5-2023

Teachers' Perspectives on Multimodal Texts in Middle School Reading Language Arts Classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley

Angelica Montoya Ybarra
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON MULTIMODAL TEXTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

READING LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS

IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

A Dissertation

by

ANGELICA MONTOYA YBARRA

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

May 2023

TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON MULTIMODAL TEXTS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

READING LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOMS

IN THE RIO GRANDE VALLEY

A Dissertation
by
ANGELICA MONTOYA YBARRA

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Elena Venegas
Chair of Committee

Dr. Xiaodi Zhou
Committee Member

Dr. Janine Schall
Committee Member

May 2023

ABSTRACT

Montoya Ybarra, Angelica. <u>Teachers' Perspectives on Multimodal Texts in Middle School Reading Language Arts Classrooms in The Rio Grande Valley</u>. Doctor in Education (Ed.D.), May, 2023, 112 pp., 5 tables, 11 figures, references, 67 titles.

Literacy in the 21st century includes multiple modes of communication that include culturally and linguistic diverse representation. It also includes multimodal texts that use visual, audio, and technological elements to create meaning. The new changing technologies have expanded literacy to more than print and written forms. Literacy instruction has seen pedagogical changes, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Educators need to explore new literacy practices that benefit the growing diversity in societies along with the fast-growing technologies. Students need skills and mentoring to navigate digital learning platforms. Literacy in the 21st century includes multimodal texts, technology, nontraditional literacy skills, and multiliteracies.

Recent literacy research shows an increasing implementation of multimodal literacies; thus, there is little to no research on teachers' perspectives and students' literacy development. This study offers insight into teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school Reading Language Arts classrooms. Teachers' perspectives regarding the ongoing changes to literacy and the digital world can provide understandings of how teachers are developing students' literacy skills.

DEDICATION

To my parents, for all their support, love, and encouragement.

My pampa, thank you for all your hard work in making sure we had all we needed and more. My mamma, who is now my guardian angel in heaven, I love you and miss you with all my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and give my sincere thanks to Dr. Elena Venegas, the chair of my dissertation committee, for your guidance and mentoring on my research and writing. Words cannot express my gratitude for all your feedback and support during this process.

I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to my committee members Dr. Zhou and Dr. Schall. Dr. Zhou, I am thankful for all your feedback and guidance with my research and writing. Dr. Schall, thank you for your knowledge and expertise. I appreciate your insights to help me improve my work. A sincere thank you to the both of you for your contributions in helping me be a better writer. It has been an honor to have been your student and learn from all of you.

To my loving husband, Eduardo, my teddy bear. Thank you for your positivity, encouragement, and support. I could not have done this without you. I love you. My boys Diego and Andres, mommy loves you to infinity and beyond. A special thanks to my sister Claudia, my brothers Rigo and Raul, and rest of my family for your unconditional support. My coworkers, friends and extended family. I appreciate the motivation, support, and encouragement.

I would also like to give a special thanks to my classmates and cohort members, thank you for the motivation and emotional support. I am glad we were in this journey together.

Finally, I would like to thank God, for giving me the strength to pursue this dream through all the challenging moments. I am truly grateful for His many blessings.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic changed the way students experienced learning.

Students learned to rely on electronic devices to receive academic instruction. One of the areas

significantly impacted was literacy. This has created a gap between the literacies of educators

who are teaching and those needed for 21st century learning. Texts in the 21st century require

students to have new skills and strategies to interpret and make meaning. "Literacy is no longer

bound to print-based mediums but instead extends to digital multimodal experiences where the

combination of sounds, images, and text all contribute to meaning making" (Boche & Henning,

2015, p. 579). Technology in the classroom is now a tool to interact with literacy and promote

student learning. Additionally, it helps engage students in learning while using skills and tools

relevant to them. With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers have shifted to more

digital and visual forms of texts (Si et al., 2022).

This shift in literacy learning suggests a new approach to literacy pedagogy in the

classrooms. The New London Group (2000) stated, "New communications media are reshaping

rapidly; there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute the ends of literacy learning,

however taught" (p. 14). The statement from the New London Group was published two

decades ago, yet technology has continued to evolve and at a rapid pace. These rapid changes in

technology create a need for new literacies and skills. Moreover, integrating technology in the

classroom alone necessitates new strategies to teach literacy. Teaching through multimodality

and technology can help students analyze, use, and synthesize multiple modes of literacy. The high standards of state testing require educators to find innovative ways to help readers comprehend texts. Classrooms are now composed of a diverse group of students. This includes the population of English Language Learners (ELLs), which makes up about 10.1% of all students according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020). In this study, ELLs are referred to as *emergent bilinguals*, an updated term as it values the funds of knowledge and language competencies students have while learning another language (Garcia et al., 2008). The diversity in classrooms creates a need for instructional strategies that benefit all learners in comprehending texts in academic instruction. Educators need to present different text types that align with the shift in technological and cultural contexts of the 21st century (Ajayi, 2011). This includes learning outside of school and institutionalized domains as reading is now accompanied by digital tools and knowledge not offered in public schools (Gee, 2012b).

Background

The New London Group introduced the term *multiliteracies* in 1996. The term "reflected multiple communication forms and a context of cultural and linguistic diversity within a globalized society" (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013, p. 62). Similarly, multiple literacies describe the way people read and write through a variety of texts including books, magazines, labels, and non-print media such as music, art, and television. Thus, multiple modes of communication are possible for readers in literacy situations. Literacy means conveying meaning through language, images, sounds, and other modes. This is important in literacy instruction as "how knowledge is presented, as well as the mode and media chosen, is a crucial aspect of knowledge construction, making the form of presentation integral to meaning and learning more generally" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 241).

When we think about literacy, we think about reading and writing, yet the definition of literacy has changed. Literacy in the 21st century includes the use of technology to gather, interpret, and communicate information. Print-based literacies are no longer the only source of information. Through the interaction of print-based and digital literacies, we can access and understand information at a deeper level (Boche & Henning, 2015). However, as literacy has changed with the use of technology, literacy concepts have been overlapping. For example, information literacy, multiliteracies, new literacy, digital literacies, and web literacies are all skills necessary for 21st century learners (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013). To meet the needs of these learners, educators must learn new strategies for literacy instruction.

Teachers need to understand what 21st century learning is and what it means to be literate. The use of multimodal tools includes interaction and mentoring from adults for students to be successful in implementation. Multimodal texts "require readers to attend to the grammars of visual design, in addition to the structures, typography, and graphic elements associated with written language" (Serafini, 2012, p. 28). The development of such skills is needed for the future of 21st century learning. The production of texts in the 21st century includes various modes like images, writing, videos, and most often performed using digital resources (Dahlström, 2022). These skills need to be taught by educators to help students interact and comprehend multimodal texts. In addition, students need to understand how different modes contribute to comprehension and meaning-making.

Schools are increasing the use of digital platforms in classrooms to educate students. Virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic created a need for learning how to use digital resources for student instruction. Although many students have returned to face-to-face instruction, districts still expect educators to implement digital resources in the classroom.

Literacy instruction should include how to navigate and make meaning using multiple modes so that "the concept of literacy includes visual, electronic, and digital forms of expression and communication" (Koltay, 2011, p. 214). Educators need to address 21st century literacy in the classrooms. Preparing students for 21st century literacy is about their success in the changing world.

Statement of the Problem

The focus of traditional literacy instruction in the classroom emphasizes reading and writing print. This creates a problem, as it places more emphasis on verbal and written language. Educators need to think of literacy practices that will help students think and understand texts at deeper levels. Multimodality may be the answer, as this framework can provide a path for teachers to help students achieve higher levels of knowing and thinking (Boche & Henning, 2015). The high accountability placed on schools and state testing requires educators to look for ways to increase student comprehension. Accountability, differentiated instruction, and meeting the needs of all diverse learners requires new methods to present literacy in the classroom. With the increased use of technology and online educational resources, there is a demand for updated skills and strategies.

During the 2020-2021 school year, students received academic instruction through online platforms. Districts across Texas relied on Google Classroom as a way for teachers to provide and receive assignments to students. Teachers, students, and their families learned how to use this technological tool to fulfill their academic requirements. Although students are familiar with technology, they still need the skills to use technology as a tool for learning. Navigating a web page, submitting assignments, checking scores, sending and receiving messages, and finding resources are just some of the skills needed to navigate Google Classroom or any other learning

platform. Educational applications such as Kahoot, Booklet, and Study Island are also resources to help introduce, assess, and target specific learning objectives for students. Each learning platform requires students to have the right navigation skills to use the program appropriately.

The state of Texas is also moving towards online testing for their state assessments. Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) will be administered through an online testing platform (TEA, 2022). Educators will be required to provide opportunities for students to familiarize themselves with the online testing environment and the tools utilized during testing. The test will provide various features and tools available for students. The teaching of these features and tools will be essential for students to respond to questions. The change from paper based to online testing requires a shift from current literacy practices. The strategies and skills once used for paper based testing will need to upgrade to skills fit for an online testing environment. Educators must now transition paper instructional teaching and learning strategies to online platforms.

New skills and strategies require that educators be familiar with multiliteracies. The curriculum and the teaching of the curriculum should reflect multiliteracies as "the pedagogic aim of multiliteracies is to attend to the multiple and multimodal texts and wide range of literacy practices that students are engaged with" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 245). It takes into account students' values, interests, and experiences. For example, students use technology everyday through social media such as TikTok and Instagram, which can be beneficial in literacy development. Additionally, the literacies students are learning about should reflect both in school and out-of-school literacies. Moll et al. (1992) explored the use of student's funds of knowledge from their home that can connect school to student's life. The homes of students can be "rich in funds of knowledge that represent important resources for educational change" (Moll et al., 1992, p.139).

Identifying students' funds of knowledge can help improve students' literacy skills. Digital literacies allow students to access and demonstrate their funds of knowledge. Students use digital games, apps for communication such as WhatsApp and Messenger, or even email for school purposes; these are out-of-school practices that can be used to teach skills in school. Schools need to consider the literacy practices of students and meaning making in the multimodal and digital world. Rethinking literacy can help teachers connect to students and engage them in literacy practices that are relevant and meaningful to them. It can also help educators provide the skills necessary for students to navigate and make meaning in their world.

Multimodality and multiliteracies can help develop students' understanding of multimodal systems and their designs. Multimodal texts can help educators engage students in critical engagement, redesign, or understanding how modes construct meaning in specific genres. Multimodality can also help teachers support readers by reaching comprehension, extending student thinking and learning to higher levels (Boche & Henning, 2015). It can also help educators connect learning with out-of-school digital literacy practices such as gaming, comics, social media, and blogs. Teachers can relate to students by bringing these literacies into the classrooms to motivate and engage students; it can also "help bridge what students do outside of school to aid what they learn in school" (Boche & Henning, 2015, p. 588).

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school Reading Language Arts (RLA) classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley. The focus was on teachers' perspectives of multimodal texts and their implementation to develop students' literacy. Teachers' perspectives are essential in helping us see the classroom from the instructor's point of view. The ongoing changes to literacy and the digital world require exploring how

teachers perceive and implement multimodal texts to develop students' literacy skills. New communications media "are reshaping rapidly, there cannot be one set of standards or skills that constitute the ends of literacy learning, however taught" (New London Group, 2000, p. 14). Since there is not one way to teach literacy with technology, it is important to understand the teachers' perception of using such tools.

This study could allow school leaders to evaluate and determine if changes to the curriculum are made, how prepared teachers feel to teach multimodality, and how it can help develop literacy skills. It can also provide district curriculum writers insight to teachers' perspectives of multimodal texts. This can help other educators on how to implement them to develop students' literacy skills. Multiliteracies requires educators to be familiar with the multimodal features of texts and think about the instructional methods that will help students learn the different features (Si et al., 2022). Knowing teachers' perspectives is crucial as the state moves from paper based to online testing.

As texts shift from monomodal to multimodal, readers need new skills to understand these new texts. Students already interact with print-based texts that contain multimodal elements such as picture books, magazines, and newspapers that contain images. However, technology has changed the skills students need to read multimodal texts. Written texts are presented sequentially, but when students interact with a website, they do not require linear reading because multimodal texts are in non-linear fashion. For example, students can click on a link and go to a different text altogether. There are also social media apps such as TikTok and Snap Chat that deliver their messages through video, images, and audio. This requires the reader to have more listening comprehension and visual literacy skills. It will be necessary for educators to become knowledgeable in different types of texts, skills, and strategies to be successful and

the social context for learning to take place (Serafini, 2012). Bull and Ansley (2018) suggested that societies' diversity and new technologies demand a need for various literacies. Multimodal texts can provide the students with a variety of learning opportunities.

Educators need to think about what and how they teach. With the technological advances of the 21st century, today's society needs literacy skills that consists of more than reading and writing (Si et al., 2022). Learners need to be able to think more deeply and critically to understand meaning by incorporating multimodal texts. Teachers' perspectives towards multimodal texts and their implementation in the classroom can help understand literacy education in the 21st century. By exploring teachers' perspectives, this study will contribute to an understanding of teacher perspectives that is significant in informing research and practice concerning multimodal texts. Finally, it can help create conversations on educational change based on teachers' perceptions, capacities, and needs/desires for change.

Research Questions

Currently, there is little to no literature that studies teachers' perspectives of multimodal texts. Teachers' perspectives of multimodal literacy is critical because how the teacher feels about multimodal texts will significantly affect classroom implementation. Educators with a positive attitude towards multimodal texts might be more willing to integrate them effectively into the classroom. Secondly, the teachers' perspective on the students' literacy development using multimodal texts will help understand how teachers incorporate multimodal texts in their classroom to develop students' literacy skills. Multimodal texts have been available for a while; however, there is now an effort to understand teachers' perspectives and implementation of multimodal texts affects literacy instruction. Finally, this study explored middle school teachers'

perspectives of multimodal texts in their Reading Language Arts classrooms. Three research questions were used to guide this study:

1. What are middle school teachers' perspectives regarding the use of multimodal texts in the Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley?

2. How do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley perceive that their students' literacies are developing through the use of multimodal texts?

3. What do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley need to be supported to use multimodal texts?

Allowing teachers to share their perspectives with the use of multimodal texts can help leaders understand how to prepare future teachers, support current teachers, and the impact on students' literacy development.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the theoretical framework of multiliteracies. The New London Group introduced the term *multiliteracies* in 1996. According to the New London Group, a multiliteracies pedagogy encourages a wide range of linguistic, cultural, and technological perspectives and tools that help students be prepared in a rapidly changing globalized world. In order to prepare students to contribute to their community, schools should adapt to the growing new technologies for teaching and learning, communication, and increased access to cultural and linguistic diversity (New London Group, 1996). Various modes of communication are possible based on people's cultural and social settings. This also influences readers and how they approach multiliteracies as multiple ways of communicating and making meaning including linguistic, visual, spatial, audio, and gestural modes (New London Group, 1996). Literacy is not just restricted to print and written forms, but rather also includes the culturally and linguistically

diverse representation. This diverse representation extends to the multiple literacy skills that students develop in social contexts and in and out of school.

The changes to teaching due to learning in digital world extended the work of the New London Group by introducing the concept of *multipedagogies* (Holmes, 2017). Multipedagogies "account for the variety of people and things that teach and all the places, digital and analog, where teaching and learning happen" (Holmes, 2017, p. 134). This means that many different people and many different tools can teach. Secondly, teaching can happen anywhere, even outside of traditional educational settings, such as schools. Through a multipedagogies perspective, activities done by different people can provide insights into improving effective teaching.

Rationale for the Study

This study sought to explore secondary teachers' perspectives of multimodal texts as well as teachers' perceptions of students' literacy development through multimodal texts. Our students require different exposure and application to literacy skills. The quickly changing technologies give educators the push to expose students to new forms of literacy. For example, Alvermann (2011) stated that adolescents are "producing literate identities, which if known and recognized by their teachers would likely accrue new respect for what they are able to do either on their own or through collaboration with others who share their interest" (p. 6). This statement was made more than 10 years ago before students' text-making processes included digital multimodal text making, yet it is still applicable. In today's classrooms, adolescents are not only producers but also consumers of 21st-century texts. Many spend their after-school hours sharing photos, stories, and videos on media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. These adolescent literacy practices reflect an ongoing shift towards a digital environment. Therefore,

"providing students with skills and strategies for navigating and interpreting visual design elements and images, in addition to the requisite skills for making sense of written language, is necessary to cross this pedagogical chasm" (Serafini, 2012, p. 30).

Educators are responsible for a generation of students who are digital learners. Gallardo-Echenique et al. (2015) described a *digital learner* as a more "global vision of the 21st century student in the digital age" (p. 172). This term focuses on implementing digital tools that aid students with learning. It can also apply to educators as the term focuses on the person who realizes the possibilities of digital technologies it presents to learning in their everyday life. As technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, it will be difficult for educators to keep up with all new apps, sites, and software. Therefore, students need to be equipped to learn how to access and navigate these platforms on their own. Today, many educators are adapting to and understanding a new learning environment, and we must continue to learn to be able to teach our students. Educators need to be able to use the language and style of their students using different methodologies for learning. Educators will need to help students develop the literacy skills necessary for the 21st century.

The research between teachers' perspectives and implementation of multimodal texts in the classroom is essential to understanding students' literacy development as such "texts and visual images will continue to dominate our literate landscapes far into the future" (Serafini, 2012, p. 30). Consequently, students will need to learn strategies for interpreting multimodal texts. This need became more evident during the year of virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students need updated skills to navigate multiple learning platforms. In addition to the multiple learning platforms, there is also a shift in state testing. Students will no longer take the paper based state assessment; the test will now be completely online. The development and

implementation of literacy skills on multimodal texts is crucial for student success in the classroom and state assessments.

For example, Gee (2012) suggested that video games could develop problem-solving skills, language, and strategic thinking. This multimodal text combines moving and still images, sounds, icons, and symbols. It can engage a student in learning, and the students develop an understanding of multimodal elements and their meaning. Additionally, it connects multimodality and the out-of-school literacy world of teens. An example is Discord, a chat platform used by gamers that became a space for collaboration and education. It provided users, specifically teens, who were more likely already using it, a place to hang out, connect, or chat with others (Rogers-Whitehead, 2021). Discord provides a way for teens to interact with others in multimodal ways such as link sharing, posting GIFS, or using emojis. Gee (2012) saw games as a new space for learning in the 21st century. Students need strategies for comprehending online features and tools. Ultimately, the teacher's perspective towards multimodal texts such as video games will affect the implementation of this model for students' overall literacy development.

This study also explored the teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts and their implementation in the classroom for students' literacy development. This study sought to understand the teachers' perspectives of how multimodal texts contribute to students' literacy development. Research is needed in understanding how multimodal texts influence literacy skills and knowledge acquisition (Ajayi, 2011). Therefore, it is vital to continue the research of multimodal texts and their impact on students' literacy skills. Students need literacy skills that will prepare them for 21st century learning. As educators "we must take into consideration learners' changing needs while flexibly adjusting to the inevitable changes associated with

increasing diverse texts and the current range of cultural, linguistic, and digital practices" (Coiro et al., 2017, p. 130).

Significance of Study

This study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school Reading Language Arts (RLA) classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley. This research provides new insights into teachers' perspectives and the use of multimodal texts to develop students' literacy skills. Currently, there is limited research on teachers' perspectives. Research on teachers' perspectives is important because their perspective, negative or positive, affects classroom instruction and students' literacy development. This study also provides information for future research on teacher preparation programs, curriculum development, teacher support, and resources for implementing multiliteracies in the classroom.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Middle school Reading Language Art teachers were recruited to participate voluntarily in this study at one middle school; therefore, the results might not apply to all middle schools in the Rio Grande Valley. This study also pertains to teachers' perspectives in the Rio Grande Valley. The Rio Grande Valley known locally as the Valley or RGV is a region near the border of Texas and Mexico. The area is generally bilingual in English and Spanish. Although the teachers in this study were Grade 6, Grade 7, and Grade 8 teachers, they do not represent the perceptions of all middle school Reading Language Art teachers. Therefore, the findings might not be relevant to other middle school teachers' perceptions of multimodal texts.

Another limitation to consider is that not all teachers might be comfortable using and navigating digital platforms and resources. One's comfort level in using technology in the classroom can influence the usage or lack of multimodal texts. For example, some teachers might

be hesitant to implement multimodal texts as they associate them with technology. Teachers who are confident in using new technologies tend to be less reluctant to incorporate new literacies in the classroom.

An additional limitation is that I am an administrator at the campus where the participants were recruited. The ethical considerations associated were the potential power imbalance between the administrator and the participant. First, there could have been biases in the responses the participants were willing to share. It could also have been possible that participants felt the need to respond in positive manner or pressured into participating in the study. To avoid having biases or a potential power imbalance, the researcher was not the designated administrator for the participants during the duration of the data collection.

It is essential to explore the knowledge gap between theories of multimodality and multiliteracies and the teachers' perceptions. Teachers' knowledge of multimodal texts affect their implementation in the classroom. Unfortunately, there is little to no literature that presents teachers' perceptions on teaching new literacies. Current research on multimodal practices is on a small scale, case-based, or ethnographic; however, the analysis on the impact on teaching and learning is limited (Jewitt, 2008). Perhaps one factor can be the rapidly changing technologies and the shift in literacy practices.

Definitions of Terms

This section highlights and provides explanations for some of the terms used throughout this study.

Digital learner focuses on learners and the possibilities of using digital technologies as part of his/her daily life; highlights the complexities of learner's technology experiences; and

adopts a socio-cultural, anthropological, communicational, and pedagogical approach from the learners' perspectives (Gallardo-Echenique et al., 2015).

English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) apply to all grade levels and all subject areas. They are designed to outline language proficiency level and student expectations for English Language Learners and are required by Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 74.4 (TEA, 2023).

Emergent bilinguals refers to English learners who are in the process of acquiring English and who have another language as their primary language. This is an updated term to English Language Learner as it values the funds of knowledge and language competencies students have while learning another language (Garcia et al., 2008).

Literacy is generally referred to reading and writing effectively in various contexts (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013).

Middle school teachers are teachers who teach Grades 6, 7, and 8.

Multiliteracies include multiple ways of communicating and making meaning through modes such as visual, audio, spatial, behavioral, and gestural (New London Group, 1996; Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013).

Multimodal literacy refers to a concept of literacy as being multimodal rather than language dominant, and it is made of multiple literacies and multiple literacy practices that continuously change as a local and global society, culture, and technology change the contexts in which literacy is practiced (Bull & Anstey, 2018).

Multimodal texts present information through various modes, including visual images, design elements, written language, and other semiotic resources. Multimodality refers to making meaning through two or more semiotic systems (Bull & Anstey, 2018; Serafini, 2012).

Multipedagogies include the variety of people and things that teach and all the places, digital and analog where teaching and learning happen (Holmes, 2017, p. 134).

Pedagogy is defined as the relationship between teaching and learning that creates the potential for building learning conditions leading to a full and equitable social participation (New London Group, 1996).

Texas Education Agency (TEA) is the state agency that oversees primary and secondary public education. (TEA, 2023).

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are the state standards for what students should know and be able to do (TEA, 2023).

The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) is the Texas student testing program for Grades 3 through 12. The assessments are based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, which are the state curriculum standards (TEA, 2022).

Twenty-first-century learner: A learner with access to technology who can read and write printed text, but can consume and produce a variety of texts across traditional and new technologies. This learner also needs to be proficient in 21st century technologies (Serafini, 2012).

Twenty-first-century literacy refers to multimodal texts available online though not necessarily through the print medium and includes the use of technology to gather, interpret, and communicate information. It also has digital multimodal experiences where the combination of sounds, images, and text all contribute to meaning making (Boche & Henning, 2015; Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013).

Reading Language Arts is a class that covers the subjects of reading, spelling, literature, and composition.

Semiotic systems are systems of signs and symbols with agreed-upon meanings within a particular group (Bull & Anstey, 2018).

The explanation of these terms can help improve the understanding of this study.

Summary

Literacy in the 21st century has created a need for different pedagogical approaches. Years ago, when asked to consider the term "literacy," educators thought of reading and writing. Now, literacy embodies multimodal texts, technology, nontraditional literacy skills, and multiliteracies. However, as technology continues to advance, it will continue to bring changes to the term *literacy*. Educators must also look for ways to embrace these changes while thinking of incorporating them in the classroom as the "pedagogic understanding of students' mediascapes demands the adoption of strategies for engaging with the literacy worlds of students and their interest and desires" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 261). In addition, students need exposure to a variety of literacies that include in-school and out-of-school practices that they can connect with.

Teacher perspectives of multimodal texts and their implementation are influential to students' literacy development. Teachers' knowledge of multimodal texts can be imperative to facilitating such implementation in the classroom. Understanding teacher perspectives on multimodal texts and their implementation can also help shape the curriculum content for their campus or district. Districts want educators to engage students in various literacies in the classroom; a good starting point would be to have them become familiar with multimodal texts. Teachers can benefit from learning how to incorporate them into the school to be beneficial for students. District and administration personnel can also benefit from learning what support systems are necessary for educators as they implement multiliteracies in the classroom.

Moving forward, educational policies, curriculum, and educators need to place students as active participants in the classroom. The most conducive learning contexts "require a better understanding of how to design instruction that builds on, and consolidates, what we know about literacy practices, disciplinary learning, digital tools and technologies, student agency, and connected learning" (Coiro et al., 2017, p. 130). Studying teachers' perspectives about literacy development through multimodal texts can have an impact on districts' curriculum. It can help identify needs and strengths that can be addressed. Middle school Reading Language Arts teachers have an opportunity to engage and build on students' literacy development through multimodal texts. It also provides students with an active role in their learning. Proper implementation of multimodal literacy in the school can help students develop higher order thinking.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literacy instruction has seen pedagogical shifts, more so in the time of COVID-19.

Learning expanded to digital spaces that required new skills. Literacy extended to multimodal

texts that included visual, audio, and technological elements that help create meaning. This shift

in literacy skills created a divide between the literacies taught in the classroom and those needed

for 21st century learners. Educators face the task of rethinking how to engage students in literacy

practices needed for new digital spaces. The rapid changes in technology have created a need for

teachers' curriculum and pedagogy to change. This technological growth has affected student

learning and development as educators are now teaching a new generation of students. Educators

can no longer assume that students learn using the same techniques that worked years ago.

Instead, educators need to move on from old practices and explore new forms of text and

teaching (Alvermann, 2011). The growing diversity of societies worldwide coupled with fast-

growing technologies require educators to become familiar with various literacies.

Pedagogical challenges occur with the "rapidly changing social, cultural, economic and

technological conditions that exist in contemporary society" (Yelland et al., 2008, p.197). The

worldwide pandemic of COVID-19 altered the way students received academic instruction,

especially in literacy. During the 2020-2021 school year, many districts across Texas began and

ended the year with digital learning. Educators had to adapt to literacy practices that engaged

students who were learning from home during the pandemic. Changes in teaching, curriculum, and pedagogy were necessary to meet the needs of a diverse student population, learning either synchronously or asynchronously. Students need 21st century skills to read, and such reading requires digital tools to enhance learning, thinking, and knowledge (Gee, 2012).

Literacy in the 21st century involves using technology to problem-solve, collaborate, and present information. Learning technological skills needs to occur for literacy skills to be developed. Educators will need to teach literacy through different modes, including technology. Technology integration is not only expected but also required in today's classrooms. Multiple literacies "are necessitated if students are to access and use the information communicated via texts in both digital and print-based formats" (Si et al., 2022). The use of technology resources and out-of-school practices connected to the curriculum can enhance students' in-school literacy engagement and development.

Context

Due to the technological advances of the 21st century, literacy and the acquisition of literacy skills requires more than reading and writing (Si et al., 2022). Defining what it means to be literate in the 21st century as well as defining multimodal texts is an important part of defining literacy in the 21st century.

Defining Literacy in the 21st Century

Literacy is a term that continues to evolve as we interact with the world around us. Literacy definitions "depend on emerging technology tools which require different ways of conceiving and communicating meaning presented in multiple media and modality forms as part of literacy" (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013, p. 63). Literacy in the 21st century includes using technology to gather, interpret, and communicate information. This became more apparent

during the COVID -19 pandemic of 2020 when schools suddenly shifted to virtual instruction. Technology integration in education has required students to be digitally literate. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the use of multimodal literacies. Si et al. (2022) described multimodal literacies "which are digital or visual forms of texts, in remote or virtual learning setting" (p. 276). Twenty first century learners need skills in information literacy, multiliteracies, new literacies and digital literacies (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013). As new technologies emerge, it creates new forms of social relationships that produce new languages. This means people "need to learn and become literate in different forms of languages in different contexts" (Sang, 2017, p. 17).

Defining Multimodal Texts

A multimodal text consists of the combination of two or more semiotic systems. Bull and Anstey (2018) described the five semiotic systems as linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial. The authors also stated that the five semiotic systems are the significant sources "that will be drawn upon when producing or consuming a multimodal text" (Bull & Anstey, 2018, p. 88). Some examples of multimodal texts are a webpage and a live ballet performance. A webpage combines the features of sound effects, oral language, written language, music, and images. The main elements of a live ballet performance are gesture, music, and space. Multimodal texts can be presented to students via different media or technologies. Some examples can include live, paper, or digital electronic, and provide a powerful learning opportunity to diverse learners.

Multimodal texts can consist of visual images and design elements accompanied by printed text. Readers are used to interacting with print-based texts that share multimodal features such as picture books, magazines, newspapers, and informational texts. There are also digitally

based texts such as hyperlinks, video games, music, sound effects, and graphic designs (Serafini, 2012). Multimodal aspects are around us in social and digital environments such as blogs, social media networks like Facebook and Twitter. There are also other forms of multimodality in text messages, email messages, and web pages. Students are already interacting with multimodal texts; it is now time for educators to use them for learning opportunities in the classroom.

Being literate in "a variety of multimodal contexts (oral, aural, linguistic, visual and kinesthetic) with both printed and digital resources are essential to being able to function effectively in contemporary societies" (Yelland, 2018, p. 849). Educators can engage students in literacies relevant to the present time by teaching students with multimodal texts. Concepts and skills need to be delivered to students in comprehensible ways to help students read and comprehend texts and to view literacy beyond traditional means alone. The change to virtual instruction with the diverse classroom creates a need for teachers to consider how to integrate multimodal literacies in their instruction with the focus on how it benefits all learners (Si et al., 2022).

Multiliteracies in the 21st Century

Literacy instruction today is more than print-based mediums; it now includes integrating technology and other forms of texts used (Boche & Henning, 2015). Students are required to be literate in multiple ways in today's classrooms. A literate person in today's society possesses many literacies that range from reading online newspapers to participating in virtual classrooms (Callow & Zammit, 2012). As a result, literacy has shifted from printed texts to multiliteracies. The New London Group first introduced the term *multiliteracies* in 1996. The term consists of texts that provide students with multimodal experiences by combining sounds, texts, and images that help readers make meaning. Multiliteracies meant literacy is no longer restricted to printed

and written texts but rather multiple modes of representation (New London Group, 1996).

Multimodal literacies "generally include print-based texts as well as visual literacies, technology-based digital literacies, and other formats of literacies (Si et al., 2022, p. 290). These types of texts can assist educators in differentiating instruction and meeting the needs of all learners. In addition, it provides an opportunity for educators to reach visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and reading/writing learners. Multimodal texts can be practical tools in enhancing knowledge in the 21st century. They can also provide the students with a variety of learning opportunities. For students to excel in 21st century literacy, we need to "equip students with literacy skills so that they can fully participate in social and cultural activities in the modern world" (Sang, 2017, p. 16).

The use of multiliteracies in the classroom can help prepare students to be 21st century learners. In turn, educators also need to understand the literacy skills necessary to comprehend texts or media that use various modes of presentation. The New London Group first introduced the term multimodality to describe a "more contemporary view of literacy that reflected multiple communication forms and a context of cultural and linguistic diversity within a globalized society" (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013, p. 62). This means multiple modes of communication are possible and depend on the reader. Therefore, multimodal texts will require readers to navigate multiple modes and design elements. Definitions of literacy are evolving, and digital technologies are becoming more ever-present, contributing to how children make meaning and communicate their understandings about the world (Yelland, 2018).

Possibilities of Using Multimodal Texts

As the growth of distance and online learning continues, educators need new literacy practices and instructional approaches to support students and the challenges of multimodal texts

and digital environments. Educators must know to face the task of bridging the print-based literacies of the past with the multimodal and digital texts of the 21st century (Serafini, 2012). Multimodal literacies "generally include print-based texts as well as visual literacies, technology-based digital literacies, and other formats of literacies" (Si et al., 2022, p. 290). Printed text continues to be part of the classroom environment, but educators see the addition of image representations such as graphs, charts, and icons. Multimodal texts require readers to make sense of the visual design, graphics elements, and written language. A suggestion made by Anstey and Bull (2010) is for educators to expand their knowledge and understanding about reading and writing multimodal texts presented in different ways such as paper, live, and digital electronics. Understanding the design of the multimodal texts supports effective classroom use. Additionally, understanding the text's purpose, audience, and method of communication is vital to achieving the desired outcome with students.

Comic Books. For example, Clever (2008) provided comic books to reach reluctant readers. Motivating students to read has become a familiar issue educators face in classrooms. Comics are examples of multimodal texts that can benefit reluctant readers. The images, print, design, and dialogue presented in a comic engage students in literacy concepts in a meaningful way. Comic books provide a learning opportunity in the classroom where traditional texts are not working. The students used a visual and text information to reinforce their grammar and spelling while making connections to media literacy. Comic books are not a common approach used in many classrooms, yet they may be a great teaching tool. Additionally, the use of visual literacy skills is beneficial for meeting the needs of diverse students. Images also allow students to make connections, inferences, and predictions about stories based on the visuals presented. Students

can benefit from these texts as it enables them to participate while lessening the pressure of understanding written text.

Graphic Novels. Hammond (2012) presented a similar use of multimodal text in the study of *American Born Chinese*, a graphic novel by Gene Luen Yang. This multimodal text merged art and text, print literacy, and visual literacy, resulting in multimodal literacy experience. Literacy includes the ability to navigate the world of images and texts. The literacy needed to understand graphic novels is necessary for success in the multimedia world. Hammond (2012) stated that the skills utilized during reading in the comic format "transfer to other multimodal forms including television and film, the Internet, and video games" (p. 25). Students have experience with these types of multimodal forms. It also provides an opportunity for educators to engage students in situated practice as students are able to share their knowledge and skills in that are meaningful to them. Educators need to reach 21st century students, and we can achieve that using multimodal literacy practices. Comic books provide a multimodal experience for the student and engage them in appealing literacy practices.

Serafini (2012) concurred that graphic novels and comics are multimodal texts that rely on graphic design and visual images to tell a story. This genre requires the reader to understand the graphical images for comprehending the story. Readers need strategies to interpret visual images and design elements to make sense of written language. Multimodal texts and visual images will continue to expand in the future. Therefore, "teachers need to embrace these changes and find ways to incorporate the multimodal texts readers encounter outside of school into their classrooms and pedagogical repertoires" (Serafini, 2012, p.30). In addition, educators can benefit from connecting in-school and out-of-school literacy practices.

Writing. In writing, students can produce a multimodal text. The writer can provide the reader with emotions through sound, gesture, facial expression, and descriptive words. This is also important for diverse learners such as emergent bilinguals as semiotic systems, such as the written word, are a social and cultural construct. Semiotic systems change and have different meanings for social and cultural groups (Bull & Anstey, 2018). Writing also provides students with an opportunity to take control of their learning. This was the case in the study conducted by Mills and Unsworth (2018) as the teacher incorporated the use of animations for learning a multimodal language of emotions. A recommendation is for teachers to use animations to "gain richer understandings of the interpersonal metafiction of written and spoken texts" (p. 618). An out-of-school literacy practice such as animations can help adolescences explore the multimodal power of animations to express feelings and emotions.

Visual Concepts. Hughes and Tolley (2010) explored the use of visual essays. Students were encouraged not only to use words, but also to express themselves multimodally by using words, images, and sounds. Students utilized digital media to construct a persuasive essay that allowed them to produce a product for a wider audience (parents, family, school, or globally through YouTube). Students were able to select the words, pictures, and/or lyrics that would justify their argument with their audience. This provided the authors with an insight into how educators can immerse new media and students' writing. It provides students with a voice to the things they are important to them and a new way to engage in the writing process.

McLean and Roswell (2015) examined high school students writing composition practices in multimodal instructional environments. Using a visual concept like photography, students make connections about their knowledge using multiple modes, print/written texts, visuals/images, and diverse experiences to compose their own visual and photographic

representations. Wiseman et al. (2016) explored a similar study in a third-grade classroom that integrated photography, art, drama, and writing in RLA instruction. The students explored and expanded on various ways of knowing by engaging with different modalities. Both studies implemented visual literacy to integrate writing and produce student centered products. In both cases, the pedagogical strategies included various modalities aimed at encouraging diverse and creative ways of knowing.

Music. In a traditional classroom, assignments are written or oral; however, educators must consider new ways of allowing students to respond. For example, Meacham et al. (2019) suggested that hip-hop literacy could provide students with multiple skills including rap, visual art, music production, dance, fashion, marketing, and knowledge. Hip-hop reading and writing in the early childhood classroom provided a multimodal way of utilizing literacy practices that connect to students' home lives. In addition, students were able to use their background knowledge as the assignment was culturally relevant to them. The music was familiar to students and gave them cultural recognition. This is beneficial for students as it connects to their lives. Therefore, we should encourage students to draw from their culture, language, and background. If we want to offer students an adequate education, we need to recognize who the students are, the different practices and histories they bring (Garcia, 2017). Additionally, students have different cultures and backgrounds that can contribute to classroom lessons. By bringing multimodal texts into the classrooms, we can build strong literacy foundations for all students.

Multimodal texts like films have soundtracks that combine dialogue, music, and sound effects. The audio significantly influences the audience as it can add realism and interest (Bull & Anstey, 2018). The music created the mood and interest for the film, which added to the emotional quality. Soundtracks for movies such as *The Shining (1980), Dirty Dancing (1987),*

and *Footloose (1984*) ranked amongst the most famous of all times for giving the audience an enhanced movie experience through music. For example, the movie *Star Wars (1977)* was first presented to the audience without music and sound effects. The audience was not receptive to the film until the music and sound effects were later added; providing enhanced engagement and emotion (Bull & Anstey, 2018).

Digital Games and Libraries

To enhance students' learning experiences, we need to look beyond our curriculum technology integration. We are leading a new generation of students and educators need to look into out-of-school practices to incorporate in the digital classroom. The digital learning experiences of students can be enhanced with technology with digital games and libraries. For example, Gee (2012) stated that video games develop problem-solving skills, language, and strategic thinking. This form of multimodal text combines moving and still images, sounds, icons, and symbols. It can engage a student in learning, and the students develop an understanding of multimodal elements and their meaning. Moreover, Gee (2012) identified games as digital invitations to rich social interactions. Alvermann (2015) shared the same thoughts as Gee regarding games serving in formal and informal environments. Games can provide a new way to create stories, connect content knowledge, problem solve, and creative thinking; most importantly, they offer the students an active role in their learning.

More recently, Holmes (2017) explored this out-of-school literacy practice through his case study on the video game *Dota 2*. This videogame is an example of a multipedagogies approach in teaching and learning. It provides an opportunity for learners to design meaningful learning of their own. In this game, different leaners/players in different sites teach each other how to navigate the game. The modules are designed to teach "through a scaffolded instruction

with overt showing and telling, reinforcement, and a ramping up of difficulty, while reducing direct instruction toward practical application" (Holmes, 2017, p. 140). Similar to how a student learns in school but through an out-of-school practice. It also provides various forms of teaching to players through problem solving interactions. It is an opportunity for people to create objects or actions that others can redesign to make them meaningful for them. It also provides others with the ability to design and redesign the game for themselves.

Valuing students' roles in learning is crucial as many students are not engaged or motivated sitting in front of a computer for six hours. Educators need different ways to engage students in classroom instruction while providing the required skills stated in the curriculum. The use of games in a digital platform is a perfect way to maintain student engagement while assessing the student's knowledge of skills. It also provides a fun learning method for students to interact with new skills learned. For example, games in digital platforms such as Kahoot, Nearpod, Study Island, and Booklet have provided students with digital learning experiences to assess concepts and retain student engagement. Additionally, digital games provide educators with a way to help students find meaning in activities as students bring their funds of knowledge from their homes and communities to develop skills in the classrooms.

Instruction with Multimodal Texts

Most readers understand the text structure of particular genres or literary forms. For example, children have an idea of linear chronology and plot development as both literacy conventions taught in school (Hammond, 2012). Children learn that in fairy tales, the story begins with "once upon a time" and ends with "and they lived happily ever after." Multimodal texts have verbal and visual elements, among other literacy conventions that need to be taught. For example, students with different cultural backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge might

not know genre conventions. As Callow and Zammit (2012) stated "for some students from low socioeconomic (SES) backgrounds, access to these multiple literacies can be limited" (p.70). Yelland (2018) concurs as he stated that children from low socio-economic areas "this conceptualization of literacy is particularly problematic. These are the students who tend to perform at lower levels in standardized tests and thus deemed to be at risk" (p. 849). Multimodal texts are presented in a non-linear fashion, unlike traditional written texts, which are presented sequentially. In fact, "nonlinear structures, hypertext, visual images, and multimodal composition structures need to be navigated by readers if they are to be successful in today's educational settings" (Serafini, 2012, p. 28).

Yelland (2018) stated that "becoming literate in a variety of multimodal contexts (oral, aural, linguistic, visual and kinesthetic) with both printed and digital resources are essential to being able to function effectively in contemporary societies" (p. 849). Multimodal literacy adds to the complexity of online learning and requires readers to know how to acquire and comprehend information. For example, online reading tasks are different from offline tasks. Students encounter text features such as hyperlinks, text to speech, embedded glossaries, and interactive questions that affect online reading tasks. For students to be successful in online tasks, "teachers must address the students' ability to read nonlinear text in an online environment" (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013, p. 66). The new technologies and the production of multimodal texts call for high levels of decision-making, cognition, planning, and metacognition. The teaching process must include the modeling and teaching of these thinking processes and developing skills and strategies (Bull & Anstey, 2018). This can benefit students with various learning styles, and it can be beneficial to meeting the needs of students. The challenge is not

only to include multimodal texts in classroom practices and pedagogies, but also to use them appropriately in developing students' literacy skills.

Secondary Teachers Perspectives and Integration of Multimodal Texts

Understanding teachers' perspectives and integrating multimodal texts is essential in understanding students' literacy development. Literacy skills can only be developed if educators understand new literacy practices and how to use them to influence student learning. Understanding teachers' perspectives and integration of multimodal texts is an important contribution to designing an effective curriculum for educators. Unfortunately, there is limited research on teachers' perspectives of multimodal texts. Si et al. (2022) reviewed empirical research on multimodal literacies in K-12 instructional practices from 2000-2020. A total of 34 research studies were the data sources to indicate that visual and digital literacies are more dispersed in secondary grades with visual literacies being emphasized in the elementary grades.

One of the studies reviewed by Si et al (2022) was the study conducted by Boche and Henning (2012). In this study, the researchers explored one teacher's use and scaffolding of a multimodal curriculum in their study. Teaching using multimodality to scaffold and learn literacy helps students leave classrooms knowing how to analyze and use multiple modes. The goal was to have students find and use multimodalities on their own to increase their understanding of the text without teacher support. Using film, optical illusions, graphics, and other technological and multimodal resources, students realized meaning occurs in multiple places and modes. Through the interaction of print-based and digital literacies, students understood the substance at a deeper level. Students would have achieved the basic comprehension, but multimodality helped extend to a higher level of knowing and thinking. As

such, multimodality "is more than just a hook or add-on. It becomes a viable, and perhaps essential, option for literacy instruction" (Boche & Henning, 2012, p. 588).

Mills and Unsworth (2018) explored the digital literacies through digital projects with students in sixth and seventh grades. Expressing emotions through animations is a way adolescents express language. It is also a literacy practice that is being explored since animations "play an important role in popular visual culture, alongside comics, fanfiction, manga, graphic novels, and video games" (Mills & Unsworth, 2018, p. 610). In an effort to improve literacy comprehension and emotional language, teachers provided iPads to sixth and seventh graders to create animated characters. The aim was for the culturally and linguistically diverse students to develop a multimodal language for the expression of emotions.

Ryu and Boggs' (2016) explored how Korean secondary English teachers understood 21st century literacies and multimodal compositions in the writing classrooms. Teachers in this study expressed positive attitudes toward teaching multimodal composition, and they agreed that multimodal composition engaged students in writing using different semiotic resources. Also, teachers reported how such instruction may motivate students through the prewriting and writing stages by evoking a deeper understanding of the content taught. Additionally, the multimodal composition allows students to express themselves using diverse modes other than language. For example, students depend on visual modes, like drawings and photos, for different ways of expressing their understanding of texts. In this study, "teachers had more positive perceptions toward multimodal composition because they believed that it facilitated effective communication by allowing learners to use all available resources to convey messages" (Ryu & Boggs, 2016, p. 58).

Yi and Choi (2015) explored teachers views on multimodal practices in K-12 classrooms. Their study found that teachers associated multimodality with digital technologies. Teachers described multimodal practices "as stimulating, motivating, appealing, and grabbing students' attention, especially when they present learning materials to students multimodally" (p. 842). Teachers also perceived multimodal practices as beneficial to emergent bilingual students as it provides them an opportunity to express themselves using multiple modes. Teachers in this study did express concern with lack of preparation time to teach multimodal practices. Another concern was the pressure of helping students pass standardized test that were mostly print-based.

As educators become more aware of multimodal texts and their potential use in the classroom, it will be essential to study teachers' perceptions of the texts. As Farias and Veliz (2019) indicated, educators admitted to being aware of multimodality in the standards but accepted only occasional use of multimodal texts in the classroom. One factor to consider could be the feeling of being constrained by mandated curriculum and/or preparation for standardized assessments. Yelland (2018) shared that teachers recognize digital experiences and the need to be literate in the 21st century, yet the focus is on print literacy contexts and application of skills. Thus, more research is needed to understand how teachers' perspectives affect their pedagogical practices. Teachers' perspectives can also help identify areas of support and changes needed to assist teachers in the application of multimodal texts in the classroom.

Challenges of Using Multimodal Texts

Educators can benefit from professional development in current concepts about literacy, definitions of literacy, and pedagogy related to 21st century skills. For example, some educators might associate multimodal texts with technology and might be reluctant to incorporate them in classrooms. Hutchinson and Reinking (2011) reported that teachers had negative perceptions

towards technology. Educators need to remember that we need to change our teaching style to meet the needs of our current students. Students' literacies today are different from those of their parents or even ten years ago (Pilgrim & Martinez, 2013). Educators need to continue to integrate technology into their instruction and become familiar with ways to incorporate literacy through technology and multimodal texts. Educators should look at technology as a resource for promoting student learning (Boche & Henning, 2015). Most importantly, the emphasis on learning through technology has increased in the classroom. Educators are expected to continue to use technology as a tool for learning in the classroom. This has become more evident after the return to the classroom from the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the most critical things in implementing multimodal texts in the classroom is to ensure that the school has a digital resource for literacy development and multimodal texts. Resources such as smart boards, computers, digital platforms, and professional development are needed to implement a school wide approach to multiliteracies. Schools must have a system in place to assist teachers in developing a consistent approach to teaching with multimodal texts. For example, textbooks should come with the digital component for students to be able to access. This allows teachers to teach students how to utilize the online tools and resources available to them. This can help all grade levels reinforce the same terminology used to talk about texts and their understandings (Anstey & Bull, 2010). This would require a school-wide effort and buy-in from school personnel. School administrators need to start with teachers' understandings that every literate practice in the classroom shapes students' readiness for the 21st century. Administrators will also need to support teachers who might need additional assistance or mentoring in teaching with multimodal texts.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the central office staff, campus administrators, and teachers were compelled to adapt and become digital converts overnight. There was no choice but to learn how to attend and host a Zoom meeting instantly, utilize PowerPoint Presentations to deliver instruction, assess online, manage a class online, and conduct teacher walkthroughs virtually. Students and parents learned to submit assignments and showed students' work using photos or emails. Some districts already had a technology component to their curriculum, but the pandemic revealed a greater more urgent need. Thus, further research is needed to understand teachers' perspectives of multimodal texts and their understanding and preparation to teach them in the classroom.

For example, Ajayi (2011) examined preservice teachers' knowledge of multiliteracies/ multimodality, their perceptions of teaching preparation, and attitudes to teaching the subject in K-12 grades. The preservice teachers acknowledged new literacy forms, but they were concerned with their preparation to teach them. Additionally, teachers identified the challenge of the traditional literacy curriculum. The new curriculum needs to be designed for digital teaching and learning to occur. We have moved on from technology integration to learning through technology. Support from district personnel is essential to the implementation of curriculum and resources. Educational leaders need to examine the preservice education for future educators and those in the academic field. Ajayi (2011) agreed,

> New London Group argued that the role of teacher education is to prepare preservice
> teachers who perceive literacy pedagogy as a tool for creating possibilities of learning
> conditions that enable all students to participate fully, effectively, and equitably in
> learning and social activities in and outside the classroom. (p. 12)

The challenge of preparing the future generation of educators in multiliteracies pedagogy starts in teacher preparation programs. For in-service teachers, their perceptions about multimodal texts and the identification of areas of supports can be one of the next steps moving forward.

Theoretical Framework

The New London Group suggested the term *multiliteracies* designate "a conception of literacy that creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (New London Group, 1996, p. 64). The New London Group (1996) attempted to enhance the definition of literacy to include the new practices in people's working, public, and private lives. This would mean a shift from monoculturalism and monolingualism to an appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity. Literacy instruction should reflect such changes so that "literacies and literate practices are shaped by society, and society shapes literacies" (Bull & Anstey, 2018, p. 6). As Sang (2017) stated, "people need to learn and become literate in different forms of languages in different contexts" (p. 17).

Multiliteracies includes multiple ways of communicating and making meaning through linguistic, visual, spatial, audio, and gestural modes (New London Group, 1996). This includes conveying sense through various texts such as books, labels, television, music, and film. Additionally, multimodal forms of information range from visual and audio communication presented through photos, print, videos, or graphs. In multiliteracies, literacy is not just restricted to print and written forms, but rather it seeks to include those culturally and linguistically diverse communities. A multiliteracy pedagogy as seen in Figure 1 consists of four segments: (a) situated practice; (b) overt instruction; (c) critical framing; and (d) transformed practice (New London Group, 1996).

Situated Practice	Overt Instruction
Drawing on the experience of meaning-making in lifeworlds	Developing an explicit metalanguage of vocabulary for discussing elements of design
Multiliteracies Pedagogy	
Transformed Practice	Critical Framing
Students, as meaning-makers, become designers of their social futures	Interpreting the social contexts and purposes of designs of meaning

Note. Source The New London Group, 1996; Serafini & Gee, 2017

Figure 1. Multiliteracies Pedagogy

Situated practice consists of meaningful practices from a community of learners from different roles, backgrounds, and experiences. This allows learning from a discussion, collaboration, and practical application from authentic situations. Through situated practice, educators promote student interaction and sharing of ideas. As Sang (2017) asserted, "Literacy is situated because literacy practices are different in different contexts" (p. 17). Literacy is a situated practice because students can develop their knowledge by collaborating with others while connecting to their prior knowledge.

Students must participate in situated practice; however, explicit instruction is still needed for understanding and creating meaning with various modes. Overt instruction allows the teacher to scaffold learning and encourages knowledge by providing guidance and other resources. For example, it is essential to build background knowledge when introducing a new unit to students. By providing a video, article, or website on the new unit, the teacher can introduce the skill or

concept, develop the metalanguage (language or terms to describe language) and then monitor student progress through the stages of learning. Via such designs, students then "develop the metalanguage that describes both the "what" of literacy pedagogy (Design processes and Design elements) and the scaffolds that constitute the "how" of learning (Situated Practice, Overt Instruction, Critical Framing, Transformed Practice)" (New London Group, 1996, p. 86).

Critical framing requires students to analyze information in an unfamiliar context to check for understanding. Learners must develop the skills needed to question, evaluate, and re-evaluate their knowledge based on new information or ideas. This is where students can construct their meaning, for through:

> critical framing, learners can gain the necessary personal and theoretical distance from what they have learned, constructively critique it, account for its cultural location, creatively extend and apply it, and eventually innovate on their own, within old communities and in new ones. (New London Group, 1996, p. 86)

The critical framing component of multiliteracies allows students to think about the text and consider the message, who the intended audience is and what the outcome can be. It provides the learner with the ability to relate meanings to their social and cultural context.

In transformed practice, the learner can engage in reflective practice by applying the learned knowledge in another context (Sang, 2017). The knowledge from situated practice, overt instruction, and critical framing transform meaning to other contexts or cultural sites (New London Group, 1996). Using the four components of multiliteracies pedagogy, teachers can prepare students for the 21st century. Students need tools that will help them make meaning of multimodal texts as the "pedagogic aim of multiliteracies is to attend to the multiple and

multimodal texts and wide range of literacy practices that students are engaged with" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 245).

With fast-changing technologies and notions of literacies, students need to be exposed to tools that will facilitate the engagements with multimodal texts. The New London Group addressed the nature of teaching and learning in a digital world, which also introduced the concept of multipedagogies. Multipedagogies is "open to all kinds of places where teaching can happen, and all kinds of people who engage in teaching, and they can even empower learners to design their own learning pathways" (Holmes, 2017, p. 134). Teaching in the 21st century includes multiple methods and media, in and out of school, that accounts for the cultural diversity of students' backgrounds. Multipedagogies might include traditional ways of teaching, but it also takes into account the diverse forms and styles of teaching. This is key to teaching in today's classrooms as students come from diverse backgrounds.

Teachers' perspectives about teaching and learning in the 21st century can range from different people in traditional school settings, to parents, coaches and students who engage as designers of their own learning. Multipedagogies may "help stress the many opportunities that teachers have to incorporate and curate good teaching moments, whether they are the ones they design themselves or those offered by others outside of the school institution" (Holmes, 2017, p. 144). This provides an opportunity for students to also be teachers and take an active role in their learning. The school's role is to enable people to come together to form and inform civic discourse while allowing people to maintain their own identity. Multipedagogies provides an opportunity to connect in and out of school learning in a way that is meaningful for students.

Summary

As we move forward with digital learning, changes in literacy education will continue. We can no longer teach students with the same skills from years ago. Instead, today's learners have greater access to multimodal resources that ought to be incorporated into classroom instruction. As educators continue to provide virtual education, this statement proves the need to expand on literacy skills. There is a need to "move forward and redesign the pedagogy of our changing times" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, p. 16). Most districts have now developed a technology integration component for their district curriculum. This seems to be in response to the need for virtual instruction and the continued use of technology integration in classrooms. Meeting the needs of diverse students will need to move beyond the curriculum educators once implemented.

It is no longer a matter of technology integration to meet students' needs; it is now learning through technology. Educators' role moving forward is to utilize technology to engage students in reading, writing, and digital technologies representative of students' worlds (Hughes & Tolley, 2010). Connecting the outside world with lessons in the classroom can inspire students to apply what their learning to real-world situations. New literacy practices center students who are "no longer recipients of information, but rather designers of knowledge" (Kim et al., 2021, p. 11). Educators must now meet the needs of students by changing their pedagogical practices. A multimodal approach to teaching and learning "affords students the use of and access to a range of literacies, texts, and modes to support their reading and writing comprehension, critical thinking, and expression both in and out of school" (McLean & Rosswell, 2015, p. 105). It is with this in mind that this study seeks to answer what are middle

school teachers' perspectives on the use of multimodal texts, how are the students literacies developing, and what supports are still needed in the implementation of texts.

With the technological changes of the 21st century, the acquisition of literacy skills in today's society requires more than reading and writing. Teachers need support in "how to best integrate classroom instructional approaches with multimodal literacies (Si et al., 2022, p. 276)

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley. The focus of this study is on middle school teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts and their implementation to develop students' literacy skills. This chapter focuses on an overview of the research design, research questions, population, data collection and analysis, limitations, and summary.

Purpose of Study

This study explored teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley. Due to the rapid changing technologies, literacy instruction in the classroom has seen significant changes. By exploring teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts and their implementation to develop students' literacy, it can provide an understanding of what support is needed for teachers in developing 21st century skills. It can also assist curriculum writers, district leaders and campus administrators in determining the necessary support systems to assist teachers in the implementation of multimodal texts and literacy development.

Research Questions

This study explored middle school teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley. Teachers' perspectives on multimodal literacy are critical because depending on their years of experience, it could

significantly affect the implementation of multimodal texts in the classrooms. Teachers'

perspectives, either positive or negative, can have an effect on their instruction. Secondly, the

teachers' perspective on the students' literacy development using multimodal texts helped

understand how teachers incorporate multimodal texts to develop students' literacy skills. It also

allows campus and district leaders to determine future support systems for teachers to implement

multimodal texts.

Callow and Zammit (2012) expressed that multimodal texts present the challenge of

using appropriate pedagogy and classroom practices to develop students' literacy skills.

Multimodal texts have been available for a while, but there is now an effort to understand how

teachers' perspectives and implementation of such modes affects literacy instruction.

Multiliteracies include "multiple modes of representation in diverse cultural contexts and in

various languages that are important in people's lives" (Sang, 2017, p. 19). The diverse

demographics of a classroom require a look at teacher's literacy practices and literacy

development. As a result, teachers need to incorporate literacies that benefit all learners using a

range of pedagogies (Yelland, 2018). This study explored middle school teachers' perspectives

of multimodal texts in Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley. The

research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What are middle school teachers' perspectives regarding the use of multimodal texts in
   the Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley?

2. How do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley perceive that their students'
   literacies are developing through the use of multimodal texts?

3. What do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley need to be supported to use
   multimodal texts?

Teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts and students literacy development can help understand the literacy practices needed for 21st century students.

Research Design

A qualitative research methodology provided an appropriate framework to examine middle school teachers' perspectives. Qualitative research is "the collection, analysis, and interpretation of comprehensive narrative and visual (i.e., non-numeral) data to gain insights into a particular phenomenon of interest" (Mills & Gay, 2018, p. 7). In order to collect data to address the research questions, a comparative case study approach was used. Goodrick (2014) described this approach as a design to generate causal explanations over two or more cases. A comparative case study approach helps understand similarities, differences, and patterns across two or more cases with a common focus or goal. Case study research focuses on a unit of study known as a bounded system for example: individual teachers, a classroom, or a school. Case study binds participants to a context (Johnson & Christensen, 2017).

In this study, the participants were bounded to the context of the school in which they are employed. Through a comparative case study research approach, the study provided new insights into the perspectives of teachers regarding how and why multimodal texts affects student literacy development. Teachers were grouped by years of experience. The cases were divided as follows: one middle school teacher with 0-9 years of experience, two middle school teachers with 10-19 years of experience and one teacher with more than 20 years of experience. As Goodrick (2014) explained, "A comparison within the case and between cases is at the heart of the comparative approach" (p. 6). A comparative case study method helped to understand similarities and differences on teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts based on their years of experience. For example, it helped understand if their years of experience have an influence on teachers'

utilization of multimodal texts. Although participants were from the same campus, they were "diverse participants with diverse experiences and diverse perspectives" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9). Through a comparative case study approach, the researcher was able to understand how teachers' views on multimodal texts play a role in their implementation to develop students' literacy skills.

There is a growing academic interest in questions of literacy, particularly under the digital era (Koltay, 2011). Further research is essential in informing understandings and practice on multiliteracies. It can help understand how the rapid changes to literacy and the digital world impact students' literacy development. This study could allow school leaders to evaluate and determine if changes to the curriculum are needed, how prepared teachers feel to teach multimodally, and how it can help develop literacy skills. It can also provide district curriculum writers insight to teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts. This can help other educators learn how to implement them to develop students' literacy skills. Si et al. (2022) commented that research has been conducted on multiliteracies but few studies examines the classroom instructional approaches in multimodal literacies.

Setting

This study took place at one middle school in the Rio Grande Valley. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), Hidalgo County is home to approximately 880,356 residents. Approximately 92.5% of the population is Hispanic or Latino. About 82.7% speak a language other than English at home. Households with a computer is about 88.4%, while households with a broadband internet subscription is at 72.8%. An estimated 66.9% of the population over 25 years+ is a high school graduate or higher, and 19.3% has Bachelor's degree or higher.

The research took place in regular education RLA classrooms at a middle school located in the Rio Grande Valley. According to the Public Education Information Management System

(PEIMS), the campus is one out of four middle schools in the district. This middle school serves between 900-950 students each school year with a ratio of 12:1. Approximately 98% of the school's student population is Hispanic. The school has 63% of the student population considered at risk of dropping out of school, 85% economically disadvantage, and 44% with limited English proficiency. A student is identified at risk of dropping out of school based on state-defined criteria. Students are identified as economically disadvantaged if they are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The middle school has a population of 76 teachers. The teacher population is 94% Hispanic.

Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Researchers obtain informed consent "by making sure that research participants enter the research of their free will and with an understanding of the nature of the study and any possible dangers that may arise as a result of the participation" (Mills & Gay, 2018, p. 62). In addition, informed consent indicates that the researcher discloses to potential participants all the information necessary for them to make decisions about their participation (Glesne, 2015). I began this study by requesting authorization to conduct research from the school district. Once approval was granted, I asked the campus principal for permission to recruit teachers from the Reading Language Arts department. This department is under my supervision at this campus. Due to my administrative role on campus, I informed participants that they were assigned a different administrator during the data collection process in the fall. In addition, participants were informed that I would only observe them as part of the data collection process and not as their designated administrator.

My next step was to invite Reading Language Arts teachers to volunteer for this study. I explained the research questions, goals of this study, and their role as participants. Participants

who volunteered for this study had a clear understanding of the research questions and the goal for this study. They were informed of the process for data collection and data analysis. I was not the designated administrator for participants who volunteered for study, and I only observed them as part of the data collection process. Participants were informed that data collected will remain confidential and secured on a locked computer that was password protected. In addition, each participant was given a pseudonym. These pseudonyms were in no way be connected to the participants' race, sex, name, or school district. Only the researcher is aware of the participants' identities. I deidentified their data before analyzing it and sharing it with dissertation chair and committee members. Participants also received a letter of informed consent (see Appendix A) explaining that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time without explanation.

Participants

This study consisted of middle school RLA teachers in the Rio Grande Valley. The campus where the study took place has five sixth-grade teachers, five seventh-grade teachers, and six eighth-grade, RLA teachers. Participants were selected from a population of educators who volunteered for this study. The sample size was four middle school teachers whom I obtained from the RLA teacher population on campus. The participants were divided into three different cases: one teacher for the 0-10 years of experience group, two teachers for the 11-20 years of experience group, and one teacher for the 20-plus years of experience. The study aimed to represent a variety of demographics within the campus. For example, a new teacher, veteran teacher, and/or one teacher per grade level were included. In terms of age, teachers ranged from mid-20s to late 50s. This allowed for a comparison of perspectives based on their ages and years in the educational field.

Sampling. The sampling technique used in this study was convenience sampling and purposive sampling. Researchers use convenience sampling "when they include in their sample people who are available or volunteer or can be easily recruited and are willing to participate in the research study" (Johnson & Christensen, 2017, p. 267). Since I am an administrator at the campus where research was conducted, it offers flexibility to both the researcher and participants for data collection. Longhurst (2003) described this method as recruiting on site. Since data for this study was based on interviews and observations of middle school teachers, it is crucial to have close contact with the participants. Having immediate access to participants made the data collection accessible to the researcher. Additionally, because the participants had to meet certain criteria, it was also purposive sampling (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). The characteristics to be part of this study required teachers to be middle school teachers and teach Reading Language Arts. The goal of purposive sampling is to "produce a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population" (Lavrakas, 2008, p. 2).

Case Profiles. Four teachers volunteered to be part of this study and share their experiences and perspectives. The participants had teaching experience that ranged from 0 to 26 plus years. I compared participants by 0-10 years of experience, 11-20 years of experience, and 20-plus years of experience. Two separate interviews were conducted by using seven open-ended questions. The focus of interview one was the teacher's perception of literacy and the second interview focused on multiliteracies. The amount of details in their responses varied based on each participant's perspectives and experiences. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participants.

Case 1: 0-10 Years of Experience. Participant 3, Ms. Jenn, is a Hispanic female who is a first-year teacher. This is her first year teaching sixth grade RLA. At the time of the interviews and classroom observations, this participant shared her experiences after twelve weeks in the

classroom. Her insights into teaching as a new teacher provided opportunities for possible areas of supports for new teachers. She shared her challenges as a new year teacher along with her perspectives for future teacher support.

Case 2: 11-20 Years of Experience. Participant 2, Ms. Nelly, is a Hispanic female who has been teaching for 14 years. She is currently teaching HILD RLA for sixth to eighth grade students. HILD stands for High Intensive Language Development. This class focuses on recent immigrant students who are part of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The teacher's experience in working with a special population of students brings insights and perspectives on teaching literacy in a RLA classroom. It helps identify the role of technology in second language acquisition in literacy skills.

Participant 4, Ms. Delia, is a Hispanic female teacher who has 16 years of teaching experience. She is currently teaching eighth grade RLA. Her experience and perspectives on multimodal texts to develop students' literacy provided great insights into working with adolescent students. She approaches literacy skills using cultural backgrounds and connections with her students. Due to the high emergent bilingual population in the area, this teacher brings her experiences and perspectives on literacy development for at risk students.

Case 3: 20-Plus Years of Experience. Participant 1, Ms. Cee, is a Hispanic female who has been a teacher for more than 25 years. She currently teaches a RLA intervention class to sixth to eighth-grade students identified as dyslexic. Part of her classroom instruction requires utilization of online learning focused on intervention reading and writing skills. Her knowledge and expertise as an RLA teacher provides insight into working with students who need fundamental skills to develop literacy skills in the RLA classroom. Part of her class curriculum consists of online assignments for students, which can help understanding the research on

49

learning through technology. Her experience as a veteran teacher helped illustrate the changes to literacy over the years and how she has adapted to the changes.

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected through two one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each participant (Appendix B). Semi-structured interviews allow interviews to take place in a conversational manner. Through the use of open-ended questions, participants answer questions related to the subject with the flexibility to go in depth on the subject or deviate from the question (Longhurst, 2003). Interviews helped clarify teachers' perceptions of multimodal texts in middle school Reading Language Arts classrooms at different times throughout the year. Semi-structured interviews also allow follow-up how or why questions to clarify or expand on the subject (Adams, 2015). In this case, this enabled the researcher to understand the teachers' perspectives towards multimodal texts and their implementation to develop students' literacy skills. The initial interviews took place after the beginning of the school year. The focus of interview one was to understand teacher's perceptions of literacy. A second interview later in the semester focused on the multiliteracies and the utilization in the classroom. Interviews took place after school or at the teachers' convenience. Before the interviews, I informed the interviewee about confidentiality and asked permission from the participants to audio record the interview to maintain accurate findings. Audio recording also "allows the interviewer to be more actively engaged in the conversation" (Adams, 2015, p. 500).

Another data source was classroom observations. To create an in-depth case study of each participant, I not only interviewed them but also conducted two classroom observations. Participants were informed that there were two observations to be conducted in the fall but were not given specifics dates. The two observations were at different times during the semester and

allowed the researcher to make notes on teachers' utilization of multimodal texts. The purpose of the observation was to corroborate the interviews conducted. It also helped the researcher observe the teachers' implementation of multimodal texts in the classroom to develop students' literacy. Also, it enabled the researcher to make note if there was opportunity to use multimodal texts or if the teacher decided to continue with print. Participants in this study were reminded that they were observed for data collection and not observed as part of administrative role. The following is a sample of a checklist that was utilized during classroom observations.

Table 1

Classroom Observation Checklist

In a multimodal literacy classroom:			Notes
1. Students use, interpret, & produce text using: • Paper or Digital technologies	Y	N	Teacher/student interaction
2. Students know, understand and use individual and combined semiotic systems: • Linguistic (vocabulary, grammar) • Visual (still & moving images, page & screen layouts) • Audio (music, sound effects, silence) • Gestural (facial expression & body language)			
3. Texts utilized in classrooms are • multimodal • interactive • intertextual • linear and non-linear			

Note. Checklist modified from Multiliteracies Matrix and Reflection Tool by Bull and Anstey (2018)

In addition to observations, lesson plans were collected from the participants. The lesson plans allowed the researcher to collect data as an exploration of teachers' current practices. The

lesson plans collected were the ones when the teacher was observed. In total, two observations took place per teacher; therefore, two lesson plans were collected for each participant. As the researcher, through the lesson plans I verified if participants are utilizing multimodal texts in the lessons. I checked for the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) that are being addressed as part of the English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) TEKS. Table 2 provides an example of TEKS in a sixth grade RLA class as indicated in the "Lead4ward snapshot" (Lead4ward, 2023).

Table 2

Grade 6 TEKS Aligned with Multimodal Texts

Application	Instructional Focus
6.2 Vocabulary The student uses newly acquired vocabulary expressively.	6.2(A) use print or digital resources to determine the meaning, syllabication, pronunciation, word origin, and part of speech
6.8 Genres The student recognizes and analyzes genre-specific characteristics, structures, and purposes within and across increasingly complex traditional, contemporary, classical, and diverse texts.	6.8(F) analyze characteristics of multimodal and digital texts
6.9 Author's purpose	6.9(A) explain the author's purpose and message within a text 6.9(C) analyze the author's use of print and graphic features to achieve purpose
6.12 Inquiry and research	6.12 use research skills to plan and present in written, oral, or multimodal formats

Note. Sources: Lead4ward (2023); Texas Education Agency Student Assessment Division (2022)

I also checked for how teachers are addressing the Texas Technology Applications Standards. For example, Standard V stated, "All teachers know how to plan, organize, deliver, and evaluate instruction for all students that incorporates the effective use of current technology

for teaching and integrating the Technology Applications Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

(TEKS) into the curriculum" (Texas State Board for Educator Certification, 2003, p. i). Although

the Texas Technology Application Standards are not stated in lesson plans, teachers addressed

this standard using resources, technologies, and instructional materials to promote student

success in learning goals. The teachers' lesson plans do have a section on their lesson plans for

resources used during lesson as well as online testing resources.

Timeline

Data collection for this study took place in fall of 2022. The recruitment of teachers

began in early August. Participants were provided a two-week window to decide on their

participation for the study. Once participants were identified, the first round of interviews was

scheduled. Below is the timeline for the data collection phase of this study:

- September 2022- began the recruitment of participants for study.

- October 2022-conducted first interview for all participants

- October 2022-transcribed first interview.

- November/December 2022-conducted first observation and collected first lesson plan, started second interview

- December 2022-finished second interview, second observation, and collected second lesson plan.

- December 2022- transcribed second interview.

- Spring 2023- began data analysis.

Data Analysis

Glesne (2015) stated that data analysis involves organizing what the researcher has seen,

heard, and read with the purpose of figuring out what was learned to make sense of the

experience After the data was collected, I started the process of organizing, categorizing, synthesizing, analyzing, and writing about the data (Mills & Gay, 2018). All data collected was stored in a locked file that was password protected. I began the data analysis of this study by transcribing the participants' interviews. I used the transcription option on Microsoft Word and uploaded the interview for transcription. I then reviewed the transcription with the audio recording to check for accuracy. Once completed, I sent the interview transcriptions to the participants through email for member checking. The purpose of this was to verify accuracy and make appropriate changes if needed. This allows the researcher and participants to "grow in their interpretations of the phenomena central to the inquiry" (Glesne, 2015, p. 212). Participants received their transcript with recording and made no adjustments or changes to transcripts.

I then continued data analysis by breaking the transcripts into smaller units by either classifying or coding. This process was done in part by using qualitative data analysis software called NVivo. Using NVivo, I uploaded interview transcripts and began to code them by sentences and phrases. Saldaña (2016) defined a code as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 4). Coding allowed the researcher to start to identify concepts or repeated patterns. The process was done with interviews and the notes on observations collected. I then began with what Saldaña (2016) described as the first cycle of coding. Led by the research questions for this study, I started "coding the process of categorically marking or referencing units of texts (e.g., words, sentences, paragraphs, and quotations) with codes and labels as a way to indicate patterns and meaning" (Mills & Gay, 2018, p. 571). This part of the data analysis was done manually using Microsoft Word. I then continued by linking the data collection with the meaning through words, sentences, or

paragraphs. Then, the categorization of ideas or concepts led to the grouping of data into categories.

I then continued with a second round of coding to review information, identify common themes, or repeated phrases. Where "the portions coded can be the exact same units, longer passages of texts, analytic memos about the data, and even reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 4). This allowed the researcher to identify recurring themes, opinions, and beliefs. I then connected categories to themes to the study's research questions.

To assist with the accuracy of my coding, I asked another doctoral candidate to review the categories that emerge during the data analysis. This process allowed having more refined categories that emerged during the study. Additionally, I mapped out my findings to describe and explore the categories found in the study. Goodrick (2014) stated that tables, diagrams, or matrices help summarize the information collected and help analyze the similarities and differences. I created a table to list my themes and match them to the study's questions. Lastly, I combined all the data and connecting categories to themes to help answer the research questions.

Trustworthiness

Within this study, every effort was made to maintain the trustworthiness of the research. To ensure credibility, I had the participants review the interview transcriptions to determine the accuracy of the interviews. In addition, participants were asked to verify or review their statements for accuracy. Participant feedback or member checking is sharing your interpretations of participants' viewpoints to clear up areas of miscommunication (Johnson & Christensen, 2017). This area was vital in validating trustworthiness in the study. To ensure transferability, I used thick descriptions in my observation notes and interviews for the reader to understand the

basis for the claims. By using thick descriptions, the researcher provides readers with texts rich in details (Stahl & King, 2020). I continued to remind participants that I am only observing them for research purposes and was not acting as their designated administrator during the data collection process. I also reminded them that participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time.

I used triangulation as a strategy to test validity within this research. Longhurst (2003) explained triangulation as the variety of methods to collect data rather than relying on one form of evidence for the findings. This study consisted of interviews, observations, and collection of lesson plans. Triangulation is "a validation approach based on the convergence of results obtained by using multiple investigators, methods, data sources, and/or theoretical perspectives" (Johnson & Christensen, 2017, p. 664). By combining multiple data sources, the researcher seeks to overcome bias that comes from single methods (Goodrick, 2014).

An audit trail was the strategy implemented for dependability and confirmability. Korstjens and Moser (2018) described confirmability as securing inter-subjectivity of the data. Interpretation should be based on data and not preferences and viewpoints. I also had a peer, a doctoral candidate pursuing literacy specialization; conduct an external check on the research to avoid biases in the study. Stahl and King (2020) suggested an external check by a peer to create the trust in trustworthy. It provided an opportunity for someone else to look at the data with different eyes. Through an audit trail, the researcher provided notes on decisions made, reflective thoughts, research materials adopted, and information on data management. It was also crucial for the researcher to be "self-aware and reflexive about your own role in the process of collecting data, and in the pre-conceived assumptions, you bring to your research" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 123). Being critical of self-reflection as a researcher helped develop a better

comprehensive understanding of teachers' perspectives towards using multimodal texts to develop students' literacy.

Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study involved me as the researcher. Since I am a campus administrator at the research site, teachers may have felt pressured to participate in this study. An external review by another doctoral student with a specialization in literacy helped minimize bias in the interpretation and analysis of the data. Another limitation of this study was that participants were from one middle school, limiting external validity. Teachers recruited to participate voluntarily in this study were from one middle school in the Rio Grande Valley so the results might not apply to all middle school teachers' perceptions. Another limitation to this study was the teachers' knowledge of multimodal texts as district curriculum focuses on traditional literacies that are written or oral. Although teachers might already be familiar with multimodal texts, they might not necessarily know how to implement them to develop students' literacy skills.

Another limitation to consider is that not all teachers might be comfortable using and navigating digital platforms and resources. However, the comfort level in using technology in the classroom can influence the use of multimodal texts. For example, some teachers consider themselves unfamiliar with new technologies. Teachers who consider themselves non-technology savvy might be hesitant to implement multimodal texts. Teachers who are confident in using new technologies tend to be less reluctant to incorporate new literacies in the classroom.

It is also essential to explore the knowledge gap between theories of multimodality and the teachers' perceptions. It is important "to investigate teachers' views about teaching and learning because they are likely to influence what and how they do in the classroom" (Yi &

Choi, 2015, p. 845). Teachers' knowledge of multimodal texts will have an effect on their implementation in the classroom. Unfortunately, there is limited literature that presents teachers' perceptions on teaching new literacies. Perhaps one factor can be the rapidly evolving technologies and the shift in literacy practices. This area requires further research.

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methodology, data collection and data analysis procedures. By using a comparative case study approach, I was able to compare teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts based on their years of experience. By using interviews, observations, and lesson plans, I was able to collect data that will help contribute to research on teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts. The research between teachers' perspectives and implementation of multimodal texts in the classroom is essential to understanding students' literacy development. By analyzing the data collected, I identified the common themes and determined the next areas of support for teachers. Serafini (2012) stated ten years ago, "multimodal texts and visual images will continue to dominate our literate landscapes far into the future" (p. 30). I believe the time is now and it is crucial to determine the necessary steps to supporting teachers with the implementation of multimodal texts in the classrooms.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This comparative case study aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school Reading Language Arts (RLA) classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley. The purpose of this comparative case study approach was to understand how teachers' views on multimodal texts, either positive or negative, play a role in their implementation to develop students' literacy skills. In this chapter, I described the findings of the comparative case study. Next, I described the emerging themes with the participant's statements. Then, I described the findings based on interviews and compared them to the collected classroom observations and lesson. Finally, I aligned my research questions with the findings.

This study was conducted in one middle school located in the Rio Grande Valley. Participants were recruited from the Reading Language Arts department. Four participants agreed to participate in this study. The participants provided lesson plans for two observations conducted at different times during the data collection process. They also agreed to participate in two different interviews. The first interview focused on their literacy perceptions and the second interview focused on multiliteracies.

The data analysis consisted of organizing, categorizing, synthesizing, and analyzing the data. I started the data analysis by aligning the participants' responses with one of my research questions as seen in Table 3. I then focused on key words shared by the participants. The participants' quotes were formatted in bold blue font to emphasize key words.

Table 3

Initial Coding

How do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley perceive that their students' literacies are developing through the use of multimodal texts?	Cycle 1
Ms. Cee- Take the IPads away **not so much screen time** right now, right? **Ms. Nelly**- I feel like **they're so into technology** that sometimes even you know when, when we first opened our new textbook this year. On the online version, they **already knew** like they're already clicking. **Ms. Jenn**- I feel like **it's a lot for me to learn** because like I said, I'm **learning every day** something new so **I'm still learning**. **Ms. Delia**- I feel it's **more challenging** and I and I have to **train them** for, you know, I feel it more challenging.	Tech savvy Learning everyday More Challenging Train students
Ms. Cee- my views on literacy have changed because there's **too many distractions** right now to focus the kids. I think there's been a **decline in in literacy** and literacy, and then we don't know now about **fake** news and what's **real.** **Ms. Nelly**- before I was very much into **the print and just annotating**. But now I've learned since the whole testing mode has changed to online, I've done a lot of **learning myself** on how to you know the textbooks that we have **learning the tools** that are available for them online. **Ms. Jenn**- I feel like now there's **a lot of different sources**. Especially with technology and all of that **Ms. Delia**- Higher, higher vocabulary. And then **getting them to adapt** for this change (online testing).	Decline in literacy Distractions Fake/Real Learning online tools Adapting
Ms. Cee-. I'll be reading something online, uh, a news story, and **something pops up** on my in my peripheral vision. Something or an ad will pop up. You know, but I'm used to ignoring it. **Ms. Nelly**- They **interact with the text**, online now with the available text, text features that they have online. So we do have the print version of our textbook and they also have it **online.** **Ms. Jenn**- **There's resources and websites** and everything that pop up every single day and and now with testing, obviously the students have to be, **they have to know** that because their **tests are online.** **Ms. Delia**- Right, just vocabulary. Breaking it down, simplify for it for them	Pop-ups Interact w/text online Websites Resources Online testing

I then created an additional column to assist me with the organization of the data collected as seen in Table 4. My first column consisted of the interview transcripts; Next, I created a second column to condense the information from the first column into words/phrases. Finally, a third column was created to create possible codes. Once codes were generated, emerging themes were categorized and combined, followed by the final theme.

Table 4

Coding Process Continued

How do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley perceive that their students' literacies are developing through the use of multimodal texts?	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Ms. Cee- Take the IPads away not so much screen time right now, right?	Tech savvy	View of Technology
Ms. Nelly- I feel like they're so into technology that sometimes even you know when, when we first opened our new textbook this year. On the online version, they already knew like they're already clicking.	Learning everyday	
Ms. Jenn- I feel like it's a lot for me to learn because like I said, I'm learning every day something new so I'm still learning.	More Challenging	
Ms. Delia- I feel it's more challenging and I and I have to train them for, you know, I feel it more challenging.	Train students	
Ms. Cee- my views on literacy have changed because there's too many distractions right now to focus the kids. I think there's been a decline in in literacy and literacy, and then we don't know now about fake news and what's real.	Decline in literacy Distractions	Changes in literacy
Ms. Nelly- before I was very much into the print and just annotating. But now I've learned since the whole testing mode has changed to online, I've done a lot of learning myself on how to you know the textbooks that we have learning the tools that are available for them online.	Fake/Real Learning online tools	
Ms. Jenn- I feel like now there's a lot of different sources. Especially with technology and all of that	Adapting	
Ms. Delia- Higher, higher vocabulary. And then getting them to adapt for this change (online testing).		

The four participants were diverse in their years of experience. I then decided to group the participants into three different cases to compare their perspectives based on their years of

experience. The years of experience for each teacher can determine their willingness to adapt to literacy changes over the years. New teachers might be open to implementing new ideas/skills while veteran teachers might feel they know what works best since they have taught longer. Their perspectives are important because depending on their years of experience, they can provide more insights into literacy development in students. Below is Figure 2 with the participants' demographics.

Ms. Jenn	Ms. Nelly	Ms. Delia	Ms. Cee
• First year teaching • Teaches 6th grade RLA • Works with regular education students • Technology comfort level: still learning	• 14 years teaching • Teaches 6-8th HILD RLA • Works with recent immigrant students • Technology comfort level: adapting	• 16 years teaching • Teachers 8th grade RLA • Works with emergent bilinguals as part of the English as the Second Language program • Technology comfort level: adapting	• 25+ years teaching • Teachers 6th-8th grade RLA Intervention • Focuses on assisting identified dylexic students • Technology comfort level: adapting

Figure 2. Participants' Demographics

The participants in this study represented a different range of years of teaching and work with different student population within the same campus. There is one new teacher, one veteran teacher, and two teachers with 14-16 years of experience. Although all are RLA teachers, each one works with different students. One of the participants works with recent immigrant students, another one works with dyslexic students as part of reading intervention, and the two others work with general education students, some which might be emergent bilinguals.

Findings

Guided by the research questions, the following themes emerged after analyzing the participants' interviews. The themes were supported by the participants' observations, lesson plans collected and the researchers' observations of the participants classrooms collected during the study. Based on the participants' responses, the findings on this chapter focus on digital literacy.

Theme 1: Student Learning and Engagement

The middle school teachers' perspectives regarding the use of multimodal texts in the RLA classrooms are tied to student learning and engagement. They perceived multimodal texts as different approaches to engaging the students and making them more attractive. The textbook adoption provides students and teachers with an online and interactive version of their textbook. Teachers are modeling for students the use of the online resource available to them as part of their classroom instruction and preparation for online testing.

Case One: 0-10 Years of Experience. As teachers prepare to transfer reading strategies to online platforms, they perceive multimodal texts can help student engagement and learning. Ms. Jenn (pseudonym), a new teacher, expressed her preference for using media pieces at the beginning of her lesson to grab the students' attention. She stated she uses more technology through either media pieces, videos, or images for student engagement. As part of her vocabulary instruction to introduce new words, she presents students with pictures that represent the word and can help students remember new vocabulary.

During my first observation of Ms. Jenn, as described in her lesson plan, was working with students on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) 6.9-(D) "describe how the author's use of figurative language such as metaphor and personification achieves specific

purpose." The teacher led a class discussion on a poem and figurative language. The English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) supporting emergent bilinguals focused on the use of new vocabulary about the topic, and the use visual and contextual supports to read. The TEKS are state mandated curriculum that students should know at the end of every grade level. The ELPS apply to all grade levels and subject areas. They are designed to support emergent bilinguals with their language proficiency levels and student expectations. During my first observation, students worked on a poem as the teacher explained figurative language and asked students to highlight essential words in texts and write notes as needed. The teacher did use facial expressions and body language to convey meaning during the reading of the poem. The teacher also referred previously learned material while trying to get students to make a connection. The use of visual supports was not observed at the time the researcher was present during instruction. Students used, interpreted, and produced text using paper.

Her lesson plan listed digital online resources as seen in Figure 3, but none were observed during the first observation. District curriculum provides online resources created by curriculum writers to assist teachers in incorporating technology in the classroom. It is the districts' expectations that teacher utilize digital resources to enhance their classroom instruction. The resources consists of Nearpod lessons, pre-made online quizzes on various topics, links to YouTube videos, and others. The district encourages teachers to innovate teaching and learning through the use of technology. During this lesson, the teacher did not utilize the resources listed on her lesson plan.

Resources
Quotation Marks Quizziz 1
Quotation Marks Quizziz 2
BrainPop Poetry
Flocabulary Figurative Language
Flocabulary What is Poetry
YouTube Rebuilding after Natural Disasters
Nearpod from After the Hurricane
Nearpod Pronouns
BrainPop Poetry
Flocabulary Figurative Language
Flocabulary What is Poetry
Nearpod from After the Hurricane
Nearpod Pronouns
Quotation Marks Quizziz 1
Quotation Marks Quizziz 2
YouTube Rebuilding after Natural Disasters

Figure 3. Resources Listed on Lesson Plan

During the first observation Ms. Jenn provided her students an opportunity to participate in situated practice. She helped them understand examples of figure language by teaching the terms explicitly. Students then reinforced the concept by taking notes and by engaging in discussion about different examples of figurative language. This also allowed situated practice to take place through the discussion, and collaboration amongst the students. They were all able to share their knowledge about figure language based on their prior knowledge about the concept. The teacher reference previously learned concepts such as similes and metaphors from work done in previous weeks.

A second observation consisted of the teacher working with students on vocabulary words for their story of the week. Students worked in their journals, writing down definitions of words. Students worked on word pronunciation and provided meaning and possible examples. The teacher offered various synonyms for the words to students orally. Students participated in the class discussion by sharing their thoughts on what the word meant. At the end of the lesson, the teacher provided students with the vocabulary words and a visual by posting a link to the student's Google Classroom. The students used, interpreted, and produced text using paper. The use of digital technologies was provided at the end of the lesson when students needed help with

some words. There also needed to be an opportunity for the teacher to utilize an online dictionary for students. This online tool will be beneficial for students, especially during online testing.

During the second observation, Ms. Jenn provided students with overt instruction. While decoding the vocabulary words for the week, Ms. Jenn asked students to think of other words that have similar meanings. She used the word in a sentence before asking students to provide a sentence with the word. There was use of metalanguage to describe if the word was a verb, noun, or adverb. When the teacher described the word savagely, the teacher used the synonyms fierce and aggressively. Ms. Jenn also provided the use of technology to enhance the students' comprehension of the word by providing a video to describe the word savagely to students. In the video, a dog can be seen savagely digging through the dirty to find a bone.

Case Two: 11-20 Years of Experience. Ms. Nelly (pseudonym) and Ms. Delia (pseudonym) fall within the range of 11-20 years of experience. Ms. Nelly has been an educator for 14 years, and Ms. Delia for 16 years. According to Ms. Nelly, the visuals in the texts engage students, and it helps them make a connection during the picture walk before reading a story. She utilizes visuals to provide second language acquisition support for her students and engage them in the reading selections. She also expressed how students could interact with the text online and the features provided. One tool is the content clarifier, which "if they click on that word, the word appears in a simpler form; sometimes they even provide them with a picture." This helps students, especially emergent bilinguals; understand the new word in the context of the passage. In addition, students can highlight texts, annotate, and use an online dictionary while working on their reading selections. Finally, Ms. Nelly stated she is helping the students transition from paper instructional strategies to online platforms.

Ms. Delia expressed how she connects her lesson to something life related. She stated during her interview "I've notice if I connect something life related to the lesson, it helps to understand better." She incorporates the student's language and cognates to help them make a connection. Ms. Delia has many emergent bilingual students in her RLA classes. She provides second language acquisition support by clarifying using the student's first language. Additionally, Ms. Delia searches for pictures, sometimes memes or cartoons, something she considers to be in style with the students that will get their attention. She credits her use of visuals, photos, PowerPoint, and short videos to student learning. These tools were evident during her first and second observations. In both observations, students use digital technologies to interpret and produce text.

For example, during the second observation, students worked on argumentative writing based on the story "My Favorite Chaperone" by Jean Davies Okimoto. The story is a print-based novel, with a couple of photographs. Students read the story through their books and completed the assignments online. Ms. Delia expressed she feels students connect to the story because it is about a teenager, like her students, and similar problems to what they might encounter. This allows the students to be more engaged in the assignments because the stories relate to them. The students worked on the argumentative writing assignment using Google Slides as seen in Figure 4. The students manipulated text boxes within the slides to type their responses to the assignment.
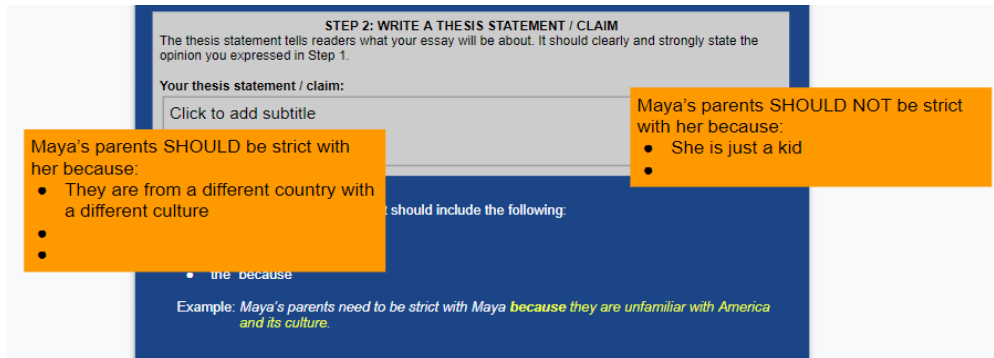
Figure 4. Interactive Writing Assignment Using Google Slides

In addition, the teacher provided additional videos and notes on Google Classroom for students to reference during the assignment. Figure 5 provides an example of the additional videos and resources provided to students.
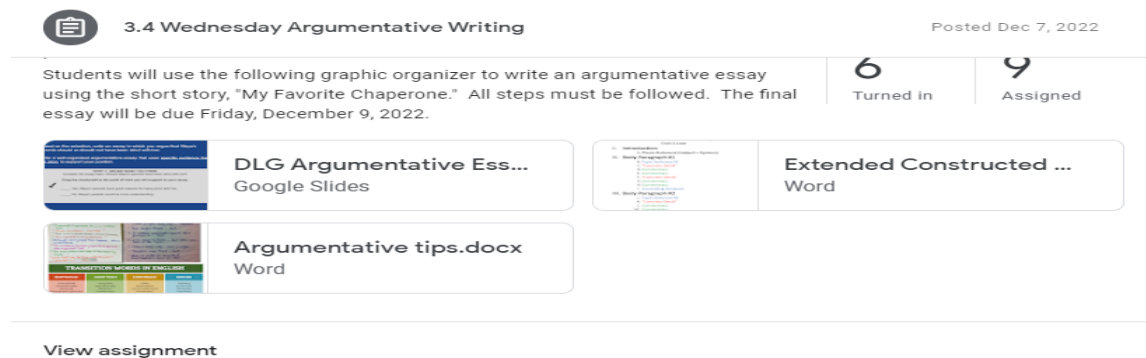
Figure 5. Assignment and Resources on Google Classroom

Similarly, Ms. Nelly commented that students interact with the text online now and the features available to them. She feels this helps students stay engaged, as students require visuals, and some need audio with the text. During observation one, her lesson plan indicated that students would be working on TEKS 7.7(B) "analyze how the characters' qualities influence events and resolution of the conflict." However, students were working on a placement test for

an online program the district purchased to help emergent bilinguals build their listening,

reading, writing, and speaking skills. The teacher commented that they were testing to update

their placement test from the beginning of the year, a requirement set by district personnel. This

allows teachers to track the student's growth and progress in their second language acquisition.

Ms. Nelly's class is part of the ESL program, with many new recent immigrants; tracking the

students practice is essential for their academic success. During the observation, students were

engaged in the lesson; some were working on the listening portion while others worked on

reading selections. Figure 6 provides as example of the listening items students work with in this

program.
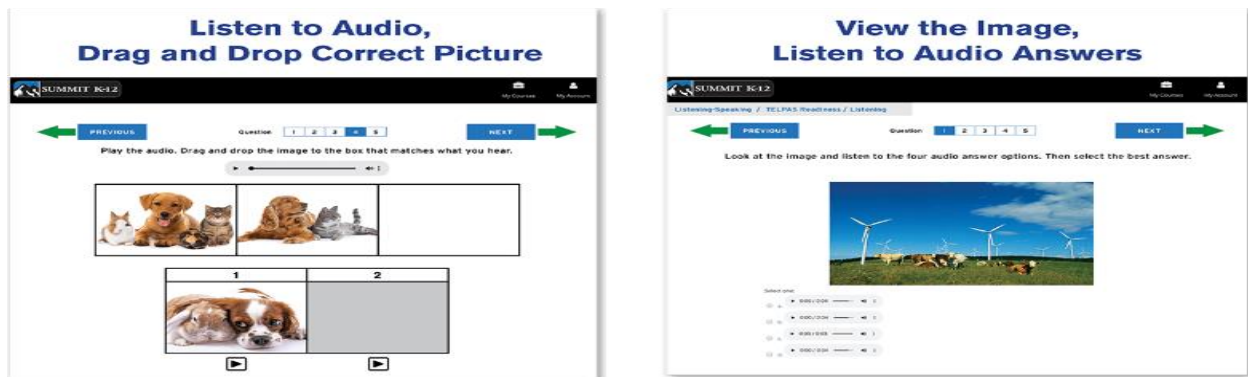
Figure 6. Sample Listening Items

Ms. Nelly was unable to follow her lesson plans for the week due to the mandated testing

for her students. Ms. Delia was able to provide situated practice and overt instruction to her

students during her first observation. Her students were able to reflect on their own familiar

experiences and perspectives and apply them to the story of the week. Her students were

motivated to learn with the assignment, as there was use of technology to enhance instruction.

The teacher provided guided practice to the students in the completion of the assignment by

showing them how to manipulate the text boxes to type their responses. Ms. Delia's writing assignment also provided students with critical framing as students make connections about the story "My Favorite Chaperone" to their culture and perspectives. The assignment provided students an opportunity to interpret social and cultural contexts within the text. The students were able to make a connection between their own and the character's perspectives and motives based on the similarities between the cultures.

Case Three: 20-Plus Years of Experience. Ms. Cee, who has over 20 years of experience, says students are 21st century. She shared the same sentiment regarding using multimodal tools in the classroom. She states students "are used to it now because they are born with the iPad or phone, or watch their parents using the phone". She commented how we have to move with the times and "technology, either good or bad, it is with us now." Her class is a RLA intervention class consisting of part teacher instruction and part online assignments. The online curriculum assigns lessons to students based on their beginning-of-year placement test. As students' progress in the lesson, they move on to the next objective or reinforce the skills they have not mastered.

This online curriculum is an example of learning through technology. The lessons provide tools to enhance learning, teaching, and student progress monitoring. Students use, interpret, and produce text using digital technologies. They are supplied with audio from letters and sounds to words and word blends. During observation one, some students were listening to the pronunciation of sounds for words, and then they proceeded to record themselves pronouncing and blending the sounds together. The teacher's lesson plan stated TEKS 7.9(C) "analyze the author's use of print and graphic features to achieve specific purposes." This was not observed during the first observation. This standard was observed during the second

observation as the teacher worked with the students on a reading selection. The teacher utilized an online dictionary to show students the definition of a word, which was the tile of the story "Saved." The story is from a district reading magazine subscription. It is print-based with many text features and illustrations. The online subscription to the magazine includes videos, audio and slideshows for the teacher to utilize during instruction. Ms. Cee started the class discussion about the sport lacrosse, and then introduced the lesson with a video explaining lacrosse. After a class discussion highlighting the similarities between lacrosse and hockey, students proceeded to read their text selection. Once reading, students highlighted keywords and ideas on their selection. The students use, interpret, and produce text using paper during this observation. Finally, the TEKS addressed during the lesson, as stated in the lesson plan, were 8.5(B) "generate questions about the text before, during, and after reading to deepen understanding and gain information."

Ms. Cee provided situated practice for her students as she introduced the story about lacrosse and made a connection to hockey for the students. The students were not familiar with lacrosse; therefore, Ms. Cee showed students a video explaining lacrosse to students. Then she made a connection to how the sport is similar to hockey and led the class discussion as students shared their knowledge on the sport. The Rio Grande Valley had a hockey team a few years ago therefore students were able to make the connection. The students were able to connect with the text based on their discussion and connection to their previous knowledge. Once discussion about the character begin, students were able to relate to story due to their background knowledge. In the explanation section of her lesson plan, as seen in Figure 7, Ms. Cee wanted the students to make a connection between the character and the students' lives.

Figure 7. Lesson Plan Explanation Section

During one of her interviews, Ms. Cee shared that she brings life experiences into the classroom discussions. "We do a lot of connections to what's happening right now in the 21st century, what is happening in our universe and our world." She connects the lesson to what the students like so they are able to connect to the story. She feels the more students connect to the story, the better they engage in the lesson and learn the skills.

Theme 2: Changes in Literacy Experiences

The second theme to emerge was the changes in literacy experiences the participants shared during their educational career.

Case One: 0-10 Years of Experience. All participants were asked if their literacy views have changed over the years and, if so, how. Ms. Jenn is new to teaching; therefore, she expressed that she is still learning something new daily. She feels there are many resources and websites, especially now with online testing. Miss Jen feels she is adapting; when she was in middle school everything was still paper and pencil. Although she could not give a perspective on the changes of literacy as an educator, she did provide how she feels it has changed for her when she was a student to now that she is an educator.

Miss Jen stated:

I.. I feel like it's a lot for me to learn because like I said, I'm learning every day something new so I'm still learning. There's resources and websites and everything that pop up every single day and now with testing, obviously the students they have to know that because

their tests are online. So I am adapting, of course, especially because when I was in

college it was when everything started being very tech because when I was in high school

when I was in middle school, everything was still like paper and pencil. Yes, so I have

had to adapt myself, but I had a little bit of experience coming from college. The one that

we used most was Blackboard. Everything had turned into Blackboard, so yeah.

While her teaching career is just getting started, Ms. Jenn is already experiencing a change in

literacy skills needed, as she will be helping students transition to their first year of online

testing. Although she feels she is familiar with technology, she does feel there is still much for

her to learn. Despite feeling like she is still learning, Ms. Jenn uses technology as a way to

engage students.

 Case Two: 11-20 Years of Experience. Ms. Nelly expressed that technology is with us

now, and it is one of the biggest contributors to the changes in literacy. Students now have access

to the online version of their textbooks, allowing them to annotate and utilize tools to support

their reading strategies. This change to online strategies has been a transition for students and

teachers, and it has been easier for some than others. "I feel that it's more a challenge for the

teachers because we've been teaching those strategies on paper for so long." Ms. Nelly

commented that it has been a struggle for her to teach online texts, as she prefers the paper

version.

This participant stated:

Yes, before I was very much into the print and just annotating. But now I've learned since

the whole testing mode has changed to online, I've done a lot of learning myself on how

to, you know, the textbooks that we have, learning the tools that are available for them

online. I need to familiarize myself with it a lot with that program. Also with the

textbook, I would do a lot of the passages. It would be like reading strategies on paper,

but now we've kind of adapted to now. More online and I've also learned about the way

they learn. So a lot of them I feel like maybe they're not engaged writing my notes, but

they're hearing me. So sometimes when I ask the guiding questions, they're responding

and that just tells me you know what they're not into, like writing the notes, but they're

still understanding the story, so I've had to adapt to the way they learn best.

Ms. Nelly did state that she feels it is something that benefits students; therefore, she adjusts to

what benefits them. Although she prefers print rather than online annotating, she adjusts to what

her students need to support their learning. Although she is less comfortable with technology,

Ms. Nelly still uses it as a way to engage students. She feels if students are engaged, they are

more like to learn the skills and concepts.

Ms. Delia expressed that she feels literacy is more challenging and has to train the

students for the change to online testing. At the end of the week when she tests students'

comprehension of skills, she uses a testing site similar to the STAAR online test. This allows

students to highlight, underline, eliminate answers and use the online dictionary. She is teaching

the students to transfer online literacy strategies to online platforms. The teaching of online tools

was observed with Ms. Delia and her students. She made sure her students knew how to nagivate

the tools during a text and how to utilize them with their texts. She also feels literacy now has

higher vocabulary. She expressed:

OK, let's say before we start out either a poetry or story, we like to introduce vocabulary,

we write it, and then break it down. Is it an adjective, verb, the meaning of each part, the

definition. Let's say some of the higher vocabulary introduce it with visuals and I also I

74

like to include a cognate, if available, and then just tell them a little bit more or less what it's going to be about.

Ms. Delia expressed similar thoughts as Ms. Nelly, as both commented they had to adjust. Ms. Delia mentioned she did not like the change to online at the beginning. "I did not like it at the beginning, but now I'm more comfortable." She commented she needed to be more confident and set an example for her students. Both Ms. Nelly and Ms. Delia expressed how they are less comfortable with technology but use it more to engage students and motivate them to learn.

Case Three: 20-Plus Years of Experience. Ms. Cee is a veteran teacher with more experience; therefore, she has seen significant changes in her educational career. For example, she talked about a time growing up when she loved the Nancy Drew books and everything about poems. She made the comparison to students now that they share different experiences with reading due to the growth of technology. "I loved Nancy Drew books and anything to do with poems, but I know a lot of students don't, but I had nothing else to do." Ms. Cee added:

My views on literacy have changed because there are too many distractions right now to focus like kids. I'll be reading something online, a news story, and something pops up on my peripheral vision. Something or an ad will pop up. I'm used to ignoring it. I just go on reading, but my 6-year-old granddaughter went on her iPad and an ad will pop up. She doesn't know to focus, 13-year-olds don't know how to focus. I know computers, we don't know, what we do without them, and smartphones and my technology in my car. My GPS but I think there's been a decline in literacy, and then we don't know now about fake news and what's real. And then you have to decide for, I know what's real and what's not real in use, but a 13-year-old might not know, or even a 20-year-old.

As technology continues to grow and literacy continues to evolve, it reminds educators to proceed with caution. This growth can come with advantages and disadvantages to classroom teachers and students. Ms. Cee feels that students learn best in small classes and with small group or one-on-one instruction in her reading intervention class. She said to "take the iPads away, not so much screen time" for students because "they need a lot of reading skills." She feels students have a hard time comprehending and staying focused with online reading.

Theme 3: Teachers Perceive Visuals as Key

The following is the third theme that emerged during this study. Teachers perceive visuals as key for students' literacy development.

Case One: 0-10 Years of Experience. Participants stated the use of visuals in their lessons benefits student understanding. Ms. Jenn uses visuals during her vocabulary introduction at the beginning of the week. She said students benefit from visuals as it gives them an idea of the word definition and provides a visual for them to remember the word. Students are more likely to remember or make a connection. This was observed during her second observation. It was also stated in her lesson plans as part of the ELPS covered for her lesson are to learn new language structures, use new vocabulary about topic, and use visual and contextual supports to read. Due to the high number of emergent bilinguals enrolled in her class, Ms. Jenn feels visuals help students connect to the story, understand the vocabulary word, and be engaged in the lesson. This participant explained:

> Uh, yes use visuals. I do like to do a media piece at the very beginning of the week. I'll show them either a video or I'll show them pictures about, let's just say we're doing a story of the week, right? I do like to show them a media piece, either a video or like to show them like images. Also, we do a lot of vocabulary in my class. I like to show them

pictures that represent that word. One week it was cool because I did a PowerPoint to

teach vocabulary words. It had a short little video, a five-second video, but I really like

that. A lot of engagement. It engages the students, they…. it's not boring for them, so if

they're engaged, they're learning. And I see that they participate a lot more, and they get

very excited, and I feel like they make the connection with what they're seeing. So, I feel

like it engages them a lot more.

During the researcher's second observation of the participant, the use of visuals was seen

being applied to introduce the story of the week as seen in Figure 8 below. The teacher led the

class discussion when introducing the word before engaging with the students in definition,

synonym, or parts of speech.

Figure 8. Vocabulary Word Sample

The teacher aligns the vocabulary words with the theme of the story or with a picture that will

represent a part of the story. This allows students to generate an idea of what the story will be

about.

Ms. Jenn provided situated practice to her students by providing a vocabulary word and picture to introduce the words for the story of the week. Students were able to connect with a text and generate an idea of what the story would be about by describing what they saw in the picture. She also provides overt instruction as students break down the vocabulary word into verb, noun or adverb. They also look for similar words using an online dictionary or print. As an added support for students, Ms. Jenn provides a link to a video on the student's Google Classroom. This provides students with an opportunity to review vocabulary words at different times or as needed.

Case Two: 11-20 Years of Experience. Similarly, Ms. Nelly and Ms. Delia share the same feeling about using visuals during their lessons. Since Ms. Nelly works with recent immigrants who are part of the English as a Second Language (ESL) program, she relies on visuals to introduce new vocabulary words and connect with the students. She describes her students as visual and auditory. Ms. Nelly described her students engaged during the lesson using visuals. "During the lesson, I feel they're very engaged with the visuals; every time we take the picture walk, they make a connection to the story before we start reading." She also commented that students start making up a story through the visuals during their picture walk, are entertained, and look forward to reading the story. The students are engaged in situated practice by taking part in something new (story) and reflecting on their own experiences by making a connection.

Ms. Delia works with many emergent bilinguals, some who are part of the ESL program. During her vocabulary instruction, Ms. Delia introduces vocabulary words with visuals. "I try to find something that is connected to their age, like pictures, it could be a cartoon, something that is in style that's going to get their attention." She stated she also likes to use cognates so the

students understand the word better. In addition to visuals, she incorporates pictures through PowerPoint or Google Slides, along with some short videos. Once students have been introduced to vocabulary words, concepts, and the story, her assignments conclude with a vocabulary word map where she checks for student understanding. Figure 9 is an example of a vocabulary word assignment in the students Google Classroom using Google Slides. Students find the definition of the word, look for a synonym and create their own sentence.
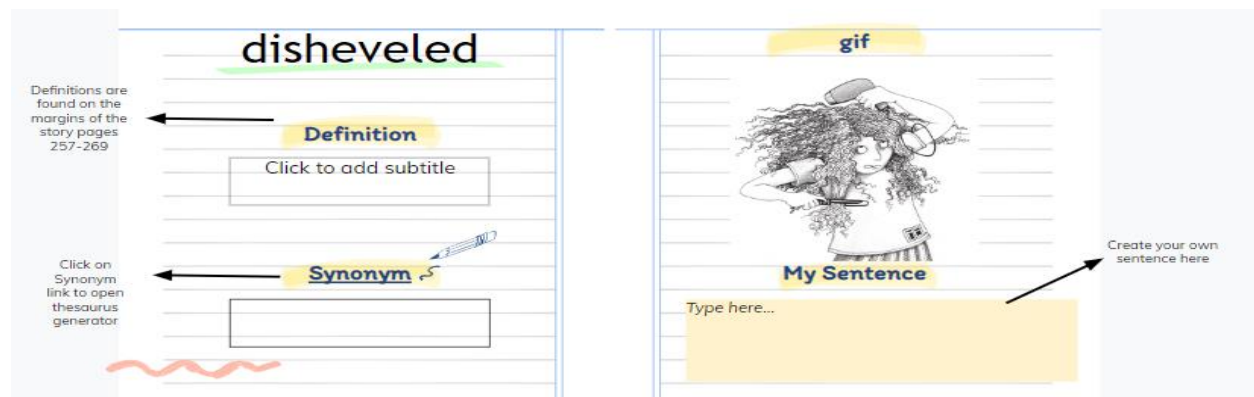
Figure 9. Vocabulary Word Map Assignment

Students can manipulate text boxes to complete the assignment. They reinforce the vocabulary words learned while working on an assignment that is transferring their paper learning strategies to online platforms. The implementation of online assignments provides an opportunity for students to practice their skills learned.

Both Ms. Nelly and Ms. Delia provide situated practice for students as they motivate them to learn by providing meaningful vocabulary practice. Both teachers reference the students' life by incorporating gifs, memes, pictures, cartoons and videos that are relatable to them. Students are able to make a connection to the new vocabulary words. Ms. Delia mentioned the use of cognates to assist students in learning new vocabulary. Ms. Nelly provides support in the

students' native language as needed. Both teachers also provide overt instruction as they scaffold the students' learning by providing guided practice when introducing the new vocabulary. They use metalanguage to find similar words to describe the new vocabulary and use technology through either videos or Google slides to enhance instruction. Ms. Delia has students complete the vocabulary mapping assignment as independent practice. At the end of the week, the students complete their vocabulary quiz on a Google Docs as seen in Figure 10.

Figure 10. Vocabulary Quiz on Google Docs

Case Three: 20-Plus Years of Experience. Ms. Cee stated she uses visual images when introducing her story. She described how she would post the pictures on her white-erase board and reference them throughout the week. She stated once removed, her students "still picture them on the board." She feels it helps her students create a mental image even when the words are removed. She also relies on introducing new stories through videos related to the story's

theme. She stated this helps students get an idea of what the story will be about and connect to their background knowledge. Ms. Cee said that as an educator, you have to use multimodal tools: "You have to take it one step ahead in the classroom and use it as a teaching tool; students are already used to it."

Ms. Cee also engages in situated practice with her students as she helps them connect the unfamiliar concepts with the students own experiences. The students engage as members of a learning community where each get to share their ideas and discussions. This was observed during her second observation where students shared their prior knowledge about hockey to lacrosse. Those that were not familiar with hockey were able to share their knowledge about soccer. They made a connection to how soccer was similar and different to lacrosse.

Theme 4: Continued Professional Development

All participants stated what they feel is needed to support teachers as they move forward in education and the changing times. Their years of experience did not play a factor in what support system they feel is needed as all agreed some professional development is necessary. Ms. Cee stated she likes it when the district reading specialists provide training on writing or changes coming from Texas Education Agency (TEA). Ms. Nelly and Ms. Delia feel that all resources allocated to RLA classrooms need to have an online platform so that they can continue to practice strategies the way they will be tested. Ms. Nelly also suggested providing teachers with information on how to use the tools because some teachers might need to be more familiar with them. She commented, "Providing more trainings, staff development, when it comes to workbooks and how to use their online tools, some teachers might not know how to use them, since it's the first year we have them." Ms. Delia also suggested, "Teacher observations of those that are tech savvy." This is a shared thought from Ms. Jenn, who is a new teacher. She also

mentioned observing veteran teachers and collaborating with others to help guide her with the different resources. Ms. Jenn added, "Observing veteran teachers here, I feel like more observations, that would work."

Table 5 below is a visual representation of the themes that emerged as related to each research question. Also included are supporting quotations from study participants from interviews one and two.

Table 5

Research Questions, Themes, Theme Support

Research question	Theme	Theme Support
1. What are middle school teachers' perspectives regarding the use of multimodal texts in the Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley?	Theme 1: Student learning and engagement.	"I like to do the media pieces first. I like to grab their attention." (Ms. Jenn) "I try to find something that's connected to their age...pictures... a cartoon." (Ms. Delia) "I feel that they're very engaged with the visuals every time we take the picture walk, make a connection before a story." (Ms. Nelly) "They interact with the text online now with the available text, the text features they have online." (Ms. Nelly) "There are different approaches to engaging our students, making the lessons more interesting and motivating them to want to learn more and understand the question." (Ms. Delia)

Table 5, cont.

		"They used to it now, they're 21st century so they're born with a computer, iPad, a phone." (Ms. Cee).
	Theme 2: Changes in literacy experiences	"I'll be reading something online, and something pops up on my peripheral vision. An ad will pop up." (Ms. Cee)

Table 5, cont.

		"They used to it now, they're 21st century so they're born with a computer, iPad, a phone." (Ms. Cee).
	Theme 2: Changes in literacy experiences	"I'll be reading something online, and something pops up on my peripheral vision. An ad will pop up." (Ms. Cee) "So many distractions, you just have to focus on what you're reading. I'm used to that, but kids might not be able to do that." (Ms. Cee) "I was very much into the print and just annotating. But now I've learned since the whole testing mode has changed to online, I've done a lot of learning myself." (Ms. Nelly) "They interact with the text, online text features. We do have the print version of our textbook and they also have it online." (Ms. Nelly) "There's resources and websites and everything that pops up every day and now with testing, the students have to know that because their test is online." (Ms. Jenn). "I feel it's more challenging and I have to train them for it, I feel it more challenging." (Ms. Delia).

Table 5, cont.

2. How do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley perceive that their students' literacies are developing through the use of multimodal texts?	Theme 3: Teachers perceive visuals as key	"I feel that they learn by me explaining it to them very thorough, I have to tell them, show them visuals." (Ms. Jenn)
		"I teach it various ways, sometimes a lot of it involves visuals." (Ms. Nelly)
		"They're very visual and auditory like when they hear the story being read to them." (Ms. Nelly)
		"I say a lot of the life experiences but the visuals. That's what they need." (Ms. Delia)
		"I do like to show them a media piece, video or images." (Ms. Jenn)
		"We do a lot of vocabulary; I do show them pictures that represent that word." (Ms. Jenn)
		"I use a lot of visuals, pictures, PowerPoint, short videos." (Ms. Delia)
		"There's a lot of other students that require a lot of visuals, the audio with the text." (Ms. Nelly)

Table 5, cont.

3. What do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley need to be supported to use multimodal texts?	Theme 4: Continued professional development	"Go to more training, send a specialist." (Ms. Cee)
		"Now that they have that online platform, for any resource to have the online platform." (Ms. Nelly)
		"Providing teachers with more information on how to use their tools because some teachers might not know how to use them." (Ms. Nelly)
		"Meeting with my team, I like to go to them to help me and guide me with all these different resources." (Ms. Jenn)
		"Me observing veteran teachers." (Ms. Jenn)
		"More textbooks aligned to online resources, colleague support, more training, and teacher observations of those that are tech savvy." (Ms. Delia)

Teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts and literacy development were for the most part positive. All participants have different preferences and comfort levels with multimodal texts but they also see the positives. Ms. Jenn expressed how as a new teacher she is still adapting and has much to learn. Ms. Nelly and Ms. Delia both agreed that although not comfortable at first, they have made the change to what is best for the students. Ms. Cee stated that teachers could use technology in the classroom, as it is something students are familiar with.

All agreed that the use of multimodal tools can engage students in learning and is an advantage to presenting new topics in the classrooms. Most agreed that they were beneficial for student learning and engagement, but Ms. Cee expressed concern with how technology comes with distractors. She worries students might not be able to focus reading online texts and might not be able to distinguish between real and fake. A valid concern as teachers have started to transition from paper-based testing to online platforms.

The use of visuals to engage students was observed during observations. The participants also expressed the use of visuals during interviews. Ms. Nelly and Ms. Delia expressed their preference to annotating on print-based books and that they have had to adapt to online changes. Ms. Delia commented how adapting to the use of technology in the classroom was difficult at first, but she has learned she needs to be a role model for her students. Similarly, Ms. Nelly expressed her preference for print over online texts, but has learned to adapt to what benefits students best. Ms. Jenn feels somewhat comfortable with using multimodal tools; however, as a new teacher, she feels there are still many resources she needs to get familiar with. She commented how she is still "testing the waters and still learning a lot of different resources to incorporate them in the classroom." Overall, the middle school teachers in this study had positive views regarding multiliteracies and the use in the classroom. They also expressed some challenges they have encountered.

The teachers' perspectives were positive that they needed to move with the times and engage in practices that are beneficial for students. As digital literacy continues to be part of secondary RLA classrooms, teachers will continue to adapt their pedagogy to fit the needs of students. One important reminder is the challenges that technology integration brings to the classroom and the use of multimodal tools. Support from district and campus leaders will be

important in this area. Figure 11 below summarizes the teacher's perspectives on multimodal

texts and their influence on student's literacy development.

Ms. Jenn
0-10 years of experience

- **Comfort level**
  - "I am adapting so I'm still learning."
- **Student engagement**
  - "I like to do media pieces to grab their attention."
- **Challenges**
  - "It's a lot for me to learn, learning everyday something new."

Ms. Nelly
Ms. Delia
11-20 years of experience

- **Comfort level**
  - Ms. Nelly-"I was very much into print and just annotating..I've adapted to more online and how they learn."
  - Ms. Delia-"I didn't like it at the beginning but now I'm more comfortable, I need to set the example for students."
- **Student engagement**
  - Ms. Nelly-"I feel they're very engaged with the visuals."
  - Ms. Delia-"Lesson are more interesting and motivating."
- **Challenges**
  - Ms. Nelly-"Many of them want the print version, they want to make notes..many require visuals...the audio with the text."
  - Ms. Delia-"I feel literacy is more challenging. It has higher vocabulary and I need to train the students for it."

Ms. Cee
20+ years of experience

- **Comfort level**
  - "We have to move with the times and technology, either good or bad, it is with us now."
- **Student engagement**
  - "Use it (multimodal tools) as a teaching tool, students are used to it."
- **Challenges**
  - "So many distractions, you have to focus on what you're reading...kids might not be able to do that."
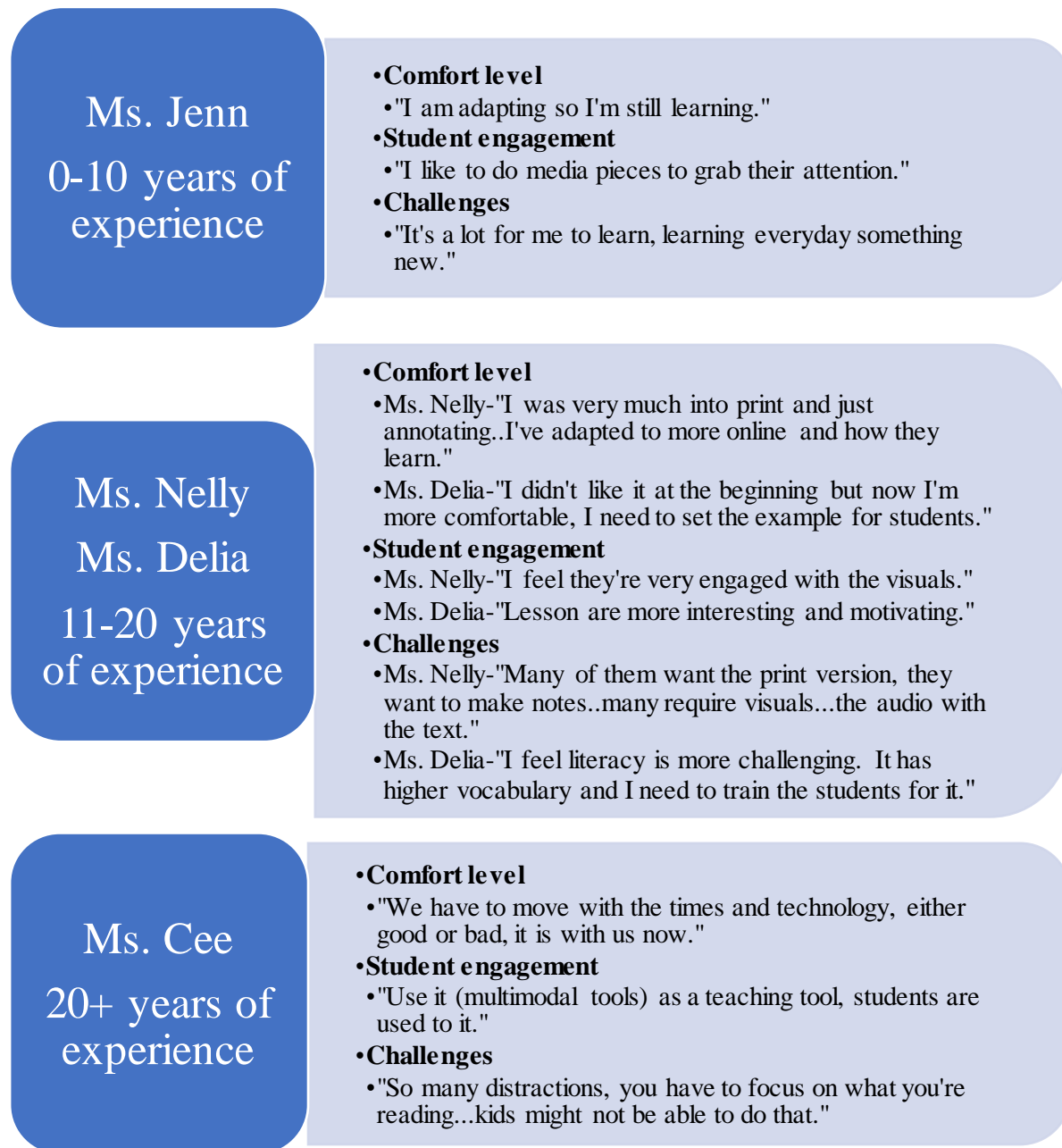
Figure 11. Teachers' Perspectives Comparison

Summary

All participants had their perceptions about multimodal texts and literacy development. The changes in technology have shifted the need for paper strategies and learning to online platforms. This is the most significant impact on literacy skills. As teachers continue to support students' literacy development, the utilization of multimodal texts in the classroom must reflect the changes in literacy skills. Teachers perceived multimodal texts as beneficial to student learning and engagement. They credited visuals as a critical component of literacy development. The high number of emergent bilingual students the teachers service, the more the teachers are required to provide second language acquisition support. One way that teachers offer this support is through visuals during their instruction. The teachers perceived that students were engaged in learning using interactive texts. They felt if using online platforms for learning, their engagement would be higher. As one of the participants mentioned, students are 21st century; therefore, the literacy practices in the classroom need to match those suitable for the students served.

Moving forward, teachers identified professional development as an area of support for all teachers. However, due to recent changes to online testing, specialists must continue to communicate with teachers regarding new changes, skills, and online platforms available. Additionally, the purchase of resources must also include an online platform if paper-learning strategies are to be practiced in new settings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The use of multimodal literacies in K-12 classrooms has grown since the COVID-19 pandemic and virtual learning. Students are now required to increase their evaluation and utilization of skills to read online texts (Hodges & Matthews, 2020). The need for additional support and instruction for students is necessary for them to comprehend texts better. There is an increasing interest in studying the best practices to integrate classroom instructional approaches and multiliteracies (Si et al., 2022). Teachers' perspectives play a role in understanding how educators use multimodal texts to develop students' literacy skills. Moving forward, educators need teaching approaches that include multimodal literacies to assist with teaching diverse classrooms. The comparative case study's purpose was to compare teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts and students' literacy development based on their years of experience.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this comparative case study was to compare middle school teachers' perspectives in Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley. The focus of this study was on the teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts and students' literacy development based on their years of experience. The research questions that guided this study were as follows:

1. What are middle school teachers' perspectives regarding the use of multimodal texts in the Reading Language Arts classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley?

2. How do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley perceive that their students' literacies are developing through the use of multimodal texts?

3. What do middle school teachers in the Rio Grande Valley need to be supported to use multimodal texts?

By answering these questions, the study contributes to new insights based on teachers' perspectives regarding the use of multiliteracy and the development of students' literacy skills. Teachers' perspectives are important because they can influence student learning and instruction through the use, or lack of, multimodal texts.

The New London Group (1996) first introduced the concepts of multiliteracy and multiliteracies to state that a new theory of pedagogy was necessary "to account for the great diversity in the nature of texts and communication resulting from societies that were becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse and globalized" (Serafini & Gee, 2017, p. 6). The multiliteracies pedagogical approach centers around four aspects: situated practices, critical framing, over instruction, and transformed practice. The students' multiliteracies are developed in all teaching contexts that should be authentic and meaningful for students, meaning students interest should be considered in multiliteracy practices (Palsa & Mertala, 2019). Therefore, teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts and their perceptions on students' literacy development, along with identification of areas of support, are needed to contribute to new insights on the concept of multiliteracy.

Four participants agreed to participate in this study at one middle school located in the Rio Grande Valley. The data obtained for this study consisted of two interviews, two

observations, and two lesson plans collected during the observations. The data analysis process consisted of coding interview transcripts to identify concepts or repeated patterns. Led by the research questions, I begin to categorize the concepts or patterns into categories. This was then continued with a second round of coding, followed by mapping out the findings into themes to the study's research questions. I chose a case study approach to compare the participants' perceptions and utilization of multimodal texts based on their years of experience. Comparative case studies use similarities and differences to support examining the causality, for this study, the years of experience and perception (Goodrick, 2014). Their perceptions based on years of experience helped me to identify themes related to multimodal texts and students' literacy development.

Summary of Findings

The following is a discussion of the findings. The four themes that emerged were (a) student learning and engagement; (b) literacy experiences changes; (c) teachers perceiving visuals as key; and (d) continued professional development. The findings of this study were more prevalent towards digital literacy.

Theme 1: Student Learning and Engagement

Participants in this study perceived multimodal texts as a positive method for student learning and engagement. They felt that multimodal tools such as visuals, media pieces, audio with the text, and the ability to interact with online features, made the lesson more exciting and motivating for students. The middle school teachers in this study perceived that their students' literacies developed using multimodal texts and credit visuals as a vital component of literacy skills. They stated during their interviews that they felt students were more engaged with the lesson if some visual or media piece was involved. They also felt providing students with visual

91

and auditory support was necessary due to the student's second language acquisition as emergent bilinguals. The participants felt the student learning was higher due to their engagement with the multimodal tools utilized to introduce lessons and vocabulary words. Their perspectives were positive as the participants felt teaching was more meaningful for students, and they were able to understand the concepts better.

As teachers transition to online testing for the 2022-2023 school year, student learning needs to be relevant to achieve student engagement. One of the participants, Ms. Cee, stated that using technology in the classrooms helps students because "they're 21st century, are they Millennials? Yeah, Millennials, they're born with a computer, iPad, or phone." Another participant stated that there are different approaches to engaging students, making the lessons more exciting and motivating them to want to learn more. Ms. Jenn, the new teacher, did express how she is still learning something new every day. She feels there are different resources, especially with technology, and it is a lot for her to learn. This can be an issue, more so for first-year teachers.

In a study by Hasheimi (2018), students received instructions for an assignment in various modes and media consisting of video, sound, and written text. Students paid more attention to the filmed instructions than written instructions. The digital use of multimodal texts engaged students prior to them engaging with the written instructions. This could be because digital imagery practices are a big part of students accessing internet, phones, or tablets (Mills & Unsworth, 2018). In a similar study, Hill (2014) found that using digital projects fostered student motivation and creativity. This project allowed students to strengthen their literacy skills in multiple modalities.

As digital media and literacies grow, multimodality through words, images, and sounds can positively engage students. Educators must help students understand and experience literacy in "meaningful ways to engage with it, ways that are also part of their new media world" (Hughes & Tolley, 2010, p. 7). Phones, tablets, and e-books are part of reading in the 21st century. All forms of literacy can engage students in classroom instruction. Other forms like written text in video games, apps, and the web are combined with images, video, data visualization, and sound (Cope et al., 2017). All tools that engage students in meaningful and relevant learning can enhance student learning.

Gee (2012) shared the same thoughts more than a decade before the emphasis on 21st century digital media skills began. As teachers begin to incorporate learning through technology to enhance student learning, it is essential to remember that it is beneficial if used in "ways that are student-centered and in the students' best interests" (Hodges & Matthews, 2020, p. 54). The multiliteracies pedagogy provides students with real life applications on learning based on their background, funds of knowledge, and own experiences. By using multiliteracies, teachers can recognize students' life experiences and use them in the classroom to engage students in learning or help students be designers of their learning. Through a multipedagogies perspective, teaching can happen anywhere and by anyone who engages in an act of teaching (Holmes, 2017).

Theme 2: Changes in Literacy Experiences

The participants in this study expressed their changes in literacy experiences during their educational careers. Ms. Nelly and Ms. Delia expressed their preferences for both print features as opposed to online, yet both stated that they had to adapt to what was best for their students. Ms. Nelly stated regarding reading strategies on paper, "I have adapted to more online, and I've also learned about the way students learn; I needed to familiarize myself with learning the tools

available to them." The participants in this study expressed the importance of adapting to what is best for students, leaving their preferences aside. Ms. Delia shared that with so many resources available for students, it is more challenging for an educator to train them to navigate those resources.

Ms. Cee, the veteran participant in this study, expressed her concern regarding the distractions students face navigating online texts. She feels students do not know how to ignore these distractors and focus on the text, which affects their reading comprehension. A concern once absent when students used to read only printed-based texts. While texts might have included graphics and visuals, there was no pop-up to worry about or a hyperlink to click on to navigate to a different page. As students interact with online texts, it is essential to teach them to stay focused and avoid distractors. The participant also stated how there is so much information out there that students cannot distinguish between real and fake.

The New London Group's (1996) definition of multiliteracies brought attention to the importance of multiple modalities in meaning-making while also considering the diversity in representation. This is a key component in a classroom environment as there is great diversity among the students and the knowledge they bring. The increased digital technologies have changed how students experience meaning-making in reading and writing. Now students can combine resources to make meaning using various modalities and media (Magnusson & Godhe, 2019). A change in literacy skills for both students and educators as reading print versus online texts requires a different set of skills. Reading online texts brings new challenges that teachers "must address to ensure students are able to approach and utilize new information contained in the more dynamic environment of online reading" (Hodges & Matthews, 2020, p. 55).

Alvermann (2011) asserted, "Sometimes it takes putting yourself into the role of the learner" (p. 17). This is a statement for all educators adapting to utilizing technology as part of instruction. The role of digital learners, whether students or adults, focuses on recognizing the value that technology presents in learning opportunities (Gallardo-Echenique et al., 2015). As educators become part of the digital learners, they must recognize the changes to literacy skills from print to online environments. For example, when reading a print-based text about animals, the students may be able to identify facts and details, examples about sharks, and other text features. If the exact text is available on a digital platform, it may provide hyperlinks, embedded videos, or additional images, which provide more layers to the text structure (Hodges & Matthews, 2020). Therefore, it is vital to consider the multimodal text features and the instructional methods that assist teaching and learning in different formats of texts that convey information--a factor all participants had to consider as they teach new literacy skills.

Effective teaching and learning is dynamic and constantly changing to meet the learning needs of students in the 21st century and beyond. As literacy continues to evolve, students will continue to be consumers and producers of texts. Multiliteracy pedagogy can engage students in variety of learning opportunities and learning communities.

Theme 3: Teachers Perceive Visuals as Key

All participants expressed that they perceive visuals as crucial to literacy development. The participants in this study all work with emergent bilingual students who need multiliteracies to connect to the diverse languages and cultures in the classroom. Ms. Nelly, who works with recent immigrants who are learning a new language in her RLA classroom, expressed how visuals are important in second language acquisition. She also stated that students are auditory learners but still require the use of visuals during the lesson. All participants utilized visuals to

introduce new vocabulary words during their lesson. One of the participants, Ms. Jenn, felt that students retained information when they could connect the vocabulary and images. Some participants utilized media pieces to introduce the lesson, while others resorted to PowerPoint, short videos, or pictures. The teachers in this study used two multimodal literacies: visual literacies and digital literacies. All participants used visuals as part of their lessons.

Literacy includes "visual, electronic, and digital forms of expression and communication" (Koltay, 2011, p. 214). All concepts are currently seen in today's classrooms. Si et al. (2022) shared that visual literacies include print-based texts and visualized activities, while digital literacies include electronic and internet-based texts. Their study found that visual and digital literacies are commonly used in secondary grades. This was evident in the participants in this study as they perceived visuals as key to students' literacy development.

Emergent bilingual students can interpret meanings through multimodal modes such as images and sounds, which can aid their literacy comprehension (Si et al., 2022; Toohey et al., 2015). Multiliteracies consist of textual and visual meaning-making processes critical in multimodal modes (The New London Group, 1996). This can help students in their comprehension connecting to the lesson's visual information and content. In addition, it can facilitate understanding of the lesson and lessen the possible frustration of someone who does not understand. Multimodalities provide multilingual students the resources to produce meanings, "which would be beneficial to develop their language skills and demonstrate their comprehension on learning contents" (Si et al., 2022, p. 281).

Theme 4: Continued Professional Development

All participants expressed the need for continued professional development. They felt it was vital to receive information on how to use tools beneficial for student success on online

platforms. Ms. Nelly felt it was important for teachers to receive training on online resources that come with the purchase of textbooks. She felt some teachers might not be familiar with the utilization of these tools as this is a new component to the textbooks. Ms. Cee felt it is important to receive updated information from TEA on writing and testing features. She expressed her gratitude when district curriculum specialist visit the campus and classrooms to provide update and resources. Ms. Jenn felt that as a new teacher she needed professional development to learn new resources. This support can be facilitated by attending targeted training to develop new skills, receiving support from the reading specialist and/or teachers who might be more knowledgeable about using different resources. Ms. Jenn mentioned she would like to have opportunity to observe veteran teachers and see their implementation of resources in the classroom.

Hughes and Tolley (2010) stated more than 12 years ago that pre-service training on technology use was necessary for our teachers. This is an accurate statement today as educators teach in a digital age with new forms of literacy, including multimedia and multimodal technologies. As predicted by Kress (2003), the TV, computer, cell phone, and other emerging technologies rule communication practices and language use, especially with students who understand the language used in an electronic medium. Students "need access to the technological tools and expertise that allow them to be powerful producers in the digital age" (Mirra et al., 2018, p. 16). This expertise can only come from educators who receive the support necessary to provide new skills to students. Students "need teachers to train their abilities to precisely understand on multimodal literacies, especially new literacies or digital literacies" (Si et al., 2022, p. 291). With increased knowledge of multiliteracies and their impact on student

learning, the teacher can to choose between multimodal literacies that can develop students' abilities.

As digital literacies continue to grow in the classroom, they "present a new language with specific demands on students" (Hodges & Matthews, 2020, p. 62). Text structure instruction now includes embedded videos, hypertext, and links. It is no longer dependent on linear reading; it now provides an opportunity to engage in text and other resources. Teachers must know how to present these literacy skills to students and guide them in navigating digital text structures. The digital formats require different pedagogical thinking of how students read and consume information. In addition, serving students in the 21st century skills requires educators to be receive updated information on best literacy practices. Classroom support needs to be provided for the implementation of literacy practices to be successful. This includes continuous professional development to keep up to date with new resources and programs.

Teachers "have the knowledge and skillset to become more capable and empowered, and with support, teachers will reach higher levels of functioning" (Zimmer & Matthews, 2022, p. 2). As multimodal texts become part of everyday instruction, providing the support needed to implement new skills is critical. Students can only be digitally literate if they have digitally literate teachers. A teacher familiar with multimodal texts is more likely to implement them in the classroom. In return, this can increase students' ability to use digital tools and resources to read, write and communicate by speaking, listening, and viewing.

Implications for Practice

The quickly changing demographics in classrooms call for teachers' change in pedagogy. Educators need new strategies to develop literacy skills in school. Multimodal texts can significantly benefit diverse students by providing a range of literacies and practices (Bull &

Ansley, 2018). Additionally, educators must incorporate meaningful activities for diverse students to acquire literacy skills. For example, emergent bilingual students could benefit incorporating multimodal texts into their second language acquisition support. Multimodal texts allow educators to present information through various modes, such as visual images, written language, design elements, and other semiotic resources. This provides an opportunity for educators to teach all styles of learning. We know students learn through various techniques, and multimodal texts offer opportunities to meet the needs of all learners. Serafini (2012) stated, "The amount of time students will spend looking at visual and multimodal texts in the new millennium will require a rethinking of current pedagogical approaches" (p. 27). A statement made over ten years ago could not be more accurate in today's educational practices. With the continued increase of technology in classrooms, educators can quickly adapt multimodal texts to teach students new content while meeting their diverse learning styles.

Additionally, this can change classroom instruction by allowing students to be designers of their learning opportunities. Students might be more familiar with digital apps/resources; this provides an opportunity for teachers to mentor students who teach others. Multipedagogies acknowledge that learning can come from anyone and anywhere. It encourages "all kinds of people who engage in teaching, and they can even empower learners to design their own learning pathways (Holmes, 2017, p. 134). It also provides an opportunity for students to bring their funds of knowledge into the classroom curriculum.

With the continued increase of technology integration in the classroom, it is crucial to balance technology and ways to promote student learning. The goal is to find the link between multimodal texts and increasing student engagement and understanding of texts. This will provide educators with tools to use during classroom instruction that can promote a variety of

modalities to promote student learning. In addition, educators "need to become familiar with a whole range of new texts and increase understandings about the composition of texts and how to engage with them" (Bull & Anstey, 2018, p. 11). Additionally, the texts in the 21st century require new strategies, skills, and pedagogies to support students' comprehension of the multimodal world.

The use of digital platforms for student learning and engagement will continue to dominate classrooms. Educators will need support navigating the challenges of multimodal texts and digital environments such as blogs, wikis, text messages, and hyperlinks. Educators will need help implementing new literacy practices. Gee (2012) suggested that it is also crucial to mentor students on using these digital platforms. With proper mentoring, educators can provide the knowledge and skills necessary for the future. While this statement was made more than ten years ago, it is valuable to today's classrooms as new skills and digital platforms are part of our everyday use. As educators, we must prepare to meet the needs of our students by providing the appropriate skills needed for learning. Furthermore, every school needs to think about "its pace, its tools, its human capital, and its pedagogical practice to open spaces for digital invention and the apprenticing of digital inventors (Mirra et al., 2018, p. 17). The school administration should provide all the necessary items for teachers to prepare better students to be consumers and producers of multimodal texts.

Another recommendation is to assist teachers transitioning paper instructional teaching strategies and learning to online platforms. This task may need various professional development sessions for educators to learn the how to implement paper instructional strategies on online platforms. As students and teachers transition to online testing, students must be familiar with using online strategies once implemented on paper. This will require support from

administrators; teachers have been teaching paper strategies for so long that it will take mentoring for them to adapt to teaching them online.

This support must also include the alignment of resources once print-based to online. The purchase of instructional materials for any school with an online platform aligned with the curriculum is recommended. This can facilitate the transition of paper instructional strategies to online. Additionally, as teachers are expected to utilize technology in the classroom and have students learn through technology, they must be equipped with the right resources such as smartboards, laptops, chargers, and access to online resources. Finally, purchasing a curriculum aligned to online platforms can assist teachers in doing so.

Recommendations for Future Research

As multimodal texts continue to increase during classroom instruction for reading comprehension, teachers need to know strategies and tools that promote critical thinking through multimodal texts. Future research on how teacher preparation programs prepare teachers to teach multiliteracies can assist in preparing future educators to understand the role of multimodal texts. In addition, teachers must know how to incorporate multimodal texts into the curriculum and how to utilize the texts to develop students' literacy skills. They must also be familiar with the resources available to them through the district and campus personnel.

Another recommendation is to continue to explore teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts. More research is needed on how multimodal texts help enhance literacy skills and knowledge for students. Teachers are the force behind pedagogy in the classroom. Their perspectives need to be valued and acknowledge. Teachers' perspectives influence classroom instruction; therefore, it influences student learning.

Limitations

Although this study focused on teachers' perspectives on using multimodal texts in middle school RLA classrooms to develop students' literacies, the study has its limitations. First, the study focuses on one middle school in the Rio Grande Valley. The region where the participants teach may influence the teachers' perspectives on literacy development. Second, although about 20 participants were invited to participate, only four agreed to the study. This limited the perspectives of teachers based on their years of teaching. Finally, teachers' perspectives in this study do not reflect all middle school teachers' perspectives.

Conclusion

This study contributes to understanding teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school RLA classrooms. This study aimed to explore the teachers' perspectives of multimodal texts and their implementation to develop students' literacy. There is currently limited research that focuses on teachers' perceptions on implementing multimodal texts. Current studies available focus on implementation and the rising utilization of multimodal texts in the classroom but little to none provide teachers perspectives. Teachers' perspectives, either positive or negative, will influence instructional decisions that ultimately affect student learning. As digital learners, teachers use multimodal tools, and their learning process is vital in their instructional decisions. They are also the classroom leaders, and their voices are important in instructional changes at the campus, district, and state level. The teachers' perceptions assist leaders in providing support systems in the areas of need.

The region where this study took place also influences the teachers' perceptions and students' literacy development. The Rio Grande Valley is composed of 92.5% Hispanic population, at the participating campus, 98% of the students are Hispanic. Many of them

identified as economically disadvantaged, at risk, and with limited English proficiency. Their literacy development may require more support due to the high number of emergent bilingual students in the region.

Participant perceptions were similar in that they agreed multimodal texts provided engagement and learning through various modes. Additionally, the middle school RLA teachers recognized the importance of technology integration in the classroom, the use of visuals to support student learning, and the need for professional development and acknowledge the changes in literacy skills. Two of the participants expressed their initial uncertainty in their technology integration skills, but both agreed that they were adapting to what was best for their students. One of the participants expressed her concern with the distractors associated with online reading.

As educators continue to increase the use of multimodal texts in school, students must develop the skills to read, comprehend, and produce new texts. The New London Group aimed for students to be critical consumers, producers, and distributors of digital literacies (Mirra et al., 2018; New London Group, 1996). This comparative case study aimed at providing teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts in middle school RLA classrooms. Further research is needed in teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts through a multiliteracies pedagogy. The multiliteracies pedagogy can help teachers adapt to the fast-changing technologies and the changes it brings to literacy instruction.

REFERENCES

Adams, W. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. In J. Wholey, H. Hatry, & K. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation.* (4th ed., pp. 492-505). Jossey-Bass.

Ajayi, L. (2011). Preservice teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and perception of their preparation to teach multiliteracies/multimodality. *Teacher Educator, 46*(1), 6–31. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/08878730.2010.488279

Alvermann, D. E. (2011). Moving on/keeping pace: Youth's literate identities and multimodal digital texts. *Teachers College Record, 113*(13), 109–128. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811111301305

Alvermann, D. E. (2015). Being in the moment: Implications for teaching and young people's digital literacies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy,* 58(8), 625-631. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.415

Anstey, M. & Bull, G. (2010). Helping teachers to explore multimodal texts. *Curriculum & Leadership Journal, 8*(16).

Boche, B., & Henning, M. (2015). Multimodal scaffolding in the secondary English classroom curriculum. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 58*(7), 579–590. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.406

Bull, G., & Anstey, M. (2018). *Elaborating multiliteracies through multimodal texts: Changing classroom practices and developing teacher pedagogies.* Routledge/Taylor Francis.

Callow, J., & Zammit, K. (2012). "Where lies your text?" ("Twelfth Night" Act I, Scene V): Engaging high school students from low socioeconomic backgrounds in reading multimodal texts. *English in Australia, 47*(2), 69–77.

Cleaver, S. (2008). Comics & graphic novels. *Instructor, 117*(6), 28–30. ERIC. (EJ792963)

Coiro J., Kiili, C., & Castek, J. (2017). Designing pedagogies for literacy and learning through personal digital inquiry. In F. Serafini, & E. Gee (Eds.), *Remixing multiliteracies theory and practice from New London to New Times* (pp. 119-133). Teachers College Press.

104

Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (2009). 'Multiliteracies': New literacies, new learning. *Pedagogies: An International Journal, 4*(3), 1-30. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/15544800903076044

Cope, B., Kalantzis, M., & Abrams, S.S. (2017). Multiliteracies: Meaning-making and learning in the era of digital text. In F. Serafini, & E. Gee, (Eds). *Remixing multiliteracies theory and practice from New London to New Times*, (pp.35-49). Teachers College Press.

Dahlström, H. (2022). Students as digital multimodal text designers: A study of resources, affordances, and experiences. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 53*(2), 391–407. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13171

Gallardo-Echenique, E. E., Marquez-Molias, L., Bullen, M., & Strijbos, J.-W. (2015). Let's talk about digital learners in the digital era. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 16*(3), 156-187. doi: https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v16i3.2196

Farías, M., & Véliz, L. (2019). Multimodal texts in Chilean English teaching education: Experiences from educators and pre-service teachers. *PROFILE: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 21*(2), 13–27. doi: 10.15446/profile.v21n2.75172

Garcia, O. (2017). Translanguaging in schools: Subiendo y bajando, bajando y subiendo as afterword. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education, 16*(4), 256-263. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2017.1329657

Garcia, O., Kleifgen, J. A., & Falchi, L. (2008). Equity matters: Research review No. 1: From English Language Learners to Emergent Bilinguals. *A Research Initiative for the Campaign for Educational Equity, Columbia University* (pp. 1-61). ERIC. (ED524002)

Gee, J. P. (2012). The old and the new in digital literacies. *The Educational Forum, 76*(4), 418-480. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2012.708622

Gee, J. P. (2012b). Digital games and libraries. *Knowledge Quest, 41*(1), 61.

Glesne, C. (2015). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An Introduction* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Goodrick, D. (2014). *Comparative case studies, Methodological briefs: Impact evaluation 9*, UNICEF Office of Research. (No. innpub754). https://ideas.repec.org/p/ucf/metbri/innpub754.html

Hammond, H. (2012). Graphic novels and multimodal literacy: A high school study with American Born Chinese. *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*, *50*(4), 22-32. https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/487148

Hashemi, S. (2018). "You're meant to read the writing?": Young pupils negotiating meaning from digitally mediated multimodal texts. In C. Osbeck, Å. Ingerman, & S. Claesson (Eds.), *Didactic classroom studies: A potential research direction* (p. 87–110). Kriterium.

Hill, A. E. (2014). Using interdisciplinary, project-based, multimodal activities to facilitate literacy across the content areas. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 57*(6), 450–460. https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.270

Holmes, J. B. (2017). Video games, distributed teaching and learning systems, and multipedagogies. In F. Serafini, & E. Gee. (Eds.), *Remixing multiliteracies theory and practice from New London to New Times* (pp.134-147). Teachers College Press.

Hodges, T. S., & Matthews, S. D. (2020). Digital literacies and text structure instruction: Benefits, new language demands, and changes to pedagogy. In P. M. Sullivan, & J. L. Lantz (Eds.), *In handbook of research in integrating digital technology with literacy pedagogies* (pp. 52-71). IGI Global.

Hughes, J., & Tolley, S. (2010). Engaging students through new literacies: The good, bad and Curriculum of visual essays. *English in Education, 44*(1), 5–26. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/17548845.2009.11912396

Hutchison, A., & Reinking, D. (2011). Teachers' perceptions of integrating information and communication technologies into literacy instruction: A national survey in the United States. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 46(4), 312-333. https://doi.org/10.1002/RRQ.002

Jewitt, C. (2008). Multimodality and literacy in school classrooms. *Review of Research in Education, 32*(1), 241–267. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X07310586

Johnson R. B., & Christensen. L. (2017). *Educational research quantitate, qualitative, and mixed method approaches* (6th ed.). Sage.

Kim, M. S., Meng, X., & Kim, M. (2021). *Technology-enhanced multiliteracies teaching towards a culturally responsive curriculum: A multiliteracies approach to ECE, interactive learning environments.* Routledge. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1870503

Koltay, T. (2011). The media and the literacies: Media literacy, information literacy, digital literacy. *Media, Culture & Society, 33*(2), 211–221. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443710393382

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice, 24*(1), 120-124. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Kress, G. (2003). *Literacy in the new media age*. Routledge.

Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods* (Vols. 1-0). Sage Publications.

Lead4ward (2023, March). Snapshot-Grade 6 English Language Arts and Reading. https://lead4ward.com/docs/resources/snapshots/elar/teks_snapshot_elar_gr_06.pdf

Longhurst, R. (2003). Semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In N. J. Clifford, & G. Valentine (Eds.), *Key methods in geography*, (pp 117-132). Sage.

Magnusson, P., & Godhe, A-L. (2019). Multimodality in language education: Implications for teaching. *Designs for Learning, 11*(1), 127-137. ERIC. (EJ1235540)

McLean, C. A. & Rowsell, J. (2015). Imagining writing futures: Photography, writing, and technology. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 31*(2), 102-118. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2014.962201

Meacham, S. J., Meacham, S., Thompson, M., & Graves, H. (2019). Hip-hop early literacy in K-1 classrooms. *The Reading Teacher, 73*(1), 29-37. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1809

Mills, G. E., & Gay, L. R. (2018). *Educational research competencies for analysis and applications* (12th ed.). Pearson.

Mills, K. A., & Unsworth, L. (2018). iPad animations: Powerful multimodal practices for adolescent literacy and emotional language. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 61*(6), 609–620. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.717

Mirra, N., Morrell, E., & Filipiak, D. (2018). From digital consumption to digital invention: Toward a new critical theory and practice of multiliteracies. *Theory into Practice, 57*(1), 12-19. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2017.1390336

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-141. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/00405849209543534

National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Public school enrollment. Institute of Education Sciences*, U.S. Department of Education.

New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(1), 60-92.

New London Group. (2000). A pedagogy of multiliteracies designing social futures. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 9–37). London: Taylor and Francis Group.

Palsa, L., & Mertala, P. (2019). Multiliteracies in local curricula: Conceptual contextualization's of transversal competence in the Finnish curricular framework. *Nordic Journal of Studies in Educational Policy, 5*(2), 114-126. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/20020317.2019.1635845

Pilgrim, J., & Martinez, E. E. (2013). Defining literacy in the 21st century: A guide to terminology and skills. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education, 1*(1), 60–69. ERIC. (EJ1110822)

Rogers-Whitehead, C. (2021, February 26). How educators can use discord to connect with students. *International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)*. https://www.iste.org/explore/tools-devices-and-apps/how-educators-can-use-discord-connect-students

Ryu, J., & Boggs, G. (2016). Teachers' perceptions about teaching multimodal composition: The case study of Korean English teachers at secondary schools. *English Language Teaching, 9*(6), 52–60. ERIC. (EJ1101224)

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Sang, Y. (2017). Expanded territories of "literacy": New literacies and multiliteracies. *Journal of Education and Practice, 8*(8), 16-19. ERIC. (EJ1139059)

Serafini, F. (2012). Reading multimodal texts in the 21st century. *Research in the Schools, 19*(1), 26–32. https://www.scinapse.io/papers/239709717

Serafini, F., & Gee, E. (2017). *Remixing multiliteracies theory and practice from New London to New Times*. Teacher College Press.

Si, Q., Hodges, T. S., & Coleman, J. M. (2022). Multimodal literacies classroom instruction for K-12 students: A review of research. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 61*(3), 276–297. doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2021.2008555

Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education, 44*(1), 26-28. https://www.jstor.org/stable/45381095

Texas Education Agency. (2023, March). About TEA. https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea

Texas Education Agency. (2023, March). Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills. https://tea.texas.gov/academics/curriculum-standards/teks/texas-essential-knowledge-and-skills

Texas Education Agency. (2022, April). *STAAR Online Testing Platform*. https://teadev.tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/testing/staar/staar-online-testing-platform

Texas Education Agency. (2023, January). Student Assessment Division. https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/testing/student-assessment-overview

Texas State Board for Educator Certification. (2003). Technology Application Standards. https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/techapp.pdf

Toohey, K., Dagenais, D., Fodor, A., Hof, L., Nuñez, O., Singh, A., & Schulze, L. (2015). "That sounds so cooool": Entanglements of children, digital tools, and literacy practices. *TESOL Quarterly, 49*(3), 461–485. doi: https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.236

U.S. Census Bureau. (2022, June 10). *Quick facts: Hidalgo County, Texas.* Retrieved from U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Hidalgo County, Texas

Wiseman, A. M., Mäkinen, M., & Kupiainen, R. (2016). Literacy through photography: Multimodal and visual literacy in a third grade classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 44*(5), 537–544. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10643-015-0739-9

Yelland, N. J. (2018). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Young children and multimodal learning with tablets. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 49*(5), 847–858. doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12635

Yi, Y., & Choi, J. (2015). Teachers' views of multimodal practices in K-12 classrooms: Voices from teachers in the United States. *TESOL Quarterly, 49*(5), 838-847. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43893789

Zimmer, W., & Matthews, S. (2022). A virtual coaching model of professional development to increase teachers' digital learning competencies. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 109*(9), 1-16. doi: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103544

Children's Literature Cited

Yang, G. L. (2006). *American Born Chinese*. First Second Books.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Study Title: Teachers' Perspectives on Multimodal Texts in Middle School Reading Language
Arts Classrooms in the Rio Grande Valley

Consent Name: _____

Principal Investigator:Angelica Ybarra   Telephone: (xxx)xxx-xxxx

Dissertation Chair:

Dr. Elena Venegas   Email: elena.venegas@utrgv.edu

Key points you should know

• I am inviting you to be in a research study I am conducting. Your participation is voluntary.
This means it is up to you and only you to decide if you want to be in the study. Even if you
decide to join the study, you are free to leave at any time if you change your mind.

•Take your time and ask to have any words or information that you do not understand explained
to you.

•I am doing this study because we want to learn about teachers' perspectives on multimodal texts
and their utilization to develop students' literacy.

•Why are you being asked to be in this study?

   •You are a middle school teacher

   •You teach Reading Language Arts

•What will you do if you agree to be in the study?

      •Participate in 2 interviews, 2 classroom observations, and turn in 2 lesson plans on
observation conducted.

Participation in this study requires audiotape of the 2 interviews to be conducted, by signing this
consent form you are giving me permission to make and use these recordings. Audio recording
will only be used for accurate transcription and data collection.

•Can you be harmed by being in this study?

  •Being in this study involves no greater risk than what you ordinarily encounter in daily life.

  •Risks to your personal privacy and confidentiality: Your participation in this research will be
held strictly confidential and only a pseudonym will be used to identify your stored data.

•What are the costs of being in the study?

      •None

•Will you get anything for being in this study?

•Participation is complete voluntary.

•You will not receive any payments for taking part in this study.

What happens if I say no or change my mind?

•You can say you do not want to be in the study now or if you change your mind later, you can stop participating at any time.

•No one will treat your differently. You will not be penalized.

How will my privacy be protected?

•I will share your information with my dissertation chair and committee members. I will deidentify data before sharing it with my dissertation chair and committee members.

•Your information will be stored in a locked and secure filed that will be password protected.

•No published data will identify you directly.

Who to contact for research related questions

For questions about this study or to report any problems you experience as a result of being in this study contact Elena Venegas at elena.venegas@utrgv.edu

Who to contact regarding your rights as a participant

This research has been reviewed and approved by the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Protections (IRB). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel that your rights as a participant were not adequately met by the researcher, please contact the IRB at (956) 665-3598 or irb@utrgv.edu.

Signatures

By signing below, you indicate that you are voluntarily agreeing to participate in this study and that the procedures involved have been described to your satisfaction. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this form for your own reference. To participate, you must be at least 18 years of age. If you are under 18, please inform the researcher.

_____   ____/_____/_____

Participant's Signature   Date

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview #1	Interview #2
Focus: Perception of literacy	Focus: Multiliteracies
1. How long have you been teaching?	1. What can you tell me about multiliteracies?
2. How do you teach literacy in your classroom?	2. Do you use multi-modal tools (visual, gestural, kinesthetic) in the classroom?
3. How do you feel students learn best?	3. How you do you think using multi-modal tools helps literacy development in the classroom?
4. Describe a literacy lesson in your classroom.	
5. During a literacy lesson, when are students most engaged?	4. Tell me how you go about preparing for the change to online state assessments.
6. What do you think of the kind of learners that your student are?	5. How do you feel about this change from print to online testing?
7. Have your views on literacy changed over the years? If so, how?	6. How do you think students will adjust to this change?
8. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?	7. What resources, materials or support is important for teachers to transition to online testing?
	8. Is there anything else you would like to tell/ask me?

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dr. Angelica Montoya Ybarra received her Doctor of Education degree from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in Literacy in May 2023. Her educational background includes attending the University of Texas Pan American where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Spanish in 2007, and a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from the same university in 2011.

Professional experience for Dr. Ybarra includes being employed as a middle school Assistant Principal in 2021 to present time, elementary school teacher from 2017-2021, Texas Literacy Initiative Literacy Coach from 2013-2015, Texas Literacy Initiative Project Manager from 2015-2017, and elementary teacher from 2008-2013.

Dr. Ybarra can be contacted via email at amontoyaz1@yahoo.com