Examining the Lived Experiences of Secondary Teachers using Visuals and Leveled Texts with English Learners at Various Levels of Language Acquisition

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EXAMINING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY TEACHERS USING VISUALS AND LEVELED TEXTS WITH ENGLISH LEARNERS AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the Department of Learning Sciences and Educational Research in the College of Community Innovation and Education at the University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological Dissertation in Practice was to understand teachers’ experience with the creation and use of visuals and leveled texts, written at various English proficiency levels, with English learners (ELs) in English II classrooms at a large high school in Central Florida. The need to examine teachers’ experience with these scaffolds arose from the disparity between academic achievement rates of ELs and non-ELs as measured by the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA). This complex problem can be addressed from a multitude of perspectives, and this Dissertation in Practice sought to examine specific practical scaffolds that mainstream English Language Arts (ELA) teachers can and do implement in order to begin to address this gap. The main research question investigated what current ELA teachers are using and creating in regard to visuals and leveled texts for ELs at various World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) proficiencies, in their secondary classrooms. This Dissertation in Practice intended to provide practical insight for secondary educators who teach ELs alongside non-ELs in their ELA classrooms. This study included six English II teachers and through interviews, observations, lesson plans, and student work samples, five themes emerged. The themes that emerged were 1) Teachers utilize a variety of visuals and leveled texts in the classroom. 2) Teachers' introduction to scaffolds come primarily from other educators and the teacher's own means. 3) Teachers implement a variety of techniques in the classroom to accompany the use of visuals and leveled texts in the classroom. 4) The environment in which the teacher works impacts teacher use and creation of scaffolds. 5) The composition of students in the classroom impacts teacher use and creation of scaffolds. Implications for practice and future research are discussed.
This Dissertation in Practice is dedicated to my children. I hope they can see that hard work and determination make everything possible; and to my parents whose example showed this to me.
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Access for ELLs 2.0 - Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners 2.0 suite of assessments

DEUSS - Date entered United States school

EL - English learner

ELA - English Language Arts

ELD - English language development

FSA - Florida Standards Assessment

WIDA - World-class Instructional Design and Assessment
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2019a), 9.6 percent of students enrolled in public schools in the United States, were considered English learners (ELs) in 2016. This amount of ELs was an increase from the 8.1 percent enrolled in 2000. Florida’s number of ELs was higher than the national average at 10.3 percent. This means that Florida’s schools are in charge of providing an adequate education to a relatively large number of students who do not speak English as a first language and have not obtained proficiency in the English language. Though classification criteria for ELs vary by state (Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013), in Florida, students are identified as needing language services based on a three-question survey, regarding spoken languages and home languages, that their guardian fills out upon enrollment in a Florida public school (Florida Administrative Code and Florida Administrative Register, 2017b). Once enrolled, students who are identified as needing language services are tested for English language proficiency. In Florida, a student is considered proficient in the English language when they can obtain a composite score of 4 or higher on the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners 2.0 suite of assessments (ACCESS for ELLs 2.0), with at least a score of 4 in reading (Florida Administrative Code and Florida Administrative Register, 2017). It is vital to note that the term “EL” is used, in this context, to designate students who meet these two criteria. In other words, non-ELs are students who enroll in public schools that meet criteria for English language proficiency, regardless of their native language status. Non-ELs are not considered as part of the above-mentioned percentages, meaning that there may be more students who were once considered ELs, that are no longer counted in this category.
According to the Florida Department of Education (2016), the Grade 10 Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) English Language Arts (ELA) is the measure used in Florida to gauge student performance in ELA. It consists of both reading and writing components. The reading component has sixty to sixty-four questions that cover twenty-six standards related to reading, speaking and listening, and language. The questions range in complexity and can be multiple choice, student typed, or technology enhanced items that require students to manipulate content to answer the question. This component is taken in two sessions over two days with ELs receiving extended time and the use of a native language dictionary as accommodations. The writing component consists of one text-based writing prompt where the students are required to complete a multi-paragraph essay in response that uses support for their ideas from the provided two to four text sources. The writing component is a 120-minute test taken in one session with ELs allowing the same accommodations as the reading: extended time and the use of a native language dictionary. Since all students in Florida must pass the Grade 10 FSA ELA, as one component of meeting Florida’s graduation requirements at a public high school (FLA. STAT of 2019) or meet the requirement with a concordant score on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT), it is imperative to consider the equitability of education for all students, regardless of English language proficiency. As it is, there is a significant disparity between the test scores of ELs and non-ELs in Florida (Florida Department of Education, 2019) that warrants investigation. This chapter examines this problem of practice and discusses its relevance to the field of secondary education; explaining the organizational context of this Dissertation in Practice, as well as the theoretical rationale behind the choice in scaffolds examined.
Problem Statement

ELs come into United States schools at all K-12 grade levels, though they are enrolling in elementary school at higher rates than they are in secondary education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019d). This disparity may be partially impacted by students who are initially classified as ELs in elementary, then exit the program as they age and raise their English proficiency (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). This trend, unfortunately, may make it easier to overlook the needs of the secondary students who are still classified as ELs, but this growing number of ELs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019a) make up a unique demographic of learners that mainstream teachers must meet the challenge of making rigorous educational standards accessible for (Nutta et al., 2014). It is imperative that this population, and their unique academic needs are addressed by K-12 teachers. Because secondary ELs are required to take and pass the tenth grade FSA ELA alongside non-ELs, in order to receive a high school diploma (FLA.STAT of 2019), the problem of practice that this Dissertation in Practice will address is that ELs in Florida are required to pass the FSA ELA in order to meet this requirement, but are doing so at significantly lower rates than non-ELs (Florida Department of Education, 2019a).

The rate that ELs are passing the FSA ELA is a problem because Florida students, who do not pass the FSA ELA, will be placed into an intensive reading class for the following year. Since the students who are not passing this exam are disproportionately ELs, this means that more students from this demographic are losing the opportunity for an additional elective course. More importantly than their high school class choices, failing to meet the passing score on the FSA puts students in danger of not graduating from high school which can have detrimental impacts for their future. According to NCES (2019b) adults between the ages of 25 and 34 who
did not graduate high school were almost twice as likely to be unemployed as those who did graduate. Additionally, males who did not graduate high school in 2017, saw eight thousand dollars less in income as compared to males who graduated high school, and nearly twenty thousand dollars less than males who earned an associate degree, with similar trends seen for women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019c).

This problem is significant because it has the potential to negatively impact a growing demographic in Florida. According to the United States Department of Education (n.d.), national graduation rates for ELs in the 2015-2016 school year was 67 percent, significantly below the graduation rates of non-ELs, which was 85 percent. In Florida during this same school year, the graduation rate for ELs was 62 percent. Furthermore, NCES (2018) reported that in 2017, students with limited English proficiency were 3.5 times more likely to drop out of high school, than students who spoke English well. Though a variety of factors may be related to high school completion, it is imperative that research attention is paid to secondary ELs. This research should include specific evidence of classroom practices that help prepare ELs to pass the tenth grade ELA FSA; specifically practices that foster growth in the ELs ability to read texts of higher-level complexity that are closer to grade level. Though in national statistics, ELs are spoken of as a group, these students vary in terms of level of proficiency in English (Florida Department of Education, 2021). Florida Department of Education (2021) considers a student to be proficient in English if they score at least a 4.0 overall and a 4.0 in reading on the ACCESS for ELLs. Based on this criteria, 21 percent of tenth grade ELs were considered proficient in the English language on the spring 2020 assessment, and thus will no longer be considered to be ELs in the state of Florida (Florida Administrative Code and Florida Administrative Register, 2017). That means that the rest of these ELs are not proficient in the English language, though they are still held to
the requirements of the ELA FSA. These students are unique individuals that have their life ahead of them and each failing score puts a student at risk.

**Context of the Study**

This Dissertation in Practice was conducted at Mountainside High School (a pseudonym). This organization is a public school in Central Florida that is responsible for the education of approximately 3,400 students. Of that total, 784 of these are 10th grade students, with 155, one fifth of them, are coded as ELs, or being monitored after exiting the ESOL program. Because Mountainside High School is a public school, these students are all required to take and pass the tenth grade FSA ELA in order to graduate. All students affected by this requirement, include the ELs in the school, regardless of the date they entered United States schools (DEUSS), or their level of English language proficiency. This problem is loosely related to the FSA ELA passing rates of other marginalized demographics in Mountainside High School, including students with disabilities, Hispanic students, and African American students. These three subgroups are also passing the FSA ELA at lower rates than white students (Florida Department of Education, 2019), and statewide students may be considered to be in more than one of the groups.

At Mountainside High School, ELs were provided with services beyond their mainstream teachers. The school staffed an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Curriculum Compliance Teacher who worked with teachers in their professional learning community (PLC). The compliance teacher provided information related to World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) testing and data. Also, the compliance teacher coordinated the education of all ELs on campus, maintaining records, ensuring ELs are being served and accommodated in all their classes, communicating with parents, and providing workshops for families on a variety of topics including resources to help with language development and community support. It is
important to note that the ESOL Curriculum Compliance Teacher at Mountainside High School was replaced shortly before this study took place. Beyond this specialist, Mountainside High School also employed three paraprofessionals who worked directly with ELs to provide extra support, such as individualized instruction in class and help in advocating for themselves when they need additional assistance from teachers. Reading classes for additional ELA practice were provided to all ELs in their junior or senior year who have not met the FSA ELA graduation requirement, as well as freshman and sophomore ELs who have not earned at least a three on the FSA ELA. These Reading classes served ELs alongside non-ELs in groups of 18-21 students and utilized small group rotations as well as the use of leveled texts. Additionally, ELs who have been in the United States for less than one year were enrolled in a Developmental Language Arts Reading double block class that served only 15 ELs per class.

The field of education in Florida has attempted to address this problem with a variety of different practices (Platt et al, 2003). For example, the Consent Decree is the legislation that ensures Florida complies with federal and state laws related to teaching ELs (Florida Department of Education, n.d.), and separation versus inclusion techniques for educating ELs has been tried (Platt et al, 2003). According to Platt, Harper, and Mendoza (2003), separation as a technique is when ELs are pulled from the classroom and taught in seclusion from their native speaking peers, while inclusion has ELs learning in the same mainstream classroom as their native speaking peers. Mountainside High School had followed a separation model for ELs in ELA in previous years but has been following an inclusion model for the last 2 years. For this Dissertation in Practice, the teacher participants were teaching ELs included in their mainstream classrooms. Like the Consent Decree, the state of Florida has signed into law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This act is a set of guidelines to ensure equity of education through the
imposition of high academic standards for students and accountability for student achievement (Florida Department of Education, 2018). This act directly speaks to the teaching of ELs in Florida’s classrooms in title III by providing guidelines for plans that districts should have in place for these learners (Florida Department of Education, 2018). Florida Department of Education (2018) ESSSA also mandates that ELs take state assessments in their first year of arrival to the school, though student growth, in reading and math, is not counted in the school grade, the measure of school performance ascribed by the state (Florida Department of Education, 2019c), until the students’ second year testing, and student achievement is not counted against the school grade until the students third year tested. Mountainside High School resides in a district that allows for ELs to be put into mainstream ELA classrooms, a practice which is common among the district high schools and provides little classroom requirements beyond the use of “ESOL strategies” by the mainstream classroom teachers. Florida Department of Education (2005) offers some examples of these strategies such as cooperative learning, visuals, and field experiences, though no strategy or strategies are explicitly required by the district.

Mountainside High School teachers are required by the school district to be in compliance with certain ESOL requirements (Florida Department of Education, 2011). The district that governs Mountainside High School follows the recommendations of the state regarding teacher training for ELs (see Florida Department of Education, 2011). The teachers in this Dissertation in Practice are all English II teachers so they are required to hold an ESOL endorsement on their teaching license or a K-12 ESOL certification. The ESOL endorsement can be obtained by completing 300 in-service hours or 15 semester hours in 5 domains. The domains
include coursework related to: (1) culture (2) language and literacy (3) methods of teaching (4) curriculum (5) assessment.

According to the Florida Department of Education (n.d.) the Consent Decree details how students are classified as ELs, and requirements for individual districts to develop a plan to meet the needs of their ELs. This decree articulates that “Each limited English proficient (LEP) child enrolled in any program offered by the Florida Public Schools is entitled to equal access to programming which is appropriate to his or her level of English proficiency, academic achievement and special needs” (Florida Department of Education, n.d.). This requirement is applicable to the teachers at Mountainside High School and is guaranteed to the ELs who learn in their classrooms.

**Positionality**

For the purpose of transparency, it is important to note my positionality related to this study. I am a second-generation American. I am only fluent in English but have a working knowledge of Spanish. My father is only fluent in English, but my mother became fluent in English and Spanish simultaneously and has since taught herself French. I also have close personal relationships with other adult ELs. I have only taught in schools in Central Florida and have significant exposure to teaching ELs at a variety of levels of language acquisition. I became very passionate about the education of ELs in my second year of teaching when I was first exposed to a newcomer who understood little to no English. I felt devastated that I did not know how to teach this student, prompting my own research into best practices related to helping students at every level of language proficiency. This independent research took place years before beginning this Dissertation in Practice and should be noted as my familiarity with and opinions related to teaching ELs have deepened significantly beyond what is required of my
position as an English teacher. In this study, I was a member of the PLC and had worked closely with the participating teachers for varying amounts of time, in most cases years. As a member, I included my own experience through a first-person phenomenological approach using written reflections (Finlay, 2012). Through engaging in Epoche as defined by Moustakas (1994), I was able to mitigate the influence of my own bias on the data collection and analysis. This was done by consciously acknowledging my positionality and considering its potential impact before I sorted the qualitative data and again as I recognized emerging themes.

**Significance of the Study**

This Dissertation in Practice will be able to serve as a resource for classroom teachers and other instructional staff that work with secondary ELs. By looking at the experience of teachers who are tasked with effectively educating ELs alongside native English speakers, practitioners can understand the process of differentiating the use of visuals and leveled texts in their classrooms and schools. Beyond the practitioners, this Dissertation in Practice can serve as an example to educational institutions and other stakeholders in the field of some of the realities of teaching secondary ELs in the age of standardized testing. Similarly, it can serve as a contribution to the existing research related to secondary ELs as it will have implications for further research into developmentally appropriate scaffolds for ELs with significant language barriers in mainstream classrooms.

**Description and Purpose of Study**

The theoretical research framework guiding the study will be phenomenology, whose premises are describing the lived experiences of the participants. This framework is necessitated by the research questions’ reliance on data collected from the participating teachers’ own perspectives. Since this study sought to understand a phenomenon, the creation and use of the
scaffolds, a phenomenological framework is indicated (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). To understand this phenomenon more completely, a number of data sources were examined including interviews held at the beginning and again at the end of quarter three, observations held during quarter three, and artifact collection that included lesson plans, student work samples, and screenshots of participating teachers’ Canvas courses, the digital classroom platform.

The purpose of this phenomenological Dissertation in Practice is to understand teachers’ lived experience with the creation and use of EL scaffolds, in particular, the use of visuals and leveled texts, written at various English proficiency levels, with ELs in English II classrooms at a large high school in Central Florida. Mainstream English II teachers must adapt their lesson plans in order to reach the needs of all learners, including those who have limited English proficiency. This Dissertation in Practice seeks to explore two classroom scaffolds that practitioners can differentiate for their ELs at all levels of English language proficiency. The research questions proposed for this Dissertation in Practice are:

**Main Research Question**: What are the experiences of English II teachers with creating and using visuals and leveled texts with their ELs at a high school with ELs in mainstream ELA classes?

**Sub-question (a)**: What are the experiences of English II teachers with differentiating these scaffolds for ELs at varying WIDA proficiency levels?

**Sub-question (b)**: What progress do English II teachers perceive as a result of classroom scaffolds for the ELs in their classroom over the course of the third quarter of the school year?
Rationale for the Scaffolds Examined in the Study

The scaffolds chosen in this study, visuals and leveled texts, were chosen as they are known scaffolds that the teachers at the site of this study used with varying levels of frequency. These scaffolds also represent an aspect of teachers’ classroom practice in which they have full control. Noted Second Language Acquisition scholar Stephen Krashen (1982) argues that acquiring a language is not a conscious task, but instead, happens in our unconscious mind, and is not taught explicitly, but is allowed to develop organically through continued exposure to what he terms comprehensible input, which is language that is just above the current proficiency level of the student that is made comprehensible through extralinguistic cues. This notion is fundamental to understanding how comprehensible input can be integrated into secondary classrooms to facilitate language learning. Krashen’s notion of comprehensible input is expressed in his input hypothesis, which describes how language acquisition happens when the learner understands the message of what is being conveyed, and that the learner can grow in their second language (L2) when their L2 is presented slightly above their current level of understanding \((i) + 1\) with extralinguistic support; meaning that learners will move to the next level of acquisition, only if they are able to understand the meaning when presented just above their current level of understanding (Krashen, 1982). Krashen (1982) posits that facilitators of language learning should focus first on providing the learners with comprehensible input, meaning the language that is given to them is done so in a way that they are able to understand the meaning, and then focus on grammatical structures of the language as a secondary goal. Exploring the use of visuals and leveled texts is exploring the language demand that is given to the ELs
Input, Interaction, and Output

In order for language acquisition to occur, Krashen (1982) theorizes that the input, or the language spoken or written for the students, must follow the \((i + 1)\) formula. Krashen (1981) then explains the role of interaction in language acquisition as necessitating “meaningful interaction in the target language-- natural communication-- in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding” (p.1). In language acquisition, output is the language that students can produce either through speaking or writing (Krashen, 1982). Krashen (1982) avows that language acquisition can occur even in the absence of output, which draws considerable attention to the need for comprehensible input, though this hypothesis has been challenged over the years as being vague and lacking evidence (Gregg, 1984; White, 1987; McLaughlin, 1987 as cited in Liu, 2015), this emphasis on input has great value when looking at the two scaffolds examined in this study: visuals and leveled texts.

Using the assumption that students acquire language more effectively when provided comprehensible input intentionally geared towards the individual language needs of the student (Krashen 1982), then a secondary ELA teacher would best serve their students by focusing their time on creating such inputs. Since teachers can control the content presented in the classroom, this input hypothesis has value in this study, as this is meant to have practical applications in the secondary ELA classroom. Though important to Krashen’s (1982) hypothesis, interaction and output were not examined as the processes are less under the control of the teachers, and thus do not reflect the purpose of this study. For the purpose of this study, Krashen’s (1982) hypothesis still has merit due to the specific circumstances being explored, as the demands of teaching the English II course at Mountainside High School necessitates giving credence to the emphasis on input. This is to say, that even though there are criticisms, the purpose of this Dissertation in
Practice is related to exploring two scaffolds: visuals and leveled texts, thus only input needs to be examined.

Comprehensible Input in the Secondary ELA Classroom

For secondary students at the beginning levels of English language acquisition, Krashen (1982) argues that the classroom can be a valuable source of comprehensible input, as the teacher can control what language the students are exposed to and when. This, he argues, is due to the fact that the nature of more grown-up conversation employs more complex language and language structures, that may limit the opportunity for these beginning level students to receive informal comprehensive input outside of the classroom (Krashen, 1982). It is with this demographic of students in mind, that comprehensible input was used as the basis of leveled texts and visuals created during this study. The leveled texts will be created using Krashen's $(i) + 1$ formula, taking into account that in order to have the highest chance of language acquisition, this comprehensible input will need to be engaging and delivered in a low-stakes environment (Krashen, 1982), that provides opportunity for meaningful interaction among the students.

For this Dissertation in Practice, classroom teachers at Mountainside High School have the ability to choose their texts and create their lessons, they have the ability to control the language input for the ELs on their class rosters. Teachers can control the language input by selecting texts that are engaging and providing scaffolds that are created with the explicit purpose of facilitating language acquisition while maintaining the rigor of the content, while prioritizing the input rather than the output of students during instruction. Comprehensible input, when applied to the context of this Dissertation in Practice, indicated the need for the teachers to pay special attention to what inputs they are providing during class. The research questions are
geared towards how this hypothesis can be applied in a tenth grade ELA classroom ELs of various WIDA proficiencies.

Collaborate, Plan, Align, Learn, Motivate and Share (CPALMS) is a resource that the Florida Department of Education uses to provide standards information and course descriptions to educators, students, parents, and the community (CPALMS, 2019). According to CPALMS, a compilation of the standards and course description for all courses taught in the state of Florida, the purpose of English II course “… is to provide grade 10 students, using texts of high complexity, integrated language arts study in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language for college and career preparation and readiness.” (n.d.b) It is clear that input is vital to this course. Teachers have the responsibility to provide the rigorous input to the students to meet this course description. English II teachers in Florida, who are required to follow the standards as laid out by the state of Florida, are tasked with teaching eight standards related to analyzing literature, nine standards for analyzing informational texts, six standards related to writing, and six standards related to language (Florida Standards Assessment, 2020). These standards are the standards that are tested on the FSA ELA at the end of the year to determine students’ proficiency. It is for this reason that it is imperative to give attention to the input that the teachers of this course are giving to their students. Though the writing may seem to fall into the category of output, as described by Krashen (Krashen, 1982), in the case of the English II course, even the writing assessment is all text-based (Florida Standards Assessment, 2020), and thus is still very reliant on input. Since this study focuses on the uses of two specific scaffolds, leveled texts and visuals, both of which are input that is implemented by the English teacher, Krashen’s hypothesis is entirely relevant.
Ellis argues the distinction between language learned naturally, *naturalistic*, and language that is explicitly taught, *instructed* (1994), a differentiation that plays an important role in this study. Because the participating teachers are all teaching ELs in their mainstream secondary classrooms, the curriculum is largely devoid of explicit instruction on the basics of language learning that are typically taught in elementary grades, and instead focuses on more complex language skills such as recognizing and using parallel structure and various types of clauses (CPALMS, n.d.a). In this regard, instructed language acquisition of the structures needed for ELs in the secondary classroom is not included in the required standards that the mainstream teachers are required to teach. Since these secondary ELs still can benefit from instructed language acquisition (Nutta, Strebel, Mokhtari, Mihai, & Crevecoeur-Bryant, 2014), it is important that these mainstream teachers provide differentiated opportunities for all ELs to have the necessary grammatical and language instruction in the ELA classroom.

This study uses leveled texts to provide some opportunities for teachers to provide this. Leveled texts in this study follow the description provided by Nutta, Strebel, Mihai, Crevecoeur-Bryant, and Mokhtari (2018), and utilize the two strategies of text simplification and text elaboration (pp. 73-74). Text simplification is a way to augment the input provided to students following Krashen’s (1982) \( i + 1 \) formula, while taking into account Ellis’s (1994) notion of instructed language acquisition. The text that is being studied by the whole class is modified into three distinct levels to correlate with WIDA levels, 1, 3, and 5.

The text leveled for ELs at WIDA level 1, uses text simplification and repetitive and basic grammatical structure appropriate for learners at that level of language acquisition. The content of the text is the same as the original text given to native speakers, but allows students at
and around WIDA level 1, to access the content. The purpose of the basic grammatical structures is to provide students the opportunity to learn the content, while reinforcing these vital linguistic skills that they may not pick up during naturalistic language acquisition. Since ELs may carry over grammatical structures from their L1 (Nutta, et al., 2014), this reinforcement of basic English simple sentences, may help correct and redirect misconceptions. Students should be assigned this leveled text if it is at the level of \((i) + 1\) for them, if not, they should be given the next level of text.

Students at and around WIDA level 3 are provided with a text, scaffolded up from the WIDA level 1 text, that uses increasingly complex grammatical forms, while still implying the text simplification strategy. This level of text also introduces the text elaboration strategy by retaining some of the original vocabulary from the text given to native speakers but providing an appositive in simplified language that offers an explanation of the word. Again, this level of text should be provided to students if it is at the limit of \((i) + 1\), as defined by Krashen (1982). If the input at this level is below or at their level of understanding, students should be given the third level of text. This level of text relies much more on text elaboration than the other two levels and is geared to those students at or around WIDA level 5. This leveled text is the original text given to students who are proficient in the English language, using the same words and grammatical structures as the original texts, but with unknown vocabulary bolded and defined in a glossary using simplified English and visuals. In addition to the attention to vocabulary, unfamiliar concepts, those that would be readily understood by native speakers, are elaborated on in an appositive.

Students who are identified as no longer needing these scaffolds to ensure comprehensive input are only given access to the original text. Glasswell and Ford (2010) support this notion by
offering that helping students access difficult texts can be done by implementing instructional support into the lessons and providing texts at challenging, but not out of reach difficulty to the students. This comprehensive input is the foundation of utilizing differentiated leveled texts with students, within the confines of a whole group lesson, allowing for more individualized support in small group or individualized instruction.
Definition of Terms

**English Learners (ELs)**- students who have not met the standard of English language proficiency. For this Dissertation in Practice, a student is considered proficient in the English language when they are able to obtain a composite score of 4 or higher on the the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, with at least a score of 4 in reading (Florida Administrative Code and Florida Administrative Register, 2017a).

**Non-ELs**- this group includes students who were never classified as ELs as well as students who were initially classified as EL but have since been reclassified. Students who were once classified as EL but have been reclassified are not widely reported by states as a distinct group regarding student achievement on tests or other measures (Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013).

**WIDA Levels**- For this Dissertation in Practice, students’ English language proficiency will be discussed using the WIDA Consortium (2012) descriptors:

- **WIDA Level 1 (Entering)**: Students are capable of matching words or phrases to a visual, and repeating words or provided vocabulary.
- **WIDA Level 2 (Beginning)**: Students are capable of matching sentences to visuals and asking WH-questions.
- **WIDA Level 3 (Developing)**: Students are capable of identifying main topics and supporting details in paragraphs of text and asking questions to glean information.
- **WIDA Level 4 (Expanding)**: Students are capable of inferring information beyond the explicit meaning of text and supporting an oral argument with evidence.
- **WIDA Level 5 (Bridging)**: Students are capable of understanding grade level text and using technical language in evidence to support oral arguments.
WIDA Level 6 (Reaching): Students have language proficiency near that of non-ELs.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on the use of visuals and leveled texts with English learners (ELs) in mainstream classrooms. First, the use of visuals and the use of leveled texts will be examined. Attention is given to the effectiveness of these practices, in secondary classrooms, specifically, as well as to their effectiveness in relation to students with varying levels of language acquisition. Next, gaps in the research related to these two scaffolds are discussed. Then, the use of a phenomenological approach in secondary education research is explored. Finally, a brief examination of the use of technology in second language learning is included, as this proposed study may be impacted by modality changes from in-person teaching, to partially or completely digital teaching.

Using Visuals in the Classroom

Literacy pedagogy has transitioned from the traditional view of literacy that relies on language only, into a more dynamic multiliteracies, that includes varied types of input such as text, visuals, and technological modalities. This transition is necessitated by the increased demand for technologically adept workforce, of which current students will one day fill (New London Group, 1996). Mayer (2008) makes a case that using visuals in conjunction with spoken words can positively impact student learning. Visuals can be used in mainstream classrooms in order to help ELs better understand the curriculum (Campbell & Cuba, 2015; Louie & Sierschynski, 2015; Matthews, 2014; Solano-Flores et al., 2014; Tang, 1992; Teale, 2009). Visuals, in this proposed study, refer to any picture, image, or graphic, that is used in teaching. Flint, Dollar, and Stewart (2009) found that, among other strategies, visuals can be used in secondary classrooms to help eliminate the language barrier, asserting that visuals can be coupled with text to bolster ELs understanding. Research also advocates for allowing students to
integrate visuals into their responses (Danzak, 2011; Flint, Dollar, & Stewart, 2019), suggesting that it can help with the linguistic development of secondary ELs. Visuals come in many different varieties.

**Wordless Picture Books**

The study of wordless picture books has become an important aspect of studying the use of visuals in the classroom. Wordless picture books are exactly what they sound like, books that tell a story and/or provide information using illustrations, without including words (Dowhower, 1997). This genre of books can also be referred to as “textless books” (Dowhower, 1997, p. 58), and can be used in mainstream English classrooms at a variety of grade levels and with ELs (Cassady, 1998; Dowhower, 1997; Louie & Sierschynski, 2015; Matthews, 2014). Louie and Sierschynski (2015) argue that wordless picture books mimic written texts in that they present a story or information in a sequential order and can be used to differentiate assignments for ELs at varying levels of language acquisition; suggesting that lower proficiency ELs can retell the story using sentence frames and higher proficiency students can organize their thinking into a graphic organizer. The use of wordless picture books in the classroom is only partially supported by existing research. Purnell and Solman (1991) conducted a series of studies of high school students in geography. They concluded that students who were given the text and a visual performed better than those who were given only one of the mediums, though the students who were given only the visual outperformed the students who were given only the text. These findings provide support for the use of visuals in secondary classrooms but implies the use of visuals alone is not the most beneficial. Further research has substantiated these findings (Gambrell & Jawitz, 1993). Gambrell and Jawitz (1993) found that the use of visuals aided
reading comprehension, and combined with text, showed even more improvement in the students’ comprehension.

*Infographics*

Another type of visual used in the classroom is an infographic. An infographic is a visual that uses text and graphics to communicate complex ideas and relationships (Tarkhova et al., 2020). Recent research attention has been paid to infographics in the field of secondary education in regards to students producing them (Gebre & Polman, 2016; Walsh & McGowan, 2017), and teachers using them to convey classroom concepts (Apriyanti, 2020; Çifçi, 2016). In select studies, infographics show promise in the L2 classroom (Bicen & Beheshti, 2019; Alrajhi, 2020), but overall, the impact of these visuals is not widely researched in relation to their effectiveness with secondary ELs.

*Comic Strips*

Considering using text combined with visuals, numerous scholars have considered the implications of comic strips (Chou, Hsu & Chen, 2015; Liu, 2004) and graphic novels (Chun, 2009; Park, 2016a; Park, 2016b) in the classroom. A comic strip is a story told through a series of pictures (Liu, 2004). Liu (2004) conducted a study with 107 English as a second language (ESL) college students who were grouped by English proficiency; they were considered either high-level or low-level. The study found that there was a significant difference in the low-level students’ performance of those who were presented with the text with a comic, and those who were presented the text alone. Conversely, high-level students showed little difference in performance when given and not given the comic. This difference provides insight into how visuals, such as comic strips, can impact students with varying levels of English proficiency; implying that low-level students benefit significantly more from being presented with a visual.
Similarly, Chou, Hsu and Chen (2015) completed a study of 28 English as a foreign language (EFL) eighth graders and concluded that using English comic books helped improve their reading comprehension, vocabulary, and motivation in English class. This finding did not differentiate between students at different proficiency levels.

*Graphic Novels*

Graphic novels are similar to comics, with the exception that they are longer (Chun, 2009; Park, 2016a). Research about using graphic novels with ELs, has supported the above findings related to using comic strips with secondary ELs (Chun, 2009; Park, 2016a; Park, 2016b). Park (2016a) completed a study in which high school ELs analyzed a literary graphic novel. The author concluded that the use of graphic novels with high school ELs was an effective way to bolster critical analysis of literary texts. Research attention has been paid to using graphic novels to teach informational text (Chun, 2009; Park, 2016b). Danzak (2011) suggests non-fiction graphic novel titles such as *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006), *Persepolis I* and *II* (Satrapi, 2003, 2004), and *Maus I* and *II* (Spiegelman 1973, 1986) may be relatable to ELs as they focus on culturally diverse protagonists, immigration stories, and social justice. These findings are important to the present study, as both informational and literary texts are tested on the Grade 10 FSA ELA (Florida Department of Education, 2014), which all public school students in Florida must pass in order to meet one of their requirements to receive their high school diploma.

*Visuals by WIDA Level*

Research attention has been paid to how visuals impact ELs in secondary classrooms. However, little is known about how this scaffold impacts ELs with different language acquisition levels. ELs are diverse in their understanding and ability to navigate the English language
(WIDA Consortium, 2012) and a student who is just entering school in the United States has vastly different ability to understand complex texts in English, compared to a student who is already able to read and write complete sentences in English. For this reason, it is irresponsible to categorize all ELs together. As Louie and Sierschynski (2015) found, visuals can have a different impact on ELs with different levels of language acquisition, providing support to the idea that there must be further research that considers this.

Using Leveled Texts in the Classroom

Leveling texts is a common practice for beginning readers in elementary school (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Kontovourki, 2012; Walski, 2020) based on the idea that students can learn to read by gradually increasing the complexity of the texts presented to them (Walski, 2020). Recent research suggests that this technique used with early readers, can also be effectively used with secondary ELs in order to improve reading comprehension (Lupo et al., 2019; Montero et al., 2014). Though leveled texts for L1 beginning readers are similar in their intention to build reading capacity by providing a text just above the learners’ ability, however they do differ. Struggling L1 readers have largely different needs than ELs (Nutta et al., 2018). Leveled texts aimed at L1 beginning readers, are typically collections of books arranged by reading level, that can be used as a supplement to the whole group reading instruction (Dzaldov & Peterson, 2005; Walski, 2020). Leveled texts for ELs, on the other hand, are created as a scaffold to the already implemented curriculum (Nutta et al., 2018). This type of leveled text, can be used at the secondary level in an attempt to decrease the language demand of texts that are already in use with the whole class, thus allowing the EL to be able to access the classroom content.

As students rise in grade levels, the language demands of their classes also rise (Cho, & Christenbury, 2009; Nutta et al., 2018). This increase in linguistic demand can be especially
challenging for secondary students who enter English only public schools, as those on lower WIDA levels may not possess the linguistic ability to access grade level texts (WIDA Consortium, 2012). One strategy to scaffold for these students is by decreasing the language demands of the classroom texts by creating leveled texts (Nutta et al., 2018). Nutta et al. (2018) posits that leveled texts “...mak[e] the core points of the passage assigned to non-ELs accessible to ELs at their current reading proficiency leveled in English because it adapts the vocabulary and grammatical complexity while maintaining cognitive demands” (p.73).

Research using these types of texts can be seen in the study completed by Montero, Newmaster, and Ledger (2014) that followed eleven secondary students in a Canadian teacher’s English literacy development (ELD) class. The teacher attended voluntary professional developments (PDs) related to using running records and guided reading in the classroom. She integrated what she learned at the PDs into her classroom and provided leveled texts to the students. The study found that the students who participated in running records and guided reading in the classroom grew significantly in their literacy as compared to a similar group of students that the same teacher had in a prior year. This finding lends credence to the idea that even though leveled texts is a popular early literacy technique, it can be implemented successfully with secondary ELs.

Similarly, to the research about using visuals, research into the use of leveled texts with secondary ELs neglects to address any impact of this scaffold on ELs with differing levels of language acquisition. This present study was designed to acknowledge this gap, by accounting for the various levels of ELs in a diverse high school.
Distinctions

In education, there are many different ways to level a text, with the common purpose of differentiated reading by a measure of difficulty for individual students; distinguishing reading by Lexile levels is just one of these variants (Glasswell & Ford, 2010). The Lexile framework (Stenner, 1999) is based on the combination of sentence length and word frequency in order to predict the ability of a particular student to comprehend a text at a particular level. This framework was created to use with students learning to read in their L1 (Holster, 2017), and thus is distinct from the leveled texts in this study where the text level considers the language demand (Nutta, et.al., 2018), as opposed to its Lexile level. There is overlap between the texts leveled based on Lexile level, such as those available on NewsELA and those teacher modified texts discussed in this study. The biggest similarity is that lowering the Lexile level can cause a text to be shorter (Lupo, et.al., 2019), and lowering the language demand can have the same impact, as nonvital words can be removed (Nutta, et.al., 2018). These leveled texts are created based on the same text, as opposed to different content, with the goal of helping students access the content of the course while building their English reading fluency.

Phenomenological Research in Education

Phenomenology is indicated in studies where the research questions are best answered using data from participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In education, a phenomenological approach can be useful in understanding different aspects of mainstream teachers’ lived experiences (Adams, 2014; Gill et al., 2020; Shelemy et al., 2019). It is also a readily used approach in recent literature, when examining curriculum and teaching strategies of second language education (Al-Issa et al., 2016; Rahman, 2018; Tercanlioğlu & Demiröz, 2015). Rahman (2018) used a phenomenological approach to examine the lived
experiences of secondary teachers transitioning to a different language teaching curriculum, justifying that this type of approach allowed for an in-depth look at the curriculum transition as a phenomenon. Tercanhoğlu and Demiröz (2015) mirrored this thinking when exploring reading strategies for students in their L1 and their L2. First person phenomenology is when the researcher includes their lived experiences into a phenomenological study, through written reflections or more creative outlets such as poems, or photos (Finlay, 2012). Recent literature provides an example of this approach in the field of psychology. Cole (2020) offers a first-person phenomenological account of mass casualty trauma, arguing that his experience with the same phenomenon that he is studying, may help practitioners and clients further their understanding of this trauma. By including the researcher's reflections and experience with the phenomenon, this approach allows the researcher to integrate knowledgeable analysis into their reflections of the topic (Cole, 2020; Finlay, 2012). As I am experiencing the phenomenon being studied in this Dissertation in Practice, it will be beneficial to include some first-person reflections that use description synthesized with thoughtful analysis.

**ELs and Technology**

Amid a global pandemic, it is important to acknowledge the possible situation of secondary schools transitioning into a partially, or even completely, digital platform. Thankfully, recent research attention has paid to integrating technology and education (Andrei, 2019; Frankel & Brooks, 2020). Adrei (2019) conducted a study of five high school ELs who attended a school where they were given a laptop. The study used observations, interviews, and documents to explore the phenomena of ELs’ technology use in the classroom. The author found that students used their school issued laptops and their personal smartphones for entertainment, but also to help scaffold the instruction for their language needs. Technology can assist with language
acquisition for secondary ELs (Brevik, 2019). Brevic (2019) conducted a study of 21 teenagers whose L1 was Norwegian, and whose L2 was English. The study chose the participants because their ability to read in their L2 was significantly better than their ability to read in their L1. The author attributed this difference in ability to their use of technology outside of the classroom for entertainment purposes that allowed them significant exposure to their L2 in a way that they chose and enjoyed, such as through gaming and social media.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This Dissertation in Practice intended to explore the experiences of English II teachers at a high school that teaches secondary ELs in mainstream ELA classrooms. Specifically, understanding their experience with leveled texts and visuals as classroom scaffolds, which Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach, & Richardson (2005) argue can be done through a qualitative design. In this study, the research questions required an understanding of the creation and effects of the scaffolds, as perceived by the teachers who create and implement them; it is acceptable that qualitative research methods be used to describe the experiences of others (Brantlinger et. al., 2005; Patton, 2002). A qualitative data design, specifically a phenomenological design, was chosen because the research question and sub-questions required data collection from multiple sources that happens in the natural setting of the participants while focusing on the participants’ experience with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). While this Dissertation in Practice outlined some of the legal requirements for teaching ELs in the state, only a qualitative approach can hope to uncover a glimpse into the reality of how that is actually experienced in the classroom, undisturbed and uninfluenced by the researcher. In order to provide practical guidance to teachers, this study intended to capture the creation and use of these scaffolds from the perspective of those who do so, thus, this study necessitates the use of a phenomenological approach (Brantlinger, et al., 2005). The approach used in this Dissertation in Practice is descriptive phenomenology, a type of inquiry born out of Husserl’s (1970) philosophical exploration that celebrates the value of people’s perceptions in research (Lopez & Willis, 2004).
As the lived experience of the participants cannot be completely described by an isolated observation, a combination of data sources was used to fill in the gaps (Patton, 2002). The phenomena being studied in this dissertation of practice were the experience of teachers’ creation and use of visuals and leveled texts with ELs at varying WIDA proficiency in mainstream English II classrooms.

Aligning with Creswell’s (2014) description of qualitative research, I was an active participant in this Dissertation in Practice and collected and analyzed all the data personally. I am one of the teachers who participated in this study and included data from my class using a first-person phenomenological approach (Finlay, 2012). Biases related to interpretation and limitations related to my intimate knowledge about the site have been disclosed in detail.

**Sampling Method and Rationale**

The sample for this Dissertation in Practice followed in typical qualitative research fashion by using a small, purposeful sample (Patton, 2002), which included all six English II teachers at a high school in Central Florida, four women and two men, all between the ages of 25-39. The teachers at Mountainside High School taught English II, English II Honors, and Pre-IB English II courses during the duration of data collection. ELs were taught in courses at each level. The teachers taught these courses as mixed-mode courses, meaning they had students face to face in the classroom with additional students joining virtually through the online classroom platform, Canvas. These teachers meet weekly as a PLC. These meetings are attended by the teachers, an administrator, and the literacy coach. Mountainside High School also has an English language learner (ELL) Compliance Specialist who works with the teachers of ELs on campus. This specialist provides data on current ELs, strategies, and support to the teachers. While, as a teacher at the location for this Dissertation in Practice could give the appearance of a
convenience sample, this sample was purposefully selected as a homogeneous sample in order to answer the research questions related to a specific course: English II. Patton (2002) suggested that homogeneous sampling is implicated when the research seeks to thoroughly describe a particular subgroup (p. 235). The attributes of this sample include that the teachers work closely as a PLC, follow the same standards progression provided by the district, follow the district-provided sample daily lesson plans, assess students’ progress towards standard mastery on quarterly assessments given for each of the first three quarters of the school year, and teach ELs at a variety of levels of language proficiency in their mainstream English II and English II Honors courses. The district provided sample daily lesson plans that include standards, learning targets, texts, and suggested standard aligned activities that teachers can utilize in their classrooms. It is important that the participating teachers work closely with a PLC and follow the same lesson plan progression because it will help with understanding the more subtle differences in the teachers’ creation and use of classroom scaffolds with ELs. The teachers’ lessons used the same texts and activities for a majority of the units and followed the same standards progression. In order to answer the research question for this Dissertation in Practice, it is important that these conditions are met in order to make the nuances in lived experiences more evident and the phenomena as a whole more exhaustively described.

Access and Permissions

As a teacher that is part of the PLC in this study, I had access to each of the participants as part of my job. The participants’ school district’s IRB required that each participant sign an informed consent prior to participation. The participants' school district cleared the data collection for this Dissertation in Practice.
Research Questions

Main Research Question: What are the experiences of English II teachers with creating and using visuals and leveled texts with their ELs at a high school with ELs in mainstream ELA classes?

Sub-question (a): What are the experiences of English II teachers with differentiating these scaffolds for ELs at varying WIDA proficiency levels?

Sub-question (b): What progress do English II teachers perceive as a result of classroom scaffolds for the ELs in their classroom over the course of the third quarter of the school year?

Data Collection Methods

In order to understand the experiences of the participating teachers, a standardized open-ended interview approach was used. The rationale for this approach to interviewing is that the detailed questions and elicitations being used in the interview were asked verbatim to each participant in order to minimize the variation in interviews, provide transparency of methods in this Dissertation in Practice, and to more effectively enable variation in lived experience to be visible (Patton, 2002). A detailed interview protocol (Appendix A) was used at the beginning of the quarter, and a new interview protocol (Appendix B) was used at the end of the quarter. These protocols were written based on the research question and sub-question. I wrote the protocols, in their entirety, as is a normal occurrence in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Writing my own protocols ensured that all the questions and elicitations glean data that is pertinent to the research question and sub-question. Following insight from Creswell (2014), the interviews were audio recorded, and transcribed before analysis. The primary source of data were the interviews. The
rationale is that first-hand accounts of lived experience can be gleaned if including the perceptions of those experiencing the phenomena (Patton, 2002). These interviews provided context for what was seen in the observations. The research question required insight into the experiences of the participants uncovered through an initial interview and a final interview. These interviews provided context necessary to understand both what is seen in the observations, but also what is contained in the lesson plans. As a member of the PLC from which the participants were chosen from, I coordinated the interviews personally. Initial interviews were completed in the beginning of quarter three, and the final interview near the end of quarter three.

The teachers were observed after the initial interview, but before the final interview. These observations are a critical component of this Dissertation in Practice because they provide insight into subtle aspects of EL education that can be observed and recorded but may not be shared in an interview. In addition, uncomfortable realities that may be left out of interviews can be observed and recorded (Creswell, 2014), helping to create a more complete picture of the participants’ lived experiences. Field notes were taken as an observer as opposed to a participant, in order to minimize intrusiveness (Creswell, 2014) or impact the natural environment in the classroom. The observations were coordinated directly with the participants and with the administration and coaches. Screenshots were taken of the virtual classroom layout as all students connect to the virtual classroom during school due to the mixed-mode classroom set-ups.

The lesson plans from quarter three were collected from each of the participating teachers. Lesson plans were used because they may provide supplemental information about what was said in an interview, and what was seen in an observation. The plans provided insight into what the participants view as important (Creswell, 2014) for their lessons related to
scaffolding for ELs. Since lesson plans are legal documents in the state of Florida, EL scaffolds are expected to be included in them in some way.

As a participant in this study, I wrote personal reflections throughout the quarter, as opposed to observations or interviews, as is indicated by first-person phenomenology (Finlay, 2012). These reflections were completed weekly for the duration of the quarter and were aimed at describing the creation, use, and perceived effectiveness of differentiated visuals and leveled texts in the classroom.

As the purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of mainstream teachers of ELs, the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact on the mode of instruction did not disrupt this Dissertation in Practice. The data was collected in a mixed-mode classroom setting where a majority of students were connecting to the class virtually using video conferencing through the Canvas platform. Although this mode was different than it would have been if they were in the physical classroom, it does not diminish the importance of the findings. The experiences of these teachers during a turbulent and unprecedented time is valuable to the current body of research related to ELs in secondary education.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was completed using a method provided by Moustakas (1994), deemed “Modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data” (p. 120). This method starts by getting a complete transcription of each participant and engaging in Epoche, acknowledging and putting away personal bias then proceeds through seven steps. Step one indicated the use of horizontalizing, or viewing each statement related to the phenomena. Step two involved seeking to classify statements for retention if they are necessary for understanding the experience with the phenomena and can be labeled. The remaining statements were
eliminated. Step three called for grouping the invariant constituents labeled in step two, which provided the themes (Hycner, 1985). During the analysis, 33 labels emerged. These labels could be classified into two categories: things the teacher can control, and things the teacher cannot control. In these two categories, sub-categories became evident (see Table 1). Step four was checking each of the invariant constituents and themes for validity to ensure they are necessary to describe teachers’ lived experience. Step five involved creating an individual textural description, or what the lived experience looked like for each participant. For step six, an individual structural description, how the experience is created, was crafted from the individual textural description. Finally, step seven consisted of creating a textural-structural description of the lived experiences of teachers with creating and using visuals and leveled texts. From these final individual descriptions, an overall description can be made for all the participating teachers that indicates the nature of this lived experience. These descriptions were given to the participant so they could review that they were captured correctly.

**Table 1: Data analysis invariant constituent labels and associated themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things teacher can control</th>
<th>Things teacher can not control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scaffold</td>
<td>Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1: Teachers utilize a variety of visuals and leveled texts in the classroom</td>
<td>Theme 4: The environment in which the teacher works impacts teacher use and creation of scaffolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Rigor</td>
<td>Classroom Make-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Common Lesson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graphic Novels</td>
<td>COVID</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leveled Texts</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visuals</td>
<td>School Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher actions</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2: Teachers introduction to scaffolds come primarily from other educators and the teacher's</td>
<td>Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things teacher can control</td>
<td>Things teacher can not control</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>own means</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside Resources</td>
<td>Testing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous Years</td>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relying on Other Educators</td>
<td>Language Demand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self reflection</td>
<td>Student attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Creation</td>
<td>Theme 5: The composition of students in the classroom impacts teacher use and creation of scaffolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Effort</td>
<td>Learning Gains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Student Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3: Teachers implement a variety of techniques in the classroom to accompany the use of visuals and leveled texts in the classroom.</td>
<td>Student Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomodations</td>
<td>WIDA Levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Differentiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer Interactions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translator</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to ensure that participating teachers’ lived experiences were presented anonymously, teachers were given pseudonyms and did not have their identity, or any identifying information connected to any part of the conclusions drawn. Furthermore, the participating teachers were given the opportunity to read the descriptive transcriptions of their interviews, as well as review any conclusion made regarding their lived experiences in this dissertation of practice.
Trustworthiness

As a teacher from the site of this Dissertation in Practice, I consciously participated in Epoche, as defined by Mustakas (1994). I consciously acknowledged my prior knowledge related to the lived experience of myself and the other teacher participants, as well as my bias related to field of education as a whole. This bias included: a) my own experience teaching in schools with a large number of ELs, b) teaching ELA that is tested with the FSA, c) being responsible for creating and using scaffolds for ELs at various levels of English proficiency, and d) my personal experience with ELs in my family and personal relationships. By setting these preconceived notions aside prior to data collection and analysis, I minimized bias. To further maintain objectivity when analyzing the data for this Dissertation in Practice I connected multiple sources of data to each conclusion, avoiding relying solely on one type of data. I allowed participants to review all conclusions related to their participation and ensured all communication with participants is non-evaluative and is related to understanding their experiences as opposed to celebrating or condemning classroom practices.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter describes what was found through the teacher interviews, class observations, and teacher reflections related to the lived experiences of English II teachers of ELs in mainstream classrooms using leveled texts and visuals. The six participants are described, the findings are presented based on themes, and the findings are explicitly related back to the research questions. Participants chose their pseudonyms, and they were not necessarily indicative of the participants’ gender. Furthermore, pronouns used match the gender of the pseudonym and not necessarily of the participant to further keep the participants anonymous.

Demographics

Inclusion criteria for this study included all teachers who taught sections of English II at Mountainside High School. All participants were certified, either with a temporary or professional certificate, in English (grades 6-12) through the State of Florida.

Collin

Collin is a sixth-year monolingual teacher in their 30s. He has some ability in a second language, though it is not fluent. He attended all his K-12 schooling in the United States. Collin had an ESOL endorsement added onto his Florida educator’s certificate and had taught English Honors and regular courses to grades seven, eight, and ten. He has also taught a year of English II through ESOL.

Howard

Howard is in his 30s and has about seven years of experience teaching English grades 9-10 and describes that he transitioned to education because “school was always a safe space”
Howard has a history of teaching exceptional student education (ESE). He also has and ESOL endorsement. He has taught ELs in multiple counties. Howard explained that he speaks “one and a half” languages; being fluent in English and possessing limited ability in Spanish.

Jules

Jules is a second-year teacher in her mid-twenties and attended all her K-12 education in the United States. She only speaks English and is in compliance with the state law which allows her to work toward her ESOL endorsement while teaching. English teachers in the state of Florida are allowed to work on their endorsement by taking one class over five years while teaching ELs in their English classes. Jules has only taught English II honors and regular sections but teaches ELs in both sections annually.

Kurt

Kurt is in his 40s and only speaks English, though he did attend K-12 outside of the United States, in an English-speaking setting. He has his ESOL endorsement as well as his reading endorsement and IB certification, an additional certification to teach pre-IB English. He is in his sixth year of teaching and has taught a variety of courses including: English II, English III, grade 3, grade 4, and electives such as pre-IB film. He has taught pre-IB, regular, and Honors courses.

Libba

Libba is in her 40s and speaks only English. She attended all her K-12 education in the United States. She is in her eleventh year of teaching, she is ESOL certified, and has taught a variety of courses including: English I, II, III, and IV; English through ESOL; Reading; and ELA
based electives such as Creative Writing and Journalism. She has taught regular and Honors levels of these courses.

*Steven*

Steven is in his 30s and is in his fourth-year teaching. He attended K-12 education in the United States and speaks English fluently, but is also able to communicate in two other languages. He has taught English II and English III regular and Honors courses and has taught English II through ESOL. He has obtained his ESOL endorsement through his teacher preparation coursework while obtaining his bachelor's degree.

**Thematic Analysis**

Through the “Modification of the Van Kaam method of analysis of phenomenological data” (Moustakas, 1994) I analyzed the interview and observational data following the seven steps outlined in chapter 3, and five themes emerged (see Table 2). These themes were corroborated by the lesson plans and student work samples provided by the participating teachers.

**Table 2: Themes that emerged through data analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers utilize a variety of visuals and leveled texts in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers’ introduction to scaffolds come primarily from other educators and the teacher's own means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Teachers implement a variety of techniques in the classroom to accompany the use of visuals and leveled texts in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The environment in which the teacher works impacts teacher use and creation of scaffolds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The composition of students in the classroom impacts teacher use and creation of scaffolds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 1

*Teachers utilize a variety of visuals and leveled texts in the classroom*

Students are required to read long complex text to meet "the county's expectation of grit" (Steven, personal communication, January 29, 2021). To begin planning to include leveled texts and visuals in the lessons, teachers must consider the original text. As the district provides text recommendations and sample lessons, teachers have a starting point for their lessons. Often, these grade level texts are linguistically complex and include non-standard written English by authors such as Shakespeare. As these texts are rigorous for even native speakers, teachers feel a responsibility to help each student comprehend and be able to interact meaningfully with the text. This feeling of responsibility sets the pretense for teachers to begin planning. They seek to accommodate all students, regardless of level of language acquisition, including students enrolled in the ESE program, students with a 504 plan, and students who are considered in the bottom quartile.

When beginning to write scaffolds into their lesson plans, teachers grapple with the way they can maintain this rigor while ensuring that students are able to access it. Some participating teachers felt that leveled texts can fulfill this purpose when provided alongside the original text to be used as a resource, instead of the only version that students use. Teachers can utilize the Canvas course to control which students have access to which versions of the text, but this is not done universally (see Figure 1, Figure 2, & Figure 3). Providing ELs individualized access to the leveled texts takes additional time that teachers feel they do not have; therefore, the teachers allowed access to leveled texts to all students. This access for all students to the leveled text is done when there is only one alternate version of the text, typically one with a lessened language demand and no visuals, though a small portion of the teachers do use the
digital platform to assign the leveled texts to specific students based on available data. Teachers noted that the expectation of rigor in their classroom ensures that they are cognizant of over-scaffolding, as the scaffolds should not take away from the rigor (Kurt, personal communication, February 8, 2021; Libba, Personal communication, February 1, 2021; Steven, personal communication, January 29, 2021).

Figure 1: Collin (2021) Digital text given to ELs around WIDA level 5
All participating teachers provided leveled texts in some form, though not all of them are differentiated by WIDA level or used consistently (see Appendix D). A number of teachers provide a simplified version when they are able to find one that has been created, that
incorporates simplified language and extended explanations (see Appendix D). These simplified texts typically come from online resources but can also be created by the teachers. When created by teachers, the teachers use their knowledge of the levels of language acquisition of their students to recognize which words would be hard for the students to understand and are necessary to understand the meaning of the text. Half of the participating teachers created leveled texts and all of them emphasized the importance and difficulty of removing the language demand while maintaining the meaning. Poems proved especially difficult, as the purpose of using these poems during the quarter was to look at how the word choice impacted the poem’s meaning and tone.

Of the three teachers consistently creating leveled texts, two of them consistently created multiple levels of texts based on the levels described by WIDA. Both teachers started with the original text and worked down the levels: decreasing the language demand and increasing the use of visuals. These teachers created a text aimed at being accessible to students around a level 5 on WIDA. This text used the original text but included expanded explanations for words, as well as a visual vocabulary. This visual vocabulary took a difficult word from the original text and included a definition in plain English, as well as a gif or picture (Figure 4). A teacher expressed that the gifs were better for words that were more abstract and thus better understood with a moving image. The teacher also expressed that gifs could provide a certain amount of engagement, to encourage the students to utilize this resource. The next text that they created was aimed at being accessible to a WIDA level 3. This text required that the teachers lower the language demand by replacing words and phrases that would be too difficult for a level 3, with more simplified language. This level also guided these teachers to remove some of the quantity of words, giving students more concise wording. In this version of the text, the teachers often
worked together to create visuals that look similar to comic panes to include for each paragraph (Figure 5). These visuals are created on free online design websites such as Canva.com. Finally, these teachers created a version of the text aimed at a WIDA level 1. For this text, the teachers took out even more of the words and simplified what was already there (Figure 6). They both expressed a feeling of not knowing for sure if this was the best way to help the students, but they both noticed that newcomer students seemed much more willing to attempt texts when they were given this version alongside the original. One of the teachers described that creating assignments and activities that have lowered language demand would be too time consuming so their “time and effort is best spent modifying the text” (Steven, personal communication, January 29, 2021). Teachers perceive this strategy as beneficial to their ELs as the language is simplified in a way that they can look up individual words for understanding, instead of translating entire pages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Visual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>husbandry</td>
<td>the activity of raising plants or animals for food</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="husbandry" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>repose</td>
<td>a state of resting or not being active</td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="repose" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>largess</td>
<td>the act of giving away money or the quality of a person who gives away money</td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="largess" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4: Collin (2021) Visual vocabulary with word, definition, and gif as a visual
Visuals are also used in every one of the participating teachers’ classrooms (Figure 7 & Figure 8). One teacher proudly exclaimed “the more visuals the better” (Howard, personal communication, February 6, 2021), and their classroom walls and digital classroom supported
that they incorporate some kind of visual, to aid comprehension, daily. A common way that these teachers used visuals is with directions on their PowerPoint presentations. The teachers took screenshots of their digital classroom platform as well as different tools on the video conferencing platform to accompany the directions (Figure 9). The teachers expressed that seeing screenshots helps ELs feel confident to try and keep up with the pace of the class, even if they do not understand the verbal directions. Another common way that these teachers used visuals is by including videos to accompany lessons on complex texts and topics. This usage was also evident in the screenshots of the teachers Canvas courses as the teacher made the videos accessible to students after class.

Figure 7: Libba (2021) Video embedded in online course platform
Another common type of visual is the graphic novel. All participating teachers use graphic novels in some form with their ELs. Most of the teachers utilize the graphic novel versions of texts they are reading in class; *Macbeth* was mentioned from quarter three. Most of
the teachers use the graphic novels with the entire class, not specifically with ELs. This strategy creates engagement in the complex texts and allows the class to universally discuss the scenes. Additionally, all teachers utilized graphic organizers in their classroom. Libba explained that this works particularly well with their ELs, as they can organize their thinking while writing less words than a traditional written response. Multiple teachers have used student produced emoji’s as visuals, as well, though student work samples of this strategy were not made available in this study. This technique gleams engagement from the students while lessening the language demand, by allowing students to respond with the familiar text characters. Evidence of these strategies was seen in the screenshots of the teachers’ digital classrooms as well as in their lesson plans (Figure 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Standards:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RL.2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RL.2.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daily Learning Target:
- Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise. (RL.2.5)

Agenda:
- Bell Work
- Day 5

Resources:
- Teacher PowerPoint 3.1

ELL:
- Visuals
- Use of a translator

Figure 10: Jules (2021) Daily lesson plan with standards, learning target, agenda, and accommodations

Two of the teachers shared that they also would use visuals spontaneously in class. During discussion, if a word comes up that is particularly complex or students clearly do not
understand, the teachers will use Google to find images to show a visual of the word. These decisions were made on the spot and specific to what was being discussed so no evidence was found in the lesson plans or Canvas courses, but this strategy was practiced during an observation in one of the teacher’s classrooms. Teachers perceive that ELs respond well to the use of visuals, overall, as they have seen a growing number of students attempting the learning when they incorporate this strategy.

**Theme 2**

*Teachers’ introduction to scaffolds come primarily from other educators and the teacher's own means*

Teachers all received the mandatory training to stay in compliance with their required ESOL endorsement for teaching English (6-12). The teachers either completed their ESOL endorsement during their college program, or as part of the specifically dedicated ESOL training classes through the district. The only other specific training related to EL was selected non-mandatory PDs that individual teachers attended. The teachers all expressed that training related specifically to teaching ELs did not provide sufficient practical strategies for classroom use. One teacher asserted that “it is essential to get more practical training or premade differentiated resources provided” (Steven, personal communication, January 29, 2021). One teacher discussed attending an optional PD on ELs in another district and described it as “not particularly useful” (Howard, personal communication, February 6, 2021). When pressed about any more training for ELs, one of the teachers responded “as a teacher, the best bet is to teach yourself” (Howard, personal communication, February 6, 2021).

The teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the place they learn strategies that they use with ELs is from other educators. Three of the teachers explicitly named the previous ESOL
coordinator at Mountainside High School as a great resource for practical strategies, understanding WIDA levels, and communication with the students’ families. They all expressed that since the ESOL coordinator left the school, that resource is no longer available to them. All the teachers mentioned the PLC as a place for resources. Three of the teachers explicitly brought up sharing visuals with each other and finding that incredibly helpful. Two of the teachers expressed that they create leveled texts together, thus taking off some of the workload. One of these teachers described “Another teacher had made a simplified version and sent it to me” (Steven, personal communication, March 23, 2021) when discussing a particular lesson. This collaboration was evident in the lesson plans. Two of the teachers explicitly reference learning from teachers even outside of Mountainside High School, asserting that they learned many of the practical strategies that they described through conversation with teachers “locally and remotely” (Howard, personal communication, February 6, 2021).

Every teacher described finding leveled texts online. They completed a common Shakespeare unit and were able to find various versions of the text with lessened language demand and versions done as graphic novels. Using their familiarity with the texts and their personal time to plan, all the teachers expressed that they are able to occasionally find resources online that they can use with their ELs. The issue with this was best expressed by one of the teachers when they asserted “It is really helpful when [texts] are available online, but the newer more engaging texts rarely have resources available” (Steven, personal communication, March 23, 2021).

This problem can be best solved, according to one of the teachers, by creating the scaffolds from scratch. Each teacher described creating scaffolds for their ELs, acknowledging that the district provides strategies within the district provided sample daily lesson plans, but
little to no scaffolds for the specific lessons they provide. Three of the teachers described creating leveled texts by themselves, carefully considering the words they were replacing and universally reflecting on their self-doubt when creating these scaffolds. This doubt was related to their feelings of trying to do the best thing for their students, but not being sure how. All three of them described the fine line they walk regarding making a text accessible while still teaching them on grade level. One of the teachers articulated this thought best when they said that they were trying to create “a simplified version that hasn’t lost its meaning.” The scaffolds that the teachers created were not limited to visuals and leveled texts, but teachers described how they use the sample lessons provided by the district in order to have a starting place to craft their lesson plans. When describing adding visuals to a text, one of the teachers said it was something they came up with out of necessity and they “felt [their] way through it” (Kurt, personal communication, March 24, 2021). Student work samples and teacher provided lesson plans corroborated that the teachers are following the same standards progression and using the same anchor texts for their lessons. Teacher created leveled texts were linked in three of the teachers’ lesson plans.

Regarding creating leveled texts and visuals, along with the other scaffolds used in their classroom, all the teachers talked at length about how this process requires significant effort from them. Since this Dissertation in Practice took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers expressed that they were only able to use selected resources from previous years. One teacher described feeling grateful that one of the more complex texts of the quarter was a repeat from previous years, so they already had leveled text created for the three WIDA levels that they described previously. This teacher and only one other teacher acknowledged using things from previous years, the former describing that even having resources from reused texts, did not take
off the burden of the new scaffolds that were needed for ELs in the pandemic. The effort that the teachers described was not limited to new challenges related to the pandemic, but every one of the teachers described working beyond what is required in order to best plan for their students with such a variety of needs. This effort shows the variation between the online course platforms and the lesson plans; emphasizing all the thought that each one of these teachers is putting into their instruction. Though the teachers acknowledge their effort, they also overwhelmingly described feeling that they wish they could do more; one of the teachers discussing teaching for all WIDA levels by saying that the ELs “need something more than me” (Kurt, personal communication, February 8, 2021).

Theme 3

*Teachers implement a variety of techniques in the classroom to accompany the use of visuals and leveled texts in the classroom.*

Participating teachers universally emphasized that visuals and leveled texts, and the effort that comes with creating and/or finding them are not even the majority of what they do to attempt to make their classes accessible for ELs. Each of the teachers brought up that they will work individually with students who are struggling with the language, in order to give the student the specific support that they require. This instruction was also observed in the classrooms. This specific strategy was just an example of the tool that all the teachers felt is the most effective with their ELs: building relationships. With more than 44 distinct references to relationship building, this is clearly a significant component of these teachers’ practice. Multiple teachers described that they are only sure of students' level of language acquisition due to the relationships they have built with them. One teacher describes how these relationships make it evident when the students “hit a language wall” and cannot understand the complexity of written
or spoken language in the classroom. It is clear that teachers in this PLC feel as though knowing their ELs and what they are capable of is just part of their job with one of the teachers explaining that they feel it is “expected” (Libba, personal communication, February 1, 2021) of them by the school culture; a celebration of the diversity of their student body. Multiple teachers described that the mixed-mode classroom, with some students joining class online and some students joining class in person, makes it harder than previous years to build these relationships, describing that they have seen this impact student performance. One of the teachers considered that not knowing as much about their ELs this year, due to the difficulties of relationship building, has made it harder to understand what areas they should put their effort into, in order to best support their students.

In addition to relationship building, the teachers described other strategies that they also use in the classroom that are implemented in conjunction with visuals and leveled texts. Multiple teachers describe giving explicit vocabulary practice, allowing students to use translators such as Google Translate, facilitating peer interactions, creating strategic small groups, utilizing multicultural literature, and providing directions and content in “all the ways: written, verbal, recorded” (Libba, personal communication, February 1, 2021). These strategies were emphasized to be just part of what goes into being a mainstream teacher of ELs at varying levels of language acquisition.

Theme 4

The environment in which the teacher works impacts teacher use and creation of scaffolds

This Dissertation in Practice took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, where teachers at Mountainside High School were tasked with teaching some students face to face, and some students online via video conferencing. This unique environment provided new challenges that
teachers were not prepared for. All the teachers expressed that the pandemic put unforeseen stress on the students and felt that teaching mixed modalities put unforeseen stress on the teachers. One teacher described having to deal with the impacts of the pandemic in their family, which interfered with the time they would have spent creating EL scaffolds for a unit. Multiple teachers explicitly expressed that ELs, in particular, were struggling doing virtual classes. One teacher articulated that it is “unreasonable to expect these students to do this work from home” (Libba, personal communication, February 1, 2021). The expectations for the students are not the only expectations that teachers expressed were unreasonable. One teacher bluntly asserted that what is expected of teachers is “more than anyone could possibly give” (Kurt, personal communication, February 8, 2021), with another teacher describing that they feel they are expected to be “a miracle worker” (Libba, personal communication, February 1, 2021), and still another teacher describes that society “demands perfection [from teachers]” (Howard, personal communication, February 6, 2021). “I don’t know. I don’t know what anyone expects of teachers” (Kurt, personal communication, February 8, 2021), remarked a teacher, in response to the expectations in the current pandemic.

Regarding the specifics of the expectations related to ELs in their mainstream classrooms, the expectations are also non-specific. All teachers conceded that they have not been given specific requirements for what they need to do for ELs. They agree that they have been provided a list of strategies from the district, but when asked for what is expected of them specifically, one teacher responded that their lesson plans are expected to reflect “some kind of accommodation” (Jules, personal communication, February 22, 2021). The other teachers mirrored this sentiment with another teacher remarking that they are expected to have “something written in the lesson plan” (Howard, personal communication, February 6, 2021).
While it is clear that the teachers feel that there are vague expectations of them in regard to teaching ELs, and especially relating to teaching ELs at varying WIDA levels, a bright spot emerged: teachers all indicated that they put significant effort into teaching their ELs. Universally this emphasis on doing everything possible to help students at varying levels of language acquisition was attributed to the school culture at Mountainside High School. One of the teachers acknowledged that the leveled texts they create is not something that the district or society expects but is more “that the school culture is enforcing” (Steven, personal communication, January 29, 2021) indicating that the diverse student population and the overall values of the administration creates an environment where teachers feel that it is just part of what they do; they go above and beyond for each student. This diversity was described to be evident in the classroom as well, which the observations corroborated. All teachers mentioned that the various levels of language acquisition are quite evident in each period, along with native speakers at varying levels of abilities. This sentiment was consistent among the teachers who all noted the school culture, beginning with the current administration, creates an environment that celebrates this diversity and warrants teachers to maintain rigorous standards while allowing ELs to thrive.

Since the site for this Dissertation in Practice was a high school, the teachers were able to describe the unique challenges that places for ELs, as the language demand in secondary education is more than elementary and the resources for these students are significantly more, including paraprofessionals to work individually with elementary ELs (Kurt, personal communication, February 8, 2021). All the participating teachers addressed the language demand of the English II classroom. They spoke about the texts that the students read in class are complex for native speakers, so ELs have particular trouble with it. Three of the teachers
described how they will intentionally change the complex language and shorten the number of words put in front of ELs in the leveled text, though, as mentioned, they still provide the original text to everyone. Four of the teachers discussed the language demand of the classroom extending beyond the texts read; it extends into every interaction in class. They acknowledge that they are cognizant of using simplified language when giving directions and interacting with ELs, avoiding difficult unnecessary vocabulary and idioms. The lesson plans and student work samples supported these assertions; the texts from the lesson plans were on grade level and complex, and the directions in the assignments were often written in plain English.

Another component of the environment that impacted the teachers’ creation and use of leveled texts and scaffolds is the fact that English II has a high-stakes test at the end, and this causes teachers to focus on the standards tested. The teachers follow a common standards progression, so they were all working with the same standards for the duration of quarter three. When asked about using leveled texts with ELs, one teacher expressed concern that they feel they should give the students practice with the original version as often as possible as “they are all expected to pass the same test” (Libba, personal communication, February 1, 2021). This sentiment was repeated by other teachers, as they also acknowledge that the standards that are tested on the FSA ELA assume the students are able to read and analyze grade-level text, something that many ELs are not yet able to do due to their language acquisition. The importance of standards that prepare students for the FSA was evident in everyone's lesson plans.

The environmental factor that came up the most often related to the creation of leveled texts and visuals to include in mainstream English II classrooms is: time. All teachers described that there is not enough time to do everything they feel they need to in order to make their classroom completely accessible. They explained that they start with resources given from the
district, such as the progression of standards and sample lesson plans, and then must create most scaffolds on their own. They all emphasized the amount of time this takes, especially considering that ELs make up only a portion of the students that require accommodations. One teacher described that ESE students and 504 students require specific accommodations that do not always overlap with the scaffolds created for students with language barriers. “No two students are the same and there is not enough time to differentiate for every single one of them,” one teacher offered. This sentiment was upheld universally in this Dissertation in Practice and seen in every observation. The teachers were seen checking with individual students and switching between talking to individual face to face students, then answering the students joining visually. Multiple teachers explicitly expressed that the pandemic has put further strain on that lack of time, citing that they must now learn to use new technology and train students on it in addition to planning for and teaching such a variety of learners.

Theme 5

The composition of students in the classroom impacts teacher use and creation of scaffolds

All of the teachers referenced different attributes of students that impacted the classroom. Three of the teachers had experience teaching English II through ESOL in previous years, a class composed only of ELs, and were able to provide their perceptions in that context as well. All three agreed that they saw more genuine effort and interaction with provided scaffolds when the class was composed of only ELs, with all three attributing it to the students’ feeling of acceptance among other ELs that gave them confidence to try in that classroom. They expressed that with ELs put into mainstream classrooms, they have seen ELs default to what one of the teachers described as “survival tactics” (Steven, personal communication, January 29, 2021) which include plagiarizing, not attempting assignments, not using provided scaffolds, etc.
None of the teachers were able to attribute perceived student growth to the specific scaffolds of visuals and leveled texts, but they did agree that there was at least some growth during quarter three. The teachers all referenced quarter three as being a tough quarter for students as it is right before testing and so there “is a lack of academic stamina” (Howard, personal communication, March 30, 2021) seen with all the students, not just ELs. One teacher described that they feel this burn-out contributed to the decline in the ELs using the leveled texts in class.

The composition of the mainstream classrooms included in this Dissertation in Practice includes non-ELs as well as ELs who score on every level of WIDA. These various levels of ELs impact what scaffolds are used, as well as how the lessons are executed. All of the participating teachers said they have students across the spectrum of WIDA levels. They can name each EL in their classroom, as well as articulate their level of language acquisition, but it was also evident that testing data is not reliable this year, due to the pandemic causing sporadic testing during the prior school year, as well as a change in ESOL coordinator which caused a lapse in updates to the teachers regarding specific WIDA levels of their incoming students. All the teachers use observational data, primarily, to ascertain general levels of language acquisition. All the teachers described individualized instruction as a strategy that they used to differentiate by WIDA level, but only two of the teachers differentiate in other ways. The only other way described by these two teachers was by their use of leveled texts, which have been described in this chapter. The lesson plans authenticate these claims, as only two of the lesson plans contain specific reference to WIDA levels.
Relation to Research Question

This section articulates the explicit answer to the research question of this Dissertation in Practice.

**Research Question**

*What are the experiences of English II teachers with creating and using visuals and leveled texts with their ELs at a high school with ELs in mainstream ELA classes?*

*Creating visuals and leveled texts.* The creation of leveled texts is incredibly time consuming for teachers, as ready-made texts are sparse, and the teachers must find the texts themselves. When teachers can find simplified versions of texts for class, there is only one version that is created in modern English, as opposed to being created with the language learning needs of ELs in mind, as Steven posed it “Sometimes you can find a text online that's simplified, but it is just like, a modern English version… not specifically something for ELLs” (personal communication, January 29, 2021). This reality demands that teachers must create the material themselves in order to provide leveled texts for students at their \((i) + 1\) (Krashen, 1981) level of language acquisition. Those Mountainside High School teachers who do create them, create them to fall in the general area of WIDA level 5, level 3, and level 1, decreasing the language demand and increasing the use of visuals as they decrease the WIDA level of the text (see Appendix D). The actual modification of the text comes from the teachers’ understanding of levels of language acquisition, and not from specific guidelines or training. The visuals provided with the leveled texts are teacher created using online platforms such as Canva.com and Storyboardthat.com which again, takes significant time. Creating visuals for ELs to reference in the mainstream English II classroom is also the responsibility of the teacher. District provided visuals are limited to pictures and paintings used to teach specific state standards that require students to compare
images with text and are not provided to clarify language or meaning. Teachers most frequently use screenshots for directions to help students navigate, which must be taken by the teacher, but also the visuals in the leveled texts are used regularly by some teachers. The creation of these scaffolds is done with little to no specific training on how to do so, as and is not required by the state, nor even expected by any stakeholders; it is done strictly by the teachers’ decision based on the way that the teacher feels is best to reach their varying levels of language learners, as Libba asserted in regards to the expectation of utilizing these scaffolds “I don’t know what we have to do, but I know I should probably do more” (personal communication, February 1, 2021).

**Using visuals and leveled texts.** Teachers use visuals to give directions, to spontaneously explain difficult vocabulary, and to supplement understanding of in-class texts. Though none of these uses is universal even in Mountainside High School, what is universal is that teachers use visuals in some fashion with the explicit purpose of increasing understanding for ELs. Leveled texts are used less universally, but consistently by the teachers who do create them. Teachers create either three WIDA levels, or just as a simplified version of the original text. They are either provided individually to students who are at or around the level of the text or provided to all students to choose their own level. Regardless of method of delivery, they are always provided alongside the original text and are explicitly provided to clarify the original text, not replace it (see Figure 1, Figure 2, & Figure 3).

**Challenges in the mainstream secondary classroom.** The language demand and the requirement of rigorous instruction makes the mainstream secondary classroom a unique environment. The teachers feel that they are expected to help all students reach the rigor of state standards that will be tested on the FSA, including ELs regardless of when they first started school in the United States or began learning English. The teachers feel a responsibility to help
these students stay motivated and able to access the learning in class, but also feel the conflicting responsibility of keeping up rigorous instruction. Steven described this conflict by stating “The county wants that “grit factor” so I always have the original text available” (personal communication, January 29, 2021). Libba furthered this point by articulating “I don’t differentiate my expectations and the reason is that they are all expected to pass the same test, so I can’t, you know, make too many accommodations.” (personal communication, February 1, 2021). Howard also commented on the impending testing by discussing his ELs and saying “Now we are at testing crunch time.. I just want to make sure they are there. The kids.” (personal communication, March 30, 2021), in reference to scaffolding less in the third quarter. Kurt shared this feeling and professed “I let them know, when [students] do the FSA it's going to be, you know, I can’t translate everything and [they] need to get into the habit of seeing these words. It’s brutal, I feel terrible for them” (personal communication, February 8, 2021).

Sub-question (a)

What are the experiences of English II teachers with differentiating these scaffolds for ELs at varying WIDA proficiency levels?

Complexity of identifying WIDA Levels. While the students at Mountainside High Students are given the WIDA test annually, the results are not always reported to the teachers. An ESOL coordinator who is no longer part of the school used to provide these detailed reports, but teachers do not believe it was required of them and have gotten less communication regarding WIDA levels after the previous coordinator left the school. In the absence of readily available testing information, that teachers also believe has been impacted by the suspension of testing during Covid, teachers must use their observations of student work, participation in class,
and individual conversation in order to ascertain the relative WIDA level of students. None of the teachers noted having any specific training on WIDA levels beyond what was briefly covered in coursework required for an ESOL endorsement, so any identification on behalf of the teacher is done without any significant explicit training, which Steven professed “I only really learned about them in school” (personal communication, January 29, 2021) and Howard furthered “as a teacher, the best bet is to teach yourself” (personal communication, February 6, 2021).

**Accessing resources.** As the composition of the mainstream English II classroom is incredibly diverse, levels of language acquisition are just one portion of the criteria that students in the classroom fall into. The teachers feel responsible for making their classroom accessible for everyone. The district provides sample lesson plans that the teachers use to begin their lesson writing but provides little more than a list of generic ESOL strategies for teachers to utilize in their planning. This situation creates the circumstance for teachers to create or find resources for their students at various WIDA levels, on their own which is incredibly time consuming. Since the WIDA levels are not the only criteria teachers must provide scaffolds for, they often opt for more general scaffolds that can be used more broadly across the classroom. This decision means that as far as differentiating by WIDA level, only certain teachers were using leveled texts (see Appendix D) and most teachers reported giving individualized instruction (Howard, personal communication, February 6, 2021; Kurt, personal communication, February 8, 2021; Libba, personal communication, February 1, 2021; Steven, personal communication, January 29, 2021), is evident in English II at Mountainside High School.

**Sub-question (b)**

*What progress do English II teachers perceive as a result of classroom scaffolds for the ELs in their classroom over the course of the third quarter of the school year?*
**Progress is a result of multiple factors.** The third quarter of the 2020/2021 school year was plagued with two conditions: 1) State and course testing preparation and 2) Covid-19. These two factors impacted student motivation and thus student comprehension during this quarter. Steven described teaching in quarter three by affirming “[the students] are tired. We’re all tired” (Steven, personal communication, March 23, 2021). Libba indicated that one specific EL who had previously been connecting to the class virtually and came back face to face showed a marked improvement in his participation and language acquisition saying “he's improving and a little more confident…” (Libba, personal communication, March 29, 2021). Kurt agreed on the impact of Covid-19 by sharing that he “noticed some of [his] really struggling ELLs just disappeared” (personal communication, March 24, 2021) indicating that they were still on his class roster, but just didn’t connect to class. Teachers did feel that the use of visuals did help students stay engaged and motivated in order to better practice with standards, but teachers all reflected that students overwhelmed with testing preparations and modality changes, due to Covid-19 made progress hard to ascertain. Teachers did not note any specific growth during this quarter and instead praised the effort of the students One teacher described an example of a specific student and held that “[test scores] are kind of deceiving, which is why I try to prop [a specific EL student] up” (Libba, personal communication, March 29, 2021) indicating that she wanted to help a student see beyond the test score he received on a district test. Another teacher described feeling impressed with ELs during Covid-19 by recounting “I’ve got a student now who [understands] nothing… I have to write post-its in Spanish, but she’s great, especially in this environment… If this weren’t the pandemic, I absolutely would be sitting with her every day.” (Kurt, personal communication, March 24, 2021).
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Major Findings

This study took place at a public high school in Central Florida that serves ELs at a variety of levels of language acquisition in mainstream English II classrooms. Six teachers were included in this study and five themes emerged (see Table 2) related to the research question. The research question for this Dissertation in Practice was:

What are the experiences of English II teachers with creating and using visuals and leveled texts with their ELs at a high school with ELs in mainstream ELA classes?

Creating and using visuals and leveled texts is difficult

The major findings were that the English II teachers of ELs in a mainstream classroom have a myriad of responsibilities in their classrooms that creating visuals and leveled texts cannot always take priority. The teachers all use these strategies in one way or another, but those who consistently create these scaffolds on their own, report that it is incredibly time-consuming and challenging. The challenges include that they have had little practical training regarding teaching ELs in general and have reported none related specifically to these two scaffolds. This lack of training means that the teachers are using their teaching experiences, available resources they find online, and conversations with other teachers in order to try and create and use these scaffolds with their ELs. Another challenge of creating these scaffolds is the amount of time it takes. Teachers reported that they must spend a substantial amount of time beyond their normal lesson planning in order to create leveled texts and useful visuals. The teachers consistently indicated that they felt more able to reach their ELs when a previous ESOL coordinator was able to support their communication and teaching strategies with their ELs. This educator left the
position and Covid-19 happened, which could have been possible reasons why the teachers felt they lost this resource. Kurt described this feeling by professing “Now I am really beginning to miss [the previous ESOL coordinator]. Really beginning to miss [the previous ESOL coordinator], because I really need [the previous ESOL coordinator’s help with [a] student, because [the previous ESOL coordinator] was always there. In fact, she was always there, she would email me and say “hey, so you’ve got this student.” She was proactive. I don’t have that anymore” (personal communication, February 8, 2021).

_Differentiating visuals and leveled texts is difficult_

Another major finding in this study was related to teaching mainstream English II with ELs at a variety of levels of language acquisition. All teachers reported that they are cognizant of the FSA at the end of the year and the expectation that students all take and pass that high stakes standardized test. It was found that utilizing scaffolds like visuals and leveled texts comes with the feeling of responsibility to not over-scaffold students, so they are ill-prepared for the FSA ELA, while simultaneously attempting to scaffold enough that ELs on all WIDA levels are able to at least access the curriculum. The teachers all felt that they must provide a curriculum that is rigorous enough that students can practice for the exam but still acknowledge that having students at such a variety of levels of language acquisition requires that they do differentiate their instruction. The teachers all reported that the language demand of the English II classroom is beyond what can be reasonably expected of ELs on lower WIDA levels, thus scaffolds must be created.

Regarding WIDA levels, this Dissertation in Practice found that teachers ascertain a students' level primarily by testing data, which they did not have readily available, and through personal observation. Teachers had a particularly difficult time collecting observational data on
students during the time of this Dissertation in Practice because they were teaching the majority of students online and thus could not observe all ELs in the classroom setting and relied on submitted work and what engagement they could glean during virtual lessons. Teachers reported that they have seen a marked drop in engagement from all students due to the additional stress put on them by Covid-19, and this exacerbated the difficulty of understanding exactly what ELs individual language need entailed. This variation in levels was only one of the factors that teachers needed to consider, as the mainstream classroom includes students with a myriad of educational needs beyond just language needs and this impacted the urgency to prioritize language needs, encouraging teachers to create more universal scaffolds in order to help meet the needs of the variety of learners on their rosters.

*Using visuals and leveled texts may contribute to EL success*

Teachers did report that ELs responded well to the use of visuals and leveled texts but think that their growth was a result of many classroom factors beyond these scaffolds. They continued to use these scaffolds throughout the quarter as they perceived them as an efficient use of their time, and often made them available to all students as an optional reference. Visuals that several participating teachers stressed as particularly effective were the screenshots for directions and expectations. These teachers reported that it gave ELs confidence to attempt to keep up with the class as they were able to navigate through the lessons regardless of their fluency in English.

**Comparison with Existing Studies**

Regarding the first major finding of this Dissertation in Practice, Gonzalez, Peters, Orange, and Grigsby (2017) conducted a study that supports the feelings of stress that impact the participants of this Dissertation in Practice creation and use of visuals and leveled texts. Gonzalez et al. (2017) found that teachers in tested subject areas had higher stress than those in
non-tested subjects, and high school teachers had significantly higher stress on top of that, as compared to their elementary and middle school counterparts. The findings of this study suggested that time was a major contributing factor to this stress, as teachers reported that they feel they do not have the time to meet all expectations of their job. Berryhill, Linney, and Fromewick (2009) conducted a study that also supported the finding that high stakes testing increased teacher stress and the lack of time was cited as a factor, though this study was done on elementary school teachers the finding can be considered comparable to the finding in this dissertation in practice due to the teachers’ involvement in high stakes testing. The teachers in this study consistently reported that the lack of time contributed to their creation and use of these standards as ELs only make up a portion of their students and they have many other expectations to attend to in order to prepare for high stakes testing. The teacher participants all articulated the benefit of a previous ESOL coordinator in helping them understand the individual needs of the students, as well as building a secure line of assistance for specific help, this finding was consistent with research where Russel (2015) found that the an EL specialist was a valuable resource to the teacher studied for these same reasons.

In regards to the second major finding of this Dissertation in Practice, the way that the teachers obtained students’ WIDA was consistent with research that found that teachers often rely on observational data and relationships in order to ascertain students’ individual language needs, as opposed to relying solely on data provided to them (Gilliland, 2015). Once the participating teachers had the students’ relative WIDA level, they needed to make instructional decisions as to scaffolds to implement in the classroom. Recent research supports the usefulness of scaffolding instruction for ELs in secondary education in order to prepare them for high stakes testing (Humphrey, 2015; Olson, Land, Anselmi, & AuBuchon, 2010). The teachers in this
Dissertation in Practice all used the target scaffolds, visuals, and leveled texts, in some way, though only two regularly differentiated either of these scaffolds to individual WIDA levels. The research also provides insight into the feeling the three teachers with prior experience teaching ELs in an ESOL only classroom by condensing that ELs benefit when a portion of their education is directly towards their language learning needs (Goldenberg, 2013).

The third major finding of the study reinforced existing research that visuals and leveled texts are effective scaffolds to use with ELs (Campbell & Cuba, 2015; Louie & Sierschynski, 2015; Lupo et al., 2019; Matthews, 2014; Montero et al., 2014; Solano-Flores et al., 2014; Tang, 1992; Teale, 2009). While there has been limited research done into the impact of visuals on ELs at various levels of language acquisition (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015) there are no available studies that discuss the impact of leveled texts on secondary ELs, it must be reiterated that there is room for further research into this area that will be discussed in the implications for future research section.

**Limitations**

Since I am a member of the PLC in this study, this may have impacted what the participants wanted to share. The teachers are aware of my research interests as I have worked with them for multiple years so this relationship may have impacted their responses to interview questions. My familiarity may not have only impacted what was shared or given attention in the interviews, it does have potential to impact my understanding and analysis of the data. Epoche, as defined by Mustakas (1994), guided me to acknowledge my bias to mitigate this risk, but it still must be addressed as a potential limitation.
Another limitation of this study is that it took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. While this setting creates a unique look into how the teachers adapted to the change in classroom make-up; a combined room with face-to-face students and students joining virtually; the results may be heavily impacted by it. Teachers had to change their classrooms and lessons to adapt to the mixed-modality classroom, so this may have impacted their creation and use of visuals and leveled texts for the classroom. The change in responsibilities and the personal pressures put on the teachers by Covid-19 could have impacted district provided resources, how the school delegated resources, and/or how the teachers utilized resources. This pandemic has impacted most aspects of teaching and learning for the school year, including concerns about health, and mental stress of this sudden change in schooling for several months with little additional support. This unprecedented environment heavily influenced the lived experiences reported on in this Dissertation in Practice.

A further limitation of this study is the sample chosen. This sample contained six teachers at one site. As the results indicated, the teachers feel the particular site impacts their working environment and thus the lived experience that was described can potentially be heavily influenced by the location of the study. This location having a large number of ELs in attendance may also impact the teachers’ exposure to and familiarity with various levels of ELs, potentially governing their creation and use of visuals and leveled texts.

Implications for Practice

This study’s findings have practical implications for the field of EL education. The first implication that should be noted is that there should be readily available training related directly to practical strategies for the English II classroom. Professional development has shown a benefit to teachers’ practice with teaching ELs (Bohon, McKelvey, Rhodes, & Robnolt, 2017;
Humphrey, 2015; Ralston, Naegele, & Waggoner, 2019). The teachers’ lived experiences were that training, when they included a relation to teaching ELs, was greatly lacking in actual strategies that can be incorporated. Bhon et al (2017) found that providing a summer institute to teachers of ELs that included practical classroom strategies showed a great increase in teacher reported ability to be effective with this demographic. Counties may consider incorporating a PD into their site’s training plan, which focuses on incorporating visuals and leveled texts into the mainstream English classroom. This Dissertation in Practice found that teachers are familiar with these scaffolds but have not received training on how to create these resources, and instead, rely on what they can find in online searches and glean from conversations with other teachers. Since visuals have a benefit to ELs in the classroom (Campbell & Cuba, 2015; Louie & Sierschynski, 2015; Matthews, 2014; Solano-Flores et al., 2014; Tang, 1992; Teale, 2009), and teachers report not having explicit training related to their practical application in a mainstream classroom, this is a founded implication. Since the teachers reported that they have students at a variety of WIDA English proficiency levels in their classrooms, these trainings should show practical uses for a variety of levels, as opposed to just catering to an overall audience for teachers of ELs in general. Students at the various WIDA levels have different needs as far as language supports (WIDA Consortium, 2012) and teachers should feel equipped and empowered to help them access grade level content at their English proficiency level.

In addition to professional development, added support in the school that focuses on helping mainstream teachers of ELs is implicated by the findings of this Dissertation in Practice. Research suggests that personnel such as ESOL specialists and literacy coaches can work with mainstream teachers and help improve their practice with ELs (Reichenberg, 2020; Russell, 2015). Reichenberg (2020) found that learning from an ESOL specialist and a literacy coach
helped improve teachers’ agency and practice. Similarly, Russell (2015) found that having an ESOL specialist working directly with the teachers provided an immediate and practical resource to the teacher’s classroom practice with ELs.

Another implication for practice that arose from this Dissertation in Practice is that teachers feel that the time it takes to create these leveled scaffolds is excessive, thus having more widespread production of leveled texts based on a rigorous grade level texts can be explored by counties. Teacher participants in this Dissertation in Practice all follow a common standards progression and are provided sample lesson plans that the teachers use and adapt to the needs of their classroom. This is consistent with Hos and Kaplan-Wolff (2020) finding that teachers were able to adapt scripted resources to be culturally responsive and useful with their secondary ELs. An implication of this is that the district may consider having leveled texts and visuals already made for the teacher based on the sample lesson plans provided or encouraging PLCs to create the leveled texts together in order to better distribute the labor during PLC time. Having these scaffolds created by the district or the PLC collectively would reduce the amount of time teachers spend planning for ELs and has the potential to increase the use of these scaffolds.

Implications for Future Research

While this phenomenology sought to only describe the lived experiences of mainstream English II teachers with ELs at various levels of language acquisition using visuals and leveled texts in the classroom, it has implications for research into the effectiveness of these two scaffolds. As discussed, there has been recent research into using visuals with ELs in secondary education (Bicen & Beheshti, 2019; Alrajhi, 2020 Campbell & Cuba, 2015; Louie & Sierschynski, 2015; Matthews, 2014; Solano-Flores et al., 2014), but limited research into how these visuals can be utilized with students of varying levels of language acquisition. The
participants in this Dissertation in Practice reported concern with giving appropriate scaffolds to students in order to best prepare them for the rigor of the ELA FSA. Therefore, future research attention would be beneficial to explore how this scaffold can impact individual students differently. As students at various WIDA levels have wildly different abilities (WIDA Consortium, 2012) and teachers are able to control the input given in the classroom, it would benefit the field to understand what \((i + 1)\) (Krashen, 1982) will look like in a practical sense in a secondary classroom. Regarding leveled texts, as defined by Nutta et al. (2018), little research has been done into their creation and use. This lack of research about leveled text leaves a gap regarding this form of comprehensible input that is adaptable to a secondary classroom. This gap can be explored, as well as this scaffolds’ effectiveness in bolstering EL achievement to further examine the disparity between the test scores of ELs and non-ELs (Figure 11), as well as the nuances between students at different levels of language acquisition (Figure 6).

![Figure 11: Student scores on quarter 1 assessment (blue), quarter 2 assessment (red), and quarter three assessment (green).](image)
Overall Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it examined the lived experiences of English II teachers using visuals and leveled texts with ELs, at various WIDA levels, in a mainstream classroom. The subject is significant because the FSA ELA is a high-stakes test that all students in Florida public schools must pass in order to graduate from high school (FLA.STAT of 2019). The scaffolds are significant because they both have had research attention to their effectiveness with secondary ELs (Campbell & Cuba, 2015; Louie & Sierschynski, 2015; Lupo et al., 2019; Matthews, 2014; Montero et al., 2014; Solano-Flores et al., 2014; Tang, 1992; Teale, 2009). The ESOL status of the students is significant because ELs are a growing population in Florida (NCES, 2019a) and the Consent Decree requires counties comply with federal guidelines for teaching them (Florida Department of Education, n.d.), making their access to equitable education important for all school personnel, including their ELA teacher. The WIDA levels were significant to explore as little research attention has been paid to differentiating instruction based on language acquisition level and instead overwhelmingly group ELs all together regardless of the fact that their abilities with the English language vary drastically (WIDA
Consortium, 2012). Finally, it was significant that these teachers were in mainstream classrooms, as this is the reality for educators that they may teach in classrooms following this inclusion model, as discussed in, Platt et al. (2003). These factors made this Dissertation in Practice significant as the results are able to provide insight to educators and key stakeholders as to the reality of creating and using visuals and leveled texts with this population.
APPENDIX A: INITIAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Prompts and elicitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ice breaker</td>
<td>The purpose of this interview is…</td>
<td>This information will be used to describe your lived experiences; it will not be evaluative in any way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Who are you as a person?</td>
<td>How old are you? <em>Explicitly state that teachers may decline to answer any questions</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Did you attend K-12 in the United States? <em>Again, remind teachers that they may decline to answer.</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What languages do you speak?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Describe your teaching background</td>
<td>How long have you been teaching?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What grades/subjects have you taught?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What certifications do you have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>Tell me about your experience with ELs.</td>
<td>How did you become a teacher with ELs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are the requirements for teaching ELs?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe any experiences that you have had with ELs that were particularly memorable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>What is expected of you as a teacher in regards to teaching ELs?</td>
<td>What does the county expect? The school? The parents? Society?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>In what way does your classroom meet the expectations of the county and society?</td>
<td>What makes these expectations reasonable? Unreasonable?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In what way is the classroom environment different than what you feel is expected?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Describe what you do in order to plan for ELs?</th>
<th>How long does it take to plan for ELs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What must you do in order to plan for ELs?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you plan for varying levels of WIDA proficiency?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>What are challenges that you face when planning instruction for ELs?</th>
<th>How is it different from planning for non-ELs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How is it different from planning for ESE/504 students?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Describe a time where you felt successful when teaching ELs.</th>
<th>What made it a success?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Describe a time where you felt unsuccessful when teaching ELs.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Describe your experience with differentiating instruction for ELs with</th>
<th>How do you differentiate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What do you understand is</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td>Varying levels of English proficiency</td>
<td>The requirement to differentiate?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td>Describe what strategies you have used with ELs that were different from what you used with non-ELs</td>
<td>Were they effective? Where did you learn about this strategy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td>Describe your understanding of using visuals with ELs.</td>
<td>What does it look like in your classroom? What do you think it could look like in a classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience</strong></td>
<td>Describe your understanding of using leveled texts with ELs.</td>
<td>What does it look like in your classroom? What do you think it could look like in a classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective</strong></td>
<td>In what way do you feel your efforts with ELs have been successful? In what ways do you feel that your efforts with ELs have been unsuccessful?</td>
<td>What about teaching ELs in high school do you feel is the most challenging to plan for or implement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Member Checking</strong></td>
<td>Is there anything that you would like to add about your experience teaching ELs? Review my understanding of their answers.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: FINAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Prompts and elicitations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ice breaker</td>
<td>The purpose of this interview is…</td>
<td>This information will be used to describe your lived experiences; it will not be evaluative in any way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Describe a typical day as an EL teacher, this quarter?</td>
<td>How has it been similar or different to other experiences that you have had teaching ELs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>In what way has the Coronavirus impacted your instruction of ELs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Describe the different levels of English proficiency in your classroom this quarter</td>
<td>How do you know the students' proficiency level?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How much time did you spend in lesson planning, specifically, for these levels?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>What have you done this quarter to plan for ELs?</td>
<td>If any, what specific lessons did you incorporate visuals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If any, what specific lessons did you incorporate leveled texts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If any, what are specific ways that you differentiated by level of English proficiency?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>What were scaffolds that you felt were the most effective with ELs?</td>
<td>How did you create/find them?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Describe what it looked like in your classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>How did your ELs grow over this quarter?</td>
<td>Academically?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective</td>
<td>Without giving identifiable information, tell me about the growth of a specific EL this quarter.</td>
<td>Why did you choose this student to describe?</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>What have you done differently or the same as you have done in other years?</td>
<td>Why was it different or the same?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Checking</td>
<td>Is there anything that you would like to add about your experience teaching ELs?</td>
<td>Review my understanding of their answers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVAL
EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

September 21, 2020

Dear Jasmine Taylor:

On 9/21/2020, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Review:</th>
<th>Initial Study, Category 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>Examining the Lived Experiences of Secondary Teachers using Visuals and Leveled Texts with English Learners at Various Levels of Language Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator:</td>
<td>Jasmine Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB ID:</td>
<td>STUDY00002093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant ID:</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents Reviewed:</td>
<td>HRP-251- FORM - Faculty Advisor Scientific-Scholarly Review fillable form.pdf, Category: Faculty Research Approval; Final Teacher Interview Protocol.docx, Category: Interview / Focus Questions; HRP-254-FORM Explanation of Research-2.pdf, Category: Consent Form; HRP-255 Updated to reflect clarification for Study Procedure section, Category: IRB Protocol; Initial Teacher Interview Protocol.docx, Category: Interview / Focus Questions; Recruitment Email-2.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials; Student Test Data.xlsx, Category: Other; Teacher Lesson Plan.docx, Category: Other;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please submit a modification request to the IRB. Guidance on submitting Modifications and Administrative Check-in are detailed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB
Library within the IRB system. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Racine Jacques, Ph.D.
Designated Reviewer
APPENDIX D: SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS RELATED TO OBTAINING,
CREATING, AND USING LEVELED TEXTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obtaining, creating, and using leveled texts</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Collin</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>● “I made the visual vocabulary last year, so it was just a matter of formatting. The vocabulary includes the word with the line number, a definition in plain English (usually adapted from Learner's Dictionary), and a gif as a visual” (February 9, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “Another teacher had made a simplified version and sent it to me. This is what I gave my students, along with the original version” (February 15, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “We are going to be doing a play by Shakespeare, so luckily there is No Fear Shakespeare to help with the simplification, but it doesn’t take out all of the work for this text… I was able to get the graphic novel version, so that took off the task of having to make visuals. I did, however, have to put the simplified text into the speech bubbles.” (February 21, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “This unit is using texts that we have used for years, and luckily the longer, more complex one, already has visuals that I made last year. The shorter text, however, does not. I did create a simplified version of it last year, but going through it now, it was not simplified enough.” (March 3, 2021)</td>
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<td><strong>Howard</strong></td>
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<td>● “I know graphic novels [are available] and No Fear Shakespeare” (February 6, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “I had a modern day iteration [of the text]” (March 30, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “we did an anime version of Macbeth… it’s an animated graphic novel more or less so I consider that to be a leveled text” (March 30, 2021)</td>
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<td><strong>Jules</strong></td>
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<td>● “I will usually provide a text that is somewhat simplified and I don’t necessarily assign it to anyone because I found that has gotten confusing. I just have it there as a view only” (February 22, 2021)</td>
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<td>● A challenge with planning “writing a simplified version that hasn’t lost its meaning.” (February 22, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “You have the original and a simplified version, meaning I get rid of contractions and, what are they called, idioms and if there are words I can switch out to make the wording more simple, I do that as well if I can do it without changing the entire text.”(February 22, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “I feel that [providing a simplified text] has been successful in that ELLs feel a little bit more motivated to try to read the text in English before translating.” (February 22, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “I did it with informational texts. The simplified version… I included pictures, but with the poems I didn’t” (February 22, 2021)</td>
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<td>● “I’ll go in and delete certain words.” (April 5, 2021)</td>
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<td><strong>Kurt</strong></td>
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<td>● “I put in loads of picture and then I had the original text, and one I took from Spark notes in plain English” (February 8, 2021)</td>
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| ● “Leveled texts outside of NewsELA are not offered. I have to make them. If
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Libba</td>
<td>• “[used leveled texts for] Macbeth, because we had the readers theater.” (March 29, 2021)</td>
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<td>• For a simplified text for Macbeth “I used whatever was in the [district provided lesson plan]” (March 29, 2021)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>• “I try not to just offer kids a dictionary or access to Google translate, so by using different leveled texts… so simplifying the text, providing vocabulary, providing images within the text is definitely meeting the requirement of making things accessible.” (January 29, 2021)</td>
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<td>• “Considering there are many levels of English learners, if you made a text for each one of them, uh, it gets easier as you create them. I try to create 3 levels of texts… usually start at the most difficult and working your way backward is the easiest for me, but I would say just for a single text to make all the levels, I would say [it takes] at least 3 hours.” (January 29, 2021)</td>
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<td>• “Sometimes you can find a text online thats simplified, but it is just like, a modern English version… not specifically something for ELLs” (January 29, 2021)</td>
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REFERENCES


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