Magnitude Thinking, Identity, and Language: Reassessing Perceptions in Migration Contexts

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Abstract Life comes with various challenges, each of which requires a thinking process. This study considered the concept of magnitude thinking and how it relates to identity, language, and migration. First, the connection between language, identity, and migration was sketched out, and the concept of magnitude thinking, along with its pyramid, was introduced. Next, the application of magnitude thinking in the nexus between language, identity, and migration was investigated to show how it helped migrants in making choices. It also insisted on having an accurate approach to assessing the scale, impact, complexity, and context of situations that migrants faced. Conclusions were made to emphasize the importance of this new kind of thinking. Integrating magnitude thinking with identity and migration offers the opportunity for people to more deeply explore their own experiences and challenges of living in an increasingly complex world.

Keywords: *Magnitude thinking, Language, Identity, Migration, Mag context*

1. Introduction

In our globalized world, people from developing nations move to developed nations in search of a better life. This brings about identity challenges. Since they are from a less developed country, they underestimate their own identity and overestimate the identity of the host country. Identity, a multifaceted and complex construct of meaning, encompasses a variety of social, cultural, national, and linguistic meanings (Pishghadam et al., 2023). Such meanings, if falsely assessed by migrants, may ultimately create cultural disillusion. In fact, a misjudgment of language barriers could result in post-migration problems as language is a key factor in adjusting to a new culture (Bourdieu, 1991).

Language, which shapes identity (Pishghadam et al., 2022), is claimed to be a form of social practice, and as Fairclough (2001) stated, it is able to affect how people make sense of the world. For example, English is often associated with power, opportunity, and modernity; thus, English is an attractive cultural mark for migrants (Crystal, 2012). Prior to migration, people may assume that it will be easy for them to learn English in an English-speaking country and that English may be the metaphorical ticket to their cultural assimilation into

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a foreign culture. These linguistic and cultural expectations are often played out upon migration and clash sharply with reality. Language barriers constitute a barrier to social integration, access to services, and opportunities for work, which bring about disillusion (Bourdieu, 1991).

As stated before, an accurate assessment of identity and language can lead to a more successful migration. To attain this, *magnitude thinking* is introduced as a new approach for a more accurate evaluation of reality. This study will first describe the relationship between language and identity. It will then introduce the new concept of magnitude thinking and finally connect it to identity, language, and migration.

2. Language and Identity

Language is at the core of identity, something so much more than just a means of communication; it is the means by which people communicate and, above all, show and build their self-identity (Al Rashdi & Rao Mehta, 2024). According to Norton (2013), language provides a means for conveying where an individual stands, his or her cultural values, and how he or she perceives him or herself in relation to others. The adaptation of the migrants into a new linguistic environment is usually one of the biggest hindrances with which they have to struggle in the construction of their evolving selves (Griffiths, 2023). This is particularly true for those who have to migrate and navigate another cultural and linguistic shift. For the easiest acceptance in the new community, migrants often have to learn the host country's language. Such adoption then becomes instrumental in the reshaping of their identity as they start identifying themselves using new linguistic and cultural markers, thus leaving behind their native language and identity (Bourdieu, 1991). Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) point out that integration of migrants in such cases is associated with tensions because they have to simultaneously seek social integration while protecting their linguistic heritage.

Language learning is much more than a matter of identity; it is deeply implicated in forming power dynamics and social hierarchies. In fact, many global languages, such as English, are given a status of prestige, being used as a symbol of opportunity and social status (Crystal, 2012). Proficiency in the dominant language may enable migrants to tap into job opportunities and greater inclusion in society. However, the power imbalance between non-speakers, or those who have less proficiency in the dominant language, groups them into a space of marginalization and exclusion from the same opportunities (García & Wei, 2014). This pressure to conform to the dominant linguistic norm can make migrants feel inadequate due in part to the expectations of their host society and their need to uphold their linguistic identity. According to Hornberger and McCarty (2012), this tension between native and adopted linguistic identities usually leads to a loss of power as they endeavor to inhabit the bucket complex of the dominant language and culture.

Besides these social pressures, language learning is ultimately tied up with culture and social practices and is more than just vocabulary or grammar exercises. According to Fairclough (2001), learning a language is caring about the cultural nuances and social habits contained in the language. Thus, the problem for migrants is not just learning a language but grasping the cultural context in which it is operated. As a result of this, people generally develop a dual or hybrid identity whereby they borrow selectively from the native culture and the host and combine aspects of these to form a fluid sense of themselves. This is described by Wei (2018) as "linguistic hybridity" — whereby migrants can indeed move into the new linguistic environment but without losing the native linguistic and cultural elements. This adaptability can also create internal conflict as migrants are always trying to reconcile their linguistic competencies with their cultural heritage (Piller, 2017).

The force exerted by social media in shaping language and identity has complicated immigration matters more. According to Norton (2013), online platforms function as spaces for the expression of language and the exchange of culture, from which migrants are able to hold onto the connections to their first language and culture remotely. Through social media, migrants are able to keep in touch with those who have the same linguistic and cultural background; this will help them retain their sense of identity. Yet these same platforms often amplify unrealistic expectations about language learning and assimilation, seeing the learning of a new language as a simple and straightforward process and increasing the pressure migrants feel to conform to dominant linguistic norms (García & Wei, 2014). Sometimes, social media can feed the idea that complete linguistic assimilation is necessary for true

success and belonging to a new society — the farthest thing from the truth and a great way to alienate people who cannot easily learn a language.

Therefore, the connection between language and identity within the aura of migration is very complicated. The attempt by the migrants to reconcile their linguistic heritage with the requirements of their new milieu is fraught with diverse and multiple factors. However, this negotiation is not always smooth, with issues of social hierarchy and cultural expectations complicating the process. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) argue that this more inclusive environment needs to acknowledge the linguistic and cultural sides of identity and be welcoming regarding diversity. Through an understanding of language and its deep connection with identity, more supportive models respecting and validating different forms of migrants' identities can be created.

3. Magnitude Thinking

In today's complex world, individuals face situations where they need to make informed and accurate decisions. These decisions are mostly made based on limited or distorted information. The information may be scant, or it may be magnified or demagnified by society, and individuals need to determine whether this information can be significant enough to base their decisions on. To achieve this, individuals need to use different types of thinking, one of which can be referred to as "magnitude thinking". As the name implies, magnitude thinking deals with assessing the magnitude of something. Like a seismologist who assesses the magnitude of an earthquake to determine its impact, individuals need the ability to evaluate the size and importance of events and actions to make judicious decisions. For instance, can someone's posture in a meeting be assessed as an important factor in canceling a marriage contract? Does it indicate the inner personality of a person, such as selfishness? Should we form our decisions based on it? This is where magnitude thinking comes into play and helps one weigh the significance of the information to make critical decisions.

Moreover, individuals may often underestimate or overestimate the significance of an event. For instance, a slip of the tongue in a leader's speech may seem like a minor error, but in reality, it may reveal deeper aspects of their real educational and literacy backgrounds. In contrast, a minor error in somebody's presentation might, in reality, be insignificant, but they may consider it very important. Magnitude thinking is essential to avoid underestimating or overestimating the true significance of an event. This kind of thinking is beyond the frequently mentioned critical or systems thinking. That is why, in this study, magnitude thinking is introduced as a new type of thinking to expand our cognitive abilities.

Magnitude thinking is the ability to accurately assess the scale, impact, and complexity of events or actions holistically. Based on this definition, magnitude thinking has five important components: scale, impact, complexity, holism, and accuracy. To make informed decisions, individuals must first understand the scale of events or actions, whether they are small (micro), medium (meso), or large (macro). Second, they should assess the potential impacts in the immediate, short, or long term. Third, they need to examine the complexity of events or actions in terms of cause-and-effect relationships (simple), interdependent factors (complex), or high sensitivity to initial changes (chaotic). Fourth, everything should be analyzed on an individual, contextual, or global level. Finally, individuals need to be cautious that the reality is not distorted by media or surrounding discourse, whether it is magnified (hyper) or demagnified (hypo). Table 1 shows these core components.

Table 1
Core Components of Magnitude Thinking

Components	Categories
Scale	Micro, Meso, Macro
Impact	Immediate, Short/Long term
Complexity	Simple, Complex, Chaotic
Holism	Individual, Contextual, Global
Accuracy	Hyper/Hypo reality, Objective reality

It should be clarified that the concept of magnitude thinking is inspired by chaos/complexity theory (Gleick, 1987), Foucault's theory of power (1980), and cognitive psychology (Anderson, 2000). Chaos/ complexity theory is related to the concepts of complexity, non-linearity, and the butterfly effect. Foucault's theory of power can be linked to the distortions imposed by power structures, media, and discourse, changing reality. Cognitive psychology addresses the perception of scales and cognitive processes.

Moreover, magnitude thinking employs other types of thinking: critical thinking, strategic thinking, and systems thinking. Critical thinking is used to evaluate and understand the scale of something and to determine whether reality is biased (Paul & Elder, 2019). Strategic thinking is used to monitor consequences and anticipate and plan future actions (Mintzberg, 1994). Systems thinking deals with interactions and provides a holistic view (Meadows, 2008). Table 2 reveals the types of thinking related to each component.

Table 2

Types of Thinking Related to the Components of Magnitude Thinking

Types of Thinking	Case Component	Relation to Core Component
Critical Thinking	Scale	Evaluates and understands the relative size or scope accurately.
	Accuracy	Ensures assessments are unbiased and free from distraction.
Strategic Thinking	Impact	Focuses on understanding potential immediate, short-term, and long-term consequences.
	Complexity	Helps anticipate and prepare for intricate and interconnected effects.
Systems Thinking	Complexity	Analyzes how various components interact within a system.
	Holism	Provides a comprehensive view by integrating various elements.

Magnitude thinking represents a rigorous system of thought leading to the ability to accurately quantify events and actions, as well as to understand events and actions in the broad context of how they influence each other. This is more important in today's world, where information overload, rapid changes in technology, and the pressure to keep pace with society all require quick decisions. Usually, people face situations where their perceptions about reality get diluted by emotional bias, media influence, or societal expectations, which makes them unable to make correct decisions. That is why magnitude thinking works like a corrective tool; it helps people to see the true relevance of the details. As an example, a decision maker must decide if a minor detail in a political campaign—say, an offhand comment or unexpected gesture—is a big deal in terms of public opinion or just a blip. Without magnitude thinking, such trivial details can easily be overinflated in importance, leading to bad decisions. Additionally, in the realms of organization management, global politics, and cross-cultural interaction, magnitude thinking becomes significantly important. In these settings, decision-makers must continuously evaluate multiple variables, including complex and interrelated systems, that may result in nonlinear outcomes. Therefore, magnitude thinking can be classified into the micro level (small scale, subtle impacts) and macro level (large scale, significant impacts). The situations in which magnitude thinking is mostly required can be called the *Mag Context*. Examples of mag contexts are marriage, job selection, educational pursuit, financial management, immigration, housing, and religious beliefs. In these contexts, individuals should make informed and correct decisions not to regret later in life.

All in all, magnitude thinking incorporates the butterfly effect from chaos theory—the idea that small actions can have large consequences—and prepares us to think about different possibilities. Similarly, Foucault's definition of power dynamics reminds us that the information we come across is not always neutral – often, it is filtered through the web of power structures that elevate or downgrade some features simply to meet someone's interest. Magnitude thinking helps people to consider these influences and reach a more accurate reality. In this new cognitive model of magnitude thinking, the strategic, critical, and systems thinking elements allow one to go beyond the reflection of the present to look forward to future consequences in tackling the complexities of modern life with more agility and precision.

4. Magnitude Thinking Pyramid

The Magnitude Thinking Pyramid (Figure 1) is a structured framework to help people consider the magnitude and consequences that are at stake with different events and actions. This pyramid comprises five layers, each representing an aspect of magnitude thinking: Perception of Scale, Assessment of Impact, Complexity Analysis, Holistic Contextualization, and Accuracy Check.

1. **Perception of Scale**: Perception of Scale stands as the lowest level within the hierarchy. The base of this structure focuses on recognizing how important issues in identity and language converge with migration. A migrant community must make efforts to establish their cultural identity. Different identity challenges can either appear as tiny modifications in personal identity or lead to significant alterations that affect someone dramatically. Inadequate assessment of identity problems leads people to invest excessive time in unimportant worries instead of addressing serious identity distress.

2. **Assessment of Impact**: The second layer, known as Assessment of Impact, builds from the previous layer by analyzing possible implications that result from decisions made about language and identity. Using the language of their new community offers migrants both immediate social advantages through better employment opportunities and improved acceptance in social circles. Their indigenous language, together with cultural identity, faces a gradual dissolution as a result of such decisions over extended periods. This layer helps people examine both temporary and long-term results of their preferences before studying the total scope of resulting changes occurring for an extended period.

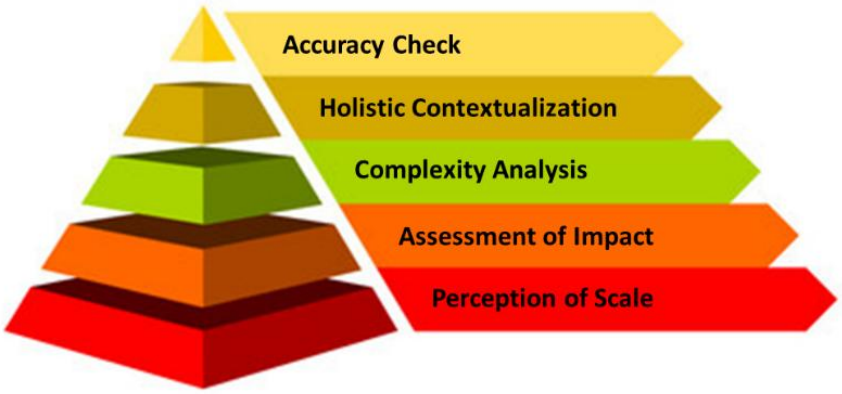
3. **Complexity Analysis**: Complexity Analysis represents the third component that supports people in studying how migration influences both identity and language complexity. Most decisions about language learning and identity adaptation do not feature simple solutions. The experience of an immigrant learning another language is influenced by multiple interrelated elements, such as social networks and educational access, in addition to personal reasons. Understanding identity complexity helps people recognize the subtle aspects of their identity growth, enabling them to make decisions that align with their life preferences.

4. **Holistic Contextualization**: Holistic Contextualization sits above complexity analysis and emphasizes the requirement to analyze wider socio-cultural elements during identity and language policy decisions. When studying how language policies affect migrant communities, we need to understand historical and social aspects along with their interaction with cultural conditions. Such choices appear beneficial in isolation, yet failure to analyze the wider impact, particularly regarding linguistic group exclusion and cultural misunderstandings, may produce unexpected effects.

5. **Accuracy Check**: Accuracy Check occupies the highest position in this system and highlights the significance of making decisions regarding language and identity through data-based methods. People need to analyze their information sources to verify that the material is accurate and unbiased. Researchers who want to study public perceptions of migrants and their languages must understand that existing reports in media and social narratives might influence the true picture of the situation. The usage of accurate data allows individuals to avoid making decisions that stem from inaccurate perceptions or stereotypical beliefs.

The Magnitude Thinking Pyramid offers individuals a framework to direct their thinking when handling life challenges and reducing mistakes. Implementing the pyramid gives everyone the means to systemically evaluate what matters most so they can identify major aspects from less essential ones. Organizational policy development and decision-making operations are directly affected by this approach, which extends its value beyond individual development. People who want to improve their critical thinking skills for vital decision-making should use the Magnitude Thinking Pyramid as their ultimate resource in this changing world.

Figure 1
The Magnitude Thinking Pyramid



By learning to prioritize magnitude thinking, people develop a clearer understanding of complex life situations, which leads to confident decision-making and improved outcomes for every stage of their lives. This system guides people to be proactive in their thinking process while they explore the full effects of their actions across environmental settings. People who analyze pyramid layers can use these critical questions to reach a deeper level of comprehension and improve their decision-making practice.

1. **Scale**: What is the magnitude of this event or action, and how does it compare to similar situations I have faced?
2. **Impact**: What are the potential immediate and long-term consequences of my decision, and how might they affect me and others involved?
3. **Complexity**: What interrelated factors contribute to this situation, and how do they influence the outcome of my decision?
4. **Holism**: How does this event or action fit into the larger context of my life or community, and what broader implications should I consider?
5. **Accuracy**: Am I basing my decision on a clear and unbiased understanding of the situation, or are there distortions that I need to address?

These questions guide individuals in their reflection and lead them to better decision-making and a deeper understanding of the complexities.

5. Magnitude Thinking, Identity, and Language

People normally select a country to migrate to based on a lot of assessment and investigation. As we discussed before, identity and language are, in many ways, tied so closely to migration. An inaccurate evaluation of these factors may cause cultural disillusionment and waste of time and energy in a foreign country. That is where magnitude thinking comes into play. The relationship between different components of magnitude thinking, language, and identity is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3
The Relationship between Magnitude Thinking, Language, and Identity

Component	Definition	Application in Migration (Language & Identity)
Scale	Understanding the size or significance of an event or action.	Migrants often overestimate their ability to quickly master the host country's language (e.g., English), believing it to be easier than it is in reality. This misjudgment can lead to frustration, delayed integration, and identity challenges as they struggle more than anticipated.
Impact	Assessing short-term and long-term effects of events or actions.	Misjudging the long-term impact of language learning or loss of native language may affect social integration, career prospects, and identity preservation. Migrants must evaluate the broader implications of linguistic shifts on their evolving sense of self.

Complexity	Considering the interdependence and cause-effect relationships of factors.	The interplay between language, cultural adaptation, and identity is complex. Migrants need to navigate various factors-social norms, cultural practices, and language proficiency while maintaining their original identity. Misjudging this complexity can lead to frustration.
Holism	Viewing events in a broader context, considering individual, contextual, and global levels.	Migrants' identities are multifaceted, involving national, social, and linguistic dimensions. A holistic view is necessary to balance integration into the host culture while preserving their native identity, considering both personal and societal aspects of language use.
Accuracy	Ensuring that reality is not distorted, whether magnified or minimized.	Media and societal narratives often distort the value of migrants' native identities and overemphasize the power of the host language (e.g., English). An accurate assessment of linguistic challenges helps avoid unrealistic expectations and cultural disillusionment.

Migrants believe that it is easier to learn a language, such as English, in a new country and that all it requires is a little effort. Yet, this first faulty estimation can eventually result in disappointment, frustration, and delayed integration into the new culture since they fail to fulfill their first ambitions. Not only that, but their judgment may have consequences on their social integration and job opportunities over a very long time. Not knowing the complexity of the situation, particularly the direct relationship between identity, language, and social integration, may result in isolation and frustration for migrants. This is also true for identity; identity is also multidimensional, with different aspects in both native and second language, and migrants not adopting a holistic view may lose their native identity. Last but not least, social media usually distorts the reality of migration by playing up the host language and culture or by attenuating the native language and identity.

In addition, the framework of magnitude thinking can also be used to help with emotional and psychological issues that normally occur when immigrants try to adapt. Migration is not just a logistical or a legal transition but is the result of a series of identity shifts in relation to social roles and a sense of belonging (Berry, 2016). If people do not correctly anticipate the emotional burden involved in these changes, they may experience anxiety, become culturally disoriented, or feel inadequate, especially if they find themselves unexpectedly faced with language barriers or cultural discrepancies (Ward et al., 2020). Immigrants become better able to cope with their psychological and emotional needs through the proper application of magnitude thinking methods during immigration. Their proactive perspective enables them to predict cultural shifts along with suitable adaptation methods that strengthen their adaptability and resilience (Auer & Thorburn, 2022). Migrants who study the long-term impact of cultural integration can establish stronger support networks or seek expert guidance to decrease their chances of cultural disillusionment (Ryder et al., 2021).

Finally, magnitude thinking allows educators and policymakers to develop better models for language instruction and integration programs targeting migrants. The implementation of this framework would help enhance current programs to address the comprehensive challenges of migration (Piller, 2016). The principles of magnitude thinking support educators in developing curricula that recognize different adaptation levels among migrants and their varied cultural experiences (García & Kleyn, 2016). Knowledge that advances the intricate bond between language and identity lets policymakers establish supportive systems that acknowledge how migration shapes individual and social roles (Holliday, 2018). The diversity of language and culture that migrants bring into their new environment facilitates integration (Vertovec, 2007). Through magnitude thinking, we can enhance both personal migration choices and institutional migration strategies, which will lead to better integration results across multicultural settings.

6. Concluding Remarks

This paper introduced the concept of Magnitude Thinking and applied it to migration, language, and identity. The newly proposed framework aims to assist people in a holistic manner to make scale, impact, and complexity assessments of events. More specifically for migration, what it does is that it

gives you a lens through which you can see language learning, identity formation, and cultural integration more accurately. Magnitude thinking works as a straightforward way for migrants to avoid overestimating or underestimating the challenges they may face when adapting to a new language and all the dynamics of identity in a foreign culture.

The reasons for applying magnitude thinking to migration stem from the many problems that immigrants face in migrating to a new cultural and linguistic environment. Learning a new language, such as English, is often thought to be merely a matter of learning how to string individual words together, but the process of learning a language is far more complicated and difficult than they first thought. It is not only the linguistic barriers that preclude this but the cultural nuances and social practices that are embedded within language that migrants do not grasp or anticipate (Benegas & Benjamin, 2024). Identity is very much involved in this process, with migrants possibly struggling with a reconstructed or hybrid identity as they try to assimilate into their new communities. As such, magnitude thinking presents a structured way for migrants to evaluate the nuances of language learning as well as identity adaptation, which supplies them with a better and clearer idea regarding the magnitude of challenges they will encounter.

The study of magnitude thinking also investigates the social and psychological effects brought about by migration. Typical misjudgments pertaining to problem size and migration-related effects can create long-term social effects, including cultural loss and employment difficulties. Dominant languages such as English tend to promote success, but these success indicators create additional challenges for individuals who face language difficulties. People who fail to acknowledge how difficult it is to learn new language features or underestimate the importance of cultural conservation in migration often lose their social connections to past and present contexts. The process gets more complex because of social media since it either promotes large-scale adaptation beliefs or conceals identity conflicts. Magnitude thinking delivers complete evaluations of migrant problems, which makes it efficient for people to manage their challenges successfully.

The theory of magnitude thinking maintains alignment with emotioncy which integrates emotion with frequency to study sense-induced emotions that contextualize cognition (Al Abdwani et al., 2025; Bahri Roudposhti & Al Abdwani, 2024; Pishghadam & Abbasnezashd, 2017; Pishghadam et al. 2021). Individuals with high emotioncy capabilities use magnitude thinking more effectively because emotional decision-making becomes more realistic through actual experiences. Migrants who have firsthand experience adapting to new cultures better understand reality than those who only learn about such experiences through reading. Emotional involvement strengthens individual judgment regarding the scale, impact, complexity, and context of personal experiences. The combination of emotioncy and magnitude thinking illustrates how firsthand experiences help people develop better cognitive frameworks to make intelligent and balanced decisions by integrating hard facts with soft feelings.

The concept of magnitude thinking applies to personal migrant decisions and support systems for migrants established by governments and institutions. Governmental departments, alongside education establishments and migrant-serving organizations, can use this framework to understand migrant population challenges. The addition of magnitude thinking to migration policies and support systems enhances stakeholder success through better focusing on support initiatives because of their understanding of multiple language learning, cultural adaptation, and identity transformation challenges. This approach can generate educational materials that support migrants' preparation for life and prevent cultural disillusionment after arrival. Such tools would help migrants adjust better to their new environment.

The concept of magnitude thinking relates directly to *Magnitude Intelligence* as a form of intelligence. The new intelligence model functions as an ability to utilize magnitude thinking within actual life applications. Researchers need to study magnitude intelligence to establish its main components, which will allow them to create standardized measurement techniques. The concept of magnitude thinking can also be related to the Dual-Mode Cognitive (DMC) Framework, in which thinking with the brain (fast and instinctive) is different from thinking with the mind (slow and reflective). In fact, the ability to transition between these cognitive modes allows for a more accurate and holistic assessment of reality,

preventing both over-exaggeration and underestimation of events. Other studies can be done to examine how this framework can contribute to magnitude thinking. Overall, magnitude thinking requires further development in domains outside migration through applications for making decisions throughout business operations as well as education and interpersonal relationships. Future research must validate and study the various elements of magnitude thinking specifically focusing on those connected to migrational environments. Researchers should examine whether migrants who adopt magnitude thinking achieve better outcomes than non-users by assessing their progress in language learning and their work success. Future research should determine the implementation strategies of magnitude thinking in cross-cultural training as it enhances intercultural competence while reducing inflated judgments about language and identity.

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