performance in a linear and limited understanding of improvements (De Wit, 2019). Internationalization of higher education plays an important part in the national, regional, and global university rankings. Reciprocally, being at the top in these university rankings can also attract an increase in the enrollment of international students with top talent. This will further enhance national competitiveness in the global economy. Therefore, many institutional leaders and national governments have positioned the pursuit of becoming a world-class university as the driving agenda.

Despite the competitive rationale, there is also an increasing need for global cooperation (Hser, 2005). The rationale for global cooperation argues that solving global issues requires working collaboratively across the globe. However, even though many US universities are motivated to internationalize both nationally and institutionally, it is also necessary to acknowledge that not all US universities want to promote internationalization policies. Many US universities faced the obstacles of internationalization due to a lack of financial support, a lack of motivated stakeholders in the administration or faculty positions, and a lack of commitment to promote international education (Hser, 2005). It is also important to highlight that the internationalization policies of US higher education are uniquely influenced by a multiplicity of national actors in the public, private, and voluntary sectors (Veerassamy & Durst, 2023). Instead

of holding a centralized and comprehensive decision-making power, the federal government's influence on the internationalization of US higher education is often ambiguous and fragmented (Veerasamy, & Durst, 2023). De Wit (2019) further invited us to examine the internationalization of US higher education in the context of the current nationalist, populist, and anti-global political climate. Veerasamy and Durst (2023) provide a framework to explore internationalization policies as “a living organism”, which emphasizes the “eclectic and expansive” nature of the policy-making process at the national level (p.321).

Thinking internationalization through a critical epistemological lens

While De Wit (2019) asked to reflect on the internationalization of US higher education under the current anti-global political climate, decolonial scholars re-oriented the focus on the internationalization of higher education through a critical epistemology. Decolonial work specifically focuses on the uneven power dynamics and epistemic inequalities in the process of internationalization. Echoing De Wit's (2019) critique about interrogating the purpose of internationalization itself, the important question in critical internationalization studies is “in whose name, for whose benefit, and to what end they should internationalize” (Stein and McCartney, 2021, p.1). Stein and McCartney (2021) criticized the neutrality and universality of internationalization.

Mignolo (2002) traced the neutrality and universality of Western epistemology back to the origin of capitalism, coloniality, and modernity. The Western epistemology was co-constructed with capitalism since the European Renaissance (Mignolo, 2002). As capitalism expanded from the Mediterranean to the North Atlantic and eventually to the Atlantic commercial circuit, the establishment of the modern world system was also expanded (Mignolo, 2002). Mignolo (2002) distinguished the concept of modernity from the modern world system:

“modernity is associated with literature, philosophy, and the history of ideas, whereas the modern world-system is associated with the vocabulary of the social sciences” (p.60). Therefore, even though modernity created a sense of illusion that Western civilization originated from Greece and continued to develop to eighteenth-century Europe, it is important to be clear that it is the modern world-system that began in the fifteenth century. Through the Atlantic commercial circuit, under the capitalistic operation, the modern world-system brought in coloniality. Mignolo (2002) introduced the concept of “geopolitics of knowledge” to explain that the knowledge created in Western civilization has been universalized, which excludes and illegitimizes knowledge production situated in other civilizations. The Western epistemology has been universalized through a hegemonic discourse, maintaining certain privileged time and history situated in a particular geopolitical space. Therefore, as the world has been globalized, the time and history situated in Western civilization were constructed to contain the universal value across all time and spaces.

Following Mignolo’s (2002) critique of Western epistemology, Stein and Andreotti (2016) created a conceptual approach, “a dominant global imaginary,” which emphasized that the colonial/ modern world is structured in a linear way of progress where Western higher education has been positioned at the top of the hierarchy. Through this global imaginary, internationalization reproduces uneven global power relations where higher education in the Global North maintains the dominant position (Stein and McCartney, 2021).

Bamberger and Morris (2024) criticized that one of the limitations of the decolonial theory is rooted in Occidentalism, “promoting the West as inherently a more morally corrupt actor than those elsewhere” (p.135). I partially agree with Bamberger and Morris (2024) that it is also important to pay equal attention to how the Global South helps to promote and reproduce

the colonality of power. But I also want to argue that decolonial scholars do understand the complexity of colonial power beyond the West and East binary. Mignolo (2002) reminds us that there is a Global North within the Global South. I believe that Bamberger and Morris (2024) failed to acknowledge the origin and history of settler colonialism, which produced Western hegemony. At the same time, they not only went too quickly to point out other “bad” players with the colonial power but also abused the word without differentiating the uneven levels of participation and complicity between the Western and non-Western players.

In summary, it is important to understand how colonial epistemic power has played by US in defining what is internationalization of higher education, how to internationalize and for whom to internationalize. At the same time, it is also important to reflect one’s own positionality and context about the complex engagement with this colonial epistemic power in the field of internationalization of higher education.

Thinking internationalization through a post-structural lens

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 presented a hard stop in internationalization, especially in international student mobility. During this uncertain time, with difficulty in crossing national borders, internationalization faced a hard stop. The dominant narrative of internationalization is being challenged. Through the post-structural epistemological lens, scholars began to think about internationalization otherwise (Stein and McCartney, 2021; Beck, 2021). Stein and McCartney (2021) invite scholars to reflect on our complicity as academics in the knowledge production economy. For Canadian universities, the salaries earned by the employees are heavily dependent on international student tuition (Stein and McCartney, 2021). Therefore, it is important for us as scholars to understand that our work is never innocent or exempt from colonial power. We need to interrogate our complicity with deep reflectivity.

Another post-structural epistemological lens drew from post-development theories, which ask to “reset” internationalization (Beck, 2021, p. 135). Resetting the internationalization field means critically reviewing and interrogating the history and evolution of internationalization and then re-orienting and inviting paradigmatic change to “internationalization otherwise”.

Post-development theories criticized development thinking, which framed non-Western and non-industrialized societies as underdeveloped. Through the binary thinking of developed and underdeveloped, Western epistemologies and ontologies are elevated and universalized as the standard that should be looked up and caught up for all societies. Because development thinking has been deeply rooted in the logic of world systems building, thinking beyond the framing of development means denying development as the only way to exist in the world and inviting diversity of existence.

Beck (2021) believed that the main inspiration of post-development theories for internationalization is to allow communities to “have agency in being able to determine their direction” (p. 140). It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of post-development theories. Beck (2021) believed that thinking beyond a development framing can be unrealistic for many communities in both the Global North and Global South because they are still struggling on a basic level of survival. However, many Indigenous scholars may disagree with Beck (2021) by arguing that even on the basic level of survival, there are still opportunities for co-existence (Corntassel, 2012). I would like to further challenge Beck (2021) by arguing that the very situation of some communities that are struggling to survive is proof that the development framework is successfully implemented. I think it is important for us to question why they do not get enough resources to survive. Who is benefiting from their suffering? And, what can it be like

for communities that want to live beyond the linear progress of development by creating their own agency and direction?

Applying post-development theory to internationalization, Beck (2021) introduced the concept of post-internationalization, which is a proposal for aspiration and hope to imagine what can happen after or other than internationalization. One is thinking of student mobility beyond the current framing of internationalization. Post-development scholars believe that international student mobility from the Global South to the Global North is a form of treating international students as objects of development (Beck, 2021). Internationalization promises international students with intercultural competency and a cosmopolitan accumulation of social and cultural capital. However, from a post-development view, it is important to question the purpose and step back to reflect on the assumptions behind the seemingly benign accumulation of social and cultural capital through internationalization (Beck, 2021). It is important to reflect on what and whose social and cultural capital is considered valuable and desirable, and whose gaze on internationalization we are holding. Therefore, to think about internationalization otherwise, the first step we need to do is to “clean our gaze” (Beck 2021, p. 143, as cited in Esteva, 2014, p, i147).

Another critique of internationalization from the post-development perspective is in the economic dimension. Development thinking demands unlimited growth with an unrealistic assumption that there are infinite resources. Beck (2021) believed that imagining what degrowth can be like might open up new possibilities for paradigmatic change for post-internationalization. Internationalization is so dependent on operation as an economic model that it is extremely hard to imagine internationalization without the business part of it.

Chinese higher education

Many universities in the Global South have built their higher education system by learning from Western universities. Instead of framing universities in the Global South simply as the receivers of help and benevolence from Western universities, it is also important to emphasize their agency and active reflections on their participation in building their higher education system both locally and internationally. Therefore, I will use Chinese higher education as an example to represent the constant negotiation between Westernization and de-colonial work in the Chinese context.

History of internationalization of Chinese higher education

Xu (2023) talked about how the Chinese internationalization process has been through various temporal phases: “‘being late’ and ‘catching up’, and paradoxes between ‘fast and slow’ paces” (p.375). The history of Chinese modernization can be traced back to 150 years ago during China’s last Qing dynasty. The isolationist policies were implemented in the early period of the Qing dynasty, which stopped any interaction, trade, or communication outside of China. Yet, Western countries used military forces to open the Chinese economy to the world. The great difference in military power between the Qing government and the Western countries forced China to realize the need to modernize. Sending Chinese students abroad to learn Western knowledge was one of the important policies for Chinese modernization. This logic has been passed down to the current policy of the Chinese internationalization process. Through the process of Chinese modernization, China aims to catch up with the West and become an equal player in the international community of higher education (Liu, 2021).

At the same time, Chinese universities were established through this modernization process. To become world-standard universities is one of the institutional goals for Chinese universities, which will fulfill the national purpose to enhance China's national competitiveness and international influence. While sending Chinese students abroad is one of the main strategies for Chinese internationalization, the internationalization of Chinese universities also occupies an important role, which is defined as internationalization at home (Gun et al., 2022). Recruiting professors with foreign degrees, encouraging professors and students to attend international conferences and publish in international journals, and using English as the medium of instruction are all examples of internationalization at home in Chinese universities.

It is also important to mention that there are many challenges to this internationalization process in China. Different from the non-differential model in Western universities, where international students are managed in different departments with domestic students, international students in China are managed in a single program of international education, where they will take courses aligned with their major but taught by faculty members who are specifically assigned to this international education program. The reason for not having a non-differential model like Western universities is that not all Chinese professors are equipped with English teaching ability, and not all international students in China are capable of taking classes in Mandarin. At the same time, there is a lack of consensus and senior administration for international work among Chinese universities (Liu, 2021). Many Chinese professors and administrators believe that the internationalization of Chinese higher education is a great bonus, but not a central part of the institutional goals (Liu, 2021). Therefore, sometimes, the department of international education is left alone to face international work.

Compared to the universities in the West, the Chinese institutional policies for internationalization are strongly tied to the national strategy in international diplomacy (Liu, 2021). As Western universities become more neoliberal and economically driven, the Chinese universities are “more after soft gains on the diplomatic front” (Liu, 2021, p. 240). It is still unclear if Chinese universities are aiming to transition to a neoliberal, economically driven model, but China is using scholarships to attract international students to study in China without making money out of international education (Liu, 2021). At the same time, different from the decentralized administration power in Western higher education, the Chinese universities are under a centralized national higher education legislation, which is governed by the national Ministry of Education. Under the Ministry of Education, the CPC (The Communist Party of China) Central Committee and the State Council issued the Outline of the Plan for Building a Powerful Nation through Education (2024-2035).

In the outline, it specifically includes to “enhance global talent training and aggregation capabilities”, “expand international academic exchanges and educational and scientific research cooperation”, and “actively participate in global education governance” (Xie, 2025). The language used in this latest version of the outline reveals how the definitions of internationalization from the Ministry of Education have become “more on openness, equal exchanges and cooperation” (Xu, 2023). Therefore, according to this outline, the motivation of internationalization of Chinese higher education changed from a unidirectional learning from the Western world to an active reciprocal participation which emphasizes internationalization with Chinese characteristics (Guo, Guo, Yochim & Liu, 2022).

Critical internationalization in Chinese universities

The narrative of internationalization with Chinese characteristics derives from an evolving critical reflection of the Chinese modernization and internationalization process. The current internationalization model is heavily dependent on a hegemonic Western definition, which initially was and still is developed as an ideological influence from a unilateral flow of knowledge from the Global North to the Global South (Xu, 2023). Many scholars criticized the process of internationalization in China as equaling westernization (Liu, 2021; Guo et al., 2022; Xu, 2023). As Chinese universities were catching up and learning from Western higher education, concerns were raised that the “foreign transplants” of Western higher education may threaten the Chinese epistemologies and ontologies (Liu, 2021; Guo et al., 2022). Therefore, scholars are looking for alternative definitions of internationalization in the Chinese context (Xu, 2023).

To justify the motivation for internationalization in China, collective memories of China’s past are an influential factor in defining Chinese characteristics in internationalization. Xu (2023) talked about the “chosen glories”, “chosen trauma”, “living (post-) memories”, and “chosen amnesia” of different periods of Chinese history. The “chosen glories” emphasized that the foundation of China is inherited from a 5000-year history of continued civilization. The “chosen trauma” was the 100 years of humiliation in the 19th and 20th centuries from Western colonization and Japanese invasion. The “living (post-) memories” started from China’s economic reform and reopening in the late 1970s. The “chosen amnesia” justifies how the chosen collective memories were constructed in a specific way, which highlights “a collective sense of nostalgia and sense of victimization” (Xu, 2023, p.379). Through both the chosen memories and amnesia, internationalization with Chinese characteristics is constructed in a

unifying national definition and is independent from the hegemonic definition dominated by the Western internationalization process.

As decolonial scholars are interrogating the power dynamics and epistemic inequality in the internationalization of American higher education (De Wit, 2019; Vital & Yao, 2021) through critical epistemology, many scholars in China are also critically reflecting on how Chinese universities have been internationalized under Western influence (Guo et al., 2022). Through interviewing Chinese students in elite Chinese universities, some students reflect on how internationalization is unidirectional and solely mimics the developed countries (Guo et al., 2022). At the same time, some students reflected on their internationalization of the hierarchy of knowledge production, which positioned Western knowledge as superior to the Chinese one. This preference for Western academic sources echoed a similar pattern of the colonial theorization of East and West and the concept of development, where the first world has knowledge and the third world has culture (Said, 1979; Mignolo, 2002). Therefore, “true knowledge now resides in the forms of an imported, scientific mode of knowledge production that is decidedly non-Chinese” (Guo et al., 2022, p. 444).

Moreover, the dominance of English as the medium of instruction for internationalization in Chinese universities is also criticized by many critical scholars (Guo et al., 2022; Qiu & Zheng, 2023; Zheng & Qiu, 2024). The use of English to teach is a contributing indicator of the status of a world-class university in international education. However, students reflected on the absurdity of using English to instruct in a classroom where all the students and the professor are Chinese (Guo et al., 2022). Instead of using English to enrich students’ understanding of the knowledge itself, English becomes a barrier for students to learn about the content of the class (Guo et al., 2022). Moreover, English medium instruction creates an epistemic injustice that may

cause non-native English speakers to become less motivated to share their opinions and lower their confidence in their ability to generate knowledge (Zheng & Qiu, 2024). At the same time, because students may not be able to share their ideas in English in a sophisticated format, their credibility of the knowledge that they shared may also be put into question (Qiu & Zheng, 2023). As a result, the use of English is only for the sake of being international, despite the ineffectiveness of instruction, the exclusion of local context, and unevenly distributed English abilities among Chinese students.

Post-structural strategy in China

Through a post-structural epistemology, China has developed various strategies that intend to break the influence of Western domination. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China developed a coalition and partnership with countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa in order to create a different path in international relations, which has been defined by the US (Shan, 2023). Moreover, in response to the Western oppression of Chinese development through the geopolitical tension between the US and China, China developed a “double circulation strategy”, which can not only keep the independence of the domestic economy but also promote international economies at the same time (Yu, 2023). Having said that, the internationalization with Chinese characteristics may be an initial sign of post-structural epistemological thinking. However, institutional policies are missing in the discourse of “internationalization otherwise” for Chinese universities.

Possible Methodological approach in future research

In the potential future research, I intend to use critical narrative analysis and participatory visual methods. I am curious to understand what are the relationships between Chinese national

and institutional policies of internationalization, and everyday students' and professors' understanding of internationalization in the Chinese classroom. The Chinese national and institutional policies of internationalization represent a macro discourse of internationalization, which defines how Chinese universities function, for example, the design of the curriculum, language of instruction, etc. Narratives of internationalization equal westernization, or Englishization equal to internationalization, by students and professors, showed a micro and everyday understanding of internationalization in the Chinese classroom (Guo et al., 2022).

Therefore, through a critical narrative analysis (Souto-Manning, 2014), I intend to bridge the macro national and institutional discourses of internationalization with the micro everyday narrative of internationalization from students and professors. Through the critical narrative analysis, I am curious to see how the everyday understanding of internationalization from students and professors in Chinese universities reflects or deflects the national and institutional discourses. At the same time, through questioning where they learned those narratives, I am curious about how students and professors understand what their roles are in the national and institutional discourses of internationalization and how they construct their knowledge of internationalization of Chinese universities from the discourses.

The choice of using critical narrative analysis reflects my critical epistemological paradigm, where I am curious about how the power dynamics of national and institutional discourse play out in the everyday lives of students and professors in Chinese universities. The critical narrative analysis not only connects the “dividing line between the particular (personal) and the general (social or institutional), the parts (micro) and the whole (macro) in research”, but also addresses theoretical abstraction, which is often criticized for critical discourse analysis (Souto-Manning, 2014, p.163). Through critical narrative analysis, individual narratives become

a powerful tool that can challenge the monologue of national and institutional discourses of internationalization.

Moreover, to gain a deeper understanding of how students and professors interpret their understanding of internationalization in Chinese universities, I aim to use participatory visual methods to collect data. I will ask participants (students and professors) to take photos on a daily basis, which shows what they see how internationalization is reflected in their daily lives. I will schedule a month for them to take pictures. Then I will have a one-hour one-on-one interview with each participant to talk about their pictures. Through this participatory visual method, I intend to reorient the power dynamics between the researcher and the participants. Through a post-structural epistemological lens, instead of imposing my interests in internationalization on my participants, I want to position my participants to be the central part of this knowledge production. “Photography is a technology with tremendous power in directing the gaze” (Luttrell, 2010, p.224). As participants are taking pictures from their perspectives, the gaze of the research will be redirected to the participants rather than the researcher’s gaze.

Positionality Reflection and Acknowledgment

Learning through both critical and post-structural scholars above, I will explore how my positionality reflects my knowledge production process in this study.

I identify myself as a Chinese international student from a middle-class family, growing up in an elite education in Beijing, and a scholar who is trained by the Western academy. My K-12 education is situated in a district that provides the best quality of education in China. The educational environment was not only competitive but also kept me in a bubble of elite education, where I internalized the idea of orienting my life with learning. I decided to study in the US when I was in a summer debate camp at Cornell in my last year of middle school. I was

overwhelmed by the highly competitive and high-pressure environment of the Chinese high-school entrance examination. At the same time, I was attracted by the liberal environment in the US higher education that I witnessed at Cornell. Therefore, my identity as a Chinese international student reflects both my privilege and the subjectivity in the internationalization of higher education. Through my experience studying in the US, I gained intercultural competency, where I had the chance to understand both the American and Chinese worldviews.

At the same time, as a scholar who is trained by the Western Academy, it is undeniable to acknowledge that my preference to use English as my primary language for academic writing and my credentials from various American universities have already positioned me complicit in the intellectual imperialism role (Vital, & Yao, 2021). Being intellectually imperialistic means that, as a scholar trained in the dominant Western epistemologies, I am ignorant of and unfamiliar with other non-Western academic epistemologies. Even as a Chinese national, I had never received any training in the Chinese academy, and I do find myself having a bias of being skeptical about the credibility of the scholarship in Mandarin compared to the ones in English. This skepticism towards the quality of scholarship in Chinese reflects partially the true reality of the current Chinese academia and reproduces Western exceptionalism and hegemonic thinking of what counts as knowledge. At the same time, this skepticism also reflects that I share a similar negative view of Chinese knowledge, which I internalized in the Westernization of Chinese education and American higher education (Guo et al, 2022). Therefore, as I slowly learned and became critical about my positionality as a Chinese scholar being trained in the Western Academy, I intentionally selected multiple Chinese scholarships in this paper to break the possibility of reinforcing the dominant narrative by Western scholars on internationalization.

Additionally, as a Chinese national scholar, I am struggling to construct my scholarship within the context of a biased dominant narrative about China in Western academic writing. In the process of building my understanding of internationalization in English academic writing, it is inevitable to encounter scholarship that considers Taiwan as a country or language like Chinese “machination” or Chinese “imperialism” without any further explanation (Kapfudzaruwa, 2024). I feel the discomfort of encountering these terms when they were used as a tautological argument rather than to provide concrete arguments to sustain their simplistic oppositional attitude. However, despite the biased anti-China sentiment revealed in their scholarship, I still had to use their scholarship in conversations with other scholars. Therefore, it is also an implicit connotation of voices influenced by the dominant Western narrative of China that do not necessarily represent my beliefs or values.

Moreover, the geopolitical tension between China and the US has shaped not only my understanding of my positionality and my choice of being a scholar using critical internationalization, decolonial, and post-development theories. As a Chinese international student, I have been navigating through two distinctive ways of ontologies and epistemologies between China and the US. Because China banned and censored various social media and information sources, I have had the chance to compare and contrast how both China and the US construct and present reality. This distinction of the narrative construction of reality between the two countries has become explicitly obvious to me, starting with the news about the Hong Kong protests in 2019, the constant debates about the sovereignty of Taiwan and Tibet, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, and the visa revocation in 2025. Being able to see various narratives constructed around the same event between the two countries made me aware of the importance of questioning the dominant narrative and how the dominant narrative has a powerful influence

on people's sense-making towards an event. Furthermore, as a Chinese who was educated in Chinese public education until ninth grade, an essential part of my Chinese national identity is closely influenced by the Chinese patriotic education of the history that China was partially colonized by Western countries from 1840 to 1949. During the period of partially colonized China, different waves of Chinese international students were sent or willingly chose to study in the US for the sole purpose of learning Western knowledge to decolonize China (Cheng, Lin, & Fan, 2020). Therefore, my choice of using critical epistemology and decolonial theories can be seen as a continuation of this train of thought of decolonizing China from the West colonization in the recent context of being critical of the coloniality of power in American higher education.

As a result, being a Chinese international student and a scholar trained in the Western Academy, I am aware of my complicity in reproducing the colonial power in my knowledge production process. Instead of trying to seek a quick solution for or absolve me from my "implication in the colonial patterns and practices that we reproduce systematically and interpersonally", I am committed to continuing to practice a deeper self-reflexivity and develop my own "radars for when we are reproducing these patterns and habit ourselves" (Stein, & McCartney, 2021, p.8).

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