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English Language Arts Teachers' Motivations and Experiences Related to Incorporating Digital Texts in Grades 6-12

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Abstract

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MEd, Edinboro University, 2014

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Selecting text mediums that best support their curriculum needs is a critical task for English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, who also need to choose materials aligned with state standards and district requirements. Because 21st-century learning standards require students to have more technology skills, teachers are increasingly offering digital texts in classrooms. The problem under investigation in this study was the gap in understanding of the curricular choices U.S. teachers make when incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms for Grades 6-12 to increase literacy. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine ELA teachers' motivation and experiences related to the incorporation of digital texts into the Grades 6-12 curriculum. Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory was the conceptual framework used for this study. A basic interpretive qualitative research design was selected for this study. Eight current ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 were recruited from two large suburban school districts to participate in an individual semistructured interview. Interview data were analyzed using thematic coding. Seven themes emerged: motivations, experiences with technology, professional development, implementation of digital texts, barriers, teacher preference, and student preference. My findings from this study can promote positive social change by increasing understanding of the curricular choices teachers make, and the barriers that they face, in incorporating digital texts in their classrooms to aid students in developing competencies that support critical literacy skills. With this understanding, administrators may be encouraged to offer ongoing professional development for educators that supports technology integration and student learning.

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Dedication

To my beautiful daughters, Annaliese and Gabriella, who inspire me to pursue my goals to demonstrate to them the importance of lifelong learning. To my loving parents, Gary and Anna, who instilled in me the importance of education and believing in myself. To my sister, Carrie, who is my biggest supporter. And to my grandparents, Leo and Edith, who, without fail, were always my biggest advocates and encouraged me to continually go further with my education.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

One longtime concern for U.S. teachers regarding curriculum in English classes has been about the ability of teachers to choose literary texts (Allington & Guice, 2014). Allington and Guice (2014) noted little support from various stakeholders, including school administrators, state and federal educational officials, and parents, for teachers to select curriculum outside of what is mandated. Concerns about adequately preparing students for college course is a key aspect of mandated curricula. As Heller (2019) noted, the curriculum and text selection for secondary English teachers is focused on ensuring that students are prepared with exposure to select canonical texts required for their college courses.

Beyond which texts to teach in English classes, teachers also have choices to make in regard to the use of print texts or digital texts or the embrace of multimodal reading environments. Multimodal reading is the combination of digital texts and print texts. Walsh (2010) defined multimodal literacy as "meaning-making that occurs through the reading, viewing, understanding, responding to, and producing and interacting with multimedia and digital texts" (p. 213). The choice of instructional material, if not specifically required by a school district, is based on teachers' personal preferences. In this study, I examined teachers' motivations and experiences in incorporating digital texts in English Language Arts (ELA) classrooms in Grades 6-12. This study was significant in that the research focused on actual experiences and what motivated teachers to incorporate digital texts into the curriculum. Digital texts are part of technology implementations in many U.S. schools and are intended to promote technological

advancements. Additionally, digital texts provide another way for students to interact with and engage in learning, thereby allowing teachers the opportunity to potentially effect positive social change by helping students to develop competencies that support critical literacy skills. Robinson (2021) argued that as critical literacies increase, it can lead to individuals making informed actions and behaviors, thereby leading to promote positive social change.

Chapter 1 of this study includes the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research question. Later in this chapter, I discuss the conceptual framework and the nature of the study. Additionally, the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and potential significance of the study are addressed. A transition into Chapter 2 concludes this section.

Background

Technology literacy is an important component of contemporary education. Twenty-first century learning requires students to have technology literacy to enhance the education that students receive (Gonzales & Bellseau, 2017; Tarbutton, 2018). Teachers can integrate technology literacy into an ELA curriculum by using digital texts. Digital texts were first integrated into classrooms as an initiative by California's governor in 2009 to replace print math and science textbooks (Ember, 2009). For technology such as digital texts to be effective, however, teachers must be knowledgeable in its implementation and students should be technologically literate (DeCoito & Richardson, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2017).

Professional development can be beneficial to teachers in navigating technological tools. Research shows that teachers require support with technology integration and must stay current with changing technologies (Conrads et al., 2018; Merchie et al., 2018). Technology needs differ between teachers; therefore, professional development should be differentiated to meet those needs. For teachers to be properly prepared for technology integration in the classroom, they must have dedicated time to use technology and collaborate with other educators (Fenton, 2017). Once they have received effective professional development, teachers may begin to implement technology into their curriculum.

In addition to being prepared to properly implement technology in the classroom, teachers need to make decisions regarding which technological device(s) best meets their curriculum and student needs. Teachers should select technology that is beneficial to their educational goals; otherwise, the technology has the potential to be ineffective (Firmin & Genesi, 2013). There are multiple platforms (Kindle, NewsELA, and Project Gutenberg) from which teachers can choose digital texts. Another option is not to integrate digital texts at all. Findings from a survey done by the National Center for Education Statistics (2021) revealed that "half [of teachers surveyed] used interactive textbooks to a moderate (35 percent) or large extent (15 percent)" (p. 3). More research is needed to identify teachers' motivations to incorporate digital texts.

Problem Statement

Educators have a responsibility for preparing students for their future; this responsibility includes ensuring that students are prepared with skills in technological

literacy. Educational reforms now require teachers and educational leaders to embrace technology reforms and create new student learning opportunities to prepare students for society's needs (Collins & Halverson, 2018). (Lawrence & Tar, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Sawyer (2017) and Subramony (2018) noted that researchers have made a correlation between teachers' attitudes about and confidence in using technology to technology integration. Therefore, the problem under investigation in this study was the need for understanding of the curricular choices teachers make when incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms for Grades 6-12 to support and expand those choices to increase literacy.

In spite of the barriers faced by teachers, many contemporary U.S. classrooms do feature technology integration that allows students to develop 21st-century skills in technology (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Increased literacy may promote positive social change by preparing students for college and career readiness. Sadaf and Johnson (2017) asserted the need for digital literacy in the 21st-century. Since the Covid-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020, more teachers have relied on technology as a tool to educate (Seaman & Seaman, 2021). According to a policy brief from the United Nations (2020), around a billion learners around the world were impacted when schools and universities across the world were shut down due to the coronavirus outbreak during the Covid-19 pandemic. Students engaged in remote learning during this time. To assist students who were learning from home, teachers had to use technology to communicate information. To aid teachers in posting or sharing digital texts, publishers changed their copyright policies during the pandemic (Staff, 2020). However, even though teachers

were often aware of the free digital resources, many did not adopt digital texts as part of the curriculum (Lederman, 2021; Seaman & Seaman, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' motivation and experiences in incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms in Grades 6-12. I did not seek to determine which text format is more effective; instead, I wanted to explore the considerations teachers use for their pedagogical approaches. The study provides an increased understanding of the decisions underpinning teachers' curricular choices and their motivations for implementing digital texts. As I discuss in this chapter's Nature of the Study section, I used a qualitative approach to allow participants to freely disclose their beliefs and preferences.

Research Question

What are the motivations and experiences of ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 regarding the incorporation of digital texts into the curriculum?

Conceptual Framework

For the conceptual framework of this study, I used Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory. Diffusion of innovation is the theory that ideas or products spread through social systems to be adopted by individuals (Rogers, 2003). As applied to this study, teachers' perspectives, whether to embrace technology in the classroom or to resist it, will diffuse to other teachers and cause either an increase or a decrease in technology integration. Rogers's diffusion of innovation was appropriate for the study because, according to El Shaban and Egbert (2018):

teachers are likely to adopt an innovation when they gain knowledge about the

existence of the innovation, create a favorable attitude toward it, engage in

activity to decide to adopt the innovation, use the innovation, and confirm the

usefulness of the innovation to student learning. (p. 236)

As teachers go through the adoption process of digital texts, they will decide the

attributes of digital texts and decide whether or not to adopt the technology.

The most relevant aspects of Rogers's (2003) theory for this study were teachers'

perspectives as part of a social belief system, teachers' background training on

technology, and teachers' motivation to integrate technology in the classroom. I used

relevant concepts of Rogers's theory in composing the interview questions and collecting

and analyzing data. The framework also informed the development of the research

question, which centered on the motivation behind teachers' choices to integrate

technology in the ELA classroom.

Nature of the Study

I used a basic interpretive qualitative study approach. A basic interpretive

qualitative approach, also known as a generic qualitative approach, does not involve the

use of one of the three common qualitative methodologies: ethnography, grounded

theory, or phenomenology (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam (2002) described a basic

interpretive qualitative study as one that aims at understanding the phenomenon through

the lens of the participants. Participants can be viewed as the experts in this type of

qualitative research. For this study, the participants were ELA teachers in Grades 6-12

from two selected public schools in northeast Ohio. The research question was the reason

that I determined the basic qualitative design to be the best one for this qualitative study. The research question concerned teachers' perspectives of technology integration and background training in technology. Data collection consisted of semistructured interviews. To explore curricular decision-making, I asked open-ended questions during my semistructured interviews with ELA teachers in Grades 6-12. I analyzed the interview transcripts to develop themes related to teachers' choices in incorporating technology.

Definitions

Digital literacy: "The ability to understand and use information in multiple formats from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers" (Gilster, 1997, p. 133).

Digital texts: "Audio, visual or multimodal texts produced through digital or electronic technology which may be interactive and include animations and/or hyperlinks. Examples of digital texts include movies, websites, e-books, and apps" (NSW Government, 2021, Definitions section).

E-book: "An electronic book" (Cambridge University Press, 2023a, E-book section).

E-reader: "A small electronic device with a screen that allows you to read books in an electronic form" (Cambridge University Press, 2023b, E-reader section).

Information and communication technology: "An umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems, and so on, as well as the

various services and applications associated with them, such as videoconferencing and distance learning" (Huth et al., 2017, p. 131).

Intrinsic motivation: "One's willingness to engage in learning activities for their interest and enjoyment without expecting any extrinsic rewards in return" (Miyamoto et al., 2020, p.1).

Multimodal texts: Texts that feature "a combination of two or more communication modes, for example, print, image and spoken text as in film or computer presentations" (NSW Government, 2021, Definitions section).

Technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge: A "technology integration framework that identifies three types of knowledge instructors need to combine for successful edtech integration" (Powerschool, 2022, para. 1).

Technology integration: "The incorporation of technology resources and technology-based practices into the daily routines, work, and management of schools" (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d., Defining Technology Integration section).

21st-century learning: A view that "within the context of key knowledge instruction, students must also learn the essential skills for success in today's world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration" (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2019, p. 2).

Assumptions

One assumption in this study was that the interview questions I developed were worded in a way that would allow me to collect the required data to conduct the study. I also assumed that participants would give truthful answers to the interview questions so

that an in-depth understanding would be possible. Finally, I assumed that data saturation would occur based on the number of participant responses and that this would allow for the meaningful coding of responses and development of themes.

Scope and Delimitations

The central research question reinforced the scope of this study. ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 were the focus of the study because of their ability to choose to integrate digital technology into the curriculum. Students in Grades 6-12 have a stronger foundation in digital literacy than students in earlier grades due to more years of exposure; therefore, the focus was on teachers in those grade levels. I chose the study sites—two public school districts in northeast Ohio— because they were similar in terms of student population for the grade levels that were studied.

When choosing the approach and data collection methods, I considered the delimitations of the study. Delimitations are the boundaries that I set for the study. The participants were from the two selected public school districts in northeast Ohio and were currently teaching ELA in Grades 6-12. I conducted semistructured interviews with the participants because they could provide rich data about teachers' motivations and experiences (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Limitations

The study has some limitations. To initially address any potential limitations, before selecting participants for the study I fully informed them of the purpose of the study and obtained their informed consent. However, even after participants agreed to the study, common factors such as time constraints during interviews or nervousness during

interviews could create limitations. Because qualitative studies entail details, description of the setting, and quotes from participants, also called rich data collection, time constraints within the study time line could also cause potential limitations (Tenny et al., 2022).

Significance

In this study, I addressed the gap in the literature regarding teachers' motivations and experiences when incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms for Grades 6-12. The importance of this study is that it may further understanding of teachers' perspectives of technology integration in ELA classrooms, specifically the curriculum choices made by teachers. Greater knowledge about teachers' decision to incorporate technology into the curriculum may aid efforts to increase the technology's effectiveness (Subramony, 2018). Findings from this study may support efforts to increase technology use in U.S. schools by supporting teachers in incorporating more technology in the classroom, potentially expanding student interactions and communications.

Teachers and administrators may benefit from the findings of this dissertation because it may provide insight into changes needed regarding technology integration in the curriculum to increase student literacy scores. Additionally, educational institutions may benefit from the study because it may yield insight on potential changes in the curriculum that might help close the gap in reading achievement on the state standardized test. Specifically, study findings may identify effective teacher curricular choices related to integrating technology and means of improving material used to teach English. With this knowledge, stakeholders may be able to make beneficial changes to teacher curricula.

Additionally, because digital texts allow another way for students to interact with and engage in learning, teachers may effect positive social change by helping students to develop competencies that support critical literacy skills (Robinson, 2021).

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the background, problem, and purpose of the study, followed by the conceptual framework, research question, and nature of the study. I also discussed the assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of the study, as well as the potential significance of the study in providing insight on ways to close the gap in reading achievement and literacy. In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth review of the literature related to the study as well as offer more insight into the conceptual framework that supported the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

One of the decisions that U.S. teachers make in regard to instruction is whether to include digital texts in their curricula. Teachers in the United States have a choice to incorporate digital texts into their curriculum, regardless of whether a district mandates what is to be taught (Baker-Eveleth & Stone, 2015). The problem under investigation in this study was the lack of understanding regarding the curricular choices teachers make when incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms for Grades 6-12 to increase literacy. In one study, researchers examined reading comprehension effects across print and digital mediums and found that both mediums play a role in comprehension in various ways and one should not be regarded as better than the other (Singer & Alexander, 2017). However, studies focused on what motivates teachers to incorporate digital texts are lacking. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' motivation and experiences in incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms in Grades 6-12.

Chapter 2 begins with overviews of the literacy search strategy that I used to conduct a thorough review of literature and the conceptual framework that I used to guide the study. I used the framework, Rogers's diffusion of innovations theory, to link teachers' perceptions of technology with their decision-making regarding technology integration. I then review key literature related to the study topic. The literature review sections are organized by themes that include technology integration, technology in the classroom, and technology and curriculum. A summary and transition to Chapter 3 complete the chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

I used the Walden University Library to conduct the literature research. The following databases at the Library were used to ensure that saturation of the research topic was reached: ERIC, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, and Sage Journals. I also used the Library's Thoreau multidatabase search tool with full-text availability. The search criteria were limited to peer-reviewed journals that were published in the last 5 years. The following keywords were used when searching the databases: *curriculum*, *digital texts*, *e-books*, *electronic books*, *teacher attitudes*, *teacher perceptions*, *teacher views*, and *technology integration.* To provide the most results, some keywords were combined. Combined keywords included *digital texts* and *teacher perceptions*, *technology integration* and *electronic books*, *teacher views* and *electronic books*, and *e-books* and *technology integration*.

Conceptual Framework

The study focused on ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 and their perceived motivations and experiences in incorporating digital texts into their curriculum. For the conceptual framework, I used Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory

Rogers's diffusion of innovation theory concerns how ideas or products spread through social systems and are adopted by other individuals. Rogers identified five stages in the innovation process. The first stage consists of knowledge of the innovation: The individual is aware but does not respond. Next, the individual seeks innovation information; this is known as the persuasion stage. Then, the decision stage ensues.

During that phase, which Rogers noted as the most drawn-out phase, the individual considers the necessity of the innovation. Rogers's fourth stage of diffusion of innovation is the implementation stage. Finally, the confirmation stage occurs. In the confirmation stage, the individual is instrumental in deciding whether to receive and use the innovation or to reject it. Not all individuals go through each stage in the process at the same pace. However, once the innovation is accepted and used, the knowledge of the innovation is spread throughout a group, and the five-step process begins again with a new individual. Through this continuous cycle, the diffusion of innovation is spread.

Regarding technology, teachers' perspectives, whether to embrace technology in the classroom or to resist it, will diffuse to other teachers and cause either an increase or a decrease in technology integration (Burch & Mohammed, 2019). Teachers' attitudes play a role in diffusing new technologies such as digital texts in ELA classrooms. According to a study by Lawrence and Tar (2018), teachers will use technology in their instruction only if it is favorable to them and they have a positive attitude toward technology. Using Rogers's (2003) theory, one can deduce that once a teacher begins incorporating technology and other teachers see its significance, they too will use it; thus, diffusion of innovation will begin.

However, the rate of adoption may vary by institution. Adoption stages and levels of concern play a large role in the rate of technology adoption (Lin & Cantoni, 2018). Additional factors also play a role in the rate of technology adoption and diffusion of innovation. These factors include attitudes toward change (Alshammari et al., 2016), loss

of control in student interactions when teaching (King & Boyatt, 2015), and beliefs about

the role of technology (Brown, 2016).

Even if academic organizations adopt technology, Liu et al. (2020) concluded that

it frequently fails the aspirations that the organization sets for the adoption of technology.

Reasons identified for this failure include inadequate support for implementation, lack of

hands-on experience with the technologies, and testing that limits a teacher's pedagogical

control (Zoch et al., 2016). However, Zoch et al. (2016) also asserted that introducing

preservice teachers to technology and affording them the time to learn digital tools will

aid in technology adoption. Having teachers who are well versed in the incorporation of

technological tools in the classroom can help with alignment to organizational goals for

technology adoption, as well as increase diffusion of innovation to other staff members

who did not receive the same technological background.

Diffusion of innovation also occurs among other important stakeholders of

academic organizations. Students also play a large role in adopting and using technology.

Students will be required to be proficient in technology for the workforce (Olszewski &

Crompton, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2018). To ensure that students receive

required technological skills, educational officials in all U.S. states have adopted at least

one framework from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE, 2020)

standards (Zoch et al., 2016) Through these standards, students will use technology to

research, create, communicate, and collaborate. Students today are accustomed to using

technology to communicate or collaborate; it is standard practice for many of them.

Ehrenreich et al. (2021) concluded that adolescents feel the need to connect with others

and use their devices to make those connections. However, the Covid-19 pandemic created shifts in the way devices and technology were used by students. Turchi et al. (2020) studied student perspectives on online learning during the pandemic. Findings indicated that students appreciated technology tools used during their learning but missed face-to-face interactions; teachers who used technology as a supplement to their in-person classes were forced to use the same technology as their primary medium of instruction. Freely accessible open educational resources like digital texts began to be more prevalent due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Seaman & Seaman, 2021). Teachers were able to use digital texts during the pandemic to continue educating students while schools were closed.

Diffusion of Innovation Theory and Incorporation of Digital Texts

When the Covid-19 pandemic closed schools, teachers were able to select digital texts and decide, once in-person learning resumed, whether or not they would continue using that medium in the classroom. Raynard (2017) asserted that the use of digital text incorporation, such as e-books, is decided by the individual related to whether it will be a "continuous innovation or a discontinuous innovation" (p. 83). This idea further illustrates the basis for Roger's diffusion of innovation theory. Furthermore, in reviewing the literature Rowlands et al. (2007) determined that 29% of U.S. students between the ages of 12 and 21 were using digital texts such as e-books. Almost a third of students had experience with digital texts for educational use. Given Rogers's (2003) theory, that number is likely to increase once other individuals of the same age adopt learning from digital texts. According to Schaffhauser (2020), only 39% of high school teachers were

using e-books as a replacement for textbooks. Schaffhauser's findings determined the use of e-books in schools is increasing due to the growth of remote education. However, teachers' motivation for incorporating digital texts and experiences with incorporating digital texts have not been addressed in Schaffhauser's (2020) article.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and/or Variables

The literature review includes discussion of three topics related to the research question: (a) technology integration, (b) technology in the classroom, and (c) technology and curriculum.

Technology Integration

Technology integration requires knowledge of learning how to integrate effectively. Tondeur et al. (2017) found that novice teachers lacked knowledge of how to meaningfully integrate technology. Teacher preparation programs fell short in preparing novice teachers on how to successfully integrate technology (Tondeur et al., 2017). When a novice teacher is not prepared to effectively integrate technology, barriers arise.

Lawrence and Tar (2018) claimed that there were multiple barriers faced by teachers that led to ineffective use of technology or decreased integration of information and communication technology. These barriers included, but are not limited to, lack of a strong infrastructure, lack of technical support for teachers, and lack of access to technology. However, the main barrier identified to integrating information and communication technology is not enough time to participate in professional development opportunities; teachers would prefer to have more time built in to try out the new technologies before integrating them into the classroom (Francom, 2020; Lawrence et al.,

2020; Lawrence & Tar, 2018). Harrell and Bynum (2018) concurred with Lawrence and Tar (2018) regarding poor infrastructure being a barrier to technology integration. Additionally, Harrell and Bynum (2018) concluded that teachers who believe that technology would positively impact their students, would use it more; teachers who believed otherwise would integrate it less. Herold (2019) discovered that less than a third of teachers believe that digital technology supports their classrooms. This idea of self-efficacy contributes to teachers' motivations for incorporating technology such as digital texts and e-readers (Chiu, 2017; Harrell & Bynum, 2018). Both Harrell and Bynum (2018) and Lawrence and Tar (2018) attributed negative teacher perceptions of technology as another barrier.

Researchers agreed that self-efficacy and teacher perceptions impact technology integration (Chiu, 2017; Harrell & Bynum, 2018; Lawrence & Tar, 2018), but they did not all offer suggestions for overcoming the barriers. Chiu (2017) offered recommendations from school leaders to increase self-efficacy and decrease teacher anxiety about technology, but Lawrence and Tar (2018) focused solely on the barriers for teachers. Harrell and Bynum (2018) also address barriers that teachers face but failed to provide recommendations. DeCoito and Richardson (2018) found themes connected to barriers which included negative attitudes toward technology and teacher readiness.

For any type of technology to be effectively incorporated into the classroom, teachers must attend professional development opportunities. Sims and Fletcher-Wood (2021) concluded that professional development for teachers is more successful when it is continuous and has the endorsement of teachers. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017)

concurred that professional development must be sustained and added that time for teachers to reflect and provide feedback is also beneficial. Dexter and Richardson (2020) asserted that teachers need learning opportunities in technology along with building leaders who offer support and address issues.

Ottenbreit-Leftwich et al. (2018) studied teachers during pre-service training, student-teacher practices, and their first 2 years of teaching. The study concluded that both school resources and the environment played a significant role in teacher practices regarding technology integration (Kimmons & Hall, 2018). To be effective, technology integration should be combined with a good theory to be effective, and technology integration models, such as technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, should resemble real life (Kimmons & Hall, 2018; Santos & Castro, 2021; Tondeur et al., 2020). Integration models may also be used to increase digital literacy. Digital literacy involves teachers directly instructing students in various forms of technology (Baxa & Christ, 2017). The DigiLit framework was developed to guide teachers in using a structure for integrating digital literacies in the classroom (Baxa & Christ, 2017). However, Baxa and Christ (2017) do not address any barriers to the framework. Identifying barriers would be beneficial so individuals can find resolutions or assistance. Coiro (2021) defined digital literacy in a different way than Baxa and Christ (2017). The meaning behind a term like digital literacy can vary. Coiro (2021) used the term to include digital reading. Coiro explained, "Digital literacy is used to conceptualize digital reading in the broader framework of reading as literacy that involves a process of integration and construction situated in social and cultural practices" (p. 12). Teachers assist students with digital

literacy by incorporating technology in the classroom and imparting technological skills which build each year. Mamedova and Pawlowski (2018) concluded that learning is more effective when teachers utilize technology and engage students. Teachers must stay abreast of the changing technologies to also remain effective. Lawrence et al. (2020) concluded that digital literacy skills are critically needed for students who are entering higher education so they are prepared to think critically, can use technology, and can communicate/collaborate effectively. Baron (2017), Coiro (2021), and Taylor et al. (2020) agreed that technology is continually advancing, therefore more research is needed.

Technology in the Classroom

In addition to providing proper implementation of technology and professional development for teachers, it is also important to select the right technology for the classroom to increase digital literacy. Teachers have reasons for the types of technology selection as well as the types of technology they select to integrate. Kompar (2018) asserted that one challenge can be in selecting the preferred digital tools to aid in developing 21st-century skills over many subject areas. Regarding technology selections for digital texts, there are three popular platforms: e-readers, tablets, and desktop applications.

The most common e-reader is a Kindle. Kindle devices are portable and allow for digital texts to be purchased and downloaded onto the device. Internet is only needed to download the text, then the text may be read without an internet connection. A benefit to the Kindle is the ability to annotate the text while reading. A study conducted by Jensen

and Scharff (2019) concluded that students using Kindles reported increases in their use of annotations. The Kindle app, which can be downloaded on certain devices, also allows for the annotation feature. Districts may also elect to use tablets such as an iPad for digital reading. iPads are also portable devices that allow for digital text downloads. Annotations and highlighting can be done as well. The touchscreen available on the device provides accessibility to younger students. Neumann (2018) conducted a study with young students and found that they were interested in and engaged with the tangible features of the iPad. If a district prefers not to select portable technology devices, desktop applications such as Adobe Digital Editions are available. These application types are downloaded onto a computer and can be used to read digital texts. Unlike the iPad or Kindle portable devices that cost the district money to purchase, desktop applications like Adobe Digital Editions are free.

Each of the mentioned reading platforms can be used in multiple content areas making it accessible for students in all classes. It would also be more cost-effective for a school district to select a type of technology that is not content-specific and can be used in all subject areas. Costs are one area of consideration for school districts. Even though it can be costly to download digital texts on e-readers and tablets, some districts believe that digital technology can be cost-effective over purchasing print texts. In a study done by Anderson (2018), it was concluded that once Kindles were purchased, the cost of the digital texts was less expensive than print books because the digital texts could be downloaded onto 6 Kindles. Seaman and Seaman (2021) asserted that the cost of print textbooks has continued to increase.

In addition to device selection, teachers must also consider features of the devices regarding student needs and student engagement. Technology for digital texts can also support students in a myriad of ways. E-readers contain features for highlighting texts, sharing quotes, interacting with texts, and built-in dictionaries (Anderson, 2018; Fernandez, 2020). Anderson (2018) further elaborated that e-readers have features allowing users to interact with the text by adjusting the font size, using the text-to-speech feature, and using the dictionary's pronunciation guide to decode words. Even with these types of features offered by e-readers, Hashim and Vongkullksn (2018) found little interest or engagement in their study on e-readers in the classroom. Even though students used the interactive features of the e-reader that are not available in print, they preferred reading from print text. The study also found that students were less interested in and showed decreased engagement in the e-readers because they were from high-income families who owned e-readers at home and were already accustomed to using them. Anderson (2018) disagreed with a student's lack of engagement using e-readers. E-readers are an effective way for students to interact with digital tools, allowing for more engagement while reading (Anderson, 2018). Students are not passively reading words across a page. Instead, they are searching for definitions within the same application, highlighting text, and making annotations. Anderson asserted that the e-reader should not replace traditional texts but should be used in addition to traditional texts to allow for student engagement with digital features.

When deciding to replace a traditional text or use technology in addition to the traditional text, student preference and teacher preference should be taken into

consideration. The study done by Hashim and Vongkullksn (2018) concluded that fourth-grade students preferred print texts to digital texts. However, Chavali and Gundala (2022) found that only 34% of college students preferred print texts. Reasons for the shift to digital texts at the collegiate level included cost and the interactive features available with digital texts. Kinskey et al. (2018) concurred with the increasing cost of printed texts being a reason that students select digital texts. However, even when students prefer digital texts, teachers have areas of concern. One major concern for selecting digital texts is a diminished ability to stay focused on the text (Turner et al., 2019). When a student's mind begins to wander when reading on screen, it could lead to decreased reading comprehension (Soemer & Schiefele, 2019). Additionally, when reading under time constraints, mind wandering can increase (Delgado et al., 2018). Another area of concern is over equitable access to technology. Over 7 million students in Grades K-12 throughout the United States have a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Therefore, to ensure equitable access to technology for learning, Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act (U.S. Access Board, 2017) addressed technology accessibility. Shaheen and Lazar (2018) believed that educators should be familiar with this law even though it is part of the federal government. In addition to technology accessibility laws, students also need access to the internet, especially when at home. The Covid-19 pandemic quarantined the nation to their homes, requiring students to continue their education online remotely. However, not all students had internet access. According to Alvarez, Jr. (2021), 46% of the population lacked internet access. To overcome this

barrier, Ohio's Governor DeWine signed House Bill 2 to expand broadband services to areas that were unserved or underserved high-speed internet access (Buchanan, 2021).

Technology and Curriculum

Due to the increase of digital technology in classrooms and the increased access to the internet, students are using more digital devices when reading (Barzillai & Thomson, 2018). Therefore, it is important to research students' reading comprehension based on text medium. Multiple empirical studies have been conducted comparing the reading of digital texts and printed texts. Throughout the studies, it was concluded that comprehension is better when using print texts (Peterson & Alexander, 2020; Singer & Alexander, 2017; Singer Trakhman et al., 2019). Clinton (2019), Delgado et al. (2018), Kong et al. (2018) and Singer and Alexander (2017) concurred with the advantages of reading with print texts. Sage et al. (2020) affirmed that college students who were studied preferred print texts. Even though these researchers deduced that print texts were advantageous to digital texts regarding reading comprehension, Singer and Alexander asserted that more research is needed in this area. They claimed studies should be conducted in the areas of motivation, sociocultural, or visual factors in addition to reading comprehension. Another consideration of the research is the population being studied. Results all agreed that comprehension from print text is superior, however, multiple studies listed are of adolescent or adult populations. From the unanimous conclusion of the referenced studies, one would assume that print text would be preferred by teachers.

However, schools are requiring technology literacy (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Delgado et al. (2018) concurred that it would be improbable to completely preclude digital texts. Part of the curriculum in the 21st-century includes technology skills. Ohio's Learning Standards for Technology is required to be implemented into the curriculum for Grades K-12. These standards are divided into three specific strands, information and communications technology, society and technology, and design and technology (Ohio Department of Education, 2017). Ohio Revised Code section 3301.079 states curricula must "include the development of skill sets that promote information, media, and technological literacy" (Ohio Laws & Administrative Rules, 2021, p. 1). Technology requirements that are a part of 21st-century learning prepare students for career and college readiness and to become technology-literate citizens (Marakovits, 2022; Ohio Department of Education, 2017). Lynch et al. (2018) and Taylor et al. (2020) cautioned that digital tools and resources may not be as effective in supporting student needs if they are not utilized properly. Rybakova et al. (2019) agreed that for instruction to be effective, it is dependent upon the way digital resources and technologies are used. It is not enough to simply have access to technology in the classroom, to achieve technological literacy students need skills to use technology in productive ways (Falloon, 2020).

With technology being required in schools and the evidence depicting that print text is more beneficial to students' reading comprehension, teachers' motivations become an instrumental deciding factor in incorporating technology. Some of the motivations for teachers include features provided by e-readers. However, teachers do not always have

full autonomy in selecting their curriculum. Even though the benefits of incorporating technology in classrooms as well as in lessons, the scripted curriculum still exist. Fitz and Nikolaidis (2020) define scripted curricula as "a term which refers to a wide variety of curricular materials or pre-packaged lesson plans that explicitly script out exactly what the teacher will say, show, and do—and often even how students are expected to respond—so that the teacher only needs to read from a manual in order to deliver the lesson" (p. 195). Curricula have been scripted since the 1960s as an intervention for students who were considered disadvantaged or at risk for failure (Beatty, 2011). Common Core State Standards added to a more recent version of scripted curricula that caused educators to follow a mandated curriculum (Barrett et al., 2018). In Chapman and Elbaum's (2021) study, a theme was identified that a scripted curriculum could be adapted or abandoned to prepare students for high-stakes testing. Preparing students for standardized testing by using a scripted curriculum was common for teachers. Chapman and Elbaum (2021) stated, "Teaching to the test clearly affected what teachers taught and how" (p. 288). With the pressures of a scripted curriculum and mandated testing, teachers are hesitant to incorporate technology, including digital texts, into the curriculum (Kang, 2018). A study conducted by Costigan (2018) concurred with Chapman and Elbaum (2021) about the issues created by the scripted curricula. The study consisted of preservice teachers and beginning-year teachers. Findings also depicted participants did not feel like they were teaching a curriculum that was familiar to them and felt that the curriculum they were teaching was not effective (Costigan, 2018). More teacher

autonomy is needed not only in the required curriculum but also in a curriculum rich in technology.

In addition to teachers' motivations to incorporate technology, one must also consider students' motivation to read. Intrinsic motivation can strongly predict a student's academic achievement (Kriegbaum et al., 2018). Miyamoto et al. (2020) conducted a study on intrinsic motivation in students enrolled in Grades 5-10. Results indicated that student motivation declined greater when there were decreases in reading proficiency. Additionally, males experienced more motivational decline than females, and the motivational decline was experienced among all genders, school tracks, and socioeconomic statuses (Miyamoto et al., 2020).

Davis et al. (2020) studied the validity of a computer-adapted measurement of reading motivation. The computer measurement program was known as the Adaptive Reading Motivation Measure. The measure was developed to assess Grades 5-12 in reading motivation. Results indicated that ratings for the measure were responsive to gender and grade differences, which is cohesive with previous reading motivation studies, and they were positively connected with reading behavior, engagement, and reading success (Davis et al., 2020). Miyamoto et al. (2020) and Davis et al. (2020) concluded corresponding results regarding reading motivation and academic achievement. However, Ellis (2020) went a step further in his research and narrowed the focus of the study to African American males and the effects of reading motivation on academic success. The case study consisted of two non-related ninth-grade African American males from the same school district. Ellis (2020) sought to gain insight into

reading motivation from a first-person perspective. Findings indicated that both students were motivated by real-world instruction. Further conclusions from Ellis (2020) also showed that instructional strategies were not the only method for reading success. Families, teachers, other students, and administrators were also helpful in the participants' academic achievement.

Summary and Conclusions

Throughout the research conducted for this literature review, I addressed three key concepts: technology integration, technology in the classroom, and technology and curriculum. Technology integration was broken down into sub-concepts that included technology integration models, barriers to integration, and digital literacy. Technology integration depends heavily on a teacher's pre-service training, self-efficacy, and perceptions of technology. Barriers to technology integration included a lack of teacher training, lack of infrastructure, and lack of support. However, much of the literature also lacked suggestions for overcoming the barriers. One suggestion that surfaced during the discovery of concepts was the need for digital literacy. Both students and teachers should be digitally literate to keep up with ever-evolving technologies.

Technology in the classroom, the second key concept identified, required a few considerations from ELA teachers when deciding to incorporate digital texts. Technology selection was a major consideration. There are various types of technology platforms, as well as multiple interactive features of the platforms. Once a technology platform was decided upon, teachers must also consider a student's access to technology, a student's medium preference, reading comprehension in each medium, reading motivation, and the

scripted curricula required by the school district. Findings indicated that reading comprehension was better when using print text. However, research from the literature review found that reading motivation plays a fundamental role in reading comprehension and academic achievement.

The third and final concept addressed was that scripted curriculum served as an obstacle to teachers having the autonomy to create their curriculum in the classroom. School-mandated curricula, which includes Common Core State Standards, suppress teachers' ability to select and incorporate more digital texts due to pressures over state standardized test scores. Teachers are hesitant to incorporate more digital technologies when mandated testing and increased student achievement rest on their shoulders.

Even though a thorough literature review was conducted, there is still a gap in literature related to teacher's motivation and experiences when incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms for Grades 6-12. In the literature reviewed, I addressed many variables to technology and technology integration but did not reveal enough insight into what motivates teachers to select certain types of digital texts. Findings from this study could provide further insight into reasons ELA teachers select digital texts over printed texts, how often digital texts are incorporated into the lessons, and what experiences occurred when incorporating digital texts. In Chapter 3, I will also include the selected methodology for the study as well as the plan for data analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' motivations for and experiences with incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms in Grades 6-12. In Chapter 3, I outline the selected research design, the role of the researcher, and the chosen methodology. The methodology includes the rationale for participant selection, the instrumentation used for data collection, and an overview of the data analysis process. Ethical procedures, including issues of trustworthiness, are then discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary and a transition to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

I selected a basic interpretive qualitative research design for this study because the study focused on the experiences of individuals (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used the selected approach to examine ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 and their motivation for incorporating digital texts into the curriculum, as well as their experiences with incorporating the specific text mediums. The study's research question focused on teacher motivations and experiences related to digital texts. The research question was, What are the motivations and experiences of ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 regarding the incorporation of digital texts into the curriculum?

The rationale for selecting an interpretive qualitative approach was to explore the motivations of teachers when incorporating digital texts and understand their experiences with incorporating them. The goal of a generic study is to "understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23). The interpretive qualitative approach was originally developed for research in nursing but has

been accepted in other disciplines, including the field of education (Kahlke, 2014). Use of this approach aided in understanding curricular decisions regarding technology integration through teacher experience. Using the basic interpretive approach, I used data from participants to identify similar characteristics and patterns of ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 who had incorporated digital texts.

Other qualitative approaches I considered, but did not choose, included a case study and a phenomenological approach. A case study would have allowed for purposeful sampling; however, most case studies include multiple data sources over some time (Yin, 2013). The time allotted for this study played a role in selecting a basic interpretive approach. A phenomenological study also requires more time because the approach goes beyond a basic understanding of several participant experiences, usually requiring more than one round of data collection (Vagle, 2016). A basic interpretive approach allowed me to explore participants' experiences in a way that was similar to the use of a phenomenological approach. I was also able to engage in purposeful sampling similar to a case study approach. A basic interpretive approach combined the benefits of each of those approaches.

Role of the Researcher

Creswell (2009) and Wa-Mbaleka (2020) identified a researcher's role in a qualitative study as a key instrument. The researcher is significant throughout the entire study, from the preliminary stages of research to the final stages of data analysis. As a researcher, I needed to be aware of how my role could influence the nature of the study. A researcher is responsible for data collection, information gathering, and the

construction of realities based on their view (Litchman, 2013). Since I interpreted the collected data and wanted to ensure it was interpreted correctly, it was important that I thoroughly documented each stage of the research process and had the data member checked.

My role involved remaining objective and unbiased to ensure the fidelity of the study. Litchman (2013) concurred with the need for a researcher to be objective and added that the researcher must also strive for detachment and neutrality. To remain unbiased, I remained cognizant of my body language during the semistructured interviews to ensure that I was not subconsciously influencing the participants. I also remained aware of response bias. Response bias is when the participants give answers that they believe are the correct answers that the researchers are wanting (Bergan & Labonté, 2020). Some strategies that Bergan and Labonté (2020) suggested to limit bias included techniques for introducing the study, establishing rapport with the participants, and asking follow-up questions.

Establishing rapport is important to conducting research with fidelity. I established rapport through a solid introduction of myself and a thorough explanation of the purpose of my study in the introductory email that I sent to potential participants. My professional role as an administrator did not affect the participants because I used purposeful sampling to draw participants from another building within my district. I held no authority over the participants who were in a school outside of my district. In my professional role as the researcher, I had to recognize any potential bias and power in relationships regarding the study participants. Participants were selected based on their

current role as an ELA teacher in Grades 6-12. They were current teachers in the two

selected northeast Ohio public school districts.

Methodology

This section includes discussion related to participant selection, the researcher-

developed instruments, participant recruitment, and data collection tools. Additionally,

the data analysis plan is addressed. I also discuss issues of trustworthiness and the ethical

procedures for the study.

Participant Selection Logic

The participants selected for this study were ELA content area teachers in Grades

6-12 who were currently teaching in a public school system in northeast Ohio. Two

school districts were used for this study; officials at each school gave permission for me

to conduct the study. I collected data from current teachers who were assigned to ELA

classrooms in Grades 6-12 within the two selected public school districts in northeast

Ohio. This specific participation group was selected because of their professional

responsibilities and teaching assignment related to the study.

I used purposive sampling to select the participants. Participants were deliberately

chosen based on the grade levels and content areas that they teach. Selecting this type of

sampling strategy allowed me to address the posed research question. Mack et al. (2005)

asserted that the desire for theoretical saturation often influences purposive sample sizes.

Saturation involves reaching a satisfactory collection of data (Mthuli et al., 2021). To

reach saturation in a basic interpretive qualitative study, at least 12 participants are

needed to adequately understand the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Fugard &

Potts, 2014; Guest et al., 2006). This study consisted of eight ELA teachers in Grades 6-12. Saturation was met with the eight participants because there was a narrow focus on the motivation and experience of a group of teachers in a limited area.

Both selected study sites are large suburban school districts. Study Site A is a large suburban district that houses two buildings on its campus. In the 2020-2021 school year, approximately 900 students were in the district; more than half of those students attended Grades 6-12 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Similarly, Study Site B is also a large suburban school district. At the time of the study, it had four buildings; more than 2,000 students were enrolled in the district, with more than half of these students in Grades 6-12 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

Instrumentation

Basic interpretive studies often feature individual interviews as the primary source of data collection (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Hunt, 2009). The primary source of data for this study consisted of one-on-one semistructured interviews containing pre-set, open-ended questions that allowed for follow-up questions related to participant answers (see Appendix). Open-ended questions obtain comprehensive responses from participants regarding feelings and experiences (Patton, 2014). To prepare for the semistructured interviews and ensure the questions aligned with my research question, an interview guide was used. The semistructured interviews were conducted individually via Zoom. Participants were sent an invite through email and they selected a day and time that was conducive to their schedule.

To collect reliable and valid data, I developed an interview guide with eight open-ended interview questions related to the research question for the study. Each question was designed to elicit the teacher's motivations and experiences with digital texts and the motivations behind digital text selection (see Appendix).

The validity of the interview questions was established through a thorough consultation with my committee members. Committee members reviewed the alignment of the eight open-ended questions to the research question, ensuring that the questions posed will aid in addressing the research purpose and problem. The committee members evaluated the interview guide for clarity of content, clarity of wording, and the logical order of questions. Interview questions were also developed from key concepts that emerged during the literature review.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Upon receiving Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I sent email invitations to the principals of the two selected study sites. The email included an introduction of myself, the purpose of the study, and an attachment of the recruitment letter. Each principal at the two study sites forwarded my email to participants in their respective district who met the criteria of the study. Participants met the criteria by being currently employed as an ELA teacher in Grades 6-12 at one of the two identified research sites. Email was the primary source of contact for each participant to maintain data collection and maintain contact with each participant. Participants who were interested in the study reached out to me via email and an informed consent form was emailed to them. Once the participants read the informed consent form and agreed to be a

part of the study, they emailed a response to me stating "I consent." Appointments for the semistructured interviews were also made through email. A strong and secure internet connection was used for the Zoom interviews.

Data collection was qualitative in nature and consist of semistructured interviews. This type of data assisted in answering the research question. Interviews were conducted individually using a strong and secure internet connection and conducted through Zoom. Interviews lasted approximately 40 min to be respectful of the teacher's time. Each interview began with a brief introduction and reminder of the purpose of the study, as well as the informed consent information.

While the participants answered the questions, I listened attentively, took notes to pose follow-up questions, and remained cognizant to not interrupt the participant while speaking. It was important to ensure that the participant was comfortable during the interview and establish rapport to yield the most reliable data (Patton, 2014). Establishing rapport, showing respect, and ensuring that participants were comfortable remained my focus during the interviews.

The duration of the data collection was over 2 weeks of Zoom interviews. Participants partook in one scheduled interview session of approximately 40 min that occurred during the participant's scheduled time that was established through email. If an event occurs that did not allow the participant to be available during the originally scheduled time, a follow-up appointment was made.

The semistructured interviews were recorded using Zoom and were transcribed through Zoom services using the Otter.AI application and double-checked for accuracy.

Transcriptions were saved in my password-protected personal Google Drive. Notes taken during the interview were transcribed using the handwriting recognition Rocketbook feature of a known as Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and stored in my personal Google Drive which is secured through a password sign-in. Participants were notified of the recording of the data through an informed consent form.

Participants were debriefed before exiting the interview. During the debriefing, the purpose of the study was reiterated and contact information was reviewed. Follow-up interviews or additional data collection were not necessary for this study.

Data Analysis Plan

Litchman (2013) emphasized that the researcher is a "filter through which data are collected, organized, and interpreted" (p. 159). Therefore, data analysis must be detailed and comprehensive. Data analysis began immediately after each interview. Each interview was transcribed, labeled, and saved in a secure Google Drive. Next, the data were coded using thematic coding, and theme patterns were identified. Thematic coding aims to explore and understand the meaning or significance of an idea (Creswell, 2009). A chart was used to categorize major themes found in the interviews and those themes were used as headings. Under each heading, specific words or phrases used during the interview were listed to understand the participants' experiences or motivations.

Once my findings from the data analysis were reviewed, the analysis was checked for any discrepancies to ensure that the findings collected answered the research question. When reviewing the findings, I also used direct quotes, when necessary, from the

participants. Using direct quotes elucidated the findings and validity of the study (Eldh et al., 2020).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Issues of trustworthiness may arise if researchers are not clear on how they analyzed their data (Nowell et al., 2017). To reinforce trustworthiness, I thoroughly detailed and documented the data at each stage of collection and analysis for this study. By recording each step of the data collection and analysis process, I was able to be aware of potential researcher bias. Credibility was established by selecting participants who aligned with the selection criteria established for the study. Also, I provided participants with a copy of their transcript to foster reliability and dependability (e.g., that I had accurately characterized the experiences that they described during the semistructured interviews). I also took steps to minimize threats to validity in participant responses during the interviews. A potential risk was that participants might try to read my body language or facial expressions during the interviews and respond with answers that they believed were in light with what I was seeking. To minimize this risk, I remained cognizant of my nonverbal cues and facial expressions during the Zoom interviews.

Ethical Procedures

To follow all procedures outlined in the IRB's requirements and approval, I applied for approval to conduct the study and was approved. The application included email approvals to gain access to participants for the study. Emails were only forwarded by the principals at each study site to participants who meet the criteria for the study to ensure the study remains valid.

Participants recruited to the study were human participants and required ethical treatment. To maintain confidentiality and privacy, only participants who were selected for recruitment received information regarding the study and their potential contributions to the data. To ensure data remained credible and valid, participants were asked not to discuss the study or interview session with others. Once participant selection occurred, those individuals were reminded that their identity and that of the study site will remain confidential throughout all stages of the study. An informed consent was signed by each participant. Interviews were scheduled individually with each participant on specified dates and conducted via Zoom.

Data collected from those interviews also remained secured and confidential. Notes and recordings taken during the interview sessions were saved on a password protected Google Drive. The only individual with access to the Google Drive storying the study data is the researcher so data remains confidential. The data will remain on the secured drive for 5 years after the completion of the study.

<p align="center">**Summary**</p>

In Chapter 3, I addressed the rationale for the research design, the role of the researcher, the research methodology, including participant selection, instrumentation used for the study, data collection, and data analysis. Finally, issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures were addressed. In Chapter 4, I present the results and analysis of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' motivation and experiences in incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms in Grades 6-12. Using Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory, I sought to understand teachers' curricular decisions regarding text mediums. The participants were current ELA teachers who had experience integrating digital texts in the classroom. Findings from the study may increase school administrators' awareness of the need to support teachers and the literary choices they make in the classroom. A research question anchored the study and aided in the development of the semistructured interview questions. The central research question for this study was, What are the motivations and experiences of ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 regarding the incorporation of digital texts into the curriculum? I asked follow-up questions based on participant responses to the seven semistructured interview questions to better comprehend participants' experiences.

This chapter includes a description of the setting of the two selected study sites and demographic information from the participants. I also provide a detailed analysis of the data collection and analysis processes. Evidence of trustworthiness, which includes the means to ensure credibility, transferability, and dependability, is also provided. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings of the study and a transition to Chapter 5.

Setting

The study sites were two public school districts in northeast Ohio. Both sites are large suburban school districts. Study Site A is a large suburban district that houses two

buildings on its campus. In the 2020-2021 school year, approximately 900 students were in the district; more than half of those students attended Grades 6-12 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Similarly, Study Site B is also a large suburban school district. At the time of the study, it had four buildings; more than 2,000 students were enrolled in the district, with more than half of these students in Grades 6-12 (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.).

At the time of the study, Study Site A employed 75 full-time certified teachers. The student-to-teacher ratio at Study Site A was 12:1. Study Site B had more full-time teachers (125 certified teachers) and a student-to-teacher ratio of 16:1. Both study sites offered general courses, honors or advanced courses, and college credit courses for students. Additionally, both selected study sites had similar community demographics. The general population was at least 90% White, with a median household income of approximately $45,000. However, the population of the study sites differed. Both sites were located in communities with fewer than 20,000 residents. Of the two, Study Site B's community was almost 20,000 in number; Study Site A's population was less half that number.

I selected eight teachers from the two study sites in northeast Ohio were selected to participate in semistructured interviews for the study. All interviews were conducted through Zoom. Zoom is a platform for communicating via videoconferencing and has audio and chat message features. To use Zoom, a stable internet connection is required. Zoom also allows users to video and audio record while conferencing. This particular videoconferencing platform was selected due to its features. Electronic meeting

invitations are sent to the participants, only the facilitator is required to download the software, the platform is password protected, and recordings are securely stored in Zoom's Cloud services (Gray et al., 2020).

Seven of the participants elected to be interviewed via Zoom privately in their classroom during their planning period, and one participant preferred to be interviewed in the privacy of their home. Participants selected a time that was convenient for them and used devices that were familiar to them for the Zoom interviews. I Zoomed privately from a room in my home. Two participants struggled initially to join the Zoom call. Both participants had to log onto an alternative device that they had in their possession to join the call. Once each of the interviews began, there were no interruptions or technology problems.

Before starting the recorded Zoom interview, I individually asked if each participant was comfortable in their selected setting and wished to keep their cameras on. All participants were comfortable leaving their cameras on during the interview and also agreed to having the interviews recorded through Otter.ai, as noted in the informed consent form. Because all cameras remained on, I was cognizant of my facial expressions during the interview to remain neutral and professional. Lindsay (2022) found that Zoom interviews conducted with the camera on lasted longer than those conducted with the camera off. The participant interview times for this study ranged from 5 to 27 min. All participants were informed that the interviews would take approximately 40 min, and all participant interviews were under that time frame.

Demographics

Participant recruitment began within 4 days of IRB approval. As identified by the research criteria in the approved IRB forms, all participants were confirmed as current ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 who had experience in integrating digital texts. Two study sites were selected for this study to ensure enough participants to reach saturation. Eight total participants agreed to take part in the study. Mthuli et al. (2021) stated that saturation requires a minimum of eight participants. Therefore, saturation was met for this study. None of the participants chose to withdraw from the study, and all eight participants partook in the semistructured interviews.

The final sample included teachers with experience in teaching Grades 6-12. One of the participants was male; the remaining participants were female. To protect the participants' identities, they will be referred to as P1 through P8. The participants' names, email address, employment sites, or other identifying information were not recorded to maintain anonymity. Grades taught was included in the study to ensure that the participants met the criteria for the study. Years in education and gender were included in the study to recognize any similarities or differences in motivations or experiences in incorporating digital texts. These demographic data could also be used by future researchers to further explore the motivations for and experiences with digital texts.

Teaching experience varied among the participants. P2 and P6 are novice teachers with only 2 years of teaching experience. However, P1, P3, P4, and P5 had 20 years or more of teaching experience. Table 1 shows the participants' demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Grade taught	No. of years in education
P1	Male	9-12	28
P2	Female	9-10	2
P3	Female	Kindergarten and 6	27
P4	Female	10	23
P5	Female	7 and 9-12	20
P6	Female	8-9	2
P7	Female	7-9	8
P8	Female	6-8, 10, and 12	7

Data Collection

Data collection took place following IRB approval (no. 10-20-22-0594375). The data process began when recruitment invitations were sent via email to the principals at both study sites on October 24, 2022. One study site immediately forwarded the email to potential participants, and the other study site forwarded the email to participants on October 28, 2022. Two participants emailed me to express interest on October 24, 2022, one participant responded to express interest on October 27, 2022, and one participant expressed interest on October 30, 2022. After each participant expressed interest, I emailed them a copy of the informed consent form and requested they respond with "I Consent" if they wished to participate. All participants responded with consent.

I sent a Calendly link to the first two participants who responded. However, the Calendly link to schedule an interview date and time was not working. Instead, I selected a date that I was available to conduct interviews and responded to the participants via email requesting a good time for them to Zoom during that day. My availability was from 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM. All participants emailed me times that were convenient for them on that day and there were no conflicts with scheduling. Four Zoom interviews were scheduled during individual times on November 1, 2022. The day before the scheduled Zoom interview, an email with the Zoom link was sent to the participants' school email address.

It became a challenge to recruit more participants. Responses to the initial recruitment emails stopped and I checked my email daily for 2 weeks. To reach saturation, a minimum of eight participants were needed (Mthuli et al., 2021). Since saturation was not met after 2 weeks of the recruitment emails being sent, I reached out to the principals again and requested them to resend the emails in hopes of getting more participants. After the second email was sent, four more participants accepted to participate in the study. For the second round of interviews, one participant was scheduled and a Zoom interview was conducted on November 17, 2022. The remaining three participants were scheduled for and interviews were conducted via Zoom on November 18, 2022. The same protocol was used for all Zoom interviews for all eight participants.

Each Zoom interview began with thanking the participants and ensuring they were comfortable before beginning the interview. Participants were also provided the

option to turn their cameras off and reminded that the Zoom will be recorded in addition to the audio recording through Otter.ai. Once the interviews began, I reviewed the purpose of the study. The seven interview questions found in the Appendix were asked in each interview. I took notes in my Rocketbook during each interview to review during data analysis. All notes and recordings were saved to my password-protected Google Drive.

Interviews varied in length, ranging from 5 min to 27 min. Since participants had the interview questions before the interview, some had noted responses to each question which made for a shorter interview. No interruptions occurred during any of the interviews, therefore, each interview was conducted in one sitting. At the end of each interview, participants were debriefed. Debriefing consisted of a time line of when they would receive a copy of the transcript and a review of the purpose of the study. Transcripts were emailed within 1 week of the interview and each participant was given 2 days to review and respond via email.

The data collection process took a total of 5 weeks. The data collection process time included sending the initial emails to the principals with recruitment letters, setting up interviews, interviewing participants, sending a second request for participants after no responses for 2 weeks, transcribing the interviews for the participants to review, and receiving feedback on the transcripts from the participants.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began immediately after each interview. I began by listening to the audio recording of the Zoom interview while cross-checking the transcript obtained from

Otter.ai. Otter.ai is a program that transcribed automatically as the participants were speaking via Zoom. I used two laptops to ensure that Otter.ai was able to correctly capture and generate a summary of the interviews. One laptop was used to record the Zoom interviews and the other laptop was set up to allow Otter.ai to transcribe. When saving the transcripts from Otter.ai, no participant identification was used. Instead, each transcript was labeled with the participant number and date of the interview.

There were some missing words on the transcript which I fixed. Once the transcripts were completed, I emailed a copy to each of the participants for member checking. Six participants responded that the transcript was correct, and two responded that a word need changed. After member checking, I analyzed each participant's transcript to identify themes.

I used inductive coding for data analysis. Specifically, I coded data to identify themes that emerged (see Bingham & Witkowsky, 2021). Color coding of the interview transcripts was the primary means of identifying responses to each of the seven topics from the interview questions. A semantic approach, which involved analyzing the specific content, was used to define the themes. During thematic analysis, I searched for commonalities and counted instances. The themes that were derived from the data analysis included motivations, experiences with technology, professional development, implementation of digital texts, barriers, teacher preference, and student preference. Table 2 shows the themes and codes from the interview transcripts. The number of participant responses that were assigned each code is included in parentheses after each code.

Table 2

Themes and Codes

Theme	Code (no. of instances)
Motivations	Accessibility/availability (7)
	Saves the school money (1)
	More opportunities for texts (2)
	Exposure to more text materials and resources (1)
	Ability to interact with the text, including audio (2)
	Remain current (up to date) with technology (2)
	Ability to find texts that interest students (1)
	Covid-19 pandemic was the catalyst (5)
	Ease of use (1)
	Lack of enough print texts (2)
	Student interest (2)
Experience with technology	Not raised with technology/not technological (1)
	Competent with technology/word processing (1)
	Comfortable with technology (3)
	Had professional development in other programs (including Google Classroom) (5)
	Used during student teaching (2)
Professional development	None (with regard to implementing digital texts) (8)
	Learned from colleagues (3)
	Tried on own (5)
	Given professional development for technology programs not related to digital texts (5)
Implementation of digital texts	Started during Covid-19 pandemic (5)
	Uses during remote days (1)
	Aids when students are absent /attendance issues (1)
	Kindles being implemented with honors students (3)
	Shorter texts are better digitally and print for longer texts (1)
	Incorporate modern/relevant articles (1)
	Implements digital but makes print available (5)
Barriers	Devices not charged (4)
	Distractions while online (3)
	internet issues (3)
	Limited free resources for teachers (1)
	Teachers have to find texts (2)
	Students don't bring devices (4)
	Reading comprehension with digital texts (1)
	Hard to focus (1)
	Technological problems (2)
	Reading texts on phones (1)
	Tired eyes/blue light issues (1)
	Students break devices (1)
	Student devices become swapped (1)
	Not all students have internet access (2))
	Students are not well versed with technology (1)
	Unable to monitor students (1)
Teacher preference	Combination of both (2)
	Print texts (4)
	Digital texts (2)
Student preference	Depends on the student (1)
	Print texts (2)
	Combination of both (5)

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Pratt et al. (2020) defined trustworthiness as "the degree to which the reader can assess whether the researchers have been honest in how the research has been carried out and reasonable in the conclusions they make" (p. 2). When assessing trustworthiness, one must consider and evaluate credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity). Lincoln and Guba (1986) established these four criteria in qualitative research to assess rigor and credibility of a study. Evidence of trustworthiness of this study included attention to any issues that were related to the credibility and dependability of the participants, and the transferability and confirmability of the collected data.

Credibility

To evaluate credibility, or internal validity, of the data collected during the study, many considerations took place. Participants were chosen rigorously based on the research criteria, as well as the research question and the purpose of the study, to support the credibility of the research findings. In terms of their professional backgrounds, all participants were carefully selected and verified with the assistance of school administrators. They all met the sample criteria. To ensure participants were relaxed in the environment and comfortable with giving honest answers to the interview questions, I gave each participant time to prepare before recording or starting the interviews and also provided the option for participants to turn off their cameras. None of the participants elected to be off camera and all began the interview when they felt ready.

Member checking was also done to ensure credibility. As an important part of credibility, member checking as the "qualitative paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). Member checking involved emailing a copy of the interview transcripts to the participants to review for correct interpretations of their responses. I also took notes on a Rocketbook during the interviews. Upon review of the data, I examined my notes for any bias or personal opinion that could have been established and recorded them in a separate section of the Rocketbook to ensure the data remained unbiased and accurate.

Transferability

Another important aspect to trustworthiness is transferability, or external validity. According to Anney (2014), transferability is the interpretive equivalent of generalizability and measures how well qualitative research findings may be applied to different contexts or settings with different participants. Regarding this study, the findings can be used to other districts within Ohio with similar student populations and demographics. Additionally, findings may also be applied to school districts in other states, making the study transferable.

Daniel (2019) added that, "to demonstrate transferability, the researcher ensures that the recruitment and selection of a sample are based on expert knowledge of participants, and participants are knowledgeable about the phenomenon under study" (p. 104). The study included participants who had experiences with incorporating digital texts, and who fit the criteria established for the study. The criteria for participants required them to be current ELA teachers in Grades 6-12. All participant selected for this

study matched the criteria and were considered well-versed in their knowledge of incorporating digital texts.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability refers to the congruence of the findings with the data gathered. To ensure consistency between the data collected and the findings of the study, triangulation of the data was conducted. Ongoing data analysis occurred immediately after each interview and continued over the next several weeks. Each step of the data collection and the data analysis process was documented and reviewed for accuracy. Interviews were transcribed through Otter.ai and carefully reviewed for accuracy by both me and by the participants during the member checking process.

According to Anney (2014) dependability also requires the participants' appraisal of the study's conclusions, interpretation, and recommendations which must be reliable and backed by the data collected from study. To address the participants' dependability, participants were given a debriefing following the interview and encouraged to review the accuracy of their answers during member checking. The next steps in the interview process were explained to participants and they were emailed their transcript of responses from their interviews. Participants responded if any changes were deemed necessary and revisions were immediately made to the transcript. Once transcripts were thoroughly reviewed, pre-codes and categories were developed after manual and thematic coding, which assisted in the development of recurring themes.

Confirmability

Mackieson et al. (2018) asserted that assumptions and bias have a potential to be found in many aspects of a qualitative study. Some of the areas that have a potential for bias include the framing of research questions, theoretical model selections, participant selection, and data analysis methods. As a researcher who also works the field of education, it was imperative that remained cognizant of any bias that may have occurred in each step of the study process.

To achieve confirmability, I began by creating a specific plan for the study which was submitted to and approved by the IRB. Once the plan was approved, I made sure to follow it exactly while reviewing each step for accuracy. A central research question and seven semistructured interview questions were also part of the study's plan. Both of these elements were reviewed for clear and unbiased wording by my committee members.

Confirmability of data was assured throughout both data collection and data analysis by continual verification by me, the participants, and through consultation with my committee members. A data audit before analysis was conducted to ensure confirmability. A color-coding schema was used to identify patterns and themes. Coding and themes were reviewed for accuracy. Notes that were taken throughout the study were also reviewed for bias. Self-reflection occurred throughout each stage of the study which included data collection, data analysis, and the interpretation of the findings.

Results

In this section, the analysis of the study's findings is covered. A thematic data analysis approach was used to identify codes that represented an overarching theme.

Codes were identified from the participants' answers to seven semistructured interview questions. The semistructured interview questions allowed for follow-up questions to gather more insight into the participant's experiences. Many of the participants' responses permitted follow-up questions.

Upon completion of the interviews, the findings of the study were organized into themes and codes for each theme, as represented by Table 2. Seven themes were identified that aligned with the central research question. The findings were presented by first presenting the research question and then discussing the identified theme with supportive data. The research question for this study was, What are the motivations and experiences of ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 regarding the incorporation of digital texts into the curriculum?

Using the central research question to guide the semistructured interview questions, participants shared their proficiencies, practices, and purposes for using digital texts in the classroom. Data compiled from participants led to the development of common themes. From their responses, the following seven themes emerged: Motivations, experience with technology, professional development, implementing digital texts, barriers, teacher preference, and student preference.

Theme 1: Motivations

Participants revealed a variety of motivations for incorporating digital texts. However, the most common reason included the Covid-19 pandemic being the catalyst to begin incorporating digital texts. Accessibility also played a large role in motivating the participants to incorporate digital texts. Students were not always permitted to remove

print books from the classroom, or there were not enough print texts for every student, so digital texts allowed all students an opportunity to obtain the curriculum. Absent students could access their texts from home and not fall behind when out of the classroom.

P4, P7, and P8 described the Covid-19 pandemic as the main motivation for implementing digital texts. P8 explained, "It really started with the pandemic when everybody was at home and we were only seeing kids a couple times a week. Everybody had one to one technology. So that's when I really saw how valuable it was to have those texts online". P2 and P6 were in college during Covid-19 and were familiar with learning through online systems. P4 stated, "…the year after Covid hit, I basically went completely digital that year." Similarly, P7 stated, "So, since we had to go on to Google Classroom as a platform during the pandemic, I do use digital texts a lot more with my students. And that's what started it for me." P8 concurred that the pandemic was "really when I started using the texts digitally instead of just the book."

Student absences both before and since the pandemic have impeded students from remaining in sync with their classmates when it comes to reading print texts, according to P4. Schools do not have enough print texts for each student, therefore absent students often fall behind on reading. However, P1, P2, P3, P6, and P7 agreed that because of digital texts, students can access the curriculum outside of the classroom and have it available on their computers or phones.

Theme 2: Experiences With Technology

All participants had experience with technology, however, the experience varied. The majority of the participants felt comfortable or competent with technology programs

such as google classroom. Participants discussed their background in technology that related directly to their experiences and technological competencies. All participants either taught during the Covid-19 pandemic (P1, P3, P4, P5, P7, and P8) or were in college actively learning online during the Covid-19 pandemic (P2 and P6). Therefore, all participants had experience with using technology. The participant with the most comfort level and experience was P1. P1 began becoming technologically savvy with word processing programs and later moved to Google Docs. In addition to using technology programs, P1 was also instrumental in assisting the school with moving to Google Suites and implementing a Kindle program with honors students at the school. P3, P4, and P8 admitted to being comfortable with technology.

In contrast to the other participants, P7 did not feel as competent as the others. P7 expressed, "We didn't have computers until my freshman year in college. There was not that option…I don't consider myself technological by any means." Although P7 lacked confidence in technology, there was still the belief that remaining current with technology is necessary.

Theme 3: Professional Development

It was unanimous that none of the participants had received professional development on incorporating digital texts. All participants had received professional development in other digital programs. Most (five) of the participants stated that other teachers had shared their knowledge or experiences with digital texts, especially concerning Kindles. This sharing of knowledge is related to Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory.

P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, and P8 indicated that learning to incorporate digital texts was done independently and without formal professional development. "I mean, I've gone to professional development for like Google Classroom, Google Slides, those kinds of things. I wouldn't say I've necessarily gone to anything with integrating actual digital texts that I can remember," P4 recalled. P7 indicated that incorporating digital texts was learned from colleagues. However, P1 was more instrumental in assisting others with technology. P1 explained:

> We had Tech Tuesday where she [another teacher] and I would teach Google. So, I never really had a professional development (PD). I was more self-taught. And because I had integrated it so much, I learned so much about it just by using it. But I did become the go-to person, and then when COVID hit, I was one of the main forces behind Google Classroom. By that time, I wasn't the first who adopted here but once I adopted, I went all in. So, I also was on the team that presented training and Google Classroom like how to use it for teachers who had not yet adopted. Again, we made it mandatory with COVID. And they had to learn how to do it. So, before we headed out, I did a lot of the teaching on that. So as far as PD on it, I did the PD to train our staff and like I said, I've already given them before. I'd been down in the middle school and in the elementary school to PD them informally, really on a volunteer basis.

Because P1 was comfortable with technology and savvy in its use, they created professional development opportunities in collaboration with other teachers to increase the use of technology by teachers at their school.

Theme 4: Implementation of Digital Texts

The findings support that the Covid-19 pandemic was the catalyst that drove the participants to begin to implement digital texts. There were not enough copies of print texts for all students so teachers had to push out texts digitally during the pandemic. However, now that students are back to learning in person, the majority of the participants still incorporate digital texts but ensure that print texts are available. Each participant incorporated digital texts in various degrees. Some participants offered the majority of texts to be available digitally, while other participants elected to only offer shorter texts digitally due to concerns with reading longer texts online.

When implementing digital texts, P6 preferred to use shorter texts due to concerns with comprehension with longer texts. P6 asserted, "I think their [student] comprehension is significantly lower with digital texts." Longer texts are printed out for students to read, according to P6. P1, P4, P5, and P8 also provide access to both digital and print texts for students. P1, P4, and P7 are incorporating Kindle devices with their honors students. P1 stated:

So, once I adopt Google Classroom, I needed to make all my texts digital. So, thank goodness the internet was well advanced by then I'm able to find any short story that we have anthologized out there. I basically take it and make a copy, turn it into a Google Doc, and then put it up on classroom. That's their assignment. I do that to this day. I have a whole collection of texts that I study, some I study every other year. So, I put up online novels that were in the public domain of PDFs out there on the internet. I'd find a PDF and post it up so the kids would

have access to the PDF as well. We still had class sets so I would give them a
physical copy, but they also had the digital copies. So, there was never excuses
that we talked about at the beginning of this interview. They have access to it. I do
that to this day. So, all the poetry I teach is digitally up on classroom. Short
stories are digital. Now, occasionally, I guess every year, about a handful to half
of my class want me to print out the story so they can read it on paper, which I
have no problem doing. That's also a benefit of digital is that it can always be
printed. So whatever best suits their learning best. Digital has an answer and I can
print it out, get it to them, and so forth.

P1 also had the most experience with incorporating technology and was instrumental in
technology training within the district.

Theme 5: Barriers

The participants identified many barriers. The largest barriers to incorporating
digital texts included students not bringing charged devices, students not bringing a
device, internet issues, and online distractions. In addition to issues with students using
devices, some of the participants revealed that they had to find their digital texts online to
assign to students and a limited number of free resources were available to teachers.

Lack of student responsibility played a large role in barriers to incorporating
digital texts. P2, P4, P7, and P8 revealed that students arrive to class with devices that
are not charged or with no device at all. When students do bring a charged device, P2, P6,
and P8 indicated that online distractions become a barrier as well. "I have students who
are taking driving school during class or who are playing games because I can't see their

Chromebooks," revealed P2. In addition to barriers related to devices, one participant disclosed a physical barrier for students. Eye fatigue from extended screen time was a concern discussed by P5. P5 explained, "I think that sometimes your eyes are exhausted from the screen. Your eyes are constantly on screen, the blue light from the screen can be bothersome, and eyes get tired from looking at a screen all day".

Theme 6: Teacher Preference

The participants were divided on their preference for digital or print texts. Most participants preferred either a combination of both mediums (two participants) or just a print text (four participants). P3 explained,

> I feel that kids need to have a book in their hand before reading and get that experience of turning the page and reading what comes next. I know I've watched some younger children use like Epic, and they can read the story and look like they're turning the page. So, I feel like it's really half and half.

P1 was an advocate of digital texts. For P1, all texts are available in a digital format, all essays are submitted digitally, and grading is done digitally. "My dream was to have Kindles for my students. And last year, through a grant, I was able to do that. Currently, we're in the middle of a pilot program," P1 stated. P6 asserted, "I do prefer digital. I do like to add current stuff sometimes because I feel like the kids were kind of in a transition period so they feel like they miss having the print resource." Although P6 prefers digital texts as a teacher, student preference was considered.

Theme 7: Student Preference

The participants revealed that not all students prefer exclusively digital texts so print texts are made available. Preference for print or digital is dependent on each student, and there is not a common preference either way. It seems that having both digital and print texts available meets the needs of all students. For P1, students who are seniors prefer print texts, while juniors prefer digital texts. A combination of print and digital texts was preferred by students, according to P2, P3, P7, and P8. Unlike the others, P4 and P5 claimed that students in their classes preferred print texts. P5 asserted, "The students do not like to be on their Chromebooks; they really don't like to read articles online".

Summary

Data analysis revealed themes that were discussed in Chapter 4. Data analysis included examining recorded interviews conducted via Zoom and assessing interview transcripts composed by Otter.ai. The central research question guided the study and the findings aided in further understanding teachers' curricular choices regarding incorporating digital texts.

Findings from the study indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic was the catalyst that compelled the participants to increase their use of digital texts. Although all participants incorporated digital texts in the curriculum, they do so at different capacities. Barriers, which include lack of student responsibility and lack of professional development, were still present after incorporating digital texts. Findings revealed that participants learned to incorporate digital texts on their own, without professional

development provided by their employed districts. Professional development may increase the participants' comfort levels regarding technology. The study found that some participants were comfortable with technology, while others were less at ease with it.

In Chapter 4, I also disclosed the setting, demographics, data collection, and data analysis of the study. Furthermore, evidence of trustworthiness and results were addressed. Participants shared similar experiences and motivations in incorporating digital texts. However, the participants had various backgrounds in technology and experiences with technology. Throughout Chapter 4, I uncovered multiple barriers make incorporating digital texts difficult. In Chapter 5, I present the interpretations and limitations of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In this basic interpretive qualitative study, I examined teachers' motivation and experiences in incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms in Grades 6-12. The research did not include motivations or experiences from ELA teachers outside of northeast Ohio, nor did it include ELA teachers in prekindergarten through Grade 5. The participants who were selected for the study were viewed as the experts in this type of qualitative study. Data collection consisted of open-ended, semistructured interviews that were conducted independently and privately over Zoom. Data analysis involved coding to identify common themes that emerged from participant responses to interview questions. Seven themes emerged during data analysis: motivations, experiences with technology, professional development, implementation of digital texts, barriers, teacher preference, and student preference.

The findings revealed that although all participants reported that they incorporated digital texts, they still made print texts available to students and used printed materials alongside digital texts. Additionally, participants indicated that professional development to incorporate digital texts was not offered in their district. All participants stated that they learned about incorporating digital texts on their own. Incorporating digital texts came with its own set of barriers including device issues, internet issues, online distractions, and eye fatigue.

This chapter includes interpretation of the findings, discussion of the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research. The study's potential implications for positive social change are also noted in this chapter. The study's key conclusions in

relation to the identified themes and elements from the literature review are also addressed. The chapter ends with a conclusion to the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

As I discuss, the major findings from this study confirmed and expanded on previously conducted research revealed in the literature review. I have organized the interpretation of the findings by themes. In the discussion, I compare my findings against those of other researchers discussed in the reviewed literature found in Chapter 2. I also interpret the findings in relation to the study's conceptual framework.

Theme 1: Motivations

Marakovits (2022) and the Ohio Department of Education (2017) confirmed that technology requirements are part of 21st-century skills that students need to be prepared for college and career and to become technologically literate citizens. However, this study revealed that teachers are also motivated to incorporate technology due to other reasons. Participants in the study noted accessibility and availability of texts as the main motivations for incorporating digital texts.

Theme 2: Experiences With Technology

Technology is continually evolving, and teachers have various backgrounds in technology. However, it is important for all teachers to have experience in technologies to provide support to 21st-century learners. Enegress (2021) confirmed that

> Students in the 21st-century have grown up online and expect the same levels of technology in their learning environments as in their day-to-day lives. Crucially, students' potential future success could be severely compromised by a lack of

digital proficiency. To address these needs, teachers are expected not only to be

profound users of educational technologies but also to engage in the design of

digital environments to adapt to the needs of the students. (p. 96)

Each participant had various experiences with technology. The experiences ranged from a

comfortable history of integrating technology as a hobby (P1) to not being raised with

technology and feeling technologically illiterate (P7). Regardless of the amount of time

each participant had incorporated technology or the comfort level of each participant, all

of them had experience with incorporating digital texts.

Even though Tondeur et al. (2017) discovered a lack of knowledge from novice

teachers in meaningfully integrating technology, that was not the case with the

participants. Six of the participants were forced to integrate technology during the Covid-

19 pandemic that shut down their schools for some time. Two of the participants directly

used technology during the pandemic while finishing college during that time. It appears

that the Covid-19 pandemic hastened participating teachers' need for technology and

access to digital texts.

Theme 3: Professional Development

All participants agreed that they received no explicit professional development

related to incorporating digital texts. Francom (2020), Lawrence et al. (2020), and

Lawrence and Tar (2018) recommended that time be built into teachers' schedules to try

out new technologies before integrating them. Participants may benefit from this idea.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) added that professional development would allow

teachers to provide feedback.

However, technology is constantly evolving so teachers need ongoing professional development to better support their students. Falloon (2020) asserted,

> This represents a considerable challenge for teacher educators, who not only need to better support their students to more effectively utilize digital resources in their future classrooms, but must also help them understand and develop a concern for broader considerations around technology use, and its impacts. (p. 2451)

To support digitally literacy students, teachers must also be digitally literate.

Professional development was provided, however, in other areas not related to incorporating digital texts. All participants partook in the professional development offered by their school district and applied what they learned in their classrooms. Therefore, professional development on incorporating digital texts may allow teachers similar to P7 to feel more comfortable.

Theme 4: Implementation of Digital Texts

All participants used digital technologies. However, they implemented digital texts in various formats. P1, P4, and P7 elected to use Kindles in their classrooms for honors students. P1 explained that the reason they chose Kindles is so that the students can build a digital library that stays with them each year and can be added to until graduation. The cost was another incentive for P1 to implement Kindles. Anderson (2018) found that digital texts downloaded to Kindles were less expensive than purchasing digital texts because of the opportunity to download a text to six different Kindles.

P3 uses digital texts because students can interact with them. Students can annotate and highlight important passages. According to Jensen and Scharff (2019), there is an increase in students annotating when using Kindles. Even without Kindles, students can access a digital text. P2, P5, and P6 post PDFs of texts on Google Classroom for students to access both in and out of the classroom.

Theme 5: Barriers

The most common barriers revealed in the study were related to student devices. Students are not showing responsibility for their devices and are arriving to class without them, according to P1, P2, P4, and P6. However, when students do bring a device to class, the devices are often not charged (P2, P4, P7, and P8). When students are not prepared with technology, it becomes difficult to incorporate digital texts. Turner et al. (2019) found that a major concern for incorporating digital texts is a difficulty for students to remain focused on the texts. P2, P6, and P8 noted that this is a barrier as well. Students can become distracted when they open other tabs while online and become off-task. Soemer and Schiefele (2019) stated that decreased reading comprehension may occur when students become distracted or unfocused when reading on screen. P6 also recognized a lower reading comprehension when students use digital texts. Many researchers (Clinton, 2019; Delgado et al., 2018; Peterson & Alexander, 2020; Kong et al., 2018; Singer & Alexander, 2017; Singer Trakhman et al., 2019) have concurred that reading comprehension is increased with the use of print texts.

Theme 6: Teacher Preference

Harrell and Bynum (2018) determined that teacher belief in technology played a role in technology use in their classrooms. Teachers who felt that technology would have a positive impact on their students were like to use it more; and teachers who did not feel this way would be less likely to integrate technology as extensively (Harrell & Bynum, 2018). This idea relates to teacher preference. Although all participants reported that they incorporated digital texts in their teaching practice, the majority said that they favored print texts or a combination of digital and print texts. Only two participants (P1 and P6) preferred digital texts. P1 has a strong background in technology and was an advocate for incorporating more technology in the school.

Theme 7: Student Preference

The study found that participants believed students preferred a combination of both print and digital texts. Only P4 and P5 believed that students exclusively preferred print texts. However, the participants revealed that the preference depended on each student. Singer Trakhman et al. (2019) found that students read more quickly with digital texts and felt they were more engaged with the text when read digitally. However, the same study also revealed the students performed better with print texts. Mizrachi et al. (2018) discovered that a majority of students preferred print text for academic reading due to the ability to remember more material and a better focus when reading print texts. P6 also believed that students remembered more material when reading from print text because of the ability to recall specifics to page numbers or text locations on a tangible page. Mangen et al. (2019) further explained this concept:

> To know where they are in a text printed on paper, readers have at their disposal several cues: they can have a look at the page number (visual cue), but they can also refer to tactile-kinesthetic cues given by the handling movements informing about the repartition of the weight of the pages on the left and on the right of the current page, and consequently on the number of pages already read and on the number of pages still to read (p. 4).

The majority of the participants agreed that a print copy of the text was provided to students so students had an opportunity to have access to a tangible text.

Alignment of the Findings With the Conceptual Framework

Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory explains the adoption of ideas or products as happening through their circulation through social systems. Verkijika (2019) further explained, "the perception of a technology's usefulness is one of the few factors that have been conceptualized by well-known models to play a vital role both in the pre-adoption and the post-adoption phases of a given technology" (p. 1). In this study, I uncovered that in one of the study sites, Rogers's (2003) theory was prominent. Figure1 illustrates my rendering of the five stages of Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory.
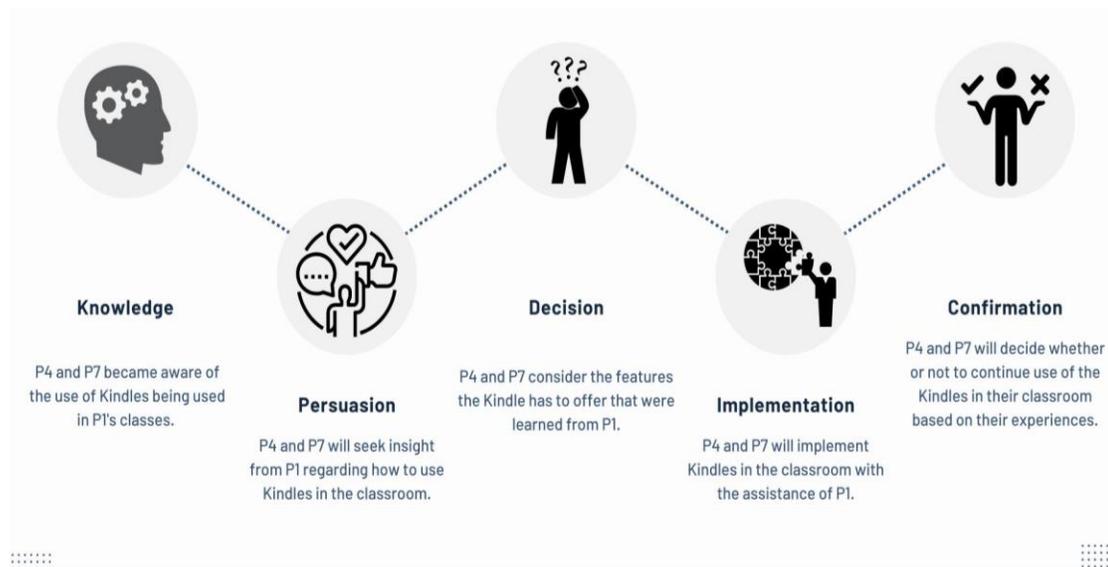
Figure 1

The Five Stages of Rogers's (2003) Diffusion of Innovation Theory
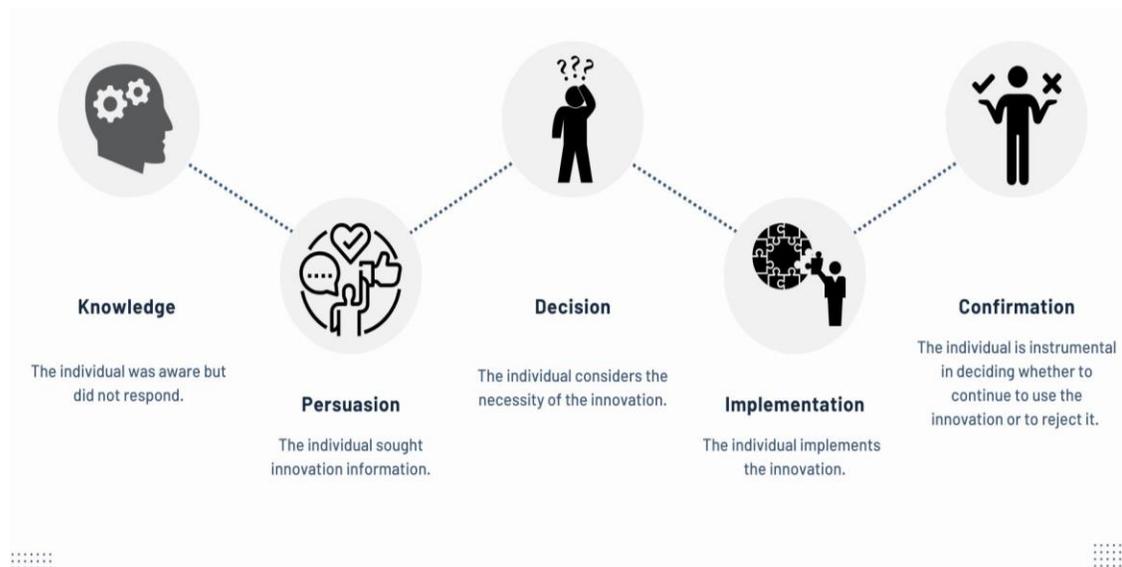
P1 was an advocate for Kindles and had spread the benefits of using Kindles to two other participants (P4 and P7) who will be adopting the devices in their classrooms as well. P4 and P7 learned of the use of Kindles in the classroom from P1. Features of the Kindle that can enhance learning were promoted by P1 to P4 and P7. P1 was persuasive in incorporating Kindles at the study site and has shared knowledge of the benefits to incorporating the devices in other classes. Additionally, P1 was also influential in integrating more technology programs, like Google Suites, into the school. It indicates that if one individual, like P1, spreads knowledge or experiences with technology, others are more likely to adopt the technology, as indicated by the adoption of Kindles in the study site. Figure 2 depicts my rendering of the application of Rogers's diffusion of innovations theory to the diffusion of digital texts via Kindles at the study site.

Figure 2

Application of Rogers's (2003) Diffusion of Innovation Theory

As illustrated by Figure 2, the use of digital texts can spread within a school. It takes one individual to adopt the idea of incorporating digital texts and that idea can be spread to others within the same building. Personal experiences of the individuals who are incorporating digital texts in a school will determine whether or not they share the idea. Individuals with negative experiences may be more likely to not recommend incorporating digital texts, while others may promote the idea. This level of personal experience will be the determining factor as to whether or not digital texts are incorporated in the school, as determined by the confirmation stage of Rogers's (2003) diffusion of innovation theory.

Limitations of the Study

As a result of its focus on people and the experiences that they bring, a basic qualitative study has some limitations. Reflexivity may be a problem, as can subjectivity

in interpreting the findings from the study. As a qualitative researcher, it is possible to make rash judgments and unjustified generalizations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I based all of my conclusions on participant responses as opposed to my assumptions, ideas, or experiences to address the issue of reflexivity. Additionally, I remained in my role as a researcher, did not participate in any side conversations, and closely followed the interview protocol as set forth by Walden's IRB protocol for the interview process. In Chapter 3, I addressed other limitations that could occur from the interview process, which could include time constraints during the interviews or participant nervousness during the interviews. Time constraint during the interviews was not an issue for this study. All participants had ample time left over after the conclusion of the interview and no one was rushed during the interview process. To address the issue of participant nervousness, a copy of the semistructured interview questions was outlined in the consent form as approved in the IRB documents. Participants had an opportunity to become familiar with some of the questions they were to be asked. Before asking the interview questions, the purpose of the study was reviewed and the time frame for the interview was revealed. Each participant was asked if they were comfortable with being on camera and had the option to turn the camera off. Finally, each participant was asked if they were ready to begin before the interview was started to eliminate nervousness.

Recommendations

Previous research conducted has indicated professional development regarding integrating technology is a concern and barrier for teachers. This barrier was also evident in the findings from this study. Future research should be conducted to identify if

professional development regarding incorporating digital texts would lead to increased use of digital texts. Additional research should also be done to gain insight into if providing professional development to teachers in the area of incorporating digital texts would lead to a greater belief in the technology, thereby increasing teachers' motivations to incorporate digital texts into the ELA curriculum with greater fidelity.

Since the research for this study consisted specifically of ELA teachers in Grades 6-12, research is needed in prekindergarten through Grade 5 to give a complete exploration of teacher motivations and experiences. Additionally, it is recommended that further research be made on students' medium preferences. In this study, I found that student preference was perceived to be a combination of both print and digital texts. Through student perceptions, it can be determined if exposure to digital texts plays a role in their preference. For example, if students are not exposed regularly to digital texts due to the comfort level of their teachers, would they prefer print texts because that is what they are provided with more often? Concerning a teachers' comfort levels with digital texts, participants revealed there was no professional development offered for incorporating digital texts. Therefore, it is recommended that research be done on why school districts do not implement ongoing professional development in this area.

Participants also found online distractions and lack of student focus to be barriers to incorporating digital texts. Further research may be needed in the area of online distractions with digital texts. Student perspectives on online distractions and focus issues may give more insight into ways to overcome this barrier and make digital text experiences more beneficial. Further research should also be conducted in other content

areas. Findings from this study provided insight into the motivations of and experiences with incorporating digital texts only in ELA classrooms. More research is needed in content areas outside of ELA, which can be used for comparisons.

Implications

Findings from this qualitative research study on teachers' motivation and experiences in incorporating digital texts in ELA classrooms in Grades 6-12 include several potential implications for positive social change in the educational system. First, findings from the study can provide school leaders with an informed understanding of ways to better support educators and the textual decisions they make in the classroom.

Next, the data provided by the findings of the study can also have implications for positive social change for teachers through incorporating technologies that promote and support critical literacy skills. Technology literacy is also part of critical literacy skills. Schools are requiring technology literacy (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), therefore, findings from this study justify the need for teachers to continue to incorporate digital texts.

Finally, findings from the study can help students be prepared for college and a career with a background in technology. The study indicated that teachers are incorporating technology skills through digital texts that allow students to interact with technology and have a stronger background in digital literacy. Marakovits (2022) and the Ohio Department of Education (2017) asserted that students need to be prepared for life after secondary school to become technologically literate citizens. Students can make a positive contribution to society with the critical literacy skills they learned in school.

Conclusion

Technology is continually advancing, including in schools. Barzillai and Thomson (2018) concluded that students, especially young ones, are reading from digital devices, causing technology to increase in the classroom. Therefore, more schools are incorporating digital texts as an option for students. In this study, however, I found that digital texts are not being consistently incorporated in every classroom. Some classrooms have gone fully digital, while others have elected to only incorporate some digital texts in combination with print texts.

In addition to the inconsistencies of incorporating digital texts, the findings from this study indicated teachers face multiple barriers with technology and student responsibility. Participants disclosed that barriers included students not bringing devices to class, devices not being charged, online distractions, and technological problems. Even with the barriers that teachers encounter, they still feel motivated to incorporate digital texts. Participants identified accessibility and availability as the main motivations. Interactions with texts and remaining current with technology also played a role in teachers' motivations for incorporating digital texts.

Teachers need to prepare students to become productive citizens who have critical literacy skills. In order to effectively prepare students, teachers must also be provided professional development related to incorporating digital texts and the removal of, or reduction of, barriers described in this study. Findings from the study ascertained that teachers have not received proper professional development to incorporate digital texts. It

would be beneficial for teachers to receive ongoing professional development in this area

to better support technology integration and student learning.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Research question	Interview question
What are the motivations and experiences of ELA teachers in Grades 6-12 regarding the incorporation of digital texts into the curriculum?	1. Tell me about your background in teaching ELA (e.g., how many years you have taught, what grade levels you have taught, etc.). 2. Tell me about what motivates you to incorporate digital texts into your curriculum. 3. What have your experiences been with incorporating digital texts? 4. Tell me about your background in technology and your comfort level with integrating technology such as digital texts in the classroom. 5. What types of professional development have you received in integrating digital texts in the ELA classroom? 6. What barriers have you encountered using digital texts? 7. Which medium (digital or print) do you prefer and why?

Note. ELA = English Language Arts.