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We Have Arabic at This School?: The Impact of Neoliberalism and Orientalism on Arabic Education in the United States

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International Studies Honors Thesis

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Abstract:

This research examines Arabic education in the United States at the undergraduate level, highlighting the question: How do forces such as Orientalism, globalization, and neoliberalism affect the way that the Arabic language is taught and recognized in the United States? The Arabic programs of three highly accredited American universities are presented, in relation to their Japanese programs. While Japanese is a language that faces its own Orientalisms and imperial history with the West, Japan is currently not a country that is prioritized through national security interests, with Arabic being designated as a "Critical Language". Through examination of the advertisement of these programs, it can be deduced that Western national security objectives are evident in the advertisement of Arabic programs leading to a sense of "othering" of the Arabic language. Additionally, neo-liberal ideals and free-market capitalist models are outlined by career outcomes and best return on the investment of education. Comparing Arabic and Japanese programs further solidifies this, through differences in phrasing and terminology, American political sentiments relating to the language and the culture, and motivations for studying the languages listed on university websites. From this research, the lasting effects that Orientalism has on Arabic education, and the perpetuation of capitalistic ideals through the imperial nature of American education may be better understood.

Keywords:

Orientalism, Neo-Orientalism, Neoliberalism, Globalization, Decolonization, Education, Arabic

Introduction:

Education, specifically international education, is rapidly changing in our increasingly globalized world. As there are movements within Western institutions to decolonize education and depart from imperialistic, colonial ideology within educational disciplines, space is opened for critical discussions relating to the betterment of our global knowledge through various curricula. Yet, neoliberal ideals and old Orientalist beliefs continue to plague the subjects American students seek within international education. Neoliberalism can be defined as a capitalistic favoring of privatization, free market capitalism, and deregulation. Orientalism is defined as the Western school of knowledge relating to the othering or exotification of peoples and cultures. Middle East studies in particular have been historically "othered" and exotified, leading to a misrepresentation of peoples and cultures within the discipline. This is a known occurrence within academia and across postcolonial studies, and work is being done by individuals and institutions to dismantle previously Orientalistic notions of the Middle East. Yet, Orientalism in a new form (neo-Orientalism), continues to exist in our Western society. For the case of this research, "othering" comes in the form of highlighting a United States national security prerogative when advertising Arabic on program sites. Arabic being highlighted on websites as a "Critical language", shows the incentives of universities to showcase the political nature in which Arabic might exist.

Current events and political interests have pushed an Islamophobic, xenophobic narrative across media and have affected the way that Western society currently views the Middle East and its peoples and cultures. With this in mind, it becomes more crucial to understand the foundations of Orientalism, and Orientalism in academia, so that we may continue to move away from colonial teachings and ideals within education. Additionally, capitalist neoliberal ideology is shaping the American higher education experience. The commodification of learning and an individual's education seen as serving the free-market is changing the education that students receive, and universities overall missions that align with international and cultural understandings of our world. On program sites, this may come in the form of highlighting career opportunities and maximum return on the (thousands of dollars) investments that students are forced to make on their education in our capitalist society. This research will unpack the workings of neo-Orientalism and neoliberalism in academia through the case of Arabic education in the United States. So I raise the question, "How do forces such as Orientalism, globalization, and neoliberalism affect the way that the Arabic language is taught and recognized in the United States?".

Across recent history, Western motivations for learning Arabic have shifted from an incentive of learning an "exotic language", (an idea that is inherently classically Orientalist), to that of a politicized nature intertwined with national security interests relating to recent relations between the US and the Middle East. By having a foundational understanding of the histories of Arabic education, my research on current curriculas can be better understood within the frameworks of neo-Orientalism and neoliberalism. The program websites of three accredited American universities will be analyzed: Georgetown University in Washington D.C., Notre Dame University in Notre Dame, Indiana, and Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. All

three of these institutions offer extensive Arabic language programs within their Middle East and Islamic studies departments. To provide insight into the way that Arabic is understood more broadly within these institutions, I will compare the Arabic program websites with the schools' Japanese program websites, which are of similar size and reputation. I will look at surface level aspects of their websites that reveal neoliberal thought, and possible continuation of colonial ideals within an area of Middle East studies. Phrasing and terminology, career options, courses offered, and options for study abroad are within the frameworks of how I will measure these forces. Measurement is further solidified by the comparison of a program that is within the same institution.

My research and interest in Arabic language education stem from a near decade of Arabic instruction from sixth grade, up to university level. Questions from friends, teachers, and strangers seemed never ending: "Why would you want to take such a hard language?", "We have Arabic at this school?", "Do you want to be a politician?". While each of those questions can be unpacked by themselves, they left me with my own questions about Arabic education over the years before college: Why are people asking me about a possible career when I'm only 12? Why is Arabic so rare in public school education? Combined with further education within the Middle East studies discipline, and my own frustrations with the University of San Francisco Arabic program, my interest in the way Arabic is taught and understood within academia and more broadly in our society increased.

With this research, I aim to further the discussion of the ways that neo-Orientalism and neoliberalism exists in our educational systems, therefore affecting the way our society functions overall. With more people seeking a college degree than ever before, combined with continuing foreign interests of the US within the Middle East, it is essential that the limitations to our

international education be addressed. For Arabic specifically, there is still an underrepresentation of the language across educational systems in the US, which may lead to the furthering of misconceptions of the language and other aspects of the Middle East and its cultures.If the mainstream narrative continues to be withheld, then the dismantling of neo-Orientalist and neoliberal models in our society will not be able to occur. If we are able to understand how the Middle East has been "othered" through the Arabic language both historically and currently across medias, then the method of teaching Arabic in the US may be improved or increased. More broadly, this research looks at the modern struggles of academic institutions to provide accurate, representative, educational experiences within our ever-imperialistic, capitalist nation where the structures in place seek to perpetuate the Western hegemony.

Literature Review:

For modern international education, specifically a culturally significant field such as languages, neo-colonial thought in the form of Orientalism comes into play. When thinking about the role of Orientalistic ideals in relation to the Arabic language, a more modern understanding of the theories and praxis behind neo-Orientalism is crucial. With this, the bridges between globalization, neoliberalism, and post colonial thinking in relation to the way Arabic is taught in the West can be better realized.

I will address and define these terms as they relate to Arabic education in the US. First, it is important to bridge the gap between Orientalism and neo-Orientalism and why one can not be understood without the other. Building on that, the way we understand globalization and its effects into the development of the way we define neo-Orientalism will be addressed through

literature. Additionally, Orientalism and how it relates to Middle Eastern studies as a whole but also the Arabic language is important to understand in the context of bridging and defining Orientalism in relation to neo-Orientalism.

The importance of this topic draws from updating and modernizing existing terms such as Orientalism, globalization, and neo-colonialism through the case of Arabic language education. Education, especially international education, seeks to better our society through knowledge and cross-cultural understanding. However, that understanding cannot take place if the systems in place specifically function to spread stereotypes and ignorance of a population. The literature I have encountered and my research seeks to provide cross-cutting contextual evidence to the problems within Arabic education in the US.

Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism:

Orientalism can be defined as the stereotyping or "othering" of aspects of Asian cultures, specifically those pertaining to the region of the Middle East. The Orient, as Edward Said describes in his text 'Orientalism' (1978), and the connotations that come with the 19th century European term, is a Western construction, and the result of a centuries long power dynamic between the West and the East. Stereotypes can be seen across generations and across mediums, from artwork, literature, news media, and more. Western cultural influences have repeatedly appropriated, exotified, and othered the Middle East and its peoples, leading to these generational cultural implications known as Orientalism (Said, 1978). In understanding the social, historical, and political constructs that define Orientalism, comes the understanding of knowledge and power. Perceived knowledge of the Orient upholds the notion that Westerners are

more progressive in their thinking and education, thus holding the authority over their understandings of what the Orient is (Said, 1978, p.7). Modes of outreach for power and authority (such as knowledge) by the West, sit at the core of Said's argument of what Orientalism is. Said provides the foundations of theories and praxis surrounding Orientalism, therefore opening the door for discussions of the way that Orientalism presents itself from the time the book was written, to today.

As our world changes in a geo-political, technological, and social sense, so do the Orientalisms that exist. As the historical contexts and epistemology behind Said's argument stays true and relevant, some of the then (1978) current political and social examples of Orientalism used to define the term, are now outdated. For example, the terms "Orient" and "Occident", are less widely used in discourses surrounding Western hegemonic patterns (Samiei, 2010). With examples like this, there is the notion that we are experiencing a "post-Orientalist" society, or the issue has been resolved. However, "it would be naive to think that the old patterns of human history and destiny which had shaped the West-and-Islam dualism have simply been removed. Far from it: they have been reconstituted, redeployed, redistributed in a globalised framework" (Samiei, 2010, p.4). With this thinking in mind, neo-Orientalism can begin to take shape as a modernized approach to the theories previously outlined by Said and the scholars of his time. Examples within the neo-Orientalist model are outlined by authors Sa'di and Abu Lughod. According to Sa'di (2021), agendas and attitudes towards the Middle East found a new breath of life in the post 9-11 context. Not in the sense of "othering", or being misunderstood from the position of an anthropological or sociological standing that the history of Orientalistic ideals has revealed, but from a politically rooted, xenophobic, islamophobic view (Sa'di, 2021). Abu-Lughod makes the case for Muslim women in the Middle East, exploring the way that the West

and US politics specifically have othered Muslim women through their perceived knowledge of Islam. In a speech by former first lady Laura Bush, it is implied that Muslim women in the region need to be helped or "saved" by Western involvement. Lughod gives her comments on the speech by Bush, "Instead of questions that might lead to the exploration of global interconnections, we were offered ones that worked to artificially divide the world into separate spheres-recreating an imaginative geography of West versus East, us versus Muslims, cultures in which First Ladies give speeches versus others where women shuffle around silently in burqa"(Abu-Lughod, 2002, p.2). The core of Abu-Lughod's comments relate to theories of neo-Orientalism through the exploration of gender and cultural relativism in the Middle East. The dualism that she presents directly relates to those found in Orientalist arguments such as the "Orient versus Occident" but in a more modern context with a former first-lady and her notions of the region. As an influential figure, those notions may be distributed to the wider American audience and further the sense of "othering" when it comes to thinking about cultures of the Middle East.

The bridging of neo-Orientalism and Said era Orientalism is vital in understanding the way that the West views and stereotypes the Middle East today. Without the original epistemology of Orientalism, neo-Orientalism may not be understood. Neo-Orientalism is built off of the already existing foundational approach to ideas of dualism and othering in the Orient-Occident binary that is now outdated, as stated before (Keskin, 2018). This being said, technology and modern day developments have made way for new ways for this epistemology to be applied. Thus, neo-Orientalism should be more widely known and adapted if we are to "grasp the new realities of our globalized world" (Samiei, 2010, p.14).

When defining neo-Orientalism compared to Orientalism, globalization plays a role in the ways that the two differ from each other, and how they can be further bridged. Globalization can be known as the international movement of ideas, people, and products. Just as globalization and colonialism are linked, so are globalization and neo-Orientalism. "As the world is becoming more globalised and interconnected, it is important to remember that there is a voice that wants to be heard in order to decolonise the exotic narratives of the "other" and seek to achieve equality in knowledge production"(Saidin & Rashid, 2022, p.10). A response to globalization has been pushback to the intertwining of peoples, cultures, and identities. In the case of the Middle East and Middle Eastern peoples in America, this comes in the form of xenophobia and Islamophobia, amplified by historical events such as 9-11, the invasion of Iraq, and the events following the Arab Spring. Islam has "become a racialized, blanket term" (Sa'di, 2021, p.9), in the face of a globalized world. Generalizing a population in such a way is classically Orientalist. Neo-Orientalism comes into play through the ways in which that generalization has taken place. Migration, and the spreading of ideas and cultures due to globalization has allowed for the accentuation of Orientalist attitudes. This is what Sa'di (2021), Samiei (2010), and Saidin, Rashid (2022), seek to explore in their connection between globalization, neo-Orientalism, and Orientalism.

The spread of global knowledge and cultural understanding has ultimately been affected by Western thinking and teaching. In the case of Middle Eastern studies, this correlates directly to the ways in which Orientalist ideals and attitudes present themselves in the way that students learn about the region and topics are addressed. It is also true in the case of the Arabic language, which is a key piece of cross-cultural learning in the sphere of Middle Eastern studies. The study of the Middle East has been plagued with imperialistic tendencies of Western education and

Western education systems (Giolfo & Sinatora, 2018) Disciplines such as anthropology and sociology pertaining to the study of the Middle East and its culture, politics, etc, have historically been a direct reflection of the ways in which the West asserts its narratives of "othering" and imperial power. This hegemonic phenomena across generations has led to a wrongful interpretation of the Orient as a whole, as Said (1978), argues in his text.

Well known organizations and groups centered around Middle Eastern affairs such as the Middle East Studies Association, The Middle East Institute, the Middle East Forum, and the Association for the Study of the Middle East and Africa, are all rooted in imperialistic, orientalist intentions (Keskin, 2018). However, these groups have changed their directives overtime. Even so, if the intentions of these groups were to educate and promote cross-cultural understanding of aspects of the Middle East when they were founded, their historical actions and directives have favored the neo-Orientalist viewpoint through published works.

In the case of Arabic as a discipline within Middle Eastern studies, the same thinking related to neo-Orientalism and Orientalism applies. Historically, early European interests in the learning and studying of the language were under the idea of studying an "exotic" language (Giolfo & Sinatora, 2018). This directly aligns with Said's definition, and the idea that the West labeling aspects of other cultures as exotic or different, categorizes those cultures as beneath or behind the hegemon. For generations, this is how the understanding of the Arabic language remained from a Western global perspective, according to Giolfo and Sinatora's historical overview of the language in relation to Western interests. As Western ideals and colonial powers asserted their influence over what a "modern society" should look like, Arabic was consequently affected. This was realized in a period during the late 19th century called the *Nahda* when a group of mainly Syrian, Palestinian, Lebanese, and Egyptian linguists sought to bring common

Western vernacular to the Arabic language that would not have previously existed (Said, 1978). In this effort of modernization, the separation between Modern Arabic and Classical Arabic, specifically Arabic as a spoken versus written language began to emerge. This is significant in the sense of understanding that the Arabic language that is taught and understood across Western classrooms is a direct result of Western influence and power assertion in the region.

Decolonizing Education:

As society seeks to move away from colonial ideology, the way that education, specifically aspects of international education is introduced, must be altered. Decolonizing education is a process in which the Western systems and institutions we encounter are challenged and eventually dismantled. Across disciplines and curriculums, decolonization of education is becoming increasingly popular in universities (Kramsch, 2019).

Orientalism is the result of old colonial thinking, thus it is overcome through a post-colonial ideology. This means not immediately accepting a mainstream narrative for what it is, whether it be in the news media, social media, writing, or other forms of literature. This can be in a real-life or classroom setting, and means challenging your set beliefs and previous ideas. "If we are to prevail over the idea that the Orient is less than, or other than the Occident, then we must first better understand and accept the historical implications that led to this ideology in the first place" (Saidin & Rashid, 2022, p.5). Altering the lens in which we view global issues, both historical and current, can be a decolonial tool that will eradicate oriental thinking. Additionally, the theory of Orientalism "is a style of thought that contributes to post-colonial identities of the Global North and the Global South and shapes the landscape of global politics and policies

today, especially towards Muslims" (Saidin & Rashid, 2022, p.5). So, the theories surrounding Orientalism not only directly relate to post-colonial ideas, it has directly impacted the way postcolonialism is thought of in academic discourse. Knowing this, the relationship between Orientalism and post-colonial thought can be directly applied to the discipline of Middle Eastern studies, as well as the Arabic language and language education.

As stated before, a part of the de-colonial mindset is challenging the tools in which you learn with and the systems you are learning from. This should be applied when thinking about both the Arabic that is taught in Western classrooms, and the curricula that is used. In more modern times, the developed coursework for the Arabic language in the West tends to reflect a Euro-centric, politically serving agenda (Golfetto, 2022), In the case of the Arabic textbook, *al-Kitaab,* -a textbook that is for beginners, and widely used in the US and Britain,- there is an expressed disconnect between the subject areas in the books that are politicized through vocab, lessons, etc, and students' abilities to comprehend the language. The coursework introduced is unnecessarily politicized for a beginner course. Early in their education of the Arabic language through *al-Kitaab,* students are introduced to terms such as "السياسة المقارنة" (comparative politics), and "التحق" (as defined in the book: to join or enter school, army, political party). For a beginner book, the inclusion of such vocab purposefully asserts a Western dominant narrative in the education of the language. Additionally, because of the nature of this specific book, students are introduced to the Arabic language primarily through English lessons, thus stifling the development of their language skills. Through the case study of this textbook by Golfetto (2022), the imperialistic, neo-colonial attitudes surrounding the teaching of the Arabic language are revealed. This can be related to Said's introduction of the relation between knowledge and power: In contrast to serving a power dynamic rooted in the exotification and belittlement of the

Arab peoples and their culture (Said, 1978), neo-Orientalism in the form of serving a new political agenda of the West and their efforts to hold power over the Middle East through language instruction is evident (Golfetto, 2022). With these seemingly modern methods of Arabic education, the goal was to make the language more comprehensible by a Western audience. However, this has proved to be a continuation of Eurocentric ideals expressed with theories of neo-Orientalism. This politicized nature of Arabic learning is inherently Orientalist and rooted in colonial thinking and Orientalism theories expressed by Said in a modern day context.

Languages and language education should not be tied to the ghosts of colonialism. Languages that are learned in schools around the world continue to reflect the imperialist hegemony of Western powers, thus perpetuating the assertion of influence that the West hoped to uphold in the era of colonialism. As de-colonial thinking and its methods rise in popularity, there is a push to dismantle this, at least at the university level (Kramsch, 2019). But the issue is, how do you pull language education away from the colonial scape, without leaning into neoliberal ideals of commodification of the language? Language education should be a space for mutual understanding and cross-cultural learning, not a political upperhand (Kramsch, 2019). In the face of globalization this is a dilemma that language educators and systems must try and combat. It is an issue that is better addressed by theories of neo-Orientalism for combatting the implications of globalization (Giolfo & Sinatora, 2018). As Western language education and curriculums are continually revised and addressed in a decolonial mindset, methods of language teaching are challenged. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), was previously attributed as the principle method for teaching languages in the Western world. Now, it is argued that the method is rooted Western, neo-colonial ideals (Block, 2010). While CLT has been widely recognized

and praised for its method surrounding immersion through speaking in the classroom, there are its setbacks. Block highlights the fact that as a Western method of language teaching, CLT is removed from its source. "For those local teachers who follow pedagogical practices imported from the West or center in a relatively unquestioning manner, lessons may be of limited use to their students, who are asked to conform to procedures and practices toward which neither they nor their teachers feel any sense of ownership"(Block, 2010, 23). Thus, having a removed method of language teaching, specifically for those languages which carry histories of colonialism, the methodology in which they are taught are often tangled with colonialistic pasts.

Additionally, globalization repeatedly acts as a block for achieving a successful, decolonial mindset when looking at language education. Globalization has brought out inequalities across economic, political, and educational spectrums (Lin & Martin, 2005). In the case of education, languages have become a source of a new global elitism for the West. Assertion of power comes in the form of knowledge and language, thus highlighting cross-cutting global inequities when it comes to education (Said, 1978).

Neoliberalism and Education:

Neoliberalism is defined as a favoring of privatization, free market capitalism, and deregulation. The theory of neoliberalism can present itself in different ways across the political and policy sphere, including in educational systems and institutions.

There is a relationship between Western universities and our increasingly globalized, neo-liberal society. Neo-liberal fundamentals have led to universities straying from serving the public-good, thus negatively impacting their missions. This is important for the ways neo-

liberalism can affect an institution as a whole (Sarpong & Adelekan, 2023). A university's mission can ultimately be connected to their outreach as an international institution and their efforts for parts of international education such as language education. If education is seen as a commodity or for serving the free-market, it is more difficult for less popular languages such as Arabic to stay included in curricula at the university level. If including Arabic serves the market, then it is present. If not, then it is discontinued. In more recent years, there has been a trend of universities pairing with government organizations, think tanks, and NGO's to receive funding. This gives into neo-liberal commodification of education and can contribute to the crossing of political interests with education systems (Keskin, 2018). Additionally, Georgetown professor Charles King states this phenomenon in his article "The Decline of International Education". He highlights the ways our Western society has reshaped international higher education through international studies, international relations, language education, and other related fields, due in part to neoliberal policy implementation. It seems as if more students than ever are majoring in international issues, thus hopefully enhancing United States cross cultural knowledge. But in reality, language proficiency is down in the US, and so is overall awareness on critical topics at the higher education level (King, 2018). This is a critical issue in the case of Arabic education and Middle Eastern studies, a discipline that is historically othered, and exotified, by Western institutions. Without incentive for personal investment return within Arabic education, then we will see an overall decline in that particular discipline. It is not an isolated case, with King's argument applying to all of International studies. As Keskin reveals in the case of Middle Eastern studies, "the commodification of knowledge within Middle East studies and Turkish studies and takes place through popularized concepts such as human rights, democracy, gender equality, ethnic and religious rights, the study of Christian minorities in Muslim-populated societies and

Turkey, work and labor rights in the Middle East, and other current topics" (Keskin, 2018, p.87). This neo-liberal commodification continues to affect education at all levels and impact the way that Arabic is taught and understood today. For the purpose of this research, I would like to highlight the critical nature of the decline of Arabic in relation to current events and political climates.

There is an evident conjunction of neoliberalism with internationalization (Bamberger et al., 2019). Internationalization interacts with decolonization, globalization, and other common international theories as they relate to education. Internationalization, when combined with neoliberalism can present itself as favoring the Western hegemony.

Conclusion:

I have explored the themes of Orientalism and neo-Orientalism, decolonizing education, and neoliberalism in existing literature in hopes of better understanding how they pertain to Arabic education in the United states . Within those themes, I looked at the differences between neo-Orientalism and classical Orientalism, globalization in relation to Orientalism, Orientalism in education, Orientalism in a post-colonial sense, decolonizing language education, neoliberalism in relation to education and neoliberalism as a result of globalization.

The literature review identifies main gaps surrounding the theories of Orientalism and neo-Orientalism and how they are demonstrated through policies and institutions. Arabic education and Middle Eastern studies are disciplines that are connected, thus the theories and praxis surrounding Middle Eastern education in relation to Orientalism outlined by Edward Said and other authors should apply to Arabic education. However, there is a limitation to Said's work

as far as the modern neoliberal university and current education related to the Middle East is concerned. Modern technologies and media, globalization and the implementation of neoliberal policies and ideals, and current events such as the Iraq war and 9-11 have led to a shift in the way that Orientalism is defined, and the Middle East and its peoples are viewed by a Western audience. My research will aim to identify that shift through the way that Arabic is taught at the higher education level.

Among the literature that I encountered, I found that I would like the foundations of my argument to be centered around the theories of Orientalism, with its implications and connecting issues also highlighted. A common critique of Said's work was that it was too theoretical in its ideas, although it still managed to reshape the ways that society thinks about the Middle East, and other cultures in terms of "othering" and exotification. The literature that I found sought to apply Said's initial theories into practice, through case studies ranging from historical events, to policies, and to organizations that all demonstrate Orientalist ideals. I would like to take a similar approach for my research, as there are still gaps to be filled in the case of Arabic education in the US. The work of Giolfo, M. E. B., and Sinatora, F. L. *Orientalism and neo-orientalism: Arabic representations and the study of Arabic, (2018),* have already examined Arabic and Arabic education as an outlet of neo-Orientalism. I would like to further expand on this idea, specifically highlighting modern institutions and their marketing tactics that contribute to the ways the Arabic language is known today in education. While institutions are involved in movements to decolonize their education, I think it would be useful to use facts and data to show the correlation between geopolitical interests and language education, thus further highlighting the points that neo-Orientalist theories suggest. Additionally, education and neoliberal ideas are inherently

connected. I am interested in exploring the connections between neoliberalism ideals and neo-Orientalism in the case of Arabic education in the United States.

Methodology:

Utilizing the gaps identified in the literature review, I aim to address the research question, "How do forces such as Orientalism, neo-Orientalism, and neoliberalism affect the way that the Arabic language is taught and recognized in the United States?". Orientalism, for the purpose of my research, is defined as the exotification, othering, and stereotyping of Middle Eastern peoples and cultures. In relation, neo-Orientalism is a modernized (post 9-11) approach to the theory, using frameworks of globalization to look into the ways modern technology, social media, and current events shape the way that the West views and understands the Middle East.

In relation to globalization, neoliberalism in politics and policies have been evident within institutions as a result of capitalism. Neoliberalism can be defined as a favoring of privatization, free market capitalism, and deregulation. Neoliberal ideals present themselves in education through policy, and the idea that education is a commodity. In the case of Arabic education, this means being utilized as a political tool that serves the free-market within education. Decolonizing our education systems comes from not immediately accepting a mainstream narrative for what it is, whether it be in the news media, social media, writing, or other forms of literature. By upholding a neoliberal, Orientalist system, decolonial education can not be achieved. Using the foundation of these terms and definitions found in existing literature,

I have researched the ways that Orientalism, neoliberalism and the idea of colonial education affects the ways in which the Arabic language is taught and understood in the US.

To realize this, I identify three higher education institutions that have historically strong Arabic language programs: Georgetown University in Washington D.C., Middlebury College in Vermont, and University of Notre Dame in Indiana. Specifically, I analyze how these universities sell or advertise their programs to prospective students in comparison to their other language programs. I address the way the Arabic language program is advertised at these universities in comparison to the Japanese language program. My reasoning for choosing Japanese surrounds the fact that the two are both underrepresented languages in higher education, with similar numbers of enrollment. In regards to policy and politics, the US and Japan are considered close allies in our modern age. However, this has not always been the case. Keeping these changing dynamics and relations with the country in mind, I think it will be beneficial for my research surrounding topics of Orientalism in the Middle East, neoliberalism, and colonialism, to compare the language programs. With Arabic's designation as a "critical language", the differences between Japanese and Arabic become apparent in the way that Arabic is politicized and marketed as a political language. Through this comparison, I will look for the ways in which Arabic is a politicized language in our modern society and how universities contribute to the politicization. I will use these questions to guide my analysis:

1. *How is the website for the language studies formatted? (Headings, Sub headings, etc.)*
2. *Is there a section for employment chances post-graduation? What are those opportunities outlined?*
3. *What is the common phrasing/terminology used to describe the study of the language?*

4. *What kind of classes are required/are offered within the curriculum?*

5. *Is study abroad required?*

Using these guiding questions for both Japanese and Arabic language programs and through this comparison, I look for the ways in which Arabic is a politicized language in our modern society and how universities and their marketing tools contribute to the politicization. Languages and language education specifically, is viewed as an outreach for cultural exchange and a tool for the advancement of cross-cultural knowledge. The idea that Arabic serves national security interests directly correlates with Orientalist and neo-Orientalist theory in the way that studies related to the Middle East aim to perpetuate Western narratives. Additionally, language and international knowledge as serving the individual, relates to neoliberal theory of serving the capitalist free market system. While comparing the two language programs, I aim to ensure that I am not glorifying the Japanese language programs at these schools in relation to Arabic programs. Overall, language education in the United States has issues related to imperialism and neo-colonial ideals that do not only apply to the Arabic language. Rather, my research seeks to understand the ways that forces such as Orientalism in regards to the Middle East and other forces relating to national security interests have affected Arabic education and the way that it is advertised. This content analysis will relate back to my research question in the way it analyzes how Arabic language programs are understood by prospective students looking for motivations to learn the language and how that may be related to Orientalism and neoliberalism. Understanding the colonial nature in which the Arabic language is ultimately connected, it is better understood how Orientalism and neoliberalism as a result of globalization - both theories

that relate to post-colonial thinking and the perpetuation of colonial ideals - affect how Arabic is understood through an educational lens.

As addressed before, my research is the result of a longtime battle with trying to receive an Arabic language education at both the university and high school level. As an American studying Arabic, I have been continually let down and frustrated with institutional and systemic dynamics that I feel have affected my ability to learn the language. I understand and acknowledge this bias of personal contact of Arabic education, and hope to utilize aspects of my international studies education to better understand dynamics and voice issues in Arabic education through concrete research and analysis.

I address how the Arabic language is taught and understood, thinking about forces such as globalization, neoliberalism, Orientalism and neo-Orientalism, and colonial thinking. My aim is not to critique the institutions I research for the ultimate purpose of their Arabic programs or the way they conduct their programs. On the contrary, I do not seek to glorify Japanese language programs. Rather, I will examine the ways in which universities give into national security and neoliberal self serving capitalist interests related to Arabic education and Middle Eastern studies. Additionally, I am limited in the scope that I am able to research these institutions, as I only have access to surface level websites and information. It is important to highlight the differences between the institution itself, and the individuals such as students, professors, and other faculty doing work within the university that may reflect different values than that of the program websites. Additionally, the marketing of websites should be differentiated from the individuals in the program. There is the understanding that while the program websites may not reflect the personal views of those involved in the programs themselves, the websites are still significant in understanding the neoliberal university. Through an adequate background and context, my

research will be able to convey the neo-Orientalist, neoliberal, colonial ideals related to the way that Arabic is understood and taught within American higher education institutions.

Findings:

Introduction:

This findings section will explore the differences and commonalities between Arabic and Japanese programs at Georgetown, Middlebury, and Notre Dame. For the case of Georgetown, political language in relation to Arabic highlights the language as serving Western intentions, thus neo-Orientalizing the way that prospective students may think of Arabic in the context of US-Middle East relations. The geographic location of Georgetown in Washington D.C., as well as other marketing tools contribute to this sense of "othering" the Arabic language, in comparison to Japanese. Notre Dame uses similar methods, which may be affected by the school's location or more conservative institutional values. Notre Dame places high priority on career opportunities after graduation, and personal prospects for students, rather than serving the common good through cross-cultural knowledge. This also provides insight into the politicization of the Arabic language in education as well as the preservation of neoliberal, free-market serving ideals. Middlebury is a liberal institution in Vermont that makes a clear distinction between linguistics as a discipline and Middle East studies. While Arabic and Middle

East studies are intertwined, there is an emphasis on literature and Arabic as a language on the Middlebury website.

These three universities have some of the most accredited Arabic programs in the United States, with excellent staff and students. That being said, there are still aspects of marketing and advertisement on these program sites that demonstrate neoliberal ideals of education, as well as possible "othering" of the language. Knowing this, comparisons can be drawn between the three institutions in the discussion section and bridged into overarching themes found across the three institutions. I point out key aspects of each program site in relation to my research question and forces such as neoliberalism and neo-Orientalism.

Table 1:

Georgetown	Terminology/Phrasing	Key courses	Study Abroad Required?	Post-grad Employment
Arabic	-Authentic -Accurate -"understand Arabs and Islam realistically" -"identify the human commonalities that make Arab people closer to American people" -"More positive knowledge"	-Arabic poetry -Islam and…(civilization, tradition, women and gender) -Modern Standard Arabic	Yes, a year recommended as well. Have to take an Arabic course while there.	Not specifically outlined.

Japanese	-Culture -History -"...Relevant critical and historical issues in the field"	-Readings through culture (Pop, political, social) -East Asia: Texts and Contexts	Yes, required at least one semester, a year encouraged.	Yes, in the brochure: Department of State and CSIS

Georgetown Analysis:

Georgetown University is a private institution in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington D.C. As a Jesuit university, there is an emphasis on the school's mission related to Catholic tradition, as well as an evident acknowledgment of the school being in the US capital as a hub for politics and international issues. This being said, Georgetown offers some of the most accredited programs related to international studies in the nation. As far as the Arabic language program goes, the undergraduate and graduate programs in Arabic are listed as some of the most distinguished programs at the university, with a main mission statement being, "...building a humanistic understanding that can lead to better American relations with the Muslim world". On the website, there is a wide overview of the Arabic major, minor, and other related fields. The pages direct you to a multitude of resources related to language proficiency, cultural opportunities, and events hosted by the department. I immediately recognized that there is a lack of sections related to career opportunities on the Georgetown Arabic website. Additionally, the language and terminology used suggests a strong connotation with Georgetown's geographic location and efforts to challenge Orientalistic, Islamophobic beliefs associated with the region and the language itself. As the Arabic language and understanding of aspects of Arab cultures are intertwined, there is the acknowledgement in the phrasing that the Arabic major seeks to provide

an authentic and critical understanding of the Arabic language and all things related. This is understandable from a historical perspective, and knowing the colonial Orientalist roots related to the Arabic language and US education. Still, there is something to be said about the connections between using Arabic as a method for Western thinking advancement, which I will later address.

The Japanese program website at Georgetown is structured similarly, with a mission statement that seeks to combine the linguistic and cultural aspects of the language. The website provides an informational video that highlights the program and student testimonies. This is helpful for those who are prospective students. Additionally, there is a brochure provided on the website outlining even more information. The Japanese language program seems to have an emphasis on cultural knowledge and understanding, which is continually highlighted on the website. This takes form in students' electives other than their language classes, the way they participate in on-campus activities, and engage with Japanese culture outside of the classroom setting. There are course offerings that address both modern and historical aspects of Japanese culture, highlighting the changes and history that leads to understanding Japan today. According to the website, most classes are conducted in Japanese, including some electives, which promotes language efficiency and fluency for majors. Overall, the website is comprehensive in describing the kind of experiences students will encounter if they choose to major or minor in Japanese.

There are critical similarities and differences that I encountered between the two Georgetown language programs. Starting with my first question about terminology and phrasing: the terminology for both sites reflect the climates in which the languages are regarded in the United States. This means that words such as "Authentic", "Humanistic", and "Accurate", are utilized on the Arabic language website compared to the Japanese site where you will find

phrasing such as "...Relevant critical and historical issues in the field", with an emphasis on cultural understanding. These differences make sense in relation to the ways that the US currently regards the languages and their adjunct cultures. In the case of Arabic, there is a visible effort to highlight the ways that Arabic and the Middle East more broadly have been inauthentically represented in its respective educational field and more broadly understood by a Western audience. With the hopes of providing a "humanistic" or "authentic" approach to the language, Georgetown is addressing previous inequalities that have occurred across generations of Western learning. Japanese language and culture faces its own forms of Orientalism or exotification that has manifested itself across time and education. By expressing a cross-cultural understanding of the language, Georgetown is demonstrating efforts to understand our globalized world through a specific language. The two are similar in this respect, although the Arabic program addresses more current sentiments and issues that come with language education. Key courses for both programs also express similarities with there being requirements in both language and more cultural classes. I was interested to learn for both programs that there is no history requirement related to Middle East history or Japan. However, it is strongly encouraged that students take a history class related to these programs. With the strong emphasis that both departments have on cultural knowledge, I find it interesting that there is no required history course, when understanding for both of these languages comes from a place of historical context and how they have interacted and been affected by the West. Another form of cross-cultural education is the requirement that both programs have for study abroad programs. Japanese majors are required to study abroad in Japan for at least one semester and Arabic majors are required to study abroad in an Arabic speaking country. Both are encouraged to spend the entirety of their junior year. Study abroad programs, especially for language or international

studies programs are an excellent method to encourage students to become more immersed in the place that they are studying. It helps shed some of the lens of Western education, and develop skills and knowledge that would not be possible at an American or Western institution.

Taking into account the similarities between programs, I was able to identify main differences as well. Georgetown emphasizes learning Arabic as an eventual mode of outreach for US and Middle East relations. Although there is nothing inherently Orientalist about this connotation, it may be misconstrued as the perpetuation of the separation between Middle East studies, and an actual understanding of the Middle East. More importantly, why is it that a program meant for learning a language, accentuates the knowledge of that language as serving US international relations? When did education, specifically international education become an outreach for US interest, when its purpose is to create a space for understanding and acknowledgment within a discipline that has been historically "othered"? I believe that this speaks to the ways Arabic has become a politicized language, and institutions feel that they must capitalize on this politicization to receive interest. To further speak to this point, we can look at the way that Japanese is advertised. As a "non-critical" language in today's current events, there is no mention of the way that learning Japanese can end up benefiting America or American politics. Rather, the emphasis is on becoming well versed in Japanese language so as to promote your global understanding and knowledge. In our modern society, a "critical language" is one that is related to a country or region that may pose some form of a national security threat. A "non-critical" language is one of the opposite distinctions, or relating to a country or region that may have fair international relations with the United States. Although a similar sentiment of cultural understanding is outlined on the Arabic website, there is an added layer of Arabic as a political language or a "critical language". So, Arabic programs specifically should not be used

or thought of for the ways that they may benefit US international interests, but rather how they can create an overall societal understanding of different cultures and peoples. Although the Georgetown site outlines this, I believe that there needs to be more of an emphasis on the importance of learning a global language, not just for the benefit of a Western power. The United States has historically used its hegemonic influence to perpetuate an imperial ideology in the Middle East. It has been repeatedly observed in the way that the US acted in the invasion of Iraq, the response to events such as the Arab Spring, and now and historically the support that the United states has given to Israel. If Arabic is going to be addressed as a tool for Middle East relations, then this fact must be acknowledged as well, even on public information sources such as the program websites.

Table 2:

Notre Dame	Terminology/Phrasing	Key courses	Study Abroad Required?	Post-grad Employment
Arabic	- "Nuances of attendant cultures" - "Broaden your cultural perspective" - "Internationalize your education"	- Must take 6 courses in Arabic language - Middle Eastern history - Islamic studies	- Not required but continually encouraged throughout the website	- Arabic as a "Critical Language" according to the US state department - Emphasis on government, technology, education
Japanese	-"Expand your cultural horizons" -"Engage with the culture in a substantial way"	- Language (Up to fifth year, advanced courses) - Literature (modern, classical, etc.)	- Not required but strongly encouraged	- large variety of sectors - Grad school - Service positions - Military - Independent projects

	-"Act as language liaisons"	- Culture (Mostly the same as literature offerings)		

Notre Dame Analysis:

Notre Dame is a private university located in Notre Dame, Indiana. The university offers a wide array of disciplines related to international studies and international relations, with branches in departments of Arabic and Middle East studies, and Japanese and East Asian studies. The two programs are clearly outlined and represented on their respective sites, with videos, resources, and helpful links for current students and those who may be interested in the Arabic or Japanese programs for their undergraduate studies. Beginning with the Arabic program site, there is immediate information and incentive for why one should study Arabic as a major or a minor. The video provided on the site looks at student testimonials, similar to the video on the Georgetown Japanese language program website. Along with offering Arabic as a major or minor, international economics with a concentration in Arabic is emphasized as an option on the site. This is interesting in regards to encouraging university wide participation in Arabic as a discipline within the economic field of international studies. Additionally, there is a strong emphasis on the Notre Dame website of career opportunities and further education prospects post-undergraduate graduation. Possible career opportunities are briefly mentioned on the "about" tab of the site, and there is another tab specifically for career opportunities. I found the "career" tab to be specifically interesting. The tab begins with the acknowledgement of Arabic as a "critical language", as stated before on the Georgetown website. Arabic has been a critical language since 9/11/2001 (Asia Society Education). The incentive of majoring in Arabic for it

being a critical language is understandable. However, it can become problematic to clearly

define learning Arabic as a mode of national security interests in the United States. Similarly to

the case of Georgetown, a motivating factor to learn Arabic should be to enhance your global

knowledge and learn about a global language for the sake of the common good, not just the

common good of the West. The difference between the listing of Arabic as a "critical language"

on the Georgetown versus the Notre Dame sites, is Notre Dame's emphasis of possible

government, media, etc, career opportunities due to the nature of Arabic being a "critical

language".

The Notre Dame Japanese program website has an almost identical structure to that of the

Arabic language program website. There is the framing of why a student should study Japanese,

programs, and student opportunities on the main page for the website. Additionally, there is a

separate tab for career opportunities, much like the Arabic program. Within this tab are student

testimonials, offerings, and examples of paths other graduates in the field have taken. I took

particular notice of the phrase "Engage with the culture in a substantial way", that the website

says on its "about" section. Engaging in a substantial way, as in learning Japanese. A rewarding

method of engaging with various global cultures is learning language. In addition to the phrasing

and terminology of the site, there is overall priority on the importance of being engaged with the

culture on campus, and outside of the classroom. On the main page of the website, there are

clubs that students can join, and events that relate to Japanese culture. This is important in

creating a space for mutual cultural exchange within the university in a setting that is outside of

the classroom. The resources provided on the website are in depth, and broad to the mission of

the Japanese program at Notre Dame.

As said before, there are many similarities between the overall structure of both websites. They both have strong attention to career opportunities, with student and graduate experiences and testimony taking importance on the way that the programs are advertised to prospective students. The websites aim to make students interested and excited about the possibility of learning a global language to internationalize their education. I found that their missions for cultural exchange and understanding were similar in these ways. Terms such as "Expand your cultural horizons", for the Japanese program and "Broaden your cultural perspectives", for Arabic are virtually the same, and speak to the ways that these language programs seek to create a more globally understanding world. As far as courses go, the two programs hold similarities as well. In the case of Arabic, there is weight on not only language proficiency, but also historical understanding, and Islam. As Arabic is the language of the Islamic holy text the Qur'an, this is helpful for students looking to engage with the language not just linguistically, but in other ways to foster a deeper understanding and connection with the Middle East. For Japanese, there are many courses on Japanese literature -both modern and historical- that are offered. This compared to the other electives for Arabic majors makes sense when thinking about modern and historical implications related to the languages. Both curriculums appear to provide a comprehensive overview of language education and directly related subjects that will propel students in their educational prospects. An additional similarity is both of the programs not requiring study abroad, although it is highly suggested. For many students, study abroad is not feasible for family, financial, or other factors. Not requiring study abroad gives prospective students who might be worried about this aspect a space to seek education in the field of their choice. That being said, in a language program, specifically programs for Japanese and Arabic, traveling and becoming immersed in a language can prove incredibly useful. I argue that it is up to the

institution whether or not they want to require study abroad for their international studies programs, although it does provide immense benefits for language fluency and overall global understanding and further education.

Differences appear in the way studying the language is incentivized. This is similar to the Georgetown website, but is different in the way the career sections appear. Careers on the Arabic program site have an obvious favoring for government jobs, and motivations to take Arabic purely for the fact that it is a "critical language". However, when reading actual student testimonials, the sectors of employment are far more diverse than the website seems to relay. One student says, "I don't speak Arabic much these days, but I do practice empathy and service for others". Paths that students take don't *have* to always include the Arabic language or be involved in government positions, which is something that is not explicitly mentioned on the website. Having a degree in a linguistic field improves your overall knowledge of cultures other than your own. Although the Arabic language program defines this, there is still a pronounced effort to have prospective students recognize the importance of learning Arabic for Western incentives. Even if this is not the goal of the program, it reflects the measures that institutions must take to gain engagement in their language programs. The highly political nature related to the Arabic program also differs from that of Japanese -a country and associated culture that are not at top national security interest in this age- which demonstrates how political agendas and interests are implemented into American educational systems.

Table 3:

Middlebury	Terminology/Phrasing	Key courses	Study Abroad Required?	Post-grad Employment

Arabic	- "Study of Arabic language, culture, and literature" - "Bond between language and culture" - "Engagement with the Arab world and a critical appreciation of its cultural and intellectual traditions"	- Can choose between Arabic literature or Arabic linguistics - Classes pertaining to Middle Eastern history, contemporary culture - Specialized topics	- Yes, one semester required, full year strongly encouraged.	- Not a clearly listed section - Journalism, non-profit sector, graduate studies - Emphasis on the linguistic, liberal arts education received
Japanese	- "The Japanese House": Where students can live and be immersed in language and culture - "From ancient myths to contemporary issues" - "Cultural and language fluency" - "Use Japanese in a variety of environments"	- Advanced seminar in Japanese (One of the few colleges in the US that offers) - History, literature, anthropology related to Japanese culture all offered - "The Japanese House"	- One semester required, the full year strongly encouraged	- Emphasis on skills developed during time at the college - Graduate work, international careers - "Majors in Japanese studies go on to careers in a variety of fields—from traditional bamboo crafts to Wall Street finance."

Middlebury Analysis:

Middlebury College is a private institution located in Middlebury, Vermont. It is a

historically distinguished college for fields in international studies and related disciplines such as

languages. Middlebury prides itself in offering a global education -one of the best the country can offer- , and allowing students to immerse themselves internationally wherever they choose. This is especially relevant in the Arabic and Japanese language programs, where students choose to study international disciplines in a more rural space. A draw of a D.C. school such as Georgetown is the appeal of being in a global city. There will be more cultural spaces to immerse yourself in, and possible opportunities and connections post-graduation. With this in mind, Middlebury recognizes the fact of being an institution in a more rural area, and utilizes on-campus tools and activities for students as well as their partnered institutions across the globe. Based on the Arabic and Japanese program websites, there is no shortage or limitations for student opportunities to become immersed in the languages and cultures that they are studying. So, although Middlebury may not have the same geographic appeal as a more urban campus, there are more than enough resources and ways for students to get involved in their international education.

There are immediate differences between Middlebury Arabic and Japanese programs versus those of the other two universities. I found that for both language programs, there is a more stark separation between linguistics and overall historical, cultural, and contemporary knowledge of the regions related to the languages. Middlebury's mission is rooted in "cultural and language fluency", as stated by the Japanese language site, or a "bond between language and culture", as described on the Arabic language website. This separation but simultaneous conjecture between language and culture is similar to the other programs, but different in the way it is carried out. Overall, Middlebury uses careful choices for language between their Japanese and Arabic programs. This phrasing and terminology highlights cross-cultural bonds and critical connections between language learning and immersion opportunities. Rather than highlighting

the importance of Arabic education for national interests, there is the prominent idea that Arabic should be taken as a connection to the Arab world. A similar mission is listed for the Japanese language program.

One of the most unique aspects of the Arabic and Japanese programs at Middlebury is the "Arabic house" and the "Japanese house". Both are living learning communities that seek to promote fluency in their respective languages. By living in the house, you sign an agreement to only speak Arabic or Japanese in the house, and abide by other expectations that will help your education. As far as Western education goes, this living learning community style is an excellent form of immersion for those who may be unable to travel for a variety of factors. That being said, choosing to study Arabic or Japanese also means a requirement of studying abroad for at least one semester. Even so, Middlebury's on-campus opportunities for cultural exchange through language immersion can be seen as a model for other universities.

Discussion:

For the purpose of my research, I was interested in the specifics of the program's website (terminology, career opportunities, study abroad, etc), and if they might relate to the ways in which Arabic education is politicized, in our globalized, capitalistic society. To reiterate, I do not mean to critique the program itself as I am not a student and I am only seeing the surface of programs at globally accredited institutions. Rather, I aim to examine the ways forces like Orientalism, neoliberalism, and globalization affect our language curricula, and if there is evidence in the ways a program is advertised. With advertisement of a language program, there are several factors to take into account. For one, there are the geographic, and institutional values

to consider when comparing these three institutions. For a school such as Georgetown that is located in the United States capital city, there will be different opportunities regarding jobs, cultural exchange, etc, compared to one such as Middlebury which is far more rural. There are also the values of the institution to keep in mind when analyzing the contents of the schools websites. Middlebury is a liberal institution in Vermont, compared to Notre Dame, which is a Catholic, more conservative institution in the middle of America. Additionally, language programs and interest in specialized international education topics such as linguistics are on the decline in the US. The Modern Language Association reports that enrollment in language programs across American institutions has declined and has been declining since 2009. (MLA 2019). The effort for institutions to get more involvement in their programs is rooted in this fact, meaning that efforts to advertise Arabic programs in particular stem from the fact that students are less inclined to major in linguistics compared to previous years. Outlining career opportunities and using phrasing/terminology related to current issues in the Middle East can lead to more engagement with the program. With the price of college tuition constantly on the rise and students spending thousands of dollars, it should be ensured that there are opportunities available post-graduation. This being said, the advertisement methods speak directly to this decline, which can ultimately be circled back to issues of neoliberalism in education, the way that globalization has affected our education system, and ultimately neo-Orientalism in the form of advertising Arabic programs for serving a Western agenda, rather than the purpose of cultural exchange. Although these themes may be subtle, they are evident and ultimately affecting and shaping the way that international education is carried out in the United States, which I will expand on further in this discussion of analysis.

To begin I will address neo-Orientalism in education and evidence that I was able to draw from the three program sites. At first, I found this a difficult force to measure. I have expressed before, these are all programs within globally accredited institutions that are actively trying to eradicate misconceptions, or stereotypes about Middle Eastern peoples and cultures thanks to a new era of post-colonial studies and scholars such as Edward Said who have been able to critique Western programs that show evidence of being historically Orientalist. Through using careful language and acknowledging these facts on their websites, there is no explicit evidence that Middle Eastern peoples are "othered" or "Orientalized" by some of these Arabic programs. For the case of Middlebury, it is a school that focuses largely on linguistics but also considers Middle Eastern cultures and histories that relate to the Arabic language. There is only phrasing and terminology that promotes the learning of language for the sake of global education, and creating a more culturally understanding world. However, this was a model that I did not completely encounter for the other two universities. For Georgetown and Notre Dame, there are strong connotations between US foreign policy and incentive to learn the language, whether that be through possible careers, or other methods. As said before, this is understandable in terms of geographic, and institutional values of the schools, although there is something to be said about Middlebury's distinction between Arabic as a language and Middle East studies. While the two are interconnected and do not exist without the other, the distinction of Arabic as purely linguistic rather than a political force is a rare model that speaks more to the mission of language education versus that of a regional focus. This is better understood when comparing the Arabic language programs to Japanese at the three institutions. Arabic is described as a "critical language" or important to learn for the future of American-Middle East relations. While the connection between current events and education is acceptable, the amount of emphasis on

Arabic as a tool for a Western agenda is questionable, in the common context of *what* that agenda is when it comes to the Middle East. Institutions can glorify American and Middle East foreign relations and the hope for a more "humanistic" or "authentic" understanding. However, the system of imperial influence will remain the same when it comes to how the US interacts with the Middle East and the Arabic language. By capitalizing on the ways that American students learning Arabic can help the US and national security interests, the hope for a more humanistic understanding of a place is erased.

This analysis between the three websites can be circled back to my main arguments surrounding the way that Arabic is "othered" in the context of current events and relations with the Middle East. The three universities that I have analyzed are those -like many other institutions in the United States- that are grappling with moving away from an Imperial education system that exotified and Orientalized Middle Eastern peoples. While this is true across all disciplines, it is pressing in Middle East studies due to the continuation of US national security interests in the region and the tendencies of politicians and modern media to view the Middle East and its peoples as "other", or "needing saving", and other Orientalist tropes. Islamophobia and xenophobia related to the language continue to exist across the media-verse. However, Orientalism related to the Arabic language versus the way the language is *taught* do not align with the purposes of my research. To elaborate, when media outlets align the Arabic language with terrorism, or promote Islamophobic tropes through Arabic, they are perpetuating neo-Orientalist and xenophobic fears of those who are "other". When Arabic is sought to be learned for the sole factor of it being an "exotic" language, this is Classical, Said era Orientalism. Arabic education programs in these three universities today seek to not other or exotify the Arabic language and Arab peoples, nor do they seek to spread an Islamophobic narrative like is

seen in the media. If sentiments of Orientalism exist within these programs, then it is not something that can be measured from the advertisement of the websites. To summarize again, neo-Orientalism in the way that the programs are advertised may present itself as more subtle, but still exists in the way that Western institutions urge students to study Arabic for the purpose of enhancing the objectives of a United States national security interest with the region of the Middle East.

While the incentives of studying Arabic can be related to a neo-Orientalist outlook, they can also be involved in the neoliberal model of education in the sense of career oriented outlooks of language programs. As described through existing literature, the commodification of education has directly affected the way that students seek education. This comes in the form of investing in education (spending thousands of dollars on higher education with tuition prices rapidly increasing), and the investment return that the student will receive (how much the student will make). As tuition prices rise due in part to the privatization of education thanks to neoliberal policy, students are incentivized to individualize their education experience or choose paths that will have the best return on investment. This neoliberal ideology is evident on the Georgetown and Notre Dame websites for both Arabic and Japanese language programs. For Notre Dame specifically, there is priority rooted in what a student may be able to do for a career path after graduation and how they might find monetary success. So, neoliberal ideology ultimately affects how language programs advertise themselves to prospective students in the ways of showing students how they can maximize their investment on their education. This shows how educational institutions play an active role in promoting this free-market, capitalistic, commodification of education. Dismantling this perpetuation comes not from the programs themselves, or even the university, but from challenging neoliberal policy that continues to affect

our educational systems. I argue, in the case of dismantling a Western narrative in education, specifically the Arabic language, the relationship between incentives to study Arabic and the commodification of the language is crucial to acknowledge.

An additional aspect of neoliberalism in education is the way education becomes self-serving, and free-market serving in the way that analyzed programs advertise themselves. This is reflected in the ways that the Arabic and Japanese websites are advertised to prospective students, where programs essentially commodify their own fields. For the case of international education, students are presented with educational opportunities that can in some way benefit *them,* not serve the common good through a global education. This is an example of neoliberal ideology in the ways that programs present themselves to students. To expand, commodification of the field serves United States capitalist interests and entities, rather than the mission of higher education international studies programs which seek to serve interests of global or cultural understanding. It is this decline in overall understanding that King recognizes in his article, and must be recognized by educational institutions more broadly if society is to move away from this new era of education as investment for capital and market gain in the United States. Additionally, this lack of global and cultural understanding fuels the continuation of neo-Orientalism. Even if there are students learning Arabic and related disciplines, the decline in overall public knowledge still exists because of this commodification of the knowledge that we seek. If there is no maximal capital return on forms of education, then the field is not worth studying according to neoliberal ideology. I would like to present the idea -according to my research and existing literature that highlights the phenomena of this decline in international education- that the way Arabic programs are advertised is affected by neo-Orientalism and neoliberalism. Additionally, the two forces are inherently connected and amplify the need for a

shift away from the new neoliberal norm when it comes to incentives for international education. Neoliberal ideology in education fuels the continuation of a capitalistic and ultimately imperial American society. In relation, Middle East and Arabic education has been troubled with these same imperialistic tendencies. So, if there is no push to eradicate self-serving neoliberal agendas in our education systems, then advancement in Middle East and Arabic education, away from imperial, colonial education can not be achieved.

US national security calls for common understanding and knowledge of the Middle East, its peoples, and its cultures, which is clearly stated on each of the program websites. With current events and US involvement in the Middle East, it is especially pressing that a comprehensive knowledge is acquired at these institutions so that steps to dismantle the effects of colonialism and imperial power in education may be taken. While the Arabic programs at the three universities outline this fact of knowledge and humanistic understanding, there is not an explicit acknowledgement of the US perpetuation of "othering" through policy and political structures, but rather an expressed link between Arabic education and possible government careers. This link, and terminology such as Arabic being listed as a "critical language", can explain the ways that Western incentives and neoliberal ideals present themselves in the advertising of language websites.

Conclusion:

Through the examination of universities program websites of Arabic and Japanese, the ways that Arabic is an "othered", politicized language and how programs overall appeal to the

neoliberal ideal of commodifying education is revealed. To summarize my findings once more, there are three points that I would like to highlight.

Firstly, surface level websites provide little evidence of Orientalism in Arabic education. Orientalism or neo-Orientalism can not be measured by a website of an institution that is actively trying to dismantle the stereotypes or misconceptions associated with the language and the region. Secondly, neoliberalism is ever-present in our educational structure, which includes in the ways that programs advertise themselves. Neoliberal thought and theory are shaping the way that students engage in education and international education. For the case of an international discipline such as Arabic, this is especially critical to acknowledge, for the way that imperial tendencies are affecting the education of language and will continue to affect American education. With Arabic being in the forefront of US political interest, self-serving interests not aligned with international education ideals are problematic for the eradication of issues such as Orientalism in our society.

This leads to my last point: If programs and institutions continue to give-in to the capitalist nature of our society, then our international knowledge and cross-cultural understanding may continue to faltar. For Arabic, this is critical to understand if we are to continue to break away from neo-Orientalism in our society that has been brought about by globalization and the emergence of new technologies and current events regarding the Middle East and US. So, if we allow neoliberal privatization and commodification of education to continue in our society, then this push away from imperial ideals will not be extinguished. This is, inherently what neo-Orientalism is as well. It is more subtle in the ways it presents itself in society, but is ultimately continuing the frameworks of what Said's original argument suggested when thinking of the "othering" of Middle Eastern peoples. By showing how majoring in Arabic

could help the US, this is essentially othering the Middle East and the Arabic language, or capitalizing on it through an imperial lens of weaponizing Western education.

When tackling broad, critical concepts such as those addressed throughout my research, it is necessary to address limitations once more. The surface level nature of the websites is not ideal for examining the Arabic language programs at these schools. Again, Georgetown, Middlebury, and Notre Dame are widely accredited institutions with some of the best language and international programs in the country. Like I've said before, I do not mean to criticize the programs themselves but rather highlight the ways that neoliberal, Orientalist thoughts and ideals have shaped our education today, which is exactly what my research question suggests. Another limitation has been time. More time would have opened up more avenues of methodology for the purposes of my research. Engaging in modes other than content analysis could bring a more personal element to my research question. While I am capitalizing off of my personal experiences with the Arabic language, I do not utilize others experiences which may be different than mine. I would like to acknowledge that my personal biases and frustrations have affected the trajectory and feelings about Arabic education associated with this research. As I am not Arab and not a native speaker, I have had different experiences from others with different backgrounds from my own.

Postcolonial studies in relation to educational systems help us understand the ways that colonialism has shaped the way the West views other peoples and cultures around the world and how there has been a historic imperialistic tendency of putting Western knowledge and academia on a pedestal compared to other regions. Steps are being taken across disciplines to dismantle these notions, through examination of histories and current events that may perpetuate this idea. The way Arabic education is politicized and acknowledged in the United States shows evidence

of this Western education phenomena combined with modern senses of Islamophobia and neo-Orientalism. As current events and US interests in the Middle east continue over decades, so do new misconceptions and Orientalisms associated with the region.

This is not an isolated case with the Middle East, but rather one that has been repeated across generations and regions, and one that will continue to be repeated. By being able to recognize the ways that educational institutions continue to play a role in the politicization of the Arabic language, I hope that the West may continue to be able to move away from the academic hegemon that has been asserted overtime. While there is more of an acceptance of cultures and the uplifting of voices more than ever in education, there is still space for elitist, imperialistic tendencies to take over, especially when thinking about the preservation of US national security interests in relation to other areas of the globe. Through Arabic education, the US hopes to continue its long lasting dominance over a region that has been repeatedly tormented by colonialism both internally and externally. All areas of colonial, imperialistic tendencies in our Western society must be addressed, including how we learn about aspects of the Middle East such as the Arabic language.

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